

2019

Psychosocial Consequences of Parental Wrongful Conviction on Children

St. Jean Jeudy
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Health Sciences

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St. Jean Jeudy

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Walden University

2019

Abstract

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by

St. Jean Jeudy

MHA, Walden University, 2011

BS, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, 2004

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Health and Human Services

Walden University

August 2019

Abstract

This qualitative multiple-case study sought to provide an in-depth understanding of how children living in broken families—due to the wrongful conviction of parent(s)—developed psychosocial issues. The theoretical frameworks applied to this study were the social learning theory, the social control theory, the role-modeling theory, and the general theory of crime. A purposeful sample of 13 adults who were children at the time of their parents' wrongful incarceration were drawn for phone and in-person interviews. The data were transcribed and analyzed to code, sort, and organize; to analyze connections in the information, and to compare and contrast cases. The multiple-case study data were analyzed using 1st and 2nd cycle coding. Among the 10 themes identified in this study were these 5: family structure and activities, behavioral issues associated with the wrongful conviction of their parents, wrongful conviction effects on education, mental health impacts of a parental wrongful conviction on left-behind children and bullying in school and at home. This implications for positive social change are that the findings raise awareness of the psychosocial issues experienced by children whose parent(s) were wrongfully imprisoned for government officials, community leaders, policymakers, and justice reform advocates who can use them to implement programs to provide psychosocial assistance to all children of incarcerated parents.

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Dedication

This dissertation is devoted to my wife, Marie-Danielle Jeudy, for her adoration and steady help all the late evenings and early mornings, and for keeping me rational throughout the years. Much obliged to you for being my dream and sounding board. Thank you for being my closest companion. I am genuinely appreciative for having you in my life. I owe you everything. A tipping of the hat to you for being my voice of reason and my heart of the issue. I dedicate much respect to you for continually helping me think, for helping me discover the solutions to my challenges, and for giving me the bravery to attempt. You have trusted in me and my capacities, and you never questioned precisely what I could do. You helped me recapture that piece of me I lost when I encountered one of the hardest difficulties of my life.

You helped me see that there's a brilliant future sitting tight for me, and you made me understand that there's still a lot to live for in this world. I know that I am so honored to be with somebody as wonderful, savvy, kind, and adoring as you. Excuse me for quite a long time when I neglected to influence you to feel appreciated. I cherish you, and I thank you for all the awesome things you do for the children and me. I am so thankful to have you in my life. You remained steadfast next to me when the entire world seemed to collapse around us. You made me more grounded and more daring than I felt, and you influenced me to feel adored more than anybody had ever affected me to feel cherished. You have changed me to anticipate new experiences and difficulties. Much thanks to you for the love that you continue giving me. I adore you.

I would like to broaden my most profound appreciation and thankfulness to my children, Craig Jeudy, Darendy Delphin, Jayden Jeudy, Sophie Germain, Sabrina Jeudy, Alposchinho Jeudy, and Fabrice Jeudy, for putting up with me for missing sports games; being late for plays, practices, and trainings; overlooking doctors' appointments, and giving extraordinary consideration when required. You cannot envision how much quality your help gave to me throughout the years — much obliged to you for your mindfulness and uplifting statements. You never stop believing in me with all that I can do and all that I can accomplish. I present my sincere consideration to you for influencing me to feel like the most fortunate father on the planet every day.

In Memory of My Late Parents and Siblings

I dedicate this dissertation to my late mother, Mrs. Delia Mertille Jeudy (1909-2004); my late father, Mr. Jedeus Jeudy (1905-1999). Also, I devote the work to my late brother Occius Jeudy, my late sister, Julia Jeudy, and my other late sister, Marie Denise Jeudy, all of whom had adored me unequivocally and whose excellent illustrations had shown me how to buckle down for the things that I try to accomplish. Mother and Father, you merit my ultimate respect and regard for regularly made incalculable forfeitures as you watched over and sustained me from my early stages to adulthood. Even though you are no longer with us, I will always remember your lessons to be completely forthright, honest, caring, kind, and mindful of other individuals. Mother and Father, I recognize the penances you made for me so that I could be who I am today.

No words I compose could ever express how much I miss all of you consistently. As time passes by, the dejection develops. How much I miss you nobody knows. I

consider you peacefully, and regularly speak your names, yet all I have are recollections. No one knows my distress and sees my sorrow for losing three of you in under two weeks. The affection I have for all of you is in my heart to keep, and there is a place in my heart that no one can fill. I will dependably cherish you. I cannot have the old days back when we were all together. Yet, a mystery, tears, and adoring contemplations will be with me until the end of time. This accomplishment is for all of you.

I want to dedicate my dissertation to all my childhood friends, all my other friends to whom I am very attached, and those on social media. I know for the last few years I have failed to participate in, and missed many, special events, such as birthdays, weddings, and other social events. Much respect to you all!

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

In the United States, an alarming number of people have suffered from a miscarriage of justice, which resulted in wrongful conviction (Irazola, Williamson, Stricker, & Niedzwiecki, 2013). Wrongful conviction cases range from a simple conviction for a misdemeanor, where the individual may be incarcerated for a period not to exceed one year, to a felony, which can result in many years in prison to life in prison (Irazola et al., 2013). Wrongful conviction is a complicated matter and needs more attention from government officials.

Wrongfully convicted individuals lives in prison are filled with stressful situations ranging from denied appeals, harassment from real criminals, and disrespect from prison guards (Minnotte, 2012). Many elements contribute to wrongful convictions and imprisonments, but this research study focused only on the mental health consequences and social implications that wrongful convictions has on the children of parents imprisoned for crimes that they (the parents) did not commit. Irazola et al. (2013) denounced the United States Criminal Justice System for not paying attention to the factors that contributed to wrongful conviction and imprisonment. The researchers also noted that the children of the wrongfully convicted experience stress that could cause them to commit suicide or to become criminals themselves.

The children of wrongfully convicted people are silent victims, according to Irazola et al. (2013). Children have no voice to speak for them; they have no understanding of the nature of the criminal justice system (Irazola et al., 2013). Children

mostly do not know when their parents are wrongfully convicted, which means these children experience feelings that often include tribulation, stress, sadness, heartbreak, denial, low self-esteem, little or no respect for their convicted parent, shame, and possibly uncontrollable behavior (Grounds, 2005).

This chapter begins with the background of the problem followed by the rationale for the study and the research questions that guided this exploration. Following, are the background of the problem, theoretical framework of the study, the nature of this multiple-case study research, and the operational definition of key terms. The chapter continues with the identification and discussion of the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the study. It then concludes with a review of the ethical considerations involved in this research and the protection of its participants.

Background of the Problem

Grounds (2005) indicated that 18 men from the United States prisons were exonerated after incarceration for crimes they did not commit; these men spent several years in prison, but all spent more than 5 years. When those men were exonerated, they had problems coping with friends and family members. However, Grounds explained that the main limitation of their research study was that little was known of the magnitude of the effect on the families' mental health because of the wrongful convictions, regardless of the length of imprisonment.

According to Irazola et al. (2013), when parents are imprisoned, their families tend to become more vulnerable and their children more exposed to becoming juvenile delinquents. If a parent has been wrongly imprisoned, however, the effect on the families

is even more problematic especially if they discover their loved one was incarcerated for a crime he or she did not commit (Irazola et al., 2013). The aftermath is more significant when family members find out that all the pain and suffering they experienced were because of the mistakes and failures of the criminal justice system (Irazola et al., 2013).

Irazola et al. (2013) noted that the United States' Criminal Justice System has always had a bias toward Blacks and poor communities concerning the factors that could prevent wrongful convictions and imprisonments. Consequently, disregarding those factors has resulted in many cases of wrongful conviction and therefore has been stressful to American families, especially to children. The absence of programs to educate children living in marginalized communities of the potential biases of the criminal justice system works against the improvement of good judicial practices in the United States (Ground, 2005).

Misconduct, unethical methods of interrogation, and misconceptions of criminal justice officials have been the ultimate challenges of the criminal justice system. The general population of the United States is concerned about the capacity of the justice system to provide ethical training and accountability for criminal justice professionals to implement stress relief programs for families and communities, and to establish strong wrongful conviction prevention programs (Irazola et al., 2013). Implementing such programs would not only benefit the wrongfully convicted but also relieve the unnecessary mental suffering of their children.

According to the Innocence Project (2014), more rigorous case reviews are necessary to sustain efforts to resolve the errors of the criminal justice system. These case

reviews are used to target the prevention of wrongful conviction, imprisonment, and false confessions. Methods to control the spread of wrongful imprisonment consist of the implementation of tougher case reviews, official criminal justice training, and greater family and community programs (Innocence Project, 2014). Over the years, a number of initiatives have been used to avoid unjust conviction and to enhance the performance of the criminal justice system.

Implementation of a program that assesses families' mental health consequences because of wrongful convictions would be a significant relief while helping to prevent wrongful imprisonments (Wildeman, Costelloe, & Schehr, 2011). The responsibility of the criminal justice system is to provide high quality, unbiased, and ethical criminal justice services to all, regardless of gender, age, race, culture, and country of origin (Wildeman et al., 2011). However, evidence from the Innocence Project (2014) indicated that in the United States, at the end of 2014, 199 of the 317 persons exonerated, due to DNA technology, were African American, 94 were White, 22 were Latino, and 2 were Asian, which shows the disparities in the Black communities.

The current literature does not sufficiently cover the mental health impact on families of wrongfully convicted individuals nor does it cover the impact on the community. Including and implementing programs to educate citizens in marginalized communities of potential biases of the criminal justice system could improve judicial practices in the United States (Wildeman et al., 2011). Wildeman et al. also noted that poor criminal justice budgets in the United States resulted in underpaid legal aid personnel. Staff is underpaid; yet, they must handle an excessive number of cases. As a

result, the staff is likely to browse cases instead of taking the time to read and understand the details of each case (Wildeman et al., 2011).

There is a negative perception of the criminal justice system owing to issues, such as underpaid staff, high staff turnover, misconduct of criminal justice officials, and legal misrepresentation. These issues are some of the major causes of wrongful conviction. Grounds (2005) found that many key issues were at the center of wrongful conviction. The first issue Ground noticed was misconduct of criminal justice officials, such as police officers, detectives, district attorneys, and legal aid representation, which could cause wrongful convictions to occur.

For example, according to Grounds, during the discovery process, some district attorneys committed acts of misconduct by withholding incriminating evidence that could prove the suspect was innocent. Some district attorneys were more inclined to getting convictions rather than finding the true criminals (Wildeman et al., 2011). Another way that officials demonstrate misconduct involves police officers' and detectives' unethical interrogation techniques to induce suspects to confess to crimes they did not commit (Ground, 2005). Wildeman et al. (2011) opined that most legal aid attorneys were overwhelmed with cases, which resulted in inadequate time to analyze criminal cases. Some legal aid attorneys, therefore, advised their clients to plea bargain even with evidence to exculpate them.

Irazola et al. (2013) and Wildeman et al. (2011) posited that misrepresentations, officials' misconducts, unethical interrogation techniques, and witness misidentifications within the criminal justice process could lead to false arrests, confessions, and

convictions. These issues contribute to the numbers of wrongful convictions, single-parent households, and children raised without parental guidance. If the family is the building block of society, the number of families who suffer from mishaps in the criminal justice system is uncalled for and unacceptable (Irazola et al., 2013; Wildeman et al., 2011).

Statement of the Problem

The problem that this research addressed was the impact of wrongful incarceration of a parent on the social and mental health of their children. Irazola et al. (2013) indicated that many studies on family structure reported that children growing up in families with both parents tended to be less delinquent than were those children from single-family households. Wrongful conviction and incarceration take a parent from their children and could otherwise be prevented (Irazola et al., 2013).

To understand the issue, the reasons for wrongful conviction were highlighted. Wrongful conviction is the starting point of why some children experienced psychological issues. Without the misconduct and other pertinent considerations of criminal justice officials, children of the wrongfully convicted would be free from those stresses. Irazola et al. (2013) explained that American citizens should be better informed about the regulations and laws governing the United States' criminal justice officials. Miscarriage of justice, which occurs in a rapidly increasing number of wrongful convictions and imprisonments, results in victims' households being even more emotionally impacted (Irazola et al., 2013).

A well-functioning community relies on well-functioning families. Wrongful convictions have negative effects on families, and therefore, they affect the community undesirably (Irazola et al., 2013). Irazola et al. also indicated that negative mental health consequences because of wrongful convictions range from simple anxiety to suicide. In addition, communities where these individuals live also suffer because of the involvement of form of illegal drugs, alcohol abuse, vandalism, domestic violence, juvenile delinquency, and theft (Irazola et al., 2013).

The preliminary literature review revealed two key issues. First, Irazola et al. (2013) reported the misconduct of criminal justice officials, such as police officers, detectives, district attorneys, legal aid personnel, which could yield a wrongful conviction. Second, the researchers also indicated that the inability of the accused to afford the cost of criminal legal proceedings constituted one of the reasons innocent people stayed in prison for crimes they did not commit.

Irazola et al. (2013) further explained that the biases of the criminal justice process could lead to false arrests, false confessions, and wrongful convictions. Further, the researchers demonstrated that these biases triggered an increase in the number of single-parent households thus causing many children to be brought up without parental guidance. This research study sought to understand the influence wrongful conviction of a parent had on the psychological and sociological well-being of their children.

Research Question

What are the psychosocial consequences that wrongful convictions have on children who grew up in single-parent households?

Purpose of the Study

In this qualitative research study, I investigated the mental health impact of wrongful convictions on the children of parents who were convicted of crimes they did not commit. In a multiple-case study, such as this one, a large quantity of data is needed for researching the mental health status of children who were separated from their parents because of the latter's wrongful conviction. In some studies, adults who were children at the time of their experience were interviewed. The same set of open-ended questions were used for adults of different families that experienced wrongful conviction.

Yin (2013) defined the case study method in qualitative research as a detailed analysis of a small number of groups or one group of individuals who have gone through the same problem over time. Consequently, the case study, as the qualitative method of inquiry for the study, allowed me to capture information on the mental health suffering of children who are called silent victims of wrongful conviction. According to Yin (2013) and Myers (2000), critics of the case study method expressed concern about the ability of a case study to generalize findings because of small sample sizes (1 to 5 participants). To overcome this problem, 13 children (now adults) of the wrongfully convicted population were selected to show evidence of an acceptable sample size.

Irazola et al. (2013) revealed that wrongful incarceration was one of the supreme mistakes of the United States' criminal justice system. To comprehend the magnitude of mental health harm on children resulting from wrongful conviction, all children (now adults) from each family were interviewed. Open-ended questions were drafted to

provide a grasp of what participants knew about the criminal justice system and process prior to the wrongful conviction and their past experiences in dealing with the situation.

Theoretical Frameworks

I used Bandura's social learning theory as a framework for this study. This theory implies that children learn and behave by copying what they see around them. This theory helped me to understand what could happen to children when their positive, either male or female, role models were not present to influence them because of wrongful conviction (Bandura, 1977). According to Bandura's social learning theory, juvenile delinquency behaviors are learned from imitation and observation of others.

However, with the positive influence of a father or mother figure, learned behavior could be reversed (Bandura, 1977). According to Bandura's social learning theory (as cited in Chapple, 2003), if a parent or guardian is present, the behaviors are positive instead of negative. When children lose the influence of one parent through wrongful conviction of a crime, a strong possibility exists that those children will, according to Bandura's social learning theory, develop negative behaviors by imitation (Bandura, 1977).

Two other theories supported these qualitative inquiries are the role-modeling theory by Bandura as cited in Chapple (2003) and the social control theory by Gottfredson and Hirschi as cited in Phythian, Keane, and Krull (2008). These theories also deal with children's behaviors. According to the role-modeling theory, children copy violent acts from those who influence them, such as their parents or older siblings (Bandura's role-modeling theory as cited in Chapple, 2003).

Wrongful conviction gives the mistaken impression to a child who is learning behavior from the parent who has been wrongfully convicted. For instance, when an individual is convicted of a violent crime, their child's state of mind is as follows: My parent is a criminal. This can change the child's behavior from positive to negative as suggested by Bandura's role-modeling theory, which indicates that children can replicate parent's violent acts (as cited in Chapple, 2003).

By the time the parents are exonerated, their children are already subject to the social control theory. According to Chapple (2003), social control theory can be defined as a situation in which inadequate parenting enhanced possibilities for juvenile delinquency. Parental control plays an important role in controlling children behavior. Wrongful conviction thus tends to weaken the parental defense. Consequently, according to Bandura's social control theory (as cited in Chapple, 2003), this may cause youngsters to deviate from positive behaviors to violent acts.

Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) demonstrated that the general theory of crime implies that a child's low self-control is often an indicator of juvenile crimes; conversely, the theory of low self-control indicates that weakness in parental defense is the main cause of juvenile delinquency (Gottfredson and Hirschi, as cited in Phythian et al., 2008). Therefore, strong and effective parenting is beneficial to the community as this could reduce juvenile crimes, which represents a significant part of all crimes committed in the United States (Gottfredson and Hirschi, as cited in Phythian et al., 2008).

Operational Definitions

Wrongful conviction – Grounds (2005) indicated that wrongful conviction is defined as people who have been convicted by mistake causing undue separation of parents from their children.

Wrongful convicted individual's children – Grounds (2005) described children left behind by their parents before the parents are taken to prison. This definition also refers to those children whose parents have been exonerated from prison.

Assumptions, Limitations, Scope, and Delimitations

I assumed that the participants talked about their encounters sincerely and straightforwardly. I assumed that the participant selection and inclusion criteria were relevant to achieve the purpose of this research. Children whose parents were wrongfully convicted may have the same experiences, pain, feelings, and outcomes as those whose parents were rightfully convicted. Although these children may hear rumors about their parents' innocence, only after their parents' exoneration can their thoughts, feelings, and experiences be different from that of their counterparts. The adults who participated in this study were children when their parents were convicted. They were children or adults when their parent was exonerated. Children whose parents were incarcerated for crimes they committed were not subjects of this study.

Therefore, the results of this study cannot be generalized to children whose parents were rightfully convicted because exoneration greatly changes children's experiences compared to those of their counterparts. The multiple-case study method strengthened generalizability, and the peer reviewing process aided in accomplishing

validity. Finally, I was trained to prevent me from letting my imperfections and any biases I may have toward the criminal justice system affect my judgment and the results of the study.

Significance of the Study

The results of this study could demonstrate to the state and federal authorities that wrongful convictions have detrimental health effects on children, families, and communities. Evidence and testimony from this study could result in the confirmation for the criminal justice authorities to order more rigorous administrative and technical reviews of each criminal case before proceeding to a conviction. This action could result in positive social change by helping the prevention, reduction, elimination of wrongful conviction imprisonment, and induced separation of children from their parents.

Smith and Dufraimont (2014) and Minnotte (2012) agreed that children who lived in a home with an absent parent developed mental health issues and were more likely to become juvenile delinquents than were those children who had both parents present. According to Minnotte (2012), children with absent fathers were also more likely to develop adverse juvenile delinquency issues, than are those who have their fathers in their lives. The family structure was fragmented owing to wrongful conviction, which results in children's growing up with an absent parent (Smith & Dufraimont, 2014). Minnotte (2012) indicated that children living in fatherless homes tended to live careless lives to hide the fear of not having their father in their lives.

This qualitative research focused on the children because it is harder for them, as silent victims, to let go and move on with their lives. Identifying and correcting problems

for the upbringing and betterment of society's youth are keys to building a better community. This research study enhanced the understanding of the psychosocial consequences of wrongful conviction for the children. The results of this study provided suggestions to help these children overcome their challenges and possibly help eliminate such consequences in the future by preventing wrongful conviction altogether.

Summary

The lifestyles of children of wrongfully convicted parents are characterized by induced separations that become more complicated as time passes. In most cases, people who get arrested claim they are innocent, but the criminal justice system is not going to release someone based on a claim of innocence. The presumption of innocence is the legal principle that one is considered innocent unless proven guilty.

Under the presumption of innocence, the legal burden of proof is thus on the prosecution, which must collect and present compelling evidence to the Court. Sometimes, prosecutors concealed evidence that could vindicate a suspect just to prove that they are doing their jobs. Unfortunately, some people cannot prove their innocence because of early forced confessions, the inability to afford a lawyer, or because of the misconduct of criminal justice officials.

This situation left society with children growing up in single-parent homes. Researchers have investigated the influence of wrongful conviction on families, but the mental health impacts of wrongful conviction on children of the wrongly convicted have not been touched. As time goes by, more people are wrongfully convicted, which means more children are mentally impacted by such a separation. This study focused on the

understanding of the lived experiences of these children, now that they are adults, and how wrongful conviction affected them psychosocially.

Chapter 2 is the literature review for this research study. Next is the methodology section embedded in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 will contain the results of the study.

Discussion, conclusions, and recommendations are presented in Chapter 5.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Growing up in a single-parent home due to wrongful parental conviction can be detrimental to children. This qualitative inquiry takes a closer look at the social and mental health effects wrongful convictions have on children who ended up living in either a fatherless or motherless home. To understand better the wrongful-conviction-induced separation of children from their mothers or fathers, I concentrated on and conducted a thorough literature review. It shed light on the psychological and physiological effects of parent/children separations linked to wrongful conviction.

In the United States, there are many individuals in prison right now for crimes they did not commit. Other People would know that they are innocent only when they have been exonerated. According to the Innocence Project (2014) database, 517 men to date were wrongfully convicted and then exonerated. Among the 517, 156 men were exonerated from death row (Innocence Project, 2014). This proves the urgency and significance of this study (Innocence Project, 2014).

Theoretical Foundation and Conceptual Frameworks

This multiple-case study is grounded utilizing several relevant theories stemming from an expansion of child psychosocial prediction theories. The first body of theory is social learning theory by Bandura (1977), which was later reviewed by Akers and Sellers (2012) and Chapple (2003). The second theory is the role-modeling theory by Bandura as cited in Chapple (2003). Bundled with the last two mentioned relevant theories are the

social control theory by Gottfredson and Hirschi as cited in Chapple (2003) and the general theory of crime by Gottfredson and Hirschi as cited in Phythian et al. (2008).

The connection between social learning theory, the social control theory, the general theory of crime, and the role-modeling theory set the ground for my research study. The approach and research question utilized in this study were oriented toward gaining an understanding of the sources of the children's lived experiences and behaviors associated with the wrongful conviction of their parents. These theories also were utilized to affirm the information found in this qualitative research study.

Bandura's (1977) social learning theory posited that individuals learned from one another, using evaluation of a particular behavior, impersonation, and copying other people's actions. The theory had frequently been described as an extension of behaviorist and psychological learning theory since it included consideration, memory, and inspiration. The key concept of social learning theory was that individuals learned through watching the conduct, mentalities, and results of the behaviors of others (Bandura's, 1977).

Most human conducts were learned observationally through copying and modeling such as watching and imitating others whom they respect (Bandura as cited in Chapple 2003). The role-modeling theory clarified human conduct as an equal collaboration between intellectual, behavioral, and natural impacts (Bandura as cited in Chapple 2003). This theory aligned with this research study because children copy and role-model what their parents do. In this case, the perception of a parent's presumed criminal behavior leading to a wrongful conviction might have given their child a false

impression of the parent's criminal activities and thus might set the child up to be a juvenile delinquent.

The social learning theory, social control theory, role-modeling theory, and the general theory of crime were also valuable for illuminating the participants' social and mental health impacts, including how they sought life improvement, and how they saw and understood their lived experiences. Bandura (1977) was the founder of social learning and role-modeling theories. There are other social behaviorists, such as Akers and Seller (2012) and Chapple (2003) who later contributed to the application of social learning and the role-modeling theories.

Bandura (1977) demonstrated that social learning theory implied that children learn criminal behavior by modeling and interaction with others who are oriented to harm society. The theory also posited that children become delinquent owing to exposure to activities or thoughts supporting a violation of the law (Bandura, 1977). Gottfredson and Hirschi as cited in Chapple (2003) and Phythian et al. (2008) theorized that low self-control derives from weakness in the parental child-rearing system as the leading cause of juvenile delinquency.

Gottfredson and Hirschi (as cited in Phythian et al., 2008) contended that the general theory of crime implied wrongdoing is defined as the result of individuals with low self-control with high criminogenic affinities. When these people were exposed to other individuals attracted to unlawful activities, they readily and easily joined the web of criminal activities (Gottfredson & Hirschi as cited in Phythian et al., 2008). Gottfredson and Hirschi as cited in Phythian et al. (2008) demonstrated that continuous offenses in

childhood opened doors for wrongdoing, growing apart from society, and low self-esteem.

Thereby, individuals with low self-control turned out to be profoundly engaged in criminal conduct (Gottfredson and Hirschi as cited in Phythian et al., 2008). On the one hand, the general theory of crime implies that low self-discipline is used as an indicator for juvenile crimes, and on the other hand, the theory of self-control indicates that weakness in parental defense is the leading cause for juvenile delinquency based on Gottfredson and Hirschi's general theory of crime (see Chapple, 2003; Phythian et al., 2008). Therefore, strong and effective parenting is beneficial to the community because it can reduce juvenile crimes, which represent a big chunk of all crimes committed in the United States (Gottfredson and Hirschi, as cited in Phythian et al., 2008).

Rationale for the Choice of These Theories

I chose four main theories as a theoretical establishment to guide this study for a few reasons. The lived experiences of children impacted by their parents' wrongful conviction and their psychosocial impacts of wrongful-conviction-induced separations have a connection with the social learning theory, role-modeling theory, social control theory, and the general theory of crime. These theories were used to analyze children and adults' learning and behavioral issues and to comprehend their social interactions that were affected by the wrongful conviction of their parents. These theories frame our understanding of the reasons for social interaction, human behavior, and psychological competence in the world.

Literature Search Strategy

Walden University provided access through its online library to EBSCOhost, an accessible online research database and Internet web index, to acquire data. I sought applicable articles, expositions, and discussion papers published from 2011 through 2017 utilizing keywords and combined terms including *wrongful conviction, child-parent relationship, family structure theory, social control theory, general theory of crime, social learning theory, role-modeling theory, family system theory, theory of low self-control, psychosocial theory, wrongful conviction-induced separation, single-parent home, foster home, nuclear family, broken family structure, children interaction in a broken family, psychology, juvenile behavior, child development psychology, children and PTSD, social anxiety and shame and embarrassment, and impacts of parents' imprisonments on their children.*

I utilized default dates of the Walden library, and I consolidated the terms generally used as a part of the adult higher academic education in psychology, psychosocial behavior, and child learning and development. This search was facilitated by using a combination of completed academic masterpieces using Internet web search tools, such as Google Scholar, ProQuest, ERIC, Sage Journals, Dissertations, and PsycARTICLES databases. Narrowing the search requests, I joined the terms with the Boolean administrators (e.g., *impacts of wrongful conviction AND children behavior AND juvenile detention and delinquency AND social isolation AND/OR academic*

outcomes). This chapter includes the study's theoretical and conceptual framework, followed by the literature review and related key concepts, and a summary of the chapter.

Literature Review

The effects of wrongful-conviction-induced separation have had a psychological impact on the lives of the children such individuals left behind. The literature review offered understanding into what wrongfully convicted individuals' children experienced when one or both of their parents were imprisoned for an extended period of time and were subsequently found innocent.

Per West and Meterko (2015) more than 125 individuals were exonerated in 2014 alone. This occurred in the United States through DNA testing and the organizations had numerous pending cases that needed to be reviewed and retried (West & Meterko, 2015). This means that more than 125 families and more than 125 children suffered from psychological, physiological, emotional, and social burden brought on by wrongful conviction in 2014 (West & Meterko, 2015).

Male Children: When Fathers are the Wrongfully Convicted

Geller, Cooper, Garfinkel, Schwartz-soicher, and Mincy (2012) documented the impact fatherless homes have on children, especially on male children. Depending on the reason or reasons a father left, male children may have different behaviors associated with living without their father. Geller et al. demonstrated that male children are at risk of mental health problems when growing up in a fatherless household.

These psychological effects include, but are not limited to, heavy drinking, drugs, poor judgment, and involvement in criminal activities, resentments, self-destruction, and

aggressiveness. This means that male children reared only by mothers because their fathers had been falsely convicted would experience a different form of psychological effects from those experienced by male children whose fathers had left owing to divorce, desertion, domestic violence, incompetence, and death (Geller et al., 2012).

Dennison, Stewart, and Freiberg (2013) mentioned that in order to have a true understanding of the psychological experiences of male children whose fathers have been wrongly convicted, researchers have to explore the interrelationship between fathers and sons. The present qualitative inquiry interviewed some male children based on their experiences of dealing with the dilemma of their fathers being wrongfully convicted.

The research sought an understanding of the psychological impacts of their fathers' absence due to wrongful conviction. According to Chung (2011), male children who have been reared by mothers tend to be more confrontational. In addition, those male children have more altercations with their mothers. The lack of a father figure in the household can cause male children to experience some stressful events that can cause them to be aggressive and confrontational (Chung, 2011).

Being the son of a convicted felon may carry a social stigma. Peters and Corrado (2013) found that the social stigma from wrongful conviction can extend to the whole family. The research indicated that the families of convicted felons might be denied employment and some federal benefits. The wrongfully convicted individuals' children may experience teasing and bullying by other children, which may cause male children to express shame, lack of trust, lack of respect, and disappointment towards the convicted father (Peters & Corrado, 2013).

Peters and Corrado (2013) also indicated that male children have two different ways of developing. On the one hand, there are those males who grow up in a fatherless home. On the other hand, there are those who are from a nuclear household. Male children who are from fatherless homes because of wrongful conviction, develop aggression, low parental responsibility, disregard for the potential of females, and tend to father children early (see Kelly-Trombley, Bartels, & Wieling, 2014; Kuja-Halkola, Pawitan, D'Onofrio, Långström, & Lichtenstein, 2012; Mustaine & Tewksbury, 2015; Peters & Corrado, 2013).

In a research study performed to determine the effects of parental detention on the mental health of Palestinian children, Shehadeh, Loots, Vanderfaeillie, and Derluyn (2015) found that among all other forms of separation, such as hospitalization, death, and an absentee parent, imprisonment-induced separations are the source of some delinquent and antisocial behaviors of boys. Shehadeh et al. concluded that boys are at high risk of adverse consequences when their parents are imprisoned for any crime and for any period of time. Shehadeh et al.'s study was performed using two cross-sectional questionnaires, the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and the University of California at Los Angeles Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Reaction Index (UCLA-PTSD-Index) to compare the situations of 99 Palestinian children (ages 3 to 10) living in a nuclear family to situations of 79 other children whose fathers were detained by Israeli soldiers.

The study compared the life outcomes of boys whose parents were imprisoned with those of boys of four different control groups (no separation, hospital separation, death separation, disharmony separation). When the boys were 8 to 10 years old, family

risk factors were considered, studied, and analyzed. There were 11 more offending and felonious occurrences with boys of incarcerated parents (between the ages of 14 and 40 years) than with boys of the other control groups (Shehadeh et al., 2015).

Female Children: When fathers are the wrongfully convicted

In a quantitative study to determine the impact paternal imprisonment has on urban mothers, Geller and Franklin (2014) determined that female children experienced different emotions from those of male children when their fathers were stripped away from their lives. As a result of wrongful convictions, many young girls were raised by their mothers (Geller & Franklin, 2014). Block et al. (2014) demonstrated that when female children grew up in fatherless homes, they tended to get involved in sexual activities or showed sexual interests earlier than those raised in homes where the fathers were present. When these female children reached adulthood, they developed negative perspectives of men, which may cause a lack of trust of males in general (Van de Rakt, Ruiter, De Graaf, & Nieuwbeerta, 2010). Consequently, those females developed difficulty in maintaining longstanding associations with men (see Block et al., 2014; Geller & Franklin, 2014; Van de Rakt et al., 2010).

Kendler, Ohlsson, Morris, Sundquist, and Sundquist (2015) theorized that female children were usually emotionally more sensitive than male children. They were more attached to their fathers than their mothers (Kendler et al., 2015). In the presence of their fathers, they tended to grow in wisdom, charisma, responsibilities, and techniques to protect themselves against men who may try to get involved with them intimately (Kendler et al., 2015). Imagine how devastated their lives were when these girls' fathers

were convicted and incarcerated for years. They may develop shame, low self-esteem, weakness to confront life, a feeling of the need to have a man in their lives early, depression, lack of savoir-faire they would otherwise have if the fathers were present (Kendler et al.,2015).

Female children growing up in fatherless homes tended to develop internalized and externalized behaviors. Internalization is defined as the presence of fear, loneliness, low self-esteem, negative thoughts, depression, and anxiety (Lansford, Laird, Pettit, Bates, & Dodge, 2014). Whereas, externalization involved fighting, anger, antisocial behavior, and change in body language (Lansford et al., 2014).

Lansford et al. (2014) also illustrated that children with fathers enlisted in the navy tended to develop more adverse internalizing and externalizing behaviors compared with other children living in a non-military and nuclear households. Lansford et al. found that female children whose fathers had been deployed tended to display a therapeutic level of internalizing behaviors compared to those children who were living with their fathers. Relating this scenario with those female children whose fathers have been taken away from them by wrongful conviction, one can imagine how difficult it is for female children to deal with their fathers being wrongfully convicted.

Male Children: When mothers are the wrongfully convicted

Griffin (2015) explained that there are instances in which mothers (or wives) were sent behind bars leaving fathers as the primary caretakers. When this happened, male children tended to develop adverse psychosocial reactions and behaviors, said Griffin. According to Griffin, mothers are a boys first love. Griffin concluded that when male

children grew up without their mothers, they tend to lose the mothers' love. Of course, the present fathers taught them how to be good fathers, but they were not able to teach them how to understand a woman's love. Griffin noted that this interaction would be the mother's contribution to her son.

Griffin (2015) indicated that owing to the fact that male children were attached to their mothers, a spontaneous disappearance of their mothers could be detrimental to their mental health and psychosocial interaction. Griffin also stated that male children who experienced adverse emotional experiences due to their mother's wrongful conviction might end up living alone because of failed relationships. In nuclear families, boys are their mothers' best companions (Griffin, 2015).

When conviction and incarceration destroyed this connection, they also crippled the way those boys perceived women as they grew up (Griffin, 2015). Griffin documented that mothers taught their boys how to become compassionate gentlemen as fathers taught their boys how to be strong men. Without the touch of mothers, boys would grow up to be strong men without the softening qualities that would make them, as men, understand women, care for them, protect their emotions, and their feelings (Griffin, 2015).

As a result, Griffin (2015) revealed that those male children later in life developed some type of aggression towards women thus leading to domestic violence and a myriad of other family problems. The mother's love was the driving force of boys' social lives that guided them towards keeping relationships, friendships, connections, and acquaintances with co-workers. The absence of mothers owing to incarceration had

adverse mental health impacts on male children which in turn had significant effects on communities where those children were developing (Griffin, 2015).

Female Children: When Mothers are the Wrongfully Convicted

The wrongful conviction of mothers has a much greater impact on female children than on male children. In a study done to establish the emotional and behavioral effects of mothers' separation from their female children, Hagan and Foster (2012) found that the psychological and sociological effects of mothers in prison on female children are greater than when girls had their fathers in prison.

The imprisonment-induced separations of mothers were detrimental to the well-being and development of their female children (Hagan & Foster, 2012). In order to study the effects of incarceration on those children, Hagan and Foster compared the well-being and development of female children separated from their mothers owing to the latter's imprisonment to the well-being and development of girls growing up in nuclear families. Girls who had been close to their mothers before the latter's incarceration behaved more positively not only with their mothers but with each other and strangers as well.

For example, they slept, played, and stayed together in the presence or absence of their parents. Whereas, girls who grew up without their mothers owing to incarceration tended to be self-centered, played alone, were selfish, and always fought with each other (Hagan & Foster, 2012). Members of both groups in the study grew up in the same environment and were treated the same way. Yet, the daughters of incarcerated mothers were more aggressive, emotionally imbalanced, and showed serious adverse behavioral issues as compared to girls whose mothers were present (Hagan & Foster, 2012).

Wrongful incarceration of mothers has a significant impact on female children. Dworsky (2015) determined that fathers are role models for boys to become responsible men and mothers are role models for girls to become responsible women. In a research study conducted to determine the social-emotional development of five-year-old children living with mothers who have postnatal depression, Kendler et al. (2015) examined a community sample of depressed mothers from two months to eighteen months postnatal. According to Kendler et al. (2015), children's social adjustment, emotional behavior, and interactions were directly related to the mother-child relationship. The researchers indicated that mothers were more capable of satisfying the children's emotional and psychological needs.

Cho (2011) and Dworsky (2015) demonstrated that from the age of 0 to 13 years, the footprints of a mother were all over their daughters' personalities. That is, everything the adolescent girl did was parallel to what her mother would do. When female children were dispossessed of their mother's attachment owing to conviction, incarceration, or imprisonment, they tended to suffer from depression, growth impedance, mental anguish, and inability to understand the intimate world at the teenage stage (see Cho, 2011; Dworsky, 2015).

Summary

To determine whether there was a gap in the literature regarding the psychosocial impact of wrongful conviction of a parent on their child and for a better understanding of the subject matter, I conducted a literature search and read peer-reviewed articles and books. This chapter shows that I also did pertinent literature reviews underlining the

importance of wrongful-conviction-induced-separations that mentally and socially affected children of both genders regardless of race, financial category, and geographical location. When children are separated from their parents, they go through changes in behaviors and habits, which take a toll on the way they see the rest of the world owing to the absence of key mentors and role models in their lives. The literature review demonstrated that wrongful conviction may affect male and female children in the same way but results in different behavioral outcomes based on whether their mother or father is wrongfully convicted.

Male children who grew up in fatherless homes because of their fathers' incarceration tended to develop serious adverse psychological and sociological effects (Geller et al., 2012). These researchers showed that male youngsters are in danger of emotional wellness issues when experiencing childhood in an orphan family unit because of paternal imprisonment. These mental impacts incorporate, yet are not constrained to activities involving substantial drinking, drugs, misguided thinking, and contribution to criminal exercises.

The impacts also include feelings of disdain, implosion, and forcefulness (Dennison et al., 2013; Geller et al., 2012). The absence of a father figure in the family unit can cause some distressing occasions that can influence male children to become forceful and angry (Chung, 2011), lack trust, disregard the feelings of others, and experience disillusionment (Peters & Corrado, 2013). Peters and Corrado (2013) also noted that boys living in fatherless homes because of the incarceration their fathers may suffer prodding harassment, and disgrace.

Murray and Farrington (2005) noted that young girls who experienced childhood in fatherless homes generally became sexually active or indicated sexual interest sooner than girls raised in homes where their fathers were involved in their lives. Lansford et al. (2014) pointed out that female children who experienced the effects of paternal imprisonment tended to demonstrate externalized behaviors, such as battling, outrage, adverse conduct, and change in non-verbal communication. They may also develop internalized behaviors including stress, anxiety, depression, social withdrawal, and embarrassment (Lansford et al., 2014).

Griffin (2015) observed that when mothers were incarcerated, their male children would, in general, create unfavorable psychosocial responses and practices. Griffin additionally expressed that boys of incarcerated mothers may end up living alone owing to their inability to maintain proper intimate connections with women. In the absence of their mothers owing to imprisonment, these boys would be resilient men without the conditioning characteristics that influence men to comprehend and secure the feelings and emotions of women (Griffin, 2015).

Young ladies who had a close relationship with their mothers before imprisonment of the latter acted more enthusiastically with one another as well as with outsiders (Hagan & Foster, 2012). Hagan and Foster (2012) also found that young ladies of imprisoned mothers were increasingly forceful, emotionally imbalanced, and developed more behavioral issues than did girls who had their mothers present. At the point when female youngsters saw their mothers' connection severed because of

conviction or detainment, they would in general experience despondency, developmental impedance, mental anguish, and powerlessness (Cho, 2011; Dworsky, 2015).

The following chapter presents the methodology, research question, instrumentation, and the role of the researcher. The procedure sections constitute the main components of that chapter and deals with trustworthiness and ethical procedures.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

In the United States, the criminal justice system has many disturbing problems. Among them is wrongful imprisonment that causes many innocent individuals to spend most of their lives in prison for crimes they did not commit. In order to comprehend the magnitude of mental health and social impact on children of wrongfully convicted parents, I interviewed children who are now adults whose parent was wrongfully convicted.

To understand participants' lived experiences and psychosocial struggles amidst wrongful conviction, I prepared open-ended questions for the interview. The present qualitative study provides data that leads to an understanding of the mental health effects that children of those unfairly convicted suffer as a result of the wrongful conviction.

Research Methodology

This qualitative dissertation used a collective/multiple-case study approach to conduct an in-depth exploration of the mental health and social impact on the children of wrongfully convicted individuals, starting with the time of arrest, moving through the time in prison, and up to exoneration. According to Yin (2013), in a collective or multiple-case study, the researcher first concentrates on a problem and then selects several connected cases in order to demonstrate or explain the problem. The researcher then demonstrates various perspectives of that issue or concern, where all forms of the data are analyzed to come up with the themes found in each case.

By cross-case analysis, the researcher can then determine which themes are common in all the cases. For the present study, I selected qualitative methodology to better understand the lived experiences, perceptions, and mental health consequences of wrongful conviction on the children of wrongfully convicted individuals. Yin (2013) indicated that for populations that are underinvestigated, it becomes almost impossible for variables in them to be identified.

Some research has been done on the impact of wrongful conviction. However, there are no studies that have been done specifically on the children of the wrongfully convicted. Yin (2013) found that qualitative inquiry is suitable to a research study when little or no other research has been done on the population under investigation. After a complete literature review, no research was uncovered to understand the mental health impacts that wrongful conviction has on this specific population, the children of the wrongfully convicted individuals.

Research Design

The inspiration driving this qualitative multiple-case study was the desire to understand and explore the lived experience and psychosocial impacts of wrongful conviction on children. I used this qualitative research inquiry coupled with an inductive procedure of semi-structured interviews to facilitate compounded descriptions of participants' perspectives. In order to safeguard the variation of the samples, I recruited from different groups, categories, races, and at different geographical sites, the children of wrongfully convicted individuals.

The participant selection criteria I used were adult-children of the wrongfully convicted individuals who were children at the time of their parents' wrongful conviction. The children in each selected family were over 18 years of age and were of different ages at the time of their parents' wrongful convictions. These people were intended to be contacted according to the Innocence Project systematic contact procedures and those willing to participate were chosen.

I used semi-structured interviews to identify insights from the perceptions of each qualified participant. This open-ended interview system allowed participants to provide data compatible with the qualitative information gathering system. I also used the semi-structured interview system to clarify the research question and to enable the deciphering of rich information about the lived experiences and psychosocial impacts of wrongful conviction on the children. In addition, I used the information retrieved from the semi-structured interview process to describe case associations and create the groundwork for further studies.

I determined the order of the questions chronologically, that is, from illustrating early events to the last. According to Yin (2013), there are some disagreements as to whether the most important questions must be asked first or last. The concerns are that participants tend to be tired and/or bored when subjected to long interviews. However, the interviews for this research study started with the least sensitive question and progressed to the most sensitive ones. I did this so that participants would become more comfortable spilling out their feelings.

I gave a consent form to each participant to sign. The consent form covered all ethical and privacy issues to protect participants' identities and confidentiality. I then used two different recording devices to ensure information security. It was important that participants know and understand that their information was being recorded, why, and for what purpose.

Participants of the Study

I selected my participants for this qualitative study from the Innocence Project, which is an organization that reviews old criminal cases and re-tries them, using the availability of the new DNA technology (West & Meterko, 2015). West and Meterko (2015) demonstrated that 344 people were exonerated through DNA testing across 37 different states within the United States. Four out of the 344 exonerated individuals were women.

In addition, there were seven cases that were not DNA-related exonerations and another ongoing one, but the real perpetrator had already been arrested making it a total of 344 exonerated individuals. Among the exonerated individuals, 20 of them came right out of death row, and 16 were convicted of capital crimes, but were not sentenced to death. In addition, West and Meterko determined that of the 344 exonerated, 212 were Blacks, 105 were Whites, 25 were Latinos, and 2 were Asian-Americans.

According to the West and Meterko (2015), the first conviction was won in 1989 and since then the number has been growing rapidly. Some of these people left small children behind when they were sent to prison for an extended period of time. Those

children, who are now adults, were at the center of this study. To validate the study, I randomly selected a representative sample from each group in the population.

This means that I selected 30 families, depending on whether they had children exposed to wrongful conviction from the time of apprehension to the time of exoneration. From each group, I chose a representative sample greater than 5%. Thus, the sample included at least 10 Black families, 5 White families, 3 Latino families, and 1 Asian family. Consequently, among them, there were two female wrongfully convicted families. The only exception would be for the women and the Asian-American populations owing to the small population size (Innocence Project, 2015).

Ethical protection of participants

Although contributors for this qualitative study were adults, they were people whose childhoods were affected in some way by wrongful conviction and wrongful imprisonment of their parents. There was no known harm associated with this study. However, I advised every participant that if any incident occurred in the course of the interview, I would take appropriate actions to ensure their safety and well-being. Every participant read and signed the consent form.

Participants had the opportunity to read and understand that the information they gave was used for the sole purpose of this research study. I utilized audiotapes to capture every detail of the interview. In addition, these files offered the advantages of reviving the interview without going back to see the participant in case of misunderstanding or misinterpretation of what was said in the interview. All files, transcripts, and audio recordings were protected and under lock and key at my residence.

Measurement

The rationale of this research study was to understand how the male and female children experienced the wrongful-conviction-induced separation when their mothers or fathers were wrongly imprisoned owing to the failure of the United States Criminal Justice system to ensure fairness in due process. In this study, the length of imprisonment was used as wrongful-imprisonment-induced separation of at least five years to calculate the effects it had on the children under study. To extrapolate enough information, five years of wrongful conviction that a child endured should have a major significance, which affected the child's behaviors with that parent, the child's peers, and academic progress.

Research Question

As mentioned earlier, the research question is: What are the psychosocial consequences that wrongful convictions have on children who grew up in single-parent households?

Ethical Protection

I conducted all interviews in private to guarantee confidentiality—some by phone, others by Skype. I gave the participants an informed oral and written consent form explaining their right to withdraw from the research study if they should ever feel uncomfortable with the information provided or requested of them. The consent form also contained the procedural system that I used to explain how I collected data and how the data were analyzed.

Following the procedure proposed by West and Meterko (2015), I obtained permission to locate and track down participants. The Innocence Project organization was supposed to send an initial e-mail or letter to all the exonerated individuals whom the organization believed to have children at the time of, or amidst, the wrongful imprisonment. This procedure was compatible with, and followed all the Walden's Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines. The IRB approval number for this research study is 11-18-16-0089998.

Procedures

The subsequent techniques served as a consecutive model to recruit and inform contributors, amass data, scrutinize the data, and confirm the results.

1. Contacting the Innocence Project and explaining to them why their help was needed to find participants and what the ethical considerations and precautions in place were so as to protect the rights of contributors participating in the study.
2. Sending to the Innocence Project an instructive letter featuring the characteristics of the study and requesting support for engaging wrongful convicted individuals' children, who are now adults, in the study.
3. Providing the Innocence Project with a letter that they should send to the potential participants, outlining the research study and how to reach me.
4. Invitation to the potential participants to contact me to set up preliminary interviews.
5. Meeting each participant individually, by telephone conference, and/or by Skype. I handed them the consent form explaining the objective of the research study,

and the set of questions to be asked during the interviews. The initial interview took place and then the second interview was scheduled. Each interview took approximately one hour.

6. Audiotaping both interviews by at least two different devices simultaneously in case one device malfunctioned.
7. Transcribing verbatim and analyzing the interviews according to qualitative data analysis procedures.
8. Extrapolating the themes from the transcripts and validating them with the participants' privacy in mind.

Badanes, Watamura, and Hankin (2011) indicated that in a multiple-case study method, there should be sufficient data to understand how children's mental health is affected owing to the wrongful imprisonment of their parent. In this qualitative study, my interviews of children of wrongfully convicted parents generated more than enough data in the way of trends of mental health effects and or behaviors due to the wrongful conviction. Also, my use of the same set of semi-structured interview questions for the children of many different selected families who suffered from wrongful conviction contributed to the quantity of data needed for this research study (see Badanes et al., 2011).

Data Collection

As mentioned in the procedures paragraph, data for the study came from a sequence of two interviews. The first interview focused on the personal conditions of participants' lives to understand participants' lived experiences. In the interview, I

introduced myself as a student researcher, and I presented to participants the ultimate purpose of the study. It was in this interview that I gave the participants the informed consent form and a sheet of the interview questions that I asked at the time of the second interview. The expected information gathered from this interview helped me understand the type of family structure to which the participants belonged.

Present and past experiences were at the center of the second interview. I based the interview questions on the research question. These questions were designed to evoke feelings of regrets, powerlessness, emotion, and the present state of mind of participants.

Yin (2013) demonstrated that interview questions should be drafted for participants to spell out every detail of the immediate experience they endured during the time when the parent was wrongly convicted. I asked the participants questions used to identify the most challenging moments that would otherwise not have happened had it not been for the existence of wrongful conviction. Participants were encouraged to explain (from their own perspectives) the role of a man (father) and woman (mother) in a family.

The second interview also necessitated participants to depict their experience of being the children of wrongfully convicted individuals. To illustrate their experiences, the adult participant, who was a child at the time of their parent's wrongful conviction, had to look back on how wrongful-conviction-induced-separation affected their lives. This interview also covered parent-child relationship during the period after exoneration.

I developed the interview questions to assure that responses elicited information that addressed the research question as well as the theoretical frameworks of social

learning, social control, role modeling theories, and the general theory of crime. Right after the interviews, I organized the data, and created files as a simulation of the beginning of data analysis as Yin (2013) suggested. Owing to the fact that I conducted the interviews by telephone, Skype, or at locations of the participants' choosing, both the researcher and subjects made sure that any distraction present during the interviews, would not create a problem.

Data Analysis

While preventing close-ended and double-headed questions, I developed open-ended interview questions (see Appendix HH). I also avoided leading questions. The interview questions were formulated in language that was easy for the participants to understand. Thus, the questions were short, specific, and concise. After transcription, I reviewed the interview answers to search for patterns and insights. For data analysis, I used the NVivo computer software.

After data analysis, I had some ideas as to what kind of information I would get from the collected data (see Yin, 2013). Yin contended that the investigator should have an overall understanding of the lived experience of participants just by reading the transcript fully. The investigator needs to understand what type of information the data convey, take notes of those data that are relevant to the subject matter being investigated (in this case, effect of separation on children from their parents when the latter were wrongfully convicted), and prepare cross-cases analysis as Yin indicated.

According to Yin (2013), the action of coding refers to the combination of data, ideas, themes, and categories marked with codes. These coding factors enable the

investigator to retrieve them later throughout the data analysis process. For the present qualitative study, I based the coding on the extraction of themes, ideas, concepts, keywords, phrases, and terms as Yin demonstrated.

I developed the codes in an a priori and grounded coding process. The a priori codes were codes I found and determined from many sources, such as the research questions, research topic, videos, and previous research theories (see Yin, 2013). On the other hand, the grounded codes are the codes I found in the text file, the interview, audio files that emerged from the interview, and any other sources of foreign inputs (see Yin, 2013).

Before comparing and contrasting the data, I coded them separately. If I had coded them all together, it would be difficult for me to determine which codes associated with which case. Thus, I compared the codes within and across cases. Those codes I compared within cases helped in the drawing out participants' experience with the phenomenon of wrongful conviction in an individual way. Whereas, the cross-cases coding analysis I used helped me to understand the differences and similarities that existed in the change in behavior of wrongfully convicted individuals' children from different family structures and categories as demonstrated in Yin (2013).

Verification of Findings

In this qualitative study, I verified (not validated) the acquired information because Yin (2013) determined that the verification of findings tend to keep the gathered information intact. There were eight recommended steps for verifying qualitative data, and Yin (2013) listed them as follows: member checks, peer review, constant

examination, triangulation, negative case analysis, clarifying researcher bias, and rich/thick description. In this research study, I used peer review, clarifying researcher's bias, and rich/thick description to verify the gathered information (Yin, 2013).

To perform the peer review, I then went in search of two Faculty Professors at Walden University. One served as my Chair and the other, a member of the committee, served as someone who is versed in qualitative research methods. One of them was a content analyst and the other reviewed the core of the research study to make sure that all components were aligned and consistent with qualitative research study (see Yin, 2013).

The two most important parts of the peer review process were to detect my biases and to make sure the transcripts and results reflected participants' stories. I submitted the findings and original transcripts to the peer reviewers, which included a composite group description and an individual case description (see Yin, 2013). Another step of the peer review process was to have the readers verify the credibility of the individual participants' gathered information. The credibility of the composite description was on the table for discussion and inference (see Yin, 2013).

Yin (2013) found that to conduct rich/thick description the readers should be allowed to transfer the gathered information to another setting or settings to see if the information is transferable and established on shared descriptions (Yin, 2013). Therefore, as suggested by Yin (2013), I followed the rich and thick description recommended by peer reviewers on the psychological and physical expressions of participants.

Summary

Chapter 3 dealt with the proposed research method, the research design, procedures protocols, data collection, and data analysis. This qualitative study used a multiple-case study method to ensure validity. According to Yin (2013), case study is one of the qualitative methodologies used by researchers to examine a situation, a group of individuals, or a person. In the case of this study, a group of wrongfully convicted people's children were studied to explore and understand the experience of having their parents wrongly convicted and separated from them.

Wrongful imprisonment can be considered as sociological and psychological phenomena, which produced extreme psychosocial effects on children left behind by wrongfully convicted individuals. One of many ways to understand the magnitude of the impacts wrongful conviction had on these children is to conduct a multiple-case study research method. Case study methodology has a degree of limitation when it concerns generalization and validation (Yin, 2013). In the present study, I chose participants across racial and gender lines in order to ensure diversity.

The participants came from the Innocence Project database, which is a database that has the greatest number of people exonerated in the United States. Essentially, I took participants' rights into great consideration, and I was frank with them in explaining the reasons for the study. I collected data in two different interviews with semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions. I also used audiotapes in the study, that is, two different electronic devices to prevent any interruptions due to technical problems, such

as the malfunctioning of one of the devices. Afterwards, I transcribed and analyzed into codes, themes, cross-themes all the data I had collected.

This research study focused on children whose mothers or fathers were convicted for crimes they did not commit. Be that as it may, those children may have had similar ordeals, agony, feelings, and end-results as those whose guardians were legitimately convicted. Even though children whose parents were wrongfully convicted may have been exposed to bits of gossip flowing around regarding their parents' guiltlessness, not until after their parents' exoneration would their experiences and feelings shift to be different from those of children of rightfully incarcerated parents.

In Chapter 4, I present the results of this study along with the information on the data collection. The chapter also provides information on the data analysis, including first- and second-cycle coding. Lastly, themes and evidence of trustworthiness are discussed in this chapter as well.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

This multiple-case study addresses the psychosocial impacts of wrongful convictions on left-behind children of parents who were convicted of crimes they did not commit. Using the procedures explained in Chapter 3, I interviewed adult participants (who at the time of their experience were children). The interviews included the same set of open-ended questions designed to answer the main research question: What are the psychosocial consequences that wrongful convictions have on children who grew up in single-parent households?

The themes were divided into two categories, sociological and psychological impacts of wrongful conviction on left-behind children, which aligned with the research question. An adequate number of participants were recruited to constitute an acceptable sample size and reach data saturation as described in the following sections.

Recruitment

Upon receiving IRB approval from Walden University (IRB approval number 11-18-16-0089998), I began recruiting participants, the silent victims, for the study. Owing to confidentiality concerns associated with the Innocence Project's administration protocols, I was unable to use their database (West and Meterko, 2015). At first, they told me that I would be able to use the Innocence Project database as a secondary source of information to find participants.

However, the Innocence Project's database included only the victims' name, the crimes they were blamed for, the date of arrest, and date of exoneration; no phone

numbers or addresses were available (West & Meterko, 2015). Therefore, I contacted other organizations, including Justice Denied, Witness to Innocence, National Registry of Exonerations, The Justice Reform Coalition, False Allegations Solutions Team, Center for Wrongful Convictions, Centurion Ministries, and Truth in Justice. None of these organizations was able to produce information to enable me to make direct contact with the wrongfully convicted individuals or their children owing to privacy concerns.

My main focus, in the beginning, was on the New York's Innocence Project because that was the first organization that I had contacted to recruit participants for my project. Unaware of the issues of privacy, the sensitivity of the cases, and the people involved, I approached the organization thinking they might be able to e-mail the recruitment flyer to those exonerated, who in turn would pass it along to their left-behind children. Unfortunately, that was contrary to the Innocence Project's policy. Nonetheless, I eventually gained access to the Project's database, but no personal information was available. This access was pretty useful, however, because later on, when I started the interview process, I researched the wrongfully convicted parents and read about the case to familiarize myself with their stories.

To recruit participants, I had to gain access to the wrongfully convicted individuals themselves who could serve as a bridge to their children. Upon meeting with the exonerees at the Innocence Network Conference, those who had left children behind while wrongfully convicted gave me information regarding their children's whereabouts (discussed later). This is a select group of people who had suffered silently, and to whom I refer as "silent victims."

Lijadi and Schalkwyk (2015) determined that specific social groups of participants are frequently troublesome for qualitative analysts to find owing to their social affiliations or physical area, powerlessness, or generally the concealed nature of their status. This particular group of left-behind children was no different. These participants, who were children at the time of their parent's wrongful conviction, were classified as a hidden and hard-to-reach population for many reasons. For instance, in this research study, I found that no record of the left-behind children's experiences existed because none of them reported or spoke out about their psychosocial struggles and abuses. The population of left-behind children does not have an established census, group, or social media platform for easy access, that I was able to find.

The left-behind children of wrongfully convicted individuals, who are now adults, are considered vulnerable and possibly in danger of significant damage if identified by their stories or experiences. They were also worried about the social dangers of retaliation from their parents' enemies because of their research involvement. Some potential participants maintain a strategic distance from the study in light of its touchy topic. According to Lijadi and Schalkwyk (2015), this type of population behaves in this manner to evade the mental misery of reviewing and retelling, hence reliving, their harrowing, or mortifying stories. To find participants I had to contact their wrongfully convicted parents individually. I truly appreciate the courage of those who spoke out and agreed to participate in this research despite all odds.

The beginning of data collection was a struggle. I ran many different ads on Facebook, Twitter, and many other social media platforms, such as Snapchat, Instagram

and Tumblr. Many people responded to my ads, but none of them identified as left-behind children of wrongfully convicted individuals. I ran and refreshed the ads daily, yet I was not successful in recruiting any participants. Another technique I used was to contact the exoneration and wrongful-conviction groups and platforms that use social media, which did not yield any participants either.

I changed styles and started to contact other innocence organizations directly to ask them for the opportunity to post my flyers on their websites. I contacted The National Registry of Exonerations, The Innocence Project, Justice Denied, Witness-to-Innocence to post my ads on their websites. The requests were unsuccessful, but Justice Denied had made a bold move by forwarding my contact details and other information to Dr. Zieva Konvisser, explaining my research objectives.

Dr. Zieva Konvisser then invited me to attend the 2017 Innocence Network Conference that was taking place in San Diego, California, in March 2017. At the conference, I was able to gather contact information from 30 wrongfully convicted individuals who had left-behind children when they (the parents) were wrongfully convicted. After the annual Innocence Network meeting, I contacted the wrongfully convicted individuals who then put me in contact with their left-behind children.

Thirty wrongfully sentenced individuals provided information on 45 left-behind children, and 13 agreed to participate in the study. As noted previously, recruitment was carried out at the Innocence Network Conference in San Diego, California, in March 2017. There were over 200 exonerated individuals with some of their families at the conference. The situation turned out to be a successful recruitment opportunity.

After each seminar I attended, I presented myself to the wrongfully convicted individuals and gave them a brief overview of the purpose of my research and then asked them whether they had left-behind children. Then I asked them if they would like to have their children participate in the study. One hundred percent of the wrongfully convicted individuals I spoke with at the conference agreed to share their phone number and promised to serve as a bridge between their left-behind children and me to initiate contact.

That was the turning point in my recruitment efforts. It was challenging and almost impossible to speak to all the wrongfully convicted individuals who had left-behind children at the conference, but when I spoke with one individual, they referred me to another one who had left children behind when they went to prison wrongfully.

To identify participants and to make sure that they were legitimate children left behind by wrongfully convicted individuals I researched the initial wrongful cases against their parents and matched their geographic location with the demographic information given during the interview. I utilized the major innocence organizations, such as The National Registry of Exonerations, The Innocence Project, Justice Denied, and Witness-to-Innocence, to gather information about each of the parents' cases. Some wrongfully convicted are not on the Innocence Project website but are on other organizations and vice versa.

In the initial introduction with each left-behind child, I made sure the parents were present. There were three of them whom I met while at the 2017 Innocence Network Conference. Those children/participants were with their parents at the conference. The

wrongfully convicted individuals connected with the other ten children/participants through triangle conference calls between them, their wrongfully sentenced parents, and me.

Fusch and Ness (2015) demonstrated that qualitative data saturation implies that there is a point in information gathering when no new information is evident. Data saturation is achieved if the analyst finds similar data while reviewing cases repeatedly, which makes them tentatively sure that the delineations of these characterizations are thick, and the analyst can then create a theory. Researchers are allowed to stop information gathering when data saturation is achieved (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

As I was conducting the interviews, I noticed that the gathered information was getting very close to each other. For instance, all 13 participants experienced academic challenges at the initial stage of the wrongful conviction of their parents. They were angered, stressed, and depressed as they found out that they would never see their wrongfully convicted parents again or for a very long time. Five out of 13 tried suicide at least once.

In addition, 12 of the 13 experienced similar academic and educational challenges amidst the wrongful conviction of their parents. Eight of the 13 were incarcerated in juvenile detention for conducting criminal activities, such as felony drug trafficking, illegal drugs and alcohol consumption, aggravated assaults, and manslaughter. Although I could not find any more participants, I strongly felt that the information gathered satisfied data saturation.

Demographic Information

Kaiser (2009) indicated that to reduce the problem of the deductive disclosure that researchers face when dealing with protecting participants' confidentiality, the investigator should avoid conveying detailed information that makes it possible to identify participants. To protect participants' privacy, I used pseudonyms to replace participants' real names. However, pseudonyms may not be enough to ensure privacy if readers knew a particular participant based on his or her story.

In these cases, I did not associate potentially revealing details with one specific participant but presented the problem as a group on a table or graph (see Kaiser, 2009). Throughout this study, I refer to participants according to their pseudonyms to protect their privacy. Aliases included the following: Abbie, Adahy, Alo, Benna, Chogan, Dakshana, Hateya, Knoton, Malia, Paco, Tablita, Tayanita, and Zihna.

Participants were chosen based on their status of being the left-behind children of wrongfully convicted individuals. Among the 13 participants, there were eight African-Americans, four Whites, and one Hispanic and there were five male and eight female participants (Table 1). Their current ages ranged from 21 to 51 years old (Table 2); their ages at the time of conviction were between 1 and 12 years old (Figure 1), and at the time their parents were exonerated, their ages were 20 to 43 years old (Table 2).

Four participants had mothers who were wrongfully incarcerated, and nine participants had fathers who were wrongfully convicted. Left-behind children/parent relationship were as follows: mother-daughter (two), mother-son (two), father-daughter (six), and father-son (three) (Table 1). Years in prison ranged from 16 to 32. Tables 4 and

5 present the demographic details of the participants. Demographic details are shown in Figure 1 and Tables 4.1 and 4.2.

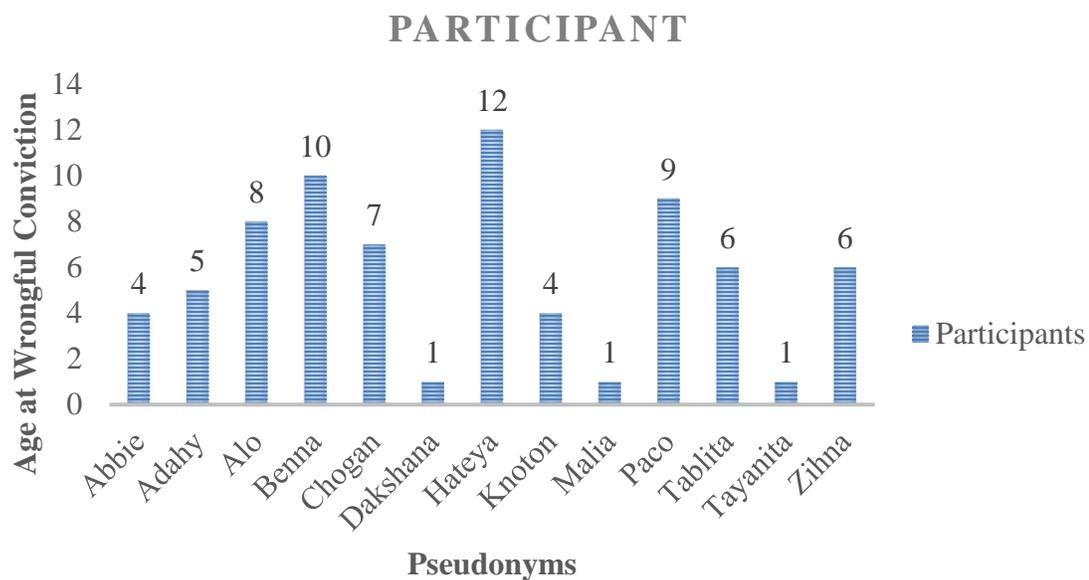


Figure 1. Participants' age at wrongful conviction.

Participants added some details regarding their race, parents, gender, and parent-child relationships. Participants' quotes related to their gender, race, their relationships with their parents, and the amount of time their parents spent in prison are found in Appendix B. Table 4.1, depicts the participants' gender, race, and parent-child relationships.

Table 4. 1 Participants' Gender, Race, and Parent-Child Relationships

Participants	Gender	Race	Parent-child relationship	Parent
Abbie	Female	Hispanic	Father-Daughter	Father
Adahy	Male	White	Mother-Son	Mother
Alo	Male	African-American	Father-Son	Father
Benna	Female	African-American	Father-Daughter	Father
Chogan	Male	African-American	Father-Son	Father
Dakshana	Female	White	Mother-Daughter	Mother
Hateya	Female	White	Mother-Daughter	Mother
Knoton	Male	African-American	Father-Son	Father
Malia	Female	African-American	Father-Daughter	Father
Paco	Male	White	Mother-Son	Mother
Tablita	Female	African-American	Father-Daughter	Father
Tayanita	Female	African-American	Father-Daughter	Father
Zihna	Female	African-American	Father-Daughter	Father

Note. Other races such as American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander were not accessible to participate in this study

The depiction of participants' profiles in Appendix A includes the age at wrongful conviction, race, and gender. Also included is the participant's family structure (e.g., married, single, divorced). In addition, this section reveals the patterns in family dysfunction, such as a participant's multiple marriages or never married. This information is illustrated in Table 4.2.

Table 4. 2 *Participants' Profile*

Participant (<i>n</i> = 13)	Education	Employment status	Age at exoneration	Actual age	Years parent in prison
Abbie	Bachelor's degree	Student	20	21	16
Adahy	Associate degree	Social worker	27	32	22
Alo	Middle school	Construction worker	33	34	24
Benna	Associate degree	Social Worker	43	43	32
Chogan	High school	Unemployed	31	32	25
Dakshana	High school	Bartender	18	42	16
Hateya	Currently in college for an associate	Retail	28	37	16
Knoton	Middle school	Construction worker	34	39	30
Malia	High school	Unemployed	26	27	25
Paco	Some high school	Security guard	25	51	16
Tablita	Associate degree	Unemployed	35	41	30
Tayanita	Currently in college for an associate	Babysitter	25	26	25
Zihna	Associate degree	Retail	31	32	25

Participants' Quotes about Their Lived Experiences

Abbie described that she was four years old when her father was wrongfully convicted. She has a younger sister and a half-brother. The half-brother was born to her mother by another man (Stepfather). Abbie was very young, even too young, but she remembered living with her parents in an apartment. Before the wrongful conviction, her father always went to the park and had much fun with her. She remembered watching the police tackled her father to the ground at the time of his arrest. When her father went to prison, everything changed.

Adahy expressed that he was four turning five years old when his mother went to prison for a crime she did not commit. He has a brother, a sister, and a half-sister. Adahy has two deceased siblings. His mother was very nurturing as far as he knows. He used to enjoy going to McDonald's, to the park, and to cookouts with both of his parents. Adahy used to love when his mother's and father's other family members were home for dinner. After his father's death, his mother went to prison; he was a lost child. He remembered that he was the one who opened the door when the police came to the house to arrest his mother. Since then, everything that was going fine in his life stopped.

Alo explained that he was eight years old when his father was wrongfully incarcerated. He has no brother or sister. Alo remembered that his father used to take him to McDonald's, basketball practice, and to school plays. They used to play basketball together. His father was very active in his life before he was convicted. Alo could not remember how the police arrested his father because he was in school when that

happened. He expressed that his life took a 180 degree turn when his father went to prison.

Benna recounted that she was ten years old at the time when the court wrongfully sentenced her father. Her father used to treat her like a princess because she was the only child he and her mother had. Both of her parents used to take good care of her before her father went to the lockup. Once her father went to prison, her life turned upside-down.

Chogan reported that he was seven years old when his father was wrongfully convicted. Chogan case was different from the other participants because he did not know his father before he went to prison. Chogan was living with his mother before, during, and after the wrongful conviction of his father. He has a brother, three half-sisters, and a deceased half-brother. The first time he spoke with his father was by mail while his father was in prison.

Dakshana described that she was just a little less than one-year-old (about ten months old) when her mother and father were wrongfully convicted. She has one brother, and she has no recollection of how her father treated her before wrongful conviction because she was too young.

Hateya discussed that she was 12 years old when her mother was wrongfully convicted. She has one brother, one sister and a half-brother. Her mother was very active in her life because she was a single mother taking care of four children. Her father was not in her life, so after her mother was wrongfully convicted her life was disoriented.

Knoton described that he was four years old at the time of his father's wrongful conviction. Preceding his father's unlawful imprisonment, they used to be very active

going out to eat at McDonald's and to basketball games and practices. All of this stopped when his father went to prison

Malia explained that she was one year old when her father was wrongfully convicted. She has one half-brother, two half-sisters, and one deceased half-brother. Also, Malia did not remember how her father treated her before his wrongful conviction.

Paco recounted that he was nine years old when his mother and his step-father went to prison for a crime they did not commit. Paco has only one sister. His parents were responsible people, and they used to take care of him with no problem. On the day of the arrest, Paco, his sister, and parents were the hostages of the perpetrator, and the police were shooting at their car. Everyone who was in the vehicle was arrested, including Paco. They separated everyone and sent them to different prisons except his 10-month-old sister.

Tablita explained that she was six years old when her father was wrongfully imprisoned. She has one brother, and her life was beautiful before the wrongful conviction of her father. She lost track of her life as soon as her father went to prison.

Tayanita reported that she was one year old when her father was wrongfully convicted. She has one half-brother, two half-sisters, and one deceased half-brother. Tayanita has no recollection of how her parents treated her before the wrongful conviction.

Zihna stated that she was six-year-old when her father was wrongfully convicted. She has one half-brother two, half-sisters, and one deceased half-brother. Zihna used to see her father every night, and he was the one to put her to sleep. Zihna's father used to

take her out to eat. She stated that her mother could not afford anything when her father was wrongly sent to prison.

Data Collection

The focus of this multiple-case study is to enhance understanding of the psychosocial impacts of wrongful conviction on left-behind children. To satisfy this purpose, I collected data from 13 participants from all four possible relationships: mother-daughter, mother-son, father-daughter, and father-son. Although my research sample is adequate, I believe it would have been better if I had at least five participants from each relationship category. This would have enabled a deeper comprehension of how the left-behind children experienced wrongful conviction isolation from their parents. However, that purposeful sampling strategy was almost impossible because I could not find any more participants despite my well-meaning efforts.

The experience of a boy who lost his mother may be different from a boy who lost his father, and the experience of a girl who lost her mother may be different from a girl who lost her father. This issue is discussed further in Chapter 5. Category 1 (father-daughter) was completely satisfied because there were six participants interviewed. Category 2 (father-son) was partially satisfied with three participants. Category 3 (mother-daughter) was partially satisfied with two participants. Finally, Category 4 (mother-son) was partly satisfied with two participants.

I collected data either by phone or in face-to-face interviews. The first four interviews were conducted in person. The first in-person interview was completed in one of the participant's homes in a closed room. The room was quiet enabling us to have the

conversation without any interruptions. I conducted two in-person interviews, using the local libraries close to the participants' locations in lieu of their residences.

The last in-person interview was conducted in the participant's vehicle because all the libraries were closed at the time of the interview and the participant did not feel comfortable doing the interview at his home. The other nine interviews were conducted by phone from my home office, which had a "do not disturb" sign on the door. The door was adequately sealed, that is, made soundproof so that no one was able to hear the conversation. For all other discussions, I made sure each participant was alone in a closed room free of disruption of the communication.

Two different devices were used to register the interviews for both systems (in person and on the phone). I took this precaution to prevent losing any data in case any of the devices malfunctioned. The data were stored in two password-protected personal computers to avoid the dissemination of the gathered information.

The interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. Harari et al. (2016) indicated that the best way to prevent failure of the recording process is to use two or more recording instruments. I used a password-protected Samsung Galaxy Note Five and a Samsung Galaxy Tab 2. The devices were both protected with McAfee antivirus software to prevent unwanted dissemination of any information that may violate the privacy and confidentiality of the participants (Harari et al., 2016).

I downloaded the Smart Recording App on both electronic devices. The Smart Recording application was a reliable recording application that allowed me to record the interviews and securely share the audio with my encrypted e-mail profile. All 13 recorded

audio files were uploaded on Otranscribe, which is a secure Web application. Otranscribe made it possible for me to play back, fast forward, and rewind the audio files while providing a template to type everything from the interview (Harari et al., 2016).

Fusch and Ness (2015) indicated that qualitative data saturation meant that investigators achieved a point in data collection when no new data was appearing. Data saturation was achieved as soon as I found that the same scenario repeatedly appeared in interviews with different participants from different backgrounds and geographical locations. This situation gave me confidence that I had sufficient information to move to the next step. Researchers are permitted to stop data collection when data saturation is achieved (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

I found that data saturation was reached after the 10th interview, when the same themes appeared repeatedly. The number of participants I found for this research study was 13 instead of the projected 30, owing to recruitment issues noted earlier. I would have recruited more participants to fill the predicted sample size had I been able to secure that many. I had significant challenges, as it were, in recruiting the participants who agreed to be part of the study.

Data collected for this research study included field notes, advanced accounts, and creative journaling. I kept field notes of every participant and precisely caught their perspective. I kept up my diary, communicating my convictions and assumptions, yet kept them isolated from the actual encounters and attitudes of the research subjects. I carefully sound recorded each participant's interview. At that point, I exchanged the

electronically recorded sound and transcribed them to a word document file on my protected PC and transcribed each interview separately.

In this study, audio recordings of semistructured interviews were transcribed and examined together with field notes. After transcription, a copy of each transcript was sent (via e-mail) to the corresponding participant to make sure of the accuracy of the transcription of the recordings. I received feedback from 11 of the 13 interviewed participants, each of whom acknowledged satisfaction with their respective transcript. The other two participants never responded. I spoke every week with my dissertation chair, Dr. Aagard, to review best practices on how to get more participants for saturation. We also talked about how to utilize social media to get more participants.

Inside these broad topics, I used iterative, inductive ways to deal with the research study. Data generation finished when I believed that I had achieved data saturation, which is considered at the time when no new subject matters were emerging from the data (see Morrison et al., 2013). Data analysis follows, where I explain the method, coding, levels of coding, themes and subtheme categories.

Data Analysis

Data analysis for this research study included reading, perusing, and rehashing the composed transcripts, fine-tuning each story to find compatibility with the research question, reviewing the interviews utilizing (both written and audiotaped accounts) for accuracy, and comparing the encounters of participants to discern similarities and contrasts. I read the transcripts repeatedly to detect the existence of sociological and psychological impacts of wrongful conviction on the left-behind children.

I transcribed all of the interviews the same day after the recordings. I read the written transcription of every participant's interview and coordinated every individual transcript with their wrongfully convicted parents' respective records found either on the Innocence Project or the National Registry of Exoneration databases. I informed each of the participants toward the start of the interview that they would receive a duplicate of the transcript and their reactions to ensure the accuracy needed to proceed with the research.

I e-mailed the respective transcript to each of the 13 corresponding participants. As mentioned earlier, I never received feedback from two of the participants, and the other 11 stated that they had no objections as to the information in the transcripts. I called those that I could not reach via e-mail and got a verbal agreement of satisfaction on what was on their transcripts. The participants were told not to hesitate to revise, expand, or clear up anything that did not mirror their lived experiences. Member checking was utilized to confirm the accuracy of the transcripts and the encounters of every participant.

For the coding, I used the latest version of NVivo data analysis software, which was NVivo 11 Pro. This reliable program allows researchers to code, organize, and analyze a large quantity of data (Yin, 2013). In this qualitative inquiry, I prepared open-ended interview questions that paralleled the research question. I then conducted semistructured audiotaped interviews. The transcribed audiotapes were uploaded to the NVivo software.

At that point, pseudonyms were used to conceal the identity of the participants for confidentiality purposes. Yin (2013) demonstrated that coding is the process of selecting phrases and words within a transcript that have similar meaning and then group them into

one category. In NVivo, they call each code a node, and each node can be considered a container in which to drop coded information (Yin, 2013).

I analyzed each node labeled with a coded name that was relevant to the research question and the information from the transcripts assigned a node name based on their association. The node served as a container for receiving relevant information identified on the transcript. As I coded the data, I accumulated nodes or codes that I could categorize to form parent-nodes or child-nodes (Yin, 2013).

In NVivo, the parent-nodes were themes generated from the accumulation of the child-nodes to the parent-nodes. For instance, in this research study, I generated a parent-node named (psychosocial consequences). In this node, there were data related to the psychological and sociological implications of wrongful conviction on left-behind children.

First-Cycle Coding

After the data collection and transcription, I uploaded all interview transcripts to NVivo for the beginning of data analysis. I executed the first-cycle coding on the basis of the research question. Therefore, I used psychosocial impacts as a parent-node, anchor-node, or a theme that contained information, such as depression, anxiety, or emotion, on the psychological side, and anything else related to keeping to oneself, social behavior, family, social isolation, and social control, to name a few. The analysis yielded ten themes related to the research question.

Yin (2013) noted that there are two types of exploratory research questions—ontological and epistemological research questions. The research question drafted for this

study is ontological because it was used to capture participants' realities and their lived experiences. The coding methods used for this study were the first-cycle coding and the second-cycle coding methods. At the first-level coding, I used attribute coding to sketch out participants' classifications, such as gender, age at conviction, age at arrest, age at exoneration, race, and parent-child relationships.

Yin (2013) also demonstrated that there are other coding strategies used in the first-level coding:

1. Value coding, in which I took into consideration the nodes that were related to each participant's attribute and values.
2. Narrative coding, in which I captured participants' personal stories.
3. Emotional coding, in which I considered the feeling of anxiety and stress related to wrongful incarceration from each participant interviewed.
4. Evaluation coding, in which I captured each participants' sentiment and feeling.
5. NVivo coding, in which I coded the participants' own words.
6. Theme coding, in which I used phrases and sentences to emphasize a particular aspect of the data.

I used all of these coding strategies in the first-cycle coding for this study. The second-cycle coding followed.

Second-Cycle Coding

Subsequent to the first-level coding, categorization of the found codes took place. The nodes were categorized based on their association with the research question, code frequency, relationship, and meaning (Yin, 2013). In the second-cycle coding, I

revamped and gathered a considerable amount of coded information from the first cycle coding into a “fundamental dish” by making use of four different 2nd-level coding methods, which were pattern coding, focused coding, axial coding, and theoretical coding. Each 2nd-level coding method will be explained in the paragraph below (Yin, 2013).

For pattern coding, I gathered and assembled the synopses into fewer sets, constructs, or themes. For instance, changes in family financial situation and breaks in family structure due to wrongful conviction fell into the same pattern category. Also, I used focused coding by looking for the most continuous or noteworthy codes. This method allowed me to code the gathered information categorically by applying thematic assertions.

For example, in the first-cycle coding, the data was scattered all over the place where behavioral issues may have combined with a sudden break in family structure. Let us say, after a disruption in the construct of a family, the left-behind children in that family received less parental supervision. This situation involved some type of adverse behavioral conditions for these children. Then, focused coding allowed me to separate the negative behavioral issues from a break in family structure thematically and looked for conceptual similarities across participants (Yin, 2013).

Another 2nd-level coding exercise I performed was axial coding, which allowed me to build a definite and subcategorical thematic system. In this system, I was able to depict a classification’s properties and measurements and investigate how the categories and subcategories identify with each other. For instance, I recognized the emotional

response as a category, and anger, fear, depression, shame, and embarrassment as some of the subcategories associated with the group of emotional response. Lastly, theoretical coding provided me with techniques to find the focal or center classification that recognizes the essential theme of the research study.

This medium allowed me to discern how well the emerged themes correlated or associated with the research question and the central purpose of the research study. For example, the core of the study was to understand the psychosocial impacts of wrongful-conviction-induced separation on left-behind children. Therefore, I divided the themes into two major categories, which were sociological impacts and psychological impacts.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

While performing the member checks for this study, I e-mailed the participants a short rundown (three to four pages) of my comprehension of their respective interview data. I requested that every research participant survey the data to guarantee the accuracy of my grasp. Participants (11 of 13) affirmed that my understanding of their respective interview data was precise. I accomplished this task by contacting each participant; unfortunately, two of them did not respond via e-mail for that purpose. However, I was able to speak to those two by phone and obtain their approval that the information on their respective transcripts was accurate.

Credibility added to the confidence in the reliability of the gathered information. Triangulation was performed by asking similar interview questions to various participants

and by gathering information from multiple research subjects and by using unique techniques to answer the research question.

In summary, I obtained member checks or participants' validation by participants' confirmation of the accuracy of their respective transcripts and agreement with my interpretations of their data. To guarantee the study's credibility, I aligned and followed the procedures noted in Chapter 3. I supported my statements with evidence to increase the trust in what was expressed, learned, and found in the discoveries of this research study.

Transferability

Using the procedures in Chapter 3 I expanded the research study's transferability. I employed the most extreme variety and vibrant, thick description to develop and illustrate the findings relevant to answering the research question (Yin, 2013). The study participants' experiences included two mother-daughter, two mother-son, three father-son, and six father-daughter relationships, which completed the quadrant of relationships needed to reflect how wrongful conviction affects left-behind children.

The participants were of different age classifications and lived in many different states inside the United States. For instance, children's ages at the time of conviction varied from less than one year old to 12 years old; their ages at exoneration ranged from 18 to 43 years old. Participants' ages at the time of the interviews ranged from 21 to 51 years old. Lastly, the participants' parents' time spent in prison ranged from 16 to 32 years. As the interviews proceeded, there were varieties in their stories that I believed could happen to many other children in the same situation.

In this study, the variety of ages from three different scenarios (at conviction, exoneration, and those at the interviews) provided traits related to transferability. Consequently, the results of this study could be generalized and/or transferred to different settings and contexts, such as children with incarcerated parents who were rightfully convicted. However, the total number of left-behind children participants was insufficient for this claim, although participants were from different states, at different ages, and in different situations.

Dependability

To boost the research study's trustworthiness, I performed the steps in the protocol set forth in Chapter 3. Yin (2013) determined that in qualitative research, dependability is a function of the supposition of replicability or repeatability. That is, I was confident that I would get similar outcomes if another researcher were to analyze the cases twice over. I oversaw the progression of the study from data collection to data analysis and how this study unfolded and moved toward answering the research question.

Yin (2013) demonstrated that there were a few methods one could use to build up dependability, a standout amongst other approaches was to have outside specialists review the full content of the research study. This method was additionally called an external review. The procedure I used to ensure of dependability was to seek reviews from my chair, Dr. Magdeline Aagard, dissertation committee member Dr. John Oswald, URR reviewer Dr. Loretta Cain, and my outside mentor Dr. Zieva Konvisser.

The review consisted of having them review data collection, analysis, context, content, grammar, and information gathering and processing procedures. To affirm the

precision of the discoveries and to guarantee that the explorations bolstered by the information gathered, all translations and conclusions were analyzed using the data itself. The following section dealt with confirmability.

Confirmability

I drew the paragraphs of this subsection from Yin (2013), who demonstrated that confirmability alluded to how much the outcomes affirmed or were supported by others. There were various techniques for proving confirmability. Yin found that the audit trail was the most well-known system used to build up confirmability since it was unbelievably valuable when reviewing the outcome parts.

The analyst could record the methods for checking and rechecking the information throughout the research study. Another analyst could ask a contentious third party to review the outcomes and record the procedure used. The social scientists or reviewers may effectively scan for and repudiate information that may negatively impact the confirmability of the study. Furthermore, the reviewers could lead an information review that inspects the information gathering and research study strategies and made judgments about the potential for inclination or mutilation.

In this study, I worked by keeping a review trail that contained subtle elements, such as the procedure of information accumulation, data analysis for this research study, and elucidation of the information. I recorded what subjects were one of a kind and fascinating amidst the information accumulation, recorded my contemplations about coding, gave a basis to why I combined the codes and clarified what the topics meant.

Yin (2013) determined that reflexivity is a state of mind that a qualitative investigator received when gathering and dissecting the research information. In this study, I looked at my own experience and position to make sure that they did not impact the research procedures. To do this, I kept a reflexive diary considering what was implicated on the research procedures concerning my qualities and interests.

These undertakings allowed me to consider a method of reasoning that was efficient to perform the research procedures. The confirmability basis of trustworthiness in this study was performed to ensure that all decisions I made in study design, data collection, and data analysis, followed standard research procedures, as detailed in Chapter 3, which prevented researcher biases from tainting the study's results. Ten themes emerged in analyzing the data, as discussed in the next section.

Themes

This research study explored left-behind children's lived experiences and the psychological and sociological impacts wrongful conviction had on them when their parents were falsely incarcerated. The social learning, role-modeling, social control, and general theory of crime models guided this research study. These models were utilized to detect and ground the findings of the complexity and seriousness of the psychosocial impacts of wrongful conviction on left-behind children that lasted for a lifetime.

The participants in this research study appeared to have little understanding of their situations and the dangers to their social well-being which unfavorably influenced their lives as they became adults. Twelve of the 13 participants expressed that they did not know about wrongful conviction before their parents were exonerated. Since the

participants in this research study had little to no instruction concerning wrongful conviction, each of them saw themselves as being strong despite all the calamities they experienced as the children of wrongfully convicted parents.

Ten themes emerged from the analyzed data; they are divided into two different categories: sociological and psychological themes. Table 4.3 illustrates the psychosocial impact themes that emerged in this study.

Table 4. 3 *Psychosocial Impact Themes*

Sociological impact themes	Psychological impact themes
Family	PTSD, anger, stress, anxiety, devastation, stigmatization
Behavioral issues	Bullied in school and at home
Impact on education	Mental health impact of parental wrongful conviction
Parent-child relationship	Inside the left-behind children minds
Missing important milestones	
The criminal justice officials' misconduct	

Sociological themes: The first theme category has to do with family interactions before conviction, after conviction, and after exoneration. The second theme is behavioral issues that emerged amidst wrongful conviction and detected while interviewing the research participants. The third is the left-behind children's education that emphasized how wrongful conviction affected their education.

Fourth, this theme has to do with how wrongful conviction impacts the parent-child relationship. The fifth theme indicates how missing essential milestones, such as a

wedding, sports achievement, high school, and college graduation, affected the left-behind children tremendously. The sixth theme has to do with the children's perception of the criminal justice system and its officials.

Psychological themes: The seventh theme deals with posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, anger, stress, anxiety, devastation, stigmatization that emerged from all 13 research participants. Social isolation, suicide attempts, suicidal ideation, bullied in school, and at home, are the components of the eighth theme. The ninth theme relates to the participants' emotional responses when their parents were arrested, convicted, amidst prison visits, and even after exoneration.

At the end of each interview, the participant spoke freely to send a message to those who might be in a similar situation. This relates to the tenth theme, which is inside the left-behind children's mind. Following this paragraph are the results of the research study.

Results

In an effort to come up with the best discovery possible, coding, organizing, categorizing, and analyzing the interview data were performed carefully using NVivo software. I focused my orientation on the lived experiences of the participants to raise awareness and understanding of the psychosocial impacts of wrongful-conviction-induced separation on left-behind children. Although the population has not yet been defined, getting interviews from 13 participants who partially satisfied the quadrant (mother-daughter, father-daughter, mother-son, father-son) proved to be impressive.

Thus, achievement of at least five participants from each of the four quadrants fell short. Only the father-daughter quadrant was satisfied with eight participants; the others comprised father-son (three), mother-daughter (two), and mother-son (two). Introduced below is a list of the emergent themes and a quick summary of each interview. Most of participants' quotes are in the Appendices, to which references are made accordingly.

The Interviews

Malia expressed that she did not have much interaction with her father before his wrongful conviction because of her young age. But that did not spare her suffering the challenging aspects of wrongful conviction as she grew up. Throughout this research study, there was a phenomenon evident with almost all of the interviewed left-behind children who were at the age of 1 year old, which included Malia, Dakshana, and Tayanita. Regarding the concern that they were too young to remember, these participants had no recollection of how their wrongfully convicted parents treated them before wrongful incarceration.

Also, their foster parents, supporting parents, and grandparents kept from them the truth about their parent's imprisonment until they started asking questions about their absent parent. Those questions usually came after elementary school age when the participants started playing sports and noticed how other children were interacting with their parents and when they went to play dates with other children from nuclear families. Even though they took them for prison visits, they most likely had no clue of what was going on. Malia was upset when she learned that her father was in prison for a violent

crime. She was distraught when her mother kept telling her that she would never see her father walking the street again.

The other age group was from 4–12, including Abbie and Knoton, who were both 4 years old. Adahy was 5, followed by Tablita and Zihna who were 6, Chogan was 7, Alo was 8, Paco was 9, Benna was 10, and Hateya was 12 years of age before wrongful conviction. This group of participants had a recollection of how their parents used to interact with them before the arrest that brought them to their unlawful imprisonment. Following this paragraph are depictions of the sociological themes listed in Table 4.3.

Sociological Impact Theme

The sociological impacts of wrongful conviction on children, as voiced by the participants, were problems at school and home, changes in appetite and sleep patterns, and even problems with peers. Other signs included social withdrawal and self-destructive behaviors. Moreover, drugs and alcohol abuse, helplessness, juvenile delinquency, and exhaustion were also issues that the participants noted they faced owing to the effects of wrongful conviction on them growing up in a family dealing with the wrongful imprisonment of a parent.

Table 4. 4 Sociological Themes, Subthemes, and Definitions

Sociological impact themes	Subthemes	Definitions
Theme 1: Family	Displacement of left-behind children owing to wrongful conviction –Left-behind parents, –Grandparents –Foster parents	When wrongful conviction happens, children of the wrongfully convicted individuals ended up either living with their left-behind mother/father, sent to live with their grandparents, or going to foster homes
Theme 2: Behavioral issues	The depiction of behavioral issues associated with wrongful conviction –Early pregnancy –Drugs and alcohol abuse	Various behavioral problems reported by most of the research participants, such as drugs and alcohol abuse, shoplifting, drugs trafficking, fighting, assaulting others
Theme 3: Education	Academic achievement affected	All 13 participants in this study reported some types of focus issues while in school right after wrongful conviction occurred
Theme 4: Parent-child relationship	Relationship before, amidst, and after wrongful conviction	Twelve participants reported having a good relationship with their wrongfully convicted parents before they went to prison. All 13 participants reported some issues in relationships amidst conviction and even after exoneration
Theme 5: Missing important milestones	Missing academic and sports achievement Missing the death of loved ones	11 out of the 13 participants reported that their wrongfully convicted parents had failed to attend their graduation ceremonies, wedding, the birth of grandchildren, and the death of loved ones
Theme 6: The criminal justice officials misconduct and mishaps	Justice officials, the media, and the crime	Participants spoke about how the misconducts of the Justice official hurt them. They explained their experiences of prison visits and how the media negatively impacted them

Theme 1: Family Structure and Activities

Six of the 13 left-behind children lived with their grandparents during wrongful conviction. Three of the 13 left-behind children lived in foster homes during wrongful conviction. Some of the left-behind children had stayed in foster care for a short period and then moved in with their grandparents. Each category was assigned depending on where the left-behind children stayed for the longest period of time. Four of the 13 left-behind children participants lived with the wrongfully convicted individual's conjugal partners (the other, free parent).

In the family theme, participants talked about family activities before during and after their parent's wrongful conviction. They also explained the role of their grandparents in their lives after a wrongful conviction. Some of the left-behind children did not have a chance to stay with the grandparents or left-behind parent owing to social problems. Those left-behind children were forced to remain in foster homes.

Some of the left-behind parents took the responsibility of taking care of the left-behind children. In doing so, the participants stated that the parent ended up losing the children to the street because of the lack of spending quality time with them. Those parents worked two to three jobs to support their families without having time to realize their children were running the streets. This kind of parent included heartbroken mothers in a single parent home who were vulnerable to drugs and alcohol abuse to mask their pain. Another type of left-behind parent had a decent paying job that satisfied their children's basic needs. This group of parents was able to maintain their left-behind children's integrity and behavior.

Subtheme: Strong family support system. Many subthemes emerged when analyzing the data regarding family. The first one is ‘strong family support system.’ This theme is directly related to the involvement of grandparents in the care of left-behind children. When left-behind children have strong family support, they tend to perform better and be more successful in life. Participants’ quotes regarding this subtheme are in Appendix C.

Subtheme: Family activities before wrongful conviction. The second subtheme relevant to the research question is ‘family activities before wrongful conviction.’ This subtheme helps us understand how each family was functioning before and what were the child-parent interactions until wrongful conviction. Ten out of 13 children reported that their wrongfully convicted parents were kind to them, took them out to social gatherings, to dinner, and to play sports. Four children did not have anything to say about family activities before wrongful imprisonment. Three children were too young to remember and the other participant, who was 7 years old, claimed that he never knew his father before he went to prison.

The findings of this research study point out that wrongful-conviction-induced separation weakens the family’s childrearing system and reduces the amount of time parents spend with their children while the other partner is imprisoned. Wrongful conviction also reduces family income, making low-income families poorer (Irazola, 2013). To overcome this adverse event, left-behind parents become overwhelmed, depressed, and overworked, leaving their children to grow up on their own.

That is where the trouble begins. Wrongful-conviction-induced separation weighs

heavily on the involved families, whose children tend to spend time with the wrong crowd, searching for role models, food, money, and anything else that may make them feel better and important. Participants' quotes regarding this subtheme are in Appendix B.

Subtheme: How family activities changed after wrongful conviction.

Interview data suggested that there were significant changes in family structure and activities after a wrongful conviction. All 13 participants reported that after wrongful conviction, family activities, time, and leisure were crippled, leaving most of them no other options but to try to find food and money for themselves at very young ages. One parent became the sole provider. In most cases, government help was needed and required, but the families were on their own. Children started to lose connection with parents owing to dissatisfaction and diminishment of the childrearing. Participants' quotes regarding this sub-theme are in Appendix E.

Subtheme: Growing up in foster homes. Of the left-behind children who were placed in foster homes, some had memorable experiences, and some expressed despair about their experiences. The fact is that if there are no available immediate family members ready to take on responsibilities of children as their parents were convicted, the authorities have no other recourse but to send them to foster homes.

Barbell and Wright (2018) defined foster home as a childcare system in which a minor has been placed into a house, assembling home, or private home of a state-ensured guardian, alluded to as a temporary parent. The position of the child is typically represented through the administration or a social administration office. The

establishment finds a home or temporary parent who is compensated for costs (Barbell & Wright, 2018).

Barbell and Wright (2018) explained that the State, using the family court and children services administrations organization, remains in loco parentis to the minor, settling on every legitimate choice while the temporary parent is in charge of the everyday care of the minor. By far, most of the children who might need childcare are in family relationship care (kinship), that is, under the watchful eye of grandparents or other relatives. Most of these connections are made casually, without the association of a court or open association (Barbell & Wright, 2018).

Barbell and Wright (2018) demonstrated that the new enactment, however, reauthorized the Family Preservation and Family Support program. They renamed it the “Promoting Safe and Stable Families” program. Barbell and Wright illuminated an extensive variety of arrangements set up under the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980. The regulation includes alterations the states must make to save or rejoin children with their families to protect the children’s well-being. Also, the government officials should set up courses of events and create conditions for the protection of parental rights, which may lead to fewer children being separated from their parents (Barbell & Wright, 2018).

Figure 2 depicts the trendline of the child participants who spent most of their youth in foster homes, including Dakshana, Adahy, and Paco. Other participants, such as Malia, Tayanita, and Zihna, spent time in a foster home. The length of time those three

stayed in a foster home was insignificant compared to that of Dakshana, Adahy, and Paco.

These participants had mixed perceptions about foster care but were unified behind the idea that foster care hurts the foster children's education. At a young age, children accept their condition of living in a foster home because they do not have enough life experience to know or understand the difference. Participants' quotes regarding this subtheme are in Appendix F.

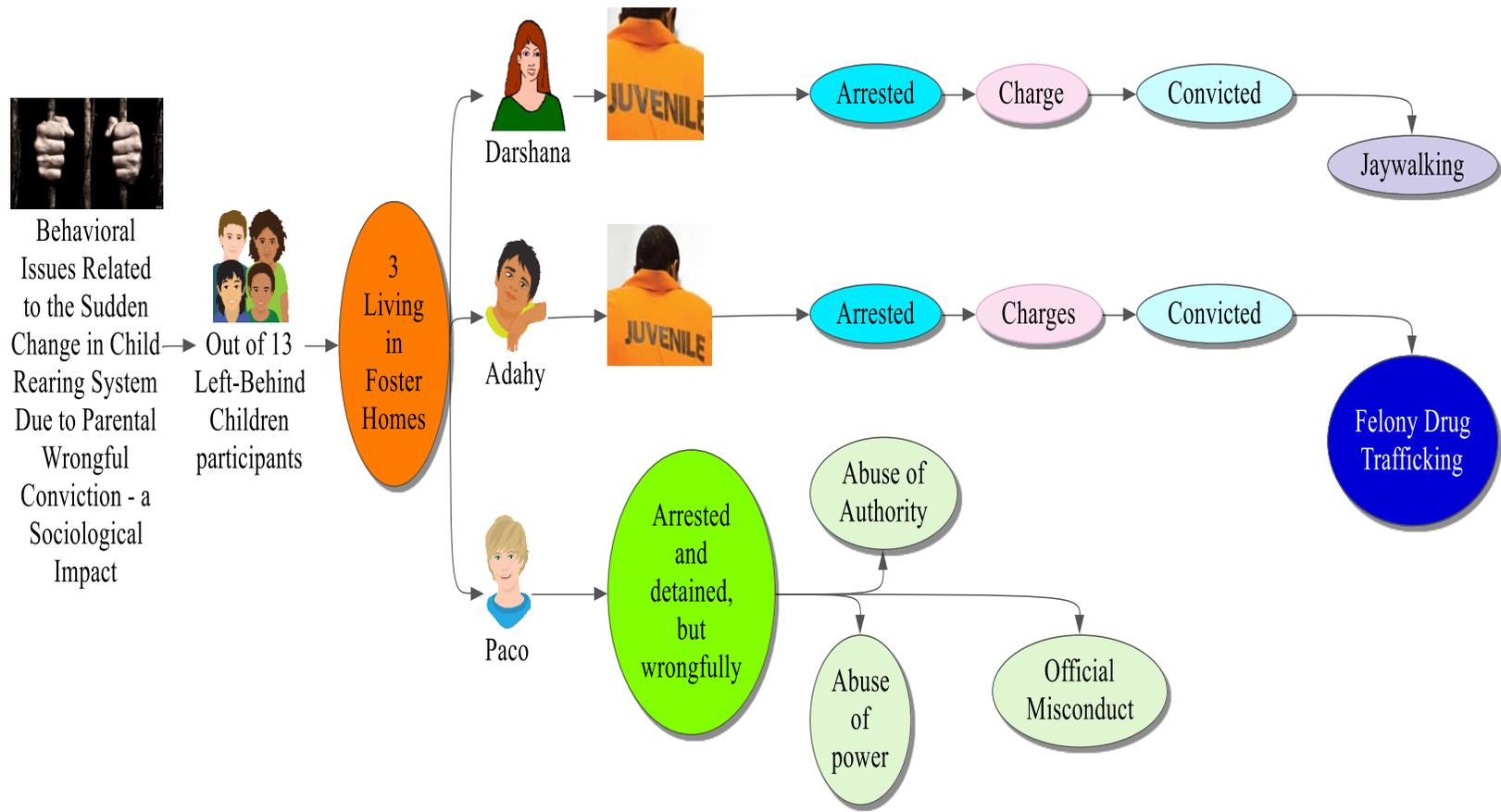


Figure 2. Children living with foster parents after wrongful conviction.

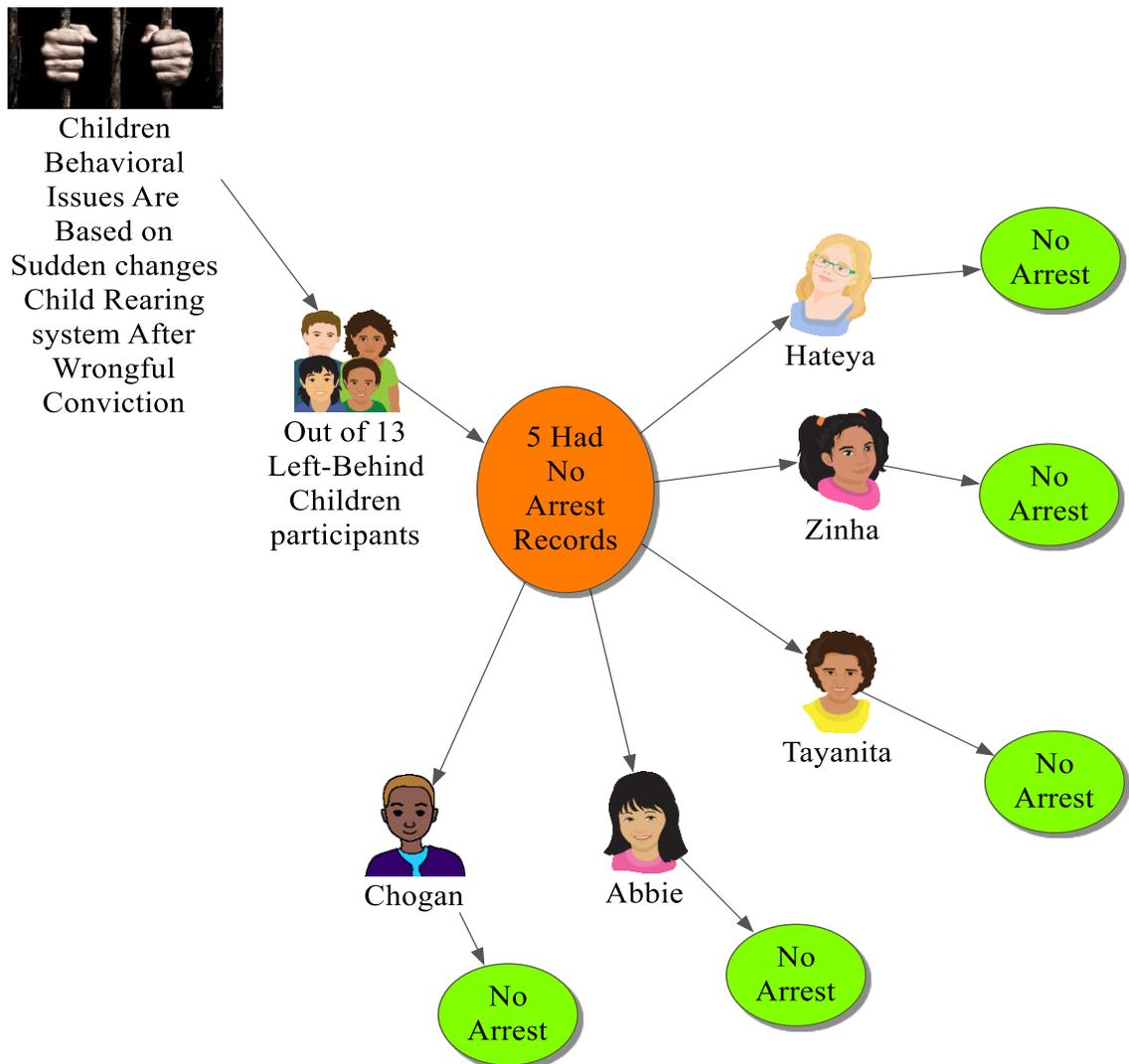


Figure 3. Participants with no arrest record live with grandparents.

The remaining six participants who had their grandparents there for them were raised differently and were more successful academically, psychologically and sociologically than those who did not have their grandparents' support throughout wrongful conviction. Participants' quotes regarding this subtheme are in Appendix F.

Subtheme: Grandparents' role. The participants' data indicated that the

ultimate role of grandparents in wrongful conviction encompasses key motivators, mentors, and role models for the left-behind children. They know through experience how to raise the children counteracting the impacts wrongful conviction would otherwise have on their grandchildren. Throughout this study, most grandparents used the ‘keep in the dark’ technique to manage their grandchildren’s emotions regarding the wrongful conviction of their parents. Even though they all took their grandchildren to visit their parents in prison, they always found a way to play with their grandchildren so that it did not affect them too much.

Unfortunately, five of the 13 participants did not have the luxury of having their grandparents present to take over when their parents were wrongfully imprisoned. The following is Theme 2, which illustrates the left-behind children’s behavioral issues that related to the wrongful conviction of their parents. Participants’ quotes regarding this subtheme are in Appendixes G and H.

Theme 2: Behavioral Issues of Children Associated with Wrongful Imprisonment of their Parents

The results show that wrongful-conviction-induced separation had a substantial impact on left-behind children’s behaviors, also linked with the childrearing system during the time the parent had been wrongly imprisoned. For example, those who lived with their grandparents had fewer behavioral issues than those who stayed with the other parent or those sent to foster homes, although the impacts are across the board as far as education was concerned.

Wrongfully convicted individuals' left-behind children seem to endure significant psychosocial challenges during their parent's detainment. This study suggests that parental wrongful conviction predicts young men's antisocial and reprobate conduct halfway due to the injury of wrongful-conviction-induced separation, mostly because parental detainment is a marker for parental culpability. This marker incompletely distorts youth thoughts regarding their parents and society in general. Table 4.5 illustrates some of the behavioral problems of the left-behind children that are related to the loss of their parents owing to wrongful conviction.

Table 4. 5 *Left-Behind Children Behavioral Issues*

Participants	Cause of separation	Behavior issues	Arrest	Charges	Convicted	Juvenile detention
Abbie	Wrongful conviction	No	No	No	No	No
Adahy	Wrongful conviction	Yes	Yes	Felony drug trafficking	Yes	Yes
Alo	Wrongful conviction	Yes	Yes	Drug trafficking-manslaughter-weapon charges-assaults	Yes	Yes
Benna	Wrongful conviction	Yes	Yes	Aggravated assaults	Yes	Yes
Chogan	Wrongful conviction	No	No	None	Yes	Yes

Table 4.5 *Left-Behind Children Behavioral Issues (continued).*

Participants	Cause of separation	Behavior issues	Arrest	Charges	Convicted	Juvenile detention
Dakshana	Wrongful conviction	Yes	Yes	Jaywalking	Yes	Yes
Hateya	Wrongful conviction	No	No	No	No	No
Knoton	Wrongful conviction	Yes	Yes	Drug trafficking-robbery-burglary-weapon charges	Yes	Yes
Malia	Wrongful conviction	Yes	Yes	Unknown	Yes	Yes
Paco	Wrongful conviction	Yes	Yes	Wrongly detained	Official misconduct	Abuse of power
Tablita	Wrongful conviction	Yes	Yes	Drug trafficking-shoplifting-assaults	Yes	Yes
Tayanita	Wrongful conviction	Yes	No	No	No	No
Zihna	Wrongful conviction	Yes	No	No	No	No

Subtheme: Depiction of behavioral issues associated with wrongful

conviction. Three participants described that they had no behavioral issues associated with the wrongful conviction of their parents. On the other hand, 10 out of the 13 left-behind children participants explained that they had experienced behavioral problems that were related to the wrongful conviction of their parents. The participants had made the

connection between their behaviors and the wrongful conviction of their parents by inferring to their downhill financial situation, childrearing disturbances, and poor self-evaluation.

This present study's findings are consistent with Murray et al.'s (2012) research, in determining that separation in light of parental wrongful convictions anticipate all antisocial and reprobate results of left-behind children. In this current study, eight of the 13 participants emphatically connected their behavioral issues as associated with parent-child separation due to wrongful conviction. In the wake of controlling for parental feelings and other youth hazard factors, division caused by parental wrongful detainment still anticipated a few antisocial—reprobate results, even up to late adult years (Murray et al., 2012).

Children left behind by wrongfully convicted parents were exceptionally helpless in preventing antagonistic results such as juvenile detention, criminal behavior, drugs addiction, heavy alcohol consumption, and suicidal ideation. Their parental wrongful conviction seemed to influence the children to juvenile delinquency well beyond the induced separation encounters. Additionally, shame, diminishment in family salary, and lessened nature of care were identified to recognize the instruments by which wrongful conviction enhanced left-behind children's behavioral issues.

Eddy et al. (2014) determined that trauma comes about because of an adverse situation, events, arrangement of occasions, or set of conditions that are experienced by a person as physically or candidly hurtful or undermining and that has enduring antagonistic consequences for the person's emotional, physical, social well-being. These

hostile consequences set the basis for behavioral issues seen in left-behind children making them victims and collateral damage to the criminal justice system.

Left-behind children who had experienced trauma may react in different ways, and no matter how much the authorities had tried to mask the severity of their parents' arrest, the event left undeniable markers making these children vulnerable. All 13 participants explained how their lives started going downhill from that point on, except those who were too young to remember. The trauma of parental arrest and disruption of family life due to wrongful conviction, witnessing public retaliation violence within their family, and exposure to drugs and alcohol abuse had opened the way for them to become juvenile delinquents.

When wrongful conviction occurs, children will stay with their left-behind parents or grandparents or be assigned to foster care. The leading cause of the separation is the wrongful conviction of their parents that left them no choice but to take whatever comes for them. Figure 1 represents those left-behind children who spent an extended period living in foster homes. The trauma of losing both parents when she was just 10 months old resulted in Dakshana growing up to be a troubled child. Luckily, she was arrested only for jaywalking; she had been exposed to child abuse and distortion of information regarding her parents. She stated that she was a furious child, which was why her guardians had sent her to behavioral school.

Murray et al. (2012) demonstrated that most children tend to follow their parents' footsteps. Labeling their parents as criminals, although wrongly, would jeopardize and distort the left-behind children's mind and make them more likely to become criminals

themselves. Wrongful-conviction-induced separation put these children in harm's way. Figure 3 illustrates those left-behind children who had been arrested, charged, convicted, and sent to juvenile detention. One of them was charged as an adult when he was 17 years old. Participants' quotes regarding this subtheme are in Appendix I.

Subtheme: Self-social isolation. Gottman (1977) found that absolute social separation over years and decades can be an endless condition influencing all parts of a child's existence. Social detachment can prompt sentiments of depression, the dread of interacting with others, or negative confidence. The absence of predictable human contact can likewise cause strife with the (fringe) companions the socially confined individual may every so often converse with or cause issues with relatives. Also, Gottman (1977) stated that on account of temperament-related confinement, the individual may disengage amidst a depressive scene just to 'surface' when their state of mind moves forward. The individual may endeavor to legitimize their withdrawn or segregating conduct as pleasant or agreeable. There can be an inward acknowledgment concerning the person that there is a significant issue with their disengaging reactions which can prompt high anxiety. Relationships can be a battle, as the individual may reconnect with others amidst a more beneficial mindset just to come back to a secluded state amidst a consequent low or discouraged disposition (Gottman, 1977).

Five out of the 13 left-behind children participants described that they had been self-centered and socially isolated themselves from other people. Some participants reported a mild level of isolation and others had significant issues and separated themselves from other people who may have been able to help them.

In the next section, I will introduce the reported behavioral issues associated with a parental wrongful conviction. Participants' quotes regarding this sub-theme are in Appendix J.

Subtheme: Behavioral issues. There are similarities and differences in children sent to foster care, those assigned to live with their grandparents' care, and those who stayed home with the left-behind parent. Children's academics and social growth were significantly affected by the disappearance of their parent(s) owing to wrongful conviction. One of the similarities seen is that left-behind children living in single parent and foster homes tend to have severe behavioral issues. In the study, four left-behind children were living with their left-behind parent (two boys and two girls): Benna, Tablita, Alo, and Knoton. Every one of these children was getting into serious trouble with the law for various reasons (see figure 4). Also, Figure 4 illustrates the description of eight of the 13 participants who had reported to have serious trouble with the law.

The results show that two of the impacts of wrongful-conviction-induced separation on left-behind children are (a) changes in overall plans for providing care, and (b) the diminished nature of care after each occurrence. After wrongful conviction occurred, the wrongfully convicted individuals' children either stayed with the other parent, went to live with grandparents, or were sent to live in foster care. Figure 4 represents the results of the left-behind children's behavioral issues associated with the blunt impact on the child-rearing system caused by a wrongful conviction.



Behavioral Issues
Associated with
Wrongful-
Conviction-
Induced
Separations -
Psychosocial
Impacts



Eight Out of 13
Participants Have
Had Criminal
Records Linked
to Wrongful-
Conviction-
Induced
Separation

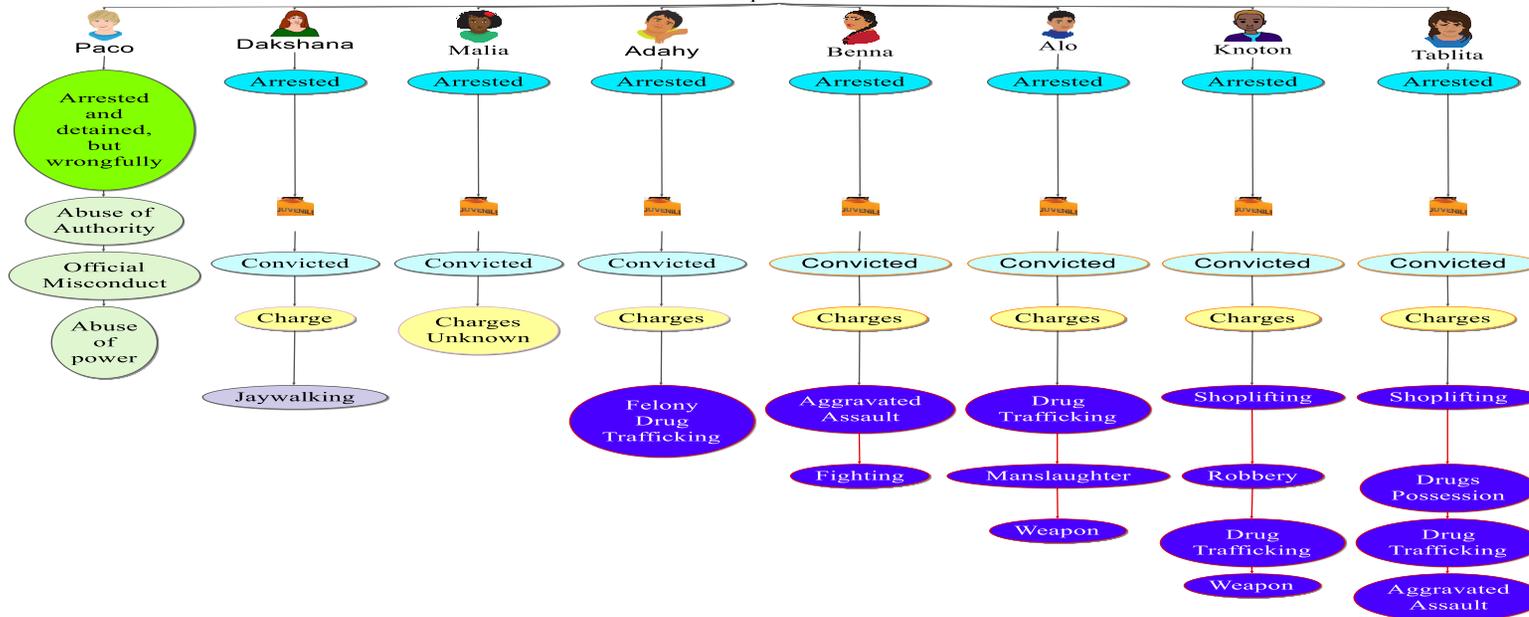


Figure 4. Left-Behind Children with Criminal Records

Paco explained that his behavioral issues were instigated by being bullied, harassed, abused by school authorities and the criminal justice authorities. After repeated bullying, Paco reported the abuses to the school's authorities, but nothing was done. Conversely, when he stood up against the bullies, he was punished harshly. Paco was punished for fighting, and profiled and viewed to be as dangerous as his parents, even though he was defending himself.

The results show that left-behind child participants who did not have a healthy support person(s) tended to have behavioral issues. As illustrated in Figure 4, the left-behind children participants who lived with their left-behind parents had severe behavioral problems. As I reviewed the data, I began to compare the findings across the individual cases. The results demonstrated failure for those guardians to work in the midst of wrongful conviction affected the childrearing framework and, in this way, affected the left-behind more than if they were living with their grandparents

Left-behind children have different complaints about foster homes that may trigger some adverse behavioral reactions. This study finds that children in foster care tended to become mature faster owing to the lack of nurturing factors. Those participants who had been in the foster home never made any complaint about the lack of supervision and financial problems, but they complained about emotional issues similar to those living with left-behind parents. In addition, they complained about the lack of homework assistance and oversight and the lack of parent-child relationship.

Table 4. 6 Drugs and Alcohol Consumption and Trafficking

Participant	Drug trafficking	Illegal drug consumption	Heavy alcohol consumption	Sibling drugs and alcohol consumption
Abbie	None reported	None reported	None reported	None reported
Adahy	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Alo	Yes	Yes	Yes	None reported
Benna	None reported	Yes	Yes	None reported
Chogan	None reported	No	None reported	Yes
Dakshana	None reported	Yes	Yes	None reported
Hateya	None reported	None reported	None reported	Yes
Knoton	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Malia	None reported	Yes	Yes	Yes
Paco	None reported	None reported	None reported	Yes
Tablita	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tayanita	None reported	Yes	Yes	Yes
Zihna	None reported	Yes	Yes	Yes

Four participants reported that they were selling drugs at a young age. Nine out of 13 described that they had used illegal substance at least once when they were young. Nine participants explained that they had been using alcohol to mask the pain and hurt caused by the wrongful conviction of their parents. Two reported that their siblings would not be able to stand at my interview because they were deeply addicted.

Subtheme: Drug and alcohol consumption. Low et al. (2012) demonstrated that

unfortunate events, such as family interruption were related to burdensome side effects, such as stress, depression, embarrassment, and shame. Parental or family issues may diminish the family connection felt by young people, which could prompt an expansion in association with an illegal substance and alcohol abuse (Low et al., 2012). They also found that cigarette and marijuana use to be related to parental dissension, partition, and separation.

It is likewise conceivable that young people used these substances for their anxiolytic impacts or as an evasion from family issues at home (Low et al., 2012). All eight participants who had utilized illegal substances and alcohol reported having extreme family disturbances due to parental wrongful conviction. The participants described their drugs and alcohol abuse as a result of their feelings of victimization, pain masking, environmental exposures, family dilemma, and peer influence in connection with the wrongful conviction-induced separation.

Lee, Fang, and Luo (2013) theorized that 40% of children of incarcerated parents developed attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder (ADHD). These children grow up thinking it is okay to create disobedient oppositional turmoil, a condition set apart by children's aggressive behavior (Lee et al., 2013). In addition, such children tend toward violent expression of their feelings, disregard of parental requests, and participation in purposefully irritating conduct of other children or adults. Lee et al. (2013) demonstrated that left untreated, oppositional conduct can develop into the lead issue, a considerably more genuine social issue set apart by physical brutality, taking what does not belong to them, fleeing from home, fire-setting, and other exceptionally damaging and frequently

unlawful practices. Similar to Lee et al.'s (2013) research study, the results of the current research study indicate that some left-behind children participants developed severe behavioral problems, such as getting involved in illegal activities. However, none of the participants got involved in fire-setting as demonstrated by Lee et al. (2013).

Nine of the 13 participants described that they were utilizing illegal drugs and alcohol at their young age to mask pain inflicted by parental wrongful conviction. Some of the participants expressed that their siblings were or are still consuming illegal substances to this day. Participants' quotes regarding the sub-theme behavioral issues are located in Appendix L.

Subtheme: Early pregnancies associated with parental wrongful conviction.

In this research study, five out of eight females left behind children became pregnant between the age of 10 and 19 years old. These early pregnancies may be associated with behaviors related to the wrongful conviction of their parents. For instance, four out of the five early pregnancy participants made connections between their early pregnancies and the imprisonment of their parents.

Participants expressed that one of the sociological consequences of wrongful conviction is the extreme financial difficulties related to the blunt change in family structure. All five participants revealed that their pregnancies were associated with the financial challenges that stemmed from the wrongful-conviction-induced separation from their parent. This situation emerged from economic pressures, causing the female left-behind children to look for and find a partner to support them financially at a young age.

Table 4.7 *Impacts on Left-Behind Children's Education*

Participant	Elementary school	Middle school	High school graduate	College graduate	Degree	Wrongful conviction impacts
Abbie	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Bachelor's degree	Yes-dazed out
Adahy	Yes	Yes	No, GED	Yes	Associate degree	Yes-confused homework trouble
Alo	Yes	Dropped out	No	No	No	Yes-dazed out
Benna	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Associate degree	Yes-dazed out
Chogan	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes-develops learning disability Yes-confused homework trouble
Dakshana	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes-confused homework trouble
Hateya	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	In college Taking one course at a time	Yes-dazed out
Knoton	Yes	Dropped out	No	No	No	Yes-expelled, behavioral issues

Table 4.8 *Impacts on Left-Behind Children's Education (continued)*

Participant	Elementary school	Middle school	High school graduate	College graduate	Degree	Wrongful conviction impacts
Malia	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes-dazed out
Paco	Yes	Yes	No, GED	No	No	Yes-confused homework trouble
Tablita	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Associate degree	Yes-dazed out
Tayanita	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	In college taking one course at a time	Yes-dazed out
Zihna	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Associate degree	Yes-dazed out

All 13 left-behind children participants who had suffered from the wrongful conviction of their parents reported some type of academic learning issues. In the next theme, I discuss and introduce the results on how wrongful conviction impacted left-behind children's education.

Theme 3: Wrongful Conviction Effects on Education

Psychological problems, such as depression, PTSD, stress, and emotional issues are discussed later in this section, but to explain what had happened to the children causing them to struggle academically relates directly to the components of sociological consequences of wrongful conviction. Every single one of the left-behind children reported a problem in school connected to the wrongful conviction of their parents.

This research study found evidence that left-behind children's education is affected by wrongful conviction. It was tough, even for those who had graduated from high school, to go to college without extreme hardship. Table 4.7 illustrates the left-behind children's educational levels and how wrongful conviction affected them.

All 13 of the participants performed well in elementary school and moved up to middle school. Two of the 13 participants dropped out of middle school. Four did not directly graduate from high school, and two of the four later earned a GED. Eight participants did not go to college right after high school graduation or GED.

Five participants went to college after high school; four of the five graduated with an associate degree, and only one with a bachelor's degree. The participant who graduated with a bachelor's degree indicated that her success was due to the efforts and diligence of her grandparents because in her adolescence she had experienced difficulty focusing. Twelve of the 13 participants described their academic failures as associated with the wrongful conviction of their parents.

Wrongful conviction has adverse effects on left-behind children's education. It affects them social-economically until their adult days. As indicated in table 4.7, four out of 13 left-behind children participants who did not graduate directly from high school. Two of them had managed to graduate indirectly from high school by taking the GED or by being placed in special programs, which was the case for Adahy and Paco.

Wrongful conviction negatively affected these left-behind children's education. Nine out of 13 graduated from high school with a high school diploma. Left-behind females did better academically than the males. Eight out of eight female participants

graduated straight from high school, and 1 of 5 of the male participants graduated from high school. Wrongful conviction has a more significant effect on male left-behind children than it has on females related to academic performance.

In the end, wrongful conviction impacts left-behind children's education because of the coercion and pressure exercised on left-behind parents and changes in family structures, in which children had to live with strangers, such as foster parents. Of the nine children who graduated from high school, four did not have the financial capability, parental guidance, moral abilities, and parental support to go to college.

Subtheme: Academic and/ or professional goals affected by wrongful conviction. Six of the 13 participants indicated that they were satisfied with their current jobs. Twelve participants reported that they had not accomplished their long-term academic and professional goals. Only one participant described that she had achieved her educational goal and expressed that the future would dictate what would happen with her professional life after her graduation.

Five participants went to college, yet four of the five did not get any further than earning an associate degree from a community college. Only one of the 13 research participants graduated from college with a bachelor's degree. My research indicates among 13 participants only one child ended up with a bachelor's degree; four graduated with associate certificates, two are still in college taking one course at a time, three never made it to college after high school.

In addition, four participants did not graduate from high school; two of them took the GED, one went on to earn an associate degree, and the other two dropped out from

middle school and never returned. Table 4.7 illustrates an overview and breakdown of the sociological consequences of wrongful conviction on these children's education.

All participants reported that they were doing fine before wrongful conviction as stated earlier, except for those who were too young to remember, such as Tayanita, Malia, and Dakshana. As soon as wrongful conviction occurred, things started going downhill for them academically. As discussed, lack of parent supervision, no help with homework for foster care children and no motivation were factors in lack of academic achievement. However, that was not enough to establish the reason why left-behind children failed academically. All 13 participants talked about thoughts that came to their minds while in class that have never left them until today.

Abbie and Hateya, Alo, Knoton, Malia, Tayanita, Benna, Dakshana, Paco, Adahy, Zihna, Tablita, and Chogan did not have the luxury of getting rigorous grandparent support when their parents were wrongfully convicted. Hateya and Tayanita are still struggling to achieve their goal while working. Although Adahy, Tablita, and Benna did not have any support, they accomplished their short-term goals, which were to work with problematic children who need social help.

This research explored the relationships of the participants with their wrongfully convicted parents before conviction, during conviction, and after exoneration to examine thoroughly what had happened to the left-behind children and why they had been in so much trouble. The parent-child relationship is significant in the healing process after acquittal. Many children expressed their concerns regarding other siblings who still believed that their parents were guilty, even after their release. Participants' quotes

regarding this subtheme are located in Appendix M.

Theme 4: Parent-Child Relationship After Wrongful Conviction and Exoneration

Theme 4 represents the analysis of participants' parent-child relationship after conviction and after exoneration. After exoneration, parents relied on the love of the left-behind family members to help them heal their wounds. After much exposition and conversation with many wrongfully convicted individuals at the 2017 Innocence Network Conference, it is evident that when they come out from wrongful imprisonment, their children's love is the most important factor that can determine whether they would be happy coming back home. Left-behind children participants also expressed that their relationship with their wrongfully convicted parent was needed for their healing process.

Table 4. 9 Parent-Child Relationship After Conviction and Exoneration

Participant	Relationship after conviction	Relationship after exoneration	Rocky relationship after conviction	Rocky relationship after exoneration
Abbie	Great	Great	None reported	None reported
Adahy	Bad	Great	Rocky	No, but siblings in doubt
Alo	Bad, then turn better	Good	Rocky	No
Benna	Great	Great	No	No
Chogan	Bad	Bad	Rocky	Rocky
Dakshana	good	Great	No	No
Hateya	Great	Great	No	No, but Siblings in doubt
Knoton	Bad	Great	Rocky	Rocky
Malia	Bad	Great	Rocky	Rocky
Paco	Great	Great	No	No
Tablita	Bad	Great	Rocky	Rocky
Tayanita	Bad	Great	Rocky	Rocky
Zihna	Great	Great	No	No

Table 4.8 illustrates the impacts wrongful conviction has on a parent-child relationship. Many participants reported rocky relationships with their parents. What they

heard on the media and from the authorities brought them shame and embarrassment. The rocky relationship is included in Table 4.8 along with connection, amidst wrongful conviction and after exoneration.

Table 4.8 illustrates parent-child relationships after conviction and after exoneration. Seven of the 13 participants had bad relationships with their parents after a wrongful conviction. Six had a great relationship with their falsely incarcerated parents. Nine of the 13 participants visited their parent in prison because their grandparents influenced them to go. Thus, when their grandparents passed away, they generally stopped visiting. At some point, the dehumanization of the parents was so great in prison that the imprisoned parents demanded that their children stop visiting in general.

Among the 13 participants, only six reported having a great relationship with their parents during parental wrongful conviction, whereas seven participants reported that they did not have a relationship with their parents during that period. After exoneration, the number fluctuated slightly. Five of the 13 participants described that they had a rocky relationship and two stated that their siblings still had a rocky relationship with their wrongfully convicted parents after exoneration. Eight participants explained that they had good relations with their parents after release from prison. Participants' quotes regarding this subtheme are located in Appendix N.

Subtheme: Relationship during wrongful conviction. The parent-child relationship is crucial to the healing process, not only of the wrongfully convicted parent, but for the left-behind child as well. Three of the 13 research participants had never seen their fathers free before, and suddenly they had to accept a total stranger as their father,

most often after they had already charted their paths.

Tayanita, Malia, and Chogan described that they never knew their fathers before conviction. Tayanita and Malia explained that their fathers spent 25 years in prison. Since they were so young when he went to prison, he came out when they were both 26 years old. They had both declared that their fathers were just another man in their lives. “He cannot come as a father” said Tayanita.

Parent-child relationship, amidst wrongful conviction, is mostly based on prison visits and on compassion they had for their mothers and fathers. All 13 participants reported that they visited their wrongfully convicted parents in prison at least once when they were children. Participants who visited their wrongfully convicted parents the most ended up having a better relationship with them after exoneration. Participants’ quotes regarding this sub-theme are located in Appendix O

Subtheme: Relationship After Exoneration. Nine out of the 13 participants described that they had a great relationship with their wrongfully convicted parent after exoneration. Two out of nine expressed that even though they had an excellent relationship with their exonerated parent, their remaining siblings were reluctant to keep the relationship going with their exonerated parent. Four participants reported that they still had a rocky relationship with their wrongfully convicted parent after exoneration. One of the participants declared that his relationship with his father improved after acquittal.

Six out of the 13 participants explained that their newly exonerated parent did not understand what they had gone through during their wrongful incarceration. Also, they

reported that their wrongfully imprisoned parent did not comprehend their psychosocial struggles, the misery, shame, and embarrassment they had to live with while they were in prison. Most of the participants expressed concerns about their wrongfully convicted parents missing their sports achievements, high school graduations, weddings, births, deaths of loved ones. Participants' quotes regarding this sub-theme are located in Appendix O.

Theme 5: Missing Important Milestones, Deaths, and Births of Loved Ones

Nine out of the 13 participants expressed that their parent' not being present at their high school graduation was troubling. Five out of 13 reported how painful it was for them that their parent missed their wedding and other accomplishments. Eight out of the 13 participants explained that their parent had missed the birth of their grandchildren. Another critical component of this theme is missing the death of family members. Eight described their pain and hurt when their wrongfully convicted parent missed the demise of their family members.

Theme 5 is divided into two subthemes—'missing important milestones,' and 'missing the deaths and births of loved ones.' Changes in family structure affected left-behind children and increased their emotional issues. Eight out of the 13 participants discussed milestones, such as high school graduation, wedding, and other achievements, and accomplishments, as illustrated in Table 4.9. Participants' quotes regarding this sub-theme are located in Appendix P.

Table 4. 10 *Missing Important Milestones*

Participants	<u>Missing important milestones</u>		<u>Missing loved ones' births & deaths</u>	
	Missing high school graduation	Missing wedding and other accomplishments	Missing grandchildren's birth	Missing death of family members
Abbie	Yes	No	No	No
Adahy	No	No	Yes	No
Alo	No	Yes	No	No
Benna	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chogan	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Dakshana	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hateya	Yes	No	Yes	No
Knoton	No	No	Yes	Yes
Malia	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Paco	No	No	No	Yes
Tablita	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tayanita	Yes	No	No	Yes
Zihna	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

Subtheme 1: Missing high school graduation, weddings, and other accomplishments. Left-behind children participants showed signs of distress and despair when it came to the birth of their grandchildren and when their wrongfully convicted parent missed the deaths of loved ones. Eight out of the 13 participants recounted that walking across the stage and down the aisle for their high school graduations and weddings were nightmares without their wrongfully incarcerated parents' presence. Some of them, such as Benna blamed all those nightmares on the wrongful conviction of her father.

Five out of the eight female participants reported nostalgic experiences at their weddings when thinking that their father would not be there to walk them down the aisle. Two of them recounted that they had to use their father-in-law, one said that her step-father walked her down the aisle, and the other two explained that they had to make a deal with total strangers to walk them down the aisle. Participants expressed strong emotional events when explaining these touching occurrences. Next is the subtheme dealing with missing deaths and births of loved ones.

Subtheme: Missing deaths and births of loved ones. Nine out of 13 left-behind children participants expressed their concerns about their wrongfully convicted parent missing deaths of loved ones, such as their grandparents, uncle, brothers, sisters, and children. Also, 8 of the participants were not comfortable with their wrongfully imprisoned parent missing the birth of their grandchildren. They spoke about how the situation mentally affected them, which will be discussed in the psychological section of this chapter.

Theme 6: The Criminal Justice Officials Misconduct and Mishaps

As an overview of the left-behind children participants' perceptions of the criminal justice system, government officials' misconduct emerged from the analysis in this research study. Medwed (2017) demonstrated that justice officials, such as forensic science analysts, police officers, detectives, lawyers, judges, and prosecutors' misconducts distorted the real purpose of the criminal justice system. In many states, there is no commission and independent oversight committee to perform checks and balances as far as the prosecutors are concerned. Therefore, they have no accountability and obligation to take responsibility for their actions as government officials (Medwed, 2017).

All 13 participants indicated that their parents' wrongful convictions took so long to overturn because criminal justice officials were not looking for the truth, but for someone to blame for the crimes. Medwed, (2017) explained that to hold people in prison, justice officials, such as prosecutors, conceal evidence that can prove innocence, detectives undermined\ truth, and prosecutors utilize jailhouse snitches who may not even know the person they are snitching on to secure a conviction regardless of the reliability of the obtained information. He demonstrated that plea bargaining is another problem that causes many innocent individuals to plead guilty to a lesser charge because they do not have anything to prove their innocence (Medwed, 2017). In each case, the participants laid the ground for government officials' misconducts as one of the important reasons for their sufferings. Each one expressed concern about why it took them so long to find out

that the justice system had made a mistake. In the next section, the participants expressed their compassion for the victims' families.

Subtheme: All participants expressed compassion for victims' families. Since their parents' wrongful convictions, all 13 participants expressed their concerns about the victims' families because they believe that it is ethical to think about the trauma the victim's family had to go through at the time of the crime. Participants stated that victims and their families' wounds had been reopening after years of satisfaction to restart thinking about who did what at the time of the crime. According to the participants, not only the wrongfully convicted individuals' families had been hurt, but the victims' families as well. Participants recounted that the victims' hurts were more painful especially, when they never found those perpetrators. Thus, when an innocent individual is convicted, the real perpetrator is still out there committing more crimes, killing more people, raping more women and children, and assaulting more people, they expressed. Participants indicated that this false sense of justice would not last for long and this must be very hurtful for the victims' families. Participants' quotes regarding this sub-theme are located in Appendix Q.

Subtheme: Prison visits—a nightmare for children. According to the participants in this study, prison visits have a psychosocial effect on children. Haney (2003) indicated that a prison visit was invented to keep inmates and their families close and that was supposed to have a positive psychological impact on the inmates. Left-behind children participants described that the opposite is accurate for those who went to visit their parent in prison. Participants revealed that there were five factors of children's

prison visit that affected them mentally. These factors that I will discuss under this subtheme are strip searches, isolation, prison environment, guards, intimidation, and travel time.

According to participants, face-to-face, noncontact visits enabled parents to address their children or different guests behind an obstruction glass that prevented physical contact. All 13 participants described that noncontact prison visits made it troublesome for their wrongfully convicted parents to touch, see, or hear their children. Further, participants indicated that as a child most of them did not comprehend why they could not hug their parent, driving them to generally get out of hand in a way that kept them from physically connecting with their parent. Participants unified their voices against noncontact visits they described as unpleasant and possibly horrible for them when they were children visiting their parents in prison. Haney (2003) demonstrated that people visiting prisons are the most significant risk factor in the contraband of drugs and other illegal items in prisons across the country.

Table 4. 11 *Participants' Prison Visit Psychosocial Experience*

Participants	Prison visit	Negative psychosocial impact	Positive psychosocial impact	Why?
Abbie	Yes	None reported	Yes	My father helps me with math
Adahy	Yes	Yes	None reported	Prison guard's intimidation

Table 4. 12 *Participants' Prison Visit Psychosocial Experience (continued)*

Participants	Prison visit	Negative psychosocial impact	Positive psychosocial impact	Why?
Alo	Yes	Yes	None reported	Special circumstances
Benna	Yes	Yes	None reported	Strip search
Chogan	Yes	Yes	None reported	Prison environment
Dakshana	Yes	Yes	None reported	Travel time, prison environment, and strip search
Hateya	Yes	Yes	None reported	Guards' intimidation
Knoton	Yes	Yes	None reported	Prison environment
Malia	Yes	Yes	None reported	Prison environment
Paco	Yes	Yes	None reported	Travel time, prison environment, and strip search
Tablita	Yes	Yes	None reported	Prison environment
Tayanita	Yes	Yes	None reported	Prison environment
Zihna	Yes	Yes	None reported	Prison environment

These actions led to strip search regulations in prison visits that affect even little children (Haney, 2003). Participants expressed that the guards' rudeness during strip searches was degrading and discouraged them from visiting their parent in prison. Most participants stopped visiting their parent in prison because they were afraid of a strip search and of the prison environment.

Table 10 illustrates the experiences of the prison visits and the psychosocial impacts such visits had on left-behind children participants. After the wrongful conviction of their parents, all 13 participants visited their parents in prison. Most of them were motivated to visit their parent in prison by grandparents, left-behind parents, or foster guardians depending on whom the children stayed with after the wrongful imprisonment of their parent. Twelve out of the 13 participants described that they had negative psychosocial experiences with prison visits and one out of that 13 indicated they had a positive one. Left-behind children participants recounted that there were many factors associated with why their experiences with prison visits were negative. The same 12 participants suggested that prison visits did not have any positive psychosocial impacts on them and here is why:

During the interviews, there was a phenomenon that developed. That was the emergence of a motivator or of motivators that encouraged the left-behind children to visit their parents in prison. The motivator(s) could be their grandparents, foster guardians, or left-behind parents. At the passing or the inability for the motivator to accomplish this task, seven out of the 13 participants reported that they discontinued

prison visit completely. Participants' quotes regarding this sub-theme are located in Appendix R.

Subtheme: Looking for a role model – ended up in juvenile jail. Participants recounted that in the quest of looking for a role model after the wrongful conviction of their parent they often ended up taking advice from their peers. Adahy reported that he looked up to his brothers who were in the same situation with him, as his role-models. When they moved to a more impoverished neighborhood all three of them fell into using illegal substances and alcohol.

Alo and Knoton explained that after their fathers' wrongful incarcerations they turned to street friends for advice and this was why they were going in and out of juvenile detention for many violent crimes. At 17 years of age, Alo recounted that he went to the same prison with his wrongfully convicted father for shooting a man over drug disputes. Participants' quotes regarding this sub-theme are located in Appendix S.

Psychological Impact Themes

The psychological impacts of wrongful conviction on left-behind children include fear, sadness, PTSD, depression, stress, shame, embarrassment, stigmatization, fear of intimacy, and traumatization. After wrongful conviction occurred, children were subjected to bullying in school and at home. In addition, this study reveals that children left behind by their wrongfully convicted parents also experienced severe cases of shame, anger, fear of intimacy, pain and hurts flashback, and remorse.

Table 4. 13 Psychological Themes, Subthemes, and Definitions

Psychological Consequence Themes	Subthemes	Definitions
Theme 7: Post traumatic stress disorder, stress, anxiety, devastation, stigmatization,	PTSD, stigmatization, emptiness inside	Wrongful conviction triggered Depression, stigmatization, traumatization on left-behind children. Some of the children are still under medication for PTSD
Theme 8: Bullied in school and at home	Effects of bullying on left-behind children—suicide attempts	Left-behind children have been bullied owing to their parents' incarceration for crimes they did not commit. They ended up having way fewer friends than the average children
Theme 9: Mental health effects of parental wrongful conviction	Shame, Anger Fear of intimacy Pain and hurts Embarrassment Flashback and remorse Depression	Throughout wrongful conviction, left-behind children went through a host of emotional issues. Five out of 13 had attempted suicide at least once
Theme 10: Inside the Left-Behind Children Minds	Feeling about speaking out Personal experience Message to others	In this theme, the participants sent their message to the world and other children whose parents are incarcerated

This research study exposes gathered information compatible with the psychosocial ramifications of wrongful conviction on the left behind children. Lee et al. (2013) determined that the energy of the psychologically strong children depends on the psychosocial conditions in which they live. Participants pointed out some factors related to the psychological impacts of wrongful conviction they had experienced, which include PTSD, bullying in schools, emotional responses, fear of intimacy, stress, depression, devastation, stigmatization, and the effects of prison visits. These are some of the factors generated by wrongful conviction decreasing psychological well-being of left-behind children amidst wrongful incarceration.

Theme 7: PTSD, Stress, Anxiety, Devastation, Stigmatization

PTSD is defined as episodes of stress and depression that occurred to people who encountered a stunning, terrifying, or risky situation (Lee et al., 2013). That was what some participants explained happened to them following the wrongful conviction of their parents. They were so traumatized it caused some conditions of PTSD for some of the participants that continue until today. Throughout this study, some of the participants demonstrated that they had experienced PTSD. Lee et al. (2013) theorized that some may feel perplexed at first, but the impacts will increase afterward.

Lee et al. (2013) demonstrated that dread triggers many split-second changes in the body to assist, shield against peril, or to maintain a strategic distance from it. This reaction is a run of the mill response intended to shield a person from hurt (Lee et al., 2013). Participants explained that they encountered a range of depression after the traumatizing event or chain of events, such as the arrest, conviction and/or sentence of

their parents. Paco, Knoton, and Tablita expressed that they had been diagnosed with PTSD and Paco is still being treated 42 years after his mother and stepfather were wrongfully convicted.

Table 4. 14 *Left-Behind Children's PTSD, Devastation, Stigmatization*

Participants	Diagnosed with PTSD	Anxiety	Devastation	Stigma	Stress	Fear of intimacy
Abbie	None reported	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	None reported
Adahy	None reported	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	None reported
Alo	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	None reported
Benna	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chogan	None reported	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	None reported
Dakshana	None reported	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	None reported
Hateya	None reported	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	None reported
Knoton	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Malia	None reported	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	None reported
Paco	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 4. 15 *Left-Behind Children's PTSD, Devastation, Stigmatization (continued)*

Participants	Diagnosed with PTSD	Anxiety	Devastation	Stigma	Stress	Fear of intimacy
Tablita	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tayanita	None reported	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Zihna	None reported	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	None reported

Six out of 13 participants claimed to have experienced symptoms of PTSD. Among the six, three participants described that they were diagnosed with PTSD following the events of wrongful arrest and conviction of their parents. All 13 participants recounted that they experienced anxiety, devastation, stigmatization, and stress. Also, five out of the 13 participants reported that they had encountered fear-of-intimacy throughout their lives that are related to the wrongful conviction of their parents.

Theme 8: Bullied in School and at Home

Bullying has been one of the most important reasons why teenagers committed suicide, have gotten involved in fights, and gone to juvenile detention (Bond, Carlin, Thomas, Rubin, & Patton, 2001). Some of the left-behind children were bullied for various reasons, but primarily for their parents' wrongful conviction. Participants recounted that bullying was one of the most significant problems they experienced when dealing with parental wrongful conviction.

Eleven out of the 13 participants reported that they had been bullied in school. A few of them, such as Abbie (bullied for her height), Benna who had never experienced bullying, and Chogan bullied for being a student with disabilities reported that their lives were awful and felt insecure. The other eight participants experienced harassment due to their parents' imprisonment wrongfully. Eight participants had experienced bullying from their homes and communities as illustrated in Table 4.13.

Table 4. 16 *Bullying in School and at Home*

Participants	Bullying in school	Bullying at home
Abbie	Yes	No
Adahy	Yes	Yes
Alo	Yes	Yes
Benna	No	No
Chogan	Yes	No
Dakshana	Yes	No
Hateya	Yes	Yes
Knoton	Yes	Yes
Malia	No	No
Paco	Yes	Yes
Tablita	Yes	Yes
Tayanita	Yes	Yes
Zihna	Yes	Yes

In the light of understanding the left-behind children's lived experiences and psychosocial impacts of wrongful-conviction-induced separation from their parents, a very important subtheme emerged, which is wrongful conviction induced suicide attempts. The following subsection deals with suicide attempts. Participants' quotes for theme eight are located in Appendix U.

Subtheme: Suicide attempts associated with wrongful conviction. A

connection exists amongst suicide attempts or suicide and bullying. Yet, not everyone who attempted suicide had been bullied (Holt et al., 2015). Suicidal thoughts may come from many different circumstances and components (Holt et al., 2015). Holt et al. (2015) demonstrated that even though children bullied are in danger of attempting suicide, this alone is not the reason. Left-behind children who participated in this study explained that wrongful conviction was the stimulus that sparked bullying and many other unfortunate events, which, in turn, triggered suicidal ideations.

Numerous issues add to suicidal thoughts, including discouragement, problems at home, traumatization history, and a sense of hopelessness, according to the participants. Throughout the results of this study, these components pave the way for suicidal thoughts, in addition to other factors. These factors become even more relevant when these children are not supervised by parents, guardians, family members, and school officials. Bullying can exacerbate an unsupportive circumstance, which is, in this case, the dreadful feeling of not having their parents around to support them due to parental wrongful conviction.

Being bullied prompts sentiments of defenselessness and sadness, both of which can add to self-destructive considerations (Nault-Brière et al. 2015). Left-behind children participants expressed that they experienced defenselessness, hopelessness, and sadness not only associated with bullying in school and at home, but with the wrongful conviction of their parent. Four out of the 13 left-behind children participants described having had

suicidal thoughts, and that they had tried to end their lives owing to what they had to go through as a backlash of their parents' wrongful conviction.

Shame and embarrassment were two factors participants reported that caused them to be emotional. After their parents' wrongful conviction left-behind children participants were afraid to speak out about their pain and hurt associated with the wrongful-conviction-induced separation. All 13 participants expressed that they had emotional responses related to the wrongful conviction of their parents. Five out of the 13 participants indicated that this situation caused them to set themselves apart from friends and other people who, they believe, might make fun of them owing to their unfortunate circumstances. Participants' quotes for this sub-theme are in Appendix U.

Theme 9: Mental Health Effects of Parental Wrongful Conviction

For this research study, I will not go through all nine factors of psychological well-being introduced by Siegel (2012). The factors that are related to the situation that participants identify in this study are personal growth, positive relations with others, social integration, purpose in life, self-acceptance, and protection. Siegel explained that when these factors are not satisfied the feeling of exhaustion and discouragement, and racing heartbeat may cause people to be consistently overwhelmed by their emotions and diverted by them. Another issue Siegel invoked was that some people turn out to be overwhelmed with tension where others may very well experience apprehension or even a rush of energy from their emotions. Left-behind children participants explained that their factors of psychological well-being were not satisfied and that was why they were overwhelmed with negative emotions.

Siegel (2012) pointed out that the excellent connection bonds amongst biological parents and their children empower a child's brain to generate the initial eight of the nine ingredients of mental wellness to their fullest potential. Left-behind children participants explained that parental wrongful conviction broke the bond between them and their biological parents at different ages, stages, circumstances, this therefore, affirms Siegel's analogy. Siegel demonstrated that it is parent-child connection that give the foundation in which children's brains develop. He showed that parent-child relationships yield the most beneficial, best-coordinated brainpower work and psychological well-being results.

The very child-rearing processes that prompt sound connections have been paralleled with the nine factors of stable mental health function (Siegel, 2012). Siegel determined that these child-rearing practices consisted of giving the children an abundant level of love, and gentle childrearing approaches that emphasized more on rewarding good conduct than rebuffing negative ones. These parental childrearing practices discharge synthetic combinations of positive ideas in the child's mind that advance nerve development and facilitate diverse parts of the cerebrum enabling them to communicate more effectively (Siegel, 2012).

Similar to Siegel's (2012) findings, none of the 13 left-behind children participants reported having a childrearing system that rewarded good conduct and enforced bad ones and not by their biological parents, but by strangers who had no interest in their upbringing. In like manner, Siegel demonstrated that every one of the inverse child-rearing practices, such as adverse, less-touchy, and harsh parental reaction to signs would hinder mental wellness. Also, Siegel explained that lesser levels of love,

using physical abuse discipline procedures that rebuff instead of educating stretch the mind and cause it to go into a defensive mode.

Twelve out of the 13 participants described that their childrearing systems were lacking natural love and that they were subjected to physical abuse as a mean of discipline. Only one (Abbie) of the 13 participants expressed that she was brought up by her grandparents who loved her abundantly and treated her as their own child. As a result, she was the only one out of the 13 to achieve a higher education, was never arrested, had no record of substance abuse, and did not have an early pregnancy.

The human body has numerous normal reactions to stress. These might incorporate both emotional responses, such as melancholy, tension, and outrage issues, and physical feedback like desires, migraines, restlessness, illnesses, and other negative impacts on the body, such as depression and discouragement (Murray et al., 2012). These researchers determined that stress, anxiety, and depression may result in physical and mental illnesses. The risks of wrongful conviction are that it struck the participants for the most part at young ages and this is when children require their parents the most.

All participants in this research study described that they had experienced depression related to parental wrongful conviction. The information below illustrates the emotional response expressed by the research participants. Reactions to emotions are tied in with developing the capacity to give an essential answer to the sentiments of someone else.

All 13 left-behind children explained that they experienced anxiety which they identified with wrongful conviction causing adverse emotional reactions. Two of them

had mixed emotional responses because they recounted that not all justice officials are terrible. Abbie and Dakshana expressed mixed emotional responses regarding the criminal justice officials owing to the path their parents were taking before wrongful conviction.

Eight participants described that they experienced depression. Seven reported being embarrassed. Twelve out of the 13 participants recounted that they had been ashamed of the crime their parent was wrongfully convicted of. Lastly, all 13 participants reported that they had regret, flashbacks, and remorse associated with the wrongful conviction of their parents. As children dealing with parental incarceration, they developed a withdrawal mentality due to shame and embarrassment projected by their parents' moral status. Participants' quotes for this theme are in Appendix V.

Subtheme: Embarrassment associated with parental wrongful conviction.

Throughout the study, it was evident that participants experienced embarrassment related to parental wrongful conviction. They explained situations with elevated amounts of distress, which people usually encounter when a socially unacceptable act or condition is uncovered by others. Left-behind children were afraid of what others would say about their wrongfully convicted parents.

Participants also explained that they were embarrassed by the mockery, name-calling and teasing by their peers. Participants described that they felt ashamed for being labeled as the children of convicted parents. What made it even worse, most of the left-behind children participants did not know that their parents were wrongfully convicted. Participants' quotes for the above subtheme are in Appendix X.

Subtheme: Shame associated with parents' wrongful conviction. All 13 participants reported experienced shame for the crime their parents were blamed for. Another reason left-behind children participants expressed they experienced shamed was the fact that their parents were incarcerated. Nine out of 13 participants indicated that they experienced shame and embarrassment when they saw other children's parents pick them up from, or take them to, sports practice and extracurricular activities. Participants' quotes for this subtheme are in Appendix Y.

Subtheme: Flashbacks and remorse after exoneration. All 13 left-behind children participants explained that they experienced flashbacks post-exoneration of their parent. Adahy reported having a flashback regarding being in foster care when his life went upside down post-wrongful conviction, and now he realizes it was all for a crime that his mother did not commit.

Alo reported imagining a picture of how his life would have been if his father had not been wrongfully convicted. He explained that he was so close to his father and when his father was arrested and sent to prison, he was mentally and physically disoriented. Consequently, he was having flashbacks and nightmares of his prison and juvenile experiences while his father was wrongfully incarcerated. Some of the participants suffered from and were diagnosed with fear-of-intimacy which is covered in the next section. Participants' quotes for this subtheme are in Appendix Z.

Subtheme: Fear of intimacy associated with wrongful conviction. Griffin (2015) defined that fear-of-intimacy is the dread of being too close with another person, such as a partner, mother, father, and siblings. Individuals who suffered from fear of

intimacy have a lack of trust that makes them unable to be too close with other people (Griffin, 2015). Fear of closeness additionally identified with the dread of being touched. Fear of intimacy often occurs after a terrible or traumatized situation or event (Griffin, 2015).

Benna indicated that before her father's wrongful conviction, he always took her to and from school every day. She explained that her first line of defense collapsed around her when she found out that her father went to prison, and she would never see him again. She was so close to her father and abruptly he disappeared. This situation created a mistrust within her causing her to be unable to trust any man. As a result, she ended up married four times (despite being in love with all past husbands) because she thought that those men would leave her as her father did.

Paco was nine years of age when a companion of his parents shot two cops in front of him and held Paco, his sister and parents prisoner at gunpoint. During the time spent capturing the culprit, the police took numerous shots at their vehicle while Paco, his sister, and parents were hostages of the perpetrator. Paco indicated that he spent about 40 years unable to secure a girlfriend because he was afraid that he would not be able to protect them.

Tayanita experienced the dread of closeness and was hesitant to get involved with the young men she cherished because of the way that her father's disappearance affected her. She explained that she was scared to get involved for too long with a man because of the wrongful conviction her father. Even though her father is now exonerated, she still fears creating bonds with her sisters, her brother and her father. Participants' quotes for

the above subtheme are in Appendix AA.

Theme 10: Inside the Left-Behind Children's Minds

At the end of the interview, each left-behind child participant had the opportunity to send a message to those children who currently have their parents incarcerated no matter if they were rightfully or wrongfully convicted. Theme 10 addresses those messages sent by participants to all children with incarcerated parents and the world. Participants's quotes for this theme ten are located in Appendix BB.

Subtheme: The criminal justice system's failures. All 13 participants expressed negative perceptions about the criminal justice system except Adahy who showed a mixed impression. He explained that he cannot condone all justice officials for what a few had done to his parent. This is just "one bad apple spoils the bunch" he stated.

This subtheme explores left-behind children's perceptions regarding the criminal justice system and many other concepts that justified their understanding of justice officials' misconducts. Their answers were coded based on whether they were negative, positive, or mixed regarding the criminal justice system. All the participants expressed that the criminal justice system failed them and their families.

The left-behind children participants expressed that they had endured the wrath of wrongful conviction in silence and never had a chance to speak their feelings. The next section will focus on participants' perceptions about speaking out and a message each one sent out to children with incarcerated parents (wrongfully or rightfully convicted).

Subtheme: Feelings about speaking out. As the left-behind children participants were describing their lived experiences, most of them took the opportunity to send a

message to other children that would have been beneficial to them if they knew how to deal with their situation. Eight out of the 13 participants expressed that they experienced fear of speaking out about their sorrow, sadness, and pain after their parents' wrongful incarceration. Participants' quotes for this subtheme are in Appendix CC.

Subtheme: Important message to other children. Left-behind children participants took the opportunity to send their messages to other children in their communities who are experiencing parental incarceration for whatever the reason. They sent their words out there in support of those children because they have "been there and done that" as expressed by many of them. One similar advice that was from most of the participants to the other children of incarcerated parents was "no matter what happens to your parents, you are still responsible for your actions. At the end of the day you, as a child, will pay for your mistakes." Participants' quotes for this subtheme are in Appendix DD.

Discrepant Discoveries

Some of the information gathered from participants were different and others were similar. For example, in theme 4, parent-child relationship before wrongful conviction, three participants were too young to remember if their parents had a good relationship with them or not. Those participants were Dakshana, Malia, and Tayanita. They were about one-year-old when their parents were wrongfully convicted. A parent-child relationship could not have been perceived by them before wrongful conviction.

Another discrepancy related to theme 4 is that regarding Chogan. Chogan was seven years old when his father was wrongfully convicted. However, he was already

growing up without his father in his life, thus making it hard to determine whether his psychosocial impacts were wrongful-conviction-related.

The other discrepancy that I wish to introduce is that Alo had a great relationship with his father before wrongful conviction. Right after his father's wrongful conviction, Alo started getting in trouble with the law. He said that he hated his father and felt ashamed for the crime his father was blamed for, and this was why he did not go to visit his father in prison. However, Alo was in the street committing crimes until one day Alo shot someone, was charged as an adult, and sent to jail at the age of 17 years old. To his surprise, he was in the same prison as his father. He stated that before wrongful conviction his father was great man. Alo explained how hard it was for him after his father went to jail and why he followed his father's footsteps.

Summary

In this chapter, I clarified the strategies I used to find and enroll my participants, described the participants' profiles, explained how the information was gathered and stored, data analysis, and the first and second cycle coding strategies, code categorization which led me to the generation of the themes. Ten themes emerged and they were family structure, behavioral issues, educational impacts, parent-child relationship, missing important milestones, the criminal justice officials' misconduct, PTSD, anger, stress, anxiety, devastation, stigmatization, bullied in school and at home, mental health impact of parental wrongful conviction, and inside the left-behind children minds. The interpretation of the findings will be presented in the next in chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The focus of this research study was to explore and enhance understanding of the sociological and psychological impacts of wrongful-conviction-induced separation on children left behind by parents who were wrongfully convicted. The understudied mental health effects of wrongful imprisonment on left-behind children of those wrongly convicted are at the center of this multiple-case study research. As described in Chapter 4, interviews were conducted to understand the psychosocial status of those children who were isolated from their parent(s) because of the latter's wrongful conviction. I conducted semistructured interviews with 13 participants. I recorded the interviews and then transcribed them. I uploaded the collected data into NVivo 11 Pro to help with the management and analysis of the discerned themes. The interview questions centered on the research question: What are the psychosocial consequences that wrongful convictions have on children who grew up in single-parent households? I divided the interview questions into two specific sections, that is, sociological and psychological consequences, which aligned with the research question.

To understand fully the results of this exploration, it was vital to have the full perspectives of the left-behind children's lived experiences and the psychosocial impacts of wrongful-conviction-induced separation from their wrongfully convicted parents. Also essential was a perspective on what factors contributed to the PTSD, drug and alcohol abuse, negative behaviors, academic failures, juvenile delinquency, early pregnancies,

negative emotional responses, self-social isolation, and self-destructive behaviors of these left-behind children.

Summary of Findings

This research study gives a robust depiction of elements that dominate and impact the general psychosocial wellness of children left behind by wrongfully convicted parent (s). Nine participants stated that the day their parents were convicted, they were immediately in great financial and psychological trouble. Three participants were too young to understand what wrongful conviction was. One participant did not know his father even though he was at an age where he could have known his father. After the wrongful conviction, this participant tried to make a connection with his father while the latter was in prison. At this point, the participant began to sense a significant psychosocial impact.

All participants expressed that wrongful conviction had a significant impact on their academic education. Most participants believed their parents were innocent or at least were told by family members that their parents were irreproachable. Participants concluded that financial uncertainty, lack of a child-rearing system, blunt disturbance in family structure, and loss of faith in the impartiality and civility of the justice system steered them to fail academically, to have behavioral issues, to exhibit self-social isolation, and to reduce professional abilities and capabilities. These perceptions created anger and frustration for those participants even causing some of them to be suicidal, which affected their behaviors and thwarted the way they visualized society as a whole.

The participants portrayed vulnerabilities and did not comprehend what might occur amidst the wrongful conviction of their parents. All 13 participants explained that they were not offered any help, such as to get involved in any government programs or in any economic or psychosocial help. One participant expressed that her life was full of unfortunate events amidst the wrongful conviction of her father. All participants expressed that wrongful conviction destroyed their relationship with their parent(s).

One participant explained that she used a prison visit as a positive way to communicate with her father. Her father helped her with high school math by writing on the moisture they created with their mouths on the glass that separated them. All other participants reported having horrible experiences visiting their wrongfully convicted parent in prison.

None of the participants believed there was any fairness, effectiveness, accountability, or professional responsibilities in the way in which criminal justice officials handled their wrongfully convicted parents' cases. All participants indicated that they had a negative perception of the criminal justice system during and after the wrongful conviction. All participants believed that prison visits would be better if they stopped dehumanizing the prisoners and treated visiting children with more respect.

The no-touching visits in prison affected the left-behind children morally, physically, socially, and psychologically. One participant indicated that what touched his heart the most was that he traveled 8 hours by bus to visit his mother on death row, and he could not even hold his mother's hand or hug her. He stated that that broke his heart,

and he was in tears for days because of that. All 13 participants expressed concerns about how many other people in prison now might be innocent.

Most participants stated that they were bullied in school and in the community in which they resided. They believed this created a withdrawal mentality causing some of them to be socially self-isolated; others fell into illegal substance abuse to mask the pain and hurt caused by the wrongful conviction of their parents. Four participants expressed that their life was so tragic that they had tried many times to end it. Three of them indicated that they had entered into wild adventures exposing themselves on the off-chance that they would get killed. Another one tried to hang herself with a jump rope tied on the bathroom curtain rod. The wrongful conviction had made left-behind children suffer severe psychological consequences.

All 13 participants believed that they had negative emotional issues that were related to the wrongful conviction of their parents. Some expressed that they had built up anger towards the wrongfully convicted parent while others had built up anger towards justice officials for taking so long to realize that their parents were innocent. Some participants knew their parents were wrongfully convicted, while others did not know. However, the participants were all experiencing depression, stress, PTSD, fear of intimacy, devastation, and stigmatization.

All 13 participants expressed that they did not feel comfortable speaking about their feelings with their peers or other people. They indicated that they had been suffering in silence because of shame, embarrassment, and the fear that people might judge them.

One participant expressed that when she told her friends that her father was in prison wrongfully, her friends gave her some funny looks as if she were not telling the truth.

Participants recounted that the criminal justice officials treated them as if they were collateral damage for the crimes their parents did not even commit. Three participants mentioned that if this were the case, then left-behind children should also be compensated for suffering wrongful-conviction-induced separation from their parents. They expressed that the criminal justice system not only failed their parents but the whole family.

Interpretation of the Findings

The findings from this study are grounded in the social learning theory, social control theory, role-modeling theory, and the general theory of crime. These theories were analyzed and applied to this research. This research study provides an understanding of left-behind children's lived experiences and the psychological and sociological impacts of wrongful-conviction-induced separation from their parents. The remainder of this chapter will discuss findings from the 10 themes that evolved from the research and how they align with, refute, or add to our knowledge of the literature on these five theories.

To summarize the themes that were presented in Chapter 4, I present them as follows: (1) family structure; (2) behavioral issues; (3) educational impacts; (4) parent-child relationship; (5) missing important milestones; (6) the criminal justice officials' misconduct; (7) PTSD, anger, stress, anxiety, devastation, stigmatization; (8) bullied in

school and at home; (9) mental health impact of parental wrongful conviction; and (10) inside the left-behind children minds (see Table 4).

Table 4. 17 *List of Themes*

Theme	Title
1	Family structure
2	Behavioral issues
3	Educational impacts
4	Parent-child relationship
5	Missing important milestones
6	The criminal justice officials' misconduct
7	PTSD, anger, stress, anxiety, devastation, stigmatization
8	Bullied in school and at home
9	Mental health impact of parental wrongful conviction
10	Inside the left-behind children minds.

This research study presents the encounters, perspectives, treatment by others, and desires shared by those children left behind by their wrongfully convicted parent. There are other research studies conducted regarding wrongful conviction. However, so far, I have found none that directly addresses the psychosocial impact of wrongful conviction on left-behind children and that uses real data.

Shehadeh et al. (2015) demonstrated that children who experience family structure interruption in their adolescence are more likely to wind up in the most reduced professional endeavors than are children from an intact family. Family structure disturbance due to wrongful conviction impairs the relationship between children's employment and goals as they (the children) become adults. Two participants described

that they had a hard time making enough money to take care of their families, as one (participant) was working as a warehouse helper and the other as a construction worker. Similar to the findings of Shehadeh et al. (2015), the majority of the remaining participants expressed a decrease in or dissatisfaction with their professional levels.

Shehadeh et al. (2015) found that children from conventional two-parent homes displayed a more grounded example of the intergenerational professional related legacy than do those from disturbed families. My research study provides the data to support this finding, including educational failure and low professional levels of left-behind children related to their parents' wrongful conviction. These impacts are the same regardless of the race of the left-behind children who participated in this study.

Impact on Family Structure

Theme 1 (Family) was about the family activities and social structure and how the wrongful conviction impacted the left-behind child in these areas. The children who seemed to be affected the most from wrongfully-convicted-induced separation were those who were left to live with a single mother; they include Benna, Tablita, Alo, and Knoton. According to Shehadeh et al. (2015), a family is a structure in which each person has a part to play and rules to maintain. People from the family structure are depended upon to respond to each other clearly as demonstrated by their assigned role, which is controlled by relationship affirmations (Shehadeh et al., 2015).

My study suggests that the change in family structure associated with wrongful conviction affects left-behind children both psychologically and sociologically. From a sociological standpoint, after parental wrongful conviction, the child stayed with their

left-behind parent, was sent to foster homes, or went to live with their grandparents or other relatives. Participants who remained with their left-behind parents reported that those parents had increased tasks and obligations causing them (the parents) to work two or three jobs to take care of their families.

All four participants who lived with their left-behind parent stated that they experienced their left-behind parents' falling into drug and alcohol addiction and working extra hours, which steered them (the participants) to hang out with the wrong crowd. One mother ended up losing her life following a seizure related to the consumption of drugs and alcohol, leaving her adolescent child, Benna, behind to mourn another loss. Benna stated that she had to go and drag her mother from a group of friends almost all the time because she was drunk. Every time she was drunk, she had a seizure that could extend for minutes, she said. She lost her mother in the process, leaving her to finish her teenage years as an orphan while her father was sitting in prison for 32 years, wrongly convicted.

Shehadeh et al. (2015) pointed out that emotional connection probably develops to advance the cohesiveness and collaboration that families require to ensure and sustain their members. Elevated strain can heighten these negative emotional factors that push solidarity and collaboration away, and this can cause issues. When comparing the review of Shehadeh et al. (2015) with the findings related to theme 1 (Family), the findings demonstrated that relatives become restless, and the uneasiness can heighten by spreading negativities among them and profoundly affect the left-behind children.

This study also found that parent-child relationships are affected owing to the shame and embarrassment created by a parental wrongful conviction. Ten out of 13 of the

children reported that their relationship with their parents did not feel like a parent-child relationship after exoneration because when bonds are broken for 10, 20, or 40 years, there is no magical way to put them back together. Three participants reported that they were one year old when their parent was wrongfully convicted and by the time they were exonerated, one of them was 18 years old, another was 25 years old, and the other was 26 years old.

Quadrilateral Impacts

Male Children Living Without Their Father

For this qualitative inquiry, three male left-behind children were interviewed on the basis of their experiences of dealing with the dilemma of losing their fathers (Alo for 24 years, Chogan for 25 years, Knoton for 30 years) owing to wrongful conviction. The investigator kept track of the psychosocial impacts of wrongful-conviction-induced separation on those three left-behind children, through the audiotaped interviews conducted at the time of data collection.

Geller et al. (2012) and Murray and Farrington (2005) determined that growing up in a fatherless home had detrimental impacts on a child, particularly on male children. Geller et al. (2012) further found that male children living in fatherless homes are in danger of mental health issues. These mental health impacts on male children were overwhelming and may involve: drinking, drugs, misguided thinking, and inclusion in criminal exercises, feelings of disdain, implosion, and forcefulness (Geller et al., 2012; Murray & Farrington, 2005). The present research study demonstrated similar findings because the three male participants whose fathers were wrongfully incarcerated reported

heavy illegal substance and alcohol abuse, two described that they had suicidal ideations, and another expressed that he was involved in dangerous criminal activities.

Chung (2011) and Murray & Farrington (2005) found that male children raised by mothers tend to be angrier and have more fights with their mothers. Chung (2011) added that the absence of the father figure in the family unit could influence male children into encountering unfortunate events that can make them forceful, fierce, and non-compliant with their mothers. Some findings of this study revealed that some participants had a relationship that was similar to that depicted in the conclusions of Chung (2011). For example, two male participants expressed that they were very close with their fathers when the wrongful conviction occurred, which brutally disrupted their relationship causing them to be bitter with everyone, including their mothers.

Furthermore, one male participant reported that being the child of a wrongfully convicted individual may convey social shame. This research study revealed that the social disgrace from unjust conviction could reach out and cause discord to the entire family. The male left-behind children participants encountered bullying by their peers, making them express humiliation, the absence of trust, the lack of regard, and disillusionment causing them to be aggressive towards their mother. The findings further indicate that owing to low parental obligation, male children participants tend to create hostility towards their mothers. For example, Knoton expressed that he was always angry and blamed his mother saying that she was the cause of his father's incarceration.

Female Children Living without Their Father

Imagine how devastated their lives would be if these girls were growing without their fathers for 20-30 years. They may develop shame, low self-esteem, weakness to confront life, feeling the need to have a man early in their lives, depression, lack of savoir-faire that they would otherwise have if the fathers were present. Six female left-behind children were interviewed on the basis of their experiences of dealing with the dilemma of losing their fathers (Abbie for 16 years, Benna for 32 years, Tablita for 30 years, Malia for 25 years, Tayanita for 25 years, and Zinha for 25 years) owing to wrongful conviction.

Block et al. (2014) found that when female children experienced childhood in fatherless homes due to paternal imprisonment, they tended to engage in early sexual activity or show sexual interest sooner than female children raised in a home where both parents were available and involved in their lives. This research study has similar findings. Five of the eight female participants reported that they started having sex at a young age and became pregnant at an early age. For instance, Zihna explained that she became pregnant when she was 14 years old.

Block et al. (2014), Geller and Franklin (2014), and Van de Rakt et al. (2010) explained that when female children achieve adulthood, they build up some contrary viewpoints towards men, which may cause an absence of trust of men as a ruler. This creates a problem in keeping up a longstanding relationship with men (see Block et al., 2014; Geller & Franklin, 2014; Van de Rakt et al., 2010). Likewise, the present research study found that seven out of eight female participants expressed a lack of trust in men in

their adult lives. Also, six out of the eight explained that they have difficulty keeping a relationship for an extended period even though they expressed being in love with their partner.

Kendler et al. (2015) showed that female children are typically and sincerely more touchy than male children are. They are more attached to their fathers than their mothers (Kendler et al., 2015). When fathers are present in their lives, female children tend to develop knowledge, allure, and all strategies to protect themselves against men who may attempt to have a sexual relationship with them (Kendler et al., 2015).

This research finds otherwise. Left-behind female participants whose fathers were wrongfully convicted countered that they lost control over their lives after their fathers' imprisonment. Also, they expressed that they encountered disgrace, low confidence, the absence of savoir-faire, and a shortcoming standing up against men's requests for sexual favors at an early age that they would somehow have refused if their fathers were around and involved in their lives.

Lansford et al. (2014) found that female children tend to encounter externalized and internalized behaviors while going through their childhood in broken family homes. These researchers defined internalized behaviors as the nearness of dread, sadness, low confidence, negative contemplations, melancholy, and uneasiness. Externalized behavioral factors were fighting, outrage, reserved behaviors, and outbursts (Lansford et al., 2014).

Similarly, the present study found that six out of the eight female participants experienced internalized and six encountered externalized behaviors. For example, in

theme 9 (Mental Health Effects of Parental Wrongful Conviction), all six-female left-behind children participants who grew up while their fathers were wrongfully convicted expressed fears, apprehension, anxiety, and embarrassment that were similar to the internalized behavior defined by Lansford et al. (2014). Also, in theme 2 (Behavioral Issues of Children Associated with Wrongful Imprisonment of their Parents), four out of the six female children participants who grew up without a father experienced externalized behaviors, such as battling with their peers, outbursts, shoplifting, drugs and alcohol consumption.

Male Children living without Their Mother

Two male left-behind children were interviewed based on their experiences of dealing with the dilemma of losing their mothers (Adahy for 24 years and Paco for 16 years) owing to wrongful conviction. Griffin (2015) demonstrated that maternal wrongful conviction causes male children to grow up without their mothers.

The present fathers will train them on how to be great fathers, yet they will not have the capacity to coach them on how to imagine a lady's adoration (Griffin, 2015). Similarly, the present research study found that both of the male participants expressed having a stable and secure attachment with their female partners. For example, in theme 9, Paco expressed that he experienced fear-of-intimacy because whenever he engaged with a woman, he became an over-protector.

Griffin (2015) found that young men's social lives revolved around gaining their mother's affection, which guides them towards keeping positive social connections, companionships, and associations. The nonappearance of mothers because of maternal

wrongful conviction had unfavorable psychological health impacts on male children. These factors not only affected the children but also affected communities where those children were developing (Griffin, 2015).

This research study demonstrates similar attribution, and that male participant whose mothers were wrongfully convicted had severe issues of social interaction, mental health problems, and were a threat to the community where they lived. For instance, when Adahy moved to a more impoverished neighborhood with his foster guardians, he was dealing with drugs, such as valium, LSD, and PCP, which negatively impacted the community. Paco experienced different and severe psychological impacts, such as loneliness, exclusion from social gatherings, and self-social isolation. They expressed that they could not keep any friendship.

Female Children Living without Their Mothers

There were two female left-behind children interviewed based on their experiences of dealing with the dilemma of losing their mothers (Hateya for 16 years and Dakshana for 16 years and her father through wrongful execution). Cho (2011) and Dworsky (2015) determined that from birth to the age of 13, the impression of a mother is everywhere on their little girls. The impact could be positive or negative depending on the mother's character.

The findings of the present study are similar. For instance, female left-behind children participants whose mothers were wrongfully imprisoned tend to experience the ill effects of misery, development impedance, mental anguish, and failure to comprehend intimacy with boys in their young ages. For example, Hateya recounted that she was

pregnant at an early age, which caused her to be mentally unstable. Dakshana explained that the mental strain of losing her mother and father to wrongful conviction was so potent, it made her try to hang herself in her foster guardians' bathroom using a jump rope that she tied to the shower rod. Luckily her body was too heavy, and she fell, with the rope tied around her neck and to the rod, inside the bathtub.

Hagan and Foster (2012) found that for female children, the mental health impact of maternal incarceration is more significant than when fathers are in jail. Mothers' detainment-induced separations from their female children are more inconvenient to their prosperity, safety, and advancement than to those whose fathers are incarcerated (Hagan & Foster, 2012). Similar to Hagan and Foster's findings (2012), Hateya was pregnant at a young age (16), and Dakshana had tried to end her life by attempting suicide at least once.

The previous section discussed how wrongful conviction affected the left-behind children based on mother-son, father-son, mother-daughter, and father-daughter connections. This qualitative research study grounded on four different theories including the social learning theory, the role-modeling theory, the social control theory, and the general theory of crime. The next section reviews each of these theories beginning with the application of the social learning theory.

Social Learning Theory

This multiple-case study is partly grounded on the social learning theory invented by Bandura (1977) and then later reviewed by Akers (2017) and Pace (2010). The social learning theory implies that children learn and behave based on what they see around

them and then replicate it. Children's behaviors learned from their impersonation and perception of others, can be turned around under the supervision of a father or mother figure. Some of the findings of this research confirm these ideas while others refute them.

Bandura (1977) perceived that there are four specific factors which are essential for the successful demonstration of the behavior needed to be learned. These factors are viewed as fundamental since they must be available before children can conclusively show the conduct of another (the model). These four factors are attention, retention, motor reproduction, and motivation (Bandura, 1977).

My research findings are different and suggest that all 13 participants had disabilities to function appropriately in class and in the communities in which they lived. Also, in contrast to the social learning theory, data in theme 3 (Wrongful Conviction Effects on Education), indicate that all four constructs of the social learning theory had been severely affected after parental wrongful conviction regardless of children's age, gender, and race.

Attention is a prerequisite for retention (Bandura, as cited in Akers, 2017; Pace, 2010). The present research findings are in agreement with the analyses by Bandura (1977), Akers (2017) and Pace (2010) concerning the social learning theory. The participants were unable to embrace social learning owing to the extreme psychological impacts that wrongful conviction had on the participants when they were children in school. To illustrate, in theme 3 (Wrongful Conviction Effects on Education), 10 participants recounted that they were dazed and/or spaced out most of the time while in

class and were therefore unable to concentrate or focus on what their teachers were teaching them.

Bandura's social learning theory (as cited in Akers, 2017 and Pace, 2010) determined that children's retention almost always is affected as a result of lack of attention. They stated that children must have the capacity to clarify perception and have the ability to concentrate and focus on the conduct that is demonstrated by their teacher to be able to retain and replicate what demonstrated to them (Bandura, as cited in Akers, 2017; Pace, 2010). The present research showed that owing to the parental wrongful conviction, the participants stated that as children, they had difficulty paying attention in class. Therefore, they were not able to retain anything discussed in their classroom. For instance, in theme 3, all 13 left-behind children participants indicated that they were not able to pay attention in class after wrongful conviction of their parents and therefore support Bandura's social learning theory.

Motor reproduction is the capacity of children to recreate the demonstration of behavior or classroom materials efficiently (Bandura, as cited in Akers, 2017; Pace, 2010). They contended that reproduction is not to the spread of the model but rather its implementation and successful completion of the observed action, which require a level of psychological expertise and stability (Bandura, as cited in Akers, 2017; Pace, 2010). The present research findings support Bandura's social learning theory because in themes 1 (Family) and 3 (Education), all 13 participants illustrated that they had been under duress due to parental wrongful conviction and therefore, these psychological requirements did not exist. Participants mental abilities and capacities to reproduce what

was demonstrated to them in the classroom were inhibited by the trauma caused by parental wrongful conviction. The participants recounted that that was the main reason why they failed so miserably academically.

Bandura (as cited in Akers, 2017 and Pace, 2010) stated that motivation is the desire to continue the behavior that one has learned, and children must be adequately aroused for compelling ongoing learning to take place. There must be adequate motivation for the children to apply their scholarly undertaking. Again, this research study confirms Bandura's social learning theory idea.

For instance, in theme 3, two participants lost interest in continuing to go to school while in middle school, and owing to lack of parental control, they ended up in gangs which caused them to be in and out of juvenile detention. There were two others who dropped out of high school, and four others who did not have the motivation to pursue their education after high school graduation. They indicated that they were not confident whether or not they would accomplish their goals owing to the lack of parental support and familial role model, hence their enhanced demotivation instead of motivation.

Bandura (as cited in Akers, 2017 and Pace, 2010) determined that parental support and discipline are necessary for the application of the social learning theory. The findings of this research confirm the social learning theory and indicate that parental wrongful conviction weakened and most of the time destroyed parental support and discipline capabilities. The lack of support and discipline put the left-behind children participants' academic lives in jeopardy because there was no positive parental support

and behavior to imitate. For example, Alo, Benna, Knoton, and Tabita expressed that they lacked support and discipline from their left-behind parents, and therefore they could not learn any behavior from them. This being the case, unfortunately, they ended up picking up negative behaviors from their left-behind parents and peers.

In this research, most of the participants lacked effective childrearing systems to enforce such support and discipline introduced in Bandura's research. This study showed that reinforcement and regulation, even though they are not the primary drivers of education had an impact on participants' learning. Moreover, deficiency of both support and discipline affected the level and degree to which the participants showed the conduct learned in and out of the classroom.

Bandura (as cited in Akers, 2017 and Pace, 2010) also demonstrated that the social learning point of view proposed the that modeling was strengthened by the area where children are living (Bandura, as cited in Akers, 2017; Pace, 2010). Environmental influence defined as the social behaviors that children gain from others sometimes bringing about fulfilling or strengthening their conduct (Bandura, as cited in Akers, 2017; Pace, 2010). Similarly, the participants of this study recounted that their lives were influenced by what they saw around them. For example, Alo explained that when his mother went to work, he was hanging out with his friends who later persuaded him to sign up with the local gang.

Bandura as cited in Akers (2017) demonstrated that modeling is the action of copying what others were doing whether good or bad. The findings confirm this statement because in order to fit in, participants indicated that they had to imitate what

others were doing. For instance, Adahy fell into drinking alcohol at a young age after he moved into another neighborhood where children were using adults to buy them illegal substances and alcohol. He copied their actions and started drinking to the point he was hospitalized numerous times for intoxication.

Role-Modeling Theory

A role model is an individual whose conduct, example, or achievement is or can be copied by others, particularly by the young, based on the Bandura's role-modeling theory (as cited in Chapple, 2003). The role-modeling theory demonstrates that people contrast themselves with other individuals who possess or perform the social jobs which are inspiring (Bandura, as cited in Chapple, 2003). This research study refutes this statement because almost half of left-behind children participants expressed that they were exposed to negative role-models after the wrongful conviction of their parents. For example, Alo, Knoton, Adahy, Tablita, Dakshana, and Malia indicated that they emulated neighborhood children who were involved and exposed to gang violence, domestic violence, sex abuse, and drugs and alcohol abuse. Therefore, they were exposed to and copied negative behaviors.

The role of parents as models to their children likewise fundamentally impact their children's education, proficiency, expectancy, and self-efficacy as demonstrated in the Bandura's role-modeling theory (as cited in Chapple, 2003). Parents and teachers were considered as positive community role-models. Community role-models were viewed as a focal impact on children's childhood and future achievement (Bandura, as cited in Chapple, 2003). In contrast, this research finds that left-behind children

participants were exposed to negative role-models. For instance, four participants recounted that their left-behind parent served as negative role-models to them owing to their drug and alcohol addiction and therefore their education, self-efficacy, and future achievements were strongly impacted.

Role-modeling theory implies that children role model those to whom they are attached and care about. As per Bandura, children familiarize themselves with positive or negative conduct from other individuals, such as parents, movies and TV actors, siblings, and others. Consequently, those behaviors are recreated or copied by the children in their community, which in turn accepted the living conditions, while the media is ready to report such conducts modeled by the children (Bandura, as cited in Chapple, 2003). Similarly, some of the participants in this study expressed that they copied what other children who did not have parental role models were doing, such as involvement in shoplifting, violence, drugs dealing, and other negative behaviors. For instance, nine out of 13 participants reported being involved in drug and alcohol consumption, aggravated assaults, drug trafficking, and other related crimes because they role-modeled their peers habits.

The role-modeling theory shows the possibility of negative behavior having reciprocal impacts on the learners (the children) and the communities in which they lived. Even though their peers might urge the individuals, left-behind parent, and other relatives to display learned behaviors, the impacts of such modeling influenced not only the learners (the children) but their communities as well as per Bandura's role-modeling theory (as cited in Chapple, 2003). Similarly, this research study finds that eight of the 13

left-behind children participants wound up being gang members, criminals, thieves, drug dealers, and drug addicts, which had a negative impact on the left-behind children participants and on the communities in which they resided.

Adults around the children (grandparents, left-behind parents, and foster parents) will react to the imitated behaviors with either punishment or support. On the off chance that the children emulate a model's conduct and the children's surroundings support the outcomes, or nothing is done to eradicate that behavior, then the children are probably going to continue displaying the behavior as in Bandura's role-modeling theory (as cited in Chapple, 2003). This research study supports this idea because nine of the participants indicated that they did not have parental figure to enforce imitated positive behavior while eradicating their involvement in negative conducts. Consequently, all nine participants ended being in juvenile detention.

On the other hand, if the adults around those children exerted disapproval of such behaviors' outcomes, then the children would cease displaying the learned behaviors based on the Bandura's role-modeling theory (as cited in Chapple, 2003). The findings of this research study, likewise, indicate that left-behind children explained that their grandparents rejected negative behavior ideation and reinforced positive ones. Therefore, there was a lower frequency of participants from this group getting into trouble with the law. For instance, out of the six participants living with their grandparents, only Malia had been in juvenile detention for marijuana possession.

Another part of Bandura's role-modeling theory is that of vicarious reinforcement, which implied that children would assess the result for other individuals'

behaviors when choosing whether or not to duplicate somebody's activities (Bandura, as cited in Chapple, 2003). Like Bandura's vicarious reinforcement ideology, this research study finds that left-behind children participants who were living with their grandparents demonstrated fear of the criminal justice system because of the harsh punishment inflicted to their wrongfully convicted parents. Therefore, they expressed that they stayed out of trouble as much as they could.

The role-modeling theory is indeed not a full clarification for all children's behaviors. The application is referring primarily to the situation when there is no role model in the individual's life to impersonate for a given behavioral response as posited in the Bandura's role-modeling theory (as cited in Chapple, 2003). This research refutes that ideology because left-behind children participants indicated that when they did not have a role model to copy behavior from, they turned to their peers and other people in the community. For example, seven out of the eight children participants who had been involved in juvenile delinquency explained that they were emulating their friends and other relatives, which means, there would always be someone to copy conduct from.

The role-modeling theory considers the individuals' behavioral challenges as resulting from factors such as exposure to models displaying negative behavior, ineffectiveness, and expectations of not being able to cope with threatening situations or people (Bandura, as cited in Chapple, 2003). The findings of this research study suggest likewise because labeling their parents as criminals created a false sense of parental criminality in the participants' minds. Consequently, nine of the participants displayed criminal behaviors and a lack of positive attributions when they were children. For

example, as Alo's father wrongfully sent to prison, Alo started following the same path which sent him to the same prison cell with his father at the age of 17 for manslaughter.

Bandura's role-modeling theory implies that the increase in self-efficacy comes from confidence and less anxiety and the ability to deal with threats from situations and people based on their capacity (Bandura, as cited in Chapple, 2003). Following this concept, conduct displayed through hope, dedication, and resiliency and, after that, continued or ended by its outcomes would be based on the capability of the person performing this behavior (Bandura, as cited in Chapple, 2003). Some of the present research's findings confirm this idea because participants lacked all sense of confidence that they would get their parents back and left with their negative and immature perceptions incapacitated them (participants) to perform these conducts. For example, Zinha and Benna explained that losing their fathers to wrongful conviction wiped out their hope of ever seeing them again. Therefore, this research clarifies social issues as coming about because of low levels of self-viability, which increase participants anxiety and reduce their abilities to deal with threats.

The findings of this study indicate that left-behind children participants experienced reduced self-adequacy, which might exist with those exhibiting juvenile delinquency. In themes 2 (behavioral issues) and 3 (impacts on education), 10 out of 13 participants expressed sentiments of powerlessness to achieve positive outcomes and therefore, those participants explained that they fell beneath desired behavior. This increasing inner-doubt leads participants to infer that they might be deficient in vital assets or abilities required to accomplish attractive academic executions and goals. This

situation coincides with the teaching of the role-modeling theory which conveys that the learning setting environment should expand participants' self-adequacy, certainty, and capacity to fulfill targeted educational objectives (Bandura, as cited in Chapple, 2003).

Bandura's role-modeling theory as cited in Chapple (2003) posited that children learned to behave based on environmental stimuli responses. This research study finds likewise because the unfortunate events triggered by their parental wrongful conviction brought about the left-behind children's erratic behaviors associated with ecological factors such as peer pressure, gangs' involvement, drugs dealing. The findings also implicate that geographical relocation and regional positions played essential roles in participants' conduct. More than half of the participants described that relocation to a neighborhood with high crime rates influenced their actions. For example, Knoton and Adahy described that living in an urban area where they mixed with individuals with guns and gang violence affected their conduct negatively.

Social Control Theory and the General Theory of Crime

This research study is grounded in the social control theory and the evolution of the general theory of crime (also known as the self-control theory). Gottfredson and Hirschi's social control theory implied that inadequate parenting leads to juvenile delinquency (Gottfredson & Hirschi, as cited in Phythian et al., 2008). Whereas, Gottfredson and Hirschi's general theory of crime (see Chapple, 2003; Phythian et al. 2008) posited that effective parenting deters juvenile delinquency. Some of the present research findings confirm the social control theory and the general theory of crime which extend to those left-behind children participants who were living with their grandparents.

In addition, some of this research findings confirm those of the social control theory introduced by Gottfredson and Hirschi as cited in Phythian et al. (2008), while others refute it. Some participants reported that they experienced inadequate parenting prompting them to exercise less control over their behaviors and involvement in positive social activities which is analogous with the application of the social control theory. Like the social control theory, participants who were living with their left-behind parent and those in foster homes reported that they had a higher rate of juvenile delinquency and detention related to the lack of an effective childrearing system compared to those living with their grandparents.

For instance, Alo, Benna, Knoton, and Tablita who were living with their left-behind parent and Paco, Dakshana, and Adahy who were living in foster homes had severe juvenile delinquency issues. Accordingly, the participants in these groups engaged in more significant amounts of crime than the other participants, such as felony drug trafficking, stealing, shoplifting, drug addiction, heavy alcohol consumption, aggravated assault, drugs possession, manslaughter, robbery, and carrying illegal weapons. The findings of this research study reinforce that wrongful-conviction-induced separation promotes inadequate parenting analogous with the social control theory, and therefore, increases participants chances of becoming involved in juvenile delinquent activities.

For example, nine out of 13 participants reported being in juvenile detention in their adolescent years owing to lack of effective parenting, supporting both the general theory of crime and the social control theory. The social control theory and general theory of crime were later reviewed and utilized by other researchers (see Phythian et al.,

2008; Chapple, 2003). Gottfredson and Hirschi's general theory of crime hypothesized that criminal behaviors occur when familial, societal, educational, and peer interaction bonds are debilitated, destroyed, or ruined (see Chapple, 2003; Phythian et al., 2008).

However, Gottfredson and Hirschi as cited in Phythian et al. (2008) contended that without such relationships, wrongdoing is an inescapable result. The findings of this research study indicate strong similarities with Gottfredson and Hirschi's general theory of crime's analogies (see Phythian et al., 2008; Chapple, 2003). For example, eight out of 13 left-behind children participants reported broken parental relationships, social isolation, school disconnection, and inadequate parental guidance, which resulted in the enhancement of their involvement in juvenile delinquency behaviors.

This aligns with the principles of the social control theory. People with reliable and stable connections with their parents and others inside society are more averse to disregard societal standards as indicated in Hirschi's social control theory (see Hirschi, 2017; Wiatrowski et al., 1981). Hirschi (2017) and Wiatrowski et al. (1981) determined that reliable and stable connection have four components: (1) attachment, (2) commitment, (3) involvement, and (4) beliefs. Attachment alludes to the cooperative linkage between a man and society.

The findings of this research study indicate that 12 out of the 13 participants distanced themselves from society amidst wrongful conviction of their parent. Among those, 12 participants reported social isolation and nine of them expressed being involved in juvenile delinquency and deviant behaviors. For example, Alo, Knoton, Dakshana, Adahy, Tablita, Benna, Malia, Paco, and Chogan revealed that they isolated themselves

from society owing to shame and embarrassment caused by parental wrongful conviction, which resulted in a high frequency of juvenile delinquent behaviors.

Commitment referred to people who have contributed time and assets into complying with social standards and desires are less inclined to deviate than those who have not made such efforts (Hirschi, as cited in Phythian et al., 2008). The findings of this research study concur with this statement because the nine participants listed in the preceding paragraph did not make time and effort to obey social norms owing to the lack of parental supervision or motivation. For example, those nine left-behind children participants explained that they did not have the knowledge to understand, invest time and effort in constructing social bonds with their parents and their communities due to the lack of parental supervision.

Gottfredson and Hirschi's social control theory found that involvement defined as time spent in socially affirmed activities that diminish the time accessible for negative behaviors (see Phythian et al., 2008; Chapple, 2003). Similarly, the present research study finds that the majority of the participants socially isolated themselves after parental wrongful conviction causing them to not effectively use their time to involve in positive social activities and thereby had more chance to take part in criminal behaviors. For example, Alo described that when his mother was working overtime, he used to spend his time hanging out with his companions who were already involved in shoplifting and drug trafficking, which paved the way for all his juvenile detention.

The last component of the social control theory identifies a person's level of beliefs in the ethical legitimacy of shared social qualities and standards (Gottfredson &

Hirschi, see Phythian et al., 2008; Wiatrowski et al., 1981). This belief was taught by members of the children's social circle, such as parents, teachers, friends, and relatives. The findings of this study demonstrate that 11 left-behind children participants lacked the support of parents, teachers, friends, and relatives to intensify their beliefs in shared social qualities which supports this ideology of the social control theory. For instance, Knoton, Adahy, Tablita, and Alo did not show the conformity of shared social beliefs when they were selling drugs and were involved in alcohol consumption at a young age.

In theme 2, as illustrated in table 10, nine left-behind children participants utilized illegal substances and or alcohol. Two of them reported hospitalization for having physical and mental health problems even in their adulthood related to early substance abuse. These findings align with the social control theory because participants indicated that their involvement in illicit drugs has to do with their lack of effective childrearing system, violence, sexual abuse, and family breakdown inflicted on them due to parental wrongful conviction.

Moreover, this study supports the social control theory and finds that the parental disconnection was even more tragic for the left-behind children participants who stayed with their left-behind parent owing to stress and depression associated with the wrongful conviction of the other parent. The research study also finds that left-behind children sent to foster homes after wrongful conviction fared worse than those living with their grandparents. Although the grandparents emotionally interconnected with the phenomenon of wrongful conviction, they responded better when it came to parenting

and supervising the left-behind children as indicated by the general theory of crime noted earlier.

The findings in theme 1, further indicate that participants who went to live with their grandparents were able to exercise a higher level of self-control than those who went to foster homes and those staying with the other parent. The findings demonstrated that the observed degree of parental supervision and care provision displayed by grandparents at different crossroads amidst this research study period is analogous to parental control. However, left-behind children participants who experienced less parental childrearing were more likely to exhibit hostility and viciousness later on in the latter years of childhood. This discovery aligns well with the implications of the social control theory.

In theme 1, three participants described that they experienced strong connections and effective childrearing with their grandparents during parental wrongful conviction. Throughout the study, all participants except of Benna, Alo, and Adahy indicated that they never had a chance to live with their grandparents amid wrongful conviction. Seven of the 13 participants stayed with their grandparents for a short period. Therefore, 'living with grandparents' is attributed only for those who lived with their grandparents for a long period. Those participants received long-term support from their grandparents, which reinforced the parental reconnection and social bond breakings emphasized by the social control theory. Gottfredson and Hirschi's general theory of crime as cited in Phythian et al. (2008) indicated that effective parenting prohibited juvenile delinquency. Consequently, those participants reported no juvenile delinquency issues, which is

analogous with the ideologies of the general theory of crime, have shown effective parenting through their grandparents.

Researchers of the general theory of crime discovered that parental connection could affect children's association in criminal conduct (Gottfredson & Hirschi, see Phythian et al., 2008; Wiatrowski et al., 1981). Again, the findings of this research indicate that wrongful-conviction-induced separation displays an inverse relationship with the general theory of crime which implies that effective parenting and parental connection can prevent childhood criminal behavior. Because wrongful-conviction-induced separation disconnects children from their parents, it therefore enhances their likelihood of committing crimes as indicated by the social control theory.

Parental connection brought down the probability of child delinquency (Gottfredson & Hirschi, see Phythian et al., 2008; Wiatrowski et al., 1981). The findings of this research study indicate that owing to the breaking of familial and social bonds by wrongful conviction on left-behind children participants, eight out of the 13 participants described that they became involved in dangerous criminal activities due to weak parenting, which is analogous to the general theory of crime. The findings of the present research study bolster Hirschi's general theory of crime which implied that effective parenting is an essential factor in protecting and preventing children from becoming juvenile delinquents. For instance, four of the 13 participants who were under effective parenting from their grandparents had low rates of juvenile delinquency, which is similar to the idea of the general theory of crime.

Shehadeh et al. (2015) argued that child-rearing styles seem to impact the advancement of children's social capabilities. He added that the typology of child-rearing styles incorporates four distinct classifications: definitive (high control/high warmth); tyrant (high control/low warmth); tolerant (low control/high warmth); and uninterested (low control/low warmth) (Shehadeh et al., 2015). However, left-behind children participants were subject to the uninterested style of child-rearing, except for those living with their grandparents which seems to be the definitive child-rearing style.

The general theory of crime further stated that the essential component leading to crime is the lack of self-control that occurs when parental control is missing (Gottfredson & Hirschi, as cited in Phythian et al., 2008). Low self-control could be utilized to predict later criminal conducts (Gottfredson & Hirschi, as cited in Phythian et al., 2008). Wrongful conviction hinders participants parental and social connections and weakens the childrearing process based on the findings of this study. Theme 2 found that 10 out of the 13 participants experienced low self-control due to inadequate parenting in their adolescent years causing them to get involved in numerous criminal activities, which agrees with the tenets of the social control theory and the general theory of crime.

This research study adds weight to the assumption that children who grow up with effective parental supervision and high level of self-control will be less inclined to be lawbreakers and more reluctant to be indicted and incarcerated as adults (Gottfredson & Hirschi, as cited in Phythian et al., 2008). The findings of this research indicate that eight out of the 13 participants exercised low self-control. Consequently, those participants broke the law at least once owing to low self-control.

Gottfredson & Hirschi, as cited in Phythian et al. (2008) hypothesized that the general theory of crime attested that connections to family, school and different parts of society serve to lessen one's affinity for criminal behaviors. Conversely to the general theory of crime, at the initial stage of wrongful conviction, all 13 left-behind children participants indicated that wrongful conviction of their parents ruined their family structure, school, and societal bonds. The results of this study demonstrate that left-behind children interconnectedness with parents, schools, and then the communities in which they lived were hindered and/or destroyed by the wrongful conviction of their parents, which adds weight to the ideas of the general theory of crime.

Gottfredson & Hirschi's general theory of crime implied that those with an inclination for criminal association are thought to have inadequate self-control (Gottfredson & Hirschi, as cited in Phythian et al., 2008). This absence of discretion led back to the child and enhanced the underlying signs of immoral conduct development (Gottfredson & Hirschi, as cited in Phythian et al., 2008). Gottfredson & Hirschi as cited in Phythian et al. (2008) determined that self-control acquired amidst early childhood does not change with time. This study counters this analogy because in their early adulthood and after parental exoneration, most participants strove to reconnect the links with parents and society.

Gottfredson & Hirschi, as cited in Phythian et al. (2008) demonstrated that the more effective the childrearing that participants experienced, the less they fall into drugs and alcohol consumption, early pregnancy and criminal activities. Nevertheless, this study confirms it on the general theory of crime grounds. For example, left-behind

children participants recounted that low self-control acquired due to the lack of effective parenting associated with parental wrongful conviction steered them to commit violent crimes and involved in temperamental behaviors, which is analogous with the implications of the general theory of crime.

Some left-behind children participants' self-control started improving in their early adulthood, which contradicts the general theory of crime referred to in Gottfredson & Hirschi as cited in Phythian et al. (2008). For instance, in theme 3, two participants indicated that they were still taking college courses (school connection). In theme 9, all 13 participants anticipated reconnection with their wrongfully convicted parents (parental reconnection). In theme 3, three participants expressed that the main reason why they chose to be social workers was to bring change to the foster care system and give back to the communities in which they are living (societal reconnection). All 13 participants had already passed their young adult ages at the time of their interviews. The older participants get, the more improved self-control becomes, which urged them to change course and become viable members of society.

Recommendations for Future Research

This research study gives an in-depth comprehension of the lived experiences and psychosocial impacts of wrongful-conviction-induced separation on children left behind by their wrongfully convicted parents. The discoveries in this research study showed that left-behind children were enormously impacted psychologically and sociologically. Since wrongful conviction disrupts family structure, it is likely that many left-behind children will experience most of the characteristics identified in the research study. The

participants had no understanding of the significance of the psychosocial damages that had been inflicted upon them due to parental wrongful conviction, and a great deal more left-behind children are living with that same lack of knowledge to this day.

Additional research is needed that could hopefully group information from all of the children of wrongfully convicted individuals in a national database so that they can be more accessible to scholars, research scientists, students, the media, and policymakers. This way their voices will be heard; they will understand when they are victimized and considered as collateral damage for the crime their parents' were wrongfully convicted of. The message should be extended to all children with incarcerated parents because they are innocent and independent of their parents' wrongdoings.

This research study focuses on the psychosocial impacts of wrongful-conviction-induced separation on left-behind children. While exploring this topic, there were many other opportunities for further research that emerged. For example, researchers may take a closer look at the extent of the damage done to left-behind children's education. Two of the study participants had only a middle school education; six of them had high school level education; four had completed an associate degree, and one had accomplished her bachelor's degree. Taking a closer look at left-behind children's academic learning could shed light on the phenomena that contributed to their academic downfalls. Further research recommended for an in-depth look at the embedded high rate of suicide attempts within the left-behind left behind children populace. More research should be done to find out the interconnectedness of suicide ideation with bullying and parental wrongful conviction. In this research study, 10 out of 13 participants were bullied at home and in

school. Participants described that to be the subsequent results of the wrongful conviction of their parents. However, to make this claim more reliable a quantitative-qualitative mixed method analysis of this particular connection may be ideal. Such a betrayal from criminal justice officials and undue forced separations have a detrimental impact on the left-behind children. Left-behind children participants trusted they were being served as collateral damage as contrasted by social learning theory.

The discoveries of this research study convey the consequences parental wrongful conviction has on left-behind children, bring attention to the requirement for criminal justice reforms and enhance the mental and social well-being and prosperity of the affected children population. More research is needed to investigate why left-behind children's mental and social wellness has been ignored for so long. The present patterns and perspectives of society may play a crucial part in understanding why psychosocial issues not considered as medical problems among influenced left-behind children. A quantitative study of left-behind children and children with incarcerated parents compared with children with non-incarcerated parents who share similar attributes might help us comprehend current patterns in children psychosocial issues associated with parental conviction.

The participants in this research study were 1, 3 to 10, and 12 years old at the time of wrongful conviction of their parents. At the time of the interview, those left-behind children were 2–51 years old. Additional studies are needed to investigate left-behind children who were 13–21 years old. The findings may use those research studies to educate children with incarcerated parents of the potential psychosocial dangers awaiting

them if they do not take steps necessary to prevent discovered psychological and sociological misfortunes and downfalls.

Implications for Positive Social Change

It would work better if our actions were tied in with making connection approving the way left-behind children feel in a specific way we act to support them psychosocially. The sense of despair, desperation, unhappiness, and distress related by the participants are not only happening to children of wrongfully convicted parents but also to all children of incarcerated parents.

The present research study's findings show that the complexities identified with psychosocial impacts of wrongful-conviction-induced separation of children left behind by their wrongfully incarcerated parents may contribute to long-lasting mental health conditions on those children. Also, the findings show wrongful incarceration induced separation can reduce mental wellness, employment rates, and social integration. In relationship to the psychosocial well-being of left-behind children with wrongfully incarcerated parents, the findings from this research study can be utilized to help government officials, community leaders, policy makers, justice reform advocates, and innocence project organizations to create programs to help all children with incarcerated parents. Those programs could aid in providing psychological and sociological assistance to those children, which, in turn, will reduce the psychosocial tortures of those children.

My research study indicated that, Because of the increased emphasis put on the function of self-control in children with incarcerated parents or deficiency in that area in causing criminal conduct, social projects, such as mediating children's psychosocial

development. These programs should include activities intended for upgrading child rearing aptitudes keeping in mind the end goal of enabling foster guardians and left-behind parents to increase self-control in children's minds as indicated by the implication of the self-control theory. In that capacity, these sorts of social arrangements viewed as a juvenile delinquency reversal work, as opposed to a reactionary method for reducing wrongdoing inside society, which seem to be failing.

The findings from this research study might be utilized to give knowledge to psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, the children's services administration, and community-based programs about the need to address left-behind children and children with incarcerated parents and understand the psychosocial complications associated with their situations. The facilitation of accessibility of these findings for providers caring for these children will aid in better diagnosis of what will be the cause of issues such as social isolation, suicidal ideation, and aggressive behaviors. Such endeavors are essential to instruct and help dispose of the persistent ascent of the rates of psychosocial issues of the left-behind children.

Limitations

There were a few limitations in this research study which may restrain the presentation and application of the findings. The left-behind children participants in this research study were African Americans, European Americans, and Hispanic with a ratio of n=8, n=4, and n=1, respectively. Other races, for example, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander were not found to be available and therefore could not take part in this research study.

There were 13 participants interviewed from 6 different states, which did not reflect the other geographical regions. For this study, the sample size was initially forecast to be 30. However, owing to difficulties of finding participants, the sample was chosen conveniently (not randomly) and therefore may not be representative and or speak to all left-behind children and communities. The information I gathered was translated by utilizing a coding framework, in this way, the development of other topics might not have been illustrative of the circumstances.

Another critical impediment of the research study is incomplete measures of mother-son, mother-daughter, and father-son relationships which were supposed to include five participants each. Father-daughter were satisfied with eight participants, whereas the other three components of this research study were not fully satisfied and therefore again may represent a weakness in the interpretation and application of the findings.

This study is limited to the fact that these are the experiences for children whose parents were wrongfully convicted of a crime and may not be the same as those whose parents were justifiably convicted. The experiences are most likely the same between the groups until that parent was proven to have been wrongfully convicted. Only then can their experiences be demonstrated to be different. This research study concentrated only on left-behind children whose parents were wrongfully convicted. . In any case, these left-behind children may end up with similar difficulties, desolation, feeling, and psychosocial impacts with those whom parents were imprisoned for crimes they did commit. Despite the way that they may be exposed to bits of information concerning their

parents' innocence, not until after their parents' vindication their contemplations, estimations, flashbacks, will move separate courses from other children of legitimately detained parents.

Researcher's Experience

Based on the literature review, I had expected that left-behind children would experience upsetting circumstances and might think of their life encounters in tragic terms, such as embarrassment, shame, and open disgrace, stigmatization, and irreverence. I kept notes in my diary about my predispositions and personal convictions, even though I had not experienced their situations myself. My opinions emerged from my experience while interacting with the Innocence Network communities, such as wrongfully convicted individuals, their advocates, students and professors, volunteers, and the Innocence Network and Innocence Project organizations. At the 2017 Innocence Network Conference, I had witnessed over 200 exonerees who had been freed from prison for an extended period and for crimes they did not commit.

I have been exposed to children left behind by wrongfully convicted parents with severe psychological and sociological issues. These were some of the children I could not even get access to because they were in prison for violent crimes. Others were inaccessible because of severe illegal drugs addictions. Some children had passed away from either natural causes and or drug overdose. Other left-behind children were scared of retaliation by justice officials and refused to participate for this reason alone. Praise be to those who overcame their fears and exercised the extreme courage to participate in the study.

Although the experience was a hard “pill” to swallow, I kept notes all through the research study procedure and set aside personal inclinations and my convictions. Preferably, the participants in this exploration were given the opportunity to vent the content of their minds on the most crucial issues of their experiences. I concealed and isolated my convictions and predispositions and guaranteed that I portrayed the interview questions as open-ended, leaving the capacity for participants to express their encounters, circumstances, experiences, incidents, and situations, without my guidance, impact, or control.

Summary and Conclusion

In brief, factors which had a psychosocial impact on the left-behind children of wrongfully convicted parents depend on participants’ personal beliefs and observations. Left-behind children participants did not have a clue about their situations in their preadolescent years. They started to have a hunch when they reached fifth and sixth grades. That was when they began to realize what was going on around them. In some instances, grandparents kept them in the dark of their wrongfully convicted parents’ situations, which seemed to work reasonably for the mental wellness of participants. However, those participants who did not have their grandparents ended up experiencing severe psychosocial issues including involvement in criminal behaviors, poor education, social isolation, bullying victimization, suicidal ideation, reduced levels of professional accomplishment and development, fear-of-intimacy, and fear of speaking out.

Regardless of the few limitations previously discussed, the present research study gives an exceptional commitment to the current comprehension of lived experiences and

psychosocial impacts of wrongful-conviction-induced separation on left-behind children. Irrespective of whether a considerable number of them accepted that they were unfortunate, they did not convey such convictions or express any worries. Left-behind children participants were too young to understand that they were victimized by those who were supposed to protect them. The understanding gained in this research study of the left-behind children subjects might be utilized to help others to implement compelling approaches to teach and oversee all children living in broken homes. Such an understanding could enhance the mental and social well-being, prosperity, and lifespan of children with incarcerated parents for quite a long time.

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Appendix A: Participants' Profile

Participants Quotes

Abbie is an engaged Hispanic female. Abbie relationship with her father was great before, during, and after his wrongful conviction.

Adahy is a White male. He is a father and a husband. His relationship with his wrongfully convicted mother was great at first. Right after wrongful conviction, their relationship started deteriorating. Adahy felt like brainwashed towards hating his mother. His foster guardians were keeping every piece of newspaper from the media regarding his mother and the crime they pretended she had committed. From time to time, they will reveal to him and his siblings how bad his mother was. Effectively, he, his brother, and his sister developed a tremendous amount of hate for their mother while she was in prison. Although his brother and sister were reluctant toward forgiving their mother, he took the initiative to receive his mother with open arms after exoneration.

Alo is a married Black male and a father of three children. Alo's father was all he had. As mentioned previously his father would go everywhere with him and was a single father. When his father was wrongfully convicted, he was forced to go live with his mother. Although, he did not have a strong bond with her. It did not take long for Alo to be in the street committing all kind of wrongdoings and getting into trouble with the law. He never had time to visit his father in prison at first. His relationship with his father strengthening after he turned 17-years-old. He shot a man and was sent to the same prison where his father is an inmate one or two months after his 17th birthday. Inside the prison facility his father was a great source of security for him, he expressed until they

transferred him (his father) to another federal prison facility. His father was exonerated before his time ended. Now he is out and has an excellent relationship with his father.

Benna is a Black married female and a mother of three children. She is in her 4th marriage. She was diagnosed with a fear of intimacy and has trust issues that destroyed her previous marriages. Her father spent 32 years in prison for a crime he did not commit. During her father's wrongful conviction, she was the one taking care of her sick mother. This situation took away the time she would make to bond with her father through visits, calls, or letters, and therefore created a gap in their relationship. After the passing of her mother, Benna rekindles her relationship with her father. Now her father is out and exonerated. Their relation is terrific.

Chogan is a single Black male living with his mother. Contrary to the other participants, Chogan did not have a relationship with his wrongfully convicted father. As aforementioned, his first communication with his father was by mail while his father was in prison. After his father's release, he (the father) came to his birthday party. He stated that that was the best day of his life. After that their relationship became sour again owing to some drama between his mother and his aunt from his father's side.

Dakshana a divorcee and now engaged White female and mother of three. She could not remember what happened when her parents were wrongfully convicted. However, after her mother's freedom, she (the mother) was on her way coming to visit her while she was in school. The school officials told her to be mean with her mother and not to show her any love. To the school officials' disappointment, she received her mother with open arms. Now they are great friends.

Hateya an engaged White female with two beautiful children. She kept a strong bond and relationship with her mother throughout the whole process (from arrest to freedom).

Knoton is a Black male and an engaged father of three children. His relationship with his father strengthening skeptically after his exoneration. He grew up believing in his father's guilt and was even shameful speaking of his father.

Malia is a single Black female with three children. She was too young to remember her relationship with her father before his wrongful conviction. Malia's relationship with her father developed while he was in prison. She stated that the link is not of a father-daughter because she barely knows the man. She expressed that this is a weird relationship.

Paco is a European White male and father. Before the wrongful conviction of his mother and step-father, his relationship with his parents was great. They were traveling, going to amusement parks and going fishing with him and he was having fun. Suddenly, everything changed for the worst when his mother and step-father got arrested and convicted for a crime they did not commit. His relationship with his parents stayed strong to the fact that he knew for sure that they were innocent.

Tablita is a Black female and an engaged mother of four children. At first, her relationship with her father was excellent. That relationship became sour during his wrongful conviction. She hated her father because she was being bullied and attacked regarding the false accusation about the crime committed by her father. Now she is a grown woman and takes their relationship to the next level.

Tayanita is a single Black female with no children. She also was too young to remember how her father went to prison. She spent all her life without a father, and suddenly her father got exonerated and tried to boss her around. She considered her relationship with her father to be rocky. “I need time to digest this whole father-daughter thing,” she said.

Zihna is a single Black female and mother. She had an incredible bond with her father before his wrongful conviction. She remembered going to many different fun places with him. She came home from school one day, and her mother told her that she would never see her father again. This news killed her inside. She said that her father has a gentle heart and would never do such a thing. Therefore, she kept her relationship with her father throughout his imprisonment. They still have a strong bond now. The participants’ profile in the table will give more biographical information regarding education, employment status, age at parental release from prison, and the number of years their parents spent in jail wrongfully.

Appendix B: Participants' Race, Gender, and Relationship

Participants' Race, Gender, and Relationship

Participants Quotes

Abbie reported that her father spent 16 years in prison for a crime he did not commit. She was 20 years old when her father was exonerated and 21 at the time of the interview. While her father was in prison, her paternal grandparents took her to live with them. They supported her education all the way up to the college level. In May 2017 she graduated with a bachelor's degree in human services because she wanted to get involved in helping other people.

Adahy explained that he earned an associate degree in social work because of his experience in the foster care system. He wanted to help other children with similar problems with him and made a significant difference in their lives. Adahy was 32 years when interviewed and 27 when his mother was exonerated. His mother spent 22 years wrongfully imprisoned.

Alo described that he was 33 years old when his father was exonerated and 34 at the time of the interview. His father wrongfully convicted for 24 years. He dropped out from middle school and now works as a warehouse worker to feed his family.

Benna indicated that her father falsely incarcerated for 32 years. She has an associate degree in social work and is working in the profession. She was 43 years old when her father was exonerated and 43 when interviewed.

Chogan's interview took place when he was 32 years old. He recounted that he was 31 years old when his father was exonerated after spending 25 years in prison

innocently. After high school, Chogan did not continue because he said that school officials said he had learning disabilities. Chogan is unemployed and living with his mother.

Dakshana stated that she went to a community college for a few weeks and dropped out and never had time to go back. She is a photographer by day and a bartender by night. At the time of the interview, she was 42 years old. Her mother spent 16 years on death row for a crime she did not commit. Her father got executed after 15 years on death row for that same crime to find out that he was innocent one year later. She was 18 when her mother was exonerated and 17 when her father died from the electric chair.

Hateya explained that her mother spent 16 years in prison for a crime she did not commit. She was 28 years old when her mother was exonerated and 37 at the time of this interview. She is working as an assistant manager at McDonald's while going to college, taking one course at a time.

Knoton reported that his father was wrongfully convicted for 30 years. Knoton was 34 years old when his father was exonerated and 39 when interviewed. "With a middle school education, I have no other way to make money to support my family, but too overworked myself," he expressed. Knoton works in a construction firm and sometimes does not work when the company has little or no contract work for him.

Malia's interview took place when she was 27 years old. She recounted that she was 26 years old when her father was exonerated after spending 25 years in prison wrongfully. After high school, Malia did not continue. She is unemployed and living in a shelter with her two children.

Paco stated that he was having so much trouble in school, so he did not directly graduate from high school. He did what is called a High School Completion. Paco had the school system to declare that there is nothing else that the system could do for him, so Paco could go to the local community college to complete his high school education. There Paco did everything he needed to do as if he were in high school, and he got his High School Diploma. He is working as a security guard. He was 51 years old when interviewed. His mother spent 16 years on death row for a crime she did not commit. His step-father got executed after 15 years on death row for that same crime to find out that he was innocent. He was 25 when his mother was exonerated and 24 when his step-father died from the electric chair.

Tablita reported that her father was wrongfully convicted for 30 years. She was 35 years when her father was exonerated and 41 when interviewed. She has an associate degree in criminal justice but never had a job in the field. She is currently unemployed and being supported by her boyfriend.

Tayanita described that she was 27 years old when interviewed. She was 26 years old when her father exonerated after spending 25 years in prison for a crime he did not commit. After high school, Tayanita did not continue her education right away, but now she is taking one course at a time while she is working as a babysitter.

Zihna's interview took place when she was 32 years old. She reported that she was 31 years old when her father was exonerated after spending 25 years in prison wrongfully. After high school, Zihna did continue and got an associate degree in criminal

justice, but she has never worked in that field. She is working in a retail store to make enough money to feed her children. Zihna and her children are living with her mother.

Appendix C: Theme 1: Family

Theme 1: Family**Theme 1: Family**

Subtheme: Strong family support. Participants' quotes.

Abbie: Luckily, I have had a strong support system. My family and I were very close, so, my paternal grandparents had been taking care of me since my father went to prison. They're always supporting and motivating me through everything, and they made me recognize how smart I can be, and if I put my mind to anything and I could achieve it. They have a significant role in pushing me and making me thrive in school.

Chogan is another left-behind child who had benefited from strong family support. To illustrate his conversation regarding strong family support, Chogan speaks of his maternal grandmother and mother.

Chogan: I'm a laidback person. I've never been in trouble because I'm staying focused on doing what is right. I'm trying to do only positive things, so I do not end up in jail. I understand that a bunch of children who do not have the father there to support them ended up incarcerated for some foolishness, but me, I have my mother to thank for raising me the right way. She had to take on two roles, a father and a mother, at the same time, and I love my mother for that. She helps me stay in school, stay out of trouble, and being the right person. My grandmother from my mother's side (God rest her soul) had been very supportive of me as well.

Hateya: Fortunately, I have had my family from my mother's side to take most of the tasks. I could have been one of the unfortunate children and be left entirely on my own. Luckily, I had them to take on from where my mother went. I did not have any bad experiences living with them. I would have some of my cousins come over, and [they] brought me things and sometimes a little money. They've always been there for me. So, I think their kindness had made a big difference in the outcome of my not being in trouble with the law and falling into drugs and alcoholism. It could have been worse even though [it's] depressing.

Hateya's family support was a little different because she received support from many different sections of the family structure.

Hateya explained that a mother in a girl's life is a significant piece, especially in the teenage. She was again lucky that her grandmother had seven children and they were all girls. So, her mother's siblings (her aunts) were there "to help me out." Almost everything she needed, and her mother would have done for her if she were there, they did for her. "That was a blessing," she said. She further described that it would have been more devastating for her if she did not have them to help out when she had her first child. Next is the family activities before a conviction will be the next subtheme.

Appendix D: Theme 1: Family

Theme 1: Family

Theme 1: Family

Subtheme: Family activities before wrongful conviction. Participants quotes.

Chogan was seven-years-old when his father went to prison for a crime he did not commit. He states that he never sees his father before wrongfully convicted the first time he ever sees his father was when his mother took him to visit him in prison. He stated that his father never comes to visit him.

The other nine left-behind children have full recollection of what was going on around them although some of them were just four, five, and six-year-old. The children enjoy going to amusement parks.

Abbie described how her life was before her father's wrongful conviction. She explained that she and her father used to go out a lot. They did a lot of things involving outdoor activities.

Adahy indicated that he was five when his mother was arrested in front of him. They took him and his siblings to foster care after taking his mother away—He still remembers that. My mother and I went to the park very often. I remember before my father died, we were a strong and stable family. We used to go to the McDonalds and had some family reunions.

Alo indicated that his father was very active in his life before conviction. He says that his father used to take him to McDonald's and to play basketball. His father played basketball with him before wrongful conviction.

Hateya showed how before her mother's wrongful conviction, she used to take her (Hateya) to places, such as the zoo, museums, vacations. Her mother used to have picnics with the whole family going to the amusement parks. They used to have fun as a family. She stated that as soon as her mother was wrongfully convicted, "my life started going downhill."

Benna reported that before her father went to prison for a crime, he did not commit. He used to take her roller-skating. She loved to skate. Her father used to save money to take her to skate. She described how she never forgot that her father used to take her and her mother to the movies as a family. Even though her father did not know how to ride horseback, he paid for her not only to learn but to compete as well.

Appendix E: Theme 1: Family

Theme 1: Family**Theme 1: Family****Subtheme: How did family activities change after wrongful conviction.**

Participants quotes.

Abbie indicated that her family activities had changed significantly despite her grandparent's supports. She stated that it was tough for her not to have her father around. Every Thanksgiving, Christmas, or Easter they always talk about how they wish their father were there. It was very different without him there.

Adahy, Paco, and **Dakshana** had no other recourse but to go to foster homes because they did not have immediate family who was ready to take on their responsibilities. There were no more family activities—everything stopped. They had to start living in a completely different family system where foster siblings were coming and going—no loyalty. They were moving from family to family like in a circle. They ere being abused—mistreated.

Adahy described that he went to 10 different foster families by the time he turned 18 years old.

Dakshana described that her foster guardians abused her. When they removed her and sent her to live with another family closer to her mother they abused her even more.

Paco had been abused by his foster parents and by the criminal justice authorities who came to grab him around one o'clock in the morning, took him in front of a grand jury to testify against his parents with no attorney present.

All the other children except those who were one year old and those who went directly to foster home right after conviction have reported extreme parent-child relationship deficiencies and financial breakdowns after the wrongful conviction of their parents.

Tablita explained that her father's wrongful conviction was catastrophic for the whole family. She was financially damaged because she was accustomed to seeing her father each time after work. He used to take good care of her. She cried almost every day.

Knoton: My father's conviction dismantled our family, mother and reputation forever. There was no more going to amusement parks, cookouts, or eating outs. I missed him, and all the activities he used to do with my sister and me caused me to go out there and tried to self-destruct.

Hateya: When my mother went to prison, my life stopped, and that was total misery and uncertainty mostly because I had never gotten along with my father and there was no way I would want to live with him. Then, my maternal grandfather and uncle came to live with me at my mother's house while my siblings went to live with my father (bad choice).

Alo: After my father's conviction, there were no more family activities. I think missing him and missing all these activities, and my mother ... never [being] home,

caused me to go in the street looking for a role model or a father figure among children my age. Next is the participants' illustration of growing up in foster homes.

Appendix F: Theme 1: Family

Theme 1: Family**Theme 1: Family**

Subtheme: Growing up in foster homes. Participants quotes. Adahy: I think because I was so young at that time, it did not catch up with me until a couple of years later. At five, six, seven years old I did not have a care in the world. I had a big backyard to play. I had two dogs to play with, and children were not as preoccupied as they are now. So, we used to be out to play all day long. Also, we did not live too far from the school playground, so, I could preoccupy my time and not be thinking of these things. That was [subconscious] suppressing memories.

The foster home's family structure is acceptable to children up until they started going out with other children and seeing how nuclear families were made up, and how they functioned. Left-behind children became aware of their situations when they were in elementary school.

Adahy explained that when he started getting older and being active at elementary school age to make more field trips and play programs, he began to see the way other families operated. That was when the situation appeared to affect him psychologically, because up until that time, foster parents/children [were] the family he knew. He had two connected components in foster care, his siblings and his guardians. That was the family life that he knew and that was the conventional family structure.

Dakshana explained that she was less than one years old when her mother and father were wrongfully convicted. Thus, she was admitted to a foster home as a newborn

baby. She's been conservative as far as giving details of what went wrong while she was in foster care. I leave this for the readers to see through lines of her intentions.

Dakshana: Obviously, I cannot give you names because one of my foster parents passed away and the other one does not consent to anything. So, they did their best as we all do in this life. I am sure there were mistakes made in the way I was brought up, and there were many things that had happened. The only thing I want to say about them is that we all do our best in this life, and they did what they thought was right whether they were right or wrong.

Left-behind children who had the chance to live with their grandparents were better off than those in foster homes and with the left-behind parents. Subsequently, this will be discussed further under the subtheme of the grandparents' role.

Appendix G: Theme 1: Family

Theme 1: Family**Theme 1: Family**

Subtheme: Grandparents role. Participants quotes. Dakshana and Paco were in the foster home where they separated with Paco going to juvenile detention and Dakshana going to a different foster home. Their grandparents fought the system and won them over. Life was better for them then until the plane crash that killed both of their grandparents.

Dakshana: When my parents went to prison I was ten months old. So, when they went to jail, my brother and I went to foster care, and my grandparents from my mother side got custody/guardianship of us. My grandparents died in a plane crash when I was six and a half. I lived with my uncle for a time, and then my mother's childhood best friend and her husband took legal guardianship of me.

Paco: My grandparents tried to shelter me as much as they could from all the stuff that was going on, but I could not believe that they could convict someone that was innocent. I stayed with my grandparents until they were killed in a plane crash out in Louisiana when I was 16 years old.

Appendix H

Theme 1: Family**Theme 1: Family**

Subtheme: Living with grandparents. Participants quotes. Abbie, Chogan, Hateya, Malia, Tayanita, and Zihna lived with grandparents and had their support throughout the wrongful conviction process or at least until they became young adults (See figure 2).

Abbie: I felt like my grandparents had been my parents my whole life. I had a lot of sorrow inside of me sometimes that made me ... not want to go to school. I do not want to take on responsibilities, or doing things that I was supposed to be doing. So, I think without my grandparents and my family, I would probably be in a foster home.

Abbie: Consequently, I would have a different group of friends and I would not have been in school. So, I do not think that I would be as strong as I'm now. I do not think that I would be able to realize my capabilities like what I would be capable of because I'm very critical of myself. So, I do not think that I would know what to achieve. I would probably just be giving up and being lazy and hanging out with the wrong people.

Chogan: Even though I was with my mother, my maternal grandmother had been taking care of me from the period I was born until she died when I was 24 years old. My mother and grandmother kept me in check and prevented me from getting

into trouble. My father's wrongful conviction had put more pressures on my mother and grandmother, causing them to over-work to support me.

Hateya: My maternal grandfather came through for me. He left his house to come live with me at the same home my mother was before her wrongful conviction. He stayed there with me until I was ready to be self-responsible. He set the stage for good moral character and thought me how to be self-responsible.

Malia: Living with my grandparents for the majority of my adolescent live shaped my personality, behavior, and character. She taught me everything I know now. That's why I had enough strength to hold on even when my life hit the bottom of the pit.

Tayanita: My Grandmother was my [heroine]. I did not understand that, but now I certainly do. My not getting involved in drugs and falling into doing the wrong things had more to do with her diligence on keeping me on the check while my mother was stressed out.

Zihna: After his conviction, I went to live with my grandmother. She taught me how to think first and act later. My life was an uphill battle, and I would not be able to carry on without the presence of my maternal grandmother. I was fortunate to have her. The childrearing system she had utilized on me and my sisters was exceptional.

Appendix I: Theme 2: Behavioral Issues

Theme 2: Behavioral Issues**Theme 2: Behavioral Issues**

Subtheme: Depiction of behavioral issues associated with wrongful conviction. Participants' quotes. Abbie, Hateya, and Chogan stated that they had not involved in anything that contradicted the law neither their families' norms.

Alo expressed that he used to do all kinds of terrible stuff, such as stealing, shoplifting, drug dealing and going in and out of juvenile detention. He stated that this started right after his father was wrongfully convicted when he was around nine and ten years old. Alo explained that he was charged and sentenced as an adult for shooting a man when he was 17 years old. Alo went to prison for ten years and released on parole after he served seven years.

Benna stated that she had been getting into trouble with the law multiple times. It was mostly for fighting. She said, "I was angry inside." She had fought people just for the fun of it. She would fight everyone. She ended up with multiple counts of aggravated assault charges, and she also went to jail.

Knoton explained that he was not of good character after his father went to prison. He described how he and his friends had been going all around stealing, shoplifting, and robbing people at gunpoint. He said, "We made money selling drugs." When Knoton was in school, he was getting into so many fights they had to expel him.

Tablita described that when she reached her teenage age, she began going out with friends and doing awful things, such as shoplifting, drugs and alcohol abuse which was the way I used to suppress the pain of losing my father from wrongful conviction.

Dakshana expressed that she had a substance abuse problem. She described that the people who took legal guardianship of her thought that she was having behavioral issues with her parents. They sent her to a behavioral school. She described that she had been an angry child owing “to what had happened to my parents.” She expressed that when she was a young adult, she was super upset. She was pretty rebellious. “I was a spitfire,” she said. She indicated that her anger issues had calmed down as she had gotten older and not using drugs and drinking anymore. She stated that she went to jail twice one for jaywalking and the other for throwing a party in a rented hotel room.

Adahy Described how tragic his life was. He had to live in a foster home along with his siblings. Between the age of 14 and 15, his foster guardians moved out to a town that had a high rate of poverty. So, the other children from that neighborhood were dealing with alcoholism, drug abuse, domestic violence issues making them not the best candidates to cast judgments. He just kind of fit in with them. As a result, when he was 15 years old, he got arrested for being involved in some types of criminal activities. He stated that “this would never happen to me if my mother [were] not wrongfully incarcerated.”

Appendix J

Theme 2: Behavioral Issues**Theme 2: Behavioral Issues**

Subtheme: Self-social isolation. Participants' quotes. Adahy: I remember when I was younger before I reach the young teenage age, about 14, 15, and 16, I've always kind of kept everything to myself because the younger children from elementary school always seem to have a typical lifestyle where mother and father involvement is crucial in their extracurricular activities. I never did extracurricular activities for that purpose.

Alo: I was young, but I remember that I did not want to be around anybody. Specifically, those people who knew what had happened to my father, I did everything to avoid them. I did not want to talk to anybody. I kept things to myself. I was the only child so, I had no brothers and sisters to help me sink all this. That created a withdrawing mentality that kept pushing me further from the people in the community where I used to live.

Benna: A few of my friends know though. Just one or two people know about my father being convicted of murder while I was growing up. After that, I did not tell anybody because many of my friends had both of their parents in their lives. So, I stayed away from most people because of my anger issues [that] developed due to the absence of my father.

Malia: I did not know what was going on in the beginning. After my grandmother and my mother told me about what had happened with my father, there was a

complex of inferiority that settled in my mind making me not want to be involved in any activities that included people other than those of my family.

Tayanita: As I said before I do not talk about my situation to many people. I separate myself from everyone except my sisters. When I deal with things, I deal with them by myself because I'm a quiet person. I hold much stuff inside. I keep things about my father and everything that he's been through; my siblings and [I] are splitting up, and my sister is getting into trouble. I deal with all this a certain way by holding them all inside and never talking about them a lot.

Appendix K

Theme 2: Behavioral Issues**Theme 2: Behavioral Issues**

Subtheme: Behavioral issues. Participants' quotes. Alo, Knoton, and Tablita explained that they had been on their own all day every day as a child and their left-behind parents used to leave their homes from early in the morning to very late at night most of the time with little or no food on the table. Their behavior as illustrated in figure 4 were a mixed bag with hefty criminal charges, such as drugs possession, felony drug trafficking, manslaughter, armed robbery, aggravated assaults, shoplifting, and carrying an illegal weapon. Benna was arrested many times for fighting and aggression.

Benna described that she was charged with aggravated assault and went to jail. She got into trouble with the law multiple times, but it was mostly for fighting and assaulting other people.

Sharita expressed that she was doing drugs and alcohol hanging out with the wrong friends. She got arrested for shoplifting and drug possession leaving her baby under her mother's care for the six months while incarcerated.

Alo explained that right after his father's wrongful conviction his life started declining from being a good child to hanging out on the street corner with other street children. At the age of 13, Alo was arrested and sent to juvenile detention.

Alo: I remember him go to jail and in a few months after that, I went through much trouble and then [went] to jail myself. My father was my role model. Seeing him going to jail set off a domino effect for me because I always want to be where

my father is and taking him away from me was devastating enough to make me lose my mind. I was still going to juvenile detention up until I got convicted of shooting this guy when I was 17 years old.

Knoton was the fourth child participant to stay with his mother while his father was wrongfully imprisoned. Even though Knoton was raised by his mother, he still ended up in the street committing criminal offenses. He was arrested and convicted of a felony, drug trafficking, robbery, and burglary.

Knoton: If my father were not wrongfully convicted I would not go through this entire dilemma. I would have had an alternate life. I would not be in such ... many embarrassing inconveniences as I had in my youthful days. I did not have my father to direct me, so I was tuning in to the wrong crowd who instructed me to all kinds of stupid stuff. Thus, [that] was the reason I wind up doing things that I should not be doing. On the off chance that my father was there, I would not have turned to folks my age for advice. Subsequently, I would have been spending more time in school than spending so many years in jail. My whole family was hurt and dismantled due to my father's wrongful incarceration.

Alo: I was the only child. I had no recourse. My mother was working too hard to put food on the table causing my mother to lose track of me.

Benna explained that she stayed with her mother as well and she indicated that she was taking care of her mother instead of her mother taking care of her. She developed anger issues. That was why she fought with other children, got into trouble with the law, and went to jail twice. Her mother had some form of substance abuse problem related to

her father's wrongful conviction. Her mother died when she was a teenager, which left her heartbroken.

Tablita: I went to jail after my first child was born. I used to be involved in every kind of stupid stuff. My mother was not home for most of the day. So, I used to have the house to myself to do whatever my heart desired. That put me into deep trouble with the law, and I used to bring boyfriends home and made out with them when she was out.

Knoton: My mother used to be in the street most of the time. She became a drug addict right after father's incarceration and therefore she [was] almost never home. When she finally comes back, she would be either drunk or under the influence of illegal drugs. So, we did not have had the parent-child bond.

Many people might think the best place for the left-behind children to live is with their left-behind parents, but this research demonstrated otherwise. For instance, Adahy explained that:

Adahy: In foster homes, we had good days and bad days. I had never gone without food on the table compared to what other foster dwellings would typically be. The only thing was that I had to go from home to home and the foster children were coming and going. I could not make any real bonds with them. There is no nurturing aspect in a foster home. ...I had to take care of myself, however small I was. Consequently, [that] was my set back. If I have any trouble in school, I could not come to my foster parents to tell them.

Appendix L

Theme 2: Behavioral Issues**Theme 2: Behavioral Issues**

Subtheme: Drugs and alcohol consumption. Participants' quotes. Adahy described that he started doing drugs and alcohol since he was 13 years old until the age of 25 "I do believe that all that time I was trying to mask my pain and my past about my mother." He stated. As a result, Adahy was 15 years old when he got arrested for felony drug trafficking. He was selling Valiums and got arrested and turning 16 during the whole court process. "I was expelled and put on house arrest." He stated.

Alo described that when his father went to prison, he then went to the street hanging with the wrong crowd and carried guns on him. Most of his juvenile detentions were for carrying a loaded weapon. "...I've got three juvenile convictions for carrying an illegal deadly weapon and one drug conviction," Alo stated. He's got one adult case when he shot this guy around his neighborhood, for which "I did seven years out of a predicted 17-year sentence," he indicated.

Knoton: I was selling all of the kinds of illegal drugs, such as methamphetamine, PCP, LSD, valiums, and weed. The business started declining when my supplier got shot and died. All my other friends and I came together to find a [solution for] the shortage of money and drugs. When I turned 13 going [on] 14 years of age, we [had] a new supplier, and he declined to deal with us. We believed this guy to be the one [who] eliminated our supplier for control of the territory. We moved away from our spots, and this was how my crew and I went down the road of

robbery and shoplifting. When I got arrested, I had four of my other friends with me.

Tablita: My first boyfriend and I were selling drugs on the corner. While I was pregnant the first time, my boyfriend got into a fight and shot someone and [got] thrown [into] prison. After that, that was total misery.

Nine out of the 13 left-behind children participants explained that they had been using drugs and alcohol to mask the pain and hurt associated with the wrongful conviction of their parents.

Benna described that she remembered when her mother drank beer she was okay, but when she drank liquor, she started to have seizures. "...Imagine a child [at] her young age alone with a mother who's having seizures almost every day. I was tiny up until I reached my early 30s," she stated. When Benna's mother had those seizure episodes, Benna would have to move things around so that her mother did not get hurt, dragged her to her bed, and sometimes she had to call the neighbors, or 911 for help.

She indicated that sometimes, she had to go to pick her up from wherever she was drinking to take her home. "I strongly believe that if my father were there, my mother would have been under control, and she would have still been alive," she added. She expressed that her mother told her one day that she had to drink every time she was thinking about her father.

Dakshana recounted that as a teenager young adult, "...I was super angry. I was pretty rebellious." She said. She indicated that she was rebellious and explained that her anger issues had calmed down as Dakshana got older and out of using drugs, and alcohol

“...which I did not do until I was in my 20s,” she expressed. She described that she was lucky not getting into trouble with the law before quitting using drugs and alcohol.

Hateya explained that If her mother were home, her brother and sister would not fall into using illegal drugs and alcohol. “Many things, that [are] going wrong with my family right now are due to my mother’s wrongful conviction,” she ended.

Knoton recounted that he was doing and dealing drugs and carrying a weapon since the age of 10 to mask the pain of losing his father to wrongful conviction. Even though, “...I do not do drugs anymore when I’m stressed out, I turn to alcohol. I cannot go past that,” he stated.

Tablita indicated that she and boyfriend were using and selling illegal drugs on the corner near the area where they lived. “I was doing this because I hated my life. I was suicidal point blank,” she expressed.

Tayanita: Another thing that gets to me was none of my parents was at my graduation. For my junior high school graduation, my grandmother was sick with cancer, and my mother was out on the street because she was on drugs, and I ... [had] nobody there for me.

Appendix M: Theme 3: Impact on Education

Theme 3: Impact on Education**Theme 3: Impact on Education****Subtheme – Academic/professional goals were affected by wrongful**

conviction. Participants' quotes. Alo, Knoton, Malia, Zihna, Chogan, and Paco had not achieved their academic and professional goals and had not been satisfied with their actual jobs. Even though Zihna have had an associate degree, she had not been working in that field. Paco, Knoton, and Alo had not been satisfied with their jobs.

Participants' quotes. Abbie: I missed my father so much I could not take it out of my head. This feeling sometimes affected me and made me so sad, when I was in high school. It caused my grades to drop, but my grandparents were always there to remind me that my education is the key to every door.

Tablita: Right after my father's wrongful conviction, my grades dropped significantly. I did not see the point of going to school anymore. Even though I went through all of these extraordinary circumstances, I graduated high school while pregnant. I did not know how I also heard what was happening in the classroom. I would space out for most of the time for most of the class.

Zinha: After his conviction, I went to live with my grandmother as you know. It was like I forget about him when I'm home, but when I'm in school, I had been thinking about him all day. It was just like at home I do not think about him, and when I am in school, I had all the time in the world to think about him and the whole situation. Like, if my father [were] here, how would my life be? And things

like that. I was spaced out and scared as to what my life was going to be without him whenever I was in the classroom.

Knoton: When I was in school, I was getting into so many fights they had to kick me out. I was weeping for a considerable length of time, and I could not get the hang of anything in school. I did not generally have friends from school since I dropped out of school while in 7th grade.

Adahy and Paco explained that they did not directly graduate from high school. Adahy went for the GED after his juvenile detention and passed it. Then he went to college and earned an associate degree in social work. In high school, Paco had the school declare that there was nothing they could do for him. He then left to get the GED from a local community college.

Paco reported that he had been so traumatized, they had to declare the school system incompetent because he could not learn anything. Thus, he went to the local community college and graduated there, and he had what is called a High School Completion.

Knoton reported that soon as his father was sent to prison, he dropped out of school. He was in 7th grade then. He had not gone to any other school after that. His mother could not keep track of him because she was working two jobs and was hugely affected by the fact that her husband had been sent to prison for a crime he did not commit.

Knoton: I did not finish high school. I took the 8-hour security guard course when I was 25-year-old. With my middle school education level, I do not think

there is much I can learn to further my education to go to college. Now I see how deep this situation had cut into my skin. My whole personality compromised. The condition broke the entire family. It's all due to the injustice they had done to my father.

Dakshana described that she was sent to a behavioral school because she was having problems over both of her parents wrongfully convicted. While she was there, she earned her High School Diploma. After high school, she was working as a bartender to support herself financially.

Tayanita described that she is currently in college. She said that she has not yet accomplished her goal but soon she will. She indicated that she is now going to school for two years to earn an associate degree in social work. She stated that she went through some ordeals when she was in foster care and would like to work to change the system. "I decided to be a social worker due to the fact that I have been through [it all] in foster care..." she indicated.

Malia clarified that she did not go to college after high school. "My father's wrongful conviction bothered me so much I could not learn anything when I was in elementary school." She has got an ocean license, and a customer service certificate from two different trade schools, but she had never found a job with any of them. She had been living in a shelter with her two children. "Yes, I completed High School. I've got a customer service certificate and an ocean license, but I [have] never worked in those fields."

Hateya clarified that she was in college taking one course at a time. Without both of her parents in her life, “as a poor child with no biological parents’ guidance, I took things upon myself, and that did not work out as it would [have] if my mother were there,” she further stated. She said that she started going to college while pregnant, but could not continue, “...so, I had to dropped out,” she explained. In the process, she ended with three beautiful children that her mother and she love very much. “I’m still going to college taking one class at a time because I have to dedicate more time home with the children versus going to school full time,” she said.

Chogan explained that after high school, he did not go to college. He said that people in his previous school said that he had a learning disability. That was why he felt that he was not good enough to go to college. He expressed great intention to go back but to school. “I have not accomplished my goal,” he said. I had been spaced out in class thinking about my father and how he left my mother to take care of me just by herself.

Alo and **Knoton** described that they had been construction workers. They were both middle school dropouts; the professional achievements had hindered.

Alo: I wanted to be an architect. I did not accomplish this goal. I did not graduate from high school. I had never been in a high school before. I’ve got my HSCD in jail. I am a warehouse worker, and I do not make enough money to take care of, my family. I wish my father were there. I would have done better in general.

Knoton: I am as a construction worker. I’ve never had a chance to even think about goals and achievement when I was young. I was living in a survival mode. Maybe that was the results of the [subconscious] of the uncertainty of what life

may reserve for me and how my life will be. So, I did not have enough knowledge to make any long-term goals because I am a middle school dropout.

Paco: I was a little child; I wanted to be a Samurai. They're honorable, and they fought for those who could not, and they protected others. Now, I'm a Father. I guess I did accomplish that goal. I've got my certification in Security Operations.

Malia expressed that she had not been working at all since she left the high school where she was working as a lifeguard.

Chogan: I [have] never worked ..., only my mother is taking care of me. I hope my father would help, but this is not the case. I do not know what my career move [will] be. I do not have any stability that may help me pushing for these accomplishments. I always want to be an actor in a movie or documentary, but I do not know how to go about it.

Adahy expressed that he had been a construction worker for sometime and the money he was making was not enough to support his family. He went back to school in January 2012 and earned an associate degree in social work. Adahy has now dedicated his life to helping other children in the same situation he used to be in when he was a child. His mother and his wife were his motivation.

Abbie reported that she had full paternal grandparents' support and her wrongfully convicted father had never given up on her and her sister. "...Luckily, I have a strong support system. My family and I are very close. So, my paternal grandparents have been taking care of me since my father went to prison". They're always supporting and motivated her through everything, and they made her recognize how smart she can

be, and that if she puts her mind to anything, she could achieve it. She further stated, “They have a big role in pushing me and making me thrive in school and my Father was always there calling me and trying to convince me to go to college as well,” she continued. Abbie was the only participant who graduated with a bachelor’s degree although she had reported a drop in her grades when she was in high school owing to her father’s failed appeals.

Zihna indicated that she was taking medical billing and coding, and she has an associate degree in it “...but I’ve never used it because I was working in retail and wind up getting a higher position in retail,” she stated.

Tablita expressed that she was working while she was taking courses at the local community college. “This was why it took me almost seven years to graduate with an associate degree in social work,” she stated. Now Tablita is working helping other children with family problems.

Benna: Yes, I graduated from high school, and then I went to City College. There I earned an associate degree in administration of justice,” Benna said. She said after that she went to another community college and gained another associate degree in business administration and then another associate degree in medical assistance. “I graduated on every one of them,” she added.

Hateya described that she was a manager at McDonald’s. She had been in college for sometime now taking one course at a time. As a child, she wanted to be a lawyer. She did not attain her goal because “...I did not have the support necessary for that,” she said. Her mother’s wrongful conviction caused her goal to change. “As a child, you do not

realize that you must accomplish your goals and expectations. You want to hit the road,” she added. Without both of her parents in her life, “...as a poor child with no biological parents’ guidance, I took things upon myself, and that did not work out as it would [have] if my mother were there,” she further stated.

Abbie described how she earned her bachelor’s degree. She stated that she did not accomplish it free of negative thoughts and feeling. “This feeling sometimes affected me so [badly], when I was in high school [that] it caused my grades to drop. But my grandparents were always there to remind me that my education is the key to every door,” she explained.

Zinha: I do not even know how I passed my tests. I was in the daze I do not even know how I also heard what was going on in the class. Like, I was going on and off like in space. However, I manage to pass my tests. Maybe when I came home, I probably had reviewed them, but in the class, I was never paying attention in the class.

Theme 4: Parent-Child Relationship After Wrongful Conviction and After Exoneration

Participants' quotes. Chogan, Malia, Dakshana, and Tayanita showed no sign of an existing relationship with their wrongfully convicted parents before conviction. This lack of parent-child relationship was not related to the wrongful conviction. Therefore, it was because three of those children were too young to remember any ties with parents and the other was seven years old and had not known his father. Malia, Dakshana, and Tayanita were about one year old as discussed before in table 1.

Chogan was seven years old, and he did not know his father; neither does he visit him. The first time he communicated with his father was while he was in prison when his mother took him to see him. Chogan was already a teenager when he first met his father. He further indicated that after his father's freedom, Chogan saw his father once when he came to his birthday party. He claimed that their relationship had gotten better. They spoke on the phone, but he was not satisfy with how things were going. "...I still have a rocky relationship with my father," he stated.

Appendix O: Theme 4: Parent-Child Relationship After Wrongful Conviction and After

Exoneration

Theme 4: Parent-Child Relationship After Wrongful Conviction and After

Exoneration

Theme 4: Parent-Child Relationship After Wrongful Conviction and After

Exoneration

Subtheme: Relationship during wrongful conviction. Participants' quotes.

Abbie: The relationship that I had with my father when he was in prison was stable. It became even stronger when [I] got older because he was always open to answer any question that I had. We were very honest with each other. He assisted me [on] many matters, such as drama at school, stuff that I did not feel comfortable talking to my grandparents about. He was always there. So, it was comforting, and I think that our relationship only got better over time.

Dakshana: Once my mother was released I went with her as soon as I've got out of that school. Maybe a few months later I went on my first anti-death penalty rally with her and the person who helped my mother for months get exonerated. I learned a lot on that trip with her and then we've moved in together in a few after that. We lived together for quite sometime. I helped her get her first apartment, helped her set up her bills, and this is because I had experience doing these things. I've been alone since I was 18 years old. So, I had my place and everything. I was teaching her things.

Alo: After his exoneration, we're just chilling and enjoy the father-son relationship. I looked back to all my troubles for not having this man in my life for so long. I think that if I did not go to the same correctional facility with him, our relationship would have [been] severely damaged because I would still look at him as a rapist. It takes a lot for someone to let go of this type of perception.

Benna: We talk every day. [We've] only had one disagreement. Other than that, we talk every day. Our relationship is excellent and sometimes three or four times a day. Sometimes he would call me on my job, and we speak.

Paco: Our relationship is excellent.

Malia: I've got close to him now. As I said, I was one year old, and I did not know him for all of these years. Now, I try to spend much time with him. I went to see him for Father's Day and Mother's Day. Yeah! Yes, I'm enjoying it

Adahy and **Hateya** both described that they had a great relationship with their parents. However, their siblings did not. "My brother and sister still do not have contact with her at this present time. However, my brother reaches out once or twice to her, and my sister and my mother spoke for a few minutes after her release," said Adahy. Also, Hateya stated: "The relationship between me and my brothers and sister deteriorated [owing] to my mother's wrongful conviction."

Zihna: We're still working on it. Like I said he has changed. He can be severe for any little thing. I know that he still needs healing, but I need healing too. I was without a father for 25 years. Therefore, I've been suffering as well.

Tayanita: He lives where he lives, and I live over here. We talk on the phone once in the blue probably. However, it's hard to build a relationship when you do not know somebody. I do not know him like that. Now, I'm 26 years old, and I'm not a little child anymore. I have my ways, and I'm not looking for my father like I used to look for him when I was a small child.

Tablita: I was without a father for a long time. It is hard to digest. I've been enduring the effects of him not being there too. He has to understand that. Until that happens, I do not think we will be in good harmony.

Knoton: The correctional facility life changed him to some degree. The relationship is not the way I require it to be because I do not feel that his state of mind is for something to that impact.

Chogan: we did not have a relationship before and now it even worst. When he came out of jail, he began to visit me for my birthday, and that was it. That broke my heart to how I would love to have a relationship with him, but he was not up for it.

Appendix P: Theme 5: Missing Important Milestones, Deaths, and Births of Loved Ones

Theme 5: Missing Important Milestones, Deaths, and Births of Loved Ones**Participants' Quotes**

Malia said that her deceased brother was always telling her “his father will be out one day.” It so happened that her brother passed away two years before her father’s freedom after a wrongful conviction. At that time her father was going in and out of the exoneration hearings and appeals at the court. My brother had a good life before he died, but stressed because of her father’s conviction. “His death affects me negatively because he was the only support I had when things were going [badly] financially for me,” she stated.

Benna indicated that many things happened in her life “...I was just mad that he was not there to protect me”. After the wrongful conviction of her father, she only had two people left as a support system. That was her mother and her paternal grandmother. When she was a teenager, her mom and grandmother died. “Everybody else who was not Benna probably would have lost their mind [because of] things that I see and things that I went through” she explained. Her father was not there to protect her, and she said that “...it just seems so cruel,” she expressed.

Tablita described that she was a very young child with no guidance. She claimed that the criminal justice system had taken the most active piece of her family leaving the remaining members [insecure] and vulnerable. “My mother left with three children, and she was not working at that time,” she stated. Her father’s case was on the news making it harder for her mother to find a local job. “We would have starved to death had it not for

my maternal uncles and cousins who were providing my mother with some money from time to time,” she explained. At this point, her family did not dwell too much on her father’s arrest and conviction, but on survival. The effects of poverty and neighborhood violence took the lives of two of her siblings.

Tablita: I could have lost my life in the process to find out that was for a crime he did not commit. Therefore, it’s cruelty. I lost two siblings [...] to violence in the neighborhood. How could they be allowed to do this to our family? This is the question I will never get the answer.

Tayanita said that after her paternal grandmother died, she was lost and became null and desolated. Her father missed her grandmother’s death. She was her coach, mentor, and supporter. Her grandmother was always explaining to her how much her father’s conviction affected her.

“I have nobody to hear me out even after all those many years. Now somebody wants to help to hear you out now after all that suffering. God is good,” Tayanita stated. Her grandmother told her that when her father was locked up, [...] she was at the age where the information could not damage her mentally. Tayanita explained that her grandmother waited until Tayanita was about eight years old before telling her what had happened to her father. “I’ve always had that perception that my grandmother would still be around if my father were there in our lives,” she stated.

Knoton “The man, lost his father, his mother, his grandfather, and grandmother while he was in prison,” Knoton indicated. “To do that to a person is completely wrong,” he added. The damage extended to the rest of his family. He was the only child, and he

had no other recourse. His mother was working too hard to put food on the table causing her to lose track of him. He said, "I lost my way of life. The criminal justice officials cannot keep doing this to people," he continued. After his father's conviction, Knoton went to the street and got involved in doing/dealing drugs.

Appendix Q: Theme 5: Missing Important Milestones, Deaths, and Births of Loved Ones

Theme 5: Missing Important Milestones, Deaths, and Births of Loved Ones**Subtheme: All participants expressed compassion for victims' families.**

Participants' quotes. Abbie: Since Abbie's father was accused of breaking, entering, beating and raping a woman, it has been very embarrassing even to think about this because she knew her father would never do anything like that. "He never lays hands on a woman before, but you know, being accused of that was scary because rape was something that could have been involved. So, it was embarrassing, aggravating, and terrifying," she said. She was convinced that her father would not do such a thing to a woman and felt compassionate for the woman. She stated that:

Abbie: The woman accused my father, lived right down the block, and she could be seeing him anytime and recognized him. Even though we were afraid for our own life and safety[...] but we felt sorry for her and her family.

Dakshana What happened was horrible because two police officers lost their lives. "...Not just police officers, but they were someone's father, husband, uncle, brother and so forth," she indicated. The crime that was committed was horrible in itself because "I'm not the only one affected; someone else's children were affected. Someone else's wife, son, daughter, were affected by that crime," she said. What had happened was horrible, and it was regrettable that it had happened. "I feel bad for their families too because now they are left with no justice for their fallen family members," she ended.

Benna described that only a few of her friends know about what had happened to her father. She said that she knew that her father was innocent, but "I've always

wondered why taking so long to find that out,” she stated. Her father spent 32 years in prison for a crime he did not commit. “During all of those years, how many more crimes had been committed by the real perpetrator? How many more families had been hurt by this individual?” she asked. “I feel bad for the victim’s family, but I knew that my father did not do it. I hope they find the perpetrator who did it,” she said. The victim’s family has to go through all this ordeal, now to find out that the person who killed their family member is still at large,” she said. In the next section, I will discuss the subtheme: prison visit—a nightmare for children.

Appendix R: Theme 6: The Criminal Justice Officials Misconduct and Mishaps

Theme 6: The Criminal Justice Officials Misconduct and Mishaps

Subtheme: Prison visits – a nightmare for children. Participants' quotes. Abbie described that she was always being stressed out about math problems. She remembered that she was not very good at math in high school. Since Abby had to talk with her father through the glass when Abbie went to see him in prison, they would create misty clouds in the glass with their mouths and write over it. Thus, was how her father was helping her to understand the math problems that she had trouble with when she was in high school. Her father was always trying to make her understand school work she was stressed out about. "That had impacted me a lot and made me never give up on school even when I thought that I could not do it," she said. "...So, we've made a good thing out of a bad situation," she stated.

Dakshana: I hated going to prison visits for many reasons. Every week I had to ride the bus 8 hours to go and another 8 hours to come back, and I had to do that twice each week, one to go to visit my mother and the other for my father. Then, when I got into the prison I cannot even touch my mother nor can she touch me. That was the same for when I visited my father. My mother had to request that I stopped visiting because my grades were falling so bad. I remember when I was 17 years old, I went to visit my mother, the correctional officers gave me a full cavity check, when I went to visit my mother. That was so disgusting; it made me want to vomit.

Adahy: There was a lot of confusion and a lot of hurts. I remember holding that “my mother’s going to get out she did not do this.” Each time we went to visit her, she would lie to us telling us that she will be out soon, and this was a big misunderstanding. The visits were too short and isolated. I had difficulties comprehending what was going on with my mother because of the prison system and procedure.

Alo: I had never wanted to visit my father because I was afraid to see what would happen to me when I ever went to prison. The lifestyle that I was living warranted that fear. However, that did not deter me from committing manslaughter and [being] sent to the same jail as my father. The prison environment has adverse effects on me for sure.

Chogan: I remember that I saw him when I was 13 years old. I talked to him through the glass, and I would not say I liked that. That was my first time visiting him in prison. I was crying all along our conversation. The dehumanization of my father and the way the guards treated me was not favorable for a second visit.

Malia: I remember we used to see him in jail but after a while, the visit stopped, and I do not go to see him anymore. Moreover, I do not go to visit even when I became an adult because I would not say I like jail: That was why I did not go to visit him. I used to be scared to go even when my grandmother used to take me there. They used to make me take my clothes off, shoes, or change my clothes. As a child, I was afraid. It was scary I did not want to go there.

Tablita: In the beginning, we used to write to each other. I sent him photos, and he replied with some of his pictures when my mother went to see him. I went to visit him many times then I stopped because the prison was not child-friendly, to me.

Paco: The authorities transferred my mother to a correctional institution, in which they did not have a death row for women. Therefore, they had to stock her in the medical section. She was not allowed to have any human contact for years except when we go up and visit.

When we were there, they maltreated us. My little sister was a young teenager, and for some reasons out of nowhere, they decided to give her a full strip and cavity search before we could enter to see our mother. They treated us like nothing as if we were all criminals. They made it as hard as possible and as miserable as possible for us to visit. This situation made me failed the same grade twice. I was held back, found it very hard to function properly. My grandparents took me to see a psychologist, but they did not know what to do with me.

Paco: She was in a cell in the middle of the arc with no climate control, no glass in the windows blurs made a single block and open to the elements. People in the dungeon in the medieval period were treated better. To know my mother, stepfather, my sister, and I were treated as such for a crime that they did not even commit made me sick.

Tayanita: Since I was little I had never wanted to have anything to do with the police, prison, or courts for that matter. So, I never like the prison environment. It gives me the creeps.

Knoton: I did not like the guards bossing me around. The voices were so offensive and intimidating. I usually experience fear and outburst every time I was exposed to the prison atmosphere making my heart to beat faster when I was thinking about going to see my mother.

Hateya: Oh well, I was probably the only child that was continually helping by sending money. Once I turned 16 years old, I had a car, and I would drive there. There were times where some of my friends would come with me. We would visit her every three to four weeks. My friend used to tell me “I do not know how you deal with this environment where people are so rude here.”

Zihna: We write to each other. I sent him photographs, and he sent me pictures. I went to visit him. I always felt like I was consistently kind of a parent to him because while he's in jail, I'm working and then it had to send him money too when he needs some food. My role kind of reverses because as I got older and started working and he needed money to survive in there so then I had to take care of him. So, I became a parent to my father.

Benna: I used to see him in prison. My older daughter was the only one who has seen my father because I used to take her there to see him. My mother took me to see him all the time. At some point, after my mother and grandmother passed away, it was a lot harder for me to go to see him, but I speak to him on the phone.

Dakshana: With both of her parents wrongfully convicted and each about 8 hours away from where she had lived, she grew sick every time she comes from a prison visit. It went to a point where it had become torturous, so her parent had to request an end to visitation. “What had bothered me the most is the fact that I had been dragged from prison to prison as a young child it made me physically sick,” she stated. She added that, “when I go back to school I would be messed up because I just visited my parents in two prisons 8 hours away from each other on the bus with my paternal grandma.” She said that she did not think about why they were in there because, to her, they were just there and that was not going to change. “When my parents saw that it was so hard for me to come to visit them, they had put a stop to it because it was too hard for my mental state and on their mental states,” Dakshana indicated.

Abbie: When we went to visit him, we thought that he was a nurse or something because of the color of the clothes he was wearing. When we reach 7 or 8 years old, that’s when my grandparents told us, my sister and me, that he was in prison. The Truth!

Dakshana: I hated going to prison visits. My foster guardians and then my maternal grandparents motivated me to go most of the time. My experiences with prison visits were unpleasant. That’s why I was so stressed out when I came back from visiting my parents.

Adahy: My foster guardians made me go to visit my Mother. When I turned a teenager, my siblings stopped attending...I went there once, then stopped.

Alo: I had never wanted to visit my father at first. My mother used to motivate me to visit. I think I went there twice between the age of 10 and 12. After that, I rebelled against my mother and never went there until my 17th birthday when I've got arrested and went to the same prison with him.

Chogan: My mother decided to send me to visit him in jail with my sisters. I went there once and never wanted to come back.

Malia: My grandmother used to take me to visit my father in prison, and I would not say I liked that at all.

Tayanita: Not much of my mother, but my grandmother took me there to visit him while in prison many times. At first, I did not know he was in jail. I thought he was at work. When I realized that he was in prison, I never wanted to go back there again.

Appendix S: Theme 6: The Criminal Justice Officials Misconduct and Mishaps

Theme 6: The Criminal Justice Officials Misconduct and Mishaps

Subtheme: Looking for a role model – ended up in juvenile jail. Participants' quotes. Adahy described that he was in foster care after his mother's wrongful conviction. He went to about ten different homes with ten different foster guardians. All his life he did not know any other form of family. Having an experience like that, Adahy had a hard time focusing in school and selecting a role model. He said that older and younger foster children were coming and going, and the adoptive parents did not provide anything else but a roof over their head and food on the table. To find a role model, "You have to rely on other children in the house," he indicated. He continued, "My older brother became my father figure at a certain point. When he turned into a teenager, he was moved out to a town that had a high rate of poverty. So, they were not the only children with issues because the other children were dealing with poverty issues making them not the best candidates to cast judgments. Those children were dealing with alcoholism, drug abuse, domestic violence so, Adahy was able to kind of fit in that into his not having parental support.

Alo expressed that on the quest of looking for a role model, he had to turn to his peers. "...most of them did not have a father in their lives. It's like there is no real guidance in the group," Alo stated.

I did not have my father to guide me, so I was listening to those guys on the street who tell me to do this and do that. Before his father went to prison, he was his role model. "Seeing him going to jail set as a domino effect for me because I always want to

be where my father is, so taking him away from me was devastating enough to make me lose my mind,” he stated. Alo was in and out of juvenile detention until he got convicted of shooting this guy when he was 17 years old. I lost my father at a critical time in my life because I was between 8-9 years old. This is when a child (especially a boy) needs his father the most. I had so many things happened to me that I could not speak off right now, much stuff, like.

Alo added that he wanted to be an architect, but he did not accomplish his goal he had spent most of his young age in juvenile jail and then sent to State prison. “...after my father left, I got into much bad stuff, and I just went crazy getting arrested all over the place and going to the juvenile,” he indicated. Then he added, “I spent most of my time locked up. Moreover, when I got older, I did seven years in prison so there is no way I would become an Architect. everything was going downhill.”

Alo explained that all his juvenile detentions were for carrying a loaded weapon. He had three juvenile convictions for carrying an illegal deadly weapon. Moreover, one count of manslaughter for shooting a man around his neighborhood, which he did seven years out of a 17-year predicted sentence. “The last case they gave me the full time. I think missing my father and missing all these activities caused me to go out there looking for a role model or a father figure among children my age,” he ended.

Subtheme: Extraordinary Circumstances Amidst of Wrongful Conviction

All 13 left-behind children participants expressed that they had experienced extraordinary circumstances as their parents were wrongfully convicted.

Abbie expressed that she not only did not have her father but did not have her mother either. “So, not having either of my biological parents in my life was difficult,” she said. “it could have been worst if my grandparents did not take charge of my sister and me.”

Dakshana explained that she grew up in a foster home and then with her grandparents for a short period while her both biological parents were sitting on death row for a crime they did not commit. She recounted that her life had become more tragic day after day. For example, “...the death of my grandparents is one that I would never forget until I die,” she stated. To brush off on what she is referring to, she was less than one year old when her parents wrongfully imprisoned, and after spent some time in foster care, her grandparents took custody of her.

Dakshana: Second, when I turned six years old going to seven of my grandparents died in the plane crash. At that time my maternal grandparents were my whole world. In the top of losing my mother and father [...] to a wrongful conviction, to begin with, I lost my entire world again. They were awesome people. They died after they dropped me off in Florida with my other grandma because I was going to visit my parents in prison and they were going to Las Vegas. Their plane crashed in Louisiana at takeoff.

Dakshana: Third, is the execution of my father who was proven innocent less than two years after his death on the electric chair. Clearly, in my parents’ case, there were corrupted lawyers, the perpetrator who did the crime gave false testimony about my parents and took it back, there were corrupted district

attorneys and lot more factors. The state of Florida did not want to look at it. They did not care about the truth, but they just wanted to pin the blame on someone to make the media happy. In the end, they executed an innocent man in the most horrific way.

Dakshana described that her father's execution was one of the well-known in the world because of what happened when the electric voltage is passing through her father's veins. "That was not an accident they did that..." she stated. She continued to say, "They've never paid for that. I've never even gotten an apology for horrifically executed my father for a crime he did not commit.

Dakshana: They told me that my statute of limitation runs out since I was in my 20s. I probably could do something with the right lawyer. I perhaps should prove a point, but at this point, it would not affect anyone but my mother and me because I do not want her to go through everything all over again". This is not about money because money will not bring her father back and will not change the situation, she explained.

Alo: Not having a father was like not being able to do stuff. When I see what other boys were doing with their fathers, such as playing basketball, going out to eat, and being on trips, all of that made me depress and stressed out.

Benna: As they took my father away from me, lack of safety was my most significant concern. I've always believed that if my father was there, there is no way these four grown men would find me to rape and beat when I was 12 years old. That was the most horrific moment of my life and would never forgive the

justice system for taking my first line of defense away which was my father and left me defenseless. Since then, I've lost trust in everybody.

Hateya: The relationship between me and my brothers and sister deteriorated due to my mother's wrongful conviction. Until now, my siblings lost in substance abuse. Sometimes, when I think what had happened to my mother, I cried nonstop. This is very painful what they had done to my family.

Knoton: The most challenging viewpoint was that he never knows my identity and whom I've moved toward becoming at this point. I would love for him to be there when I was moved on from secondary school. I have tried many times to hurt myself because my life was so tragic, but something held me back. As young as I was, I had to fetch food on my own when my mother could not provide. My lived experience was awful. I would never wish any other child to go through this situation.

Malia: Growing up without a father affects me morally, emotionally, and psychologically.

Paco: I know it may be a minor thing to many people, but I could not hug them. I could not go there see them hug them and even hold my mother's hand. That was huge for me. It's like I did not have a childhood. I could not share my life with them.

Tablita: My father was not there for me when I'd first got pregnant followed by an abortion. At that time, I was sick and almost died and wishing that he were home. Second, despite being pregnant (second time of course), I went to my

prom. My belly was flat, but I know that I was about 4 or 5 months pregnant. I was depressed when I saw everyone else had their parents there except me. My mother could not come because she was an addict and far lost. I was all alone. It is in our tradition that fathers help the most at their daughters' weddings financially. I'm deeply hurt.

Tayanita: When my grandmother was sick in the hospital, I always remember these days, and it gets to me. For my junior high school graduation, my grandmother was ill with cancer, and my mother was out on the street because she was on drugs and I did not have anybody there for me. When I was going down the aisle, I wanted to see someone there, but there was no one there. My family dealt with it a certain way with my sisters, but I separate myself far from them, which I should not, but I did because I'm a very different person and I deal with things differently. They did not know how those things get to me and affect me and caused me to be depressed sometimes. I'm hurt.

Appendix T: Theme 6: The Criminal Justice Officials Misconduct and Mishaps

Theme 6: The Criminal Justice Officials Misconduct and Mishaps

Subtheme: Relief. Participants' quotes. Abbie: The most rewarding for me was being able to go to attend the 2017 Innocence Network Conference. Initially, he would ask my grandfather, but this time I was honored and happy that he asked me to go with him. I've got to experience a whole new state with him on the other side of the country. Thus, was the first time I ever had spent so much time with him together. I could see how he reacted around other people and seeing him dressed up and everything was very appealing to me. Some of the participants' quotes for this subtheme will be found in Appendix T.

Adahy: Just the fact that I have my mother back is a great deal because I can see that I was wrong and all of that was because the media and the authorities misled me. Now, I can call her every time I want. I have a mother now, and if I call her at 3 a.m. for a question, she would be delighted to receive my call.

I do not have to wait for visitation. I associated all my troubles with my Mother's wrongful conviction because once my mother was released, I had a humbling conversation with her and I stop and realize that she was innocent this whole time. I was lied to by the wrong people. After that, I do not even drink anymore. I do not do drugs anymore. There are many times that I had to go to the hospital for some procedures that I do not want to have because of my past drugs and alcohol abuse. Now I go to church which is rewarding to her release, and the religious experience is working out great for me.

Dakshana: I just wanted to echo and change people's perception regarding the criminal justice system. Therefore, I agreed to take part in this research. I want to see if there will be some social justice reforms to protect all other children [whose] parents [are] convicted to get some emotional and financial help and protection. Now, I have my mother, and I think we can help each other heal.

Alo: I have gained comfort seeing my father home. He's here with us, and I have an opportunity to say that I'm sorry for losing faith in him. We get to know each other and being very close again.

Hateya: I am happy that now she's home, and she can go on being a grandmother to my children. She has nine grandchildren, and she can spend time with them. The time she had lost with us (my siblings and me), I do not think anyone can make that back up.

Knoton: I was glad that he was free. Now, I get to spend some quality times with him, and he gets to spend some time with his grandchildren.

Malia: I'm happy that he's here with us now even though they took him away from us for such a long period.

Paco: She was going to be free and safe. We can be together and that I was able to hug her and cherish her. It is a terrifying situation to have your mother in prison because of prison is the most dangerous place in the world. There are people in a combat zone [who] are not in so much survivorship that exists in prison.

Tablita: God is great, and my father is free at last. There is no way you can pay someone for the loss of time spent in solitary confinement notwithstanding those taken from his family.

The following paragraphs are the psychological impacts of wrongful conviction on left-behind children.

Appendix U: Theme 8: Bullied in School and at home

Theme 8: Bullied in School and at home**Participants' Quotes**

Alo: Yes, there were a couple of people who knew my father as a rapist. I used to go through a lot for that. When I was in middle school, I used to have anxiety and stressed out every day when I was going to school. This bitter taste was one of the reasons why I dropped out of school from middle school.

Knoton: I remember commonly other children harassed me about my Father being in prison. I used to be depressed almost all of the time while in school. There was this big guy who used to call me assassin and called my family all sort of names. He used to hit me, and I feared him. I could not function in school.

Tayanita: Sometimes people made fun of me because my father is in jail for murder. They used to tell me that the reason I'm the way I am is that I do not have a father. "You never know your father that's why you so stupid." Stuff like that. I used to get that a lot growing up as a child. I do not get it anymore, but I used to be traumatized with this kind of insults. I used to ignore it a lot, but as I grow up, I realize that it affects a child not to have both of their parents in their lives and its hurt and always made me sad.

Zihna: Only when I was in Pre-K. There was a girl she was like five feet and the other children were about three years old, and she was bullying me, not in school though, but only my siblings from my mother side. My mother's children, they used to argue with me and said to me, "that's why you do not have a father" or

“your father is in jail” or “your father is going to be gay because he’s in jail with a bunch of men.” Little dumb stuff like that.

I sometimes used to cry because my siblings had their father and I was the only one with a different father and that I did not have my father with me. My mother had five children, and four of them were for the same guy that she was married to after my father taken to prison. So, I’m the only one that looks different and the only one that has a different father. Although my step-father had never made me feel different, he’s always showing himself as a father to me, but my siblings always reminded me that he’s not my birth father and that ever made me sad and self-centered.

Adahy: I remember many times other children teased me about my mother being in jail. Foster children have been coming in and out of the places that I lived in. They used to tell me, “...at least my mother is not a murderer.” Even my brother and sister used to make fun of me while they were living in the same foster homes. They would tell me stuff like that also to get me upset and frustrated.

Hateya: my case was terrifying because I was living in the same block as the parents of the children who accused my mother. Their parents used to bully my family and me as I was passing by. I used to live in fear all of the time thinking one day they would come and shoot us all. There was not just one parent; there were many of them who used to bully me when I was coming home from school. They used to drive by and yelled inappropriate things to me, and some of my neighbors use to make comments that would bother me deeply.

Paco: I had come very close to getting in trouble with the law for hurting other people who had been bullying me. They called me all kind of names, like “a murderer and cop killer.” They used to harass me also because I was Jewish. I was born Jewish. No one could ever have been nice to me. All the teachers and the people in the school were afraid of me as if I was some time bomb getting ready to go off. Nobody wanted to be around me. A lot of other children always try to bully me up. The bullies wanted to do it because they would make their reputations since they could beat me up who was so much bigger than them. Other children in the school would also attack me so that the bullies could leave them alone. Therefore, created low self-esteem in my mind and made me angry and sometimes created violent outburst toward other students while I was in school.

Tablita: When I was in elementary school, things were OK. But when I went to middle school I started being aware of the gravity of the crime my father blamed for, I began keeping stuff to myself because all my friends did not believe that my father was innocent. They used to bully me and tell me that my father was a criminal, a rapist, and that I am a dangerous person. That broke my heart. I cried all the time that I was in school. In high school, some of the time, I just cried, and in different circumstances, I felt like my life was pointless and I wanted to kill myself.

Appendix V: Bullied in School and at Home

Theme 8: Bullied in School and at Home

Subtheme: Suicide attempts associated with wrongful conviction. Participants' quotes.

Alo: I felt that my life had no purpose and wanted to end it once and for all. After my father was gone, I was hopeless and involved in careless practices, including extreme liquor or drugs consumption. I had to maintain a strategic distance from social connections with others.

Dakshana: My parent's situations affected me a great deal. Not that I have never tried suicide and stuff like that. I have. That was the stupidest stuff that I've ever done. I attempted to hang myself from the shower rod, and I fell with the rod in the bathtub.

I did not want to be alive anymore. I should end it right there right now, and this is a true story. I went into my foster parents' bathroom with a jump rope. I tied it to the rod and passed it around my neck, and when I went to hang, I fell with the whole shower rod into the bathtub, and I was laughing. I did that because I felt that I had no other recourse with both of my parents in prison for a crime they did not commit, and my grandparents died in a plane crash.

Knoton: My father's wrongful conviction brought a world of dissatisfaction somewhere inside of me some time made me want to hurt myself. That is one of the reasons I could not have cared less. Sometimes, I pushed myself to either get hurt or get killed. Now it's hard for me to sit here thinking that everything is ok

after I went through so much pain, hurts, depression, and fears. I was a child losing her way in this world; I was dead inside. I do not know what attracted me out of doing drugs. I think that was the last incarceration that made me stay away from doing evil things to myself and others because I did not want to live anymore. Twice, my girlfriend had to take my gun away from me because I wanted to end my life. The pain was so extreme; I never knew I would make it that far.

Tablita: After my father's wrongful conviction, our family became a train wreck. My first boyfriend and I were selling drugs in the corner, while I was pregnant the first time. My Boyfriend fought with a guy and shot him. Since he was in prison, I had no one else to look out for me. That was total misery. I had tried to kill myself many times but did not get through with it. Now I am glad that I did not do it.

Appendix W: Theme 9: Mental Health Effects of Parental Wrongful conviction

Theme 9: Mental Health Effects of Parental Wrongful conviction**Participants' Quotes**

Alo: I was being depressed all the time. I could not take part in any joyful activities. I've got discouraged to be around people, and my energy was running low. I did not want to talk to anybody. I was a broken child.

Chogon: I used to be stressed and depressed when I should deal with things, such as male problems when I need him to direct me in the right direction. Because of all of that, now, I'm on medications for depression. I've been holding so much inside of me sometimes I feel like that my head going to explode.

Hateya: For my siblings, it was more depressing because they did not have the same kind of friends that I had. The wrongful conviction of my mother destroyed them so severely this why they're so unstable.

Paco: My Doctor helps me deal with what had happened and learned to function. He got me to put on anti-depressants, which have been helping considerably. It allows me to start dealing with what had happened and start healing. My mental state went through the roof. I suffered from anxiety, depression.

Tablita: Oh, my Lord! It was insane. It was depressing and mind-boggling. I could not even stay for extra curriculum activities because my mother could not afford a car, so there was not anyone to come to pick me up from the school. Thus, it means that I had to take the regular bus home. When I see the children

with their parents going places and having fun that's when the thought of my father stroked me the most.

Tayanita: They did not know how those things get to me and affect me and caused me to be depressed.

Alo: My father's pretended crime had put me in a lot of trouble on the street and prison. I was subject to a lot of beating and mockeries due to his offense. Every time I speak to someone about this I become emotional. I used to be depressed and very stressed out when people talk about his heinous crime.

Chogan: The whole family hurts, the children are damaged, and the system corrupted, and it's a failure. When a child has his father snatched away from him/her, he/she needs to have some assistance from the government. Therefore, could either be psychological, emotional and even financial. Additionally, would happen if we want to build a stable society. The system of government we have here is not working to create a strong nation. Instead, they are destroying it with lies, deception, corruption, and irresponsibility. I used to be stressed and depressed.

Paco expressed that part of his depression has to do with him being present when the crime was committed and at his parents' arrest. At that time, he was utterly in shock. "My grandparents took me to a psychologist, but they did not know what to do with me. They did not have any knowledge of how to treat me because it was not a standard everyday situation where I could not deal with something; I suffered from depression," he

stated. He continued to say, "I suffered from anxiety or anything like that. I was a complete mess."

Appendix X: Theme 9: Mental Health Effects of Parental Wrongful conviction

Theme 9: Mental Health Effects of Parental Wrongful conviction**Subtheme: Embarrassment associated with parental wrongful conviction.**

Participants' quotes. Abbie described that when she was younger, she was not very open about the situation. "I was embarrassed because I did not want people to think that my father was a bad person," she said. "I will have to explain my father's situation to my friends, and most people would not believe me anyway," she explained. She added that growing up, Abbie was not open much, but when reached high school and while writing college letters Abbie started to be open more about it, and she was more responsive to questions people had. "I think in high school that's when I started telling people about my father and I told them the truth. I told them that he went to jail for something that he did not do. I did not tell them the whole story because I did not want them to have the wrong impression," she said.

Abbie "I remember when I was in elementary and middle school I was embarrassed that my grandfather and grandmother came to pick me up because everyone always had their parents around to pick them up and I was the only one who did have mines," she added. Also, in her soccer games and softball games, there were only her grandparents there to support her—it was kind of weird and frustrating—because rape was the charge and it was embarrassing, aggravating, and scary," she concluded.

Alo explained that he would keep his father's conviction secret. He did not tell his friends. Alo further explained that If his father went to jail for killing someone, would be far more comfortable talking about it. However, his father went in for rape, and none of

his friends in the street would want to hear about such a thing. “He’s a rapist. That made me feel embarrassed and afraid to talk about it and him to the people I knew,” he said. “I was being embarrassed all the time.”

Benna: when you speak on one of your parents is out of your life they are going to want to know what had happened. Then that will make you in the position to explain. So now when you tell them the story, it’s embarrassing, you know. All the people that I was friend with have their fathers and their mothers in their lives but me I did not have my father in my life like a lot of my friend did.

Knoton: If my father were not wrongfully convicted I would not go to that through this entire dilemma. I would have had an alternate life. Not having him around get a kick out of the chance to reveal to me something other than what expected or whatever. I would not be in such many embarrassing inconveniences as I had in my youthful days.

Tablita recounted that when she was in kindergarten, things were ok, but when she went to elementary school, she started being aware of the gravity of her father’s crime. “I began keeping thing to myself because all my friends did not believe that my father was innocent” she stated. Oh, my Lord! I was embarrassed almost all of the time” she ended.

Tayanita: When people ask me about him, and why he was locked up they’re always like wow that’s deep. The look in people faces makes you feel ashamed and embarrassed. You’re like should I tell people about this anymore or not, therefore, most of the time I kept things to myself. People do not believe you. Instead, they give you a regular look as if you are telling them lies.

Appendix Y: Theme 9: Mental Health Effects of Parental Wrongful conviction

Theme 9: Mental Health Effects of Parental Wrongful conviction

Subtheme: Shame associated with parents' wrongful conviction. Participants' quotes.

Abbie: I felt ashamed because if I told them, people would have judged me and probably call me names and calling my Father names. It was a hard situation to explain; so, they would probably say that I was lying.

Adahy: I have always been ashamed. Like I said when I see the other families come to pick up the children from school or school activities I used to feel bad.

Then, there are times that I must explain my family situations and then everybody kind of look at you funny as if you were the “weirdo” in the group. It did create shame, and anger, and hurts that my mother is a murderer. At that time, everybody thought that she was a murderer. Yes, I was ashamed throughout my life up until after her exoneration.

Alo expressed that “I was embarrassed, ashamed, depressed all the time.” He said that his father’s pretended crime had put him in much trouble on the street and prison. He was subject to a lot of beating and mockeries due to this crime. Every time he spoke to someone about this he becomes emotional, he explained. He stated that “I used to be depressed when people talk about his crime he blamed for.” “I felt hurt and messed up,” he ended. When Alo saw what other boys were doing with their fathers, such as playing basketball, going out to eat, and being on trips, “...all of that made me depress and stressed out,” he said.

Benna: I've never felt ashamed of the crime that they'd accused my father of because I know he was innocent. There is no way my father, the man that I know for all my life would commit such a crime. However, sometimes people asked me why your father is in prison? I was staying low because I assume that if you're in jail and if you're convicted of a crime this because you've done it. I did not want my friends to judgment for my father's wrongfully charged wrongdoing.

Chogan: This was one of the reasons that I did not want to speak to anyone about my father being in jail. Therefore, was all because I felt ashamed of the crime they pretended that he'd committed. I remember that I told my best friend not to judge me because of what they'd accused my father of doing. There are times people repeated that to me, and that hurt my feelings and wish that I was never born of him.

Dakshana: No. I've never felt ashamed for that because they were not the one committed that crime. The criminal justice should be embarrassed for executing my father and imprisoned my mother for something they did not do.

Hateya: No, I was never ashamed. I'm one of these people that never hide things, so, due to the fact we know that was a conspiracy against my mother and our whole family, I was not ashamed. So, if anybody asked I answer questions with no problem at all. If I was ashamed, I was ashamed of the justice system, the judge and the prosecutor for allowing these low life parents to this to my mother.

Knoton: I felt ashamed to even going to visit him. I had dissatisfaction somewhere inside some time made me wanted to hurt myself. I used to be

discouraged and exceptionally worried when I had to discuss his terrible wrongdoing with other people.

Paco: I was never ashamed of them. I was ashamed of what some other people came to believe. I was embarrassed the criminal justice officials did not understand the truth because blinded by revenge. People thought that I killed the officers. I was 9 for God sake. I was ashamed of what people thought of us. It is hard to say which is the higher crime, the guy shooting the police officers or the Florida criminal justice system framing two innocent people and after torturing those two people, their children, and the entire family for 16 years and murdered my Step-father.

Tablita: I was ashamed almost all of the time. Imagine my father was convicted of rape and beat a woman at knifepoint. I was getting attacked for that. Most of my girlfriends hate the rapists because most of them were victims of this crime. Therefore, they were more violent towards me.

Zihna: The only time I feel like ashamed and embarrassed is when I must explain to my job what had happened to my father when I'm requesting time off to go to see him in prison.

Appendix Z: Theme 9: Mental Health Effects of Parental Wrongful conviction

Theme 9: Mental Health Effects of Parental Wrongful conviction

Subtheme: Flashback and remorse after exoneration. Participants' quotes.

Abbie indicated that her remorse was more of questions than answers. "Why did justice officials take so long to find out that my father was innocent for him to be released? Why did I have to suffer these ordeals for all those years?" She asked. The criminal justice was made to protect people, but "...I think they failed to protect my family," she concluded.

Adahy described that when all the facts are laid out before him, he was very remorseful because then he was old enough to understand what was going on. He had already hated his mother and had nothing to do with her sometimes when she was in prison. Adahy expressed his regret for treating his mother like a criminal. Even though his siblings were still distant from his mother and doubted her innocence, he stayed close with his mother because he knows this the only way for him and his mother to effectively heal their wounds. "I think talking to her does help and addressing that and being able to express why I felt the ways that I felt, and why I believed what I believed it was because she was wrongfully convicted. My foster guardians, the media, and the authorities brainwashed me," he explained.

Benna explained that she was concerned that the person committed the crime would go out there committed more crime while her father was purging in prison. "I am very remorseful that there is still a perpetrator out there getting away with the crime while committing more atrocities to other people...this is my remorse," she stated.

Dakshana recounted that she is very remorseful. "...My father did not have the opportunity to be exonerated before his wrongful execution," she mentioned. Her father executed for the same crime he was wrongfully convicted. Two years after his execution, her mother exonerated because the real criminal confessed that he was the one killing the two police officers and then gave false testimonies to the authorities against Dakshana's parents.

Alo: The only thing that I regret is that I should have believed him when he said that he did not do it. Since almost every criminal defendant pleads not guilty, it is hard to know who did and did not commit the crime. I regret that I did not believe that he was innocent. I regret being ruthless in his regard, I regret saying that I do not want to speak to him.

Chogan: I felt sorry that he was there for so long and that why does it take those criminal justice authorities so long to find out that they had the wrong man. This is dangerous that the person who committed the crime was still out there committing more crimes against other people. We both missed each other's whole life.

Hateya: No, I always felt terrible for my Mother because I still believe that she was innocent. So, I regret that they took her away from us like that and for so long. The court should have seen that there was no merit in the case against her.

Knoton: I felt sorry that he was there for so long and that why does it take those criminal justice system experts so long to discover that they had the wrong man.

Thus, is dangerous that the individual who carried out the wrongdoing was still out there carrying out more criminal acts against other individuals.

Malia: I was upset that they took him from us just like that.

Zihna: I always felt bad for him because I still believe that he did not do it and he was there for something he did not do. I do not know. I was so happy that he was coming home. My worst feeling was that I knew that they were doing him injustice, and there is nothing that I or anybody else in the family can do about it.

Appendix AA: Theme 9: Mental Health Effects of Parental Wrongful Conviction

Theme 9: Mental Health Effects of Parental Wrongful Conviction**Subtheme: Fear of intimacy associated with a wrongful conviction.**

Participants' quotes. **Benna** explained that she had been married three times and divorced twice. She thinks girls have to go through more problems than boys when their fathers are not in their lives. At 15 years old, she did not know anything about boys. Missing a father is very hard for a young lady.

“I did not even know how to be treated,” she said. She had always believed that if her father was there, there is no way these guys would find her to rape and beat when she was a twelve-year-old. “That was the most horrific day of my life and would never forgive the justice system for taking my first line of defense away which was my father and left me defenseless,” she stated. Since then, she lost trust in everybody and afraid to enter into a relationship with men. If she finally enters into a relationship with a boy, it used not to last because of emotional and trust issues. “I remember that after I was raped and beaten, I could not sleep at night thinking that if my father were there, this would not happen to me. I was devastated because I cannot trust any man now.”

Knoton indicated that he had been experiencing fear of intimacy in his early adult age. “...Thus, was why every girl I had met I could not commit to anything with them even when I had a strong feeling for them.” He described. My greatest fear was that I would not be able to protect and support a family financially with my middle school level education. My life started falling apart after my father's wrongful conviction.

Paco diagnosed and treated for fear-of-intimacy for years. After his parents were in prison, he did not speak to anyone. Even now I'm still dealing with the fear of intimacy because when you are in a situation like that, and you try to deal with it. You can not let people get too close because you cannot tell many things," he ended.

Tayanita described that she was a one-year-old and grew up with her father in prison. When her father was found innocent and exonerated, she was already 26 years old. She indicated that she did not have a father in her life to teach and supervise her on interaction with boys.

She explained how hard it is for her to love others and to intimate with boys. "I do not know how to love people because I've never had my father to teach me you know stuff like that," she stated. She added that, "...the more I hold my story in is the more I break down into tears this may be why I grow up as a young adult now who do not even know how to love her father and even a boy for that matter." She has a boyfriend, "...but I do not know how to experience love and give back even though the relationship is meaningful to me," she indicated. Not having a father as a girl is a nightmare. She further stated that "...girls always want their fathers in their lives and this little girl lost her ways through life forever."

Tablita explained that after her father was wrongfully convicted and separated from her, "...it was a freefall of despair, fear, hopelessness, distrust, hate, disbelief and discouragement." She described. She indicated that she could not trust any intimate relationship. "If I was with someone it was either for money, drugs or/and protection." She added.

Appendix BB: Theme 10: Inside the Left-Behind Children Minds

Theme 10: Inside the Left-Behind Children Minds**Participants' Quotes**

Adahy: Mixed perceptions - Some people may say that we cannot trust anybody, or we cannot believe the authorities. I would say, no, and that this one bad apple that spoiled a bunch, not a bunch that ruined one. The Criminal Justice System is a necessary evil I think. Again, this is a couple of bad apples that spoil the bunch. I'm not going to condemn them all. I know some good people work with the criminal justice system not all of them are bad. Unfortunately, we have some of them that are making bad decisions and causing arms and hurts to others.

Dakshana Negative Perception - Dakshana expressed that both of her parents wrongfully convicted of a crime they did not commit. "I feel failed by the criminal justice system." They executed her father in the electric chair about two years before the date they found out they were not the persons committed the crime. She indicated that her mother was exonerated then causing more pain and hurts when thinking about her father who lost his life due to others' misconducts and misconceptions.

Dakshana stated that she felt like justice officials have not being held responsible for their actions. She said that they should have 100% proof a person committed a crime before executing that person. She said, "Nobody exempts without 150% of proof that is the person committed the crime." "I mean 100% is good too...", she continued, "but want to make sure not to execute an innocent person. There should be many different people

review the cases to make sure of the information is the right information before executing someone.”

Dakshana: in my parents’ case, there were corrupt lawyers, there was Walter Woods who did the crime, giving testimony, and then take it back, there were corrupted district attorneys and more factors. Things like that were apparent signs, but the State of Florida did not want to look at them. They did not care about the truth, but they want to blame and make the media happy.

Benna Negative Perception – Benna described that she was ten years old when her father was wrongfully convicted. Two years later, she got raped and beaten by four grown men while coming home from school. Before conviction, her father used to drive her to and from school most of the time. “...If my father were there, I would not be in this situation—This stressed me out every time I have to talk or think about what had happened to me that day,” she explained. Moreover, she further added, “The system ruined my family.”

Benna: I feel that this criminal justice system made for people like us it made for Black people or African-Americans what have you. The criminal justice system established for the minority, but not just for black. It’s never going to change. Even though we had a black President, it has not changed a bit. The only way things will change is with the voice of the people, and this is what I believe the Innocence Project is doing.

Tablita Negative Perception – Tablita indicated that she had a negative perception regarding the United States criminal justice system. She felt that the Justice

System failed her father and the whole family. She further described that the authorities just needed someone to bring down for the crime and they just took him. She stated that she felt like they do not try to find the actual rapist. She added that the justice system failed everyone in her family, but mostly her father because he's the one spending 30 years in prison for a crime he did not commit. "The criminal justice is a disaster that needs serious reforms," she stated.

Tayanita Negative Perception - "...the criminal justice is messed up in general," said Tayanita. "They need to get this system in better shape for it to serve those it meant to serve" she added. Tayanita expressed that the only way the criminal justice will get better is if the people are willing to work together, the community, not just the working people, but everybody have to work together. She further explained that police officers used to work with the community, now they do not work with the community anymore. "They are just locking people up. As soon as two or more guys go to the corner store to buy something the cops profiling them to be drug dealers. Why a black man cannot go to the corner store to get a coffee and sip it in peace without being labeled as a drug dealer?" asked Tayanita.

Abbie Negative Perception—With everything that happened with her father Abbie stated that she lost hope and faith in the criminal justice system. However, she said that people like the Innocence Project, Lawyers, volunteers, and Students of all kinds who were willing to fight for her father and other wrongfully convicted individuals deserved to be recognized. "These people who work with and in the Innocence Project are making a difference in a lot of people's lives," Abbie stated:

Hateya Negative Perception – Hateya stated that she did not have a good opinion of the justice system. She indicated that when she saw all the other wrongfully convicted individuals from the Innocence Network’s 2017 Annual Conference, she had no faith what so ever in the criminal justice system. “Hearing the stories of the wrongfully convicted individuals make me feel that we need serious reform of the criminal justice system,” she indicated. She expressed that some of the authorities are a bunch of people sitting there taking their position for granted by messing with other people’s lives. Please do not get this wrong, but one bad one is already too many when it comes to the presence of an individual.

Hateya: I think the criminal justice system is horrible. I mean, there are too many people where higher officials know the truth, but they do not do anything about it I mean if my mother was such a big monster, why now they allow her to be out. Why would they tell her to sign this thing and you can go free as long as you not going to sue us. Therefore, is horrible for all of the wrongs they had done to my family. Because they know that she did not do what she accused of and do nothing about it, there should have been something coming to them as a deterrence for a better justice system, but this is not what happens. These justice officials are well protected. Therefore, they do whatever they feel. I do not have faith in the criminal justice system.

Paco Negative Perception – Paco indicated that in his parents’ case the actual criminal made a deal with police. Therefore, he stated that the justice officials they let him (The perp) testify against his parents saying that his mother shot one police and his

stepfather shot the other police officer. Paco explained that the perp did that in exchange to get a lighter sentence and they did give it to him. The justice authorities released the actual perpetrator at a certain point, and they kept his mother and step-father in death row while pressuring him (Paco) to testify against his parents. Paco explained that he was only nine years old when this all happened to leave him mentally, physically, and socially affected.

Paco: The prosecutor falsified evidence against them that did not exist. He hid evidence that would prove that my parents were innocent. They got convicted even though there was no evidence that they had done anything except be there at the wrong time. After conviction, they were both sent to death row.

Paco: My stepfather sent to prison in Stark, Florida. That place makes the picture from Guantanamo looks like a bloody Hotel Resort. It was like a donjon in there. He incarcerated with people who were horrible people. He was locked up with Ted Bundy for God sake. They treated him like dirt.

Paco expressed that he had no love for the American Criminal Justice System. He stated, “When the American justice system is concerned, I think of it more of the American injustice system.” Paco cited that the system is made up of some judges, officers, and other justice officials, “...but they are the ones who should have been in prison. They are lunatics,” he ended.

Appendix CC: Theme 10: Inside the Left-Behind Children Minds

Theme 10: Inside the Left-Behind Children Minds

Subtheme: Feeling about speaking out. Participants' quotes. Abbie described that speaking out is an opportunity for the left-behind children to break the circle of silence that is haunting them from the time of their parents' wrongful conviction to present. "it's important to recognize how children feel when their parents are convicted because it could determine their future. My life depends on how I feel and my behaviors towards everything," said Abbie.

Tablita: It feels good to be able to finally talk about the more significant part of that laments that settle in within me. It is a substantial relief for me. Initially, I would keep things to myself, but when I know I would be participating in this research study, I felt like I should take this opportunity to vent my frustrations graciously.

Tayanita: I am a quiet person I do not use to speak out. The main reason was that of the fear of humiliation and negative feedback from others. Consequently, is wrong because not having my father messed up the bond between him and me and the other children. There is no way to get 25 years back, and it's impossible. Thus, is why I was always afraid to talk to anyone about my feelings concerning my family's situation. Therefore, is heartbreaking.

Dakshana: The reasons that I do not do much talking and stuff like that is because every time I start speaking out, I become very emotional. I was young. I did not know better, and I did not know the right way to deal with the situations.

Now I know I need to speak out to raise awareness of what had happened so that people would come with some reforms that will be favorable for children with incarcerated parents.

Appendix DD: Theme 10: Inside the Left-Behind Children Minds

Theme 10: Inside the Left-Behind Children Minds

Subtheme: Important message to other children. Participants' quotes.

Abbie: I think I want people to understand that this happened so much more than I was even aware. Being wrongfully convicted is traumatizing for not only the person being wrongfully convicted but also family members. I want to advise children of the wrongfully convicted to stick by their exonerated parents and understand where they're coming. Once they're out, they need to keep making efforts to understand them because the transition into the real world is challenging for them.

Dakshana: I mean the most significant message I would send out to other children with incarcerated parents is that just because these things happen to your parents does not make how good you are. You can live in two ways. You can live in it and use it as an excuse to be a messed-up person, or you can live your life the best you can without making excuses. We're still responsible for ourselves. Children must take responsibility for their actions.

Alo: I would tell them not to take the wrong path. Listen to what parents are saying to them. I would also tell them that even though you are missing your father and you do not know what is going on or whatever, you got to figure out what you want to do in life and work hard to make it happen. I would let them know not to follow and hang out with the wrong crowd because this is like a

magnet its sucks you in and there is no turning back from it. Most importantly, stay in school!

Benna: I would tell them never to give up and always to have faith because faith goes a long way. Never stop trying because someone will finally hear you. Make much noise that you can because somebody someday will start paying attention.

Chogan: I want them to know that God can make everything happen for as long as you have Him in your life. Hold on tight everything will be okay. I felt for all the children who had their parents wrongfully convicted. I want to tell them that they're not alone, listen to their elders and not to hang out with the wrong people. The government wronged you, but in the process, you cannot let them get to you further by playing their games. Be smart and do not get involved in any illegal activities. Consequently, is the only way to stay out of trouble. Most importantly keep in school.

Hateya: I guess I would say to keep moving forward. I mean, there is always a light at the end of the tunnel for yourself. Maybe not for your loved one but yourself.

Knoton: I would send this message out there for every child with parents incarcerated or dead to illness. Do not let yourselves fall into the devil's hands because once you go down that path, you cannot climb back up. I do not want what had happened to me happens to any other child with the incarcerated parent.

Paco: No matter how some people try to rationalize it when someone goes to prison whether he or she did it or not, their families are innocent. They should

protect their children. They punished us as well, and they rationalized it with the idea that the person who was convicted who did this to you. It is even worst when the convicted person is innocent. Then you messed up the whole family for no apparent reason. Therefore, they should have compensated for the entire family. Left-behind children should not be considered as collateral damage because their parents went to prison.

Tayanita: My essential message is for me to say that you can get through any situation and I would like to tell other children that they are not alone. When you think that your case is terrible, there is someone else that theirs are even worst. I had a friend that had a father in jail for a crime that he did not commit as well. We used to comfort each other. I would tell all the children not to be afraid to tell your story. Do not feel ashamed. Do not be embarrassed there is always somebody out there that is going through the same thing and worst,” she said.

Zihna: The most important message is that when someone’s parent has taken out of their life is like meeting a stranger. Like they lose so much time like that when they finally come back is like you do not know who this person is and you try to think how’s life is going to be with them in it. Now it’s like I’m trying to fit my father into the life that I’ve already build. Sometimes I forget that he’s home even though it’s been a year since he’s got out. I forget that he’s there because in my mind, I’m used to not having a father because he’s gone for so long. It’s like I’ve got to know him all over again like someone you meet for the first time. I’m trying now to rebuild the bond with my Father as an adult.

Appendix EE: Letter to the Innocence Project

Letter to the Innocence Project

Date:

Name of PAO

Address

Dear (Name)

My name is St Jean Jeudy, and I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University. I am conducting dissertation research on the effects wrongful conviction induced separation had on children. There are a vast number of studies explaining the effects of wrongful conviction in general and some studies on the families. However, the effects of wrongful conviction on the wrongfully convicted individuals' children is not yet well known. This qualitative research study will provide an in-depth understanding of the experiences of children when their parents are wrongfully convicted.

In order to conduct the research study, I would need your assistance to locate and identify those who have been wrongfully convicted and have children caught up in the mix. Your organization will do that by sending the prospective participants an e-mail (pre-drafted by the student with contact and e-mail address) indicating whether they would like to participate in the study. Upon agreement to participate, participants will then contact the student to decide for the interview process. Finding those wrongfully convicted families will provide me (the researcher) with the opportunity to communicate with those children (who are now adults) needed for the study. Once identified, I would like to talk with them about what were their experience and state of mind from the time

when their parents were wrongfully convicted to the time of the interview. In addition, we discuss the goals and purpose of the research study. The participants needed for this study should be adults who are at least 18 years of age who were children of wrongfully convicted individuals while growing up. All participants will be free to participate or not participate. In addition, they will be able to discontinue their participations at any time. Moreover, their participation and information given will be kept strictly confidential and protected from dissemination.

I would welcome a telephone call from you to discuss any questions you may have concerning this study and your role in identifying research participants. I can be reached at (631) 404-8628 or e-mailed at stjean.jeudy@waldenu.edu and or sjeudy116@gmail.com

Sincerely,

St Jean Jeudy

Doctoral Candidate

Walden University

Appendix FF: Letter to Participant

Letter to Participant

Date:

Name of Participant

Address

Dear (Name),

My name is St Jean Jeudy and I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University. I am conducting dissertation research on the effects wrongful conviction induced separation had on children. There are a vast number of studies explaining the effects of wrongful conviction in general and some studies on the families. However, the effects of wrongful conviction on the wrongfully convicted individuals' children is not yet known. This qualitative research study will provide an in-depth understanding of the experiences on children when their parents are wrongfully convicted.

I realize that your time is important to you and I appreciate your consideration to participate in this study. In order to fully understand your experience, we need to talk on two separate occasions for approximately one hour each meeting. These discussions will be either over the phone, on Skype, or face-to-face and will not require you to do or say anything you do not feel comfortable doing or saying. The conversations are designed to simply get to know you and learn about your experience of being the child of a wrongfully convicted person. All information gathered during our meetings will be kept strictly confidential.

This study is not affiliated with the innocence project Organization, and that no one at the Innocence Project will know whether or not you choose to participate.

Please contact me at your earliest convenience to schedule a date and time that we can talk. My telephone number is (XXX)XXX-XXXX. You can also e-mail me at XXXXXXXX@waldenu.edu and or XXXXXXXX@gmail.com. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

St Jean Jeudy

Doctoral Candidate

Walden University

Appendix GG: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Date:.....

Location:.....

Name of Interviewer:.....

Name of Interviewee:.....

Interview Materials:

- Audio recording instruments and one extra for backup
- Extra battery
- Consent for to be faxed or e-mailed
- Speaker phone apparatus (if interview is being done by phone).
- Audio tape (if interview is being done face-to-face). This will be done in a secured place, such as a public library closed room, to ensure confidentiality.
- Pen and notebook
- A stop clock

(Total duration: 60 Minutes)

Interview Number: One**Introduction**

(Duration 2 Minutes)

(start at _____ end at _____)

Welcome: (this is where the reasons for the interview will be explained)

Hi my name is St. Jean Jeudy

- I would like to thank you for making yourself available for this interview today.
- As you may already know, I am a Ph.D. Candidate studying at Walden University.
- The purpose of this interview is to learn more about your experiences of being a wrongfully convicted individual's child and any recommendations you may have related to children living with wrongful conviction induced separation.

Interview Ground rules:

(Duration 2 Minutes)

(start at _____ end at _____)

- Everything you tell me will be confidential. In order to protect your privacy, your personal information will not be and anything you say to me today.
- Please let me know if you have any question or concern.
- You do not have to answer question(s), which you do not feel comfortable answering.
- I would like you to keep in mind that I just wanted to know what you think and feel about the wrongful conviction of your father/mother, and therefore, there is no wrong or right answer.
- Is it ok if I audiotape this interview for my recollection?

(Duration 56 Minutes)

(start at _____ end at _____)

1. Did you read the consent form that was sent to you? Do you have any questions about it?
2. Do you agree to be interviewed and audiotaped?
3. What is your name and what are the names of your parents and brothers and sisters?
Did you have any nicknames? (Background question)
4. When and where were you born? (Background question)
5. How would you describe the roles of your parents in your life before your parent's conviction?
6. Who were some of your friends? What did you do with your friends? What had you told them about your parent's conviction? If so, please could you explain?
7. Could you explain if you were subject of any bullying due to your parent being convicted?
8. What kinds of things did your family do together when you were young before your parent's conviction?
9. What are some special memories you have about your convicted parent?
10. What are some personal experiences that have especially touched your heart when you found out that your parent is convicted? What were your first reactions toward him/her?
11. How would your life be different had your parent not been wrongfully convicted?
12. As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? Have you accomplished that goal?

13. Describe yourself as a young adult. Did you attend any school or training after high school?
14. What is the most important message that you want us to take away from this interview?
15. Is there anything else that you would like to add about any of the topics that we've discussed or other areas that we did not discuss but you think are important?
16. What type of family activities did you enjoy growing up? How did that change after parent's conviction?
17. Where were you when you heard that your father/mother was arrested? What was your mental state then?
18. What can you tell others about growing up in a single parent home due to a parent being wrongfully convicted?
19. What were your experiences when interacting with other children in the community who came from traditional families?
20. How old were you when your parent was exonerated?
21. What was your opinion of wrongful conviction before your parent was wrongfully convicted? How did this change after your parent was exonerated?
22. Could you please explain how you feel about the justice system regarding your family?
23. How would your life be different with your father if your parent had not been wrongfully convicted?

24. Could you please explain your relationship with your wrongfully convicted parent after arrest? Conviction? And Exoneration?
25. Where were you when you heard that you father/mother was convicted? How did the conviction make you feel about the parent?
26. What are your feelings about your parent being wrongfully convicted?
27. How did you experience wrongful conviction induced separation from you father or mother?
28. What was the most challenging aspect of dealing with your parent's absence for such a long period of time?
29. How did you manage the relationship with your mother/father while he/she was wrongfully incarcerated?
30. Explain your look back, perceptions, and emotions when you found out that your parent was wrongfully convicted?
31. Where were you when you heard that you father/mother was exonerated? What are the thoughts, flashbacks, remorse, and emotions associated with your parent's exoneration?
32. What was the most rewarding aspect if there is any of your parent being wrongfully convicted?
33. What is the most important message that you want us to take away from this interview?
34. Is there anything else that you would like to add about any of the topics that we've discussed or other areas that we did not discuss but you think are important?