

2019

## The Impact of Parental Incarceration: Adults Reflect on their Juvenile Years

Carolyn Eugenia Allen  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Walden University  
2019

Abstract

The Impact of Parental Incarceration: Adults Reflect on their Juvenile Years

by

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MA, University of Central Florida, 2009

BS, Florida Gulf Coast University, 2007

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration – Criminal Justice

Walden University

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## Abstract

For many American families, incarceration has become a way of life. Per the National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated, there are more than 2.7 million children who have a parent in prison and some may have one or both in county jail. There are psychological implications in terms of the child's well-being, behavioral, academic, and emotional outcomes, and family-level processes. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to describe the impact that a parent's incarceration has on a child even through adulthood. The research question examined how a parent's incarceration impacts the future of the child into adulthood. Data were collected for this study through interviews with 12 adults who had a parent who had been or; in many cases was still incarcerated. The findings indicated that there is a significant impact on children when a parent is incarcerated and that as a result, children may exhibit externalizing behaviors such as anger, aggression, and hostility towards others. The results of the study may inform social workers and others who serve this population.

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## Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to my wonderful and loving family. My amazing husband Joey, who encouraged me to never give up and let me know that he was behind me every step of the way. To my beautiful and wonderful children Shannon and Ashley, even when I had my worse days you were there to cheer me on and always let me know just how proud you are of me. To Arlington and Darrell, loving my girls make life easier for me. You all have loved me, supported me and were patient with me through the late nights, early mornings, the tears and the small breakdowns. To my mother Tomicenia Butler, my siblings Marzell Hill, Clintoni Swain, Robert Williams, Christopher Williams, Tammy Davis and Sterling Williams, I love you and hope that I have blazed a trail for you to follow one day. A very special “I love you” to my great nephew Jordan A. Holloman, you are about to start your journey in life, go out and conquer the world! My journey has been one that we as a family have all traveled and for this, I want you to know that I am so blessed to be supported and loved by all of you.

*“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”*

—Philippians 4:13

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To my "honorary" dissertation coach, Dr. Rina Bradley Brown, Thank you! Thank you for your guidance, we were to graduate together but that wasn't in God's plan. You pushed me through this journey and all the way to the finish line. God, bless you and keep you.

This work is dedicated to every child affected by parental incarceration. My prayer is that one day no child will feel like they are forgotten due to a parent's incarceration. This research is my first step in helping to eliminate this problem. I pray that everyone that reads this study will feel a sense of obligation to take a stand in this fight and advocate for those impacted by parental incarceration and rally for change.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

A child who experiences parental incarceration can have adverse effects that can lead to an enduring trauma that involves ongoing and repeated stressors throughout adulthood (Foster & Hagan, 2015). There is a direct impact felt by young people in the United States resulting from parental incarceration. Youths may not benefit from their family living arrangements after a parent is incarcerated. Many children do not get the support they need whether it is having a positive role model or just positive messages (Nichols & Loper, 2012). This study will provide insight regarding the impact of parental incarceration through reflections of adults who had a parent incarcerated during their juvenile years.

### **Background**

Aaron and Dallaire (2010) examined the effects of incarceration of parents on children for other occurrences like related risk factors and family processes and showed that there are still areas regarding this topic that have yet to be researched to address parental incarceration and the effects on children. Bocknek, Sanderson, and Britner (2009) said that there was a very high occurrence of posttraumatic stress among school age children who had parents who were incarcerated as well as a high rate of behaviors that were internalized and externalized. Peers of children who had parents who were incarcerated had an advantage in terms of not becoming incarcerated due to the history of their parents. Those children with a family history of incarceration will most likely become incarcerated before ever becoming an adult and are six times as likely to be

incarcerated themselves. More than half of those in the juvenile justice system have a parent in the prison population.

In the United States, the rate of imprisoned adults has quadrupled over the past two decades. In this research, children of incarcerated parents have a population that is increasing rapidly. There is evidence that children are easily susceptible in terms of following in the footsteps of their incarcerated parents; (Martin, (2016). Having a parent incarcerated can pose many threats to children's emotional, physical, educational, and financial wellbeing. Murray & Murray, 2010). Long-lasting psychopathology has been linked to strong risk factors due to parental incarceration. There are other causes that due to parental incarceration put children at risk for child psychopathology.

Phillips and Gates (2011) showed that there is a connection between branding and childhood emotional, social difficulties, and defending of social withdrawal due to parental incarceration. There has been evidence that has linked the incarceration of fathers with increased household instability and, elevated risks of poor child outcomes.

### **Problem Statement**

There is a problem in society, specifically, there is a problem in the way that society provides support (counseling, education, therapy) for children of incarcerated parents. Many children with parents who are incarcerated end up being incarcerated themselves (Jones, Dinsmore, & Massoglia, 2014). 80% of children of current prisoners will someday be incarcerated (Poehlmann et al, 2013). These children enter the juvenile system as early as age 8 (Miller, 2006). Parental incarceration is associated with lower educational achievement (Hagan & Foster, 2012). There may also be economic hardship

for families (Wakefield & Uggen, 2010; Western & Pettit, 2010), and poor mental health and few psychological resources for children and young adults (Swisher & Shaw-Smith, 2015).

No uniform programs exist to address this problem despite empirical evidence that many children of incarcerated parents will have problems when it comes to having healthy relationships, which in the end can lead to self-destructive behaviors. This problem impacts juveniles in different ways. Some possible factors contributing to the problem are: the way the juvenile justice system provides support for children of incarcerated parents and lack of funding and fractured services for children and their guardians. The literature reviewed for this study clearly reveals that researchers have looked at problems related to children of incarcerated parents from the perspective of poor academic achievement, involvement in delinquency and gang-related activities, violence, difficulty dealing with authority figures, and eventually adult criminal behavior.

This study will fill the gap by contributing to the literature, and policymakers can then possibly use the results of this study to develop programs that will assist this targeted group and help them to break the cycle of incarceration and become productive citizens in their communities. One of the goals of a policy should be to ensure that the best interests of children are at the forefront when a parent is incarcerated. Policy interventions may include people from many agencies working at every stage of the child's life to make sure that they are not a product of their parent's lifestyle.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine the impact of parental incarceration according to adults who had a parent or both parents incarcerated during their juvenile years. There is a need for more research to determine whether incarceration is simply reflective of developmental and behavioral problems or if it is a direct cause. The literature reviewed for this study identified several themes which include: word repetitions (word that occurs repeatedly) or connectors (words that are related). This study will involve looking for repetition in the text from in-depth interviews. Indigenous categories are another way to look for themes. When there are familiar and unfamiliar words used in unfamiliar ways, this can trigger themes. Metaphor can also reveal themes. The way people talk and use their words will show a connection. There was no literature that examined the risk factors from the adult's view. This qualitative case study will fill this gap by contributing to the body of knowledge regarding formulating and changing policies involving the effects of parental incarceration on children.

## **Research Questions**

*RQ1*: How does parental incarceration impact a child?

## **Theoretical Framework**

Ambiguous loss theory and resilience theory will serve as the theoretical frameworks for this study. Both theories were chosen to help explain what children may experience when a parent is incarcerated and how it can affect their wellbeing in the future, as well as show their resilience when faced with adversity. In the early 1970s, Norman Garmezy created resilience theory.

In 1977, the term ambiguous loss theory was created by Dr. Pauline Boss. Ambiguous loss theory helps provide useful insights into the difficulties faced by individuals in terms of decision making and adapting to new challenges. It is traumatizing when there is uncertainty or lack of information for a child regarding the whereabouts or status of a loved one or as absent or present, dead or alive. Ambiguous loss happens when there is a lack of facts involving a loved one. When there is trauma and grief, human relationships are ruptured indefinitely by ambiguous loss. The reaction and how they handle the trauma will be different there may not be fear, anxiety and panic for children who have not suffered a loss of a parent to incarceration, then those who have a parent incarcerated. If there are complex family and instability issues that were experienced before, during, and after a parent's incarceration, this can be the cause.

Both theories are best suited for this study because Ambiguous loss theory can explain what the child may feel or experience, while resilience theory can show how they may overcome loss. Implementing effective strategies that focus on ways to assist this affected population could improve how the future for some of these children turn out.

### **Nature of the Study**

This study will be qualitative and explore the impact of parental incarceration on children. When attempting to determine the essence of a phenomenon, a qualitative approach is needed because it can help to answer questions about experience, meaning and perspective, most often from the standpoint of the participant. (Creswell, 2013). This study proposes to improve understanding for the reader of how children with incarcerated parents can display risk factors that can lead to them being incarcerated as adults, as well

as identify protective factors such as: positive attitudes, good mental, physical, and emotional health for those whose parents were incarcerated but did not end up becoming incarcerated themselves. Information was gathered from adults who had at least one parent who was incarcerated when they were juveniles. Specifically, a sample size of 12 adults was selected. All 12 participants had parents who were incarcerated when they were a juvenile, 6 in the sample experienced incarceration themselves (as either a juvenile or adult after their parent was incarcerated), and 6 in the sample did not experience incarceration themselves. Face-to-face interviews and surveys were used to collect data for the research. Face-to-face interviews allowed me to observe body language and other movements during the interview. It also provided better accuracy in terms of participant' emotions during interviews. To prevent or minimize bias, a rapport was established with the participant before the interview to help them to become more comfortable.

### **Definitions**

*Ambiguous Loss:* A loss with no understanding or closure. The process of grieving is delayed due to the person's search for answers which can result in unresolved grief.

*Correlation:* A connection between two or more things or a mutual relationship

*Incarceration:* The act of being detained or confined to a jail or prison.

*Phenomenological Approach:* an approach that is used to help explain how a certain situation is experienced by human beings.



*Posttraumatic stress disorder:* An anxiety disorder that results from experiencing a traumatic event that leaves the victim feeling helpless and in fear of threatened or actual harm (Ford, Grasso, Elhai, & Courtois, (2015).

*Psychology:* the study of the human mind, how it functions and the affecting behavior in a given context.

*Self-destructive behavior:* A behavior that a person engage in that is harmful or potentially harmful for that person. This type of behavior can occur continuously and ultimately lead to suicide.

*Trauma:* An experience that can be disturbing.

### **Assumptions**

For the purposes of this study, the following assumptions were made. This study seeks to explore the impact of parental incarceration on children. Each participant involved in this study will provide narrative reflections of their lived experiences as a child with a parent who is or has been incarcerated. All participants involved received the same survey and were asked the exact same questions during interviews. The data from these interviews were collected, processed, and analyzed to give a true and accurate depiction of each participant's individual experiences. These interviews took place in a safe environment and were audio recorded for accuracy purposes. Participation was voluntary. The fact that there are so many children in our juvenile justice system and later in our adult system who have had a parent who was incarcerated is a serious issue. Exploring the reasons why some of these individuals ended up in the criminal justice system and others did not will be the focus of this research.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

This study involves an examination of the impact on children when a parent is incarcerated. This study was limited to adults who were 18 and over and have had a parent incarcerated while they were juveniles. This targeted population was chosen because they can provide insight regarding what it was like to have a parent incarcerated during their juvenile years. The findings of this study may be beneficial to future research and programs to benefit children that are impacted due to parental incarceration.

### **Limitations**

This study was done to fill a gap in prior research by examining the impact that parental incarceration has on children and specifically examine the potential differences between participants who ended up in the criminal justice system and those who did not. There were 20 participants chosen for the study. The primary limitations were that the study was: qualitative in nature, the sample size was small, and the findings may not be generalized to the public. With participants reliving what may have been a difficult time in their lives, there are limitations involved in this research. There may be apprehension, where participants are afraid to respond to questions. To address this concern, data collection procedures were explained to the participants before receiving consent. They were ensured that their responses were coded as a means of protecting their identity and privacy. Privacy for all involved is the largest ethical concern of the study.

Providing detailed descriptions of experiences allows researchers to keep a detailed account of all events with participants as well as a more detailed description of the environment, instruments used, and methodology. This is important when getting

policymakers involved in implementing laws to help at-risk youth, and others who may assist with children who have incarcerated parents, allowing them to have a positive and healthy lifestyle.

### **Possible Type and Source of Data**

#### **Significance**

This study of adults whose parents are or were incarcerated when they were juveniles and the risk factors that can contribute to their own incarceration will be a significant contribution to the body of knowledge on the effects of juvenile incarceration. Little is known about how parental incarceration affects a child's future. If psychologists; as well as members of the juvenile justice system and social service field are able to identify risk factors and come up with strategies that will benefit children of incarcerated parents, they as well as the child can benefit from the information gained in this phenomenological study. This study can change lives, policies, and practices and has the potential to make an impact on social change. Most of all, it could be a preventative resource for juveniles with incarcerated parents.

#### **Summary and Conclusion**

Children whose parents are involved in the criminal justice system face a host of challenges and difficulties such as: antisocial behavior, behavior issues at school, economic hardship, and criminal behavior (Murray & Farrington, 2008). Incarceration is not a single or discrete event but a process. Many programs are set to help incarcerated parents and not children. . The aim is to prevent the problem before it begins.

A major issue that needs to be addressed is factors which may lead to juveniles of incarcerated parents ending up incarcerated themselves versus factors that might protect juveniles from incarceration. Careful evaluations of participants' psychological functioning and patterns of coping needs to be addressed. There have been many studies done on parental incarceration as shown in Chapter 2, however, none have focused mainly on the impact for the child, from the perspective of reflecting adults, looking back on their parents' incarceration. This study would be a step toward addressing the impact of incarceration on this affected population. Until society addresses the issues that children face when they have an incarcerated parent, these concerns need to be identified and programs and interventions need to be put in place to help these individuals.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

The effects of imprisonment on a family can lead a child down many pathways. Parental incarceration can traumatize a child when a parent is absent and not in the child's life for an extended period. When there is a change in a family's structure and that child no longer has that normalcy, this can be traumatizing to a child in many ways. Parental incarceration brings about changes in a family's finances and dynamics which can be traumatizing and harmful to the child. The traumatization of the child puts them at a greater risk for having a single parent household, limiting their financial means, disrupting the disciplinary process for the child, and exposing them to embarrassment and shame.

Not having a positive role model in a child's life can have a negative effect. Sometimes, if a child has a positive role model in their life, this can make a difference. Mentoring programs can have a positive role. There has been little attention to date on the impact of mentoring programs on youths that have incarcerated parents and the viewpoint of the child.

To locate articles and literature for this study, different research strategies were used involving direct and indirect effects of parental incarceration on youth and how they cope with separation from parents. This review looks at research that has been conducted to date regarding the targeted population and resources that are available to those youths who have a parent, or in some cases both parents incarcerated.

The fundamentals of ambiguous loss theory are important for theoretical models of understanding why the issue of parental incarceration has an impact on child depressive symptoms.

McCaskill (2014) conducted research to bring attention to the many adversities and trauma that children may experience due to a parent's incarceration prior to that loss. McCaskill exposed the common negative life experiences that these children face and their contact with Child Protective Services. The implications were that if you had a mother incarcerated, there was greater risk for that child to experience increased exposure to violence and have daily interactions with parents and parents were more likely to be unemployed, which indicated that the child will need therapy and other types of assistance to help address the trauma that comes along with having a incarcerated parent as well as issues that they had before the incarceration. Evidence suggests that before a

parent's incarceration, these children were exposed to trauma and negative life experiences which makes them a vulnerable population.

Mezzo found in a study entitles "Children of incarcerated parents" that during 2014 there was more focus on the incarcerated parent and not as focused on the children that were left behind during the incarceration. With a constant rise in incarceration over the decades, there is an increase in the number of children that are affected (Craig, 2009; Sandifer, 2008; Boudin, 2011; Foster, 2009; Novero, Booker & Warren, 2011; Craig, 2009; Laughlin, Arrigo, Blevins, & Coston; 2008). Emotional and behavioral issues are what may lie in the future for those children, which can lead to criminal behavior.

Juvenile boys are more likely to be involved in crime and antisocial behavior as revealed by current research. Although more research is needed into the specifics as to why boys are more likely to engage in crime, the possibilities are unlimited therefore more research is needed to bring change to this situation. Adult children of incarcerated parents have a less likelihood to be involved in criminal behavior than juvenile children of incarcerated children. To help implement programs for those children, more research is needed. These programs can target preventative ways to aid in helping juveniles avoid following in their parents' footsteps. If there is no help offered to the children, no programs implemented, and those issues are annoyed by the children and society, children will continue to show criminal and antisocial behavior.

The United States has one of the largest at-risk populations which is children with incarcerated parents as reported by Miller (2006) in her research. The focus of her study was to reveal the possible consequence that parental incarceration can have on children

and how service providers combined efforts to alleviate this problem for the betterment of the children. Major shifts in the family is one thing that is listed as a possible short- and long-term effect of parental incarceration as reported in current literature. This shift can lead to economic stress and adverse interpersonal issues for the child.

Moses (2010) discovered that there must be programs to assist a child when they are separated from their parent due to incarceration or institutionalization, this will assist them with the lost. Allen (2017) stated that the affected population has seen some growth in the number of programs that specialize in assisting the child (prison visitation, tutoring or mentoring) against comprehensive treatment. Although hard to endure, these programs are always in a dangerous state.

Parental incarceration has been linked as a strong indicator for long-lasting psychopathology. Many more causes have been discovered by Murray & Murray (2010) that can put children at risk for child psychopathology if they have parents that are incarcerated. A strong predictor of parental incarceration are reliable symptoms of child psychopathology. There's conflicting evidence as to whether these symptoms can contribute to these problems or just causes of child psychopathology. There is convincing evidence that having a parent incarcerated can create attachment insecurity for a child due to the parent-child separation, not having the parent readily available for the child, lack of communication on why the separation occurred, and living arrangements for the child that is less favorable. When children are exposed to social and economic strains, there can be a link from attachment insecurity from parental incarceration to child psychopathology. Contributions to child psychopathology can be attributed to attachment

insecurity following a parent's incarceration if there are other social and economic strains.

Parental incarceration has affected many children and their families as founded by Nickel, Garland & Kane (2009). What is faced by those children are a numbers of serious risk factors like: modest school accomplishments, drug addition, emotional issues, severe poverty, as well as domestic ferocity. There is also a more serious problem for those children which is access to services to address these risks. If and how these risks are addressed is difficult for governmental agencies to know. Though policy changes and better scheduling of services to those children, much progress can and has been made. The results of the study showed a recommendation for comprehensive programs to address the risks and individual needs that children of incarcerated parents face. Also, it was recommended that those individuals have their form of care tailored to their needs whether they live with a parent or family member or if in foster care getting these services to the affected children is very important to that child. It is very important that the criminal justice system improve their policies, programs and practices to help minimize the trauma and ill-effects that is felt when a parent is arrested and when the child visits the parent.

How parental incarceration affects households and the children in those households is yet to be determined as reported Nichols & Loper (2012). Their study which consist of the use of a child-centered lens research the impact this may have on school outcomes of children living with a family member or an associate of the family who has been incarcerated prior to their 18th birthday. At the beginning of the study the



results indicated that if a youth had a family member incarcerated, they may have experienced more socioeconomic challenges, difficulties at home were more frequent, and there were lesser cognitive skills compared to those youths who had not experience such an absence. Those already traumatized youths were also more likely to have a high absenteeism from school, which reported a lower percentage of graduates from high school, compare to their counterparts who did not experience such a challenge. Contrary to what the researchers anticipated or guessed, the results were different showing that having a family member in the household incarcerated was the only meaningful association with poor school outcomes. There is a possibility that households that have individuals that are not of immediate kin are ones that experience a more persistent disordered home life than those that have members of their immediate family incarcerated. This study also revealed that there needs to be a more extensive study done to address the effects of incarceration on children that has anyone in the household to become incarcerated.

There has been a growing list of risk factors that are associated with having a parent incarcerated during adolescence including school drop-out. Nichols, Loper, & Meyer (2016) used multilevel modeling to complete a study which looked at truancy, academic success and lifetime educational fulfilment from a developmental ecological approach to see if there is a linkage of having a parent incarceration and difficulty in reaching those milestones. A study utilized data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health (48.3 % female; 46 % minority status). Traits were examined from everyone such as: school and family connections. Attributes from school life were also

evaluated: school size and mental health services, to evaluate the risks of incarceration and whether those characteristics can significantly reduce those risks. The results of the study indicated small meaningful risks associated above and beyond what was previously focused on (individual and school level characteristics). There was a connection between family and school which was acknowledged as a conducive factor whether there is a history of incarceration for the parent. Whether there is a history of parental incarceration or not, there were possible compensatory factors for family and school connectedness, for academic accomplishment and absenteeism. However, the study also showed that when examining the highest level of education there were no link between school connectedness and lowering the risk that are associated with parental incarceration. A final revelation suggested that although there are potential risks related to parental incarceration, there are possible regions for school-base prevention and intervention when it comes to adolescents.

A connection was shown by Phillips & Gates (2011) in which their research, showed there is a connection due to parental incarceration between labeling and childhood emotional, social problems; and defending of social removal. The model that was used helped to demonstrate how a family may feel it's in the best interest of the child if they don't let the child know about the incarceration of the parent; social withdrawal function, child emotional and behavior issues and its link to stigmatization; and how seeking out help may be delayed due to fear of being stigmatized. With the knowledge that has been gained from research on stigmatization, it was feared that this may confirm the idea that children that have a parent incarcerated are different than those that don't

which has been a stereotype for many years. How children respond to stigmatization may be a normal and defensive reaction to stigmatization and being treated in a prejudice way as reported in literature on stigmatization. Some of those problems that were reported are: anxiety, withdrawal, low self-esteem and anger. Whether than attention being made on how to fix those children affected by the stigmatization, a comprehensive reply to attitudes and beliefs of many should be the focus when attempting to recognize and end discriminatory treatment.

Resiliency theory has the influence of promotive factors that was said to not influence the behavior of some youths that are exposed to negative risk factors. A study was done by Stoddard, Whiteside, Zimmerman, Cunningham, Chermack, & Walton (2013) which examined the effects of cumulative risk and promotive factors on adolescent violent behavior. Individual characteristics and peer, family, and community influences are what cumulative measures of risk and promotive factors entail. The two models of resilience for violent behavior was tested using Hierarchical multiple regression in youth who reported violent behavior. Higher level of violent behavior was linked to higher cumulative risk. The association between risk and violent behavior has been diminished by higher levels of promotive factors which indicated lower levels of violent behavior. The results of the study support the risk-protective model of resiliency and showed that cumulative risk for youth violence can be reduced by promotive factors.

Recent research in the Arizona Department of Corrections was motivated by the alarming amount of men and women that are incarcerated and the well-being of their children. As stated by Tasca, Turanovic, White, & Rodriguez (2014) despite the advances

in literature, whether mental health of a child is affected by maternal opposed to paternal incarceration little is known about. A study conducted by Tasca et al, (2014) on whether there are differences in mental health needs amongst children that have an incarcerated parent is. The focus of the study was to see if incarcerated mothers would report the mental status of their child quicker than the incarcerated father. The results revealed that mental health issues for children were more likely to be reported by a mother than for the father were to report this concern. Even after the controlling for additional parent stressors and exposures to child risk factors like violence, being exposed to drugs/alcohol while in utero and parental mental illness. Future research for policy implications and directions were discussed.

As the introduction to a series of articles, Uggen & McElrath (2014) summarized parental incarceration. This is a field that has advanced extremely in the past years. There were five key lessons that came from the research and was revealed at a 2013 summer workshop entitled "Parental Incarceration in the United States: Bringing Together Research and Policy to Reduce Collateral Costs to Children." What the researchers also found was that to reduce the number of children affected by parental incarceration drastically, there needs to be serious sentencing reform. The intent of the artless was to lay the ground work for future research and policy. Making the right policy choices and taking opportunities that may come our way will enable us to address the inequalities in our institutions. Parental Incarceration is such an epidemic that this issue has been addressed on Sesame Street episodes. In our view the struggle to humanize and destigmatize the children of incarcerated parents is what is important.

The incarceration of a father has been linked with household instability, elevated risks of poor child outcomes, with now and future consequences for the family disparity. Wildeman & Wakefield (2014) found that researchers have shown an interest in knowing “what is the consequence for the family if there is mass imprisonment”? The results of the study showed that if you have a parent incarcerated behavioral problems that a child already have, as well as other issues may be exacerbated. There was also a discovery of first-hand risk of parental imprisonment. The estimated risk for parental incarceration amongst black children was large and has steadily increased over the years. On the other-hand the risk for white children has been modest (Wildeman, 2009). Childhood mental health and behavioral problems has been linked to parental incarceration according to the best evidence thus far. This evidence suggests that difficulty in school, issues related to joblessness and criminal connection may play a part when a child has a parent incarcerated. There is an increase of behavioral problems for children when parental incarceration exists. This has been shown to increase by one third to one-half a typical deviation and worldwide in nature, which can impact externalize and internalize behaviors coarsely identical measure.

Wildeman (2010) study looked at the causes of children’s behavioral problems and the consequences of mass imprisonment at age 5 due to parental incarceration. What was discovered from the study was that there is an association between having a parent incarcerated and a child’s physical aggression for boys at age 5, and the results also showed that there is an intensity among boys whose fathers did not go to prison for a violent crime or were abusive to the mothers of these children. The results further suggest

that a girls' physical aggression may be decreased, although the results are not strong. In the overall findings, it showed that fathers may pass down crime and incarceration to their son (but not daughters) which ultimately lead to mass imprisonment.

In a different look at parental incarceration Wakefield (2015) study examined a child's health when examining the effects of parental incarceration. In cases of abuse there were low parenting quality when neglect or abuse were prevalent, in this instance parental incarceration is the best thing for the child and their protection if the parent is removed from the home.

When there are reports of physical or sexual abuse in childhood by a parent or caregiver this is an important moderator when examining the effects of paternal incarceration on well-being. Swisher and Shaw-Smith (2015) found that women who did not experience sexual abuse in childhood as reported in this study showed a positive association between paternal incarceration and depression, while those who did have a history of sexual abuse did not show this association.

Per Wildeman & Wakefield (2014) male imprisonment is a common thing in families that are housed in some of our poorest neighborhoods. Due to the mass incarceration, this has become an interest to researchers to see what the consequences may be for the families. There has been a link shown for increased instability, risks of poor child outcomes, there is also suggestions of family disparity both now and in the future, which is all due to the incarceration of a father. Knowing that many of these families must deal with the fact that there is an absent parent that is missing due to incarcerations is what's missing from the quantitative literature. Some families will also

have other family members that are also incarcerated at the same time. The results of the study revealed that if a disadvantage child has a parent incarcerated, he/she will be at a greater risk for other issues other than having a parent incarcerated as opposed to those children that didn't have an incarcerated parent. Years-ago incarceration wasn't an issue for many families, however in the past years this problem has plagued many families which means that the most contemporary family will be touched by this problem at some point in time which researchers could have never anticipated. Another discovery during the research found that on an experimental level was shown that a large amount of literature on the effects of parental incarceration on children may have also shown not just a direct impact, but also how it relates to a broader family relationship to incarceration. The most important results of the study revealed that a high stressor for families is having a family member incarcerated, every more stressful is having a mass incarceration in a family which can have consequences for a child and inequality for the family which has not been fully researched. Future research was needed to understand just how having other family members such as brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts and cousins incarcerated can affect a child's well-being, not just focus on a parent being incarcerated. There is still much research that needs to be done. More attention empirically needs to be explored to this overlap between incarceration of family members and parental incarceration and its effects on a child.

There have been much quantitative methodological approaches that relied on secondary analysis of datasets that hasn't addressed the issue of the effects of parental incarceration on children, which has not allowed there to be a direct way of identifying

the mechanisms of how incarceration affects a family as well as a child's well-being (Dallaire, Zeman, & Thrash, 2014). This qualitative research will help address this issue by providing an important compliment to quantitative investigations. By giving a voice to the participants this will allow aspects of how the family function and process this issue in ways that the quantitative research didn't depict. The research will fill the gap in ways that will address each affect and suggest ways to improve or eliminate this phenomenon.

This research will address the challenges that are faced by juveniles that have a parent incarcerated and offer suggestions for overcoming these challenges, by building on previous research and discussions that have been conducted and explored on this phenomenon. By describing philosophical and methodological approach this will offer suggestions for overcoming these challenges.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

Parental incarceration is becoming a very important topic. There are more families that are being affected by this problem. There is some information on parental incarceration, but minimal on how this affects youths in their future. Background information for this study on the impact and how it affects children even into their adulthood was gathered from peer-reviewed articles. The main method for locating literature that was significant to my topic was through Walden University Library search engines. Using library resources, there were various database that were utilized such as ProQuest Central, SocIndex, SAGE, Lexis Nexis Academics, Criminal Periodical and ICPSR. Searches were also conducted in Google Scholar.



There were several keywords and phrases that was used to locate the literature described in this review. These included *the effects of parental incarceration on children; parental incarceration; incarcerated parents; parental incarceration and the effect on a child; parental incarceration; behavior, parental incarceration; and economic issues, parental incarceration*. Many terms were used in unification with one another.

Contributing articles were found through references cited by various authors of articles found through the databases mentioned above. These searches were limited within the past thirteen years (2003-2017). Google Scholar was also used to locate articles online. There was limited amount of information on this topic that was recent, however information was found that indicated this topic has been explored somewhat in the past.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Ambiguous loss theory and resilience theory will be used in this research as the theoretical frameworks that I will utilize. These theories will be the backbone of my dissertation. Both were chosen because as a child when a parent is incarcerated you are faced with a loss that can carry many emotions and you go through a grieving process. Knowing how to deal with those emotions can be a challenge for some. Having the ability to adjust to those emotions will demonstrate your resilience.

Resilience is defined as the means of conquering negative effects of risk contact, having the ability to cope with traumatic events, or evading any path that may lead to negative risk (Walsh, 2016). This theory shows how an individual's ability to successfully adapt to life tasks in the face of social difficulty or highly unfavorable conditions.

Hardship and trauma come in many shapes and forms for family or relationship problems, health issues, or workplace and financial burdens, among others.

There are two viewpoints when it comes to the model of resilience: the trait-oriented perspective and the process-oriented perspective (Stoddard, Whiteside, Zimmerman, Cunningham, Chermack, & Walton, 2013). Resilience can be viewed as a personal trait that allows some at-risk youth the ability to overcome difficult life events and achieve adjustment in life that is optimal or even extraordinary. The view of this resilience is that one must be born with this internal ability to overcome and if they are not able to overcome adversity, then failure is on them.

Resilience in the process-oriented perspective is looked at as an interaction of individuals, their environment and the way they handle the obstacle of overcoming risk exposure that is negative to them. Their coping mechanism when something traumatic happens and how to avoid paths that lead them on a negative journey to destruction. How promotive dynamics may help in lessening adolescents' probability of internal difficulties has been the focus of recent researchers. Help can be given to many adolescents that may display internal behaviors such as low self-acceptance, depression as well as external behaviors like risky and delinquent activities (Cooper, Brown, Metzger, Clinton, & Guthrie, 2012).

It has been suggested that interventions that enhance adolescents' assets and resources are a result of resiliency-based research that can help with youth development and behaviors that are displayed both internally and externally. Several studies have been done by researchers on the relevant of resilience-based interventions and how it prevents

adolescents' risky behaviors (Allen, Garcia-Huidobro, Hurtado, Allen, Davey, Forster, et al., 2012). Half of the research participants (those who did not end up in the criminal justice system) in this study will be examined to delve deeper into this aspect.

In 1977, the term ambiguous loss theory was the brainstorm of Dr. Pauline Boss an educator and researcher who completed research on families of soldiers who went missing in action. Ambiguous Loss theory suggests that it is traumatizing when there is doubt or a shortage of information for a child on the whereabouts of a love one or the status of a loved one as absent or present, as dead or alive. The reaction will be different for children that have not suffered a loss of a parent to incarceration, then the reaction for those that have a parent incarcerated. If there are multifaceted family matters and unpredictability that is experienced before, during and after a parent's incarceration, this can be the cause.

Many families around the world experience a loss daily, with many not being recognized by society. Some may experience a loss that is not as defined as the loss of a loved one to death. When a person experiences a loss, it could be a person, object or an experience. When there are ambiguous losses such as: miscarriage, divorce, adult children leaving home, mental illness, sexual abuse or even having a parent incarcerated, it can be hard on a person (Boss, 1999; Knauer, 2002; Rycroft & Perlesz, 2001).

Boss (1999) identifies two types of ambiguous loss. Psychological presence, but a physical absence is the first form of ambiguous loss. Although not physically present, the person is felt psychologically. A divorced mother who is no longer in the home with the

child or a parent that is incarcerated are all ways that can be felt psychologically in the family's thoughts even though they are not present.

When the emotional bond is gradually slipping away or missing, Psychological absence can be confusing. There may be questions about the person that is absent, but still are a part of the family. This can cause a shift in the role of the family which will cause further questions. It can be very stressful for a family that experiences an ambiguous loss which can be a continuous ordeal.

Feeling insecure about the future and feeling helpless, an ambiguous loss can truly take a toll on people. Stress on some families can be a tremendous strain if not dealt with properly. Every family at some point must deal with some form of stress, however stress from an ambiguous loss can be very exhausting and, how a family handles stress will determine the impact it will have long-term (Madden-Derdich & Herzog, 2005). No one solution can be used to address ambiguous loss for every family. Each family must deal with this in a style that is fit for their needs.

Additional help may be needed for some who are dealing with ambiguous loss. Their loss is no less real than those that are more tangible. This can cause many to struggle with their emotions. When there is an ambiguous loss in a family, people are expected to move on. This can be a difficult thing to do for some families. Not being able to deal with loss isn't the result of not trying, but the unfeasibility of the condition that leaves them feeling helpless or incapable (Boss, 1999). In the past studies, researchers have explored different issues related to parental incarceration: effective interventions for children, delinquency after parental incarceration, maternal vs paternal incarceration, the

cycle of intergenerational incarceration, but there has been little research on “how parental incarceration impacts a child”. Much of the literature for this study is over ten years old due to there is little literature resources on the topic of parental incarceration that has been published recently.

### **Literature Review**

There have been past research findings where various related risk factors and family processes have been examined for the effects of incarceration of parents on children. While there have been several studies, there are still areas on this topic that research is needed (Aaron & Dallaire, 2010) that will address parental incarceration and the effects on children.

Akesson et al. (2012) found in their research that there were more people in the United States incarcerated than in any other country. In over the past thirty years the incarceration rate has risen more than 300 percent. In 2007, of those incarcerated they reported have an estimated 1,706,600 minor children and of those 2.3 percent were under the age of 18 (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008). Their study aimed at understanding how incarceration affects this population of children whether it's: mental health, substance abuse or risky behavior being displayed by the child.

The effects of parental incarceration on parenting was examined by Wakefield (2015). In this study, it was found that on average there was an increase to negative parenting behaviors like physical abuse, but no positive change which could include engagement when a father has been incarcerated.

Parental incarceration was found to have some impact on infant mortality, child homelessness as well as a child's internal and external behavior problems as found by Wakefield and Wilderman (2014) in their study. The effects of parental incarceration on families appeared to be negative and wide ranging.

Arditti (2012) found that if a child resided with their parent prior to incarceration they experienced a more traumatic experience than those that didn't. There is also evidence that those that may have had little contact with their parent as far as living arrangement may experience some trauma also. These children are subjected to a series of experiences that reactivate or intensify trauma.

A small sample of children who had a parent incarcerated were used in a study completed by Bocknek, Sanderson & Britner (2009). A very high occurrence of posttraumatic stress was shown because of having a parent incarcerated amongst this group of children who also had a high rate of behaviors that were internalized and externalized.

In 2008, Caine did a study entitled "Children of offenders and the cycle of intergenerational incarceration" with the U.S. Department of Justice which revealed that there is a connection between family history and crime. Due to the history of their parents, there is an advantage for peers of children that had parents incarcerated of not becoming incarcerated. Those children that has a family history of incarceration will most likely become incarcerated before ever becoming an adult and are six times likely to be incarcerated themselves as adults. Having a parent incarcerated represent more than half of the Juvenile Justice system population.

Clayton (2015) found in her study that if a child resided with their father before he became incarcerated and that parent cared for the child and was one of the child's primary attachment figure then the incarceration separation can be considered traumatic and possibly have lasting effects.

There was a Craigie (2011) found that there was no tangible proof that paternal incarceration knowingly effects internalizing behavioral problems in children. Although paternal incarceration worsens externalizing behavioral concerns in children irrespective of gender and mainly for Blacks and Hispanics.

To see if there are differences in rates of mothers as opposed to fathers' incarceration in family associates, predicted incarceration of adult children, and minor children living situation another study was done by Dallaire (2007), who found that mothers gave children a greater threat than fathers for adult child incarceration.

### **Research Findings on Interventions**

In a study entitled "Mentoring children of prisoners: Program evaluation," Bruster and Foreman (2012) evaluated the needs of children whose loved ones were incarcerated and the possible impact of parental incarceration on children and families. Youths participating in mentoring have more interest in school, healthier relationships with their family, and find having a dialogue with someone about everyday issues or problems helpful as found in this study.

In 2014, Correia did a study in which she explored ways to link community mental services and youth in the juvenile system. The results of the study showed that the number of youths in Alameda County entering juvenile hall have higher rates of both

mental health disorders and substance abuse disorders and are traditionally from the lowest socioeconomic backgrounds.

Moses (2010) found that there must be programs to assist a child when they are separated from its parent due to incarceration or institutionalization, this will assist them with the lost. There has been growth in the number of programs to assist this affected population which includes services that are specialized for the child (such as prison visitation, tutoring or mentoring) versus comprehensive treatment. These programs are difficult to sustain but are almost always in a financially precarious circumstance.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

There has been previous studies done on parental incarceration. However, none have been done on the impact and risk factors for the child. Some studies have focused on the adult and their incarceration, but not the child. With there being an alarmingly high rate of parental involvement within our criminal justice system (CJS) there are great concerns that there should be strong studies on the effects of c (CJS) of parents on their children's lives.

Despite the influence of parental involvement in the CJS, there is very little research to date that has shown evidence of any study or research being done on the psychosocial consequences for children of incarcerated parents. Because it is important to hear the voices of the effected population themselves, the purpose of this study was to get their perspectives and views regarding the matter of their parents' incarceration and how it impacted them.



This current study consisted of confidential, in-person interviews with adults who had parents who were incarcerated while they were juveniles. To help provide adequate care and services for those affected children, we need to address those risk factors. In doing this, my hope is to contribute to the existing research to better serve the needs of children impacted by parental incarceration. Chapter 3 will include, a detailed description of the research protocol used for the interview, research design, how participants were selected, and how data were selected for my study.

### Chapter 3: Research Method

#### **Introduction**

The topic of this phenomenological study is the impact of parental incarceration on children. This qualitative study will help to understand “how having a parent incarcerated impacts a child”. The long-term impact on the child will be considered on a sample of adults that has/had an incarcerated parent to see if there are potential risk factors. More research is needed to see how parental incarceration may impact the child.

From the criminal perspective, there was no literature that examined risk factors. To address this problem, this qualitative case study aimed to provide data to public policy decision-makers that will contribute to the body of knowledge to formulate and change policies regarding the impact of parental incarceration on children. Six research participants were interviewed who had a parent incarcerated when they were a juvenile and ended up being incarcerated in the juvenile or adult criminal justice system, and then six also had a parent incarcerated during their juvenile years but the participants themselves not had any contact with the justice system.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

The phenomenon of interest involves “the impact of parental incarceration as adults reflect on their juvenile years.” Sykes and Pettit (2014) reported that in 2012, there were over 2.6 million children who had a parent who was incarcerated. The goal of this research is to find if there are signs that are displayed by the child that show a pattern and potential risk to follow the paths of their parents. Early in life, if a child has a parent incarcerated, this can be detrimental to them, which can lead to delinquency and depression. The timing of incarceration for the minor child could play a role in how they handle this event. Children of incarcerated parents at some point in their life will be more likely to be involved in the criminal justice system compared to other youths. Parental incarceration negatively impacts mental health, education, earnings, and relationships both in early and late young adulthood, and these effects increased over time (Mears and Siennick, (2016). The effects of parental incarceration are cumulative and enduring. To help these children realize that there is hope, there needs to be a strong intervention in place. Some risks factors include: disrespect for authority, gang affiliation, problems in school, and violence and drug activity, which can all lead to adult criminal behavior. Many of these factors could indicate possible warning signs regarding future incarceration if not addressed in time. There are also numerous behavioral and health-related outcomes related to parental incarceration such as: learning disabilities, behavioral problems, developmental delays, and speech/language problems, and attention deficit disorder (ADD, Turney, 2014)

The approach that is best is the qualitative case study design using an instrumental approach. The focus of the case study design is to gain an understanding of a difficult case in the best possible way. Multiple methods for collecting data are used due to this reason. The richest possible understanding of a case can be attained when multiple sources of data are collected. The qualitative methods that can be used in case study research are participant observation and interviews.

To get a clear understanding of this phenomenon, a quantitative study would not be the best option. Quantitative research will not allow the researcher to have the direct contact with the participants that is needed to understand how the impact of parental incarceration affected adults during their juvenile years. With this qualitative study, participants is interviewed and observed regarding their reactions to questions that are asked by the interviewer. This cannot be done with a quantitative study. Although children of incarcerated parents are rarely explored due to them being in a protected group, getting information from them as adults is essential for this phenomenological study.

### **Role of the Researcher**

According to Patton (2002), the researcher in qualitative studies is an instrument of data collection. The researcher plays an important role in collecting data for his or her research study. As the primary source of data collection, it is essential to identify the role that the researcher will be performing in this research . I will gather data through surveys, and face-to-face interviews with participants who had aa least one parent incarcerated during their juvenile years. Having the abilities and skills to be authentic, honest, and

open is something that the researcher must possess. This allows the researcher the ability to be accurate with what participants said during interviews (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Participants had no relationship with the researcher to make sure research results were not questioned or jeopardized. The interviews were with 10 research participants who had a parent incarcerated when they were a juvenile and ended up being incarcerated themselves in the juvenile or adult criminal justice system, as well as 10 participants who were not incarcerated in the juvenile or adult system but also had a parent incarcerated during their juvenile years.

Participation in this research was strictly voluntary. Each participant was given a consent form after agreeing to participate in this study. Because bias can occur in qualitative research, a primary focus was to ensure that bias was not present in this study. As the researcher, confirmation bias should be avoided. Academic research and everyday situations can be influenced by confirmation bias (Nickerson, 1998).

The main purpose of the researcher is to be an observer. This helps to focus on the behavior of the participant when questions are asked and help the interviewer to give a detailed description of what type of setting the interview occurred in. It is beneficial in this type of research that the interviewer and observer be allowed to give a good account of what is observed. The researcher is the key to the research data and its analysis, so the susceptibility of biases will increase. It is best to clarify what the biases may be and address them.

## **Methodology**

The qualitative methodology will be used to explore this topic. Because there is little-known research on the impact of parental incarceration as adults reflect on their juvenile years, variables were not readily identified. Characterized by Creswell (2009) as “inductive and emerging, qualitative research is shaped by the researcher’s experience in collecting and analyzing the data” (p. 22). Concerning the impact of parental incarceration on children, there are studies that were identified in which to measure a large, general population of children. It was discovered by researchers that some children that have a parent incarcerated might experience substance abuse, pressures of delinquency, and anger towards parents and the whole criminal justice system (Kjellstrand & Eddy, 2011). Much of the research that has been done touched on areas of gender and ethnic background (Greenaway, 2003) and mentorship programs for adults as well as those for children were compared (Steele, 2013). There is no study in which “the impact that a parent's incarceration has on a child” has been researched regarding direct effects. This section describes the methods used for selection of participants, recruitment, gathering data, strategies to reduce researcher bias, establishing credibility, ethical considerations, and data analysis.

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

A small sample of participants will help to receive a rich, thick description. The qualitative samples will be small due to it being critical in getting this desired type of results. The use of a purposive sampling strategy is necessary to this study. The deliberate choosing of the participants will allow the researcher to use a purposive sampling

strategy that maximizes the diversity in the interviews (Chretien, Goldman, Craven, & Faselis, 2010). The research will use the following criteria for selecting the participants which will also be listed on the flyer: adults age 18 and over; had a parent incarcerated while a juvenile; signed a consent form to participate in the research (Appendix E); and half of the research participants will have had involvement with the criminal justice system and half would not have been involved. For this study a sample of 20 participants will be used. Having a large enough sample size is needed to achieve data saturation and have all possible themes emerge. A local non-profit organization under the sheriff's department supervision was asked to participate in the study (Appendix F) and has agreed to work with the researcher in conducting this research (Appendix G). This non-profit has access to adults that have been incarcerated or involved in the criminal justice system. Flyers (Appendix D) will be posted by the researcher at the location of the non-profit to notify possible interested participants of the research study. Exclusionary criteria will be individuals who are not age 18 or older and has not had an incarcerated parent.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

To select participants the researcher will use purposive sampling. A purposive sample is based on characteristics of a population and the objective of the study. It is also sometimes referred to as selective sampling. Those that meet the criteria will be selected to participate in the study. A fictitious name will be assigned to each participant and data will be collected both electronically (voice recorder) and on paper, then organized in a way to conceal the identity of the participant. Each data collection will be assigned in sequential order by the archival numbers. Any information related to the participant will

be labeled by the fictitious name and archival number. A log will be utilized which contains a list of sequential numbers that allows the researcher to track the data and use for data collection occurrence. To have the packets available for the interview they are assembled with the archival numbers and other information ahead of the interview.

Once all the needed forms are verified by the researcher as meeting all requirements from the participants, the researcher will make sure that the participant understood what the study is about and the participant's involvement in the study. Transcripts of the data and field notes will be kept in order by using headers. For the research study the researcher will use two forms of data collection. In-depth interviews will be utilized as well as observation. Each interview can last approximately one and a half hour each, which is a time frame that is appropriate in phenomenological research for data collection (Creswell, 2006).

Each participant is assigned an interview date as well as an archival number starting with the number 100 for the data collection process. Interviews will be conducted in a private room at a public location and while the interview is being conducted, the researcher will also take field notes. In the field notes the researcher will describe what was observed which may have included: body language, nonverbal behavior, and the participant's responses being paraphrased were all discussed during the debriefing sessions. Further probing from the participant may be warranted because of the nonverbal behavior which was observed during the interview and was needed to confirm verbal statements given by the participant. Every participant will be given the opportunity after the interview is completed to make comments and clarify information. If it is necessary

for a follow up interview to occur upon the completion of the original interviews, the participants will be contacted, and a follow up interview will be scheduled. The interview and question guide as well as the notes are written on standardized paper. A Sony voice recorder will be used for the interview. After the interview, the data that was obtained will be placed in a sealed yellow legal-sized envelope by the archival number assigned to the participant and then place in a secure location.

After the actual interview with the participant, the researcher can begin transcription of the taped interviews. The tapes are then archived once the interviews are processed. Transcribing the interview immediately after it is conducted allow the researcher to record the participant's responses and attitude while they are still familiar. For transcribing, the researcher will tape everything that is disclosed during the interview after listening to it carefully. This may have included nonverbal sounds (crying laughter, etc.) that are noted from the researcher transcribed notes. Notes will be transcribed on a Toshiba laptop using Microsoft Word 2013.

### **Instrumentation**

A two-part design instrument was created by the researcher and will be utilized with the participants. Content validity for the questionnaires has already been established by the approval from the chair and committee member guiding the research study. First part includes a detailed demographic of the child whose parent was incarcerated, along with questions in regarding the parents' and the parent's criminal history (Appendix A). Part two of the instrument consists of question that the researcher will guide the participant through during the interview that covers several categories: the participant's



life, the incarcerated parent and the caregiver of the participant. The questions have been reviewed and approved by the researcher's research committee. This guided interview tool helps the researcher to know what types of questions to ask the participants during the in-depth interviews (Appendix B & C).

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

During the interview process data analysis began. Notes that are taken by the researcher includes what the participant states, body language, facial expressions and other aspects that are captured by the researcher (Poggenpoel & Myburgh, 2005). For information that the researcher finds relevant, codes will be assigned for a clearer understanding. A code sheet with the assigned code numbers and each participant's identity will be kept separately from the original materials in a locked storage cabinet only accessible by the researcher. Once transferred to the researcher's personal computer, this code sheet along with all audio voice recordings will be destroyed. All hard copies will be maintained in a secure locked box and only accessible to the researcher for a period of five years after the completion of the research in the researcher's home. To get a more transparent breakdown of the data the researcher may have continuously asked the participant who, what, when, where, how or how much. To maximize the differences and similarities in the emerging categories a constant comparison of the data can be done. Each category should have similar characteristics for the purpose of data grouping. Which may also help to reduce the needed data. Reducing the data allow the researcher to identify any major or minor categories of experiences that a child face that has or had a parent that was incarcerated and can draw on the theory building. During the analysis of

the data when the, same themes are recurring, and no new insights are given by additional sources of data, this is Saturation. Once saturation has been obtained there is enough data to ensure the research questions can be answered.

There can be an enormous amount of data collected by a qualitative study. This data must be analyzed correct and the researcher chose to use NVivo, which is a software database that organizes the data for the researcher. Complex data can be sorted and formed using this program. Various Microsoft word documents are imported. Key points are highlighted which allows for a speedy recollect or future analysis. NVivo allows a researcher to build and retain knowledge of the gathered data, also tracking ideas, helps use annotation for creating and writing memos that are captured during observation. Similar themes are linked together by NVivo which allows the researcher to get a fresh look at the data through coding stripes. Project themes will be tracked which allows comparison of many items like: age, gender of incarcerated parent, academics which are all crucial to the study. There are query tools used by NVivo that can allow understated trends and patterns to be seen by the researcher. This allows the researcher the option to utilize graphs and pie charts to display new ideas and findings. Connections or disparities in data can be found by using this software system that would most likely wouldn't be found if done manually.

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

#### **Trustworthiness and Summary**

No research goes untouched from the researcher's bias; having their ways of approaching subjectivity, qualitative and quantitative perspectives are very much

influenced by the standards guiding the research (Morrow, 2005, p. 254). Credibility will be established by purposive sampling. Participants will be randomly recruited based on the criteria state earlier. When recruited, participants will not be discriminated against based on race or gender. This is to ensure that various participants with diverse backgrounds are considered for the study. Triangulation will be used to establish credibility and confirmability. Triangulation means to use one or more methods when collecting data in qualitative research. Triangulation is created by cross-checking data, dictation of the audio recordings, and checking the notes while dictating.

### **Credibility**

Credibility is a process that relies heavily on the researcher's capability to consider all the difficulties that could arise in the study and to explain these difficulties as well. One of the same credibility as well as internal validity both relate to design, researcher's instruments and data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 188). Even though the researcher has a broad conception about the phenomenon under study, any preconceived notions or assumptions will be deferred to allow a clear understand and to get the true meaning of the phenomenon (Englander, 2012). This can assist with ensuring credibility of the research. Internal validity is a way to measure how well the research has been done. Internal validity or credibility refers to how well the research was done. It can also be established by reviewing the transcripts to search for any biases and then clarifying any found biases. When clarifying biases, the researcher can confront the biases by speaking of the prejudices that may influence the interpretation of the research and become

engaged with the participants by asking the participants questions about the biases (Creswell, 2009).

### **Transferability**

Transferability is the transfer of results beyond the boundaries of the study. This phase of the research allows the researcher's study to shine in a wider context while remaining true. One method of obtaining this is having a very detailed description of your data as well as framework. This can save time in not having to replicate the design and finding (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 189). To achieve transferability, a detailed description of the participant's accounts which supports the account of the data collected from study participants.

### **Dependability**

Dependability helps establish the findings from the study. This level of the research shows the viewer that there is a logical argument for how the data was collected and that the data is constant with your argument (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 189). Dependability is always a concern when there is independent review of the research. Oversight by the dissertation committee helped with this process.

### **Ethical Procedures**

The population of the study consisted of adults in which a parent has been or is incarcerated. In 2006 K. Miller stated that at that time there were approximately 1.5-2 million children that were affected by parental incarceration. Also, at that time, it was estimated that 767,400 African American children in the United States had a parent in prison (Glaze & Maruschak, 2010).

Just as with any study that involves human subject, ethical issues may arise at any time human subjects are involved. A researcher must weigh the cost and benefits of having human participants in a study (Berg, 2004). Because human participants are being used in this study, I completed training and received certification for Protecting Human Research Participants from The National Institutes of Health Office of Extramural Research (Appendix H). Approval is needed from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Walden University as well. All ethical guidelines set forth by Walden will be followed by the researcher for approaching potential participants and selecting them that met all ethical standards. There is no conflict of interest that could weaken the researcher's skilled standards for the study. Also, there are no coercion risks of the participants by the researcher and a full explanation for the study will be given. As part of the interview process each participant will be told what will occur, the length of the interview and how the information will be used. It will be explained that there is freedom to withdraw from the study at any time the participant feels they no longer want to be a part of the study (Berg, 2004). Participants will be allowed to ask questions at any time and can get a copy of the research results (Neuman, 2006). Having a parent incarcerated and having to talk about this may have the participant feeling uncomfortable or have emotional responses is a potential direct risk for the participant. No video equipment will be used during the interview. Each participant will be told that they would receive a \$25 gift card for their participation in the study. Many IRB have an issue with incentives when a protected group is involved. It is felt by many researchers that \$20 is what's considered to be adequate for having someone participate in an extended interview (Acock et al., 2005).

The only people having access to the information will be the researcher and persons that have been selected if needed to assist with validating the results of the study.

All documentation and materials associated with the interviews, including audiotapes, physical files and transcripts will be assigned numeric identifiers and safely stored on a password protected computer that only the researcher has access to. It is very important that the identities of the participants are kept confidential by the researcher. There should be no linkage to the participant's identifiers with their survey responses when utilizing the data. A respondent has the safeguard of having anonymity. When a researcher ensures anonymity, this is saying that there is a safeguard in place for the privacy of the participant as well as assurances that there will be no way of linking the name of the participant with the research. Common identifiers include names, social security numbers, addresses, and telephone numbers. Information will be stored by the assigned archival number in an envelope that is labeled by the information sheet and then stored in a locked secured file cabinet at the researcher's home office. The envelope will consist of forms, notes, cassette tapes, and jump drives (Mack, Woodson, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005). It is important to the researcher that all data be kept in a centralized place so that it is easy to manage in a systematic and organized fashion. After 5 years from completion of the dissertation, all tapes and other archived materials will be destroyed to ensure confidentiality (Mack et al., 2005).

### **Summary**

Incarcerated men and women in the US have shown significant growth over the past twenty years that has affected an unexpected number of children and families.

Despite the mounting interest in prison reentry and the fact that there is such a large population of affected children, there has been minimal attention to improve outcomes for this group of children at the national level. The purpose of this research is to show that having a parent that is or have been incarcerated impacts the future of that child(ren) and can have a negative effect on influencing them to follow the same path as their parents. This research is a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach. Past research literature has failed to show that certain risk factors can have a direct impact on a child into adulthood.

How a child flourishes in the face of difficulty can depend on certain risk and shielding factors. This current research main purpose is to cast light on how parental CJSI over time can impact children's mental health, which may include substance use and may cause them to develop risky behaviors. It will also identify interventions and have them put in place so that these strategies could prevent children from becoming involved with the CJS and following in their parents' footsteps. It is vital that delivery of services which will promote innovative and significant interventions for these children be provided which will in turn employ appropriate and applicable strategies to help alleviate some of the impact that is placed on children of incarcerated parents.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the impact of parental incarceration according to adults who had a parent incarcerated during their juvenile years. There is a need for more research to determine whether incarceration is simply

correlated with developmental and behavioral problems or if it is a direct cause. The research question for this study is as follows:

*RQ1: How does parental incarceration impact a child?*

Chapter 1 covered the background of the study, problem statement, purpose, research question, nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, and scope and delimitations. Limitations, significance, and a summary closed out this chapter. In Chapter 2, I explained the approach of the literature review, search strategy, and theoretical and conceptual framework before a detailed summary of the chapter was given. In Chapter 3, the methodology was reviewed and, the purpose of the study was restated that incorporated the affiliation of the study, research design and rationale, number of participants, and recruitment process used. In Chapter 4, I will describe the research setting, demographics, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness, and results of the study.

### **Settings**

The setting for this study was addressed in Chapter 3. Interviews were conducted in a setting to ensure that participants were comfortable. The researcher interviewed participants at the local library's conference room. Each interview was conducted in a quiet room with only the researcher and participant. All participants were fully cooperative. There were no personal or organizational conditions that influenced the participants or their experiences or interpretation of the data. The Walden University (IRB) approved the study (#03-12-19-0617527). Letters of consent were obtained from each participant in the study. Participation in the study was voluntary, and participants



could stop the interview process at any time if they became uncomfortable with the questions that were being asked or if their past brought back too many bad memories. Each participant received a \$25 gift card for their participation in the study.

### **Demographics**

The participants who volunteered for this study were adults who had at least one parent incarcerated during their juvenile years. The participants of the study provided insights regarding the impact of parental incarceration as they reflected on their juvenile years. Initially, the study sought a total of 20 participants: 10 participants whose parents were incarcerated during their juvenile years and have since been incarcerated in either the juvenile or adult system, and 10 participants whose parents were incarcerated during their juvenile years, but were not involved in the CJS. However, only 12 participants were used because saturation was met with 12 participants. 10 were female and two were male. The identity of the participants was kept anonymous by assigning each with a fictitious name both electronically via voice recorder and on paper. Data collection was assigned in sequential order by archival numbers. Any information related to each participant was labeled according to his or her fictitious name and archival number. Table 1 shows the makeup of participants for this study.

Table 1

*Participant Demographics*

Participant	Age	Gender	Incarcerated	
			Yes	No
Participant #01	32	Female		No
Participant #02	25	Female		No
Participant #03	29	Female		No
Participant #04	37	Female		No
Participant #05	34	Female		No
Participant #06	20	Female		No
Participant #07	41	Male		Yes
Participant #08	28	Female		Yes
Participant #09	30	Male		Yes
Participant #10	19	Female		Yes
Participant #11	32	Female		Yes
Participant #12	45	Female		Yes

**Data Collection**

For this qualitative study, there were two men and 10 women who participated. A good way to get participants is to use snowball sampling. Snowballing is when participants who see a flyer and participate in a study, are encouraged to invite others that may have fit criteria to contact the researcher if they are also interested in participating. The odds of any member being selected for this nonprobability sampling method cannot be calculated and will allow for random sampling (Cohen, Nissim, & Arieli, 2011). Once a potential participant was verified as meeting criteria to participate in the study, an

interview was scheduled. Once enough interviews were completed, saturation was achieved.

Each interview was recorded using the Olympus VN-541 PC digital voice recorder. All interviews lasted between 15 and 20 minutes. Each interview began with the participant completing the demographic form which asked for information such as age, race, educational level, and information on the participant's parents. Once all forms were completed, the interview began with me asking a series of open-ended questions which were used to gauge descriptions from participants regarding how having a parent incarcerated impacted them during their adolescent years. Information from the study was given to participants and they were given the opportunity to ask questions or voice concerns if they had any before proceeding with the interview. Each participant was given the same questions and follow-up questions were asked if deemed necessary to get more insight into their experiences. The interviews occurred over a 12- week period. Each interview was hand-transcribed by me by replaying the interview recordings and then transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy, affording the researcher the opportunity to make any necessary corrections. This also helped with seeing patterns that may have developed during interviews.

All interviews are stored in a safe location on a universal serial bus (USB), in addition to all consent forms and questionnaires. The digital recording device was also stored in a password protected locked file cabinet for 5 years.

### **Data Analysis**

For this study, an instrumental approach was used. The instrumental approach allows me to bring insight regarding the issue of parental incarceration and how it impacts a child. Once all data were collected, interview transcripts were read as well as any notes that were taken during the collection process. Each recorded interview and notes were reviewed to alleviate any risk of personal biases.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

All research procedures were submitted to and approved by IRB prior to beginning my study to ensure credibility and validity.

### **Credibility**

There was no deviation from the procedure that was noted in Chapter 3 of the study. Member checking or participant validation is a technique for exploring the credibility of results. A copy of the interview transcript was given to each respective participant, so they can review the document. This allows the participants the opportunity to review what they said, add more information if they want to, and to edit what they said. The participant was given the results to check for accuracy and reverberation with their experiences.

### **Transferability**

Transferability was easily achieved by making sure the results of the study can apply or transfer beyond the boundaries of the study. Other researchers will be able to use the results in other studies. There were no variations from the outline in Chapter 3.

### **Dependability**

Dependability is a needed part of trustworthiness that must be addressed. It allows the researcher to establish the research study's findings as consistent and repeatable. Dependability ensures that other researchers will arrive at the same interpretation and conclusion that my findings yield (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). There was no variation from Chapter 3.

### **Confirmability**

Using reflexive journaling helps address any bias so that I remain objective.

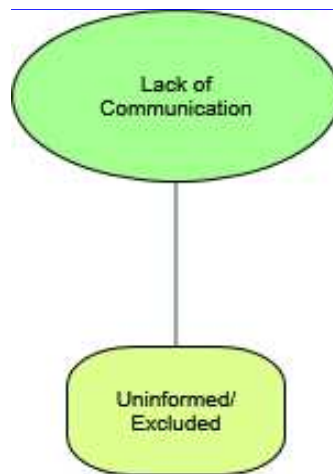
### **Results**

Codes were created in the study from the perspective of the interview respondents, which is known as emic approach. Creating preliminary categories helped to organize the interview responses by the research question. After listening to the digital audio recorded interview, I then began coding each transcript to ensure accuracy in appropriate data review.

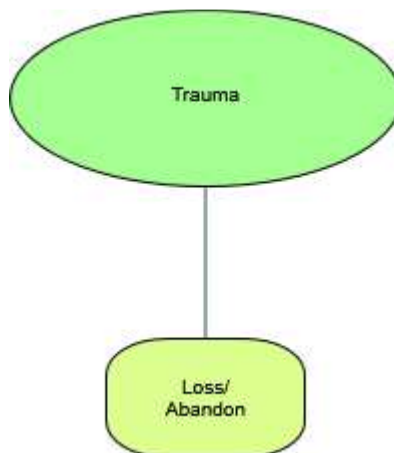
### **Themes**

After doing a thorough review of the transcripts a pattern was observed by the researcher with each participant. In research this is called themes which are recurring words or ideas. These themes can be helpful in forming insights and analysis. This can help a researcher organize their ideas and is a much faster way of answering the study question. With the help of qualitative data analysis software NVivo 12 Plus, themes were coded, and nodes established. This software can help you detect and code themes to speed up analysis in your study.

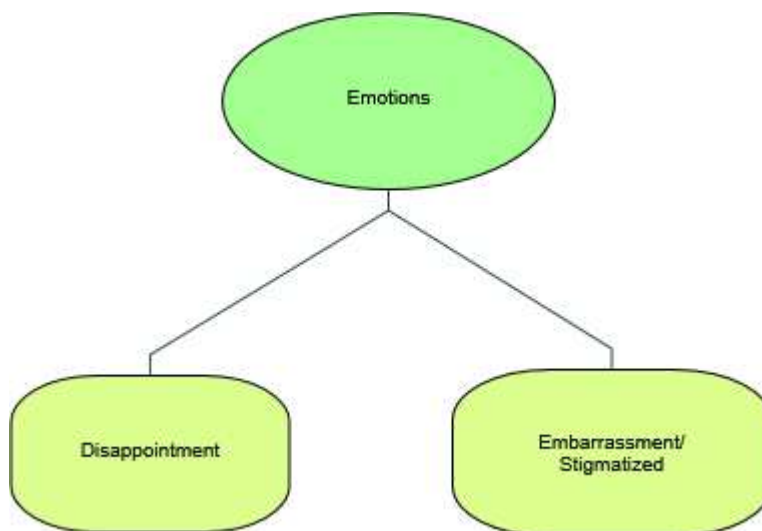
This qualitative study was guided by one question: How does parental incarceration impact a child? As discussed earlier, there are three themes that was discovered during data collection, along with four subthemes. Each theme was acquired by emic coding and then a comparison of themes and casual relationships were noted which is referred to as axial coding which is showing a connection between data that is collected (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, (2011). Figures 1, 2, and 3, are illustrated below to help answer the research question put forth.



*Figure 1.* (Theme 1). Structural analysis from the theme of lack of communication as the main node and the subtheme uninformed/excluded



*Figure 2.* (Theme 2). Structural analysis from the theme of trauma as the main node and the subtheme of loss/abandon.



*Figure 3.*(Theme 3). Structural analysis from the theme of emotions as the main node and the subthemes disappointment and embarrassment/stigmatized

**Theme 1: Lack of communication**

The first theme that emerged from the data was lack of communication.

Participants of the study revealed their lived experiences on having a parent incarcerated during their juvenile years.

**Uninformed/excluded.** Uninformed/excluded was the subtheme that emerged under lack of communication. During the interviews when asked, “*Did you know why your parent was arrested?*” Out of the 12 participants that were interviewed 8 didn’t know why their parent was arrested.

**Participant #2:** No, not at the time

**Participant # 6:** I found out later when I was old enough to know why he was in prison

**Participant #9:** At the time I didn’t know why he was arrested. I was told later that it was for a fight he got into and the man was seriously hurt

**Participant # 10:** I had no ideal because before then I thought he was the best father ever

**Participant # 11:** At the time I didn’t know, but my mom told me when she was release on bond that it was for public assistance fraud

## **Theme 2: Trauma**

The second theme to emerge from the data was Trauma, Participants described how the impact of parental incarceration affected them.



**Loss/Abandon.** Loss/abandon was the subtheme that emerged under trauma.

When asked to “*describe how their life changed after the incarceration*”

**Describe how your life changed after the incarceration?**

**Participant #1:** As far as I can remember since I was young at the time, before he was incarcerated, he was home and doing family stuff. Then after he got incarcerated, we had to change environment we had to go stay with her mom where my uncles and an aunt also stayed. We end up being in a house of about thirteen it was very crowded and a lot of stuff going on.

**Participant #3:** Our life was so different, because we only had our mother and she did the best she could for us, but it still didn't fill the void that my father left. We were accustomed to doing family stuff and now it just was us doing things with my mother or other family members like our grandparents on both side of the family. But we did ok.

**Follow-up:** *You spoke of a “void” that your father left, explain what you mean by that?*

**Participant #3:** When you have a routine of doing things with someone and that person is no longer there no one else can replace them. My mom tried her best to be mother and father

**Participant #8:** I had a real awakening! Everything was different when it came to material things. It was a habit getting the latest styles and fashion and now was

wearing the same clothes and shoes all the time. I didn't have my friend there anymore, I could always talk to my mom

**Participant #9:** Life changed drastically! I gave my mom hell because I wanted my dad. My uncles tried to step in and help her, but I didn't care. She even sent me to stay with my grandma because she couldn't deal with me.

**Participant #10:** My life was so bad, I felt I had no one in my family that was honest. They had kept everything such a big secret from me. I couldn't trust anyone

### **Theme 3: Emotions**

The last theme to emerge from the interviews was emotions. Many of the participants shared raw emotions during their interview.

**Disappointment and embarrassment/stigmatized.** Disappointment and embarrassment/stigmatized was the subthemes that emerged under emotions.

There were several questions that was asked that allowed them to express themselves.

The questions were, "*How did you feel when you found out that your parent was incarcerated?*" "*How do you feel about your parent's involvement in crime? Why? And*" "*Is there any bad feeling towards your parent for leaving you? Why?*"

#### **How did you feel when you found out that your parent was incarcerated?**

**Participant #4:** I was very hurt because although I was with my mom, me and my brother it was good when I could visit my dad for that father/daughter bonding

**Participant #6:** It was hurtful when I found out that he would be gone for years, but my mother made the best of it for us

**Participant #8:** I knew something was up because I had been hearing things being discussed around other family members. When she got sentenced, I was devastated

*Follow-up: What things did you hear being said?*

**Participant #8:** My family was saying “well you know she will be gone for a while”. They wanted to know when was she going to tell me? And some of them even said “she didn’t have to do what she did”!

**Participant #9:** I was sad when my mom told me it would be a while before he could come home. Growing up boys want to be like their father, and this meant I had no male figure to look up to anymore

**Participant #11:** I was totally embarrassed because she was arrested at home and in the front yard

*Follow-up: Who else beside you saw the arrest?*

**Participant #11:** We were having a family gathering so we had my friends and other family members there. It was so embarrassing. To this day my friends are like remember when your mom was arrested at the cookout (laughter)?

**How do you feel about your parent’s involvement in crime?**

**Participant #4:** It's disappointing that he was selfish and thought about himself and committed a crime and not about his children

**Participant #7:** I hated it for my sister, but it is what it is, and I can't judge her because I have my demons also

**Follow-up:** *What demons are you referring to?*

**Participant #7:** I've been arrested also. So, I can't judge her without looking at myself

**Participant #8:** I didn't really think about it until she got arrested and sentenced to prison. That's when the whispers started and that's when I really got embarrassed. It was hurtful to hear what people were saying

**Participant #9:** I held some resentment for a while because growing up you only think about yourself and what you need. But as I got older and talk with my dad I can see how he was placed in a bad situation and just used poor judgment

**Participant #12:** It was embarrassing when I was young. I had one friend that was in my shoes, but everyone else had parents that was there for them

**Is there any bad feeling towards your parent for leaving you? Why?**

**Participant #1:** I continue to have that desire for that void to be filled in my life. I considered it to be normal even into adulthood. Even now it's still there and that's something that I still struggle with now. That's something you can't get back I try

to reason with myself and understand from an adult perspective, but then I don't know how to feel.

**Participant #5:** Yes, he isn't a good father! No matter how he tries, he falls back into his old routine of lying. He's been out now for five years and we are trying to work on our relationship, but it's going to take time

**Participant #8:** I will never hate my mom for the choices that she made, however I am disappointed in the fact that she didn't have to do all she was doing for us. Had she just got a job and we lived within our means, prison would never have happened

**Participant #10:** There are a lot of bad feelings towards my father and mother because I feel like they could've done more for me as my parents. It's like they were only out for themselves.

*Follow-up: What were some of those bad feelings?*

**Participant #10:** I was always angry, and I hated other kids because their parents were there. When I think about it now, that was wrong because those kid's parents made the right decisions and mine did not, so they are not at fault.

**Participant #12:** Hell yeah! He was a bad father and never took his responsibilities serious enough to stop gambling

*Follow-up: What did you mean by him never taking his responsibilities serious?*

**Participant #12:** If he loved his family, he would have put us first and not some dice. He didn't give my mother the money. He gambled for himself

### Summary

In this chapter, I provided the results of this qualitative study on how adults reflect on having a parent incarcerated during their juvenile years. The research exposed three themes: lack of communication, trauma, and emotions. There were also four subthemes that emerged from the main nodes: uninformed/excluded, loss/abandon, disappointment and embarrassment/stigmatized. The one research question was answered. I found that when a parent is incarcerated, it weighs heavy on the child. This type of trauma can have a negative impact on the child that lasts throughout adulthood. The participants professed their true feeling and how they felt as a juvenile when their parent was incarcerated. There are so many feelings that are felt when a child goes through such a trauma. Many juveniles have no way to express themselves, and many simply don't know how to express their feelings. Because of this many harbor feeling that over time festers and become toxic emotions into adulthood. With these emotions a parent and child have no hope of having any type of close bond or relationship in the future. Putting policies and strategies in place can assist in helping or allowing the relationship to continue. It can also give the needed help that so many juveniles go lacking when they have lost a parent due to incarceration. In Chapter 5, I discuss interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, and implications for possible social change and the conclusion of this study.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusions

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the impact of parental incarceration according to adults who had at least one parent incarcerated during their juvenile years. This study is significant in terms of preexisting literature on parental incarceration. This study enhances understanding and supplements the need for continued research on identifying programming and services that could be offered to children with incarcerated parents so that their experiences will not be traumatizing. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with twelve participants in this qualitative study.

In Chapter 4, I reviewed the research setting, sampling strategy, data collection methods, data analysis, and participant's demographics. Evidence of trustworthiness was addressed along with explanations of emerging themes and subthemes from participants' experiences. In Chapter 5, I will clarify the findings. I will discuss the limitations of the study, give recommendations for further research, explain implications for social change, and close with a summary.

### **Interpretation of Findings**

A large amount of research has been conducted over the past years on parental incarceration, however, none has discussed the direct impact on children when parents are incarcerated. Ambiguous loss and resilience theory served as the theoretical frameworks for the study. This framework was used to allow participants in the study to speak about their lived experiences having a parent incarcerated during their juvenile

years and how it had an impact on them even into adulthood. There were three major themes that emerged, which were: lack of communication, trauma, and emotions. This study addressed a gap in literature by exploring how parental incarceration impacts juveniles into adulthood. One research question guided the study and was designed to explore how parental incarceration impact a child.

The theme of lack of communication supports and extends the central body of knowledge that lack of communication was key when talking to many of the participants. Several expressed that there was little to no communication involved when their parent was incarcerated to let them know exactly what was going on and why their parent was no longer in their home or life. Other family members stepped in and tried to let the child know exactly what was happening. The findings from the study are supported by a vast consensus among participants that there is a significant impact on children when a parent is incarcerated and them not knowing what is going on in the family.

When I started this study and from experiences on the job it was my belief that children can be traumatized when parental incarceration occurs. The findings from the study also support that belief, that parental incarceration can cause trauma to children that can have a lasting impact. From this trauma, children can exhibit externalizing behaviors like anger, aggression, and hostility towards others. These behaviors can in return lead that child to make the same mistakes that their parents have made, and they can also end up incarcerated. Many of the participants in this study did have a criminal record due to mistakes.



There were many emotions expressed by participants when they were interviewed about having a parent or multiple parents incarcerated when they were young. Emotions are a natural instinctive state of mind, it is a strong feeling that comes from circumstances, mood, or relationships with other people. Some of the emotions that participants felt were fear, sadness, and true anger. Being able to deal with those emotions could be the difference between a great future and one filled with bitterness.

### **Limitations**

As with all research, there were limitations in this study. When it came to getting participants for the study, the ideal was to have an even number of males and females participate. However, there were more females than males who wanted to participate in the study. There was a total of 12 participants, of which 10 were females and two were males. Also, all participants were African-American. Other minorities were not represented. Strategies to address differences can help generate information about causes to produce policies and practices to eliminate disparities.

### **Recommendations**

Current research on parental incarceration and the impact on the child is very limited in availability as evidenced through a comprehensive review of the current literature. The results of this study reveal some recommendations for future research based on the limitations of this study. As a result of the findings from my study, it is recommended that the judicial system (courts, jails and prison) as well as other social agencies such as the Department of children and families, implement a system punishment and programs that will assist in keeping families together.

When the crime is not severe enough to rule out incarceration, there should be options to at least house parents near facilities close to home. This will allow the child a chance to visit with their parent. Corrections administrators should work with phone companies to get a rate that is affordable to all, which will allow more conversations with the parent, keeping them involved in their child's life. Longer time periods spent on the phone can also allow for parent-child bonds to continue. Implement a program that provides guidance to children to help them understand what they may feel or experience when they have a parent incarcerated. Programs should be age appropriate and geared to helping even the youngest child understand what has happened. A recommendation for future research would be to conduct a qualitative study that looks at the impact of incarceration on males versus females, and to explore other minorities which would allow for a more thorough study. People of different races and ethnicities may react differently to having a parent incarcerated.

### **Implications for Social Change**

Parental incarceration has become an issue that many children in America have experienced at some point in their lives. With my experience working in the prison system, I have seen and heard stories regarding how inmates have come from a line of family members who have been involved in the justice system and how it affected them. The literature that was published did not explore the actual impact from an adult's point of view and how it impacted them during their younger years.

### **Individual**

The participants in this study were all adults who faced the traumatic experience of having a parent or multiple parents incarcerated while they were juveniles. These individuals spoke about their lived experiences and how they were impacted even into adulthood. Though traumatic, many have taken their experiences become successful parents and citizens. A few have not been able to get the help they needed sooner and were unable to avoid being victims of incarceration themselves. There is a gap in the literature regarding parental incarceration due to there not being a focus on how children can be impacted even as adults. Implementing a plan to provide juveniles with programs and the counseling assistance they need will help them be successful and reduce the likelihood that they too will be a part of the CJS.

### **Organizational**

The judicial system as well as the correctional system should implement a process for which parents would have to follow to allow them to remain in the home with their child. Some crimes that are committed does not place danger on the community and should not warrant going to jail or prison. Creating other alternatives for punishment could be the difference in a child being allowed to continue to have their parent in the home and having a bright future as opposed to not having a parent in the home and following their parents' criminal behavior.

### **Societal**

The results of this study can lead to effective programs and policies being created that can help juveniles overcome their negative experience of parental incarceration. Programs to help build self-esteem and to allow them to see that someone cares and can

show them what they need to be successful. These programs and policies could be the tools a child need to be productive citizens in society.

### **Conclusion**

This study was conducted to explore the impact that parental incarceration has on children when they are juveniles. The findings illustrated that there is a significant impact on juveniles when a parent is incarcerated. In sum, although some expressed their experience as one that they have moved on from, many still spoke as if they were still living the trauma. Any type of shift in a child's life can be detrimental to and for that child. There may be different adverse reactions displayed by the child when the parent is no longer there. Young children with incarcerated parents may show signs of emotional or psychological problems. Children may also exhibit internalizing problems, such as anxiety, withdrawal, depression, and shame. Many of the adult participants of this study spoke on the hurt and embarrassment they felt when their parent was incarcerated. Couple this with little or no dialogue with that parent is a recipe for failure in their relationship. The parent is not the only person that is being punished when a crime is committed. The innocent child also serves time with the parent. If every effort is put into place to ensure that the bond continues for the child and parent, this impact can be less hurtful for both the child and parent. Throughout this study, it became apparent the true impact that is felt when a child loses their parent to incarceration. The criminal justice system needs to be involved in decision-making about family contacts and family support. The social welfare system needs to be involved with the family members of incarcerated parents to provide services such as visitation and reentry. When all players

(courts, schools, social services and policy makers) in this traumatizing event coordinate with one another to come up with policies that will make this transition less traumatizing for the child, we will hear stories of empowerment and not of trauma.

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## Appendix A: Demographics/Personal Survey

Fictitious Name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Archival #:

\_\_\_\_\_

Data Collector (s):

\_\_\_\_\_

Date of Collection:

\_\_\_\_\_

Data Collection Method:

\_\_\_\_\_

**Part 1: Demographics**

Address:

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number:

\_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Race:

\_\_\_\_\_

**Parental Characteristics****Mother**

1. What is your mother's highest level of education?

\_\_\_\_\_ GED \_\_\_\_\_ High School Diploma \_\_\_\_\_ Some College \_\_\_\_\_ College

Degree

2. Is your mother currently incarcerated? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No How long?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. To your knowledge how many times has your mother been incarcerated? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Where is she currently incarcerated?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Is she in jail \_\_\_\_\_ State Prison \_\_\_\_\_ Federal Prison  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Do you or did you visit your mother while she was incarcerated? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
No
7. How many visits did you do to see her? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Who provided your transportation to visit?  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Did you get placed in foster care during the incarceration? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes  
\_\_\_\_\_ No
10. Did you have a relationship with your mother before the incarceration? \_\_\_\_ Yes  
\_\_\_\_ No

### **Father**

1. What is your father's highest level of education?  
\_\_\_\_\_ GED \_\_\_\_\_ High School Diploma \_\_\_\_\_ Some College \_\_\_\_\_ College  
Degree
2. Is your father currently incarcerated? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No How long?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. To your knowledge how many times has your father been incarcerated? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Where is he currently incarcerated?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Is he in jail \_\_\_\_\_ State Prison \_\_\_\_\_ Federal Prison  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Do you or did you visit your father while he was incarcerated? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
No

7. How many visits did you go to see him? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Who provided your transportation to visit?  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Did you get placed in Foster care during the incarceration? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes  
\_\_\_\_\_ No
10. Did you have a relationship with your father before the incarceration? \_\_\_\_ Yes  
\_\_\_\_ No

## Appendix B: Interview Questions (No Criminal Involvement)

Fictitious Name:

---

Archival #:

---

Data Collector (s):

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Date of Collection:

---

Data Collection Method:

---

1. How old were you when your parent first became incarcerated?
2. How did you feel when you found out that your parent was incarcerated?
3. If you were present, how did you feel seeing them being arrested?
4. Did you know why your parent was arrested?
5. If your friends knew about your parent's incarceration, how did your friends react to your parent being incarcerated?
6. How do you talk to others about them being incarcerated?
7. How do you feel about your parent's involvement in crime?
8. Was that the first time that your parent was incarcerated?
9. How many years did your parent serve in prison or how much time in jail?
10. Describe how your life changed after the incarceration?
11. How do you remember your life before your parent's incarceration?
12. Who do you currently live with?
13. How did you feel about where you lived after the arrest?
14. If you live with someone other than your parent, how did you feel about that person?
15. Was your caregiver able to fill the void of your parent's absences?
16. While your parent was incarcerated, did you visit them? If so, how did the visit go?

17. How did you feel about visiting a correctional facility?
18. Had any of your friends ever visited a love one that is incarcerated? How did they feel about the visit?
19. Is there any bad feeling towards your parent for leaving you? Why?
20. How was the void of your parent being gone filled?
21. Why do you love your incarcerated parent?
22. How did your parent show you that they love you?
23. Are you happy with who you have as a parent? Why?
24. How do you feel about your parents missing important parts in your life?
25. How was your school academics affected?
26. How are you avoiding following in your parent's footsteps?
27. How do you feel your behavior kept you out of the criminal justice system?
28. What are you doing to ensure that you have a successful future?

**Other information**

As a child of an incarcerated parent, what would you like for the researcher to know about your experience that could possibly help other children who has an incarcerated parent?



## Appendix C: Interview Questions (Criminal Involvement)

Fictitious Name:

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Archival #:

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Data Collector (s):

---

Date of Collection:

---

Data Collection Method:

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1. How old were you when your parent first became incarcerated?
2. How did you feel when you found out that your parent was incarcerated?
3. If you were present, how did you feel seeing them being arrested?
4. Did you know why your parent was arrested?
5. If your friends knew about your parent's incarceration, how did your friends react to your parent being incarcerated?
6. How do you talk to others about them being incarcerated?
7. How do you feel about your parent's involvement in crime?
8. Was that the first time that your parent was incarcerated?
9. How many years did your parent serve in prison or how much time in jail?
10. Describe how your life changed after the incarceration?
11. How do you remember your life before your parent's incarceration?
12. Who do you currently live with?
13. How did you feel about where you lived after the arrest?
14. If you live with someone other than your parent, how did you feel about that person?

15. Was your caregiver able to fill the void of your parent's absences?
16. While your parent was incarcerated, did you visit them? If so, how did the visit go?
17. How did you feel about visiting a correctional facility?
18. Had any of your friends ever visited a love one that is incarcerated? How did they feel about the visit?
19. Is there any bad feeling towards your parent for leaving you? Why?
20. How was the void of your parent being gone filled?
21. Why do you love your incarcerated parent?
22. How did your parent show you that they love you?
23. Are you happy with who you have as a parent? Why?
24. How do you feel about your parents missing important parts in your life?
25. How was your school academics affected?
26. How do you feel that education could help you have a better future?
27. How do you feel your actions lead to your criminal behavior?
28. How do you ensure that you don't continue in you parent's footsteps?

**Other information**

As a child of an incarcerated parent, what would you like for the researcher to know about your experience that could possibly help other children who has an incarcerated parent?

## Appendix D: Research Flyer

### **A Study on the impact that a parent's incarceration has on a child**

The purpose of this study is to understand how the incarceration of a parent affects a child into their adult years. This study will consider the criminal history of a parent to determine if their incarceration had a long-term impact on a representative sample of children that can help account for potential risk factors that may affect them later in the future. This study will be used as part of the researcher's Walden University dissertation.

There are two parts to the study which consists of: a questionnaire and a one-on-one interview which may last 60 minutes

### **Participants Needed**

The study seeks participants that are:

18 years of age or older

Had a parent who was incarcerated during your juvenile years

The study is seeking a total of 20 participants:

10 participants whose parent was incarcerated during their juvenile years and now they themselves have been incarcerated in either the juvenile or adult system and

10 participants whose parent was incarcerated during their juvenile years and they themselves was not involved in our criminal justice system

\*\*\*Those that are excluded are: people under the age of 18 and those that have never had a parent incarcerated during their juvenile years\*\*\*

Compensation: All participants who participate in the study will receive a \$25 gift card for their participation. If you are interested in participating, please contact Carolyn Allen by email at [REDACTED] or by phone [REDACTED] if you would like more information. Your help and input are greatly needed!

## Appendix E: Letter to Organizational Staff

Date: August 20, 2018

Redeemed Inc.

2127 Pat Thomas Parkway

Quincy, Florida 32351 Address

Dear Ms. Berry,

My name is Carolyn Allen and I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University. I am conducting my dissertation on “The Impact of Parental Incarceration: Adults Reflect on their Juvenile Years”. This research will provide insight regarding the experiences and effects that parental incarceration has on the child. It will also shed light on the impact of services that need to be in place to assist youths that experience effects of having a parent incarcerated.

Your assistance in conducting this needed research is important. If willing I request that your program/organization post a flyer on your bulletin board to recruit participant for this study. Every step will be taken to protect the participants’ information, identity and confidentiality as guided by Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB). If persons are willing to volunteer, contact information will be on the flyer for them to contact me.

I welcome a telephone call from you to discuss any questions you may have concerning this study and the role you can play in making this possible. I can be reached at [REDACTED] or emailed at [REDACTED]

Sincerely,

Carolyn Allen

Doctoral Candidate

Walden University

## Appendix F: Letter of Cooperation

Community Research Partner Name:

Contact Information:

Date:

Dear Carolyn Allen,

This letter shall acknowledge that our organization gives you permission to post an announcement on our advertisement board/appointment board stating the following to recruit interested persons that are willing to volunteer as a participant in your study.

### **Qualitative Study**

**on**

### **“The Impact of Parental Incarceration: Adults Reflect on their Juvenile Years”**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand how the incarceration of a parent affects a child. This study will consider the criminal history of a parent to determine its long-term impact of incarceration on a representative sample of children to help account for potential risk factors that may affect them (Nickel, Garland & Kane, 2009).

There are two parts to the study which consists of: a questionnaire and a one-on-one interview which may last 90 minutes

### **Participants Needed**

You may be able to participate if you are:

Age 18 or older

Have a parent who is currently OR were incarcerated during your juvenile years

Signed consent to participate in the study

Have been involved in the criminal justice system

Compensation: All participants will receive a \$25 gift card for their completed participation in the study. Those that are unable to complete the participation in the study will receive a candy jar for their time.

If you are interested in participating, please contact Carolyn Allen by email [REDACTED] or by phone [REDACTED] if you would like more information. Your help and input are greatly needed!

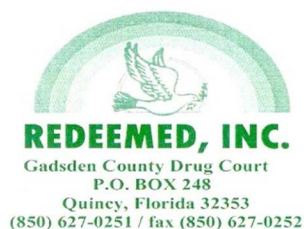
**We will not be responsible for providing any contact information of any participants to you in violation of any ethical practices. Further, we reserve the right to take the announcement down or withdraw our organization as a community partner at any time if our circumstances change.**

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the researcher without the permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

---

Authorization Official



Dear Carolyn Allen,

This letter shall acknowledge that our organization gives you permission to post an announcement on our advertisement board/appointment board stating the following in order to recruit interested persons that are willing to volunteer as a participant in your study.

#### **Qualitative Study on**

#### **"The impact that a parent's incarceration has on a child"**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand how the incarceration of a parent affects a child. This study will consider the criminal history of a parent to determine its long-term impact of incarceration on a representative sample of children to help account for potential risk factors that may affect them (Nickel, Garland & Kane, 2009).

There are two parts to the study which consists of: a questionnaire and a one-on-one interview which may last 90 minutes

#### **Participants Needed**

You may be able to participate if you are:

Age 18 or older

Have a parent who is currently OR were incarcerated during your juvenile years

Signed consent to participate in the study

Have been involved in the criminal justice system

**Compensation:** All participants will receive a \$25 gift card for their completed participation in the study.

Those that are unable to complete the participation in the study will receive a candy jar for their time. If you are interested in participating, please contact Carolyn Allen by email [REDACTED] or by phone [REDACTED] if you would like more information. Your help and input are greatly needed!

**We will not be responsible for providing any contact information of any participants to you in violation of any ethical practices. Further, we reserve the right to take the announcement down or withdraw our organization as a community partner at any time if our circumstances change.**



**REDEEMED, INC.**

Gadsden County Drug Court  
P.O. BOX 248  
Quincy, Florida 32353  
(850) 627-0251 / fax (850) 627-0252

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the researcher without the permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, written over a horizontal line. The signature is cursive and appears to read "Anthony Schmidt".

Authorization Official

Contact Information



## Appendix G: Certificate of Completion for Protecting Human Research Participants

