

A POPULATION IN THE DARK: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF
FAMILIAL INCARCERATION ON YOUTH

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Abstract

With incarceration rates steadily increasing in the United States, more and more youth are experiencing the impact of familial incarceration. Unfortunately, most of the research conducted on the effects of incarceration on youth centers on the incarceration of a parent, and seldom is the incarceration of other family members taken into account. This narrow focus fails to capture the entire essence of this population of youth. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to begin to gain a better understanding of this population of children and adolescents so that we, as psychologists and other mental health providers will be more knowledgeable and effective in our interventions. This exploratory study examined the experiences of young adults (ages 18-30), who had encountered the incarceration of a family member during their childhood or adolescence. A qualitative analysis of 10 interviews was completed, utilizing a grounded theory approach. During the interviews, participants described the impact of the incarceration of their family, academic, and social life. Furthermore, participants identified various coping mechanisms and supports that they utilized in order to persevere through this difficult time in their lives. Lastly, participants described various resources they felt would have benefited them, and provided advice for youth whose family members are currently incarcerated. Results from this study indicated various themes related to youth's experiences, including the importance of extended family members (especially for youth of families of color), parentification of the youth, sense of loss, stigma, and impact on academic achievement. The current study also uncovered themes about how participants coped with the incarceration of a family member, including coping strategies that were utilized, opportunities that were not available at the time, and resources that were helpful and unhelpful for them in the coping process. Implications for future

research, mental health providers, program development, policy, schools, families, and youth were also discussed.

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Table Of Contents

	PAGE
ABSTRACT.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	v
CHAPTER I: STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM	1
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	2
Familial Impact	3
Importance of extended family members for families of color	8
Stigma	9
Academic Impact	10
Psychological Impact and Long-term Outcomes	12
Resilience and Coping Strategies.....	14
Availability of Interventions	16
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY	18
Participants.....	18
Procedures	18
Consent Form.....	19
Interview	19
Treatment of Data	20
Consent Forms	22
Interview Data.....	22
Data Collection	22
Data Analysis	22
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS.....	22
Part I: Case Examples	22
Case 1: “Jessica”	22
Case 2: “Zair”	23
Case 3: Emmanuel	25
Part II: Participant Data	26

Participants' relationships with the incarcerated family member	Error!
Bookmark not defined.	
Effects	27
Social experiences	27
Overall experience	30
Family experiences	32
Family changes	32
Talk among the family	36
Staying in touch with the incarcerated family member	39
Academics	43
Coping	47
Most difficult part of family member's incarceration	47
Coping mechanisms and resources	49
Resources desired	52
Unhelpful resources	55
Advice for other youth	56
Interview Experience	59
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION	61
Extended Family Members Matter	61
Importance of extended family for youth of color	62
Parentification	63
Sense of loss	63
Stigma	64
Academic achievement	66
Family dynamics	67
Resources and Coping Skills	69
Unhelpful experiences	70
Desired resources and experiences	71
Advice	73
The Interview Experience	74
Limitations	74

Implications.....	76
Future research.....	76
Mental health providers	78
Program development	81
Families.....	81
Schools.....	83
Policies.....	86
Children and adolescents	86
Conclusions.....	87
REFERENCES	89
APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT AGREEMENTS	95
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL.....	98

Chapter I

Statement of the Problem

The effects of having a loved one incarcerated can be quite profound, especially for children and adolescents. Fortunately, researchers in more recent years have begun to shift their focus on understanding this population with regard to their experiences, risk and protective factors, outcomes, and effective interventions. However, a majority of this research has been limited to parental incarceration (e.g., Arditti & Savla, 2015; Cho, 2009; Dallaire & Zeman, 2013; Kampfner, 1995; Wildeman & Turney, 2014). While valuable and informative, this narrow focus fails to capture the population as a whole, and continues to leave some children with incarcerated family members in the dark.

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the experiences of young adults who were affected by the incarceration of a family member as children and/or adolescents. The current study seeks to gain a better understanding of this population of youth by including those who have had parents, siblings, and extended family members incarcerated. By including these youth in our understanding of the population as a whole, psychologists and others in helping professions will be more knowledgeable and effective in their interventions. Young adults who participated in this study discussed their experiences of having an incarcerated family member. Further, the current study sought to generate hypotheses on how the lives of youth are impacted across several domains (e.g., home, school, social), as well as resources and coping mechanisms that were desired, utilized, or unavailable at the time of their loved one's incarceration.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

Incarceration rates in the United States are at a staggering high with over 2.4 million adults and juveniles incarcerated in federal, state, and local facilities (Wagner & Sakala, 2014), nearly double the amount reported in 1990. As the incarceration rates steadily rise, so, too, does the number of youth who are being affected by a family member's incarceration. These incarcerated men and women are fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts, cousins and close family friends. It is estimated that approximately half of the men and women in federal and state facilities are parents to over 1.7 million children, a number showing an increase compared to the 2008 report (United States Bureau of Justice Statistics [USBJS], 2010). However, these estimates fail to consider the nearly 850,000 people incarcerated in local jails, juvenile correctional facilities, military prisons, immigration detention centers, Native American country jails, and territorial prisons, as well as those who are civilly committed. Therefore, it is likely that the number of youth affected by parental incarceration is much higher. Furthermore, statistics on other relationships, including siblings, cousins, aunts, or uncles, are virtually nonexistent, forcing us to make our own inferences about the true number of youth affected by familial incarceration—a number that is undoubtedly high.

Youth who experience the incarceration of a family member may experience a variety of stressors and face a multitude of challenges related both directly and indirectly to the incarceration. Considering the relatively large number of youth affected by familial incarceration, there is an alarming shortage of research conducted on this population, especially with regard to youth who have incarcerated family members beyond parents. For many, it can be difficult to see past the charges faced by the incarcerated, and recognize the family that they

leave behind while carrying out their sentences. Moreover, it may be assumed that the impact of the incarceration of family members in non-caregiving roles is not as significant as that of a parent or primary caregiver. However, in many ethnic minority populations, a range of extended family members may provide care for youth. For instance, in Hispanic/Latino families, *padrinos*, or godparents, might also be responsible for caretaking obligations such as economic assistance, encouragement, and even discipline (McGoldrick, Giordano, & Garcia-Petro, 2005). Further, extended family members are vital for Black families. *Kinship care*, or informal adoption, or taking in other children and/or the elderly are all ways many Black families demonstrate strong values of family unity and cohesion (Boyd-Franklin, 2003).

The current study, however, seeks to understand the experiences of these youth. The following review of current and relevant literature will include discussion of familial, social, academic, and psychological impacts, as well as resilience, coping strategies, and available interventions. Given the scarcity of research examining the effects of the incarceration of non-parental family members on children and/or adolescents, findings about the experiences of youth affected by parental incarceration will be included in the review as well.

Familial Impact

What does incarceration mean for a family? Incarceration can be conceptualized as a disruptive process that is associated with both primary and secondary losses (Arditti, Lambert-Shute, & Joest, 2003). A primary loss is the incarceration itself, as it results in the physical loss or removal from the family's everyday life. Other losses families experience directly as a result of incarceration include loss of income and loss of emotional support. These losses impact both individual members as well as the family as a whole an infinite number of ways. As a system, the

family is undoubtedly changed when one of its members becomes incarcerated—from changes in the family structure to changes in the roles of each of its members.

Which family member is typically lost when a family experiences an incarceration? In most cases, when a caregiver is incarcerated, it is the father, though the number of mothers who are being incarcerated has significantly increased by 400% since 1986 (Miller, 2006). With the lack of research on the incarceration of siblings and extended family members, it is difficult to estimate exactly which family members are more likely to be incarcerated. Based on current national trends, however, men account for a larger percentage of the prison population than women (United States Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2010). Therefore, it is likely that family members who are males (e.g., brothers, uncles, grandfathers, godfathers, male cousins) are more likely to be incarcerated than family members who are females (e.g., sisters, aunts, grandmothers, godmothers, female cousins).

Along with this loss, a family's composition may change in other ways as well. For instance, it is very likely that other extended family members may care for children in the case of parental incarceration. This is known as kinship care. Often it is the grandmother who, either informally or formally, takes on the responsibility of caring for the children when a mother or father becomes incarcerated. In 50% of cases, when a mother is incarcerated, the maternal grandmother cares for the children left behind (Miller, 2006). In only 15% of paternal incarcerations, a grandmother will care for the children (Miller, 2006). This may be a difficult adjustment not only for the children, but also for grandparents, as they may no longer have the energy nor the finances to care for these young people. If this task becomes too difficult for grandparents, siblings of the incarcerated mother or father will often be split up among other relatives with more resources to care for them.

Relationships with an incarcerated member can be difficult to maintain. Although most children express a desire to have an active relationship with the family member—even in the presence of feelings such as hurt, fear, or anger—contact is often difficult (Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008). Moreover, research from Roxburgh and Fitch (2014) indicated that inmates who remained in contact with their children—through visits, letters, or telephone calls—reported lower distress and depression. However, prisons are often removed from communities, and numerous transportation obstacles may interfere with contact visits. Even when facilities are housed locally, visitation and phone regulations can be challenging and difficult for youth to understand. In an article published in 2004, a young boy described a family friend driving him nearly six hours to visit his incarcerated mother, only to be turned away because they did not have an updated visitor’s list (Foster, 2004). Additionally, most prisons and jails are not child-friendly in terms of their visiting spaces and rules. Children and those who accompany them are subjected to pat-downs and metal scans, and touching (e.g., hugging, sitting on a family member’s lap, holding hands, etc.) is often prohibited.

Arditti et al. (2003) studied the effects of incarceration on families by interviewing “remaining caregivers” at a correctional facility. Over 81% of the participants believed that the incarceration had created problems for their family. One participant of the study said that in light of the incarceration, her “family has been torn apart.” The secondary losses experienced by a family can strain the remaining caregiver, as most—if not all—of the family’s responsibilities are placed upon their shoulders. Arditti et al. (2003) found that economic stress, in particular, was immense. In addition to losing the income of the inmate, most remaining caregivers also lost a part of their own income as they were forced to leave paid work outside of their home in order to care for their children. Many of these families utilized public assistance programs after the

incarceration, and some no longer received child support. To compound matters, these families are further burdened by other costs such as paying for attorney fees, receiving collect calls, and sending money to the inmate for their commissary (Arditti et al., 2003). Other responsibilities, such as parenting, getting the children to and from school and other activities, and providing emotional support for the children, were fully absorbed by the remaining caregiver as well. The remaining caregivers often worried about the effects of the incarceration on the children, and often felt a sense of helplessness watching their children struggle with these effects. Many felt as though they were doing all of this on their own—and for the most part, they were. Between the loss of the other caregiver due to incarceration as well as the lack of social support from others, it is easy for remaining caregivers to feel overwhelmed by not only their responsibilities, but also other emotionally draining aspects of the incarceration (e.g., observing effects on children, missing the inmate). Seeking help and support from others often is not an option. These caregivers understand and anticipate the stigma typically associated with incarceration, and therefore withdraw from others, and may even cut off contact with the inmate as well, just to avoid the stigmatization (Phillips & Gates, 2010).

What does this mean for the child as an individual member of the family system? With remaining caregivers spread so thin, attending to each and every need of youth can be challenging, especially in households with more than one child. With one caregiver removed from the family, the remaining caregiver may not be available to listen to the child talk about their struggles, due to work conflicts or other demands. Another phenomenon observed in this population of youths was the development of a keen sense of awareness and attention to adult's needs (Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008). Many youth were aware of the stress experienced by their caregiver and began to take on adult responsibilities, and often assumed the role of “protector” in

their father's absence or the role of "caregiver" in their mother's absence (Dallaire, Ciccone, & Wilson, 2012; Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008). Dallaire et al. (2012) asked children with incarcerated mothers to draw pictures of their families. Among other things, these children's drawings conveyed messages of having more authority than their mother (e.g., the mother or mother figure was drawn significantly smaller than the others) compared to their peers.

Another phenomenon that may occur is parentification. When a parent is incarcerated, older children often become "parental children" and are expected to care for younger siblings while their mother or father is at work. They pick up younger children from school, help them with their homework, serve dinner, and bathe and get their siblings ready for bed. Nesmith and Ruhland (2008) found that aside from acting more maturely by taking on these additional roles and responsibilities, children with an incarcerated parent were described as having a "remarkable maturity" throughout their interviews. Children with an incarcerated parent also become acutely aware of the needs of the inmate as well. It is common for inmates to lose weight while they are serving their sentence, and often children may see this as a sign that they are not being fed or perhaps are sick. A common reaction is the request to send food and new clothes (Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008). Loud commotion in the background when talking to an incarcerated parent on the phone also brings worry to youth. They may fear for their parent's safety after hearing shouting or arguing over the phone. Meek (2008) also found that when children were visiting their incarcerated brothers, they felt the need to "be strong" for them in an effort to protect them and to preserve their well-being, regardless of how fearful, anxious, or sad the children truly felt. Children seldom shared these fears with the remaining caregiver or at the very most understated their concerns, especially if the relationship between the caregiver and the inmate was strained, as they did not want to cause additional stress (Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008).

Importance of extended family members in families of color. Much like trends depicting skyrocketing increases in the number of people affected by incarceration, statistics on incarceration rates across races in the United States are particularly alarming. Minority populations are the overwhelming majority in most correctional facilities. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP; 2011) estimates that “while one-third of the nation’s population is African American or Latino, these ethnic and racial groups account for 58 percent of the nation’s prisoners.” Black men are eight times more likely to be incarcerated than their White counterparts (Western & Wildeman, 2009), and make up nearly one million of the over 2.4 million currently incarcerated (NAACP, n.d.; USBJS, 2010). Given the racial disparities among those incarcerated in the United States, it is of particular importance that these populations of inmates and their families be understood.

What role does race play in impacting youth and their families who experience incarceration? Of relevance to the current study, the incarceration of extended family members may be much more impactful and significant for these youth and their families than is often acknowledged. One strength characterized by researchers as common among Black families is the hearty kinship bonds and extended family relationships (Boyd-Franklin, 2003). Hispanic and Latino families demonstrate similar bonds with kin and extended family members and have high rates of co-residence and proximate living (McGoldrick et al., 2005; Sarkisian, Gerena, & Gerstel, 2006). Both Black and Hispanic/Latino families rely on these family members for emotional, social, and financial support and youth frequently interact with them on a daily basis (Boyd-Franklin, 2003; McGoldrick et al., 2005; Taylor, Chatters, Woodward, & Brown, 2013). Subsequently, these family members are critical in times of crisis and adversity, including a family event such as incarceration. Moreover, people of color often consider individuals outside

of blood and marital relations to be part of the family (Boyd-Franklin, 2003; McGoldrick et al., 2005; Taylor et al., 2013). These individuals may be peers, godparents, members of a religious congregation, etc., but referred to as “cousin,” “aunt/uncle,” “brother/sister,” “mother/father,” etc. Clearly, family as defined by Black and Hispanic/Latino families are central figures for youth. Therefore, their reactions to the incarceration of extended family should be acknowledged, validated, and respected.

Stigma

Although these youth may experience copious challenges, most youth prefer to keep a family member’s incarceration a secret. If they do consider seeking social and emotional support, they do so with heightened ambivalence. This may be a result of the stigma that youth experience, anticipate, and/or perceive. Link and Phelan (2001) describe stigma as having the following key elements: distinguishing and labeling differences, associating these differences with negative attributes, development of an “us” versus “them” mentality, devaluing and discrimination to continue to maintain these differences. Inmates are often subjected to boundless stigmatization due to attributes such as their incarceration status, crime committed, etc. While youth do not necessarily personally possess these attributes, they may be stigmatized simply through their affiliation with this family member (Phillips & Gates, 2010).

As Nesmith and Ruhland (2008) found, while some children desperately wanted to find peers who were in similar situations, they were often hesitant to disclose information about a parent’s incarceration because they were afraid of the potentially negative, social repercussions that could result from such a disclosure. What if they could not find someone like them, or even worse, what if they mistakenly revealed their secret to the wrong peer? They believed that their peers would say hurtful things about their incarcerated parent or even about themselves. These

children also felt as though they were expected to keep their parents' incarceration a secret because of the expectations placed upon them by their families (Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008). Similarly, Meek (2008) found that the reluctance to disclose information about a sibling's incarceration was due largely to the fact that the children believed that information should stay within the confines of the family, as it was no one else's business. These children were also specifically fearful to tell other adults, like their teachers, about a sibling's incarceration because they felt as though teachers might then perceive them as "bad" because their brother had done something "bad" as well.

Academic Impact

There has been mixed evidence with regard to academic performance as it relates to familial incarceration (e.g., Cho, 2009; Meek, 2008; Murray, Loeber, & Pardini, 2012; Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008; Nichols & Loper, 2012; Turney & Haskins, 2014). While some studies reported insignificant findings, reflecting that academic performance was not affected by incarceration, other studies have shown quite the opposite. Cho (2009) examined the academic challenges faced by children who had an incarcerated mother at either the county jail or state prison by studying retention rates. She found that children who had a mother incarcerated in a county jail experienced many more academic challenges than those experienced by children who had a mother incarcerated in a state prison. It is possible that the children who had a mother incarcerated in a prison experienced fewer academic challenges (lower retention rates) because they experienced a stronger sense of stability than their peers who had a mother incarcerated at the county jail. The mothers of these children had been incarcerated anywhere from one to seven days, and had multiple incarcerations over the course of the study, as opposed to the other

children whose mothers had been incarcerated in the prison at significantly longer rates and primarily served only one sentence during the length of the study.

The incarceration of a household member—family or not—also has an impact on the academic performance and outcomes of youth. Nichols and Loper (2012) found that children and adolescents who had someone in their household become incarcerated had lower cognitive skills and abilities compared to their peers. These youth also showed higher rates of extended school absences as well as lower high school matriculation rates. When the incarcerated household member was not a parent, the severity of these findings increased dramatically. What accounts for this difference? One speculation is that when one's parent becomes incarcerated, others rightfully perceive this as a loss of a child's primary caregiver. When a sibling or another member of the household becomes incarcerated, others may not perceive this as a great of a loss to the child. These children and adolescents may then be overlooked when it comes to receiving necessary attention and services. Also, a child's teacher or someone in the school system is much more likely to be informed when a child's parent is incarcerated than when another family member is incarcerated. There is a strong possibility that children with incarcerated siblings and extended family members may receive less support and therefore have greater academic challenges and worse academic outcomes.

Furthermore, Turney and Haskins (2014) sought to further understand the relationship between grade retention and paternal incarceration by examining retention rates, parent reports, test proficiency, and teachers' reports of students' behavior and proficiency. They found that youth in their study who had currently or previously had experienced paternal incarceration were more likely to be retained, or, in other words, forced to repeat a grade. However, their results also yielded a negative correlation between teachers' proficiency ratings and retention rates, in

which youth with lower teacher-rated proficiency scores were more likely to be retained than their counterparts. No significant relationship was found between retention rates and parent/teacher reports of youth's behavior or test proficiency. The researchers considered two possible explanations for this finding: 1) teachers stigmatize children of incarcerated parents; 2) "teachers' perceptions of children's academic proficiency are more accurate measures of children's capabilities than test scores" (Turney & Haskins, 2014, pp. 254). While these findings call into question how stigmatization may impact youth's academic performance, in so far as retention is concerned, it is important to note that the exact mechanism underlying this relationship is not known. Students are definitely more than just test scores; the decision to retain a student is typically made by multiple people (e.g., caregivers, child study team, teachers), and based on multiple factors (e.g., grades, behavior, maturity, grasp of material, attendance). Perhaps these explanations are not mutually exclusive, in which teachers observe not only academic difficulties, but emotional ones as well, and begin to see that youth with incarcerated parents, as a result of the incarceration, are overwhelmed by or ill-prepared for moving on to the next grade.

Psychological Impact and Long-term Outcomes

When research on the effects of parental incarceration first emerged, many in the field acknowledged its association with negative effects for youth. However, concern about the impact of other pre-existing factors, such as poverty, exposure to community violence and/or criminal behavior, etc., caused researchers to more cautiously examine how incarceration (specifically parental) may affect youth. While some studies indicate null hypotheses for anticipated relationships between parental incarceration and various negative effects (e.g., Murray et al., 2012; Wildeman & Turney, 2014), others, including Dallaire et al. (2014), demonstrate

significant findings between parental incarceration and internalizing and externalizing symptoms, even when controlling for these variables. That being said, these variables are still meaningful, as they can have mediating effects on negative outcomes (Kjellstrand & Eddy, 2011).

Familial incarceration can impact youth's mental health. Youth may experience strong feelings of fear, sadness, loneliness, low self-esteem, and depression (Wright & Seymour, 2000). Many youth also report symptoms of trauma-related stress, such as difficulty sleeping, poor concentration, and symptoms of depression (Arditti & Savla, 2015; Kampfner, 1995). Furthermore, Philips, Burns, Wagner, Kramer, and Robbins (2002) found that youth with incarcerated parents were more likely to present with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder as well as Conduct Disorder. Moreover, risk factors such as limited social advantage, impaired parental health, and ineffective parenting may mediate outcomes like youth antisocial behavior (Kjellstrand & Eddy, 2011). Additionally, youth may also have difficulties in meeting developmental tasks (Miller, 2006). When the challenges they face related to having an incarcerated family member outweigh their capacity to cope, "emotional survival takes precedence and meeting specific developmental tasks are interrupted" (Miller, 2006, p. 478). Age and developmental stage play a key role in how youth experience the incarceration of a family member. Younger children commonly feel guilt, as they may not understand why their parent had to be incarcerated and may blame themselves, as well as separation anxiety and fears of abandonment (Wright & Seymour, 2000). Behavioral regression is also common in younger children (Arditti et al., 2003; Wright & Seymour, 2000). One parent reported that their previously well toilet-trained youngster began having "accidents" after his father had been incarcerated (Arditti et al., 2003). In older children and adolescents, gang involvement is

common (Dallaire, 2006; Miller, 2006). These youth often feel as though they do not fit in with their peers and therefore will seek peers who they feel are more accepting of them. These cliques are often involved in delinquent activity, and becoming a part of their social circle puts these vulnerable youth at risk for becoming involved in the juvenile justice system as well.

With regard to long-term outcomes, a strong association has been found between children of incarcerated parents and antisocial and internalizing outcomes, even when controlling for prior risk factors (e.g., environment, poverty, domestic neglect or abuse, parental drug use, etc.; Poehlmann, 2009). Parental incarceration has also been linked to higher rates of theft and other problem behaviors (Murray, Loebner, & Pardini, 2012), including substance use (Gjelsvik et al., 2014). These behaviors put youth at risk for becoming involved in the juvenile justice system. When adolescents become involved with the juvenile justice system, it is more likely that they will reoffend and become involved with the legal system as an adult (e.g., Bulis, Vloran, Benz, Todis, & Johnson, 2002; Pew, 2008). Those exposed to familial incarceration as youth may also be at risk for problems with their physical health as well. Gjelsvik, Dumont, Nunn, and Rosen (2014) examined how exposure to the incarceration of a household member as a youth impacts mental and physical health-related quality of life. The researchers found a strong association between living with an incarcerated household member as a child and poor physical quality of life among Black participants. On the other hand, White participants reported fewer physical health concerns but significantly higher levels of poor mental health. They suspected that their findings may have been a reflection of how mental health issues are experienced differentially by race (e.g., individuals of certain races have been found to show symptoms of somatization due to the stigma of mental health).

Resilience and Coping Strategies

Research on resilience, protective factors, and coping strategies utilized by youth impacted by familial incarceration is markedly sparse. Research on resilience in general posits three protective factors in children that are likely to impact how they adjust to familial incarceration: positive individual attributes (e.g., easy temperament, high self-esteem, intelligence), supportive family environment (e.g., emotionally supportive), and support from those outside of the family, such as schools, communities, peer groups, churches, etc. (Miller, 2008; Parke & Clarke-Stewart, 2001). Additionally, Dallaire and Zeman (2013) examined children's empathy as a protective factor for aggressive peer relationships. While they found that empathy was a protective factor for these children, they also noted that children who were experiencing parental incarceration at the time of data collection demonstrated significantly less empathic behaviors than their peers—some of whom had experienced parental incarceration in the past. The authors indicated that this finding may have been reflective of children's limited emotional resources during a challenging time, which perhaps limits both motivation and ability to interact with others in a prosocial manner.

With regard to coping strategies employed by youth facing familial incarceration, Johnson and Easterling (2015) identified three ways by which youth attempted to endure parental incarceration. First, they indicated that youth often “deidentify” or attempt to distance themselves from their incarcerated parent in some way, by denying their absent parent's presence, refusing to talk about them, not acknowledging the fact that their parent is incarcerated, and/or “replacing” the absent parent by positively relating to an alternative caregiver. Miller (2008) identified this behavior in youth as a mechanism of resilience, indicating that youth learned from their experiences and adapted by psychologically distancing themselves

from a maladaptive situation in an attempt to protect their psychological well-being. Second, some youth also became desensitized to parental incarceration. Although these youth often denied caring about their incarcerated parent, their parents' recidivism history and potential, the difficulties they faced as a result of the incarceration, etc., the researchers observed that the youth's affect or remarks suggested otherwise. Finally, the researchers found that youth coped with parental incarceration by asserting a sense of control. This included engaging in distracting behaviors enabled the youth to control and prevent thoughts about the incarceration from impeding day-to-day functioning. Participants in Johnson and Easterling's (2015) study reported rapping, dancing, striving for positive academic performance/proficiency, remaining positive, and setting positive long-term goals as means to distract themselves and take control of their happiness during an otherwise difficult time.

Availability of Interventions

Parallel to research, the few interventions that exist for youth with incarcerated family members are specifically geared towards those with incarcerated parents. A handful of intervention programs address the needs of both youth and the systems in which they are embedded by incorporating individual and conjoint interventions for youth, their incarcerated parent, remaining caregiver, and community agencies/resources (e.g., Miller, Perryman, Markovitz, Franzen, Cochran, & Brown, 2013; Phillips & O'Brien, 2012). Intervention programs designed specifically for incarcerated parents typically involve parenting classes that teach parents about child development, behavior management, and relationship building/bonding (Parke & Clarke-Stewart, 2001). Some parenting programs also include opportunities for children to watch live video transmission of their parent reading a book, as well as a video or audio recording of a parent reading a book that was later sent to the child (Hoffmann, Byrd, &

Kightlinger, 2010). Further, parent-child visitation programs, like Girl Scouts Beyond Bars, may be available. The goals of these visitation programs include: preserving and enhancing parent-child relationships, reducing the stress of separation, enhancing the child's sense of self, and promoting the parent's positive adjustment upon release and decrease likelihood of recidivism (Parke & Clarke-Stewart, 2001). Interventions for youth experiencing parental incarceration are typically delivered in the form of mentoring and school programs, and often have a remaining caregiver component (e.g., Bilchik, 2007; Springer, Lynch, & Rubin, 2000; Weissman & La Rue, 1998). Mentoring programs "have the potential to improve children's socio-emotional skills, increase their capacity for attachments, and produce stronger, healthier relationships between children and significant others, leading to better outcomes in social and academic competence" (Bilchik, 2007, p. 9). Furthermore, group interventions for youth experiencing familial incarceration are promising, as strengths-based groups can not only increase self-esteem (Springer et al., 2000), but also provide a safe place for youth to share freely about their feelings and experiences with familial incarceration and have these feelings and experiences validated by like peers as opposed to stigmatized by others (Yalom, 2005).

Chapter III

Methodology

Participants

Ten participants were acquired through network and snowball sampling. Participants were young adults, between the ages of 18 to 32, who had experienced the incarceration of a family member as a child and/or adolescent. Of the ten participants, 60% were male and 40% were female. With regard to race, participants self-identified as Black (70%), Hispanic (20%) and Biracial (10%). The participants were an average age of 25 years.

All of the participants indicated experiencing the incarceration of a family member as a child or adolescent. Half of the participants (five) reported having four or more incarcerated family members. Moreover, three participants (30%) indicated having two incarcerated family members and two (20%) reported having one incarcerated family member. When asked to identify one family member around whom the questions would be framed, three participants (30%) identified their father; two (20%) identified their brother; two (20%) identified their aunt or uncle; and three (30%) identified their cousin. Furthermore, most participants reported being school-aged (4 responses, 40%) or adolescents (4 responses, 40%) at the time that their family member's sentence began. The remaining two participants (20%) indicated that their family members' incarcerations began when they were infants.

Procedures

The researcher met with each potential participant of the sample, during which she introduced herself, provided a brief overview of the study, and distributed and explained the consent forms. The first 10 participants to return their consent forms were selected to participate in the study and an interview date was scheduled. At the completion of his or her interview, each

participant was asked for a referral for someone else who might also be interested in participating in the study. These potential participants were added to a waiting list, which was pulled from, in the order of referral, in the event that someone from the network sample was unable to be interviewed.

Consent form. The researcher collected each consent form completed by the participants. The consent form explained the purpose of the study, procedures for participation, potential risks and benefits of the study, and confidentiality and its limits. The contact information for all individuals affiliated with the study was also provided. (See Appendix B for consent forms.) The consent form explained that the study is completely voluntary and that participants had the right to decline participation at anytime during the interview process without penalty. Participants were also asked for permission to audio record the interview, although participation in audio recording was optional and participation was not contingent upon audio recording.

Interview (see Appendix A). At the start of the interview, participants were informed that if, at any time, he or she wished to discontinue the interview, he or she might do so without penalty. All participants consented to audio recording. Further, participants were informed that the researcher would take notes as responses were provided in order to ensure accuracy in reporting responses. The interview, which was comprised of both open- and closed-ended questions, was divided into three parts: Background Information and Context of Incarceration; Social, Familial, and Academic Effects; and Coping. Upon completion of the interview, participants were asked about others who would be interested in participating and were given the opportunity to ask the researcher any questions. They were thanked for their participation and reminded that they may contact the researcher should they have any questions or concerns in the

future. Each participant was assigned a code by the researcher and any identifying information was removed from the transcriptions of the audio recordings. All names referenced in this study have been changed to protect the identity of the participants.

Treatment of Data

Consent forms. The consent forms were kept in a locked storage file cabinet at the home of the researcher. Furthermore, each participant was assigned a code in order to keep his or her name confidential. No one other than the researcher had access to this information.

Interview data. Hard copies of the interview data and audio recordings were also stored in a locked storage file cabinet at the home of the researcher. Once the data was transcribed, the information was transferred to an encrypted and password-protected computer database at the researcher's residence. Three years after the completion of the research, all documents with identifying information will be shredded and the researcher will erase any audiotapes after publication.

Data collection. This study utilized interviews as the method for obtaining data from participants. The length of the interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 1.5 hours each and no participant was interviewed more than once. The same interview questions were asked of all participants, included both open- and closed-ended questions, and provided the opportunity for participants to address any related issues that were not covered within the limits of the structured interview questions.

Data analysis. After all of the interviews were conducted and transcribed, the researcher utilized the Corbin and Strauss (2014) method of analyzing data. This method does not utilize statistical procedures or other quantification methods to interpret findings; however, mathematics such as percentages and means were used to describe interview data. Corbin and Strauss's (2014)

method is based on grounded theory, in which the researcher generates hypotheses based on the data collected from the interviews in order to develop a deep and fruitful understanding of the experiences of the participants. According to grounded theory, qualitative data analysis involves several steps of coding. The first is open coding, which examines the interviews in their entirety and then breaks up information to identify conceptual categories. The next level of coding is axial coding. While axial coding often overlaps with open coding, it differs in that it collapses the initial categories by finding connections and relationships between the different concepts obtained through open coding. The final step of the coding process is selective coding. The researcher uses the collapsed codes to generate core or central categories or themes. For the current study, the researcher first broke down all responses from the interviews by specific concepts. These concepts were then developed into more refined categories. Lastly, themes of the interview responses were identified.

Chapter IV

Results

The following section provides case examples that integrate the participants' stories and personal accounts of their experiences. These case examples are included in order to give readers a sense of the reality of the lives of these participants and how they were affected by the incarceration of a family member. In order to protect the identity of participants, the following vignettes are composites of participants' stories and all names and identifying information have been changed.

Part I: Case Examples

Case 1: "Jessica"

Jessica is a 26-year-old Latina female who is currently attending graduate school and holds a part-time job. She lives with her mother and younger brother, Max, who is 21 years old, and her maternal uncle. Jessica reported that her uncle, who had been residing with Jessica and her family since he emigrated from Honduras when she was a young child, was incarcerated when she was approximately 11 years old. Jessica was able to recite the events leading up to his incarceration in vivid detail. She indicated that she had fallen asleep on the couch shortly before county sheriff's officers came into the home and arrested her uncle. Because she was half asleep at the time, Jessica has always described the incident as a "bad dream." Jessica reported that she was very close to her uncle and that she loved when he would take her out for ice cream after her soccer games on the weekend. Additionally, she indicated that he held a job as a construction worker and his paycheck significantly contributed to her family's bills. After his incarceration, her mother had to take up extra shifts to cover the loss of his income. Jessica described this as a difficult time for her and her family. She remembered her mother not being home as often, and

how it became Jessica's responsibility to make sure that her brother got home from school safely. She described that after school, she would always make certain that he completed his homework, took a bath, and had his things together for the following school day. Furthermore, Jessica reported that her mother would often leave dinner in the refrigerator with instructions on how to heat it up for herself and her brother. When asked about school, Jessica indicated that her teachers noticed that she became more quiet and withdrawn. She stated that they would constantly redirect her throughout the day to stay on task, as she would often daydream and sometimes she would even fall asleep. When her teachers would ask her whether she was getting enough sleep, Jessica would just quietly nod her head. Jessica appeared sullen when she described remembering how she would sometimes lay awake at night worrying about whether or not her uncle was safe. However, she never explained any of her worries to anyone because her family had made it quite clear that she was not to let anyone know about his incarceration. When she would ask her parents about how long her uncle would be away, they would only tell her that he would be home "soon." Jessica described a time when, one night, she and her brother, Max, were hiding outside of her mother's bedroom, listening to a telephone conversation about their uncle. "I don't know what we will do if they deport him afterwards. What will we do when he's gone? I can't work any more hours than I already am," she heard her mother say. She then heard her mother cry. Jessica hurried her brother away from the door and they retreated back into their rooms.

Case 2: "Zair"

Zair is a 28-year-old Black male who is currently employed as a maintenance worker at a local university. He is married and has two young children. His family resides nearby, including his parents, older brother (age 30), and younger sister (age 26). Zair has another brother, age 32,

who was incarcerated when Zair was approximately 15 years old. Zair recounted the first few days after his arrest, describing a time when he and his siblings noticed that their brother did not come home and their parents told them that he had to go to a boarding school. He reported that he was angry that he did not get to say goodbye, but remembered also feeling a little suspicious since he never remembered his parents talking about sending him away. The next day in school, however, he overheard one of his peers say, “Did you hear what happened to his brother? I heard he killed someone and is locked up.” Zair described how he became even angrier, since he knew that these boys were wrong. He indicated that he went up to one of his peers and pushed him. The other boy pushed him back and everything escalated so quickly. Before he knew it, Zair recalled, he was in the principal’s office with a black eye. He remembered his mother coming to the school to speak with him and the principal. Zair reported that this is when he was told the truth about his brother: He had been involved with the wrong people, began selling drugs, and one night, during a transaction, had a knife pulled on him. As he sped away, he hit a pedestrian. Zair stated that his mother did not want Zair to know about this, but after the incident in school, she realized that this was a secret that could not be contained. Zair shook his head as he recalled the events that transpired over the next few weeks and months, and how his brother was in and out of the media. Further, Zair reported that he got into more and more fights, and was being suspended from school often. One time, he heard a teacher comment to another, stating, “He’s just like his brother.” His parents were constantly pleading with him to change his behavior and not to follow in his brother’s footsteps. After all the trouble he was getting into, and hearing the remarks made by others, including his parents and teachers, he stated that he remembered thinking to himself, “Maybe I am like my brother.” While Zair reported that his fighting decreased as he grew older, he indicated that he began spending more time with some of his

brother's older friends. One day, an older male of the group asked Zair to hold onto a bag of marijuana for him and he took it. He reported that while he did not get caught that time, a few months later he was arrested and released. He reported that in combination with the pleas from his loved ones, this was the "wake-up call" he needed in order to change his behaviors. He became very active in the church and engaged in several community projects that the church oversaw. He married his high school sweetheart, and together they have started a family. Zair reported that he still is an active member of his church and hopes that through his involvement in their youth groups, he can help other children and adolescents with similar experiences to "stay on the right track."

Case 3: "Emmanuel"

Emmanuel is a 19-year-old Latino male who resides with his mother and grandmother. When Emmanuel was eight years old, his adult cousin, who had acted as a father figure to him, became incarcerated after getting caught selling drugs. At the time, Emmanuel was living in a multi-family home with his mother, grandmother, aunts, and cousins. His aunt, the mother of the cousin who became incarcerated, owned the home. He reported that when his cousin became incarcerated, his aunt sold the home in order to pay for his legal fees after she had also lost her job. While he was generally upbeat throughout the interview, Emmanuel appeared somber and his affect flattened as he remembered all of the losses he suffered at the time. He remembered missing his cousin taking him to the park to play basketball, helping him with his homework after school, and talking to him about what was going on in his life. Emmanuel reported that he became very depressed after he, his mother, and grandmother had to move out of the home and into their own place. He described his family as "scattered" at the time and stated that he felt isolated. His mother reportedly noticed this change in him and got him involved in a community

program where he was able to connect with older males and participate in fun outings. His affect changed as he began describing this program, and a smile brightened his face as he referred to it as “my saving grace.” Emmanuel reported that if he had not gotten that support, he probably would have given into temptations to follow in his cousin’s footsteps. Currently, Emmanuel volunteers at the program as a mentor to other youth who are experiencing similar circumstances. He reported that he is planning on going to school to be a counselor.

Part II: Participant Data

The following section will outline the participant’s responses from the interview, which was structured into three major sections: Background Information, Effects, and Coping. Among these major headings, additional subheadings were created and explained, based upon related questions.

Participants’ Relationships with Incarcerated Family Members

When participants were asked about the quality of their relationship with their incarcerated family member during their childhood/adolescence, 80% of participants indicated that they had a positive relationship with the family member. Participant 1 stated, “He was the one person that I looked up to. He was good at sports, a ladies’ man. ... he was the person who I was real close to.” For Participant 3, his family member was someone who was always there for him. He stated:

We did a lot together ... anything I needed, he was there. If I needed a ride somewhere, he gave me a ride; if I needed advice, he gave me advice; if I just wanted to talk because I got into trouble, he would help me out.

Two participants (20%) indicated that they had a negative relationship with their incarcerated family member. One participant (4) described not having a relationship with his father, stating, “I

don't really have a relationship, never really did. He tried to get back into my life but I wasn't really trying to do that because you weren't there the whole time so why do you want to come now?" Participant 10 reported her relationship with her family member as "detached."

Effects

This section focused on various effects of having a family member in jail or prison. Participants were asked questions related to social, familial, academic, and personal impacts resulting from the incarceration. Additionally, participants were asked to summarize the overall impact of having an incarcerated family member and to indicate the most difficult aspect of their experience.

Social experiences. Participants were asked who knew about their family member's incarceration, and whether or not they disclosed this information to others. Nearly all participants (9 responses, 90%) indicated that someone other than their families knew about their family member's incarceration. Of these participants, four reported that "everyone" knew. Participant 1 stated:

Other people used to come up to my mom and other people would come up to my cousins because it was in the papers. So other people did find out, and it was kind of hard for my family because we really didn't want everyone to know our situation.

Participant 9 indicated that while everyone knew about the incarceration, incarceration was a common occurrence in his community. He stated, "Everybody in the neighborhood knew that he got locked up. No one looked at me with pity or I wasn't embarrassed because that sort of thing just happened." Five participants identified specific people/places in the community who knew about the incarceration. Two participants indicated that their church community knew.

Furthermore, other participants reported that their parent's place of work (Participant 2), a

neighbor (Participant 4), or a family friend (Participant 6) knew about the incarceration of their family member. When discussing her church community knowing about her family member's incarceration, Participant 10 indicated that it was "awkward" knowing that other people knew about her family's situation. She stated:

It was a little awkward because I felt like my identity in my family is the good one. I'm the one who stays out of trouble; I'm a good student. ... I'm like that person. But I felt like this is "that" family member that we talk about who has a record and "Oh, he's so bad." It felt awkward and it felt like I was attached to that. I always had the good girl image and then attached to it was "Oh, but your uncle is in jail."

Participant 6 reported that other than her family, a close family friend knew about the incarceration, stating, "You know how people can talk." Only one participant (Participant 7) reported that only her relatives knew about her family member's incarceration.

Participants were also asked more specifically about whether or not their childhood friends knew about their family member's incarceration. Seventy percent (seven participants) indicated that their friends knew of their family members' incarceration. With regard to telling her best friend, Participant 7 explained, "I told my best friend everything, so it wasn't hard. I just told her and I didn't necessarily need a response from her, I just wanted her to know."

Participant 1 discussed how although it was embarrassing to tell his friends at first, it was ultimately a positive and helpful experience for both himself and his friends. He stated:

A lot of my friends knew because I was real open about it, it was kind of affecting me. People could see there was something wrong with me. I was out in the open with it, I told other people about it. At first it was kind of embarrassing because you know you have a

family member on trial for murder, but it wasn't that bad because they were really there for me and I was able to talk to them about it. We actually learned from it.

Participant 3 reported how his family member's incarceration helped him in another way. He explained, "My friends didn't give me any negative feedback. They glorified it, so it actually made me look cooler." Another participant acknowledged that his friends knew, but he did not tell them. Instead they learned about his family member's incarceration after witnessing her arrest. Participant 5 stated, "Someone already had told them, they knew. They saw her get caught and handcuffed. I'm one of those people though, if you don't ask, I don't tell. I don't like to give exclusive information when it's not needed."

Thirty percent (three participants), however, denied that their friends knew about their family member's incarceration. Participant 10 explained that there was shame attached to this "family secret," and because of her community, she did not want to experience stereotyping due to her race.

Additionally, participants were asked whether their peers at school knew about their family member's incarceration. Most participants (seven, 70%) reported that their peers did not know. Furthermore, another participant discussed how he separated his home life from his school life:

School was another world for me. I had friends, but we never discussed things like that. I had my people in school, and then I had my people in the neighborhood. They were separate worlds for me. There was no need for me to go to school and say, "I have a cousin that got locked up!"

While one participant did not answer this particular question, the remaining two participants indicated that their school peers knew about their family member's incarceration, however, they

described two very different experiences and reactions from their peers. Participant 3 explained that it gave him “protection,” stating: “It gave me protection. Sounds funny now, but everybody was like, “Oh, his brother is in jail—he’s a tough guy.” Everybody thought that I was a tough guy too.” Participant 8, on the other hand, described how her peers bullied her after they found out about her family member being incarcerated:

A lot of people in school heard about it and would say to me that my dad was a drug dealer or that he was a murderer ... something to that effect. It was like kids thought they were better. And then people would say, “Oh your dad got life? He’s going to be a faggot. Tell him not to drop the soap in there.” Stuff like that, it pissed me off.

Furthermore, some participants also commented on whether or not they experienced any difficulties in telling people in the community, friends, and/or peers. Two participants reported some difficulties, indicating that they felt or expected to experience stigma related to having a family member incarcerated. Participant 6 stated:

It was hard not to tell anyone—it’s a big secret that you carry. But at the same time, you don’t want anyone to know and find out. Regardless of everything, he’s still your dad so whatever people have to say, it’s going to affect you and hurt you. People just sometimes say things to hurt people. It was hard but it was probably better for people not to know.

Participant 2, however, reported that he benefited from others knowing about his family member’s incarceration, indicating that it made him fit in and feel more accepted.

Overall experience. Participants were asked to describe their experience of having a family member incarcerated as a child and/or adolescent. Most participants described this time period in multiple ways. Many participants (4 responses, 40%) described it as “hard” or “tough,” while three others (30%) indicated that the incarceration “really affected me.” Others alluded to

the sense of loss that resulted from the incarceration (3 responses, 30%). Participant 9 said, “It was like you lost your best friend. It was a tough time.” Three participants (30%) reflected on the support that they received during this reportedly difficult time. Participant 6 stated:

My mom was great. She was basically the mother and the father at the same time, so it really helped me to not think about anything. I think having my mom was the best thing. Everything I owe to my mom because she was there through everything and she didn’t let us down at all.

Participant 5 described that seeing how his family member’s incarceration affected his young cousins was the worst part of his experience, stating, “It was tragic. The faces of my little cousins, I’ll never forget that.” Participant 4 spoke about his feelings of anger that arose after his family member was incarcerated. He stated:

It was all built up anger inside of me. I did a lot of things that I shouldn’t have done and I can’t take back. When that stuff was going on, I was getting in trouble at school, I was fighting a lot. ... I was just a real angry kid. It definitely affected me in a lot of ways.

Two participants (20%) generalized that this time was not difficult for them. One participant indicated that her father’s incarceration “affected her” but was not “tough” because she had so much support from her mother. Furthermore, Participant 10 described this time period as “detached.” She stated:

As far as my family goes, they really kept it away from me. I think because I was the baby. So I think they tried not to let me know the extent of what was going on. ... I think they tried to keep me as innocent as possible and didn’t let me know things until I got older. I think it probably affected them more than it did me because they kept it from me for so long, until I got older. By the time they told me, [my cousin and I] weren’t talking.

Family experiences. Participants were also asked to describe their families at this time. Many participants indicated that there was discord and tension (4 responses, 40%). Two participants (20%) reported that their relatives blamed each other for their incarcerated family member's actions that led them to their involvement in the legal system. Participant 1 stated:

It was a blame game. People were blaming each other for why he did it. ... I was really young, so I didn't get to understand all of the turmoil going on. I didn't really understand why they were arguing, but I felt that at that time everybody should have stuck together. I just wanted peacefulness while he was going through that time.

Two other participants (20%) reported that their families experienced financial stress during this time.

Family changes. Participants were asked about changes that occurred to or within their families. One participant (10%) reported that her family did not change during this time and described it as "regular." She said, "Everyone did their own thing, nothing changed with them."

Three participants (30%) indicated that their family had experienced financial stress after the incarceration of their family member. Two participants (20%) indicated that their mothers had to work more because of this financial burden. Participant 6 explained that because her mother had to work more often, she was not home as often as she was prior to the incarceration:

Once my dad went away, she had to find a job ... look for ways to maintain us. That's the one thing I feel bad about, you know, my mom having to work. She was always there for us, and everything we have we owe to her. That's the only really big change—not having my mom at home with us a lot.

Additionally, two participants (20%) indicated changes related to their living situation. Specifically, Participant 8 explained that she and her remaining immediate family became

homeless for a period of time due to the lack of financial support after her father became incarcerated. Participant 8 spoke about her experience with homelessness and how it affected her thoughts about her father:

We got put out; we didn't have anywhere to go. We had to sleep in a car, while my dad wasn't there for my mom and me. So do I be angry or do I understand that he was young and maybe he didn't know how to be a father and maybe he was doing things that got him to jail because he was trying to be a provider. Because I know what that's like.

Further, Participant 1 discussed how he and his family had to leave their home because his family member's mother sold the multi-family home after her son became incarcerated.

Moreover, three participants (30%) reported that they had taken on parentified roles after their family member began serving their sentence. In some cases, financial stress often contributed to some participant's reports of parentification (2 responses, 66%). For instance, Participant 4 discussed how he tried to financially help his mother during his father's incarceration and stated, "As I got older, I was taking on more responsibilities. I was trying to find little side jobs, like raking leaves ... whatever I could do to just help my mom out." Participant 8 described a similar experience of working to lessen her family's financial struggles. Unlike Participant 4, however, she also felt that she had to support both her mother and her father who was in prison. She stated:

I was 17 and my mom needed help with her bills and my dad needed money while he was in jail so I had to be strong for my mom so she wouldn't fall weak but also be there for my dad because I didn't want him begging and asking people for money, because people gave to him when they felt like it. He was in there for so long that he was becoming a bill for people.

Not all participants indicated that financial stress led to parentified roles. For instance, Participant 5 described helping to care for his younger cousins at a young age during his aunt's incarceration:

As soon as we got out of school, all of us would walk straight to grandma's house. Basically, we were the ones who were helping them with their homework, when we needed help with ours. It was me and my older cousin, who is a year older than me, we had to take care of them. Even though we stayed at my grandmother's house, the older cousins were always the ones who were taking care of the younger ones. So we were seeing the stress that was put on them, one got out of hand, the other one is just emotionally depressed all of the time. Basically, we couldn't do anything with them.

Two participants (20%) indicated that once their family member became incarcerated, they saw their relatives less frequently. Participant 8 stated:

It [incarceration] breaks up families, because when my dad was out, everybody would stop in and we would do everything and maybe because he was a provider who held things down. My dad got locked up and it was no more seeing aunts and all [of] them.

Participant 3 discussed this change in his family, stating that he noticed distinct differences after his brother began serving his sentence:

Some people were more supportive, helping him. ... For the first few years he was going through the trial, so you didn't know what was going to happen. ... He could get locked up, there could be a chance that he didn't get locked up, so the first few years, there was a little bit more support. Then after he got sentenced and had to do his time, you could tell the difference between certain family members.

On the other hand, some participants reported changes in the way that their families raised them (3 responses, 30%). Two of these participants indicated that their families became more involved and/or strict. When speaking about his parents keeping him from following in his brother's footsteps, Participant 3 stated:

They made sure that we were all busy. We didn't have any down time, they didn't want us hanging out in the streets and if we did, they made sure [they] knew where we were, who we were with. ... They changed their lives around because it changed the way they did things and they kept us busy.

Another participant indicated that his family taught them about society and how the world worked because of his aunt's incarceration. He stated:

My cousins, her children, they were a year or two years younger than me. They were 5 and 6 then. It sucked because they would ask us questions like "Why is she...?" or "When is she...?" and we would be like, "I don't know." Like we were trying to find any situation possible for them to not think about that. But our family is strong and hard, they'll tell us about society before we even knew about it. So it's like, now that we got older, we knew, we were ready for it."

Most participants also discussed changes in particular family members and identified at least one person who they perceived had the most difficulty with the incarceration (9 responses, 90%). Of these participants, most had indicated that a sibling (3 responses, 30%) or grandparents (3 responses, 30%) took the incarceration the hardest. Participant 10 stated, "When my uncle got incarcerated, I felt like that took a toll on my grandparents because that was their baby." When discussing the changes she saw in her brother after her father became incarcerated, Participant 6 stated:

I think my mom should have gotten him [Participant's brother] help because he had anger issues. ... I feel like he took it the hardest because he didn't have that role model that he was expected to have. His friends had dads but he didn't have a dad, so he basically taught himself everything that he needed to know as a guy.

Further, two participants (20%) indicated that their mother took the incarceration the hardest. When speaking about his brother's incarceration, Participant 2 stated, "My mom was crushed. She just broke down and cried and cried." Another two participants (20%) responded that the "other" side of their family had the most difficulties associated with the incarceration. Both of these participants had fathers who were incarcerated while they were children. Additionally, two participants (20%) indicated that their cousins took the incarceration the hardest. In reference to his aunt's incarceration, Participant 5 explained that his cousins would frequently ask about their mother's incarceration. He stated, "They would always ask, every day. Before school, after school ... even if we went outside to play, they'd still ask." Lastly, Participant 7 denied that anyone in her family had any difficulties with her cousin's incarceration because "no one cared."

Talk among the family. The participants were asked to describe what other relatives were saying about the incarcerated family member. Out of 10 participants, nine gave a response to this question. A majority of participants (5 responses, 50%) indicated that other relatives spoke negatively about their incarcerated family member. Participant 4 stated, "Everybody looked at him like he was a trouble maker. Emotions, arguing—that's what he is known as throughout our family." Another participant indicated that her family referred to their incarcerated family member as "a bad seed" (Participant 7). Other participants reported that they were exposed to relatives discussing how their family member's poor decisions and choices resulted in incarceration (3 responses, 30%). Participant 9 indicated that his mother used his

family member as an example as the participant grew up, stating, “Even though he had all of these flashy things, my mom actually had a conversation with me about that. She sat me down and said “You see how he’s sitting in jail for 10 years? That’s who not to be like.” Participant 9 stated:

You know, on the streets, everyone was saying, “Oh, your dad is a drug dealer, your dad is a murderer, your dad is going to be a faggot.” My mom was saying, “Don’t give a shit because he was never there for you so why does it matter?” My grandmom was saying, “Oh well, he shouldn’t have been out there doing what he was doing with things.” And then his family ... nobody understood that he had this little girl out here who needs attention and everybody was stuck on, “Oh, he’s not there to provide anymore.”

Other participants discussed how some of their relatives were blamed for their family member’s incarceration (3 responses, 30%). Participant 1 indicated:

It was a blame game. I felt like people were blaming each other for why he did it. ... Nobody let him take full responsibility. It was just like, “Oh, you weren’t there for him” and, “You weren’t there either.” That had me thinking—can I do something wrong and everybody else just blame each other? It kind of messed me up a little while I was younger but as I got older I was fortunate to figure out that it wasn’t about everybody else when you made a mistake.

Moreover, Participant 10 reported that she heard her relatives speaking about her grandmother’s parenting abilities after her son had been incarcerated. She stated, “Just overhearing conversations. ... I knew that they all looked at her like she was less of a parent.”

Additionally, one participant (10%) expressed that some of his family would speak negatively about his own trajectory, indicating that he would follow in his brother’s footsteps

and would be incarcerated himself. This participant said, “A lot of people talked down about me, saying I would end up the same way—that the same thing would happen, same route, all that stuff.”

Lastly, participants were asked if these discussions had impacted their own opinion of their incarcerated family members. Forty percent (4 responses) reported that their family’s opinions impacted them. As mentioned previously, one participant had indicated that because his family members were blaming each other for the incarceration, he began to believe that his own mistakes could be blamed on others as well (Participant 1). Participant 2 stated that when he heard what others would say and saw his mother’s reaction, he felt “shameful.” Further, Participant 9 discussed how his mother’s discussions with him about his incarcerated cousin were not malicious, but for his benefit. He stated:

Whatever words were said or however she reacted to things or what she said to me, I knew that that was a mother’s love. She would never steer me wrong. ... I was old enough to know and to realize what she was trying to say to me at the time.

Further, Participant 4 indicated that it made him angry. He stated, “I was constantly hearing his name and something negative going on. There was a lot of anger around it, I blame him for a lot of what I got into because a lot of it was because I was angry and I was angry because of him.” Additionally, five of the participants (50%) reported that they were not impacted by what their relatives said. Two participants (20%) indicated that their family’s opinions were separate from their own. Participant 3 discussed not paying attention to what others said, in an effort to support his brother. He stated, “I was real close to my brother so I didn’t pay attention to what people said. I supported my brother. I wanted to be there for him so I didn’t pay attention to anything that people really said.” Participant 7 stated, “That’s what other people thought, not what I

thought. It hurt a little bit, but I also knew that everyone is entitled to their own opinion. ... I knew that I couldn't get mad at anybody for feeling how they were feeling." Moreover, two participants (20%) reported that although they knew what others were saying about their incarcerated family member, they did not influence their opinions because they saw what these relatives were talking about first-hand. Lastly, while Participant 8 was angered by what others said, she continued to love her father who was incarcerated. She stated:

I would get mad. ... Everybody just gave up on my dad. But not me. I still loved him. I was saying I was going to grow up to be a lawyer so I could get my dad out of jail. ... Scratch off a million dollars and maybe get him a decent lawyer. I was on the phone with all different lawyers, because I felt like I had to get my dad out and when he got out I was going to take care of him.

Staying in touch with the incarcerated family member. Participants were also asked whether or not they had stayed in contact with their family members while their family members served their sentence. Six of the participants (60 %) indicated that they had stayed in touch with their family member through visits, phone calls, and/or letters. Of these participants, four (66%) reported that as a child, they had visited their incarcerated family member. Participant 2 discussed his experience visiting his brother in jail:

That was my first view of jail; seeing him in the clothes and behind the wall. We couldn't touch him. My mom was upset and so it just made the whole thing emotional. [Our visit] was with a phone and behind glass so that you can see him, just can't touch. You have to go through one door, they pat you down, and they send you through another one. Close the one door, open the next. It makes jail a reality instead of just a place. It makes it like you can really end up here.

Participant 3 described his experience visiting his brother in the prison and when he was housed at a program:

The first visit, in [city] ... it was really upsetting. I had never been to a prison before. They treat you like a prisoner when you get there and I had to not strip, but put all my stuff in a locker. We sat in this tight room. It was uncomfortable—me never getting into any trouble and doing this. At first, I was anxious and I really wanted to see my brother. But then, I was like, “Dang! You have to be here all of the time?” So it was upsetting. Then you get in there and I’m upset at myself because I don’t want to go through this—all the steps and stuff—it’s a little selfish but that’s how I felt at the time. The second visit was on a farm. We sat around a table and so that was fine. He was in a program.

Participant 4 explained what it was like visiting his father in prison.

I was always small and didn’t know what was going on. But I always remember the long car rides. When I was small, he was up in [city]. I don’t remember where that is, but it seemed so far back then. The car rides were always long. Then we’d go see him for a couple hours; then you had to leave. I was always with my grandmother, so I wasn’t really worried about anything happening. She made me feel safe.

Another participant described what it was like to visit her father when he was in prison.

Participant 8 said:

My mom wouldn’t take me to see him, but my sister, she would. I would go there and I would cry. Sometimes they were fun, because, you know, he was locked up now, so I got to get all of his attention. So he was hugging me and could read me books. The only problem was I didn’t like going through their security part. They were in everything. If you had boobs, they made you lift up your bra ... you know, things that made you feel

uncomfortable when you're there to visit a loved one. It was hard because the visits went from at least once a month to maybe every three months. Overall it was fun. They don't really allow you to sit on inmate's laps though, so you really sit across from them and talk. He read me books, would talk to me about life and his mistakes, and whenever he looked sad, I would be sad. But there's nothing you can do. I'd ask him when he was getting out, prayed for him to get out.

Further, Participant 10 spoke about her visits to see her uncle. She stated:

[Prison] was just a place to go on the holidays and if we were going to be in the area. [My grandmother] would always want to go visit my uncle for the holiday and they would have certain days there for visiting, so if we were there then the whole family would go and visit him. When I had to go to the prison—I mean, just the process to get in there—it was degrading. You had to take off all of your jewelry, you can't wear certain outfits. I remember I wore a pair of jeans I wasn't supposed to wear so we had to go to the store and had to buy a huge white t-shirt to cover my jeans. I felt like they were stripping me of the image I was trying so hard to uphold ... just to visit him.

In addition to visiting, three participants (50%) indicated that they had kept in touch with their incarcerated family member through telephone calls. Participant 4 indicated that he was 8 years old when he stopped visiting his father and maintained contact via the telephone. He described the telephone calls by stating that “there was a lot of noise in the background.” Furthermore, while Participant 9 explained that his telephone calls with his cousin decreased in frequency over the course of his sentence, he enjoyed talking to him over the telephone. He stated:

Well, it was cool because I could talk to him and he would tell me he was good and he'd explain himself. So once I heard his side of the story, it made me feel closer to him even more. Talking to him on the phone was okay.

Participant 10 also discussed telephone calls with her family member. She stated:

He would call randomly maybe twice a year and I would talk to him on the phone. It was always awkward conversation and I would try to make it as quick as possible, but I felt like he was talking to me because he had to. I didn't know what to say to him. I felt that he was inquiring about my life and I don't know why but I felt like I really didn't want to share.

Additionally, Participant 10 was the only person to report that she had contacted her incarcerated family member via letter. She stated:

On my 16th birthday, he wrote me a letter. This was the first letter that he wrote me. I wrote him back, but I think I was a little too honest. ... So when I wrote him, I probably hurt his feelings. I told him that outside of being related to me, you're a complete stranger to me.

On the other hand, four participants (40%) reported that they did not stay in touch with their family member as a child while the family member was incarcerated. Participant 1 indicated that he did not reconnect with this family member until he was 21 years old, because his family did not want him to visit the prison when he was younger. Participant 7 reported similar experiences. She explained that she did not know how to stay in touch with her family member, stating, "I didn't know anything about that stuff." Further, she reported that her family did not want her to associate with her cousin. She stated that they "kept me away from that stuff ... probably because of the bad seed thing I said earlier."

When participants were asked whether or not they wished to stay in contact with their family member at that time, approximately half responded that they did (5 responses, 50%). Furthermore, two participants (20%) indicated that they did not want to stay in contact with their family member. Participant 10 attributed this to the distance that developed in their relationship as her family member served his sentence, resulting in unfamiliarity with each other. She also mentioned feelings of guilt associated with their differing opportunities and freedoms. She stated:

I remember he would call on the holidays and I feel like I was the only one who didn't want to be handed the phone because I was like, "What are we going to talk about? He doesn't know me, he doesn't know what's going on." I also didn't want to brag about things that were going on and make him feel bad.

Additionally, two participants (20%) reported that they remember being ambivalent about contact with their incarcerated family member as a child. Participant 5 reported, "At that time, I didn't know what I wanted; all I knew was that I needed to help out in raising my cousins." Further, Participant 9 reported ambivalence about contact with his incarcerated family member because the conversations with him were sometimes repetitive, and he also was working hard. He stated, "I got older and started talking to him less. I stayed focused and did those things that he told me to do. He was right, it was the same thing that my mom would say." Participant 4 did not provide an answer to this question.

Academics. Participants were also asked if they believed their school performance and/or functioning was impacted at all by their family member's incarceration. Sixty percent of participants (6 responses) believed that having a family member incarcerated as a child impacted their education. Two participants (20%) indicated that it had actually improved their

performance, as their family member's incarceration motivated them to do better. They reported that their education was the key to expanding their opportunity for success in the future and to avoid incarceration themselves. Participant 6 said, "Him going to jail motivated me more to do better so I would never be in that same situation." Similarly, Participant 9 stated:

I would say no, but I think that it did. I think it maybe motivated me a little bit more where I could say, "Yeah, my cousin sold drugs and stuff and didn't do good in school, and look." So maybe in a way, a little bit. I guess it gave my mom some ammunition to keep me in line and say, "Hey, look what could happen." My mom really didn't play no games about school.

Additionally, two other participants (20%) indicated that because of their family member's incarceration, they felt that their parents pushed them more to succeed in school. One participant indicated that after his brother became incarcerated, his parents switched him to a better school once his grades began to drop. Participant 5 reported that his family also pushed him and his cousins to perform better in school, however, they did not respond as well. He stated:

My family would have too much of an expectation for us to reach. Instead of letting us do what we wanted, they would try and push us. Even though I know they tried to push us to do better, they pushed a little too hard. We started rebelling and we said we weren't going to do anything because they were pushing us too hard. I was doing all right, too. I was a B/C student.

Some participants indicated that having a family member incarcerated during childhood could also have a negative impact on their education (3 responses, 30%). Participant 4 discussed often being described as "troublesome" and "angry." He reported that he got into trouble a lot

throughout school, which he attributed to the anger that he had pent up inside of him towards his father's incarceration. He stated:

I was bad. ... A lot of my behavior problems would affect my grades. They were bad. I was fighting a lot so I was barely in school. I'd fight and then I'd be suspended. I was troubled from fourth grade until my senior year of high school. I was going through a lot. I had a short temper.

While Participant 8 was not getting into fights at school, she found that her father's incarceration influenced her ability to concentrate in school. She indicated that she was preoccupied by the thought of talking to her father, as well as the challenges related to her father's incarceration. She stated:

You can't focus; your mind is elsewhere. How can you focus on education as a child when you're talking to your parent that's incarcerated? And they give you a time frame, so you're waiting for the phone to ring again and you can't wait to get out of school because you want to talk to your dad. I just wanted to be with my dad ... and I just couldn't focus, because then I had to see my mom struggling because he wasn't there and you really can't pay attention. Your focus can't really be on school because you have so many problems going on at home, so you may not have gotten rest that night. You may have stayed up thinking about your dad all night.

Lastly, Participant 3 reported that his brother's incarceration caused him to think of future options other than school. With these other options in mind, school was no longer a priority and his grades worsened. Participant 3 explained:

I was thinking about his lifestyle and I was thinking: Well, my brother didn't finish school and he was real big into baseball—so I figured I would either make it in sports or I

would be a drug dealer like him. So school became somewhere I could go instead of just being home. Then after his sentencing and he was locked up, my dad really enforced me having to go to school and all that. I took it seriously then.

On the other hand, four participants (40%) indicated that their family member's incarceration had not affected their school performance and/or functioning. While half of these participants (2 responses) reported that they had exhibited behavioral problems, such as fighting, they denied that this was related to their family member's incarceration. One participant explained that they had "always gotten in trouble at school, so it wasn't because of that," while another reported that getting into physical fights was "just something everyone in my school did."

Participants were also asked whether or not they or their family had told anyone in school about their family member's incarceration. Most participants denied that anyone at their school was aware of this information (7 responses, 70%). When asked to elaborate on why others did not know, Participant 1 stated:

I wish other people knew because communication is very key. I think that could have helped me a little bit more with that whole process because if I had talked to somebody other than family members and friends, I could have let my feelings out a little more.

That could have helped me during that process.

Additionally, another participant indicated that neither he nor his family told anyone at school because that information was "personal, family business" so no one outside of his family needed to know. Participant 4 stated:

I didn't share that. I didn't open up to people like that. I was more quiet and kept it all in ... which was a bad idea because that's when I started getting in trouble. As far as school

goes and this—this is my business. It's personal stuff. You don't really share that, you know?

Additionally, three participants (30%) reported that at least one person in their school knew about their family member's incarceration. Participants identified teachers, principals, and coaches as the individuals in the school who knew about their family member's incarceration. Participant 3 described his experience of his teachers and coach knowing about his brother's incarceration:

I told a couple of teachers that I was close to and obviously they told me, "Please don't go that same route, this is your chance to change and he could be your example." They tried enforcing the school thing with him and he didn't want to listen. So they said, "See, this is your opportunity to listen." I even told my baseball coach actually. That was his coach when he was there too and the baseball coach was really supportive. He even went to my brother's court date. They really got along, so he was really supportive of me throughout the process.

Coping

Lastly, in addition to identifying the most challenging aspects of having a family member incarcerated as a child and/or adolescent, this section focuses on the coping mechanisms utilized by participants to get through this difficult time, as well as resources participants desired and those they found were not helpful (and possibly detrimental). Finally, participants were asked for advice for other children and/or adolescents who are currently facing the challenges associated with having a family member incarcerated.

Most difficult part of family member's incarceration. Participants' responses were fairly diverse when asked to identify the most difficult aspect of their family member's

incarceration as a child and/or adolescent. Two participants (20%) reported that “everything” was difficult. Further, two other participants (20%) indicated that the most difficult aspect of their family member’s incarceration was the loss they experienced. When describing her cousin’s incarceration, Participant 7 said:

I could talk to him about anything. ... It was hard because I didn’t have that anymore. We were really close so it was sad when he went to jail. He was the person I knew I could always talk to about everything. I wasn’t close to my other family like that. So when he went away, it was like a part of me left too.

Similarly, Participant 9 spoke about how his companionship with his cousin disappeared when his cousin was incarcerated:

The roughest thing was that he used to play basketball with me, he played video games with me, he cooked for me, and he used to do a lot of nice things for me. And when he was gone, those things didn’t happen anymore. So when he was gone, it affected me because I didn’t have a male figure in the home.

Another participant indicated that the most difficult thing about his brother’s incarceration was accepting that his brother had committed a crime. He stated, “[The hardest thing was] accepting that he did something wrong. Accepting that my brother was a criminal. He wasn’t totally a bad guy, you know. He just made some bad decisions.”

Other participants spoke about financial hardships and responsibilities that were associated with their family member’s incarceration (2 responses, 20%). Specifically, Participant 4 reported that he found it difficult to witness his mother struggle to provide for the family on her own after his father was incarcerated. He stated, “I was young, I wasn’t able to work and I had to watch my mom struggle to try to give us the best of everything. That really affected me a lot.”

Likewise, Participant 5 explained that he had to “step up” after his aunt was incarcerated. He said, “The hardest? Everything was just brought on my cousin and me. We didn’t ask for it. So when it happened, we looked at each other and knew, we have to step up now.”

Moreover, when speaking about the most difficult part of her experience of having her father incarcerated, Participant 6 stated, “I had to call the cops on him once, because of the whole situation with him and my mom. It’s just hard, because everything with him is hard.” Lastly, one participant explained how it was difficult for her to watch her brothers, who were close to her uncle, become influenced by his behavior. She reported,

I feel like his rebellious attitude rubbed off on my siblings. I feel like my grandmother’s unconditional acceptance, no matter what he did, allowed my brothers to take it as

“Okay, well as long as we don’t go to jail then everything is alright.” They did everything just short of going to jail. They got into drugs. My uncle maybe carved a path that became an option for all of us. I feel like he introduced us to a world of trouble that we wouldn’t have even known if he had not made the decisions he made.

Coping mechanisms and resources. Participants provided a multitude of responses when asked what helped them to get through their family member’s incarceration as a child and/or adolescent. The most common response among participants was involvement in a positive activity that helped them to keep busy and temporarily distract themselves from the challenges they faced at home. Most participants reported that they became involved in sports and/or extracurricular activities (7 responses, 70%) to help cope with their family member’s incarceration. Participants reported that they became involved in sports such as baseball, basketball, football, lacrosse, and tennis (5 responses, 71.43%). Other participants reported that their involvement in Girl Scouts and volunteering was helpful (2 responses, 28.58%). Two

respondents (20%) also reported that they kept busy and distracted by playing video games and watching television.

Furthermore, many participants identified particular people who provided support, mentorship, and love that helped them cope with the incarceration of a family member as a child and/or adolescent (6 responses, 60%). Four participants (40%) reported that talking to a family member about their loved one's incarceration was helpful. Participant 4 stated that talking to his grandfather about his father's incarceration provided him with perspective:

Talking to my grandfather, my dad's father. He knew the things that his son used to do, so he knew where I was coming from and he would just tell me that everything was going to be all right.

Similarly, Participant 6 indicated that talking to her sister about her father's incarceration helped her because "I saw her view of things, and my view of things, so it sort of helped." Participant 8 reported that talking to her incarcerated father helped her. Specifically, she responded, "Talking to him on the phone and him letting me know that he loves me and that he's good in there—that was helpful." Additionally, two participants (20%) identified their mothers as "the" person who helped them to get through this reportedly difficult time. Participant 6 stated:

My mom's support was number one. She was basically our fort. She was a really strong person. I mean, she would cry and she wouldn't want us to see, even though we knew when she was crying. She wouldn't want us to see everything that she was feeling or going through. ... It was because of her that I graduated from college, it was because of her that I am here today. She was headstrong, supported us, and maintained us throughout our entire childhood ... and she still continues to be there for us.

Likewise, when Participant 9 was asked about the top things that helped him cope with his cousin's incarceration, he responded, "Definitely my mom. She was there to provide me with things I either needed or wanted." Finally, two participants (20%) indicated that a positive role model helped them to cope with their family member's incarceration. For example, Participant 2 reported that an older peer acted as a mentor and a positive example while his brother was incarcerated. He stated,

So "Bob" was always my example. He showed me that you can go to work, do the right thing, and in turn, you can have nice things and be just as "successful." I used air quotes because even though people who sell drugs have a bunch of money, I wouldn't call them successful. Anyway, he was always my hope. He was always in my ear.

Additionally, some participants attributed their ability to cope to personal characteristics (4 responses, 40%). Two participants (20%) discussed how difficulties related to their family member's incarceration became easier over time as they matured and grew older. Participant 4 stated:

Aging helped. Your mind matures. As I got older, my mind was on a different page. ... I started being myself, spending time with my family, talking to my mom, and doing stuff like volunteering.

Furthermore, another participant believed that taking on more responsibility, although difficult at the time, helped him to cope during his aunt's incarceration. He said, "Stepping up and taking responsibility, it basically made me better by doing it." Participant 7 indicated that it was her positive mindset that helped her cope during her cousin's incarceration. She stated:

I didn't move on or anything, but I did push through it. I'm a firm believer in not stressing over stuff you can't change. If I can't change it, why should I stress over it? I'm

not saying it didn't hurt. The hurt was still there, but I'm not going to bring myself down because of the situation.

Participant 3 stated that his girlfriend helped him through his brother's incarceration. He described her as "supportive," and indicated that she was able to talk to him about what he was going through because "her brother was on the streets, so she knew what I was going through."

Other resources that participants found helpful included church (1 response, 10%) and school (1 response, 10%). Participant 7 reported that she was involved in church, which she attended regularly and kept her busy. Additionally, Participant 10 reported that doing well in school was important to her during her uncle's incarceration. While a lot of attention was focused on him, she reported that doing well in school was "my way of getting attention from my family—I always did my best."

Finally, one participant (10%) indicated that he did not always utilize positive coping mechanisms to deal with his father's incarceration. He reported that he drank alcohol, on one occasion, and often engaged in fights. He stated:

I was fighting a lot. That really ... it didn't make me happy, but I felt relieved afterwards.

I had so much anger in me. When I got into a fight, I just let it all out. I was just physically letting it all out.

Resources desired. Participants were also asked about what resources they wished had been available to them as a child and/or adolescent to help them to cope with their family member's incarceration. Thirty percent of participants (3 responses) indicated that they would have liked to have someone to talk to about their family member's incarceration and its impact. Two of these participants reported that they would have been most comfortable talking to

someone who was older, outside of their family (and therefore unbiased), and had gone through a similar experience. Participant 6 stated:

When I was younger I would have liked to talk to someone. It would have been easier I think if I talked to someone who was older and who could have helped. When you're younger though, you feel embarrassed to tell other people your story. It gets easier when you're older though.

While Participant 7 reported that she believed talking to someone would have been helpful, she indicated that as an adolescent, she "didn't want [others] to expect [her] to share about what was going on." She stated:

When I was younger, I didn't want to hear it and I didn't want to share, I feel like I was very ignorant to that thing. Now, I'm the kind of person who will talk to people and ask for advice, especially if they went through the same thing that I'm currently going through. It would have helped for me to be open like I am now back then. Now I'll listen to what other people have to say.

Other participants discussed factors related to their families that they believed would have made their experiences with having an incarcerated family member as a child and/or adolescent less difficult. One participant (10%) indicated that he wished he'd had a closer relationship with his family during his brother's incarceration, as he felt he distanced himself during that time. Further, Participant 5 explained that he would have liked to be able to talk together as a family about his aunt's incarceration. He stated:

I wouldn't talk about personal stuff. Not to other people. I wouldn't mind having someone to talk to, but with me, it would have to be a family thing. I would've liked to just talk as a family about what was going on. Our families are our best friends.

Moreover, Participant 8 had indicated earlier in her interview that one of the major changes she noticed as a child after her father was incarcerated was that she did not see her family as much. When she was later asked what would have been helpful to her, she reported that she would have benefited from having more support from her family members at that time.

Additionally, participants spoke about other resources that they believed could have made a positive impact on how they coped with their family member's incarceration. Participant 7, for example, reported that she would have liked information about how to stay in touch with her cousin after he had gone to jail. While she reported that other family members did not support her in wanting to maintain contact with him, she felt as though she was old enough, as an adolescent, to make the decision to stay in contact with him, at minimum, through letters. Furthermore, Participant 8 responded that she would have benefited from becoming involved in "kid things." She stated:

[I would have liked] having hobbies like skating and doing things to take my mind off of everything. It's so hard when your parents allow you to know their struggles and so to actually have a moment of being a child and doing something that's fun—that would've helped. Skating, basketball, going to play soccer, being a part of something that takes your mind off of the fact that they're not there, because for that moment, you don't have to think about all that because you're just in that fun moment.

Similarly, Participant 4 reported that he could have benefited from becoming involved in boxing, which he explained might have been a positive way to relieve his anger. Instead, he explained earlier, he got into fights with his peers. Additionally, Participant 4 indicated that he would have also liked to have another father figure present in his life while he was a child and adolescent.

Lastly, two participants (20%) responded that “nothing else” would have been helpful, or denied that they had desired additional resources to help them cope with their family member’s incarceration at the time.

Unhelpful resources. In addition to identifying resources that could have been helpful, the participants were also asked to identify things that were not helpful during their family member’s incarceration. Most participants struggled to answer this question, and either indicated “nothing” or did not respond at all (6 participants, 60%). Two participants (20%) had indicated that some of their own actions at the time did not make it easier for them to cope with the incarceration of their family member. For Participant 1, this behavior was fighting. He stated:

A lot of fighting happened. I was fighting all of the time. I felt like all of the anger and the emotions just got the best of me sometimes. Then you start to think that you’re him, and you start thinking that you’re *that* person so you start wanting to fight. You start acting out and stuff.

Likewise, Participant 3 reported that for a brief period of time, he began engaging in the same behavior that resulted in his brother’s incarceration. He stated:

The drug dealing wasn’t helpful. Even though he was locked up, I continued to do it for a small amount of time so it took me a while to stop that. In my mind, it was a normal thing for me. I told [my mom] that I was doing stupid jobs with one of my father’s friends but I was really selling. That’s how I got money and how I helped my mom at a young age. I had this thing where I thought that until I get caught, I’m not doing anything wrong. Thankfully, I didn’t get caught and I stopped before I had to get caught.

Additionally, other participants discussed how their families' actions were not helpful to them at the time (2 responses, 20%). For instance, Participant 8 reported that speaking negatively about her incarcerated father did not help her to cope with his loss. She stated:

You have to speak positively about that person, even if they did wrong. You have to remember that children love that [family member]. No matter how bad a person has done their child, you cannot talk badly about them because it will still affect that child. Even though everyone else was trying to say negative things about my dad, it didn't hurt me.

But it did hurt me because of how much we were struggling.

She goes on further to add that she wished she had not been so keenly aware of the struggles that her adult family members, including her own mother, were facing related to her father's incarceration. She said, "If I didn't see those struggles and I did fun, kid things, my life probably would have been a little bit better. But that's not what happened, and a strain was put on me."

Finally, Participant 10 reported that the lack of communication among her family about her uncle's incarceration could have been damaging if his incarceration impacted her more than it had. She stated, "More of the sheltering, not having conversations about what is going on ... I think my parents and grandparents' solution was to act like [my uncle's incarceration] never happened. And that wouldn't be helpful if it had affected me more."

Advice for other youth. Finally, participants were asked to give advice to other youth who are currently facing the same challenges that they did as a result of having a family member incarcerated. In addition to a brief outline of participants' responses, their advice is provided below. Only one participant did not provide a response (10%). Many participants advised other children and adolescents to better themselves by setting positive goals for themselves (3 responses, 30%), staying focused (1 response, 10%), staying busy with positive things (1

response, 10%), “stepping up” and following through on responsibilities (1 response, 10%), and learning from their incarcerated family member’s mistakes (3 responses, 30%). Furthermore, two participants (20%) indicated that children and adolescents should surround themselves with positive people and avoid the “wrong” type of people. Moreover, two participants reported that youth should seek support from others by talking to “someone” or to family. Some participants also gave advice regarding the incarcerated family member (three participants, 30%). Among this advice, participants included: trying to stay in contact with the family member, remembering that the incarcerated family member loves you, not giving up on the family member, educating yourself on the incarcerated family member’s situation, remembering that this family member may need love and support, and being open to growth and moving forward.

Below is the advice given by participants:

Want something for yourself. Try to find something that you want to do. Set a goal for yourself, even if it’s not a specific goal, just want something better. If you live in the projects and you’ve been struggling, want something better. Don’t just accept it and say, “Oh, this is how I am, this is how my uncle is, or this is how my brother is so I’m going to do that too.” That’s what I would tell the kids—you have to want something better for yourself. (Participant 2)

Surround yourself with good people and people who are going to help you do what you want to do or people who are going to help guide you to do what you want. Surround yourself with good people. (Participant 3)

Stay focused. Speak to someone. Just stay busy with positive things, volunteer your time, anything—do anything to stay out of trouble. Stay away from the wrong type of people. (Participant 4)

I'd tell them to step up. Just go with it, you can't change what the person did, but you can change what's going to happen afterwards and in the future. Other than that, you can't wish for help if you yourself are not going to go find it. (Participant 5)

I would tell them to use their family member's situation as an example, not as something that they should turn or lead into. It's really your inner will to actually be able to go the opposite way so that you can be better than what your family has been through, to motivate you to do better. Whether your dad's in jail, your mom, or whoever it is, it should help you to want to do better, to want to take your family out of that situation and help them to a better situation, not a worse situation. (Participant 6)

I wish I would have known how to stay in touch with my cousin. Try to stay in contact, even if you feel like you can't. There's always a way that you can. (Participant 7)

Don't ever think that that family member doesn't love you. They do love you. People just make choices in life that sometimes aren't the best choices. That doesn't mean you have to follow their direction. You don't have to allow it to make you angry, you don't have to allow it to stop your growth. What you do is learn from it. You don't make the same type of ... I won't say mistakes or judge the situation ... but you don't further the cycle. You just talk to your family and you still seek support because everyone needs support.

(Participant 8)

Basically the same thing that I was told during that time: That's not the way to go, that's not something to follow. You see the outcome. So go to school and make better than that. Be the first person to go to college instead of being the next person who went to jail.

(Participant 9)

Educate yourself on what happened and understand why the consequences were what they were. Understand your family member and know that what he did doesn't define him. In my mind, that's what happened. I let it define him so I never really tried to get to know him. ... I thought I already knew the kind of person he was and that wasn't the kind of person I wanted to get to know later. That was really unfair. Forgetting about what that person did wrong and remembering that they're still your family member and maybe they need your love and support, the same way that you do. And just be open about growth and moving forward instead of being stuck in that moment. (Participant 10)

Interview Experience

When participants were asked about how the interview went for them, most participants described their experience as "good" (six participants, 60%). The remaining four participants (40%) did not answer this question. Three participants (30%) reported that they have not spoken about their experiences having an incarcerated family member "in a while" (Participants 1 and 7). Moreover, one participant (10%) indicated that they had not thought about the incarceration for a long time. Talking with the interviewer, however, reportedly provided some participants with the opportunity to develop new insights. Twenty percent of participants (two) reported that reflecting on their experiences allowed them to gain new insights into their experiences. For instance, Participant 10 stated:

It was good. It made me realize things in the moment that unless I was talking to somebody about it, I probably wouldn't have come to these conclusions, especially because my family doesn't talk about it, so being that I'm talking about it with you, I'm making connections about it in my head as we go. So that was cool.

Further, Participant 9 described his experience with the interview as highlighting his appreciation for his mother, who he previously described as vital to his success in coping with his cousin's incarceration. He stated:

It was good, you know it made me think about things that I've been through and I came a long way myself coming from the projects—rough projects—it made me appreciate my mom, talking about it. I always knew that, deep down in my head, but just talking about it made me think about it more.

Some participants were happy to have the opportunity to help others through their participation (two participants, 20%). Participant 8 stated:

I don't mind talking to people about my story because I don't want people to experience what I've been through. So if it's anything to help anybody, I'm definitely there to help because it's not something that you want your children to experience.

Others described the interview as “interesting” (Participant 7, 10%) and “fun” (Participant 8, 10%), indicating that they enjoyed talking about this (Participants 1 and 2, 20%). Participant 8 discussed the importance of talking about these experiences and stated, “Sometimes you shouldn't bury things because if you bury and hold things in, you know, it can sometimes make you a little more stressed and you might not know why you are stressed.”

Chapter V

Discussion

This study explored the experiences of young adults who were affected by the incarceration of a family member as a youth (i.e., children, adolescents). It sought to gain a better understanding of this population of youth by including those who have experienced the incarceration of siblings and extended family members. This chapter discusses the themes that emerged from the participants' responses to questions about how this incarceration had impacted various aspects of their family, education, and friendships. Moreover, this chapter will also discuss the themes surrounding participants' reports of the resources and coping skills that were utilized, desired, or unavailable at the time of their loved one's incarceration. These themes included: the importance of extended family members and the role of extended family members in youth of color, parentification, sense of loss, stigma, academic performance, resources and coping skills (e.g., utilized, desired, beneficial and not beneficial), and the interview experience. Furthermore, limitations of the study as well as implications for future research, mental health providers, program development, schools, families, policy, and children are discussed.

Extended Family Members Matter

Youth with incarcerated non-parental family members experience similar difficulties and challenges as children experiencing parental incarceration. Six out of the seven participants who reported the incarceration of a non-parental family member indicated that this experience had a significant impact on them as a child and/or adolescent. Many of the findings of the current study overlap with literature regarding the impact of incarceration, including the dynamics of parentification, the sense of loss that youth feel, and the stigma they experience (e.g., Arditti et al., 2003; Dallaire, 2006; Meek, 2008; Miller, 2006; Phillips & Gates, 2010). Moreover, the

current study's exploration of the impact of familial incarceration on academics identified alternate, related themes that distinguish it from previous research findings. These findings are discussed in the subsequent sections.

Importance of extended family for youth of color. The importance of non-immediate and non-parental family members to youth is often discounted and/or underestimated, perhaps because these family members are not always the youth's primary caregivers. However, extended family members play an important role in the lives of these youth, particularly in Black and Hispanic families, as they are prominent family figures who are actively involved in their daily lives, providing emotional, social, and financial support (Boyd-Franklin, 2003; McGoldrick et al., 2005). In fact, when asked how he defined immediate family, one participant stated, "Well, I consider my immediate family my parents, siblings, and aunts and uncles." All of the participants in the current study identified themselves as people of color, indicating that they were of Black, Hispanic, or biracial backgrounds, and nearly all of the participants (86%) who discussed their experiences of having a non-parental family member reported similar realities as youth who experienced parental incarceration. (These experiences will be discussed thoroughly in the following sections.) Therefore, findings from the current study suggest that the incarceration of non-parental and extended family members may be just as poignant for youth of color as the incarceration of parents. With the overrepresentation of Black and Hispanic populations in correctional settings, this finding is rather alarming, considering that relatively little research and intervention has been conducted and implemented to understand and address the needs of these youth. When these children and adolescents are being overlooked for such matters, their experiences are being discounted and invalidated.

Parentification. Given the magnitude of the impact of familial incarceration, it was not surprising that the findings from the current study were consistent with previous literature on the development of parentification roles in youth experiencing parental incarceration (Arditti et al., 2003; Dallaire, 2006; Dallaire et al., 2012; Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008). Participants reported taking on more responsibility by helping their families financially (including sending money to the incarcerated family member), providing care for younger family members who were also impacted by the incarceration, taking on additional chores, and providing emotional support for other family members. Moreover, researchers Nesmith and Ruhland (2008) commented that the young participants in their study “showed a remarkable maturity for their age.” While the participants in the current study were young adults, a similar finding was revealed when they were asked to identify a family member who took the incarceration the hardest. Most participants easily and quickly identified one or two family members and provided details they observed as youth that led them to their choices. This testifies to the fact that youth can be very observant and perceptive, as most youth in this study were aware of the emotional experiences of others at the time. Additionally, in many instances, it appeared as though the parentification experienced by participants developed as a result of financial stress. Although it was speculated, it was difficult for other studies to confirm this relationship since many of the families who participated had experienced some level of financial stress prior to the incarceration (Arditti et al., 2003; Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008).

Sense of loss. Most of the participants in the current study reported a great sense of loss when their family member became incarcerated. Incarceration is a multi-level loss (Arditti et al., 2003). For some, it was physical. The loved one who was once physically present was no longer there. Participants also described this loss as losing one’s best friend, one’s companion, the

person with whom they could talk, and the person in whom they could confide. An aspect of this loss that has not been discussed in previous literature but was reportedly experienced by some of the participants in the current study was the loss of the image of the family member. Not only do youth have to cope with the physical and emotional loss of their incarcerated family member, but for some, they may also have to cope with the dissonance that emerges when they perceive multiple identities and qualities for their loved ones. As a result of their own associations and feelings as well as exposure to the perceptions of those around them, an inmate may be an uncle, sister, cousin, loved one, companion, best friend, but they also can be perceived by youth as “bad,” criminals, or labeled by their charge (i.e., drug dealer, murderer, abuser). While youth can simultaneously view their family member in multiple ways, the experience of loss comes into play when a once positive perception becomes negative. One participant commented, “You know, it was hard ... accepting that my brother was a criminal. Even though I glorified it at first, I know he did wrong, other people knew he did wrong.”

Stigma. Most participants indicated that individuals other than family members knew of the incarceration. People learned of the incarceration in a variety of ways, including being told directly of the incarceration by the participant or another family member, finding out from the media (e.g., newspaper, television coverage), witnessing the arrest first-hand, or through word of mouth in the community. Those who are incarcerated, as well as their loved ones by association, are commonly perceived as “different” by society (Phillips & Gates, 2010). These perceived differences set off a process of stigmatization that leads to associated negative attributes, devaluation, and discrimination (Phillips & Gates, 2010). Each participant discussed the stigma that they experienced or anticipated as a result. For some, the stigma they faced was direct and overt. One participant reported that she was bullied by her peers after they learned of her family

member's incarceration. Another indicated that people in the community, including school staff and members of the family's church, told him that he would end up just like his incarcerated family member.

For other participants, the stigma was anxiously expected, as they anticipated judgment from others in relation to the incarceration. Many participants reported that they did not tell others about their family member's incarceration for fear that they would respond with hurtful things. Furthermore, some participants reported being fearful that their family member's actions would reflect negatively on their own reputations. Moreover, one participant indicated that after she and her family moved to a predominantly White neighborhood,

I guess there was some level of shame attached to it. I didn't mention it because it was a family secret I felt. I didn't want to tell people about it and then have them ask me questions. I lived in the suburbs. At first, we were the only Black family for miles, so I didn't want to be the stereotypical Black person with a relative in jail, so I just never mentioned it.

Some participants also indicated that they felt embarrassed around others when they spoke about (or even thought about) their family member's incarceration and/or the actions that had resulted in their sentence. The anticipation of being judged, both overtly and covertly, often leads many families to keep incarceration a secret from non-family (Meek, 2006; Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008; Phillips & Gates, 2010).

Interestingly, several participants discussed that they welcomed judgments by others, a dynamic not discussed in previous literature. In these instances, participants reported that there was not any shame or embarrassment associated with incarceration. One participant indicated that incarceration was a common occurrence in his community. Other participants reported that

they and their peers glorified their family member for being incarcerated. For some, their family member's incarceration, coupled with this perception, provided youth with an image of being "tough" and "cool" by proxy. As a result, a sense of power was fostered, and an air of protection was engendered for youth, as participants reported that others hesitated to start—and sometimes avoided altogether—any trouble with them, in order to avert any potential conflict with the incarcerated family member or their associates.

Academic achievement. The findings from the current study demonstrate a relatively new finding in the literature with regard to how the incarceration impacted the youth's academics. While participants in the current study reported that their academic performance and/or functioning was affected, they reported that the impact was generally positive. For example, participants indicated that their family member was used as an example to do better by both themselves and their families. For these participants, their family member's incarceration motivated them to set goals for themselves. Moreover, adults, such as caregivers, teachers, and coaches, placed pressure on the participants as youth to not follow the family member's path. They did so through discussions, by keeping them busy with activities and off of the streets, and by being more mindful and engaged in their lives. Johnson and Easterling (2015) found this striving for academic proficiency to be a coping mechanism by which youth find "strength through control" (p. 257).

There are mixed findings among the literature about whether or not familial incarceration impacts youth's academic performance (e.g., Cho, 2009; Meek, 2008; Murray, Loeber, & Pardini, 2012; Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008; Nichols & Loper, 2012; Turney & Haskins, 2014). Research that has implied a negative impact on academics (i.e., Cho 2009; Nichols & Loper, 2012; Turney & Haskins, 2014) reported school behavioral problems, concentration difficulties,

poor grades, retention, and risk for dropout. Similarly, participants in the current study reported that they had gotten into fights and were disciplined with suspensions in their school years. Furthermore, some participants spoke of how they were distracted in school as they thought about their incarcerated family member or the resulting difficulties at home. One participant indicated that after his brother became incarcerated, he experienced doubts about the importance of his education. Prior to his brother's incarceration, he perceived his brother as successful, as he was making a considerable amount of money, people seemed to respect him, and he was able to obtain many material things that he wanted. Subsequently, this participant flirted with the idea of dropping out of school and engaging in the same illegal activities as his brother. If it were not for the adults in his life, like his parents and coach, he reported that he may have taken that path.

Family dynamics. Participants reported a variety of changes that occurred after their family member became incarcerated. As is consistent with the literature, two participants reported a change in their living situation as a result of their family member's incarceration (e.g., Arditti et al., 2003; Dallaire 2006; Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008). One participant indicated that the multi-family home in which he resided was sold to compensate for legal costs, while another participant reported that she and her family became homeless for a brief period of time after her father was incarcerated.

Additionally, many participants reported that there was significant discord among their family during this time, a finding that is consistent with the literature (Arditti et al., 2003; Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008). At least half of the participants reported negativity from family members, including comments and beliefs about who was at fault for the incarceration, criticism and name-calling of the incarcerated family member, and how other youth in the family (including participants) would become incarcerated as well. Participants also reported that they

saw their relatives less frequently. Perhaps this was a result of the discord that erupted after their family member became incarcerated. As one participant stated, “[Incarceration] breaks up families.”

Additionally, some participants reported that the incarceration impacted their caregivers’ parenting styles, indicating that their caregivers had become more strict and determined to keep them busy and off of the streets. One participant, however, reported that this dynamic was always in place, as his family was known to inform the younger generations about “street life” and the “real world.” The young participants in Nesmith and Ruhland’s (2008) research reported similar experiences with their remaining caregiver after the incarceration of a parent. They reported that their caregivers were adamant about getting them involved in sports, clubs, or church organizations to provide them with not only an outlet for their feelings regarding the incarceration, but also a means to keep them out of trouble.

Lastly, similar to previous literature (Dallaire et al., 2014; Miller, 2006; Western & Wildeman, 2009; Wright & Seymour, 2000), some participants reported that their families had experienced financial distress as a result of the incarceration. In most cases, however, these were participants who had also reported that the family member incarcerated was a parent or someone who had provided a substantial amount to the families’ incomes. It was surprising to not see this experience validated by more participants who had other family members incarcerated, given the role and importance these family members played. Only one participant of seven who experienced non-parental incarceration indicated that their family had experienced financial strain after his cousin became incarcerated. This may have been a blind spot for participants; as children and adolescents, they may have been less aware of any financial issues directly related to the incarceration. Had the participants’ other family members, such as parents or other adult

relatives, been interviewed as well, perhaps these family members would have endorsed financial stress related to the incarceration. Or, perhaps, financial stress is a more likely occurrence when the incarcerated family member is someone who significantly contributes to a family's finances, who are often caregivers and other adults.

Resources and Coping Skills

While the literature on coping strategies exercised by youth experiencing incarceration is scant, existing research on this topic identifies multiple ways in which youth cope, including: engaging in recreational activities, detaching from the incarcerated family member (through physical or emotional avoidance), setting positive goals for themselves, and prosocial behaviors (e.g., volunteering at church, wanting a career in a “helping” profession; Johnson & Easterling, 2015; Kjellstrand & Eddy, 2011; Meek, 2008; Miller, 2008; Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008). In response to a variety of questions regarding coping strategies during the interview, a majority of the participants in the current study discussed utilizing positive outlets to cope with the stressors and challenges associated with their family member's incarceration. These activities, which included sports, clubs, religious activities, television, and video games, acted as distractions from the difficulties they faced. Furthermore, some participants reported that they also sought the support, mentorship, and love from particular people, such as a family member, an older peer, and peers going through similar situations, in order to cope. Additionally, some participants indicated that school was both motivating and distracting for them. For some, however, school was anything but a distraction. It was a place where one participant was bullied by peers after they learned of her father's incarceration. It was also a place where some participants had difficulty concentrating because they were worried about their incarcerated family member or concerned about what others in the school would think. Finally, some participants had reported

that their coping was correlated to their maturity: as they grew older and became more insightful, they were able to better understand the situations in which they found themselves. As youth mature, they develop greater abilities for insight and empathy, and as a result, may be able to better understand caregivers' decisions and other reasons for their family member's incarceration. While the current study looked particularly at the experiences of youth by way of a retrospective interview with young adults, some participants could not help commenting on their insights and understandings now, as adults, at some point throughout the interview. Several participants commented that they now understood why their family members ended up in prison, an understanding they did not have when they were younger. While no advanced statistical measures were conducted, especially on a sample of this size, the researcher generally observed that as the participants increased in age, it seemed as though their change in perspective did as well.

Unhelpful. When asked to describe things that they perceived as unhelpful during the time of their family member's incarceration, many participants struggled to answer this question, as less than half of the participants gave a response. Those who did not answer indicated uncertainty or stated some version of "everything that happened was supposed to happen." Participants who provided a response indicated that engaging in fighting and acting out behaviors was not helpful for them, as the consequences (i.e., suspension from school, discipline at home) did not outweigh the benefits (i.e., "letting off some steam"). Additionally, some participants reported that they believed it was detrimental for them to be exposed to adults' discussions about the family member, particularly if the discussions were critical and/or condescending, as well as other "adult problems" at an early age. Furthermore, one participant had indicated that if her relationship with her incarcerated family member had been stronger, the

silence and secrecy she experienced with her family around the events leading to her uncle's incarceration may have been "confusing and hurtful."

Desired. Participants were asked to identify people, activities, experiences, etc., that, as youth, they would have liked to help them cope with the incarceration of their family member. There were four major areas in which participants desired additional resources, including social support, familial support, information, and activities. Specifically, participants indicated that they would have liked someone to talk to about their family member's incarceration and the related challenges. Their descriptions of this desired person seemed to resemble one who is in a mentorship role. Some participants reported a preference to speak to someone who was unbiased, outside of the family, older and/or more mature, and was knowledgeable of the difficulties related to having a family member in jail or prison.

The literature on mentoring programs and how they may positively impact youth affected by a variety of adversities, including familial incarceration, has begun to pick up momentum in recent years (e.g., Jekielek, Moore, & Hair, 2002; Schlafer, Poehlmann, Coffino, & Hanneman, 2009; Sipe, 1996). Moreover, other participants indicated that they would have liked someone to replace the lost role of this family member, by providing advice and guidance and engaging in quality time together, however they noted that this person did not necessarily have to be another family member.

Additionally, many participants commented on ways in which they wished their families would have been more supportive. For instance, several participants indicated that after their family member's incarceration, their relationships with other relatives became more distant and they had wished that they had maintained close relationships with these relatives. This was seemingly correlated with the relationship these relatives reportedly had with the incarcerated

family member: If an argument or falling-out occurred between the relative and incarcerated family member, this conflict seemed to trickle down to the youth. It impacted whether or not the relative continued to be involved in the youth's life. Furthermore, some participants reported that they had wished that their family discussed the incarceration more. Several participants indicated that the incarceration was not spoken about, and if it was, it was an "adult" discussion or was seen as more critical and less constructive. One participant commented that his family stressed the importance of family above all else, but seemed to fall short when it came to supporting one another once his aunt became incarcerated. Because his family also stressed that the incarceration was a private family matter, he did not have others to talk to. He reportedly felt that he might have experienced less stress had he and his family taken the time to discuss the incarceration amongst themselves, as a family unit.

Furthermore, participants reported that they would have benefited from information about how to stay in touch with their incarcerated family member and visitation (i.e., rules and regulations, expectations). This kind of information is not always readily or easily available to families (Foster, 2004; Parke & Clarke-Stewart, 2001). Additionally, participants indicated that they would have benefited from involvement in "kid activities," such as rollerblading, being part of a sports team, etc. One participant, who had also reported that he often engaged in physical fights after his father was incarcerated, indicated that if he had participated in boxing, he could have channeled his anger in a more positive manner. In older children particularly, the increased prevalence of anger and externalizing behaviors (e.g., fighting) has been linked to parental incarceration (Kjellstrand & Eddy, 2011). Therefore, it is important that these issues are addressed to avoid possible repercussions of such externalizing behavior, such as the youth

becoming involved in the juvenile justice system themselves (e.g., Murray, Farrington, & Sekl, 2012; Murray, Loeber, & Pardini, 2012).

Advice. During the interview, participants were asked to provide advice for youth who are currently experiencing similar difficulties related to familial incarceration. Positivity was a common theme among the advice offered by participants, whether it related to goals, perspective, or outlook. Participants also commented on the importance of staying busy with activities, such as clubs, sports, church groups, community organizations, etc., to both cope with the difficulties related to familial incarceration but to also help to avoid the temptation to follow in the family member's footsteps. Similarly, many of the participants reported that youth should learn from the mistakes of their incarcerated family members in order to avoid incarceration themselves and to help stop the cycle of incarceration that sometimes occurs in families (Western & Wildeman, 2009). Included in this learning was the advice of several participants to refrain from becoming involved with negative influences, as well as patience and taking responsibility.

Some participants provided advice specifically related to the incarcerated family member. Participants suggested that youth should remember, regardless of their current feelings towards their loved one, that their incarcerated family member loves them. It was also suggested that youth should not give up on this family member and should remember that they need love and support as well, despite the wrong decisions they may have made. Along these lines, some participants suggested that youth learn about their family member's experience, to help them develop more empathy towards their family member. Lastly, a few of the participants of the study indicated that staying in contact with the family member is also important. Contact with incarcerated family members can be beneficial for both youth and the incarcerated. Maintaining contact with an incarcerated family member may reduce the stress resulting from separation and

maintain attachments (Parke & Clarke-Stewart, 2001). Further, Roxburgh and Fitch (2014) found that frequent child contact, by mail and visits, was associated with lower subjective reports of anger and depression in adult male and female inmates.

The Interview Experience

While four participants did not provide an answer about their experience of the current study, the remaining six participants who did answer indicated that their overall interview experience was positive. For most of these participants, their family member's incarceration had not been spoken about in a "long time." Moreover, some participants indicated that their participation was cathartic. In their reflection of the interview experience, some participants had reported that they had developed new insights about their experiences and their family members. Others had also reported that their participation in the current study may contribute to helping others.

Limitations

Due to the qualitative nature of the study and the in-depth design of the interview, the sample size was small and a control group was not utilized. Moreover, there was a lack of diversity with regard to gender and geographic location. As such, caution should be taken when considering the generalizability of the results to the general population, as other factors such as location, education, socioeconomic status, etc., may result in differing experiences in other regions. Despite these limitations, the participants of the current study are consistent with the research that correlates race with incarceration (USBJS, 2008; Western & Wildeman, 2009). As previously stated, people of color account for a large percentage of jail and prison populations, suggesting that most of the families of those incarcerated are also of similar backgrounds. Along

these lines, each of the participants in the current study self-identified as a person of color, signifying a parallel with the population of those affected by familial incarceration.

Although the participants were seemingly candid, honest, and cooperative during the interview process and provided detailed descriptions of their experiences, the responses provided by the participants may relate to social desirability bias. Furthermore, only one perspective was obtained, as other family members, such as caregivers, were not included. It is likely that had she spoken with additional family members, the investigator could have obtained various other perspectives to contribute to the overall picture of the participants' experiences. Also, participants were asked to describe their experiences and answer the interview questions based on one family member's incarceration. Eighty percent of participants in the current study reported that they had more than one family member incarcerated. The participants' choice in whom they spoke about may have also impacted the results. For example, did participants choose not to speak about the family member whose incarceration had the greatest impact on the family? Also, 50% of participants reported having had more than four family members incarcerated during their childhood and/or adolescence. Were the effects of one incarceration enhanced or compounded by the incarceration of multiple family members? Moreover, while the sample of young adults fell across a relatively wide age range, their retrospective reports on their childhood and/or adolescent experiences may have been influenced by normal memory limitations, maturity, additional knowledge or awareness of information as an adult, etc. As such, their retelling of their stories or how they remembered their experiences may have been influenced by these factors.

Lastly, another limitation to the current study is the potential for investigator bias, as the researcher created the interview questionnaire, conducted the interviews with participants, and

analyzed the data. Furthermore, the researcher had a high interest in the subject matter. Thus, investigator bias as a result of the influence of the researcher's interest in the topic, as well as her involvement in the current study, from conceptualization to analysis, should be considered when interpreting the results of this study.

Implications

Despite these limitations, the current study provided an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of these youth that previously had not been thoroughly examined. The following section will provide a discussion of the implications for future research, mental health providers, program development, schools, families, children, and policies, based on the findings of the current study.

Future research. In light of the findings of the current study, more research on this population of youth is needed, especially given what is already known about children with incarcerated parents. Although small in sample size, the young adults in this study who experienced the incarceration of non-parental family members report similar experiences and challenges as their peers who had experienced parental incarceration. Therefore, this population of youth needs to be included in research seeking to further our understanding of those affected by incarceration. It would be beneficial for similar research to be conducted on a larger scale with a larger, more diverse sample of participants. Moreover, this study may be enhanced by also incorporating the perspectives of other family members to supplement participants' reports. Researchers should consider the benefits and limitations of their samples as well. While children and adolescents can be particularly perceptive and observant, due to age and insight, their knowledge of the full extent of the circumstances surrounding familial incarceration may be

limited. However, as discussed earlier, there are also some clear limitations to utilizing a sample of young adults.

Additionally, Black and Hispanic/Latino men and women from urban, disadvantaged communities are incarcerated at much higher rates than their White counterparts and make up nearly two-thirds of the prison population (Western & Wildeman, 2009). As a result of this mass incarceration, many family members and friends were removed from communities. Most of the participants in the current study had experienced the incarceration of multiple family members and close friends as youth. While these participants were asked to discuss only one of their family members, they could have experienced the incarceration of any other family member as just as great a loss as the loved one they chose to discuss. Future research should not only continue to explore the impact of incarceration on youth and families of color, but should pay particular attention to how the incarceration of multiple loved ones may influence—and possibly exacerbate—youth’s experiences.

Lastly, many people who experience incarceration have been exposed to cumulative environmental risks prior to their incarceration. Miller (2015) stated: “Exposure to poverty and its inextricable connection to discrimination, community violence, inadequate health care, marginal education, and other community/family stressors are significant influences on their interpersonal functioning” (p. 27). As such, it is important for future research to consider these factors in the analysis and conceptualization of this population. An example from the current study is the possible contribution of economic stress to the development of parentification roles. Is the increase in responsibilities, for instance, related to economic struggles that occurred before or after an incarceration? Or was the incarceration a “tipping point” for prior economic distress,

and therefore youth were expected to take on more responsibilities in light of a caregiver's more demanding work schedule?

Implications for mental health providers. The findings from this study suggest that children and adolescents experience several psychosocial stressors when a family member becomes incarcerated; therefore, the impact of the incarceration of these family members should not be discounted. First, it is important for mental health providers to fully assess the needs of youth and their families in order to get a thorough understanding of the difficulties they may be facing. In doing so, it is also important to take into consideration the stigma—both experienced and anticipated—that may be attached to having a family member incarcerated. The stigma experienced by youth and their families may result in resistance towards treatment providers. Children, caregivers, and/or family members may not want to discuss a family member's incarceration, or they may minimize its importance and/or impact. While this may be due to fears of being judged, it may also be a result of the distress and anxiety experienced from thinking about and/or discussing the topic. As such, developing rapport with youth and their families is crucial, so that clinicians are afforded the opportunity to balance meeting their families where they are with what may be clinically necessary.

In addition to stigma, some youth may experience the incarceration of a loved one as a great loss. Treatment providers may observe in their clients bereavement reactions, as though they have experienced the death of a loved one. This issue is particularly complicated when working with immigrant families whose incarcerated family member may also be facing deportation. The physical loss perceived by these children and adolescents is real, and subsequently, treatment providers may have to incorporate bereavement and grief interventions into their work with this population. Furthermore, these youth may not feel as though they can

process this loss with their family, as the incarceration may be viewed as prohibited from discussion. It is important that mental health providers work with families to understand why the incarceration is not spoken of (e.g., they may feel it is developmentally inappropriate, may not know what to say to the youth). Further, if discussion of this topic is a goal that the family wishes to attain, mental health providers may have to help them build upon their strengths in order to facilitate such a discussion (e.g., reinforcing communication skills, role playing, addressing anxieties and concerns about discussion).

Additionally, these youth may have many other experiences that should be of particular interest to mental health treatment providers. They may experience anxiety in the form of worry and concern about the challenges their family faces related to the incarceration, or about the welfare of their incarcerated family member and their perceptions of the prison/jail based on their experiences during visits and phone calls, intermingled with their imagination and images portrayed in the media. Furthermore, youth may be hearing negative things from others (e.g., family members, peers, teachers) about their incarcerated family member, which may influence their perceptions of them. These factors might cause several dynamics that may be key in treatment. First, youth may internalize negative attributes. Participants in the current study indicated that others labeled their family member as a “bad seed” or “troublemaker.” As youth, some of the participants at times had wondered whether or sometimes believed that these statements applied to them, as they were told they would “follow the same path.” Second, youth’s perception of their incarcerated family member may be in a constant state of evolution. They may be ambivalent about how they feel towards their family member: While youth may love them, they may also be angry with them for the decisions they made or for the challenges that resulted from the incarceration. Having a family member become incarcerated can be a

confusing time for youth, in terms of understanding both their own identity and their thoughts about their incarcerated family member. It is important for mental health providers to be aware of these possible dynamics, to normalize and validate these feelings, and to support them in this journey in understanding themselves and their feelings.

In addition to individual and family treatment, youth experiencing familial incarceration may gain significant benefits from group therapy. Group treatment in and of itself has many benefits for its members, including: instillation of hope, universality, imparting information, altruism, corrective experiences, and socializing techniques (Yalom, 2005). This is likely and equally true for youth involved in group treatment programs specifically aimed at helping them process and cope with familial incarceration. When asked about their experience in participating in the current study, some participants had reported that they were eager to participate, in the hope that their involvement would help others. By participating in group treatment with peers who are experiencing similar circumstances, group members can be given the opportunity to help one another through advice, support, and empathy.

Based on the issues raised by participants in the current study as well as previous research (e.g., Arditti, 2005; Bilchik, 2007; Bulis et al., 2002; Hoffman et al., 2010; Kjellstrand & Eddy, 2011; Miller et al., 2013; Parke & Clarke-Stewart, 2001; Phillips & O'Brien, 2012), the group itself should consist of several components, including: mentorship, psychoeducation, anger management, emotional expression, coping skills, and problem solving skills. As was demonstrated in the current study, not all youths' experiences with familial incarceration are the same. As such, it may also be beneficial for group facilitators, once rapport is built, to check in with each of the group members and their caregivers in order to interweave each of their own personal needs into the group's plan.

Implications for program development. Youth are embedded in intricate systems, and more often than not, it is nearly impossible to make significant changes in a child or adolescent's life without multisystemic interventions. As such, programs aimed to help youth cope with the incarceration of a family member should carry out interventions in the homes, schools, and communities in which these youth are embedded. While this may seem like a daunting task, even seemingly small interventions, such as maintaining regular contact with a designated person at the youth's school or establishing a connection between families and community programs to deliver resources (e.g., housing, financial, childcare), may be meaningful. (Familial, school, and policy implications are discussed in greater detail in later sections.) Based on the results of the current study, a vital component of such a program is a mentor system in which youth would be able to connect with individuals who could provide support for the youth in terms of empathy, understanding, and experience. Mentoring programs have the potential to improve youth's socio-emotional skills, allow them to be exposed to positive role models, and develop meaningful, trusting relationships in which they can find comfort in disclosing their challenges with having an incarcerated family member (Bilchik, 2007). Additionally, given participants' reports of coping strategies (both utilized and desired), it is suggested that a program for youth experiencing familial incarceration include enjoyable outings and activities that encourage healthy distraction, bonding, and the opportunity for youth to "just be kids."

Implications for families. Every family is its own unique system with its own values, influenced by culture, beliefs, experiences, etc. As such, there is no one-size-fits-all answer for how families "should" handle the incarceration of a loved one. Given participants' responses in the current study, however, there are some guidelines that families may want to keep in mind. First, minimizing youth's exposure to negative talk about the incarcerated family member was

reportedly important to some of the participants in the current study. As mentioned previously, youths' feelings towards their incarcerated family member may be mixed. As one participant reported, although she was angry with her father for being incarcerated, she still loved him and it hurt her to hear criticisms from family members when she was already hearing negative comments from her peers at school and in the community. Similarly, families may also like to consider limiting youth's exposure to "adult" concerns until it is developmentally appropriate. According to the current study, many youth, regardless of their relation to their incarcerated family member, experienced parentification. One participant had commented that she wished she could have just "done kid things." Furthermore, the results of the current study imply that many youth do want to talk to their family about various aspects of their family member's incarceration. However, many of the participants also felt as though they did not get this opportunity. Talking can be difficult for some families: kids ask countless questions, adults may not always know the best way to respond to their questions, and sometimes adults' own feelings about the incarceration may make it difficult to have a conversation. It is important for families to know that this is okay. Having support, however, can make all the difference in the world for a family and its youth. Support also comes in various shapes and sizes. Just as some young adults in the current study reported various sources of support outside of their families, adult family members, too, can open up to others for support. For some family members, seeking individual or family counseling may be helpful. For others, this person does not have to be a therapist or mental health worker per se, but can be a friend, religious leader, or trustworthy person from the community. Talking to someone when needed may not only provide an emotional outlet for the family member, but also a sounding board to help weigh decisions (e.g., whether or not to disclose information about the offense, what to say about where the family member is and why

he/she is there) in a manner in which both the family's values and youth's well-being are considered. Support is not limited to discussion. Like many of the participants reported in the current study, support can be found in prayer, activities, organizations, etc.; families need to discover what works best for them.

The participants in the current study were remarkably resilient, and while there are many different factors that may attribute to this resilience, the one commonality demonstrated across participants was that some "thing" positive was better than nothing. This positive support came from many sources—whether it was a distracting activity, a caring individual, or a place perceived as a respite. So while not every family may be ready for or receptive to professional help for their children and/or adolescents, families can aid in youths' abilities to cope by incorporating even something as small as playing video games, as implied by the study results.

Implications for schools. Not every family will be forthcoming about an incarcerated family member, especially with school staff or those who are perceived as "outsiders." It is important to keep in mind that many families with a history of incarceration—whether it is one relative or multiple—face stigma from a variety of sources which may limit to whom they choose to disclose. As such, school staff should be mindful of judgments and biases and what is communicated both to the student and to their family, as their experience of the incarceration may be very complex and complicated. Also, the results of the current study posit a general guideline of meeting a family where they are in regard to their readiness to speak of the issue, as well as respecting their privacy and beliefs as they relate to the incarceration. Of course there are caveats to this guideline, including the limitations to confidentiality, should the student (or perhaps even a family member) confide in staff about situations that may threaten their safety or

well-being, such as harming themselves or others, and/or child maltreatment (e.g., neglect, physical abuse).

If school staff do learn that a student's family member has been incarcerated, communication with both the student and their family is essential in ensuring optimal outcomes for youth. Regardless of how school staff learn of familial incarceration—whether a student and/or family member confides in them directly, or the events leading up to an incarceration are in the media or are otherwise well-known in the community—school staff should consult with the family to determine whom they would like to inform about the incarceration, as well as with whom they would like to maintain regular contact. Youth spend a majority of their time in school. Therefore, it can be beneficial for caregivers and designated school staff to maintain consistent contact regarding the student's emotional, behavioral, and academic functioning while in that setting. It may be equally important for school staff to be aware of experiences outside of school that may be impacting these areas of functioning as well. Additionally, having someone at the school who the student can talk to, if wanted and/or necessary, is crucial. This person should be someone the student trusts so that they feel comfortable talking about what may be bothering them.

Youth experience a loved one's incarceration in many ways. Some youth may exhibit behavioral problems, others may not. Some youth may experience emotional concerns, others may not. And, consistent with the literature and as seen in the current study, some youth may experience academic problems, others may not. How can schools support youth who are impacted by familial incarceration? By being flexible! Every student and family is unique, and each has their own individual needs; therefore, schools must bend and adapt to the needs of their students as much as is possible. Many of the participants in the current study indicated that

having an incarcerated family member motivated them to perform better in school or led others to encourage them to take their school work more seriously. As such, encouragement and motivation from teachers, principals, coaches, security guards, etc., can have a positive impact. Furthermore, some participants indicated that they were distracted in school due to thoughts about their incarcerated family member or difficulties at home. Specifically, one participant commented that she was often distracted in school while thinking about answering her father's telephone call once she returned home. The nature of correctional systems does not always provide inmates with the opportunity to place calls on a consistent day or time, due to situations like lockdowns, unannounced cell searches, etc. How wonderful could it have been if this participant's counselor had permitted her to briefly write a letter to her father to help put her mind at ease when these thoughts arose? Perhaps she even could have been allowed, with her parent or guardian's permission, the opportunity to leave class one time per week in order to take a 15-minute telephone call with her father in the guidance office. Regardless of the intervention taken by the school, staff should be asking, "How can we support this student so that they can thrive both academically and emotionally?" The two go hand in hand: If a student is distracted or in distress, it is going to be very difficult for them to pay attention to a teacher's lecture, follow—or even hear—instructions for assignments, due dates, etc.

Lastly, schools should be cognizant of bullying. Youth and families are not always successful in keeping a family member's incarceration a secret. One participant in the current study indicated that her peers at school and in the community had teased her about her father's incarceration, saying some terribly hurtful things about her father. No child, regardless of the circumstance, deserves to be bullied. Therefore, incidents of bullying should be taken seriously and intervention should occur swiftly.

Implications for policies. For obvious security and safety reasons, jails and prisons enforce many rules, regulations, and restrictions regarding visiting an inmate. These institutions restrict what can be worn, what can and cannot be carried in, and the amount and type of physical contact that can occur during the actual visit. Visitors must pass through metal detecting devices, and sometimes are “patted down” or have their hands wiped for controlled substance residue. Not surprisingly, these visits can be both confusing and uncomfortable for youth and their families. Information about visitation and what to expect is not always easily available for families. Many participants discussed their experiences of visitation, emphasizing that at some point or another, they felt uncomfortable, taken aback by security procedures, or became aware of a policy only upon arrival at a facility, and not beforehand. The list that an inmate submits for visitation usually contains, at minimum, the name, birth date, and address of the visitor. Given the experiences reported by the participants, visitation procedures and policies should include sending a letter or pamphlet to adults on an inmate’s visitation list, outlining the policies and procedures of visitation. Furthermore, when a child or adolescent is listed, a similar letter or brochure should be sent explaining, in a developmentally appropriate manner, the rules (i.e., policies and why they are in place) and what to expect on a visit. This procedure can help to prepare a family for visitation by removing some of the confusion, and anxiety, and replacing it with knowledge and understanding.

Implications for children and adolescents. Despite the struggles and difficulties youth may face as a result of familial incarceration, it is important to remain positive. This not only includes maintaining optimism and a positive outlook, but also helping young people to set positive goals for themselves. It is best that they use their family member’s experience as an example of what not to do, and recognize that they deserve to achieve great things in life. This

means that they should be careful to not associate with those who can be viewed as negative influences. However, if they cannot avoid this involvement, as one participant experienced, they should set clear and firm boundaries with these individuals to avoid getting into unnecessary trouble.

In terms of coping, it is important to encourage youth to talk about their emotions and the challenges that they and their families may be facing. As one participant reported, “It’s not good to keep your feelings all bottled up like that.” Other participants suggested that extracurricular activities were not only a fun distraction, but also a positive outlet to channel some of their feelings. Therefore, youth should know that it is okay if they do not feel like talking all of the time, as there are multiple ways of expressing oneself.

Youth should also be aware that it is normal to have multiple—often conflicting—feelings, thoughts, and beliefs about a loved one and their situation. This is another reason why talking is beneficial for youth—it can help them to sort all of these things out. Many participants wanted other youth to know that even though a family member is not physically present, they can still love and be loved by that family member. It is important for youth to stay in contact with their family member, if that is what they choose, and know that although their family member may have made some wrong decisions, youth can still learn from them.

Conclusions

This study sought to offer young adults the opportunity to openly discuss their experiences of having a family member incarcerated when they were children and/or adolescents. It specifically focused on the effect of the incarceration on their families, academics, and friendships, as well as the availability, utilization, and impact of various coping resources. While many of the participants’ responses were consistent with literature on the effects of

incarceration on youth, the current study remains one of the few studies that ventured to understand the effects of both parental and non-parental incarceration on youth by using a qualitative method to thoroughly explore how the incarceration of siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc. impacts youth during their childhood and/or adolescence.

While the current study had its limitations (e.g., small sample size, generalizability, the potential for researcher bias), it provided meaningful insight on not only the challenges that youth face when a family member becomes incarcerated, but their strengths and resilience as well. Participants endorsed challenges related to loss, stigma, parentification, family discord, financial difficulties, and academic struggles. However, many participants identified several positive coping mechanisms that they utilized to help get them through these difficult times. Some participants reported that as youth, they were able to turn their negative experiences into positive ones; for example, by using their family member's incarceration as a means to set positive goals for themselves and avoid making the same decisions that led to the incarceration. Despite the tenacity and fortitude that these participants demonstrated as youth, many reported that they did not have anyone, including family members, to talk to about their struggles or feelings related to the incarceration. As this study underscored, researchers, mental health providers, community organizations, schools, policy makers, and families need to continue to shine a light on the experiences of these youth, in order to address their needs and increase their strengths and resilience.

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Appendix A

INFORMED CONSENT AGREEMENT

“A Population in the Dark: Bringing the Effects of Familial Incarceration on Youth to Light”

You are invited to participate in a research study. Before you agree to participate in this study, you should know enough about it to make an informed decision. The principal investigator, Amanda Morales, is a doctoral candidate in the Graduate School for Applied and Professional Psychology at Rutgers University. If you have any questions, ask the investigator. You should be satisfied with the answers before you agree to be in the study.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to explore the effects of familial incarceration (i.e., siblings, parents, extended family members) and to understand the experiences of young adults in regards to coping. An increased understanding the experiences of youth who have incarcerated family members will help mental health, social work, and child health agencies may be able to support these youth better.

Participants: This study will use a network sample of approximately 10-25 young adults (18-30) and will be conducted at various settings contingent upon their geographic location. You will only be considered for participation in this study if you return a signed consent form. There is a cap on the number of participants, as this is a small study, so the acceptance into the study is on a first come, first serve basis.

Procedure: If you participate in the study, you will be interviewed individually during a designated time at an agreed-upon location. With the researcher, you will discuss your experiences in having an incarcerated family member; how the incarceration impacted your academics, social relationships, as well as your family; identify coping mechanisms and resources that you utilized and those that you did not utilize but would have found helpful during the incarceration. **If you indicate at any time that you want to stop the interview, you will be thanked for your participation and will be free to go home.**

Risk/Benefit: There are minimal risks associated with your consent and participation in this research study. Talking about difficult experiences may create discomfort for some participants. Again, you can indicate that you would like to stop the interview at any time. If necessary, the contact information for a local psychological clinic will be provided. Participation in this study may not benefit you directly; however you will play a major role in helping other researchers, social workers, psychologists, and others to understand the experiences of youth who have incarcerated family.

Confidentiality: This research is confidential. The research records will include some information about you, and this information will be stored in such a manner that some linkage between your identity and the response in the research exists. Some of the information collected about you includes: your name, age, ethnicity, and employer/school affiliation. Please note that

we will keep this information confidential by limiting individual's access to the research data and keeping it in a secure location (password-protected computer) in the researcher's residence. All study data will be kept for three years after the completion of the research, all documents with identifying information will be shredded, and any audiotapes will be erased by the researcher after publication.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, you may contact me, Amanda Morales, at (732) 330-8435 or e-mail me at moralesam@comcast.net. You can also contact my dissertation faculty chairperson, Dr. Nancy Boyd-Franklin, at boydfrank@aol.com.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the IRB Administrator at Rutgers University at:
Rutgers University, the State University of New Jersey
Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
3 Rutgers Plaza
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559
Tel: 848-932-0150
E-mail: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

I have read and understood the contents of this consent form and have received a copy of it for my files. By signing below, I consent to participate in this research project.

Participant Signature _____ Date _____

Investigator Signature _____ Date _____

Audio Addendum to Consent Form

You have already agreed to participate in a research study entitled: “A Population in the Dark: Bringing the Effects of Familial Incarceration on Youth to Light” conducted by Amanda Morales. The Principal Investigator (Amanda Morales) is asking your permission to allow her to include an optional procedure of audiotape (sound), as part of the research study. You do not have to agree to be recorded in order to participate in the main part of the study.

The recording(s) will be used for analysis by the Principal Investigator (Amanda Morales) and to ensure that information from the research study has been recorded properly.

The recording(s) will include the responses that you provide throughout the interview. Name and/or address will not be included within the audio recording.

The recording(s) will be stored in a locked file cabinet and linked with a code to your identity and will be destroyed upon publication of study results.

Your signature on this form grants the investigator named above permission to record you as described above during participation in the above-referenced study. The investigator will not use the recording(s) for any other reason than those stated in the consent form without your written permission.

Participant (Print) _____

Participant Signature _____ Date _____

Principal Investigator Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

PART I: CONTEXT

Introductions: “Breaking the Ice,” Background Data

1. Tell me a little about yourself.
 - a. How old are you?
 - b. What do you like to do for fun?
 - c. Are you in school or working? Tell me a little more about that. [major, place of employment, do they like it?]
 - d. How do you identify yourself, in terms of race and ethnicity?

The Family Member(s)*

2. How many of your family members have ever been in jail or prison?
**If the participant has had multiple incarcerated family members:* For these next questions, I'd like for you to focus on the family member whose incarceration impacted you the most. If we have time, we can also talk about other relatives afterwards if you would like. For now, however, please focus only on one family member.
3. Who in your family is or has been in (jail/prison)?
 - a. Tell me a little about (this person/these people).
 - About how old were they when they were in (jail/prison)?
 - What is their relationship to you?
4. How old were you when they were in (jail/prison)?
5. Tell me a little about their sentence.
 - a. How long were they in (jail/prison)? Are they still there?
 - b. Where (were/are) they held? [jail, prison, municipal/county/state/federal]
 - c. Do you know why they (were/are) there?
6. Describe your relationship with this family member. [i.e., Were you close to this person?]
 - a. What was your relationship like before they went to (jail/prison)? During? After?

PART II: EFFECTS

Social

7. Who knew about your _____'s [relative] (prison/jail) time?
 - a. Friends? Peers? Neighbors? Community members? Other?
8. Who were your best friends during this time? Did they know about your _____'s [relative] (prison/jail) time?
YES
 - a. How did they know? Did you tell them?
 - b. How did they respond?
 - c. What was that like?
NO
 - a. Why didn't they know?
 - b. Why didn't you tell them?
 - c. What was that like?

9. What about your peers (other people your age) in general? Did anyone else know?
YES
- How did they find out?
 - What was that like for you?
- NO
- Why didn't they know?
 - What was that like?
10. Did anyone in your neighborhood or community know about your _____[relative]?
YES
- How did they know?
 - What was that like?
- NO
- Why didn't they know?
 - What was that like?
11. You mentioned that _____ [other person] also knew about your _____ [relative].
- How did they find out?
 - What was that like?
12. How was this time for you? Looking back, would you say it was a hard/tough time for you?
- Were there any changes about you that others may have noticed?
 - Did you spend less time with others?
 - Did you or others notice a change in your mood? [anger, irritability, depression, anxiety, "not yourself"]
13. Did you experience any difficulties in telling others about your family member's (jail/prison time)? Tell me more.

Family

14. Tell me what your family was like during this time.
- Did you notice any changes in particular family members?
 - Who do you think took _____'s [relative] (jail/prison) time the hardest?
 - What were the relationships like between your _____ [relative] and other family members?
15. Did your family change during this time, if at all? (structure)
- [PARENT] Did you have to move?
 - [OTHER] Did you have other family members move in with you?
 - In terms of responsibilities, how did your role in the family change, if at all? Did the roles and responsibilities of other family members change?
16. What did other family members think about your _____'s [relative] incarceration?
- Did that affect you or your thoughts about it?
YES
- How?
 - What was that like?
- NO
- Why not?
 - What was that like?

17. Did you stay in touch with this family member while they were in (jail/prison)?
(letters, phone calls, visits)

YES

- a. How often did you write/phone/visit?
- b. What was that like for you?
 - Experience of waiting for letters, reading letters, writing letters
 - Reaction to call duration; reaction to background noise; quality of conversation
 - Perceptions of the prison/jail; experiences with system; interaction with inmate; anxieties prior/after; reaction to separation

NO

- a. Why not?
 - Perceptions of calls, letters, visits; possible anxieties or worries
 - Other factors: Not allowed by other family; too far; bad experience
- b. What was that like?

18. Did you want to stay in touch with your _____ [relative]?

Academics

19. How did you do in school? What were your grades like?

20. Do you think that _____'s [relative] (jail/prison) time affected your schooling? If so, how?

21. How do you think your teachers would have described you at the time? Remember to think of this answer in terms of when your _____ [relative] was in (jail/prison).

22. Did you get in trouble in school?

23. Did any of your teachers, guidance counselors, principals, or any other staff know about your family member's (jail/prison) time?

YES

- a. How did they find out?
- b. What was that like?

NO

- c. Why didn't they know?
- d. What was that like?

Summation of Needs

24. We have gone over a lot. Of everything we have spoken about so far, what was the hardest part about their (jail/prison) time for you? This could be from the time of their arrest until the time they were released, or even now, if they are still in (jail/prison).

PART III: MOVING FORWARD

Coping

25. At the time that your _____ was in (jail/prison), how did you cope with what you were going through?

- a. Did you talk to someone about it?

YES

- i. Who? (Parent, guidance counselor, teacher, therapist, other family member, member of the church, etc.)

NO

- ii. Why not?
 - b. Did you know other kids your age who were going through the same thing?
 - i. YES: Did you talk to any of them?
 - c. Did you take up a new hobby or interest?
 - d. Did you try alcohol? Marijuana? Any other drugs?
 - e. Did you get into trouble at all during that time? [i.e., fall into the “wrong crowd,” become gang involved, get arrested]
26. What sorts of things were helpful for you?
- a. Of all the things you have mentioned, can you tell me the top three or so things that helped you get by?
27. What else would have helped you to cope better? In other words, what kinds of things do you wish you would have had, but didn't, in order to help you deal with your situation?
28. What sorts of things weren't helpful?
29. What advice would you give to kids and teenagers who are currently going through this?
30. Is there anything that I didn't cover that you would like to say? Is there anything else that you think that I should know?
31. Do you know anyone else who would be interested in helping me?
32. How was this process for you?