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# Alleviating Risks of Parental Incarceration through Mentorship

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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Sonia Murrey

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University  
2015

Abstract

Alleviating Risks of Parental Incarceration through Mentorship

by

Sonia L. Murrey

MS, Wilmington University, 2011

BS, University of Delaware, 2010

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Human Services Administration

Walden University

October 2015

## Abstract

The focus of the present study was on the lack of positive socialization of children affected by parental incarceration. Researchers have indicated the need to broaden the examination of the effects of parental incarceration on children. Mentorship has demonstrated a positive influence for youth who display at-risk behaviors. However, there is little research regarding the effectiveness of mentorship programs for youth who have experienced the negative effects of parental incarceration. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of youth who have completed an individualized mentorship program following parental imprisonment. Flyers were distributed to case managers and program managers of mentorship programs in New Castle County in order to recruit participants ages 18 -24 years who had a parent incarcerated and who had completed a mentorship program. Through individual interviews, 5 participants provided a retrospective account of antisocial behaviors exhibited as the result of parental incarceration, isolation, physical and emotional abuse faced in their youth, and the ways in which mentorship impacted their lives. Interview data were coded based on words that expressed emotion (emotion coding), words that expressed action (action coding), and words that described circumstances (circumstantial coding). This study revealed that, for these 5 participants, mentorship did have a positive impact. Findings further suggested that mentoring be recognized as a more focal strategy to assist youth, researchers, and practitioners in (a) identifying triggers that may lead to adverse responses to parental incarceration and (b) helping youth improve their overall quality of life when exposed to such circumstances.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to all of the mentors who continue to provide mentees with hope and empowerment, and to those who have been mentored and have chosen to carry the torch to help someone else through mentorship.

“If you can help your neighbor now, don’t say ‘Come back tomorrow and I’ll help you.’”

– Proverbs 3:28 NLT

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank God, first and foremost, for guiding me and providing me with the courage, knowledge, and wisdom to embark upon and to complete this most rewarding journey. Second I wish to thank my parents, Calvin and Sonia Murrey, Sr. for their love, support, and reassurance through all of my tears and triumphs. I also thank my sisters, Virginia and Johnna Murrey for their words of encouragement throughout this process.

To my doctoral chairperson, Dr. Eric Youn, thank you for sharing with me your expertise as you have helped me reach one of my most cherished life goals. Your support and belief in me will always be remembered. I also wish to acknowledge my committee member, Dr. Marlene Coach, my URR, Dr. James Castleberry, and Dr. William Barkley for their attention to detail, their feedback, and their commitment to overseeing the development and completion of this project.

I am eternally grateful for my family, my friends, and colleagues.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Introduction**

Having a parent incarcerated presents many challenges for children and families. When a parent or guardian is imprisoned, it has a direct impact on family members, especially children (Eddy & Reid, 2001). The relationship that the incarcerated individual has with family members is also impacted along with internal and external interactions in surrounding environments (Miller, 2006). Human service professionals are particularly concerned with the family experience for exoffenders and with designing interventions that improve the relationship between exoffenders and their children.

Transitions occur that can cause separation of siblings and/or entire families. Even more is that there are many factors, such as family, educational settings, and living arrangements that shape the interactions of youth with their surrounding environments (Eddy & Reid, 2001; Kjellstrand & Eddy, 2011; Miller, 2006; Phillips & Gates, 2011). However, parental incarceration is considered most stressful to the children left behind (Shlafer, Poehlmann, Coffino, & Hanneman, 2009). This statement highlights some of the existing researchers who have examined the impact of parental separation on children who have been left behind while at least one parent is incarcerated. Additional studies are reviewed in the literature review in Chapter 2.

As the number of persons imprisoned increases, so does the number of children left without parental guidance. While some information exists concerning the effects of parental incarceration on children, there is very little known about the impact of targeted interventions, particularly mentorship programs, on children affected by the

imprisonment of a parent (Eddy & Reid, 2001; Kjellstrand & Eddy, 2011; Shlafer et al., 2009). Researchers have suggested that universal intervention strategies help alleviate at-risk behaviors of youth (Shlafer et al., 2009), but there is little research addressing this specific population of youth affected by parental incarceration. Current intervention services are mostly geared toward assisting youth with positive socialization (Park & Clarke-Stewart, 2001).

The socialization of children involves interactions between themselves and the primary persons in their lives such as parents or caregivers, siblings, friends, and teachers (Park & Clarke-Stewart, 2001). Positive socialization of children affected by parental incarceration can lead to a decrease in juvenile delinquency (Park & Clarke-Stewart). However, these intervention services may not be tailored to the needs of this ever-growing population. This issue may be partly attributed to the limited literature on the topic of simply understanding the needs of youth who have been affected by parental incarceration. A theoretical foundation, which may guide an understanding of these needs, is also discussed in Chapter 2. In addition to understanding the needs of this population, this study is necessary to further understand the effectiveness of mentorship programs for youth who have experienced the negative effects of parental incarceration.

The remainder of this chapter is an explanation of the research problem, research design, and methodology. The research questions and the purpose of the study are presented. Attachment theory is the conceptual framework used to guide the study. Key terms are defined in Chapter 1, and assumptions, limitations, and significance of the

study are presented. Chapter 1 also includes a preview of the literature review in Chapter 2 and the methodology discussion in Chapter 3.

### **Background of the Problem**

Many children experience challenges that can add stress to adjustment and may therefore affect developmental outcomes. One of those challenges involves the imprisonment of a parent. There were 1,700,000 children who had a parent in state or federal prisons in the United States in 2007 (Poehlmann, Dallaire, Loper, & Shear, 2010). According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (Glaze & Maruschak, 2010), this number represents 2.3% of the U.S. population under the age of 18 years. It is possible that there are more children affected who have not yet been accounted for due to the change in the number of people incarcerated since 2007. At the end of 2013, 1,574,700 people were incarcerated (Carson, 2014) compared to the 1,518,535 persons reported in 2007 (Glaze & Maruschak, 2010). Moreover, statistics collected in 2011 show that there are 2,070 parents incarcerated in the state of Delaware alone (The Sentencing Project, 2013).

Risks for children of incarcerated parents are high (Poehlmann et al., 2010). Children's behaviors are produced by complex relationships in their external environment and the consequences of behaviors predict the probability of reoccurrence (Molm, 2004). The negative impact of parental separation can increase the amount of strain placed on children. Children who expect the involvement of parents throughout their lives may be disappointed after a parent is incarcerated as their expectations for involvement are not met. Moreover, incarceration of a parent or both parents constitutes the presence of

negative stimuli in the lives of children affected by this issue as the positively valued stimuli, the parents, are removed (Park & Clarke-Stewart, 2001). Following this, at-risk behavior displayed by children affected by parental incarceration may be a direct result of the conditions to which they are exposed.

Negative social and academic problems are both internalized and externalized by youth who have experienced parental incarceration (Poehlmann et al., 2010). However, it is not confirmed that problems related to substance abuse, intergenerational incarceration, truancy, and school failure may be attributed to parental incarceration or if the imprisonment of a parent is a risk marker (Rollin, Kaiser-Ulrey, Potts, & Creason, 2003). It is known, however, that mentoring has a positive effect on youth's social skills, behavioral standards, commitment, academic achievement, and peer selection (Rollin et al., 2003).

Researchers of large-scale, longitudinal studies that focused on children who experience parental incarceration have used secondary data for analyses of the problem (Cassidy et al., 2010). Consequently, these studies tell little about contextual processes involving the realignment of family and developmental adjustments that link parental incarceration to child outcomes (Cassidy et al., 2010).

### **Statement of the Problem**

If more efforts are not made to understand and address the negative effects of the phenomenon of parental incarceration, affected youth may be placed at a higher risk for experiencing the adverse effects previously mentioned, including antisocial behavior, defined as behaviors resulting from a lack of positive socialization including defiance,



hostility, irritability, anger, lying, theft, and violence (Eddy & Reid, 2001) and intergenerational incarceration (Kjellstrand & Eddy, 2011). These effects may be further explored through mentorship programs.

A mentorship program is defined as an intervention strategy that ensures that the unique needs of unambiguous populations are addressed, including mental capacity, gender, ethnicity, and age (Mann & LeCroy, 2008). Mentorship programs vary in format and structure fall into two main categories, formal and informal (Allen, Eby, & Lentz, 2006). Within these two categories are adult mentorship programs as well as mentorship programs designed for youth (Allen et al., 2006; DuBois & Neville, 1997; Farruggia et al., 2011). Whether in a professional setting, a school/training setting, or a setting where personal achievement is the main focus, mentorship is described as the essence of role-modeling or leading by example (Merriweather & Morgan, 2013).

Although mentorship programs vary in structure, all encompass the necessity for meaningful and frequent interactions between mentors and mentees. Allen et al. (2006) asserted that mentees often report a greater quality of relationships when interactions with a mentor are frequent. In addition to the frequency, diversity of interaction is also important (Hansman, 2002). Mentorship overall is universally utilized to promote the positive growth of mentees (Allen et al., 2006).

While there is a wide range of mentorship programs available, very little is known about the impact mentorship has on diverse populations of youth as mentorship is most often used as a universal intervention to mitigate a wide range of at-risk behaviors, including juvenile delinquency, school failure, truancy, substance abuse, and

intergenerational incarceration (Shlafer et al., 2009). Many mentorship programs targeting specific youth populations, such as programs for academically at-risk students, are increasing (Brittian & Stokes, 2009). However, programs aimed at reducing the negative effects of parental incarceration and contributing variables, including the behaviors previously discussed, are lacking.

Researchers have indicated that mentoring promotes positive development among some youth but have not demonstrated the depth of the impact such programming has on this population (Rhodes & DuBois, 2008). Specifically, researchers have not indicated the scope to which mentorship programs have a direct impact on youth who have been affected by a parent's incarceration. The research problem addressed in the present study concerns what is not known regarding mentorship as a best practice for working with youth leading into adulthood who face adversity and risks due to parental incarceration. Shlafer et al. (2009) emphasized the need to understand the effectiveness and the impact of mentorship programs in general. Additionally, researchers have not indicated when targeted interventions such as mentorship programs should be implemented (Shlafer et al., 2009).

In addition to there being insufficient research regarding the long-term effects of parental incarceration, there is also a lack of research regarding effective intervention strategies that are gender and ethnicity specific for this population of youth. This is an important goal for researchers as there is no one method that may be generalized to all populations (Miller, 2006). Exploring more individualized and targeted approaches such as mentorship programs can promote more diversified intervention strategies for youth

and young adults who come from various backgrounds and circumstances (Miller, 2006; Shlafer et al., 2009).

### **Purpose of the Study**

I sought to broaden the understanding of the effects of targeted intervention strategies for mitigating the adverse risks faced by youth through investigating the impact of mentorship programs on persons who have experienced parental incarceration. The purpose of the study was to describe the lived experiences of youth during and/or following the imprisonment of a parent or both parents. The literature provides an understanding of the effects of parental incarceration and the universal approaches currently used in addressing behavior issues in youth. The impact of targeted intervention strategies consisting of mentorship programs on the population of youth and young adults who have experienced the phenomenon of parental incarceration was investigated through a transcendental phenomenological approach. The method for investigation and specific interview questions are provided in Chapter 3 and Appendix C.

### **Research Question**

What is the nature of the impact of mentorship programs on youth who have experienced the effects of parental incarceration?

### **Theoretical Framework: Attachment Theory**

Understanding the significance of the relationships developed between children and primary caregivers may be explained best through Bowlby and Ainsworth's attachment theory. Bowlby and Ainsworth claimed that children form secure attachments through the responsiveness of primary caregivers (Bretherton, 1992). Such relationships

can predict independency based on the security of the relationship, and thus behavioral responses in children. Specifically, children consider their perception of self as it is directly related to their perception of an attachment figure (Bolen, 2002). In other words, children often compare their own identity to the identity of their primary caregiver.

Parental behaviors affect attachment (Bolen, 2002). Insecure attachment relationships may be formed due to the imprisonment of parental figures (Shlafer et al., 2009) if the parent is the primary attachment figure (Makariev et al., 2010). Such separations can be traumatic for children. Youth who do not form supportive and caring relationships with parents are more likely to display more oppositional characteristics (Bretherton, 1992). Shlafer et al. (2009) claimed that feelings of untrustworthiness may result from insecure attachments along with skewed views of oneself.

Negative risks including the display of antisocial behaviors and crime increase when a parent is incarcerated (Makariev et al., 2010). However, there are other factors that are also important in predicting negative outcomes among children affected. For example, intergenerational effects such as a parent's exposure to poor parenting, child abuse, and/or the loss of his or her own parental figure could contribute to the experiences of children (Makariev et al., 2010). These factors give way to the importance of targeted interventions in breaking the cycle of negative outcomes.

Attachment theory was used to guide research concerning the linkage between parental involvement/noninvolvement and antisocial behaviors, including juvenile delinquency and other behaviors resulting from a lack of positive socialization. Since children perceive themselves through their primary caregiver, understanding attachment

theory and how it is related to parental incarceration shed light on the implications of relationship processes (Cassidy et al., 2010), especially as they are related to the adverse effects of the phenomenon. Building relationships with adult figures may positively influence youth (Shlafer et al., 2009). Newly formed relationships with mentors may reverse oppositional characteristics displayed by youth who have been affected by the disruption of attachment due to parental incarceration.

### **Nature of the Study**

A transcendental phenomenological approach was used to gather data on the experiences of participants in order to form a more thorough description of the experiences of individuals who have had a parent incarcerated and who have completed a mentorship program. This phenomenological approach was selected in order to convey conditions, situations, and context specifically related to understanding the nature of the impact of mentorship programs on this unique population. Five participants between the ages of 18 and 24 who had a parent incarcerated and who had completed a mentorship program were selected to participate in this study. Data were collected over two face-to-face semi-structured interviews. Coding was used for analyzing the data collected from interviews and for identifying emergent themes.

### **Definitions**

*Antisocial behavior:* Group of related behaviors including: defiance, hostility, irritability, anger, lying, theft, and violence (Eddy & Reid, 2001).

*Mentor:* Individual identified as a role model in a mentorship program who is dedicated to addressing the needs of mentees through promoting positive reinforcement (Merriweather & Morgan, 2013).

*Mentorship program:* An intervention strategy that varies in format and structure to ensure the unique needs of unambiguous populations, including mental capacity, gender, ethnicity, and age, are addressed (Mann & LeCroy, 2008).

*Targeted intervention:* Strategies tailored to specific issues experienced by individuals, rather than groups (Mann & LeCroy, 2008).

*Universal intervention:* Strategies that are less readily adaptive for unambiguous populations. Universal intervention programs are used to promote resistance to peer pressures that may produce at-risk behaviors in youth (Mann & LeCroy, 2008).

### **Assumptions, Limitations, Scope, and Delimitations**

It was assumed that individuals who volunteered to participate in the study did not bias the study through providing responses that they believed I was attempting to obtain. It was also assumed that individuals who were identified by program staff to participate in the study did not reject the invitation to participate. From those identified, a pool of willing participants was formed with the intention of interviewing at least five people, in the event that some individuals did reject the invitation to participate in the study. It was assumed that study participants would answer interview questions truthfully and to the best of their knowledge. It was further assumed that NVivo would be appropriate for accurate data analysis.

The generalizability of this study may be limited to similar populations who have had a parent incarcerated. This limitation may be attributed to variations in mentorship programs as well as differences in participant backgrounds and experiences related to the phenomenon investigated. In addition, receiving input from mentors and program supervisors enhanced the study. Knowing more about each program provided additional insight concerning youth experiences. The findings of this study are limited to interpretation and not quantitative analysis.

### **Significance of the Study**

A closer examination of the impact of parental incarceration and the well-being of youth was critical. This research is unique because it addresses the underresearched area of individualized intervention strategies aimed at mitigating the risks faced by youth who have experienced the phenomenon of parental imprisonment. Mentorship can have a profound impact on others (Steele, 2013). In order for a positive impact to occur, the construction of the mentor-mentee relationship must agree (Steele, 2013). In other words, the mentor and the mentee must have a mutual understanding regarding the purpose and function of the mentoring relationship. I explored the impact of mentorship as a targeted intervention for mitigating specific factors of risk, such as antisocial behavior (defined as behaviors resulting from a lack of positive socialization, including: defiance, hostility, irritability, anger, lying, theft, and violence; Eddy & Reid, 2001) and intergenerational incarceration (Kjellstrand & Eddy, 2011), resulting from the negative effects of parental incarceration. Further research may provide additional evidence that factors surrounding the issue of parental incarceration are significant in relation to increasing the number of

programs available for youth, the diversity among such programs, and the general effectiveness of universal mentorship programs.

I sought feedback from participants who have completed a mentorship program previously and who were therefore able to provide more in-depth explanations of their experience(s) concerning the impact of mentoring programs. Results of this study will provide insights to professionals and scholars regarding the distinct needs of this diverse population. Insights gained from this study may assist service providers in helping youth to realize and achieve their individual potential. Informative study results may assist providers in providing youth with more opportunities for success and growth, academically, personally, and professionally, upon completion of targeted mentorship programs as youth go on to fulfill educational goals, family goals, and individual career goals.

Additional research may stimulate theory building, more research, and intervention practices, which may include mentorship as a best practice for avoiding the adverse effects of parental incarceration experienced by youth. The findings from this study demonstrate that the individuality and the diversity achieved within mentor-mentee relationships can allow for distinct changes among youth concerning self-perception and behaviors, which may ultimately lead to positive social change through the reduction, and subsequent elimination of at-risk behaviors.

Further research, involving the participation of young adults who are presently experiencing or have experienced the effects of parental incarceration, may demonstrate the necessary measures that must be taken to ensure the quality of mentorship



relationships. The attributes of the relationship between mentor and mentee can either hinder or advance the development of youth (Spencer, 2007). Findings may help professionals become more aware of the challenges youth and families experience in relation to parental incarceration. Increasing awareness of these challenges and the effects of mentorship may also increase the amount of additional supportive services available to youth and families.

### **Summary**

The effects of parental incarceration on youth are characterized by changes in behaviors, family stressors, drug and alcohol abuse, poor academic performance, and juvenile delinquency. Traditionally, universal interventions have been administered to this population in response to the display of the characteristics previously outlined. Researchers have documented the outcomes of mentorship programs in general. However, research is sparse concerning the impact of mentorship programs on youth who have had a parent in prison. There was no research found on the depth of this impact as expressed by program participants themselves. With the rise in the number of parents being imprisoned, this study was relevant and necessary. I used transcendental phenomenology as I sought to uncover the lived experiences of youth who have had a parent incarcerated at some point in their lives and who have completed a mentorship program.

This chapter is followed by a review of related literature in Chapter 2. A description of the research design, study participants, procedures, techniques for gathering information, and interview protocols that were used are outlined in Chapter 3.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

The United States is one of the most prominent nations to be affected by the issue of parental incarceration and the direct impact the issue has on young people (Bretherton, 2010). Family living arrangements are not always accessible or beneficial for youth. Many of the social environments in which the children who are left behind live lack the promotion of consistently positive messages. Researchers have evaluated the success rates of mentorship programs (Eddy & Reid, 2001; Kjellstrand & Eddy, 2011; Shlafer et al., 2009) and to date, there is little attention paid to the gravity of the impact of mentorship programs on youth whose parent(s) have been in prison from the perspective of those youth (Rhodes & DuBois, 2008).

Research strategies are reviewed to assist in locating relevant articles in the future. Following this, the literature review draws attention to research pertaining to the direct and indirect effects of parental incarceration on youth and how youth cope with separation from parents. This review provides a better understanding of the resources available to youth for coping with separation from parents. It also sheds light on the many obstacles that must be overcome and the challenges to overcoming. Lastly, a review of attachment theory offers insight concerning the importance of long-term relationships for normal social and emotional development.

### **Research Strategies**

Several resources were used to conduct literature research. The Walden University online library provided many of the articles used for this literature review.

Ebscohost (eBook collection), PsycInfo, PsycExtra, SocIndex, and PsycArticles were all accessed using the base terms *youth*, *mentorship*, and *parental incarceration*. Other words used to narrow searches consisted of *intervention*, *effects*, *formal*, *informal*, and *positive*. Contributing articles were found through references cited by various authors of articles found through the databases mentioned above. Google Scholar was also used to locate articles online. There was no research found that specifically concerned the direct feedback of youth who have experienced parental incarceration and who have completed a mentorship program. The review below is limited to the effects of parental incarceration on youth and the separate impact of mentorship on youth overall.

### **Background**

There is growing recognition of the increasing and alarming rate at which mothers and fathers are being incarcerated. As a result, the number of children being left behind is also steadily on the rise (Kjellstrand & Eddy, 2011). Approximately 1 in 50 children in the United States has experienced the effects of parental incarceration (Bretherton, 2010; Kjellstrand & Eddy, 2011; Murray, Farrington, & Sekol, 2012). More specifically, statistics published in 2007 showed that there are an estimated 1.7 million children with at least one parent in prison (Shlafer et al., 2009). The number of parents imprisoned rose from 945,600 in 1990 to 1,706,600 in 2007 (Murray & Murray, 2010). A quarter of these children are under the age of 4 (Makariev & Shaver, 2010) and live in situations of disadvantage involving socioeconomic factors, biases, and other challenges which exist beyond their control (Cassidy et al., 2010). Moreover, the number of children with at

least one parent in a local jail is unknown due to the lack of data collected on these populations (Cassidy et al., 2010).

### **Overall Effects of Parental Incarceration**

Incarceration can make parenting more difficult and also contributes to the stress placed on families facing such a situation. Parental incarceration could be a critical factor in causing negative outcomes among children (Murray & Murray, 2010). Shlafer et al. (2009) validated this assertion through research that showed that children whose parents have been incarcerated were at a higher risk of facing behavioral and educational challenges. Youth experience daily challenges related to stress, violence/abuse, and to the social stigma which labels them as inferior due to the poor choices of parents leading to incarceration (Shillingford & Edwards, 2008). The most common effects of the phenomenon include behavioral changes, substance abuse, family stress, stigmatization, poor educational performance, and juvenile delinquency (Eddy & Reid, 2001; Kjellstrand & Eddy, 2011, Miller, 2006; Phillips & Gates, 2011).

It is also a possibility that parental incarceration may enhance existing behavioral problems among children; the inability of parents to regularly interact with children can lead to a risk of increased negative behavior in young children especially (Eddy & Reid, 2001). Eddy and Reid asserted that children who maintain contact with parents during their incarceration are positively impacted and display less at-risk behaviors. Most inmates (90% of women and 80% of men) are released within a few years and continue to have some contact with children during their incarceration (Eddy & Reid, 2001).

Although contact during incarceration is limited to monthly visits, it is expected that at least some parental duties will be resumed following incarceration (Eddy & Reid, 2001).

Some challenges that may exacerbate the effects of the phenomenon involve existing differences among populations of youth including poverty, poor mental health, and physical health, and other sociodemographic risks (Poehlmann et al., 2010). Both internal and external factors such as family structure and processes, social status, and parent-child relationships prior to parental incarceration/absence must be considered in equal magnitude so that the most effective services may be delivered to support youth and families (Aaron & Dallaire, 2010; Dallaire, 2007; Eddy & Reid, 2001; Miller, 2006; Schrimmer, Nellis, & Mauer, 2009). These specific challenges are described in more detail in the following paragraphs.

### **Specific Challenges**

Additional risk is assumed when a mother is incarcerated (Dallaire, 2007). Specifically, both emotional and psychological stresses in youth can result from maternal incarceration. Although maternal incarceration is not the same as maternal abandonment, Greenaway (2003) claimed that the issue of maternal neglect is most significant in the African American population. This neglect may be attributed to the relinquishment of parental rights resulting from discrimination based on race, class, and sex (Greenaway, 2003). In general, children who are African American experience the imprisonment of a parent at a much higher rate than other races (Phillips & Gates, 2011). It is estimated that of children born in 1990 only 1 in 25 Caucasian children experience parental

incarceration by age 14, while 1 in 4 African American children experienced parental incarceration by age 14 (Murray, Farrington, & Sekol, 2012).

Many factors shape the interactions and behaviors of youth. Some factors include differences in ages, personalities, family and living arrangements, school attendance, neighborhoods in which one resides, and various other risks based on individual circumstances and situations (Phillips & Gates, 2011). It is critical that the examination of intervention strategies take place in order to maximize support for this population (Aaron & Dallaire, 2010; Dallaire, 2007; Eddy & Reid, 2001; Miller, 2006). If more efforts are not made to understand and address the negative effects of the phenomenon, affected youth may be placed at a higher risk for experiencing the adverse effects mentioned above, including antisocial behavior and intergenerational incarceration (Kjellstrand & Eddy, 2011).

### **Family Intervention: Kinship Caregivers**

Regarding interventions involving family, two opposing perspectives exist on kinship caregivers. One perspective in current literature asserts that in reducing the effects of parental incarceration, it is in the best interest of children affected by the phenomenon to be placed in the care of family members for the length of the parent's sentence, despite the challenges associated with this situation (Mackintosh, Myers, & Kennon, 2006). Children who have a parent in prison are often cared for by kin who must reorganize their lives to take in the children (Mackintosh et al., 2006). Although kinship caregivers willingly take on the task of caring for the children of a relative, there is a great personal cost. Despite obstacles including: increased levels of stress, behavioral

issues, financial difficulty, feelings of worry and depression, as well as dramatic changes in public policy, it is critically important for a child to live in a home where they feel loved and accepted. This may be the key to protecting and maintaining a child's emotional health and resiliency (Mackintosh et al., 2006).

The opposing perspective emphasizes that it is not in the child's best interest to stay in the care of a family member during a parent's stay in prison due to the limited resources available to caregivers. Inadequate resources undermine families' attempts to care for their relative's children (Phillips & Bloom, 1998). This standpoint also acknowledges a kinship foster care alternative. In order for kin to receive foster care assistance, children must be in the custody of the state. This increases the likelihood that the child may be removed from the family and placed in the formal foster care system (Phillips & Bloom, 1998). Because public assistance programs were not designed for relative caregivers, this population faces many obstacles in accessing such programs (Phillips & Bloom, 1998). When financial resources become limited, children may be moved and separation among siblings is likely to occur.

Interventions for restructuring families, including financial and interpersonal aspects are necessary for reducing the negative side effects restructuring (Miller, 2006). Following this, policy reform and development is necessary for increasing the financial and emotional support received by family members who become caregivers to children with incarcerated parents (Phillips & Bloom, 1998).

### **Social Policy: Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program**

Originating from the dramatic growth in the number of children in foster care in the mid-to-late 1980s, the social policy related to the effects of parental incarceration on children is the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program (PSSF). During this time, issues including substance abuse, alcohol abuse, AIDS, mental illnesses, poverty, and homelessness intensified the ongoing concern of child welfare (Stoltzfus & Spar, 2002). These issues were exacerbated as foster care caseloads grew, low morale and high staff turnover became common, and the number of foster parents and homes available for placement lessened (Stoltzfus & Spar, 2002). Consistent shortages in the amount of supportive services available to youth and families also contributed (Stoltzfus & Spar, 2002).

In an effort to address the aforementioned issues, some states developed services, such as family preservation services, to be administered through child welfare agencies. However, federal funding was not provided to help families in preventing foster care placement. Only private funds were made available, and only after placement had taken place (Stoltzfus & Spar, 2002). Family preservation services were designed to alleviate hardships, including neglect, abuse, and/or the inability of a parent to care for a child. These services provided support for family reunification and helped to keep children safe in their own homes (Antebi, 2002).

Created in 1993, PSSF is a state policy that provides grants to be used for the purposes of four different welfare services including: family preservation, family support, time-limited family reunification, and promotion and support of adoption processes



(Stoltzfus & Spar, 2002). Such services are designed to expedite the reunification process between parents and children and also to maintain a safe living environment for children while providing support for reunification and adoption (Antebi, 2002). Following its creation, President George W. Bush signed into law the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Amendments of 2001 that reauthorized the PSSF to raise mandatory funding and additional discretionary funding levels in an effort to fund services to support, prevent, and cure the difficulties faced by families and children of incarcerated parents. The new policy was designed to provide stability and strength for families, protection for youth, better parenting skills, resolutions for crises, and resources for preventing out-of-home placement (Antebi, 2002, p. 8).

Increased funding provides mentoring programs for children of prisoners, and also expands the Foster Care Independence Program with more money for education and vouchers for training for those youth who age out of the Foster Care Program or for those who have never been adopted (Stoltzfus & Spar, 2002). This program impacts affected individuals and communities as the true purpose of the program according to the Children's Bureau, is to provide services aimed at preventing the separation of children from their families and ensuring permanent living arrangements for children and youth (Antebi, 2002, p.3).

### **Universal Interventions**

A large amount of literature exists concerning the intervention strategies currently administered to youth who are at risk for adverse outcomes due to parental incarceration (e.g., Kjellstrand & Eddy, 2011; Makariev, & Shaver, 2010; Miller, 2006; Shlafer et al.,

2009). Positive outcomes of relationships between at-risk populations of youth and supportive adults are well documented in the literature surrounding mentorship (Rhodes & DuBois, 2008; Spencer, 2007). Mentoring relationships are described as encompassing trust and empathy (Rhodes & DuBois, 2008). Mentorship promotes positive emotional, cognitive, and identity development and an overall enhancement of life for mentees (Merriweather & Morgan, 2013; Rhodes & DuBois, 2008). It can occur across a variety of populations. Youth who engage in some form of mentorship have a more positive transition into adulthood (Spencer, Collins, Ward, & Smashnaya, 2010).

There is evidence that such programs can promote better emotional functioning and social behaviors among youth facing diverse risk factors (Rhodes & DuBois, 2008; Spencer et al., 2010; DuBois, & Neville, 1997). These factors consist of, but are not limited to socioeconomic status, tendency toward aggressive behaviors, poor interpersonal relations, exposure to drugs and alcohol, and poor academic performance (Farruggia et al., 2011; Grossman, Roffman, & Rhodes, 2002). Mentoring has also been shown to effectively address the critical needs of youth transitioning from foster care to adulthood (Spencer et al., 2010). Successful mentorship promotes positive outcomes through offering support in various aspects of life from career and academic support to emotional support (Merriweather & Morgan, 2013).

While available researchers did indicate that mentoring promotes positive development among some youth, they did not demonstrate the scope to which mentorship programs have a direct impact on youth who have been affected by the incarceration of a parent (Rhodes & DuBois, 2008). A gap exists in the literature regarding the evaluation

of mentorship as a best practice for working with youth who face adverse risk due to parental incarceration.

Considering the effects of parental incarceration, the persistent theme concerns the lack of positive socialization of children affected by this issue. Very little is known about the impact mentorship has on diverse populations of youth as it has been most often utilized as a universal intervention in order to mitigate a wide range of at-risk behaviors (Shlafer et al., 2009). Authors of prior studies agreed that there is the need to broaden our examination of the effects of parental incarceration on children. Moreover, an in-depth examination of programs and interventions that promote positive socialization must be performed in order to effectively address those issues that are a direct result of parental incarceration (Aaron & Dallaire, 2010; Eddy & Reid, 2001; Miller, 2006; Park & Clarke-Stewart, 2001).

### **Targeted Interventions**

While universal programs are important on a large-scale for youth, they tend to be less readily adaptive to the needs and strengths of populations that are unambiguous. These programs are used to promote social competence and resistance to peer pressure that may produce at-risk behaviors (Mann & LeCroy, 2008). However, more targeted interventions are tailored to specific problem areas for individuals, rather than groups. Mentorship programs should vary in format and structure in order to address unique aspects of adolescent development (Mann & LeCroy, 2008) including mental capacity, gender, age, and ethnic background.

If mentorship programs are not adequately designed to meet the appropriate and specific needs of various populations, more stress may result and serve as a deterrent for some participants (Brittian & Stokes, 2009). It is especially important for more research to be conducted on the effects of minority children as there are a disproportionate number of African American women in prison (Greenaway, 2003). Greenaway asserted that distinct intervention strategies focused on the positive socialization of minority children must be taken into consideration, as the issues, circumstances, and experiences of populations, such as African American populations, may differ from that of the majority culture. Successful pairing of mentors and mentees can provide guidance to youth experiencing the adverse effects of parental imprisonment (Shlafer et al., 2009). Shlafer et al stressed that guidance is essential for youth, especially in the absence of parents, and that support and stability may be provided through mentorship.

Cultural competency is critical regarding successful mentoring relationships (Merriweather & Morgan, 2013). Merriweather and Morgan (2013) noted that such competency derives from acknowledging biases and respecting different values, experiences, and hence worldviews. The needs of mentees can vary based on the aforementioned factors. For example, African American mentees may have different experiences and face different obstacles as the result of negative stereotypes, and may therefore also have needs that are unlike those of Caucasian Americans. Gender also plays a similar role in such differences. Strategies that meet the needs of mentees based on sociocultural realities are necessary for successful mentorship practices (Merriweather & Morgan, 2013).

Overall, the intent of these studies was not necessarily to evaluate current intervention programs in place. Rather, it was to provide evidence that factors surrounding the issue of parental incarceration must be studied in a sincere effort to increase the number of programs available for youth, the diversity among such programs, and the general effectiveness of intervention strategies. Equally important is the need for changes in public policy. Hence, it is the experiences of the affected children and their families, especially, which must be kept in mind during the reforming of existing policies and the formation of new ones.

### **Mentorship**

Mentorship programs vary. Each differs in format and structure, which proves beneficial in meeting the variety of service needs for various populations (Mann & LeCroy, 2008). Mentoring is a process that should be natural and somewhat spontaneous in conveying knowledge, skills, and emotional support (Zippay, 1995). While most mentors work with disadvantaged youth, much of the research on mentoring has been done in a corporate organization and has placed the most focus on career development for adults (Mann & LeCroy, 2008; Zippay, 1995).

Despite the limited amount of research on the topic, studies show that the presence of an adult mentor is critical in the development of youth, especially for those who do not have adult role models and advisors present in their day-to-day lives (Allen et al., 2006). Similarly, there has been no research conducted on the degree of mentorship or the quality of the relationships as perceived by mentees. However, the quality of the

mentor-mentee relationship is significant in evaluating the success of a mentorship program overall (Allen et al., 2006).

### **Summary**

Incarceration can make parenting more difficult and can place a significant amount of stress on the family overall, resulting in behavioral changes and stigmatization of youth (Murray & Murray, 2010). Maintaining parental contact during incarceration is possible, but may be difficult for the children and family members involved (Eddy & Reid, 2001). Additionally, the risks faced by youth are increased when a mother is incarcerated (Dallaire, 2007).

The researched literature failed to show the impact of mentorship programs on diverse populations of youth who have had a parent incarcerated as programs have been most often used as universal interventions in order to mitigate a wide range of at-risk behaviors (Rhodes & DuBois, 2008). All risk factors, both internal and external, must be considered equally in an effort to deliver the most effective services to youth and families. In Chapter 3, I provide a description of the research design, study participants, procedures, techniques for gathering information and interview protocols used in my study.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

Chapters 1 and 2 included information and analyses of some of the effects experienced by children whose parents have been incarcerated. Children may struggle with psychological and emotional stresses, especially. Internalized and externalized behaviors are exhibited by children, and these behaviors are exacerbated by the child's environment and separation from a maternal figure.

Targeted intervention strategies must be examined further to provide sufficient support for this population. Social status, family structure, and parent-child relationships existing prior to parental incarceration must be considered (Miller, 2006; Schrimmer et al., 2009) in equal proportions in order to understand and administer the services that will be most effective in supporting youth and families in leading healthy and positive lives. If targeted intervention strategies remain understudied, this particular population may remain underserved and youth may face more risks, which could ultimately result in repeating cycles of intergenerational incarceration. Specifically, what is not known is how mentorship programs impact youth who have experienced the phenomenon of parental incarceration. The purpose of this study was to provide further insight concerning the effects of targeted intervention strategies for mitigating the adverse risks faced by youth through describing lived experiences and investigating the nature of the impact of mentorship programs on persons who have experienced parental incarceration.

This chapter outlines the qualitative method and design used to assist in shedding light on the lived experiences of study participants, the rationale for the research design,

how participants were selected, procedures for data collection and analysis, and strategies used in the verification of findings.

### **Research Methodology**

Qualitative methodology was used to explore this topic. Because of the lack of research concerning mentorship programs for this population, variables were not readily identified. Creswell (2007) characterized qualitative research as “inductive, emerging, and shaped by the researcher’s experience in collecting and analyzing the data” (p. 22). Concerning the effects of parental incarceration on children, there are many studies in which variables by which to measure among a large, general population of children were identified. For instance, researchers have found that children experience substance abuse, anger towards parents and the criminal justice system, family victimization, and pressures of delinquency (Kjellstrand & Eddy, 2011). Researchers have compared the effects of parental incarceration on children varying in gender and ethnic background (Greenaway, 2003). Researchers have also compared mentorship programs for adults and those for children (Shlafer et al., 2009; Spencer et al., 2010; Steele, 2013). There are no studies in which the effects of mentorship programs on victims of parental incarceration were directly compared. In this study, it was not possible to conduct a comparison because no individual’s experience and/or background may be counted the same. Each experience was unique. It was not readily known what supports were available to each person at the time of parental incarceration, when the parent was incarcerated, or the background of the family.



## Research Design

Transcendental phenomenology was used to understand the nature of the impact of mentorship programs on the experiences of youth with parental incarceration. A phenomenological approach concerns the overall meaning of a particular phenomenon according to individuals who have lived through the experience (Donalek, 2004). The use of a transcendental phenomenological approach placed less focus on my interpretation of the findings, and placed more focus on participant knowledge of experiences. Through a transcendental phenomenological approach, data were collected from participants who were asked to think back to their youth and from this, the fundamental nature of the experience was developed. Creswell (2009) asserted that understanding the common experiences of individuals can aid the development of policies and practices that can assist in lessening the effects of a particular phenomenon.

A hermeneutical approach may have been considered, but may have been less effective for providing additional understanding of the description of experiences of the population since it is used mostly to interpret the meanings of lived experiences (Creswell, 2009; Lopez & Willis, 2004). Rather than merely focusing on the implications of one individual's experience, as in narrative research, the purpose of the transcendental phenomenological research was to gather data on the experiences of multiple persons in order to form a more thorough description of what youth experience during parental imprisonment, and the nature of the impact of mentorship programs. A collective description, including textural and structural descriptions of experiences, was necessary

for the study in order to relay conditions, situations, and context. Transcendental phenomenology was used to convey the essence of participant experiences.

While grounded theory research places emphasis on a particular population overall, it is mostly utilized in the development of a theory. In this case, attachment theory adequately informed what these children and youth experienced. Ethnographic research is mostly concerned with persons who interact frequently, and share specific patterns and beliefs (Creswell, 2007). This approach may not be effective as the population studied was not very large and a cultural system or group was not being studied. On the other hand, although a case study methodology would have allowed for the exploration of multiple sources of data, it would have limited the study to, typically, no more than 4-5 cases. This approach addresses something that is occurring over a period of time. It does not address current experiences or what a person has experienced due to a specific phenomenon.

A phenomenological approach was necessary, before the discussion of theory could take place regarding this widespread issue, as research regarding this population is limited. A discussion of the significance of parental interactions in shaping the behaviors of youth displayed the connection between attachment theory and the early relationships formed (or not formed) with primary caregivers. Highlighting the significance of parental involvement in shaping behavioral responses of youth was in line with attachment theory concerning early relationships developed with primary caregivers; however this phenomenological research sought to understand the lived experiences of youth from their own perspectives.

Accordingly, obtaining participant feedback, specifically participants' feelings and opinions about their lived experiences enhanced my understanding of the specific implications of mentorship programs. A more in-depth investigation into the impact of mentorship on victims of parental incarceration was necessary. This exploration assists in both researcher and practitioner understanding of the effects of parental incarceration, which also permits the effective suggestion of targeted intervention strategies for this unique population (Eddy & Reid, 2001).

### **Research Question**

What is the nature of the impact of mentorship programs on youth who have experienced the effects of parental incarceration?

### **Participants of the Study**

Participants for this study consisted of five participants between the ages of 18 and 24. The participants had a parent incarcerated and completed a mentorship program. Purposeful sampling was used for this investigation. Participants meeting the aforementioned criteria and who had the ability to contribute new knowledge were identified for this study. According to research concerning qualitative phenomenological research (Donalek, 2004; Patton, 2002), it was important to select information-rich cases that would shed light on the research question. Following the identification of prospective participants, a small group was selected randomly to participate in interviews.

Participants, ages 18-24 years old, were chosen because they were thought to have had a better understanding of the phenomenon and were better able to describe their experiences retrospectively. A child may have required the supervision of a parent or

guardian and may not have been fully aware of the consequences associated with having an absent parent. Locating participants following the completion of a mentorship program did pose a barrier to identifying a larger pool of participants and was dependent upon the tracking methods used by the program staff.

Participants were recruited through organizations with mentoring programs in the state of Delaware. Meetings with organizational staff were held, information about the nature of the study was provided, and a request was made to program staff for assistance in recruiting study participants. Recruitment involved the arrangement of a meeting with the researcher and potential participant to discuss the nature of the study. This discussion provided information relating to participation. Staff members were asked to distribute invitational flyers to potential participants and potential participants contacted the researcher to begin the interview process. Upon participant responses to the invitational flyers via telephone, three separate information sessions were scheduled. Each session was conducted in a private meeting room at a public library located in Delaware. One person attended the first information session. Five people attended the second information session, and three people attended the third session. I achieved the goal of recruiting 5 participants for interviews. A follow-up letter describing the study and the process was sent to the organization's staff (Appendix A) and to potential participants (Appendix B).

### **Measures**

The purpose of the study was to describe the experiences of youth who completed an individualized mentorship program following the imprisonment of a parent or parents. In this case, a mentorship program was identified as a program of at least 6 months. Mentorship programs were identified as either school-based or community-based and were measured in basic categories based on the level of mentor-mentee engagement. Levels were described as low, moderate, or high. For example, academic school programs and school administrators were described as having a low to moderate level of engagement and programs dedicated to providing mentoring resources, such as Big Brother/Big Sister, were described as having a high level of engagement. Parental incarceration may have occurred at any point before the participant began the program. In order to gain a better understanding of participant experiences, specific interview questions were asked. These questions are listed in Appendix C.

### **Ethical Protection of Participants**

Participants in this study were adult male and female volunteers who chose whether or not they wished to participate. There was no direct or indirect harm known to be associated with participation in this study. If any participant experienced difficulty with participation in this study, a referral was made to the appropriate community services. The research protocol, interview protocol, and consent forms for this study were approved by the Walden University Institutional Review Board before the data collection process began (IRB Approval No. 03-19-15-0335789). Each participant completed a consent form and confidentiality of information was enforced. Informed

consent documents were read to each participant to confirm eligibility and to reiterate the voluntary nature of the study. Each participant was informed of the duration of the interview, benefits, expectations, the requirement of a second interview, and the availability of resources through his/her case manager, should it be necessary, prior to the interview. All documentation and materials associated with interviewees, including audiotapes, physical files, and transcripts were assigned numeric identifiers and are stored in a locked filing cabinet or in a password-protected computerized file for 5 years. Only I and persons chosen to assist in the validation of results had access to transcripts resulting from the study. Any information that identified participants was removed from transcripts prior to the validation of data. The Consent to Audiotape and Statement of Confidentiality can be found in Appendix D.

### **Procedures**

The following sequence served as a guide in recruiting volunteers, informing participants, collecting and analyzing data, and validating research findings.

1. Contacted YMCA, YWCA, Boys and Girls Clubs of Delaware, Rosehill Community Center, Delaware Youth for Christ, Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League, the Hospitality School, the Latin American Community Center, LifeLines Mentoring Program, Delaware Foster Youth Mentoring Program, Delaware Futures, Project Ready: Mentor, Helping Our Young People Excel – H.O.P.E. Mentoring, and The Mentor Network to provide information about the study via telephone.

2. Sent an information letter that detailed the nature of the study to organizational members and requested their assistance in recruiting former mentees who had at least one parent incarcerated.
3. Scheduled meetings with identified volunteers and provided information on the study as well as a copy of the letter describing the study.
4. Requested that interested participants contact me to schedule an interview. Follow-up telephone calls were made to meeting attendees if there was no contact within 1 week of the informational meeting.
5. Prior to the scheduled interview, each participant received a copy of the letter describing the study and signed the Consent Form outlined in Appendix D. Each interview lasted approximately 30-45 minutes and consisted of asking questions outlined in Appendix C. The interview concluded by scheduling a second interview that took place within 1 week. This length of time allowed for accurate transcription and analysis of collected data.
6. Audiotapes were transcribed word-for-word and analyzed according to the procedure listed at the end of this chapter.
7. A request for graduate students currently enrolled in a qualitative methods course (8300 or 8350) at Walden University was made to course professors for assistance in validating themes from interview transcripts. Selected students had the capacity for accurately performing validation

procedures and observed the ethical protection of participants as outlined previously in this proposal.

8. The second and final interview was conducted with each participant to ensure his/her experience was accurately represented.

### **Data Collection**

Face-to-face semistructured interviews were used to collect data. Data were collected over two interviews. The first interview focused on the background of the participant, sources of inspiration/admiration, and the impact of the mentorship program. The nature of the study was described, rapport was built with participants, the consent form was signed, and information related to participant experiences with parental incarceration and their respective mentorship programs was gathered during the interview. Through sharing personal experiences related to parental incarceration and mentorship programs, rapport was built and credibility and objectivity was established. The information that was collected provided some understanding of the context and challenges faced by participants, who were victims of parental incarceration, before entering the mentorship program. It also provided insight regarding the changes effected in the life of the participant that may be attributed to the program.

During the interview, details of the participant's experience with his or her specific mentorship program by asking focused questions that stemmed from the research question in this study. Findings provided insight concerning the underlying questions: (a) How do participants describe their experience with parental incarceration? (b) Have they been marginalized due to the stigma associated with the phenomenon? (c) How so? (d)



What have been the direct effects of mentorship on the lives of participants? (e) Do the participants strive to have a better quality of life than that of their parents? (f) Does the participant feel they would have had a better life if they entered a mentorship program earlier in life?

To address the research question, participants were asked sets of interview questions. Questions one through six concerned their childhood experiences. These questions provided some background regarding the effects of parental incarceration as they were experienced by participants. Questions seven through nine described the participant's source of inspiration/admiration. These questions were asked in order to shed light on the impact that separation of a parent has on a child, especially if the parent is the child's source of inspiration/admiration before his/her imprisonment. Information obtained from questions one through six provided some insight regarding the lived experiences of participants as they are related to self-perception and attachment. Interview questions ten through thirteen, and concerned the actual impact of the mentorship program on the participant and suggestions for making improvements based on his/her experiences, such as timing of enrollment in the program and individualization strategies to reduce the universality of mentorship programs. These questions also informed the theoretical framework of the study through discussion about the participant's reason(s) for entering the program, the relationship between the participant and his/her mentor, and changes in the perception of self as indicated by a change in choices made by the participant since entering the program. Each question in the interview is listed in Appendix C.

Conducting the second interview enabled participants to validate the meaning of data previously collected and encoded. Questions for this interview were developed based upon participant answers given in the first interview. Interviews were conducted in a setting that ensured privacy and was free from distraction. Participants selected the sites. Each interview was tape recorded and transcribed. Interview notes were taken to document nonverbal communication and to provide details related to the environment in which the interview will take place.

Data were organized into separate interview files. All electronic and physical files were maintained in a locked filing cabinet in my home office. Analysis of the data occurred following transcription.

### **Data Analysis**

A plan for data analysis should be completed prior to starting any qualitative study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Such planning can prevent the mislabeling of certain data. Coding was most appropriate for analyzing the data collected from interviews. Using this method made data easier to search and review. Creating categories allowed for the identification of similarities and differences that could require further investigation.

Interview transcripts were read over for purposes of understanding the information provided. Patton (2002) noted that understanding the context in which the information was provided was essential to obtaining a more holistic perspective. Reading collected data entirely assisted in understanding the meaning of transcripts in the context of participant experiences. After reading the text, passages and/or phrases relevant to the impact of mentorship on youth affected by parental incarceration were highlighted.

Coding or labeling was applied to each set of data collected in this study. Participants played an active role in shaping emerging themes regarding this phenomenon from the inductive process involved in data analysis. Each statement identified as a necessary component for understanding participant experiences with mentorship programs and parental incarceration was labeled based on categories created in order to organize data according to differences and similarities. Each label represented emotions, feelings, and actions concerning each participant's feelings related to the phenomenon.

Due to the variety of structure regarding mentorship programs, data were also categorized according to the level of engagement in each mentorship program completed by study participants. The frequency of interactions was coded as low (at least one interaction per week), moderate (at least two interactions per week), or high (more than two interactions per week).

The number of categories based on participant feedback was unlimited. However, if information was not necessary for understanding participant experiences as related to the research questions and it could not be coded, then it was disregarded. Forming tentative categories and relationships during the data collection process provided for a system of organization for further analysis and confirmation of accuracy. It also added the element of flexibility that allowed for the emergence of unforeseen themes. Remaining open during the process of analysis minimized the number of constraints on possibilities concerning initial interpretations of data (Patton, 2002). Tentative categories for the study were formed based on categories that surfaced in related literature concerning: the gender of the child affected and the gender of the incarcerated parent, the

developmental stage of the child when the parent was incarcerated, associated risk factors that affect a child's ability to resolve effects of parental incarceration (i.e., socioeconomic status), specific outcomes of parental incarceration including youth delinquency and externalization of adverse behaviors, and effective parenting (monitoring, parent-child relationship, parental involvement, inconsistent discipline, and inappropriate discipline) (Kjellstrand & Eddy, 2011; Miller, 2006). NVivo software was chosen to organize, code, validate codes through searching for specific words and phrases, and analyze the data I collected to ensure accuracy and to ensure that participant meanings were maintained throughout analysis.

Following the categorization of data individual experiences were described separately from group experiences. In other words, the experiences of each participant were reviewed based on the categories in place. From this, connections between participant experiences were viewed and grouped to provide a multifaceted description of the meaning of the experience that was representative of the participant group all together. With this inclusive description of a group of participants who had completed a mentorship program following the incarceration of a parent, a better understanding of the depth of the impact of mentorship programs related to their experience was provided.

### **Verification of Findings**

Findings of the study were verified. The verification of findings, which is typically used in qualitative studies instead of validation, maintains the essence of qualitative inquiry (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative studies use verification to ensure the accuracy of findings through specific procedures. Verification consists of quality,

trustworthiness, and credibility (Creswell, 2009). Strategies to ensuring the aforementioned aspects of qualitative research include: triangulation of sources, member checking, use of rich, thick descriptions, clarification of researcher bias, presentation of discrepant information, spending a prolonged amount of time in the field, peer debriefing, and the use of an external auditor (Creswell, 2007; Creswell, 2009). Of the strategies mentioned above, peer debriefing, clarification of researcher bias, member checking, use of rich, thick description, and triangulation of sources were utilized. Reflexivity and in-depth descriptions of experiences and the context in which they occurred also assisted in ensuring evidence of quality (Creswell, 2007).

### **Peer Debriefing**

Two Walden University graduate students, one male and one female, who were proficient in qualitative inquiry executed the peer review. The peer review process accounted for reliability of interpreted data and the validation of codes. Copies of the original transcript were provided in conjunction with copies of the study findings, which included both individual and group descriptions.

### **Researcher Bias**

Biases and personal values were indicated and documented in memos in order to identify any factors that may shape the interpretation of findings, and thus, quality of research (Creswell, 2009). Patton (2002) states that the researcher is the instrument in qualitative investigations and qualitative studies should list some information about the researcher. In separating my indirect experiences from this study, I included information

regarding my experiences and training to indicate my perspective on the topic being investigated:

I have witnessed the intergenerational incarceration and recidivism rates of family members. I have worked with at-risk populations of youth and young adults varying in age and ethnic backgrounds through training programs and youth camps. Working with these programs, I have documented individual progress and program outcomes.

### **Member-Checking**

Member checking took place during the second interview. This process involved the checking of analyzed and interpreted data by actual participants (Creswell, 2009). Questions for this final interview were formed based on the descriptions of findings from the initial interview in order to determine credibility of transcriptions.

### **Rich, Thick Description**

The use of rich, thick description also provided verification of findings. In-depth descriptions of participant experiences and the context in which they occurred assisted in ensuring evidence of quality in a qualitative study (Creswell, 2007). Detailed descriptions helped determine if findings could be generalized based on characteristics of participant experiences (Creswell, 2007). Descriptive information was provided through verbatim interview transcripts. Margin notes highlighting patterns in the data, notes from peer reviews, direct quotes, and notes concerning participant behaviors during the interview were also included.

**Triangulation**

The triangulation of sources was used in verifying findings. Triangulation was used to strengthen the study through combining methods (Patton, 2002). Case managers provided some background information regarding their respective mentorship programs. This information was used to corroborate participant descriptions. All of the aforementioned methods were critical in ensuring the verification of findings.

**Summary of Chapter 3**

In Chapter 3, I provided a rationale for selecting qualitative methodology, a phenomenological approach. Next, I described the participants of the study and restated the study's research questions and provided evidence of how the questions aligned with my approach. I discussed data collection and analysis techniques used in my study.

Finally, strategies for verification were provided and ethical considerations were discussed. In Chapter 4, I present a description of the research setting, participants, and study results as they are related to the research questions.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe the lived experiences of youth during and/or following the imprisonment of a parent or both parents through the research question: What is the nature of the impact of mentorship programs on youth who have experienced the effects of parental incarceration? Specifically, I sought to expand current understanding of the effects of targeted intervention strategies that aim to mitigate the adverse risks faced by youth through investigating the impact of mentorship programs on persons who have experienced parental incarceration.

I used attachment theory to establish the significance of the relationships developed between children and primary caregivers. Coding was used in data analysis to capture emergent themes among participant experiences. This chapter is an overview of the results of participant experiences that led to developing a broader understanding of the effects of parental incarceration and subsequently, the impact of mentorship. In this chapter, I will describe the research setting, ethical considerations, participant background and recruitment, data collection and analysis, summaries of individual experiences, overall findings, and my summary.

### **Research Setting**

I conducted the research in New Castle County in Delaware. Interviews occurred during April 2015. All of the interviews were conducted in person, in a private meeting room located in Wilmington, Delaware. Participants had the option of choosing any public library location. I maintained a contact log in which I recorded the interviewees'



name and telephone number. When participants responded to my participation flyers (distributed by program/case managers of various organizations), they were invited to an information session to obtain additional information about the study and a mutually agreed upon interview date and time was scheduled. Informational meetings were also held in a public library private meeting room.

### **Participant Background and Information**

An overview of research participants who self-identified and consented to be interviewed is provided in this section. All identifying information has been purposely omitted to protect the identity of participants. Each participant was also assigned a pseudonym, which will appear in the text below and referenced hereinafter. In this way, the use of direct quotes and rich, thick description was maintained. Participant background and information profiled below will provide context for future discussion. Content in each profile may not be considered uniform due to the variances in participant answers to the interview questions. All information provided below was current at the time of disclosure. An overview of this information is provided below (see Table 1).

Table 1

#### *Summary of Participant Demographics*

Participant	Age (years)	Gender	Disclosed number of siblings	Parent imprisoned	Parent incarceration date	Parent release date
1	20	Male	3	Father	Unsure	2001
2	24	Male	Undisclosed	Father Mother	2000 2003	2007 2013
3	18	Female	Undisclosed	Father	1999	2002

4	20	Female	3	Father Mother	1997 2003; 2008	2000 2005; undisclosed
5	18	Male	Undisclosed	Father Mother	2015 2003	2015 2004

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Note: The mother of Participant 4 was incarcerated twice.

Participant 1, Elijah, is a 20-year old who identified as an African American and Caucasian male. He has at least three siblings, whom he spoke about during the interview. According to Elijah, only his father was incarcerated. He was unsure of the time period during which his father was in prison, but he estimated it to be between Elijah's birth and when he was 6 years of age (1995–2001). He remembered receiving letters from his father while he was incarcerated and spending some time with him when he was 6 years old. His father passed when he was 13 years old. Although his mother's presence was not consistent, he did not remember a time when she had been incarcerated. He offered that he grew up in foster care, but also lived with his mother for a brief period of time.

Elijah revealed that he did not experience a full childhood due to many circumstances including the passing of his father, separation from his siblings, expulsion from school, and his own imprisonment. He described his relationship with his father as a friendly one and described the relationship with his mother as nonexistent. He identified jail as his source of inspiration and recognized himself as the person he admires. He said that he listens to himself more than he did before he was incarcerated, he had found himself and “started to do things differently.” He began the mentorship program in February 2014 and indicated that the completion of his mentorship program, in March

2015, was a condition of his probation following his incarceration, but that the program positively impacted his view of himself, his actions, and his beliefs.

Participant 2, Derek, is a 24-year-old who identified as an African American male. He did not disclose if he had any siblings. However, he did say that he has “two kids to take care of.” Both his mother and his father were incarcerated and released at different times. His father was incarcerated in 2000 and released in 2007. His mother was incarcerated in 2003 and released in 2013. He described his childhood as “rough” and stated that sports kept him focused “on doing the right instead of the wrong.” According to Derek, he received more support from persons outside of his family during his younger years. He stated his source of inspiration was music due to the bond that he developed with his brother as they listened to it.

Derek further indicated he admired his uncle who introduced him to sports and kept him from being incarcerated or deceased. He credited his uncle with his success in meeting new people who would also help him finish school and stay focused on “positive activities.” Completing a mentorship program was not mandated. However, Derek stated that his relationship with his mentor was “like a best friend [he] never had.” He offered that upon beginning the program in 2014, he felt as though he needed mentorship for advice due to a lack of parenting as he became an adult. Following his completion of the program in early 2015, Derek said that he views himself more positively and that he now believes in himself.

Participant 3, Tina, identified as an 18-year-old African American female. Her father was incarcerated when she was 2-years-old and released when she was 5-years-old

(1999-2002). The number of siblings was not disclosed during the interview. Tina indicated that her mother followed in the footsteps of her grandmother and was abusive during her childhood years. She stated her father was not involved in her life and that it was her mother who fulfilled the role of both parents. The women in her family were identified as her major source of inspiration. According to Tina, she had admiration for her grandmother because she “always reminds me of my strengths” and is never negative. Tina indicated that she had not yet completed the mentorship program in which she was enrolled. However, in speaking with her further, she stated that she had completed one mentorship aspect of the program, which assisted her with enrolling into a 4-year university.

Tina’s mentor and caseworker also indicated that she had completed additional mentorship programs within the larger program, including a financial responsibility program and the foster care mentoring program. According to Tina, she entered the mentorship program recently, towards the end of 2014, because she needed guidance, didn’t have a good relationship with her mother, and had no local family members. She disclosed that the program positively affected her self-esteem and her decision-making. Concerning the benefits of the program she stated, “Having that person to back you, and not judge you, and have your back, and cares about you, and pushes you for the better, and listens to you when you’re down, and is just there, like the things you wish your parents could or would do or would have done, I’ve gotten from being in my program”.

Participant 4, Lisa, is a 20-year-old, who identified as an African American female. The number of siblings disclosed was three. Her father was incarcerated when

she was 2-years-old and released when she was 5-years-old (1997-2000). Lisa stated that her mother was incarcerated twice; the first time when she was 8-years-old (2003) and the second time when she was 13-years-old (2008). She was released when Lisa was 10-years-old (2005) and 15-years-old (2010), respectively. According to Lisa, her childhood was “chaotic” and she lived through a “very unhealthy situation.” Her mother was abusive and both parents used drugs. Her father was not present in her life. She stated that she was raised in foster care, which was better than her previous living situation where her mother was abusive. During our interview, she described her responsibilities, which included her and her brother caring for themselves: “We fed ourselves. We clothed ourselves. We took our own baths. My was just too busy caught up in her addiction. We raised my little sister until she got adopted.” She indicated going to school was an outlet from her life at home. Her grandmother, whom she and her siblings were ordered to stay with by the court from time to time, was identified as her source of inspiration due to her continued display of love. She also discussed her admiration for her foster mother, who was also her social worker at one time. Lisa indicated that she started the mentorship program in September of 2012, at age 18, and that she had not yet completed the program. However, in speaking with her further, she stated that she had completed one mentorship aspect of the program, which assisted her with becoming employed with a partnering agency. Lisa’s mentor and caseworker also indicated that she had completed additional mentorship programs within the larger program, including a financial responsibility program and the foster care mentoring program. She admitted that she had

not been participating in the program for a short while, but that the program offered her positive resources and provided her a positive outlet.

Participant 5, Robert, is an 18-year-old who identified as an African American male. The exact number of siblings was not disclosed. Both Robert's mother and father were incarcerated. His father was incarcerated and released when he was 18-years-old (2015). His mother was incarcerated when he was 6-years-old (2003) and released when he was 7-years-old (2004). He indicated that he was abused during his childhood and placed into various foster homes. The reason for his mother's incarceration was due to her abusive behavior towards him. Robert stated that his major sources of inspiration were his "little brothers and little sisters" because he wanted a better life for them. The person he admired was his brother, who was murdered in front of him. He credited his late brother with helping him lead a more positive lifestyle. Robert became a mentee at an early age when he was placed into foster care. Additionally, he enrolled in one of the multiple mentorship programs he completed in late 2014 and finished the program in March 2015 at the age of 18. During the interview, he shared that his mentors gave him good advice and that he entered the programs to better himself as a person. He stated that the programs have helped him think before acting and helped him realize he had a purpose in life.

### **The Data Collection Process**

The data collection process for the study was guided by qualitative inquiry. I began the process of data collection on March 20, 2015. I recruited a sample of five participants from New Castle County. I distributed flyers to case managers and program

managers of mentorship programs the day after I received IRB approval. Participants responded by telephone inquiry to acknowledge their desire to participate in the study.

### **The Interview Process**

Following the first and second information sessions, an interview was scheduled with two attendees. All three attendees from the third session scheduled interviews as well. Interviews took place in person in a private meeting room in a public library located in Delaware. Consent forms were signed by each participant and I received permission from each respondent to audiotape the interview in its entirety. All notes and protocols were stored in a secure location as identified in my IRB application.

Signs of saturation were revealed by the third interview, which indicated that each of the participants involved in the study experienced some adversity and exhibited negative behaviors following the incarceration of a parent. Signs of saturation also pointed to the implication that mentorship had a positive impact in reducing those behaviors. I established that I had reached saturation when no new information emerged during the remaining interviews. While the same interview questions were asked of each participant, I had a more narrow focus after I achieved saturation and I was able to probe for greater specificity in areas where there were gaps. I developed early codes emerging from participant feedback. The second interview was held with each participant, separately, in a private meeting room in a public library located in Delaware to ensure accurate reports of participant feedback.

### **Variations**

Three circumstances that might be considered variations to my study were encountered. First, two persons, one male and one female, who responded to the invitational flyer were denied the opportunity to participate in the study because they did not meet the inclusion criteria for participation in the study. Second, two additional males who responded to the invitational flyer and attended the informational meeting did not follow-up to a request for interview. Third, managers of various programs also reached out to partnering agencies to assist in recruiting participants. A request for revisions to include those partnering agencies was submitted to the IRB and additional participants were recruited from those agencies following approval on April 7, 2015.

### **Managing the Data**

All data records were organized and managed consistently, according to the data storage procedures outlined in my IRB application. All electronic files have been maintained and password-protected. All hardcopies have also been maintained and secured. A journal was kept for contact and follow-up information, and for logging field notes. The unique identifiers previously mentioned were used in scheduling interviews on a private calendar, and in all other documents, both electronic copies and hardcopies. Interview audio tapes were transcribed no more than 72 hours after the initial interview.

### **Analyzing the Data**

A transcendental phenomenological approach was taken in analyzing the data from this study as the participant formed the contextual description of his/her lived experience(s). My primary goal of data analysis was to organize and understand collected



data through assembling and segmenting words in order to compare, contrast, analyze, and emphasize patterns and themes among them (Creswell, 2009). In summary, this process involved the following: (a) reducing the ample data into a manageable cluster of topics; (b) abbreviate and categorize the topics; (c) assemble data into categories and perform a preliminary analysis; (d) recode, if necessary, and (e) interpret the meaning of the data. To accomplish this approach, I reduced 30 pages of transcribed audio recordings, five handwritten memos (Appendix G), and field notes into the data summarized later in this chapter. A description of coding is outlined in the next section.

### **First Phase of Coding**

The first phase of coding involved segmenting and labeling text data relevant to my research questions (Creswell, 2009). I uploaded all interview transcriptions into NVivo software for data analysis. I performed a line-by-line search for words and phrases that provided some insight regarding my research questions. The text identified was highlighted and assigned to various nodes. According to the definition provided by QSR International's NVivo software 2010, a node is a collection of references concerning a person, place, specific interest or theme that has been identified in the data sources. Using features designated for query in NVivo software, I searched for specific words and phrases in order to validate the relevancy of those identified. Because of some of the variances in participant data, I used multiple types of codes to label text relevant to my study. Data were coded according to the following mixture of coding that appears throughout this document: words that expressed emotion (emotion coding), words that expressed action (action coding), and words that described circumstances (circumstantial

coding). Direct quotes are identified by the use of quotation marks in this document. Coding and analysis was performed until all relevant data were reduced to categories that were manageable. During the coding process, I found it important and supportive to create memos that documented my initial thoughts and proposed analysis. The first round of coding yielded 31 condensed pages of text and 126 nodes (including combined and subcategories).

### **Second Phase of Coding**

Data, previously sorted in first cycle coding, were further sorted and simplified into broader themes during the second phase of coding. These major themes became the basis for my discussion (Chapter 5). This phase specifically concerned the identification of patterns and direct relationships between data. I searched for examples of expected data (that were present in previous literature), unanticipated data (that were not expected to be found at the beginning of the study), unusual or rare data (that may be of conceptual interest), and data that addressed the theory guiding my research (attachment theory). Creswell (2009) used the term *engaged coding* to describe this process. Following this, codes were expanded based on patterns that emerged following initial categorization. Next, they were raised another level through organizing categories based on feelings, actions, and circumstances. I began to examine the relationship between each category and my study participants (Creswell, 2009).

Finally, I compared the themes and patterns I had established to each of my three research questions and created a list of four major themes. An example of the code assignment, which illustrates the theme I named Drawing from Lived Experiences, can be

found in the table below (Table 2). The table contains data thematically coded to depict respondents' characterizations of the differences associated with their childhood and adolescent years, as well as their reported source(s) of inspiration. This is one of four themes to be discussed later, in the section titled 'Results'.

Table 2

*Sample Coding, Drawing from Lived Experiences*

Participant Response (NVivo text)	Tentative Code Assignment
"I had more support when I was younger from outside."	Decreased parental involvement
"It wasn't good because I had ...some crazy foster parents. But I wasn't being beat."	Improvement of circumstances
"My dad died."	Separation from attachment figures
"I loved to play sports."	Positive behavior
"I kept getting locked up all my life."	Discovery of inspiration: Activity
"And then I got kicked out of school. I went to jail."	Decline of circumstances
"...my mother, she stopped being as... She started I guess controlling her emotions more."	Increased parental involvement

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness and qualitative objectivity were ensured by thoroughly following the research protocol outlined in my proposal and IRB application. This process included: peer debriefing, clarification of researcher bias through the use of memos, performing member checking, use of rich, thick description, triangulation of sources, and maintaining communication and receiving consistent support from my dissertation chairperson and peers. Member checking was accomplished through peer review of coded data by two

Walden University students (one male and one female) and through conducting a second interview with study participants to ensure accurate accounts.

To achieve transferability, I created detailed descriptions of participant accounts, to support my interpretations of the data collected from study participants. The depth and scope of the data were gathered directly from interview responses. I used NVivo coding to maintain participant meaning. Dependability is often concerned with an independent examination of the research. I managed this process through dissertation committee oversight. Furthermore, participant meaning was verified, with respective study participants. Confirmability was established through following the steps outlined in my IRB and research protocol.

## **Results**

The overarching discovery from this study was the finding concerning the positive impact of mentorship on youth who have been affected by parental incarceration. There are four major themes including, growth of awareness: The impact of mentorship, lack of parental presence: physical, psychological and social impacts, drawing from lived experiences, and responding to influence. Collectively, these themes provide the contextual answers to the research question.

What is the nature of the impact of mentorship programs on youth who have experienced the effects of parental incarceration?

Participant answers to the research question are aligned with the four emergent themes presented next.

### **Growth of Awareness: The Impact of Mentorship**

All of the participants in this study participated in community-based mentorship programs with a high level of mentor-mentee engagement (programs in which two or more interactions between mentors and mentees occurred each week) reported that they experienced changes in their individual choices or behaviors, the ways in which they viewed themselves, and in their actions and beliefs following the mentorship program. Participants revealed these changes when they were asked how do you feel about the choices you made in your life before you entered the program, how would you say that the program affected the way you view yourself, if at all, and what changes, if any, have you noticed in your actions and beliefs since the end of the program (see Appendix C). The responses of participants were not classified into specific categories. Rather, responses were merged and revealed holistic experiences as they were associated with completing a mentorship program. All of the participants expressed positive experiences regarding their relationship with their mentors and the impact of the program overall. Elijah said,

I didn't care about much before I went, and everything was just like whatever. But [my mentor], she's seen a lot in me that I was still fighting to see in myself. . . . I felt like she went to different heights because she saw so much in me . . . She was like that person. I always seen her doing more than I was, that I should've done more for myself. So it was kind of something that I needed. And she always kept it real with me. She said a lot of things that made me realize that I needed to change some things. . . She really kept it real with me and I had to rethink some

things about what I was doing. I wouldn't have that motivation to want to do stuff or feel like I had the potential to do stuff. So, it helped me. I'm more ambitious than I probably was before. I get more stuff done. I see a lot of things through.

Derek said,

As I'm getting older I'm starting to feel changes, starting to think differently, starting to go through different things. And [my mentor], he's already older so I already clung to him for advice on stuff and he never steered me wrong. I was on the wrong way. I don't know which way to go. I was going the right way, then I go the wrong way, then I go back the right way, then the wrong way again. And I had turned around and never did it again. I went so many directions that I don't even know how I even still manage to be here right now. I look at myself as I know me now.

Robert indicated that he had experienced a sense of uselessness prior to entering the mentorship program:

[The mentorship program] just make me look at life different and take another chance. Because every choice I was making was turning me in jail. It made me look at myself like I'm better than what I have been. I think different. I think before I act. And I realize that I have a purpose in life. It'll make you basically feel like you're needed, and not useless.

During his interview, Robert acknowledged that he had made some choices in his life that were not leading him in a positive direction and he recognized the change in his actions and accomplishments since the completion of the mentorship program. Lisa, on

the other hand, indicated that she had not yet completed the larger mentorship program and that she had not realized that the program was broken into smaller mentorship pieces to facilitate successful completion, as was previously indicated by her case manager. Lisa said, “I mean I didn't know it was goals like that. I work . . . it's a program through [the mentorship program] and we garden and landscape.”

The same lack of awareness was indicated by Tina, another young adult, who did indicate that she had completed high school and was accepted into a 4-year university due to the mentorship she received. However, she failed to recognize that her achievements were the result of her completing a mentorship program, even as it was related to a larger mentorship program. As Tina put it, “I'm still in it now. We're not supposed to [complete the program] until we're 21 . . . There isn't parts, but getting into school . . . they helped me with that.” This finding regarding the lack of awareness of the availability of resources, including mentors, provides a linkage to the overarching theory of attachment and the implications of relationship perceptions and processes.

Questions also elicited responses that showed participants recognized the benefits of the program. Elijah said,

I wouldn't have that motivation to want to do stuff or feel like I had the potential to do stuff. So, it helped me. I'm more ambitious than I probably was before. I get more stuff done. I see a lot of things through... I want to say the program provides a lot of resources to help somebody be successful in the way they want to be successful.

Derek said, “I’m getting a chance to do everything that another person maybe can’t do and I’m going to take advantage of it.” Tina stated, “This is really an amazing experience.”

The overwhelming majority of participants (4 of 5 [80%]), reported feelings of attachment to their mentors. Tina reported, “She is like my momma! Me and my mom do not have a good relationship. So whenever I have a problem or something goes down that’s the first person I run to. She’s like my mother in every way.”

All of the participants described at least one positive benefit resulting from their relationship with their mentor, even though they may have experienced negative circumstances previously or concurrent to the mentorship program. For example, Elijah indicated that the mentorship program was a part of his probation sentence after his incarceration: “Just me being on probation and the reentry program it came with it. So me seeing probation and then the mentorship program, it was all kind of what they said I had to do.”

One participant reported having a “causal relationship” with his mentors. He described his relationship with his mentor as one of “good quality.” When asked to specifically describe his relationship with his mentor, he replied, “My mentors? They always try to give me good advice. So I could say they try to force me in the right direction.” In chapter 5, the meaning of these variations and their relation to attachment theory are discussed. The next section will provide research findings that describe the influence of parental incarceration.



### **Lack of Parental Presence: Physical, Psychological & Social Impacts**

Through this theme, the effects of the imprisonment of a parent or both parents as they are described by the participants in this study are defined. This theme, lack of parental presence: physical, psychological and social impacts, pertains to the research question aimed at understanding how youth cope with parental incarceration. However, responses related to the physical, psychological, and social impacts of parental incarceration overlap into a complicated system of cohesive responses. Rich descriptions were provided by participants related specifically to the interview questions, how old were you when your mother or father was incarcerated? when were they released? how would you describe your childhood? and, how would you describe the roles of your parents? Answers to the aforementioned research question were exposed through symbolic loss and a lack of physical presence. For example, some participants reported physical and emotional abuse by parental figures: Tina said, “She raised me the way her mom raised her. Her mother was abusive, so my mom followed the pattern.”

Lisa: My mom was abusive. She used drugs. My dad wasn't there because he was like an alcoholic and he was using drugs. My mom was like delusional. Like when she did drugs, she would make up stuff and just like beat us. So, it was like no structure... Very unhealthy situation.

Robert described how his mother was incarcerated for a year due to her physical abuse towards him, “. . . being abused by my mom. When I was six and she got incarcerated [because of the abuse].”

Some participants reported neglect by parental figures:

Derek: I remember I was like 6 and my mom she was high on drugs. And I remember coming downstairs and she didn't know, but the bottom of the bed was on fire from the candle she knocked over. And I remember I just poured water over it.

Lisa: My mom, like even though she was in the house, we took care of ourselves. We fed ourselves. We clothed ourselves. We took our own baths. My mom was just too busy like caught up in her addiction. We raised my little sister until she got adopted.

Robert stated, "They was sometimes there, but they cared about other things more than their kids. So, it was like I had them, but I didn't have them."

Others reported social alienation:

Elijah: I didn't really have one. I had to grow up fast, from younger ages and then to come into foster care. Being in an environment when you always around new people. I always remember people. I'm always getting attached to people and I'm always leaving people or people are leaving me.

Elijah also reported that his father died, following his incarceration, when he was 13 years old. In addition to these reports, the majority of participants (4 of 5 [80%]) identified as growing up in the foster care system. Most of the participants pointed out that they received no support from immediate family members. For example, Lisa stated, "Well, when I first turned 18 I had no choice because I didn't have anywhere to go or any family or anything that was like, you know, willing to help me." Derek said, "I didn't

have nowhere to go for a long time and I know how it is moving house to house, sleeping in cars and doing all that type stuff.”

Two of the five participants indicated that they had been incarcerated previously. However, all of the participants disclosed that they displayed delinquent and at-risk behaviors before entering the mentorship program. Examples of behaviors included school failure, probation, and drug use. Elijah described, “I was doing a lot of things I shouldn’t have been doing on probation like smoking and stuff. And I was giving up dirty urines left and right.” Tina stated, “Yes, made a lot of bad choices. Yeah, I was very in the streets. I liked to run the streets. Lived a very crazy life style, very crazy lifestyle.” Lisa explained, “I didn’t finish school, but you know, I’m working towards it.”

All of the participants had fathers incarcerated at one point in their lives between the ages of 2 years old and 18 years old. The majority of participants (4 of 5 [80%]) had their mothers incarcerated (see Table 1) between the ages of 6 years old and 12 years old. Although most of the participants described both positive and negative reactions to their separation from a parent or both parents, less focus was placed on positive experiences.

### **Drawing from Lived Experiences**

A combination of the two remaining themes identified as drawing from lived experiences and responding to influence was used to define the overall impact of mentorship on youth who have experienced the effects of having a parent incarcerated. First, it is important to understand how youth draw from their life experiences, which can influence the ways in which they view themselves, their actions, and their beliefs. Responses were provided by participants to specific interview questions including,

describe one specific memory you have from your childhood; in what ways was your childhood different from your adolescent years? and what types of activities did you enjoy growing up?

Participant answers shed light on behaviors related to individual experiences and coping mechanisms. For example, Lisa provided a description of how her coping behaviors changed:

I take things for what they are. Like, I'm not living in a fairytale. Because for the longest I guess it was a coping mechanism... kind of not acknowledge what was wrong in my life. Basically just, you know, dealing with whatever happened - it was ok. You know?

She went on to describe other methods of coping as she drew from her experiences: "Going to school. I used to love going to school because that was like we was free. We wasn't getting beat. You know like that was the only outlet we had - was going to school."

Elijah also describes how he drew from his experience of being incarcerated:

I grew up fast. So I see a lot things that I knew... but I always had common sense, so a lot of things I seen I always knew like "man that's not right." Even some of the things that I experienced when I was younger that I did. I'm just like 'I know that's not right'. And I feel bad about a lot of things that I did because I know it's not right. Like the way I handle situations, I always come out on top with all my situations. Like whatever it is. Just recently I got released early from probation and that was a situation where it was kind of hard for me. My situation was kind

of messed up. I [didn't] have nowhere to go. I don't have no family for real. So I was in a situation where I was all over the place... I do a lot of stupid stuff but I always learn. I never make the same mistake twice.

Participants also described learning from others in similar situations, as conveyed below:

Tina: My little cousin's dad wasn't in her life either. So was just like I just seen like all my family been through, how they took care of their kids and we never dressed bad, always was on top of everything. They pushed us in school and we're smart women. My aunt wrote a book. It was always around me. So I just seen it every day, all day.

### **Responding to Influence**

It was equally important to understand how youth respond to influence in order to adequately assess the overall impact of mentorship on youth who have experienced parental incarceration. Inspiration and admiration sources were regarded as sources of influence. Participants provided answers to the following interview questions concerned with influence, what was your major source of inspiration?; how did you discover that source of inspiration?; if you could choose anyone, living or deceased, who would you say that you admire, and what makes this person different from other people?; how has this person impacted your life?; in what ways, if any, do you find yourself trying to imitate him/her?

Participants described various sources of influence. For some it was their own experiences that inspired them:

Elijah: I didn't really care about much. But I think growing up, jail was my inspiration for real. Because seeing that type of environment made me really think like – 'I can't... something got to change because I can't do this again, like I won't do this again. So whatever I was doing before, it has to stop.

For others, sources of admiration and inspiration involved persons:

Derek: I'd say my uncle. I admire him because even at his worst he was still him and he still smiled. He still let you know he was okay. It's okay to be down sometimes. If it wasn't for him showing me football, I think I would've been another statistic. Either I would have been dead or locked up. But now since I played football I got to meet different people... I finished high school. I start college next Monday ... for economics and audio designer, business and all that.

Tina stated, "I look up to my nanny. So whenever things was bad my nanny always would keep a smile on my face. Especially like when I felt like I was low, she'll always remind me of my strengths." Lisa specified, "She was my social worker and my foster mom. She was an awesome mom. She always made me strive to do better." Robert shared, "Little brothers and little sisters. Because I wanted them to have a better life than I did. So I led by example."

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I provided an overview of the research setting, participant background information, the data collection and analysis process. I provided participant responses through the introducing and aligning the four major themes that emerged through data collection and analysis.

Themes that originated from original coding and are significant to the study of the impact of mentorship as a result of parental incarceration include: growth of awareness: the impact of mentorship, lack of parental presence: physical, psychological, and social impacts, drawing from lived experiences, and responding to influence. Each of the aforementioned themes were thoroughly supported through answers to the research question utilizing NVivo quotes which emphasized participant responses to interview questions. Concerning the theme of growth and awareness, the research question was supported in that all of the participants recognized some benefits of the mentorship program and expressed satisfaction with the relationships they had with their mentors. Use of the theme lack of parental presence: physical, psychological, and social impacts highlighted the direct and indirect effects of parental incarceration on participants through descriptions of physical and emotional abuse, the death of a parent following incarceration, and the lack of relationships formed between parents and participants following parental incarceration. The theme drawing from lived experiences provided insight regarding coping strategies and changes in behaviors and beliefs as they were related to the effects of parental incarceration. Insight concerning the significance of role models and the response of participants to positive influences was provided through use of the theme responding to influence.

Chapter 5 consists of a presentation of my study findings, alignment of the literature review in Chapter 2, attachment theory, and recommendations. Concluding thoughts will follow the explanation of this study's contribution toward positive social change.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe the lived experiences of youth related to the incarceration of a parent or both parents. Specifically, I sought to broaden understanding of the effects of targeted intervention strategies that aim to mitigate the adverse risks faced by youth through investigating the depth of the impact of mentorship programs on persons who have experienced parental incarceration. I concluded that mentorship has a positive impact on these groups of youth. In viewing each of the four themes as a unit, there were no reports of negative consequences linked with the impact of mentorship. All of the participants expressed feelings of higher self-esteem, trust, accomplishment, and purpose resulting from their respective mentorship programs.

Although previous researchers contributed to the body of knowledge in the separate content areas of parental incarceration and mentorship, I identified a research gap regarding the evaluation of mentorship as a best practice for working with youth who face adverse risk due to parental incarceration. My research findings help shed some light on the research knowledge gap and shortage of literature specific to understanding how mentorship impacts youth who are affected by the incarceration of their parents.

In this chapter, an overview of my research findings are presented followed by detailed interpretations as they are aligned with each of my research questions. I also identify how the findings are interpreted and linked to the literature review in Chapter 2. I integrate theoretical considerations. Limitations of the study, recommendations, and



implications for social change are provided. Finally, I provide my reflections and concluding thoughts.

### **Overview**

A transcendental phenomenological approach was used to understand the impact of mentorship on youth who experienced parental incarceration. This method was chosen because the definition of the meaning of the phenomenon of parental incarceration may best be understood through the lived experiences of these participants. More in-depth research can be established once the variables associated with these experiences are more clearly identified.

Volunteers were solicited from various mentorship programs for this study and three young men, and two young women fitting the population necessary to conduct this research were identified. All participants completed a mentorship program, were between the ages of 18 and 24 years old, and had at least one parent imprisoned at a point in their lives. Research questions focused on understanding how participants described their experiences with parental incarceration, the depth of the impact of mentorship and whether or not that impact was positive.

The findings from the interviews revealed that participants experienced various stressors related to the lack of parental involvement due to parental incarceration. Participants had difficulty with socialization skills, obtaining sufficient resources, maintaining stable and structured living environments, avoiding intergenerational incarceration, truancy, and school failure before entering a mentorship program. All of the participants found their community-based, high engagement mentorship programs, to

have an overall positive impact on the improvement of their lives. The types of mentorship programs youth were involved in were geared towards topics including prevention, health and well-being, financial management, employment skills, and also included one-on-one sessions which promoted personal and social growth. Two of the five participants obtained resources for finishing school, and one is currently enrolled in a postsecondary education program. Two of the participants have also created stable living environments for themselves.

### **Interpretations**

The intent of this study was to provide insight into what youth experienced when their parent was incarcerated and if mentorship had an impact on their lives. It was found, regarding the participants in this study, that mentorship programs greatly reduced the number of negative and at-risk behaviors exhibited as the result of parental incarceration, participants were influenced by parental incarceration, and that mentorship promoted the positive development of participants. Ages of the participants, providing a retrospective account of their experience, and changes in views of self, actions, and beliefs are significant points to consider when interpreting the outcomes of this study.

### **Depth of Impact of Mentorship**

In addressing the research question, what is the nature of the impact of mentorship programs on youth who have experienced the effects of parental incarceration, several discoveries were made. It was discovered that these participants benefited from enrollment in a mentorship program. As a result of the program, they were empowered and gained increased self-esteem. They found themselves actively seeking advice from

their mentors and accomplishing longstanding goals, such as obtaining employment and housing, and finishing school. For most, this was a life-changing opportunity that allowed them to achieve higher success in all aspects of their lives. Having the support necessary to do so was important to their success. Having a reliable individual to talk to and interact with regularly, help reduce stress and provide assistance through numerous resources, as well as be a source of motivation was beneficial to participants and critical to their accomplishments.

### **Considerable Influence of Parental Incarceration**

All of the participants in this study experienced parental incarceration by the age of 12 years old. This study confirms previous literature, which shows that children whose parents have been incarcerated face higher risks concerning behavioral and educational challenges (Shillingford & Edwards, 2008). Incarceration of a parent for the participants in this study caused stress on families, who were unable to assist participants, substance abuse, poor educational performance, and a display of delinquent behaviors. At least four of the five participants indicated that they had no family support. All of the participants described times in which they exhibited delinquent behaviors. There was no indication that any contact was maintained during the incarceration of a parent. Participants reported that they did not have a relationship with their parent(s) following their release. One participant stated that his father died a few short years after he was released from prison. In addition to the imprisonment, or symbolic loss of his father, he also had to cope with his actual loss. Derek, Participant 2, focused on his participation in sports in an effort to maintain a positive focus, instead of focusing on his volatile living situations, which

involved sleeping in cars and frequenting shelters. Mental and physical abuse experienced by four of five participants exacerbated delinquency, poor educational performance, and stigmatization.

### **Positive Development**

Participants also expressed that the mentorship program was an opportunity for them to help others in the same way they received help. There was an overall sense of breaking a cycle of parental absenteeism and intergenerational incarceration, and becoming more self-sufficient. Elijah stated that he now has a more positive view on life and that he wishes to stay positive and to help others achieve a more positive outlook. All of the participants seemed more hopeful and upbeat about their future following the completion of the mentorship program, especially knowing that their individual mentors are persons on whom that can rely. For most of the participants, the support of a mentor has mitigated or reduced anti-social and other negative, at-risk behaviors.

### **Age of Participant**

Many factors, including age differences, affect the interactions of youth (Phillips & Gates, 2011). The mean age for the participants in this study was 20 years, with the youngest at 18 and the oldest at 24 years. All of the participants conducted themselves in a mature manner and were willing to discuss their experiences regarding parental incarceration and the completion of a mentorship program. Research on parental incarceration indicated that a significant portion of the population of children who had a parent incarcerated were under the age of four (Makariev & Shaver, 2010). Participants' parents were incarcerated well before they reached age 18, and most of the participants

reported that they have just recently completed their respective programs. The impact of mentorship may have been greater for younger participants as compared to those who chose to participate in this study. A younger population may have been less exposed to adverse behaviors if given the opportunity to participate in a mentorship program sooner than the participants in this study. However, participants in this study may have felt more comfortable discussing their experiences and sharing their accomplishments. Their age and maturity level may have contributed to their comprehension of the effects of parental incarceration, admittance of previous mistakes, and understanding and application of the impact of mentorship.

### **Retrospective Account**

The participants in this study provided a retrospective account of their lived experience. For most, their first experience having a parent incarcerated was at least 10 years prior to this study. This consideration is important because their reflection on this time may have changed since the time of the original experience. Each participant entered a mentorship program at least 6 months prior to this study. Consideration of this is important for the same reason mentioned above. All of the participants acknowledged that their parents were absent from their lives for an extended period of time and that they were accustomed to their absence. Since entering a mentorship program, participants expressed feelings of elation for the availability of additional resources. The presence of their mentors added to their support system and influenced their views of self, actions, and beliefs.

### **Views of Self, Actions, and Beliefs**

Changes in views of self, actions, and beliefs are also points of consideration. All of the five participants who chose to participate in this study indicated positive changes in the abovementioned categories as the result of the mentorship program. Four out five of the participants, Elijah, Derek, Tina, and Lisa, indicated that they have a better sense of self-worth and potential. They also reported that they avoid negative situations and old neighborhoods to prevent partaking, again, in the negative habits that were identified before entering the mentorship program. Previous research on the effects of mentorship programs indicated evidence that mentorship programs can promote better emotional functioning and social behaviors among youth facing diverse risk factors (Rhodes & DuBois, 2008; Spencer et al., 2010; DuBois, & Neville, 1997).

### **Theoretical Considerations**

The results of this study do suggest these participants experienced a form of attachment to mentors. Attachment theory provides some insight into the results of this study. Bowlby and Ainsworth assert that children form secure attachments through the responsiveness of primary caregivers (Bretherton, 1992), and that such relationships can predict behavioral responses in children. In the parenting context, it can be said the participants in this study did not form a secure attachment relationship with their parents as children. The insecure attachment to the parent was mostly due to parental incarceration, physical and emotional abuse, and substance abuse. This lack of attachment increases the risk of the display of more oppositional characteristics (Bretherton, 1992). It can be argued that the expression of negative behaviors including a

wide range of “at-risk behaviors” such as juvenile delinquency, school failure, truancy, substance abuse, and intergenerational incarceration were the results of insecure attachment.

On the other hand, children perceive themselves as directly related to the way in which they perceive an attachment figure (Bolen, 2002). In the mentorship context, it can be reasoned that participants in this study compared their own identity to the identity of their mentor, who can be considered to have been viewed as a new figure of attachment. Building relationships with adult figures may positively influence youth (Shlafer et al., 2009). Participants who formed new relationships with mentors displayed reverse oppositional characteristics compared to those characteristics displayed by participants prior to disruption of attachment due to parental incarceration.

Participants in this study embraced the roles of their respective mentors. Most of them considered their relationship with their mentor to be better than the relationship they had with their parent(s) and derived satisfaction from the improved circumstances reported. Intergenerational effects described by one participant included her mother’s exposure to poor parenting, child abuse, and/or the loss of his or her own parental figure. Such effects could contribute to the holistic experiences of children (Makariev et al., 2010). The same participant reported having a mother-daughter relationship with her mentor and described the relationship as one she wished she had with her birth mother. The participants in this study defined the relationship with their mentors as helping, respectful, and nurturing. Most of them have embraced their mentors as a life-mentor and

emphasized the positive impact they have contributed to their lives since the relationship was established.

### **Implications for Social Change**

The goal of positive social change was in mind while this study was being conducted. Understanding the social problem was my first goal, and second to give voice to the chiefly underreported and underserved population of youth who have experienced parental incarceration. Participants involved in this study have demonstrated the positive impact of mentorship on youth who have experienced parental incarceration. As indicated, one of the findings of this study concerned the lack of adequate resources for youth who experienced parental incarceration, and the lack of knowledge of those resources. Mentorship was not evaluated as a best practice for mitigating the risks specifically associated with this sensitive population. These deficiencies may impede possibilities of youth receiving adequate intervention and prevention supports.

My social change initiative involves that emphasis be placed on the significance that youth affected by parental incarceration be provided information and mentorship resources, especially, as specifically related to the findings of this study to assist them in recognizing triggers that may lead to adverse responses to parental incarceration. My goal is to provide this information to help youth improve their quality of life when exposed to circumstances that challenge their overall well-being and the security of their future. I will accomplish this by disseminating this research to program administrators including prison and work-release staff, mentors, school administrators and guidance counselors,



training program administrators, and other community organizations that are in a position to reach youth who experience parental incarceration.

I also plan to present my findings at professional conferences and to the research community. This dissemination is critical to raising awareness of this population and the implications of parental incarceration. Participant stories, grounded in attachment theory may help to offer insights that will generate discussion around ways to effectively alleviate, or at least diminish the harmful impacts of parental incarceration.

It is my hope that the findings of this study will further indicate that there is more work to be done with regards to additional research, theory-building, and the creation of innovative intervention practices which recognize mentorship as a best practice for avoiding the adverse effects of parental incarceration experienced by youth.

### **Recommendations**

A focus on a younger population of youth who have experienced parental incarceration and completed a mentorship in future studies may provide greater insight into the understanding of their experiences and the unique needs of the population as a whole. Speaking to this population at the time of initial incarceration of a parent will reduce reflective discussion of the topic and may provide alternative insights into the phenomenon.

The scope of this study was limited to five participants who completed a mentorship program in Delaware. Expanding the number of participants across a broader area would be beneficial to obtaining a fuller understanding concerning issues such as family involvement, variations in perceptions of siblings, and differences in the impact of

mentorship across varying cultures. Additionally, future studies should examine the account of the incarcerated parent, gender differences, and psychological well-being to collect more in-depth background information that may provide additional insight.

### **Researcher Reflections**

During this research, I uncovered many important insights that would enable me to understand participant decisions, behaviors, and thought processes. The most rewarding experience in this process was earning the trust of participants so that they felt comfortable enough to share their experiences with me. I became fully immersed in the information I collected and understood more about parental incarceration and the impact of the phenomenon as the data unraveled.

### **Conclusion**

It is my belief that change comes about through knowledge and action. This study provides an opportunity for change in both ways. For instance, participants in this study were found to display antisocial and at-risk behaviors. It is critical for professionals to identify a means for helping youth before the onset of the display of these adverse behaviors through research, planning, and practice. The diversity achieved within mentor-mentee relationships can allow for distinct changes among youth concerning self-perception and behaviors, which, in turn, may lead to the reduction, and subsequent elimination of at-risk behaviors.

A transcendental phenomenological study was the best option for answering the study's research questions because it facilitated understanding of the lived experiences of participants as they are related to parental incarceration and the effects of mentorship.

There was no study found that directly examined these constructs simultaneously or as interrelated. The findings of this study provide a foundation of understanding concerning the nature of the impact of mentorship programs for future researchers to build upon. Results indicate that mentorship has an overall positive impact on youth who have experienced parental incarceration. Findings also indicate that, despite circumstantial commonalities, youth who have experienced the effects of parental incarceration are a unique and diverse population, and that diverse needs may be met through the availability and diversification of resources such as mentorship programs. Based on these findings, providing this unique population with diverse resources, including mentorship, is dependent on developing an understanding of the impact of parental incarceration and the resulting triggers that may lead to adverse responses before emphasis can be placed on recognizing mentorship as a best practice for improving the overall quality of life for youth.

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## Appendix A: Letter to Organizational Staff

Date:  
Name of Organization  
Address

Dear (Contact Name),

My name is Sonia Murrey and I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University. I am conducting my dissertation research on the impact of mentorship program on youth who have experienced parental incarceration. This research will provide insight regarding the experiences of youth during parental incarceration. It will also shed light on the impact of mentorship programs on youth who have experienced the effects of having a parent in prison.

Your assistance in conducting this much needed research is important. If willing, I request your program to identify young adults who have completed a mentorship program through the distribution of the enclosed invitation to participate in my research. Identification of program participants will provide an opportunity to contact the individuals needed to complete this study. Once identified, individuals will be invited to attend an informational meeting to discuss the nature of this study. The participants of this study need to be between the ages of 18 – 24 years, have completed a mentorship program, and have had a parent incarcerated at any point in their lives. The participants are free to choose whether or not to participate and can discontinue participation at any time. Information provided by the participants will be kept strictly confidential. I would welcome a telephone call from you to discuss any questions you may have concerning this study and your role in identifying research participants. I can be reached at (xxx) xxx-xxx or emailed at xxx@waldenu.edu.

Sincerely,

Sonia Murrey  
Doctoral Candidate  
Walden University

## Appendix B: Invitation to Participate

Date:  
Name of Participant  
Address

Dear (Participant Name),

My name is Sonia Murrey and I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University. I am conducting dissertation research on the impact of mentorship program on youth who have experienced parental incarceration. This research will provide insight regarding the experiences of youth during parental incarceration. It will also shed light on the impact of mentorship programs on youth who have experienced the effects of having a parent in prison.

I realize that your time is important to you and I appreciate your consideration to participate in this study. Meeting on two occasions, for approximately one hour each meeting, will help in obtaining an accurate understanding of your experience. Semi-structured interviews will take place during each meeting time and all meetings will be recorded. Meetings can be held at a public library location of your choosing and will not require you to do anything you don't feel comfortable doing. The meetings are designed to simply get to know you and learn about your experience of having a parent in prison and how the mentorship program you completed has impacted your life. All information gathered during our meetings will be kept strictly confidential.

Please contact me at your earliest convenience to schedule a date and time that we can meet. My telephone number is (xxx) xxx-xxx. You can also email me at xxx@waldenu.edu. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Sonia Murrey  
Doctoral Candidate  
Walden University

## Appendix C: Interview Protocol

### **Impact of Mentorship – Interview #1**

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of Interviewee:

### **Questions:**

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

1. Participant information:
  - a. Age, gender, ethnicity
  - b. How old were you when your mother or father was incarcerated?
  - c. When were they released?
2. How would you describe your childhood?
3. Describe one specific memory you have from your childhood?
4. In what ways was your childhood different from your adolescent years?
5. How would you describe the roles of your parents?
6. What types of activities did you enjoy growing up?

### **INSPIRATION**

7. What was your major source of inspiration?
8. How did you discover that inspiration?

9. If you could choose anyone, living or deceased, who would you say that you admire, and what makes this person different from other people?
  - a. How has this person impacted your life?
  - b. In what ways, if any, do you find yourself trying to imitate him/her?
  - c. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about the person you identified?

### **MENTORSHIP PROGRAM**

10. On what date did you start the program?
11. On what date did you complete the program?
12. Describe your relationship with your mentor.
13. Why did you decide to enter a mentorship program?
  - a. How did you feel about the choices you made in your life before you entered the program?
  - b. How would you say that the program affected the way you view yourself, if at all?
  - c. What changes, if any, have you noticed in your actions and beliefs since the end of the program?
14. In what ways, if any, do you feel that others who have experienced parental incarceration may benefit from a program such as the one you have completed?
15. Is there anything else you would like to share with me?

## Appendix D: Consent Form

**Alleviating Risks of Parental Incarceration through Mentorship  
Walden University**

You are invited to participate in a research study on the impact of mentorship program on youth who have experienced parental incarceration. This research will provide insight regarding the experiences of youth during parental incarceration. It will also shed light on the impact of mentorship programs on youth who have experienced the effects of having a parent in prison.

You were selected as a possible participant because of your knowledge and/or experience related to the topic. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before acting on this invitation to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Sonia Murrey, Doctoral Candidate at Walden University.

**Background Information:**

The purpose of this study is to better understand your experience with parental incarceration and how mentorship has impacted you.

**Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study:

- You will be asked to participate in two interviews which will be held at a public library location of your choice
- Each interview will last for approximately one hour each time
- Each interview will be audiotaped

Here are some sample questions:

- What types of activities did you enjoy growing up?
- Why did you decide to enter a mentorship program?

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Walden University, your employer, or your relations with your mentor/organizational affiliation. If you make the decision to participate, you may withdraw at any time without affecting the aforementioned relationships.

**Risks and Benefits of Study Participation:**

There are no risks known to be associated with participation in this study. Participants of this study may potentially benefit through the offerings of more comprehensive support services.

If stress or anxiety is experienced during your participation in the study you may terminate your participation at any time. You may refuse to answer any questions you consider to be too invasive or personal.

**Compensation:**

There is no form of compensation offered for participation.

**Confidentiality:**

All research records resulting from this study will be kept private in a locked file. Only the researcher will have access to research records. Reports that might be published from this study will not include any information that may directly or indirectly identify a participant. All interviews will be audio recorded in order to ensure that an accurate description of your experience has been provided. Audiotapes will be destroyed within six months of the completion of the study.

**Contacts and Questions:**

The researcher conducting this study is Sonia Murrey. The researcher's advisor is Dr. Eric Youn. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Sonia Murrey at (xxx) xxx-xxx, xxx@waldenu.edu or Dr. Eric Youn at xxx@waldenu.edu.

If you have any questions about your participation in this study you may contact The Research Participant Advocate at Walden University, Dr. Leilani Endicott, at 1-800-925-3368 extension 3121210 or email at Leilani.Endicott@waldenu.edu. Walden University's approval number for this study is 03-19-15-0335789 and it expires March 18, 2016. You will receive a copy of this form from the researcher.

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

xxx@waldenu.edu

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix E: Recruitment Flyer



**ADULT PARTICIPANTS  
REQUIRED**

**FOR A RESEARCH STUDY INTO  
THE EFFECTS OF MENTORSHIP**

Have you experienced having a parent incarcerated?  
Have you completed a mentorship program?

You may be eligible for this study if you are:

- Between the ages of 18—24 years old
- Have had one or both parents incarcerated
- Have completed a mentorship program

The research study is aimed at understanding the impact of mentorship on youth who have experienced having a parent in prison from the perspective of young adults.

For more information, please contact the researcher:  
Sonia Murrey  
Ph: 302-468-6238  
or  
Sonia.murrey@waldenu.edu



## Appendix F: NIH Training Certificate



### Appendix G: Example Memos and Jotting

I used memos for field notes, capturing my thoughts, and managing my biases (Patton, 2002). The memo below is *unedited* and refers to the saturation of findings.

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#### Reflection Memo

---

I have been thinking about the correlation of findings which indicate that parental figures had issues with substance abuse before incarceration. Following incarceration, there was a lack of parental presence, often times in spite of physical presence.

Referring to the roles of his parents and their substance abuse, one man shared:

I just thought people get tired of doing something so many years. But even to this day, I guess it's all up to the person. If you tired you will stop, if you not you going to keep going. I just don't see how you can wear and tear on your body that long without really hurting yourself. Or you may be hurting yourself internally and you don't know about it. But, that's all.

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Participants describe coping with instability in various ways. How do you describe loving a parent who is not emotionally present? Or one who is abusive to youth due to his/her own abuse (substance, physical, etc.)?