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# Examining Protective Factors That Promote Resilience Among Children With An Incarcerated Parent

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NATIONAL LOUIS UNIVERSITY

EXAMINING PROTECTIVE FACTORS THAT PROMOTE RESILIENCE AMONG  
CHILDREN WITH AN INCARCERATED PARENT

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY DOCTORAL PROGRAM  
IN THE COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

BY

Celeste Ashley Jackson

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Chicago, Illinois

May 2019

**Community Psychology Doctoral Program**

Dissertation Notification of Completion

Doctoral Candidate: Celeste Jackson

Title of Dissertation: EXAMINING PROTECTIVE FACTORS THAT PROMOTE RESILIENCE AMONG CHILDREN WITH AN INCARCERATED PARENT

Certification: In accordance with the departmental and University policies, the above named candidate has satisfactorily completed a dissertation as required for attaining the Doctor of Philosophy degree in the Community Psychology Doctoral Program (College of Professional Studies and Advancement) at National Louis University.

  
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May 17, 2019  
Date

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## Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the millions of children and families impacted by the injustices of mass incarceration and racial disparities on a daily basis. Our story is important and I will always fight to make sure that our voices are uplifted.

This dissertation is also dedicated to my child who came and went during the course of this dissertation. My sweet baby, you came and went away far too soon, before we could meet you but you are forever etched in our hearts and I thank you for teaching me how to persevere and thrive following tragedy. Though I was weak, you helped make me strong, your little tiny self who never breathed life, you changed my entire world, my little love. I will love and miss you always. Rest in Heaven.

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## Abstract

Children of incarcerated parents (CIP) represent one of the most vulnerable, at-risk populations in the United States (Johnston, 1995). Best estimates suggests there are 2.7 million children with an incarcerated parents and African-American children are disproportionately represented at a figure of 1 in 9 children (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008). Much of the research attempting to understand this population and guide intervention efforts has employed a deficit-based approach, highlighting the plethora of adverse risk factors and negative outcomes associated with being the child of an incarcerated parent. This approach fails to acknowledge the presence of resilience inherent in these youth. The exploratory mixed methods research utilized in this project includes a quantitative (Study 1) and qualitative (Study 2) component. The two studies attempt to better understand protective factors and resilience in CIP. Situated in a strengths-based approach, the first study utilizes a multi-measure survey of CIP to examine the relationship between academic achievement, parent-child contact and subjective psychological well-being (a construct of resilience). Study 2 utilizes qualitative in-depth interviews with caregivers of CIP to further understand perceptions of how the preceding factors affect youth from the caregiver's perspective. Findings from these two studies suggest mixed perceptions of parent-child contact as a protective factor that promote resilience in CIP. Implications from findings are explored and discussed.

## Examining Protective Factors that Promote Resilience among Children with an Incarcerated Parent

Children of incarcerated parents (CIP) represent one of the most vulnerable at-risk populations in the United States. Best estimates conclude that more than 2.7 million children or 1 in 28, experience the incarceration of a parent at any given time in the United States (The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2010). While this number is jarring, it merely reflects state and federal prison rates of incarceration. When jails, parole, probation and other types of correctional supervision are considered, the statistics increase drastically and are even harder to estimate. CIP represent one of the most critical collateral consequences of mass incarceration (Alexander, 2010). In the United States, mass incarceration is the result of excessive over-imprisonment of America's most marginalized and oppressed groups; poor people and people of color (Wakefield & Wildeman, 2014). While African Americans make up only 13% of the US population, they disproportionately account for 44% of the prison population, making African-American children the most widely represented group impacted by parental incarceration (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008). Parental incarceration is also one of the several classified Adverse Childhood Experiences or ACE's, which are stressful and traumatic childhood events shown to lead to dysfunction in adulthood (Kalmakis & Chandler, 2013). As rates of incarceration increase as do the number of children impacted by parental incarceration and subsequently an increased sense of urgency for research to better understand the effects of parental incarceration.

Studies that have examined CIP have primarily assessed and analyzed the associations of risk factors, negative consequences and threats to well-being and poor outcomes of these youth (Jonhston, 1995; Loper & Clarke, 2013; Luthar, 2016; Mazza & Overstreet, 2000; Murray & Farrington, 2008; Nichols & Loper., 2012.; Poehlmann, Dallaire, Loper, & Shear, 2010). Much

less is known about the assets, resiliency and even the positive outcomes demonstrated by this population. Several studies have investigated factors that might promote resilience or be associated with positive functioning that could serve as a buffer to mitigate risk factors and negative outcomes of CIP (Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008, Shlafer & Poehlmann, 2010; Poehlmann & Eddy, 2013; Luther, 2015). Poehlmann, Dallaire, Loper and Shear (2010) suggest a conceptual model for understanding parent-child contact during incarceration. In an examination of research investigating the role of parent-child contact during incarceration they conclude while there are many confounding variables, contact between children and their incarcerated parent has significant impact potential on child development (Poehlmann, Dallaire, Loper, & Shear, 2010). Other studies have evaluated the role of factors such as academic performance as a protective factor in at-risk youth (Novotný & Křeménková, 2016). The overarching focus of the following quantitative and qualitative studies is to explore parent-child contact and academic achievement as potential protective factors that may promote psychological well-being and therefore help CIP obtain greater resilience and well-being.

### **Children of Incarcerated Parents and the Risks**

Oftentimes referred to as the “Hidden Victims” of mass incarceration, CIP represent the very real residual effects of the imprisonment of their parents, often the result of mass incarceration. Mass incarceration is understood as the excessive arrest and imprisonment of individuals, particularly those who are of color or poor (Wakefield & Wildeman, 2014), with the US leading the rest of the world in this category (Pew Center on States, 2009). Michelle Alexander (2010), thoroughly paints the picture of mass incarceration in her book *‘The New Jim Crow’*.

Like Jim Crow (and slavery), mass incarceration operates as a tightly networked system of laws, policies, customs, and institutions that operate collectively to ensure the subordinate status of a group defined largely by race. (Alexander, 2010, pg 13).

While some progressive reform has occurred since her classic book, the reforms have been minimal and have paid little attention to the collateral damage. Some of the progress that has occurred in recent policy reforms has been led by the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act, which narrows the mandatory minimum sentences to serious violent/drug offenses, and reduces sentences for eligible inmates who demonstrate rehabilitated behaviors such as engaging in work, job training, school and faith-based activities while incarcerated (American Bar Association, n.d.).

Yet again, few consequential policies have aimed at helping those children who are left behind without a mother or a father (Johnston, 2005). CIP are a difficult population to track through research as there is no systematic database that houses information about these children and their families. CIP can come from any race, ethnicity, social economic background, neighborhood, community or demographic. However, incarceration predominantly affects poor, communities of color, more so than any other demographic in the US (Alexander, 2010). Many CIP come from low socio-economic communities plagued with high crime rates, lack of resources, failing schools, high unemployment rates and poor economic structure. Often these precipitating factors precede the incarceration of a parent predisposing them to risk prior to their parents incarceration (Murray & Farrington, 2008; Loper & Clark, 2013; Phillips & Gates, 2011). Therefore, the likelihood of poor psychological development and negative outcomes are intensified by the loss of a parent due to incarceration. Furthermore, many of these children are less likely to elicit the same empathy as children who have lost a parent due to divorce, military

deployment, or death, increasing the effects of social stigma (Phillips & Gates, 2011).

Incarceration is a stigmatizing experience for both the incarcerated person and the children and families impacted. This is mainly because of negative societal ideals about who “criminals” are and what it means to be a “criminal” (Luthar, 2016). Children and their family members are often ascribed these same judgments about their character by mere association with their loved one. It is argued that these children may experience feelings of rejection by their peers, school administrators, and even family members because of the crimes their parents committed (Luthar, 2016). Mazza and Overstreet (2000) argue that CIP are more likely to exhibit symptomatology of depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and/or suicidal ideation following the incarceration of a parent.

One study found that nearly 67% of parents arrested were handcuffed in front of their children and children who witness the arrest of a parent reported feelings of heightened fear and uncertainty (Phillips, 1998). Nicholas and Loper found that children who experience the incarceration of a household member were found to have lower cognitive skills as they missed more days of school and were more likely to drop out or not graduate when compared to their peers who did not experience the incarceration of a household member (2012). More than half of incarcerated parents reported they were the primary financial source for their child at the time of their arrest. Which leads to inevitable financial insecurity these children subsequently experience due to the parents removal from the home (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008).

Furthermore, attachment theory suggests that continued or elongated separation of children from their primary caregiver could be traumatic, having long lasting adverse effects, interfering with successful cognitive and emotional development across several critical domains (Shlafer & Poehlmann, 2009). A child’s sense of security is rooted in the relationships they have

with familiar caregivers and that security is necessary for confident and productive exploration of the world. For CIP, the loss of a caregiver due to incarceration disrupts attachment and the emotional security, causing children who are still developing attachment patterns to embody insecure attachment styles, which are likely to negatively influence their ability to bond optimally in future relationships. Children who exhibit attachment insecurity are also at risk for developing other behavioral and mental health problems (Makariev & Shaver, 2010). CIP were also found to be at increased risk for intergenerational transmission of crime: being caught up in the criminal justice system (Will, Loper, & Jackson, 2014). One possibility is that children with an incarcerated parent are more suggestible than their peers to follow a pattern of criminal behavior which could lead them to similar outcomes as their parent (Will, Loper, & Jackson, 2014). Another possibility is that they simply live in the same neighborhoods targeted by police forces driven by structural racism making them targets for unfair policing practices and incarceration (Alexander, 2010).

The preceding findings provide a dismal and devastating picture highlighting the many risks, threats and negative outcomes associated with children of incarcerated parents. While it is important to understand these risks that are associated with belonging to particular a group, labeling theory provides clear warning as to why it is necessary for society to take precaution when trying to understand this group. As such, risks are not definitive outcomes. Society must better address how it categorizes and defines members of vulnerable and marginalized groups such as CIP (Lee, Tajima, Herrenkohl, & Hong, 2017). Given that CIP represent a distinctive set of individuals who are placed in this status as the result of the actions of their parents or other caregiver(s), there is much reason to criticize the traditional deficit-oriented approach to understanding these youth.

The alternative research lens is to try to understand these youth from a strengths-based approach, uncovering their assets, resilience, and ability to overcome adversity and creatively function in a way that defies their common challenges. This research takes such an approach, focusing the relationship between protective factors and positive outcomes of CIP.

### **Community Psychology Approach**

Community Psychology (CP) is a discipline of practice that focuses on the well-being of an individual within the context of community. Empowering marginalized individuals and communities is one of the core principles of community psychology (Kloos, et al., 2012). Rappaport connotes that empowerment can be understood as ones' individual determination over their life and such "conveys a psychological sense of personal control" (Rappaport, 1987). This research mirrors the beginning stages of the integral steps of community psychology research which integrates action with research. According to the Society for Community Research and Action (SCRA), the governing body of Community Psychology, multiple methodologies such as the use of mixed methods align with the values and principles of CP (SCRA, 2014). The goals of CP are to promote research that enhances the well-being of people and their communities, specifically underrepresented and marginalized groups such as CIP. One of the core values of CP is engaging in empowerment related practices with such marginalized groups, which can be carried out, for instance, by allowing members belonging to these groups to sharing their stories. A mixed method approach to understanding CIP is valuable because hearing directly from the youth as well as their caregivers allows the researcher to triangulate the themes of the stories to obtain a fuller picture. There are limitations and disadvantages to directly surveying youth, and also from directly interviewing caregivers. Therefore, both of these approaches will be used together to understand the resiliency in CIP.



## **Quantitative Studies of CIP**

Quantitative studies investigating CIP, historically utilize secondary datasets. Hayward and DePanfilis used Administrative data from the Adoption and Foster Care Administrative Reporting System (AFCARS) to explore which factors promote reunification for children who have a parent incarcerated (2007). They found variables such as a child's age at time of incarceration and release, family and parental characteristics, and characteristics of out-of-home care were likely to affect the probability of reunification of children with their incarcerated parents among release (Hayward & Depanfilis, 2007). A similar study exploring parental incarceration during the reunification period utilized secondary data from the California Social Work Education Center (CalSWEC) (D'Andrade & Valdez, 2012). The findings suggest that reunification for parents who are incarcerated upon release is more of a challenge than initially thought. The problem is not simply that the parents were incarcerated during the time of the reunification process but given societal and lifestyle characteristics, the required rules are not always adhered to by the parents (D'Andrade & Valdez, 2012)

## **Resilience Theoretical Frameworks**

Resilience is a multi-faceted construct that researchers have defined in a number of ways (Afilfi, Merrill, & Davis, 2016). Resilience can be understood as a process or as an outcome. As a process, resiliency is an ever-evolving character trait of an individual. As an outcome, resiliency is something that one accomplishes following a single or series of adverse events (Almedom, 2013). Novotný and Křeménková (2016) define resilience as “the psycho-social process of coping with life adversity in such a way that the development and functioning of an individual maintain normal or even surpass general expectations”. Therefore, resilience can be viewed as a reflection of one's psychological well-being. Similar theories offer insight into the

concept of resilience. Ryff's psychological well-being theory promotes two main concepts of psychological well-being: positive psychological functioning and life satisfaction (Ryff & Keys, 1995). Using data from a nationally representative sample of adults over the age of 25, n=1108, she operationalized 6 key variables with a 20-item scale. This scale suggests a theoretical construct of resilience that reflects: self-acceptance, positive relations, environmental mastery, personal growth, autonomy and purpose in life (Ryff & Keys, 1995).

Traditionally, research on CIP has sought to understand psychological well-being and resilience from a deficit or problems-focused lens (Mazza & Overstreet, 2000; Phillips & Gates, 2011; Loper & Clark, 2013). As demonstrated in the above review of literature, there are sufficient studies focusing on CIP that underline the risks and negative outcomes. Such an approach can lead to an implicit narrative that CIP are a hopeless population lacking in capacity to succeed, likely to show poor outcomes psychologically and otherwise. Experts argue for strength-based approaches to understand objective and subjective dimensions of well-being of youth with incarcerated parents (Pollard & Lee, 2003). Figure 1 reflects the primary thesis of this research, which is parent-child contact and academic achievement are strength-based protective factors that are embedded within resilience and therefore lead to psychological well-being.

### **Protective Factors**

The U.S. Department of Health defines protective factors as "...conditions or attributes in individuals, families, communities, or the larger society that, when present, mitigate or eliminate risk in families and communities that, when present, increase the health and well-being of children and families" (Brodowski & Fischman, 2013). In CIP, these attributes are seen as strengths that support individual growth and development and have the capacity to promote resilience. Therefore, protective factors will be conceptualized as the precursor to resilience.



Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Resilience in CIP

**Parent-Child Contact.** Several studies have explored parent-child contact during incarceration as a potential protective factor to promote well-being and reduce the likelihood of negative outcomes commonly associated with CIP (Poehlmann, Dallaire, Loper, & Shear, 2010). Tuerek and Loper (2013) contend the most significant predictor of family reunification after imprisonment is parent-child contact during incarceration. While visitation is just one form of contact during incarceration it is the method most often explored in several studies. The findings are mixed and need to be further investigated (Poehlmann, Dallaire, Loper, & Shear, 2010). Additionally, there is a need to explore the potential impact of other forms of parent-child contact during incarceration such as phone calls and letter writing. Few studies have attempted to theorize the role of parent-child contact during incarceration. While some studies have identified benefits of parent-child contact related to children's well-being many of the studies are limited and clear interpretations are challenging. As stated earlier, CIP are a hard to identify population

and are a protected group because of their vulnerable status. Researchers face challenges trying to recruit participants for studies that involve CIP. Additionally, many studies rely heavily on the report of the parent or caregiver and not on the child directly. The main reason is that there is a duty to protect and not cause emotional harm to children as study participants. Shlafer and Poehlmann (2010) interviewed 57 families, including incarcerated parents, children and their caregiver to assess the triadic relationship of the child-caregiver and incarcerated parent. They found that many of the children viewed their incarcerated parent as positive attachment figures. Had it not been for the direct interviews with the children themselves these positive perspectives might have remained unknown. As a result of the children's perceptions of their incarcerated parent, caregivers felt more positively about facilitating visits between the incarcerated parent and the child.

**Academic Achievement.** Wang and Huguley (2012) found that educational aspirations and GPA were two of the biggest predictors of educational success among African American students. The study conducted by Wang and Hughley pooled secondary data collected from a longitudinal study of over 630 economically diverse African-American students, mean age=14.5 years, in an east coast metropolitan area. GPA, cognitive engagement and educational aspirations were used as predictors to determine academic achievement. The main purpose of the study was to understand if racial discrimination and parental socialization had any effect on student academic achievement. They found that racial discrimination, particularly by teachers, more so than by peers, had a negative association with student academic achievement. Yet parental socialization and instilling cultural pride served to buffer or mitigate the effect. While this study did not directly recruit CIP, the sample was clearly relevant, and supports the adoption of

academic achievement as a potential protective factor. Academic achievement will be operationally defined through this study as a child's ability to excel in an academic setting.

### **The EPOCH Measure of Adolescent Well-being.**

The EPOCH Measure of Adolescent Well-Being is a strength based self-reporting assessment tool that measures perceived psychological well-being by examining five positive psychological attributes: (E)ngagement, (P)erseverance, (O)ptimism, (C)onnectedness and (H)appiness. These attributes individually and collectively contribute to adolescent psychological well-being, physical health and other positive outcomes in later adulthood.

The 20-item measure is the result of 10 sample studies ran across n=4,480 adolescents in Australia and the US. Several hundred items were considered from existing measures and tools assessing psychological well-being, academic performance, positive outcomes, resilience and other positive attributes. The researchers took the initial pool of 60 items and narrowed them down by identifying only those items that reflected one of the 5 positive psychological attributes of the EPOCH, 12 items per attribute. This measure was then administered to 2 samples. Correlation analysis showed those items that were closely related and the measure was narrowed to a 25-item measure that was then administered to 3 samples. After further psychometric analyses, the authors refined the measure once more to a 20-item measure that was administered to the remaining 4 samples. Internal reliability and validity were tested across all 10 samples. Cronbach alpha for the combined samples was .90 while test-retest reliability demonstrated a Pearson r score of .31.

In developing the measure, the authors utilized diverse adolescent pools, with varying demographic backgrounds from 2 different countries. They also used repeated assessments and several other measures as well to look at life satisfaction, depression, academic performance and

health and behavior. The study found that the EPOCH scores were negatively related to items measuring emotional distress and were positively related to factors assessing well-being and positive psychological function. Significant positive correlations were found between the EPOCH measure and academic performance. Those adolescents who performed well academically also had higher perceptions of well-being.

### **Purpose of the Research**

As the review of literature outlines, there are myriad risks associated with CIP, making them vulnerable and in need of research attention, but less is known about resilience and the protective factors which might mitigate risks. These protective factors can potentially lead to a positive trajectory and lessen the likelihood of negative outcomes. Intervention and prevention efforts have long relied on findings from studies that focused on the deficits and negative outcomes listed above. Many have relied on secondary data collected for another purpose. Very few studies have gathered data from youth directly. CIP's self-perceptions into their well-being adds valuable insight. Their capacity to speak to their unique experiences and the impact those experiences have had on their lives is largely underestimated. Again, as most studies which seek to assess the well-being of children impacted by parental incarceration gather data from adult sources, such as the primary caregiver, the incarcerated parent, or the child's teacher, rarely ever is the child's voice heard. Every kind of data is useful, but secondary sources provide only a limited perspective of a youth's perceived reality. By directly surveying and sampling youth on their unique perspectives and experiences of parental incarceration researchers can gain valuable insight as to how to provide the most effective and appropriate interventions. Presumably, youth and adults have different interpretations of "well-being". They also prioritize different aspects of well-being and this is amplified among marginalized or at-risk youth (Fava, Li, Burke, &

Wagner, 2017). One of the reasons several researchers (Luther 2015; Poehlmann & Eddy, 2013) argue for strengths-based approach in understanding CIP is that very little is known about the ones who have “overcome the odds” (Werner & Ruth, 1992). Some children still function normally in spite the adverse experience of parental incarceration (Poehlmann & Eddy, 2013). As such, these researchers argue that more focus should be given to protective factors and resilience processes in these children. There is considerable evidence suggesting parental presence makes a difference in one’s life trajectory, but the deficit-based nature of published studies offer limited perspectives for policy and practice intervention. Murray, Farrington and Sekol’s (2012) analysis of CIP suggests a greater policy focus on funding interventions, geared to target children displaying traits of antisocial behavior, drug use and poor mental health. These studies, however, never even suggest identifying CIPs with positive attributes. In fact, it seems difficult to understand how their work would inform policy to increase the likelihood of positive outcomes.

This research seeks to add to the limited existing literature which focuses on protective factors and resilience processes in CIP. Utilizing a strength-based approach this study explores the relationship between protective factors; parent-child contact and academic achievement with CIP subjective perceptions of well-being. Through this work, potentially new frameworks for intervention and prevention can be discovered that can advance the well-being of millions of children impacted by parental incarceration. The work can also help prevent the psychological and emotional trauma CIPs are subjected to on a daily basis. This research will sample and survey youth directly to gauge their perceptions of their own well-being.

To examine the relationship between parent-child contact, academic achievement and resilience in CIPs, the proposed research questions were explored via an explanatory sequential

mixed-method design (Creswell, 2014). This research has 2 phases: Study I) a quantitative structured online survey for CIPs, and Study II) follow-up qualitative interviews of caregivers. Results of the quantitative analyses related to participant resilience will be explored first. In order to better understand the presence of protective factors and their relationship to resilience, qualitative analyses of caregivers from phase II will then be explored. Thus, the qualitative data helps explain and build upon initial quantitative findings (Creswell, 2014).

### **Study 1: Research Questions**

1. Does parent-child contact during incarceration lead to higher self-perceptions on the EPOCH measure of adolescent well-being for children of incarcerated parents?
2. Does parent-child contact during incarceration lead to higher academic performance for children of incarcerated parents?

It is hypothesized that youth who have any contact with their incarcerated parent are likely to score higher on the EPOCH Measure of Adolescent Well-being. It is also hypothesized that youth who have any kind of contact with their parent during incarceration will demonstrate higher academic performance. It is also hypothesized that adolescents who score higher on the EPOCH Measure of Adolescent Well-being will also demonstrate higher academic performance.

### **Positionality Statement**

The researcher is a graduate student in the Community Psychology Program at National Louis University, Chicago, IL. As the daughter of a mother who was incarcerated for over 17 years, my research interests in the subject matter of CIP and resilience stems from the gap observed in the literature in which I feel there are untold stories about CIP. The negative narrative is often the one most predominantly discussed and less is understood about those children who still do seemingly well and overcome the risks associated with parental



incarceration. This researcher has spent years reading books, scholarly articles, attending workshops, engaging in conversations with experts in the field to understand the issue from an academic perspective and not just a personal one. However, this researcher's personal experience, being the child of an incarcerated parent, does inform her desire to focus on strength-based research and highlight resilience and positive outcomes. This researcher has had the opportunity to attend a Big 10 university on an academic scholarship, graduate top of her class, obtain competitive and challenging employment and internship opportunities that stimulated growth and eventually landed her in acceptance in a masters and doctoral program.

Additionally, upon completion of several graduate courses in qualitative and quantitative research methods and theoretical perspectives of community psychology, this researcher re-assessed her study design to one that would be most appropriate and fitting for the population being studied and the research questions being investigated.

The extensive knowledge available, which included both in classroom learning and personal experience, have guided this research over the last several years. This research topic is based on the investigator's specific interest in understanding CIP and resilience processes. Understanding this, it is important to note the personal buy-in the researcher has for this topic and this population. Baturina (2015) suggests that no researcher is without bias, and therefore understanding one's bias could enhance one's work as opposed to stifle it. Recognizing this, continual efforts were made to engage in conversations with my peers and my advisors to ensure that the approaches, methods, techniques, analysis and data remained as valid and un-skewed as possible.

### **Method: Study 1**

#### **Design**

Study 1 of this research involved an exploratory quantitative survey design instrument consisting of 4 constructs: demographic data, academic achievement, parent-child contact and the EPOCH Measure of Adolescent Well-being, see Appendix A.

**Demographic Information.** Participants were asked to identify their age, gender, race, educational level and high school status. They were asked about the status of the parents' incarceration and their relationship to that parent. Respondents were also asked to disclose whether they had ever been arrested. Some studies suggest a correlation between parental incarceration and transgenerational criminal activity (Besemer, Farrington, & Bijleveld, 2017). This question sought to explore whether variables such as contact with an incarcerated parent and perceived well-being had any significant relationship on youth who have an arrest record due to criminal activity (Besemer, Farrington, & Bijleveld, 2017).

**EPOCH Adolescent Wellbeing.** The EPOCH Measure of Adolescent Well-being is a 20-item questionnaire which assesses participants within 5 subscales which are conceptually used to define psychological well-being (Kern, Lizbeth Benson, Steinberg, & Steinberg, 2016). The 5 subscales are: engagement, perseverance, optimism, connectedness and happiness. Participants are asked to respond to positively worded statements such as "I am happy with life" and "I finish whatever I begin" along a 5-point Likert scale from 1=almost never to 5=almost always or 1=not like me at all to 5=very much like me. This measure is used to understand adolescent perceived psychological well-being. The mean score was computed by adding all 20 items together and dividing by the 5 subscales with higher scores on the scales indicating higher or more positive perceptions of well-being.

**Parent-Child Contact.** Participants were asked about the frequency and types of contact they have with their parent during incarceration. Parent-child contact was categorized into three

types: letter writing, phone calls and physical visits. This scale asked participants how often they wrote, visited and had phone calls with their incarcerated parent. Frequency of visits, letters and phone calls was determined by participants' self-reports on a 5-point scale from zero occurrence to multiple occurrences, ranging from none, annually, semi-monthly, monthly and weekly, with the higher numbers indicating higher rates of contact. The mean score was computed by summing the items up and dividing by the 3 types.

**Academic Achievement.** This construct was operationally defined by evaluating types of grades received, grade point average (GPA) on a 4.0 scale and extracurricular activities. Participants were asked to select their GPA range on a scale ranging from less than 1.5 to above 3.5. They were also asked to list the types of grades they received from mostly F's to Mostly A's. Finally, this scale also asked about the number of extracurricular clubs the participants were involved in at school from 0 to 3 or more. Several items that were originally considered for this construct included suspension history and post high school plans. These items were removed from the construct model as they did not hold together significantly.

## **Participants**

To be eligible to participate in the study, participants were allowed to be either male or female, between the ages of 13-18. They had to be able to read and speak English fluently. The anticipated number of participants for this survey was 30 with the maximum not to exceed 90. The final sample size derived was N=12. Participation in this study was voluntary. Legal guardian consent was required for those participants under the age of 18. Each participant was compensated \$10 in cash for their participation upon the completion of the survey. This survey was originally intended for adolescents who have experienced the incarceration of a parent;

however, some participants experienced familial incarceration of a relative who lived in the home and their responses were included in the final data set as well.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

The survey was administered by the researcher electronically via an iPad. Studies have shown adolescents between the ages of 13-18 are typically more technologically savvy due to recent increases in exposure to devices such as computers, tablets and cell-phone at a much higher frequency than older generations (Blake, et al., 2015; Linder, Ameringer, Erickson, MacPherson, & Stegenga, 2013). Therefore, these youth are less likely to have difficulty navigating these devices and more likely to be engaged in online surveys than paper and pen administration. This process for data collection has been successfully implemented in other published works surveying youth (Blake, et al., 2015, Linder, et al., 2013).

### **Recruitment**

*Protocol for correctional institutions:* While sitting off to the side in the designated waiting area for visitors prior to entry to inmate visitation area the researcher visually identified those visitors entering who appeared to have an adolescent with them between the ages of 13-18. After determining if the accompanying adult was either a parent or legal guardian eligibility was determined to extend an invitation to participate in the survey. Youth and families who demonstrated interest but did not want to participate prior to the visit with the incarcerated parent were offered an opportunity to participate after the visit or at a later scheduled date.

*Protocol for local agencies:* Other participants were recruited outside of the correctional institutions from various local agencies and organizations such as the Boys and Girls Club, The YMCA and Big Brother Big Sister of America. A flyer for recruitment was distributed and posted in public bulletin areas. Interested participants contacted the researcher to schedule a

time/place to meet to review consent forms and complete the survey. Only adults of eligible participants were able to schedule an appointment with the researcher. Youth who initiated contact were informed that only a consenting adult could reach out to the researcher to coordinate and that the adult would also need to be present to sign consent forms while the youth took the survey.

### **Study 1: Results**

This study utilized a self-report survey tool to collect responses from children who have experienced parental incarceration. Participants in this study were recruited from various locations; including community-based centers that service families impacted by incarcerated parents and word of mouth, however the primary recruiting source were several major midwestern correctional institutions.

#### **Descriptives**

The final sample for this survey was N= 12. Both, male and female participants were sampled with 67% of participants identifying as female and 33% identifying as male. The age range of participants was 12-21 with the mean age being 16 years old. The majority of the participants identified racially as African-American, 92%, with the remaining percentage being Hispanic/Latino. Eleven percent of the participants were in middle school, most, 67%, were in high school, while 22% had graduated from high school. The mean grade of participants in high school was 10th. Eighty percent of survey respondents identified as having had a parent incarcerated, the remaining respondents identified having another family member incarcerated. Half of respondents, 50%, said that they currently have a parent or family member incarcerated. When asked about post-high school plans, 100% percent of participants identified continuing

education plans beyond high school, with 83% saying that the goal was college and beyond. The other 17% said they would be pursuing trade school.

The survey did not inquire as to whether the youth's incarcerated parent was detained in a county jail or a state correctional facility. However, it is important to note that the majority of the survey respondents who participated were recruited at the same Midwest Correctional Institution.

**Psychometrics** The items in the EPOCH Measure of Adolescent Well-being held together extremely well as predicted with a Cronbach's alpha of .92,  $M = 3.54$ ,  $SD = .75$  for this sample. The 5 subscales held together relatively well independently: engagement  $\alpha = .77$ , connectedness  $\alpha = .78$ , perseverance  $\alpha = .62$ , optimism  $\alpha = .89$  and happiness  $\alpha = .76$ . Academic achievement had a Cronbach's alpha of .74,  $M = 3.06$ ,  $SD = .06$  on a 4-point scale. Parent-child contact measure was also found reliable (4 items;  $\alpha = .83$ ),  $M = 2.91$ ,  $SD = 1.43$ .

## **Research Questions**

Research Question 1: Does parent-child contact during incarceration lead to higher EPOCH well-being scores?

Research Question 2: Does parent-child contact during incarceration lead to higher academic performance?

It was hypothesized that participants who have any form of contact with their incarcerated parent will demonstrate greater psychological well-being as demonstrated by the EPOCH measure. It was also hypothesized that participants who have any form of contact with their incarcerated parent will demonstrate greater academic achievement.

## **Quantitative Analysis**

The relationship between parent-child contact and perceived psychological well-being was analyzed using regression analysis. Such a form of statistical analysis is used to explain

relationships among certain variables and account for which variables are predictive of an outcome. Linear regressions were run using the stepwise method to determine predictors of perceived adolescent well-being via the EPOCH scale. The stepwise method was used since there were multiple predictors, and the goal was identifying those predictors that produced the best model. The primary regression analyses examined which among the set of predictors predicted subjective well-being as an outcome. The findings revealed a positive relationship with academic achievement, specifically GPA, and a negative relationship with grade in school as seen in Table 1. These factors accounted for 69% of the variance within the model

Table 1.

*Regression analysis predicting subjective well-being.*

<b>Model</b>		<b>B</b>	<b>Std Error</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
1	(Constant)	.934	.654		1.427	.191
	On a 4.0 scale, what is your current GPA?	.710	.173	.823	4.103	.003
2	(Constant)	2.203	.589		3.743	.007
	On a 4.0 scale, what is your current GPA?	.507	.132	.588	3.835	.006
	What grade in school are you in?	-.200	.061	-.499	-3.256	.014

The only significant factor in the regression model was that academic achievement (GPA and grade in school) predicted psychological well-being ( $R$ -squared= .43). There was also a negative correlation between year in school and psychological well-being. As grade in school increased, EPOCH mean scores decreased suggesting the further along in school one is the less psychological well-being one has. Cross-tabulations were run for gender and perceived well-being, showing that adolescents who had a mother/stepmother incarcerated had a lower mean ( $M=3.3$ ) on well-being than those youth with a father/stepfather incarcerated ( $M=3.7$ ). Maternal incarceration has a greater impact on adolescents perceived psychological well-being than

paternal incarceration. Male participants had the biggest variance in scores depending on the gender of the parent incarcerated. Males who had a father incarcerated had a  $M= 3.4$ , whereas males who had a mother incarcerated had a  $M= 2.5$ . This suggests that the gender of the incarcerated parent was significantly related to adolescent perceptions of well-being.

Table 2:

*Well Being Scale Totals Based on Gender of Incarcerated Parent*

<b>Relationship IP: Gender</b>	<b>Participant Gender</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>N</b>
Father/Stepfather	Male	3.4333	.72858	3
	Female	3.8750	.45000	4
	Total	3.6857	.57787	7
Mother/Stepmother	Male	2.5500	.	1
	Female	3.5375	1.00695	4
	Total	3.3400	.97750	5
Total	Male	3.2125	.74092	4
	Female	3.7063	.74423	8
	Total	3.5417	.74919	12

There was a significant negative correlation between frequency of contact and parents' length of incarceration  $r=-.001$  ( $p<.05$ ). The longer that parents were incarcerated the less likely contact would occur.

Females generally tended to rate themselves higher on the EPOCH scale than male participants. Table 3 shows the high-low split which reflects those participants who rated themselves above or below the 2.5 mark of the 5-point scale. Five of the 8 females had average scores above 2.5 whereas only 1 of the 4 male participants had a mean score of above 2.5.

Table 3.

*Well Being Scores; High Low Split by Gender*

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Scores &gt;2.5</b>	<b>Scores 2.5&gt;</b>	<b>Total</b>
Male	3	1	4
Female	3	5	8



Total	6	6	12
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Results from the quantitative phase of this research suggest that girls with an incarcerated parent have higher psychological well-being scores than boys with an incarcerated parent. Results also indicate that academic achievement and performance impacts the well-being of adolescents who have an incarcerated parent. Finally, the gender of the incarcerated parent appeared to be a factor in adolescents perceived well-being. The interviews with caregivers in Study II will further explore these findings by obtaining caregiver perceptions. Thus, the qualitative data explains and builds upon initial quantitative findings (Creswell, 2014).

Because the sample size was so small for Study I and true quantitative inferential analysis could not be concluded, this study was primarily exploratory in nature and the findings were used to inform the design of Study II.

### **Methods: Study II**

The previous study explored resilience and parent child contact from a quantitative approach. Study II will be an exploratory qualitative study that will further investigate the relationship between resilience and parent child contact. Based off the findings from study I which were not conclusive due to the small sample size and lack of generalizability, Study II will complete the picture by adding the perspectives of the caregivers of CIP.

### **Qualitative Studies of CIP**

Qualitative studies investigating the effects of parental incarceration and factors that affect the outcome of CIP often utilize methods such as interviews to gather data (Beckmeyer & Arditti, 2014; Loper & Clarke, 2013). Qualitative research focuses on analyzing and interpreting texts to uncover meaning and patterns that can explain phenomenon.

In a study aimed to evaluate an extended visitation program for incarcerated mothers and their minor children, researchers collected data from mothers (N=24) and caregivers (N=19) of children to understand their perceptions about the program and perceived benefits (Schubert, Duininck, & Shlafer, 2016). The extended visiting (EV) program consists of highly structured, extended-length, child-centered, intentional engagements between incarcerated mothers and their children. These visits allow mothers permissible physical contact with their children which is often prohibited and or limited in typical visiting areas. They have extended together time, up to 4 hours, more structured child-centered activities, and also a change of scenery. These types of visits take place outside of the typical visiting rooms, which allows for more child friendly and child centered experiences such as scheduled lunch time, gym time and arts and crafts. In this study, mothers and caregivers were engaged in semi-structured interviews to understand their perceptions of perceived benefits of the EV. A phenomenological approach was explored using a team of independent coders to identify themes. Mothers identified the following benefits: opportunity to build and maintain relationships with their children; engage in physical contact with their children; personal motivation; privacy from caregivers and correctional staff; increased peer support and personal growth (Schubert, Duininck, & Shlafer, 2016). Caregivers perceived benefits echoed that of the incarcerated mothers as many caregivers communicated support and understanding of the need for the building of the mother-child relationship.

Several studies have sampled caregivers in an attempt to understand this unique and complex population, and in several cases they have utilized the grounded theory approach for inquiry and coding. A study by Shalfer and Poehlmann (2010) evaluated caregiver and teacher perceptions of attachment, as well as caregiver relationships between children and their incarcerated parent. This longitudinal mixed methods study evaluated 57 families of CIP who

engaged in a mentorship program over the course of 6 months. Questionnaires were administered to children to assess their perceptions about the relationship with their caregiver and their incarcerated parent. Children aged 4-15 were given a 25-item self-report questionnaire with positively worded statements on a 5-point Likert scale; higher scores indicated more positive perceptions of relationships. The caregivers of the children were interviewed monthly for 6 months using semi-structured interviews to understand the caregiver's perceptions and feelings about the parent-child relationship. These caregivers were also interviewed at the intake and at the end of the 6 months to retrieve information about behavioral concerns and patterns as well as the type and frequency of contact that children had with their incarcerated parent. Mentors and teachers of the children were also interviewed at intake and again at 6 months after the mentorship program had begun to understand their perceptions of the child's feelings about their relationships with their incarcerated parent and their caregiver.

Overall, they found that some children viewed the relationship positively while others had negative feelings about the relationship with their incarcerated parent. Some even developed a sense of alienation when the contact with their incarcerated parent was minimal, supporting the idea that parent-child contact is valuable. Of the 29 children who did respond to the direct question about their incarcerated parent 12 (41%) had positive feelings, reflected in comments such as "I really miss my dad" and "I had a dream that I tore down the prison walls so that I could be with my dad". Nine children or 31% had negative feelings of their incarcerated parent, revealed in statements such as "I don't like my [incarcerated] mother, she's mean". The remaining 28% had mixed feelings both positive and negative.

**Study II Methodology.** The qualitative portion of this study utilizes caregiver perceptions to explore CIP contact with their incarcerated parents, and the relationship of this

contact with children's psychological well-being. The quantitative results indicated limited evidence that parent-child contact during incarceration had positive effects on children's well-being based on youths' perceptions. Caregiver perceptions were collected to gain a complete picture of the relationship between protective factors and resiliency in CIP from those who have an up-close view of the children. Leaving out the qualitative portion would leave out this important perspective and part of the story. Study II therefore consisted of qualitative, semi structured, in-depth, one-on-one interviews with caregivers of CIP. Semi-structured interviews probed questions around the theme of resilience and topics of parent-child contact and academic achievement, driven by a more theoretical and deductive analysis method (Silverman, 2013). The open-ended interview questions allowed participants to fluidly share their experiences and stories in a natural and flexible way that provided the opportunity for more inductive analyses. Therefore, this methodological approach consists of both Thematic Content Analysis (TMC) in which theories and themes are explicitly explored based on existing research and also Grounded Theory Method (GTM) to allow the researcher to open to themes and concepts that may emerge to inform theory.

### **Research Questions for Study II**

1. What are caregiver perceptions about the relationship between the incarcerated parent and the child?
2. Do caregivers believe that parent-child contact during incarceration has a positive impact on children's well-being and that it promotes resiliency?
3. What factors do caregivers observe that support psychological well-being or resilience in the children they care for?

4. Is there a difference in caregivers' perceptions of psychological well-being based on the gender of the parent incarcerated?

## **Recruitment**

Convenience sampling was used to recruit caregivers for the qualitative phase of this study. A select sample of caregivers whose children participated in Study I were invited to participate in individual one-on-one interviews for Study II. Caregiver information was collected on consent forms from children in Study I which asked parents to provide their information if they were interested in participating in future studies. Only those caregivers who indicated interest were engaged for Study II. Additionally, caregivers were also recruited through the same organizational outlets used in Study I. Organizations who had previously shared constituent information about the first study were asked to again share information about the second study. Caregivers of children were contacted via email about the opportunity to participate in Study II and were provided general details about the study including the name, topic, location, time, date, eligibility and compensation. Those caregivers interested in participating were asked to respond via email indicating interest and giving the researcher permission to follow up.

Caregivers were additionally recruited through sharing information about the study using other mass emailing to listservs of organizations that service children and families impacted by incarceration, such as the Prison Fellowship Ministry and the National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated. Current caregivers who expressed interest were given primary consideration for the study.

## **Participants**

In order to be eligible participants had to be the primary caregiver of an adolescent between the ages of 12-18 who has experienced parental incarceration. Caregivers had to be

willing to participate in a 55-minute interview and answer questions about themselves, the child they care for and the incarcerated parent. Participation in this study was voluntary. Participants were provided informed consent for full disclosure and review. All participants were at least 21 years of age or older. Each was compensated \$30 cash for their participation upon the completion of the interview.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

Semi-structured qualitative interviews were utilized to explore the relationship of resilience and parent-child contact in children of incarcerated parents as well as other themes from the perspectives of caregivers of CIP. Interviews lasted an average of 43 minutes. Participants were provided a copy of the informed consent for their review prior to the interview. Participants had the opportunity to ask any questions they wanted to ask prior to signing the consent form. The researcher administered the interview with the caregiver at a predetermined time and location. All interviews were conducted using Zoom video conferencing and were digitally recorded.

**Interview Protocol.** Prior to the interviews, participants were provided with access to the Informed Consent document for review and signature. All participants acknowledged receipt and review of the consent prior to the start of the interview. Participants were offered an opportunity to ask any clarifying questions after the interviewer reviewed the consent and verified once again the participant understood and agreed. The interviews were separated into 3 parts. The first section of the interview asked demographic information and specific information about the caregivers' experiences and life story. This included questions such as "Can you tell me about yourself?" and "How would you describe yourself as a parent/caregiver?" Participants were also asked during this time "Talk about the relationship you have with the (incarcerated) parent?"

What was it like prior to the incarceration and what is it like now?’ The second part of the interview asked caregivers to describe the child(ren) whom they care for who’ve experienced the parental incarceration, they were asked “What types of grades does he or she receive?”, “What kinds of activities are they involved in?”, “How can you tell when things are going well for him or her and when they are not?”. The final part of the interview consisted of exploring the relationship between the incarcerated parent and the child(ren) from the caregivers’ perspective. The caregiver was asked “Describe the type of relationship the child had with their parent prior to incarceration and what type of relationship do they have now”, “How often does the child communicate or visit with their incarcerated parent?”, “In what ways do you think the contact or lack of contact effects the child, if any?”

The interviews were semi-structured and the protocol provided a guide and outline for the interviewer. Participants were encouraged to tell their stories as naturally and comfortably as they felt possible. Follow up questions were asked throughout the interview and participants were often encouraged to “Say a little bit more” if the answers were short and did not provide a lot of content.

### **Data Analysis Procedure**

The data analysis for this sequential qualitative study utilized Thematic Content Analysis informed by Grounded Theory Methodology. Thematic content analysis condenses participants narratives into content-related categories using the participants own words and thus condensing or grouping attempts to reflect shared meaning (Bhattacharyya, Kauer, Corpus, Lykes, & Heesacker, 2018). Data is interpreted through the identification of concepts and themes that emerge through the systematic line-by-line coding of the transcribed data; which is the deliberate and careful word by word reading of the transcribed content by the researcher (Hsieh &

Shannon, 2005). This approach allows for the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of participant experiences and deeper meanings.

A combination of theory driven and grounded theory was used to code the research in the study. That is to say the data were analyzed with understandings of the past literature, pre-conceived theory, and the findings from Study I. The fundamental assumptions of the study remained the same, that children of incarcerated parents are more likely to demonstrate resilience and psychological well-being when protective factors such as parent-child contact during incarceration and academic achievement are present. Thematic Content Analysis, which is largely informed by grounded theory analysis also explores the ways in which individuals construct their realities based off their experiences (Brewster, Velz, Mennicke, & Tebbe, 2014).

Each of the interviews was conducted by the current researcher and digitally recorded. Notes were collected during the interviews, and then each interview was listened to several times more, with even more intense note-taking. Each of the interviews were transcribed verbatim. Six of the interviews were transcribed using NVivo Transcription service with each interview being reviewed for accuracy. The other 3 interviews were transcribed by hand by the researcher. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality. Transcribed interviews were read line by line to identify emerging concepts. Any mentions of resilience, well-being, wellness or other related concepts were particularly noted while keeping an open mind to the various ways new themes may emerge. These examinations continued until perceived saturations points were reached. The interviews were coded separately and there was no restriction on the number of concepts and themes identified. Repeated concepts were grouped into categories and subcategories for those themes that reflected more than 1 caregiver experience. Initial and final themes were discussed with the researchers dissertation chairs and advisor.



**Grounded Theory Methodology (GTM).** GTM is often employed for topics or populations that are understudied and where theory does not exist, or where existing theory is insufficient (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). GTM is designed to examine social phenomenon such as resilience in children of incarcerated parents. Such an examination is done through the gathering of information directly from participant experiences (Charmaz, 2006). This approach supports an understanding of resilience that builds on theory but that is also grounded in the data. GTM purports that there is no such thing as an “objective truth”. Instead, researchers, participants, and all involved will construct many truths and realities based on what is known, the multiple interpretations of the data obtained, and how the theory itself is constructed from these understandings (Charmaz, 2006).

From a qualitative perspective, this researcher’s extensive personal history into the content matter serves as a benefit and not a hindrance in collecting, analyzing and interpreting the data. GTM also highly encourages researchers to identify participants who have lived through a phenomenon in which they are more interested in learning about. Again, the topic of CIP lacks sufficient literature and data to determine definitive hypotheses and only certain parts can be pulled from existing research to inform the current research. GMT is therefore in the service of helping to complete the story, utilizing research participant knowledge, as it is the participants themselves who are the experts on the subject matter.

**Thematic Content Analysis.** Thematic Content Analysis is the specific coding method that was used to code the transcribed interviews. Thematic Content Analysis highlights inductive qualitative analysis in that specific patterns and themes are pinpointed in the coding process (Bhattacharyya, Kauer, Corpus, Lykes, & Heesacker, 2018). Transcriptions were coded for emergent themes from a ground up process, but again, resilience and the positive outcomes

associated with well-being were attended to throughout the coding process. Every instance of resilience, positive outcomes, well-being or parent-child contact were categorized and highlighted. The same can be said of parent-child contact as a protective factor that leads to resiliency in CIP.

On the continuum from inductive to deductive qualitative analysis, this study takes a blended approach with the acknowledgement that much of the research on resilience which exists has not yet been looked at in the context of youth who have grown up with incarcerated parents. The coding was initially driven by research and theory on resilience and well-being, while keeping open to new ideas and directions around resilience and well-being within the children provided by the caregivers.

## **Results: Study II**

### **Descriptives**

Participants for this study ranged in age from 28 years to 69 years old with the  $M = 40$  years of age and the median age being 34. Data was collected from a total of 8 caregivers, 7 female caregivers and 1 male caregiver. All of the caregivers identified as the primary caregiver of the child (or children) experiencing parental incarceration: 6 identified as the parent and 2 as grandparents. One caregiver of the 8 had also personally experienced parental incarceration as they themselves were incarcerated for 90 days.

All of the interviews were conducted using Zoom videoconferencing and were digitally recorded. A majority of the participants, 6 (75%), lived in the Chicago/Metropolitan area while the remaining 2 (25%) of participants lived in rural Illinois, and one recently relocated to Minnesota. Six of the caregivers identified as African American and the other 2 caregivers, identified as white. Given that the data was neither relevant nor helpful for building rapport,

education nor social-economic status (employment status or income level) was collected for this study. Some caregivers identified as having multiple children.

The interview questions did not ask that the caregiver share stories only specific to one child but all of the children who experienced the incarceration of a parent. This was done so caregivers could fluidly tell their stories. Seven of the caregivers, 87%, reported that the incarcerated parent was the father, while 1 of the incarcerated parents was a mother. Caregivers were also not directly asked to divulge information specific to the criminal case or proceedings relating to the incarcerated parent. Caregivers who participated in the study cared for anywhere from 1-4 children, all of whom experienced the incarceration of a parent, and the average number of children cared for was 2. The ages of the children cared for varied somewhat as the oldest child was 14 and the youngest was 1 and the mean age was  $M=8$ . Table 4 provides information about the caregivers' participants such as age, race, relationship to incarcerated parent (IP) and ages and number of children cared for by the caregiver.

*Table 4.*

*Caregiver Demographics Study II*

<b>Study Participant</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Relationship to IP</b>	<b># of Children</b>	<b>Ages of Children</b>
CG1	28	White	Wife	3	9,6,3
CG2	55	AA	Father	2	10 & 8
CG3	29	AA	Childs Mother	4	14,8,4 & 1
CG4	44	AA	Wife	1	13
CG5	29	AA	Wife	1	14
CG6	30	AA	Childs Mother	2	14 & 11
CG7	34	White	Ex-Wife	2	8
CG8	69	AA	Mother	1	12

Information about the status of the IP was collected as well; such as whether they lived in the home with the child prior to incarceration, length of their sentence, length of time served and distance to prison from child's home. Table 5 is a summary of this data.

Table 5.

*Caregiver-IP Demographics Study II*

<b>Study Participant</b>	<b>Lived Together Prior to Incarceration</b>	<b>IP Length of Sentence</b>	<b>IP Time Served</b>	<b>Distance to Prison (hours)</b>
CG1	Yes	6	3.5	2
CG2	Yes	12	10	2
CG3	Yes	3	1.5	5
CG4	Yes	13	5	3
CG5	Yes	10	2.5	2
CG6	Yes	5	5	6
CG7	Yes	8	3	9
CG8	Yes	-	-	1.5

### **Themes identified**

Themes were identified from the coding of the transcripts as outlined in Tables' 6-10. The themes included: *Positive caregiver perceptions, caregiver roles, child's distress related to incarceration and caregiver challenges*. What emerged appeared to be both positive and negative perceptions of caregiver's experience of parenting a child with an incarcerated parent. Positive caregiver perceptions included how the caregiver perceived parent-child contact as an overall positive experience for the child as well as reflections on the youth's positive psychological adjustment in lieu of the loss of a parent due to incarceration.

**Positive Caregiver Perceptions: Parent Child Contact** involved the caregiver's perceptions about the impact and outcome of incarceration on the child. This included parent child contact and academic achievement which were two main factors supported in the review of

literature as influential to positive outcomes for CIP. Table 6 includes responses from caregivers when asked questions such as, “How would you describe the relationship between ‘child’ and their incarcerated parent, “In what ways, if any do you see the incarceration of the child’s parent has affected them?” “How do you think the child feels about the contact they have with their parent?” “How would you say that the child feels about the frequency/types of contact?” Many of the caregivers had positive things to share about the contact between the incarcerated parent and their child, noting the importance of the contact to the child and how that caregiver perceives the contact as an important experience for the child as well.

Table 6:

*Open Coding Evidence: Positive Caregiver Perceptions: Parent Child Contact*

Participant	Theme	Phrases/descriptive words
CG1	Parent-Child Contact	“I look at it as a positive thing. I think that for children it is important for people that do have loved one that are incarcerated. It is important to keep that bond and that relationship”
CG5	Parent-Child Contact	“Even though I’m not speaking to him, I understand the importance of the relationship. I don’t want her to have a negative outlook on her father”
CG7	Parent-Child Contact	“She always wanted to go {visit her dad}.and she was be the one that would tell me to behave myself. The visits were actually very important to her. They meant a lot to her. I mean, that is her dad and hers’ relationship. I don't know, I can't describe it.”

**Positive Caregiver Perceptions: Academic Achievement** was the second theme that fell within the construct of positive caregiver perceptions. Caregivers responded to interviewer

questions; “What kinds of grades does (child’s name) receive?, “How would you describe (child’s name) academically and socially?” Responses to these questions are outlined in Table 7 below. Caregivers identified that the academic performance of the child was a prominent and positive factor as perceived by the caregiver. Caregivers did not connect whether that achievement was in part due to the contact that the child had with the IP.

Table 7

*Open Coding Evidence: Positive Caregiver Perceptions: Academic Achievement*

Participant	Theme	Phrases/descriptive words
CG1	Academic Achievement	“academically all my children are very smart. They struggle with anxiety issues”
CG7	Academic Achievement	“She adjusts and she goes with the flow. She is a straight A/B student. She takes school seriously. She doesn't miss a day”
CG6	Academic Achievement	“My son is an athlete, plays basketball year-round, really smart, he’s an A/B student,, articulate, sweet boy, funny, well spoken “

**Caregiver Roles: Caregivers as Gatekeepers.** For several mothers, serving as a gatekeeper was a function many assumed with intentions to “protect” their child from any potential negative or adverse outcomes that may come from contact with their IP, “I usually read the letters before giving them to her to make sure he isn’t telling her anything inappropriate “ Glaze and Maruschak (2008) suggest that incarcerated fathers who have a positive relationship with their child's caregiver often report a higher frequency of contact with their child during incarceration. This seemed to be consistent with the findings.

**Caregiver Roles: Caregivers as Facilitators** Many caregivers acknowledged the strained relationship they had with the IP but did not use that as a factor to withhold the child from having contact or continuing their relationship with the IP. One caregiver reported; “Even though I’m not speaking to him, I understand the importance of the relationship. I don’t want her to have a negative outlook on her father” and another shared that “For our sake, we aren't putting the kids in between that. I'm not going to say 'no, you can't talk to them no more' cause that’s not fair”. Table 8 outlines the caregiver responses in relation to Caregiver Roles. There was no specific question that elicited this information but instead these themes organically arose throughout the interview. Caregivers shared reactions and feelings about their role as described below.

Table 8

*Open Coding Evidence: Caregiver Roles: Gatekeeper versus Facilitator*

Participant	Theme	Phrases/descriptive words
CG7	Gatekeeper	“The rules were if she stayed he couldn’t have overnight visits and I needed access to her. He couldn’t adhere to that, so the visits ended and he was back in prison shortly after that”
CG6	Gatekeeper	“I usually read the letters before giving them to her to make sure he isn’t telling her anything inappropriate”
CG4	Gatekeeper	“Sometimes he wants to ‘play dad’ when they mess up and have troubles but they don’t always receive that well and I’m kind of their protector”
CG3	Facilitator	“I’m the advocate of let’s facilitate a relationship. Yes, I understand that you’re in jail and everything. But I felt like it'll be my job to help facilitate that relationship and so I’ve been helping her write letters.”

CG1	Facilitator	“For our sake, we aren't putting the kids in between that. I'm not going to say 'no, you can't talk to them no more' cause that's not fair”
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**Child Distress over Incarceration.** Caregivers provided that many of the children experienced distress over the loss of their parent to incarceration. This type of distress was seen throughout the review of literature (Jonhston, 1995; Loper & Clarke, 2013; Mazza & Overstreet, 2000). Caregivers described the distress in terms of the child's behavioral and emotional responses immediately after the loss of their parent and over the course of the incarceration. It provided powerful context to the stories of these children hearing caregivers express their distress these children experienced. Table 9 includes phrases caregivers shared throughout the interview to conceptualize this concept of distress.

Table 9.

*Child Distress over incarceration*

Participant	Theme	Phrases/descriptive words
CG5	Distress	“Sometimes she acts out and I think it's because she misses him. She gets sad like when the daddy daughter dance comes around and I have no one to take her”
CG2	Distress	“(Child 1) has had more difficulty than (Child2 ) I think it is because up until a couple of years ago when she was younger she was able to have more contact with him during the visits she could even sit on his lap and felt like his 'little princess' but now that she is older the prison doesn't allow that and I think she is just kind of hurts”
CG6	Distress	“She was all about her daddy, always wanting to be with him and hang with him so it was very hard for her. She's at an age now where she covers her hurt with sarcasm.”



CG8	Distress	“She would get really emotional after the visits so I knew she was sad. She wouldn’t really want to talk or do anything just would kind of sulk on the ride home and sometimes she would cry silently”
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**Caregiver perceived challenges.** The final theme that emerged in coding the data was the perceived challenges caregivers shared related to barriers around contact, isolation and empathy. Caregivers shared that while they may perceive contact as a positive experience for the child and the IP, they emphasized the challenges experienced as being the caregiver to a child with an incarcerated parent. This research was intended to be strength-based so questions were developed that would search for assets. However, it seemed almost inevitable that many of the caregivers felt compelled to talk about the challenges they face raising a child with an IP. No specific question elicited these responses more than others but again they emerged organically throughout the interview. Caregivers noted barriers to contact as a significant challenge to maintaining and sometimes establishing physical contact visits. Isolation was a theme that highlighted caregivers’ feelings of separateness due to the specific struggles of co-parenting with someone who is incarcerated. Empathy was also seen as a perceived challenge. While caregivers acknowledge that they are not responsible for the actions of the IP, they cannot help but empathize with the IP and the child, recognizing the situation as a loss for all parties involved. See Table 10 for caregiver responses.

Table 10

*CG Perceived Challenges: Barriers to Contact, Isolation and Empathy*

Participant	Theme	Phrases/descriptive words
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CG7	Barriers to Contact	He was transferred at 3 times and this last time they sent him to Virginia and it's like so what am I supposed to do? I have to take off work, miss out on money drive all those hours by myself so she can see him. I am planning to take a weekend off next month to go visit but it takes a lot of planning"
CG5	Barriers to Contact	"We visited when he was closer once a week but then when they moved him it got harder because I had to plan to take time off and the drive was over 4 hours"
CG2	Isolation	"I feel like I'm in prison too at times, even right now talking about it. I have to be home when he calls or the kids miss the calls, planning their holidays and days off school to go visit him and things like that."
CG7	Isolation	"I think it was like something going on at school and I had to be there and there was an issue in the apartment and that's when it really hit me. I realized I was alone and I didn't have a partner to depend on for this type of stuff anymore."
CG8	Empathy	"My heart hurt for a long time for my daughter, she can't be there to raise her own child. I understand her choices put her there but a terrible thing to go through life without your mom"
CG3	Empathy	When my 14-year-old cries and has questions missing her dad and the doctors are asking questions about the father's medical history, I don't have anything to tell her! How must she feel? All she has to cling onto is a couple of pictures. Yes, it is important even with the toxicity and she could look at his face and see for herself and not be able to look at me lost and i have no explanation for that anger she feels."

### **Discussion**

Parental incarceration is a multi-faceted issue that will require a diligent effort from researchers to develop the most effective policies and interventions to promote the well-being of these children. Study 1 investigated the relationship between parent-child contact during incarceration and resiliency. Resiliency was conceptualized by self-perceptions of psychological well-being and academic achievement. While the primary interest has been that parent-child

contact during incarceration would be related to youth having more well-being, the quantitative analyses were unable to support this hypothesis. Variables related to a child's tendency to visit or phone their IP did not relate to well-being. Overall, on the EPOCH measures, females tended to rate themselves higher on well-being compared to males. This difference may indicate that girls have a higher rate of perceived well-being, or perhaps different coping mechanisms. Among academic achievement-related variables, high school plans were not significant predictors, showing no relationship between post high school plans and perceived well-being.

The significant negative correlation between frequency of contact and parents' length of incarceration might be explained by a number of possibilities. One is the fact that older children have been found to have less contact with their incarcerated parent. Another is that, perhaps due to the system, or other factors, the children over time tend to visit their incarcerated parents less. Despite the quantitative findings here, there is little reason to suggest that contact does not matter. Given that the literature suggests that contact during incarceration is a significant predictor of sustained relationship post incarceration, deeper questions arise. There is every reason to work hard to better understand how losing contact could impact the potential for greater resilience and well-being and re-establishing that relationship.

Cross-sectionally, in this small sample, it appears that, as adolescents age, their perceptions of psychological well-being decreases. This could be due to a number of factors, including the many confounding variables that adolescents deal with during this developmental stage. On the one hand, removal of one's parent may be more traumatic at a younger age, and yet younger children have had to deal with this trauma for a shorter period of time.

There was a positive correlation found between well-being and GPA. As scores of psychological well-being increased so did GPA. What is unknown is whether psychological

well-being causes higher GPA's or if higher GPA's lead to psychological well-being. Does having good grades influence your psychological well-being, promoting resiliency, or does doing functioning well psychologically influence academic performance, promoting resiliency?

Most recent estimates suggest that nearly 75% of inmates who identify as parents have at least some form of contact with their children during their incarceration, which suggests that caregivers generally see some value or purpose in facilitating this contact. Children (up until a certain age) cannot facilitate these contacts independently of their caregivers. While children who are old enough to purchase a stamp and write a letter can engage in written communication with their incarcerated parent without the assistance or knowledge of their caregiver; any child under the age of 18 is legally unable to physically visit their incarcerated parent without their guardian/caregiver present.

In Study II it was hypothesized that, based on caregiver perceptions, parent-child contact would be a significant factor that promoted well-being in children of incarcerated parents. Study II found that most caregivers did identify positive perceptions related to parent-child contact during incarceration; however there were barriers that played a role ability to facilitate contact. Caregivers identified academic achievement as another positive factor that supported the preliminary hypothesis of this research. Caregivers were able to generally speak to and conceptualize what positive psychological functioning looked like in their children, but their perceptions of positive functioning did not always correlate with having access to their incarcerated parent. Some parents suggested that even if the contact was not always as frequent they believed their child would still demonstrate resilience. They perceived that children's inherent ability to thrive contributed to their ability to overcome adversity. As one parent noted "She takes school very seriously, she always has and I've never really had to be on her about that

She just cares about her grades and things like that.” Additionally, social support of the caregiver was an important factor for youth resilience, which was supported in previous research as well (Luther, 2015).

Caregivers identified some themes that were not anticipated based on what had been explored in previous existing literature, such as the Caregiver role as a facilitator and gatekeeper, as well as barriers to contact. These themes are important for consideration when developing policy and informing practice. Understanding the triadic caregiver-IP-child relationship and how each part affects one another is important in understanding the role of parent-child contact and how it is received and experienced by the child (McHale, Salman, Strozier, & Cecil, 2013).

### **Limitations of the Study**

There was a small sample size and very little variability in the quantitative survey sample and therefore the findings are not generalizable. Children of incarcerated parents are a hard to identify population because there is no systematic way of collecting parental status of these children and caregivers often do not want to risk stigmatizing youth by labeling them. There was a variety of recruitment techniques employed to ensure the target sample number was reached. However as anticipated, recruitment for this study had its challenges. This was not an easy group to recruit. Many of the youth approached in the correctional facility fell out of the targeted age range making them ineligible to participate. Some youth were approached prior to their visit and had limited time to complete the survey in anticipation for visits while in the waiting area. Additionally, because there is no systematic way to identify these youth which is why many research studies typically tend to have very small sample sizes. Furthermore, the housing stability of CIP may change more frequently than other children due to being in foster care placement. Other economic challenges of their primary caregiver may cause them to move,

making the it harder to keep in contact with the children. Convenience sampling was used to recruit participants for the study from multiple targeted locations. Participants were recruited from the check-in/lobby areas of various Midwest Correctional facilities. In addition to correctional facilities, participants were recruited from local agencies, organizations and businesses where this population frequents; such as Big Brothers Big Sisters, YMCA, The Boys and Girls Club and local churches. The procedure for recruitment varied by facility type.

Researchers have found themselves challenged in collecting the data necessary to draw confirmatory conclusions. Initially, some youth and their parents identified that there was not a parent incarcerated but another parental figure such as an uncle or the significant other of a parent such as a mothers' boyfriend, who lived in the home and had an existing relationship with the child prior to their incarceration. It was later decided to still include the responses of these youth. Studies support that the incarceration of a household member or a non-custodial parental figure can be as impactful as the incarceration of a biological parent.

Every effort was made to distinguish that the data collection was in no way affiliated with the correctional department or facility where the participants were being recruited. Nevertheless, some parents/caregivers displayed apprehension about moving forward and allowing their children to participate. Not surprisingly, many families of incarcerated parents have had less than pleasurable encounters with the department, making them less trusting of those affiliated with the department. Several technical difficulties and challenges occurred while recruiting in some of the facilities. Because of the deep bricked walls with no windows, access to WiFi was almost impossible. Therefore, the use of the iPad for data collection was seriously challenged. After that set back, the new strategy was to bring paper copies of the survey to the facility. Another

challenge was that it was permitted to bring the surveys but not the staples that kept the documents together.

### **Future Directions for Research**

Further studies should seek to expand the sample size and widen the targeted age range for participation. Additionally, research should explore other potential protective factors that promote well-being within this population to continue to see if parent-child contact has a positive impact on adolescent well-being. Initially it was very challenging to define the constructs that would be utilized in this study. Resiliency is so broadly outlined and there are varying depictions of what resiliency looks like either as an outcome or a process. This study chose to focus on resilience as a measurable outcome utilizing the EPOCH Adolescent Measure of Well-being with well-being used as an interchangeable construct with resiliency. The field would benefit from a commonly agreed upon standard for defining and measuring resiliency. Also, while one study found the imprisonment of a mother to have more damaging effects than the imprisonment of a father (Murray & Farrington, 2008), more research should be conducted to examine the differential impact of maternal compared to paternal incarceration.

Given that females tend to rate themselves higher on self-perception of well-being further research might investigate other confounding factors that might be attributable to male respondents' lower perception of well-being. Why do males not rate themselves higher, given they share similar academic goals and have the same frequency of contact with their incarcerated parent? Could it be that these adolescent boys did not perceive themselves positively due to other factors? Much more ultimately can be understood through the expansion of this quantitative study through the additional collection of more qualitative data with the youth themselves.

Some adolescents in the study were cautious about answering certain items, particularly about their personal arrest history. Social desirability bias may offer key insight as to why these youth were more reluctant to answer. Such apprehension of course could affect the reliability of the responses.

Youth who have experienced the incarceration of a parent are particularly vulnerable. Therefore, the objective of the survey items in Study I was to collect as much necessary data to answer the research questions without causing any emotional damage to the youth. These youth may, at the time of the survey, still have been experiencing grief due to the losing of their parent to incarceration. One option to mitigate some of the concerns with gathering emotionally triggering information from youth is to use the retrospective reports of adults who experienced parental incarceration during their youth. This approach has a lot of support as well as criticism. Some researchers view retrospective adult reports of adverse childhood experiences such as parental incarceration with skepticism. One major issue is that social desirability and other confirming biases may influence adult participant's responses. Researchers must be aware of this risk when collecting data. Additionally, asking adults to recall their experiences from youth may pose challenges for some especially those who struggled and continue to struggle with emotional regulation (Luther, 2015). However other experts in the field agree that the approach is still worthy of research as it adds, to the limited existing data available on this population (Luther, 2015)

This study recruited participants from a strength-based approach, with the presumption that there was an already existing relationship between the incarcerated parent and the child. The study focused on recruitment at Midwest correctional facilities while the participants were in the waiting rooms waiting to visit their parent or relative. Many studies on this population focus on



the lack of (or underdeveloped) relationships between incarcerated caregivers and their parents. While mass incarceration does severely impair the potential for those relationships, many families struggle and overcome obstacles to maintain the relationships with their loved ones (Nichols & Loper, 2012; Poehlmann, Dallaire, Loper, & Shear, 2010; Loper & Clarke, 2013)

### **Implications for Policy and Practice**

**Researchers.** One of the major limitations to this study was that there is no systematic way of identifying these children and their families. Therefore, correctional institutions could begin to collect that data as they screen and intake inmates as they do other demographic information. Surprisingly, most correctional institutions do not know the parenting demographics of the women and men, which limits their ability to develop rehabilitation and restitution programming (Phillips & Gates, 2011). If the goal of imprisonment is for offenders of crimes to serve their time and rehabilitate themselves to be better citizens upon their return to society then there should be better programming for those incarcerated to achieve these goals. Additionally, other programs and organizations outside of the prison should seek to help families and children impacted by parental incarceration. Providing information on parenthood status would aid these organizations in their efforts to gain funding and help those in need. As a researcher, having access to a database that houses this information would have been critically helpful for the success of these studies and other studies seeking to understand CIP. Researchers need to of course take precaution in how they address and study this vulnerable group but they also need access to them because they are so understudied. Policy reform relies heavily on what can be proved and sustained by evidence-based research; therefore having more reliable and valid studies that accurately reflects CIP and their families would allow for more generalizable and useful studies.

**Policy Makers.** It is important for policy makers to make more extended visits possible, ones that foster more parenting skills, stronger relationship building, child-friendly environments and child centered activities, in addition to elongated exposure of the child to their parent. Parents need to familiarize themselves with what it will be like being around their children full time, especially those who have had little experience prior to their incarceration. Many CIP have never experienced extended periods to develop the rapport with and respect for their parents authority. As we saw in this study, caregivers value the contact their children have with their incarcerated parents; however, barriers exist that limit the contact they can have. Initiatives to support more versatile modes of communication in this advanced technological age, such as video chatting, texting and email would be helpful. Some prisons are already utilizing these methods but in most cases it is the exception and not the rule. Legislatures should create policy that makes these methods of communicating with loved ones from behind bars the standard, and back up these initiatives with funding. The prison industrial complex is heavily monetized and families impacted by incarceration feel this strain in many ways. Policy reform should not only make such methods accessible to families, but they should also provide the funding so that access to these resources do not pose a financial burden on families who may already be struggling.

While the incarcerated parent is the person most directly impacted by incarceration, the child is impacted in many ways' unseen. Judges must better take into account how the children and families will be directly impacted as a result of a defendant's sentencing. Our society could use more just improvements. Legislatures could require judges to include Family Impact Statements that would better outline information about the child's family situation and the way(s) that child might be impacted by restricted access to their parent. Family Impact

Statements challenge sentencing judges with vital information about the best options to keep the child or children and the defendant-parent connections retained.

Sentencing parents to institutions that are 3 or more hours away, and sometimes not even in the same state, poses a huge challenge to those caregivers and children who are seeking to keep in contact with their loved one(s). Efforts should be made to ensure that parents are sentenced within a reasonable proximity to their families to help support visitation. Several cases provide precedent for the consideration of such statements (Cyphert, 2018). While the use of these methods are relatively low in most states, several families who participated in this study acknowledged distance as a barrier, making it impossible for a child to visit an incarcerated parent. Judges need to seriously consider how children will be impacted by the incarceration of a parent

**Communities.** Developing training and support for the triadic relationship of the Caregiver-IP-Child to create an optimal experience should be another policy consideration. Given that caregivers personally experience stress, isolation, and go through personal struggles it may be difficult or challenging at times to co-parent effectively without having the right skills. Policymakers should provide funding for organizations to give training and support for these families in these stressful roles.

### **Conclusion**

The incarceration of a parent is a horrible experience for any child to endure. The loss of a parent for any child to incarceration can lead to risk factors that can have devastating outcomes. Too often, seemly good short-term societal interventions end up creating even worse cycles, and devastating long-term outcomes. It is the resilience of the children that counters our societies well-intentioned interventions. The children's own adaptivity protects themselves and

others against our privileged-based interventions. So many of the children end up functioning optimally and, because of the CIP resilience, they may stay on a positive trajectory or even better after the loss of a parent. These children most often thrive when certain protective factors are in place to buffer the various toxic risks to their well-being. The psychosocial impacts of social marginalization experienced by CIP are important areas to study, but if we are to help in the process we need to better understand the sources of resiliency in this very resilient population. There is little question that when this group is afforded the opportunities, they can, as demonstrated in this research, build off of their positive attributes and abilities.

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## **Appendix A: CIP Adolescent Survey: Study I**

Informed Assent Youth:

“Examining the Relationship Between Parent Child Contact and Wellbeing Among Adolescents with an Incarcerated Parent”

MINOR ADOLESCENT ASSENT

(read as a video recording)

Hello, my name is Celeste Jackson. I am a doctoral student at National Louis University and I could really use your help. I am trying to learn about the different types and amount of contact teens have with their parent who is incarcerated and how they view their personal wellbeing.

If you decide you want to help, you will be asked to answer several questions in an online survey on this iPad. It's okay if you can't read some of the questions—I will be standing nearby as you are completing the survey to answer and clarify any questions you may have. The survey should take about 10-20 minutes to complete.

Other people will not know if you are completing this survey. If you are visiting your parent today they will not know that you are participating in this survey or your responses. It is your choice whether you want to participate or not. I will put things I learn about you together with things I learn about other teenagers. When I tell other people about my research, I will not use your name so no one can tell who I am talking about. You will be asked about your interaction with the justice system, be assured that any answers you provide will be confidential and no one, including your parent(s) or legal guardian will be aware of your response.

All information gathered in the study will remain confidential. Only myself and my advisor will have access to survey responses. The information I collect will be kept in a locked cabinet at my home on a password protected hard drive for up to 3 years while I proceed to write up and potentially publish my findings, after which time I will shred all survey data. The results from the study will be available to participants upon request.

Your parent or guardian has said it's OK for you to be in this study. You can choose if you want to do it too. If you don't want to be in the study, no one will be mad at you and there will be no consequences. If you want to be in the study now and change your mind later, that's OK. You can stop at any time.

When you are done and have completed the survey you will be asked if you are willing to participate in future studies conducted by me. You may answer yes or no.

When you are done with the survey you will be given a \$10 cash for your time and your help. That is my way of saying Thank you and that gift is yours to keep. If at any point after the survey you feel sad or want to talk to someone further, I will be giving your parent/legal guardian a pamphlet that has numbers of counselors in your area that may be able to help.

My telephone number is 708-740-4422. You can call me if you have questions about the study or if you decide you don't want to be in the study any more.

If you have any concerns or questions before or during participation that you feel have not been addressed by the me, you may contact my graduate advisor: Dr. Tiffeny Jimenez, or NLU's Institutional Research Review Board: Dr. Shaunti Knauth, NLU IRRB Chair, Both of their contact information will be provided in the paper copy form that I will also provide to you.

#### Agreement

Would you like to help me understand your thoughts on your wellbeing and the types of contact you have with your incarcerated parent?

YES

NO

By checking yes, you have agreed to participate in the study and complete a 41-item questionnaire even though you know that you don't have to do it and I have answered all your questions.

#### Section I: Demographic Information

1. Would you like to participate in this survey?

Yes No

2. Do you have any thoughts of hurting yourself at this time?

Yes No

3. How old are you?

4. Do you have a parent currently incarcerated?

Yes No

5. Have you ever had a parent incarcerated?

Yes No

6. Are you in high school?

Yes No

7. What grade in school are you in?

9th 10th 11th 12th Not currently in school

8. What is your gender?

Male Female

9. How do you identify racially?

Black/ African American White Asian  
Hispanic / Latino/a Pacific-Islander Middle eastern Other/Not Listed

10. Have you ever been arrested?

Yes No

#### Section II: Academic Achievement Information:

11. What kinds of grades do you receive in school

Mostly A's Mostly B's Mostly C's Mostly D's & F's

12. How often have you been suspended from school in the last year?

Never Once or Twice More than Twice More than 3 times

13. What are your plans for schooling after high school?

>I plan to go to college

>I plan to go to trade school

>I plan to go beyond college

- >I do not plan to attend school after high school
- >I am unsure of my plans for schooling following high school

14. On a 4.0 scale, what is your current GPA? Less than 1.5

1.51-2.50                      2.51-3.0                      3.0-3.5                      3.51+ greater

15. How many extracurricular/social clubs are you currently involved in?

0                      1-2                      3+

### Section III: Incarcerated Parent Information

The following questions ask about your parent who is now or who was previously incarcerated, do your best to answer to the best of your ability. There are no right or wrong answers.

16. How often have you shared with someone that you have or have had a parent incarcerated?

- >I share with anybody
- >I will share with most people
- >I will share with some people
- >I don't share with most people
- >I don't share with most people I don't share with anybody

17. How long has or was your parent incarcerated?

- >Less than 6 months
- >7 months – 1 year
- >1 year -3 years
- >3 years-6 years
- >6 years -10 years
- >More than 10 years
- >I don't know/unsure

18. What is the relationship of the parent that is or was incarcerated?

- >Mother
- >Father
- >Step-Mother
- >Step-Father

19. Do you currently know the reason that your parent is or was incarcerated?

Yes                      No

I have an idea but not 100% sure

20. Has your parents' incarceration been explained to you by a member of your family?

Yes                      No                      Somewhat

21. How often did or do you visit your incarcerated parent?

- >Several times a month.
- >At least once a month.
- >A couple of times a year
- >Every couple of months.
- >Less than once a year

22. How often did you or do you write your incarcerated parent?

- >Several times a month.
- >At least once a month.
- >A couple of times a year
- >Every couple of months.
- >Less than once a year

23. How often did you or do you speak on the phone with your incarcerated parent?

- >Every Week
- >Every Other Week.
- >Every Month
- >Every few months.
- >Less than once a year

#### Section IV: EPOCH Measure of Adolescent Well-Being

The following statements are about you. There are no right or wrong responses just do your best to respond to each statement as it describes you.

24. When something good happens to me, I have people who I like to share the good news with.

Almost Never          Sometimes          Often          Very Often          Almost Always

25. I finish whatever I begin.

Almost Never          Sometimes          Often          Very Often          Almost Always

26. I am optimistic about my future

Almost Never          Sometimes          Often          Very Often          Almost Always

27. I feel happy. Almost Never

Almost Never          Sometimes          Often          Very Often          Almost Always

28. When I do an activity, I enjoy it so much that I lose track of time.

Almost Never          Sometimes          Often          Very Often          Almost Always

29. I have a lot of fun.

Almost Never          Sometimes          Often          Very Often          Almost Always

30. I get completely absorbed in what I am doing.

Almost Never          Sometimes          Often          Very Often          Almost Always

31. I love life.

Almost Never          Sometimes          Often          Very Often          Almost Always

32. I keep at my schoolwork until I am done with it. Almost Never

Almost Never          Sometimes          Often          Very Often          Almost Always

33. When I have a problem, I have someone who will be there for me.

Almost Never          Sometimes          Often          Very Often          Almost Always

34. I get so involved in activities that I forget about everything else.

Almost Never          Sometimes          Often          Very Often          Almost Always

35. When I am learning something new, I lose track of how much time has passed.

Not at all like me      A little like me      Somewhat like me      Mostly like me      Very  
much like me

36. In uncertain times, I expect the best.

Not at all like me      A little like me      Somewhat like me      Mostly like me      Very  
much like me

37. There are people in my life who really care about me.

- |                                    |                  |                  |                |      |
|------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|------|
| Not at all like me<br>much like me | A little like me | Somewhat like me | Mostly like me | Very |
|------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|------|
38. I think good things are going to happen to me.
- |                                    |                  |                  |                |      |
|------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|------|
| Not at all like me<br>much like me | A little like me | Somewhat like me | Mostly like me | Very |
|------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|------|
39. I have friends that I really care about.
- |                                    |                  |                  |                |      |
|------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|------|
| Not at all like me<br>much like me | A little like me | Somewhat like me | Mostly like me | Very |
|------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|------|
40. Once I make a plan to get something done, I stick to it.
- |                                    |                  |                  |                |      |
|------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|------|
| Not at all like me<br>much like me | A little like me | Somewhat like me | Mostly like me | Very |
|------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|------|
41. I believe that things will work out, no matter how difficult they seem.
- |                                    |                  |                  |                |      |
|------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|------|
| Not at all like me<br>much like me | A little like me | Somewhat like me | Mostly like me | Very |
|------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|------|
42. I am a hard worker.
- |                                    |                                       |                  |                |      |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|------|
| Not at all like me<br>much like me | A little like me<br>Very much like me | Somewhat like me | Mostly like me | Very |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|------|
43. I am a cheerful person.
- |                                    |                  |                  |                |      |
|------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|------|
| Not at all like me<br>much like me | A little like me | Somewhat like me | Mostly like me | Very |
|------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|------|
- END OF SURVEY
44. If you would You be interested in participating in future paid studies like this one, please enter your name and the name of your legal parent/guardian



## APENDIX B: Parental Consent Form- COIP Study I

*“Examining the Relationship Between Parent Child Contact and Wellbeing Among Adolescents with an Incarcerated Parent”*

### PARENTAL INFORMED CONSENT

Your child is being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Celeste Jackson, doctoral student at National Louis University, Chicago, Illinois. The study is entitled *“Examining the Relationship Between Parent Child Contact During Incarceration and Wellbeing Among Adolescents with an Incarcerated Parent”*.

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between parent child contact during incarceration and perceived wellbeing of adolescents with an incarcerated parent. With your consent, your child will be provided a headphone set and an iPad where they will be directed to a multimedia site which will play a video recording of the informed assent. Should they agree to participate they will then be navigated towards an online survey which will take **approximately 10-20 minutes to complete**. The questions on the survey will be written in language familiar to an adolescent child. However, students vary in their reading skills, and for that reason the researcher will stand nearby to assist the youth if they should need it.

**Participation in this study is voluntary.** Each participant will be compensated \$10 dollars upon completion of the survey.

Your child will not be penalized if he/she decides not to participate. If your child decides to continue with the survey, he/she may discontinue participation at any time, with no penalty. **All information gathered in the study will remain confidential.** Only myself and my advisor will have access to survey responses. Data collected will be kept in a locked cabinet at my home on a password protected hard drive for up to 3 years while I proceed to write up and potentially publish my findings, after which time I will shred all survey data. The results from the study will be available to participants upon request.

Emotionally, your child may feel uncomfortable by reflecting and answering questions about their experiences associated with having a parent incarcerated. It is also possible he/she may feel good when reflecting on experiences with having a parent incarcerated and thinking about their support system. You will be provided with a resource brochure after the survey which includes helpful resources, including various counseling services should you or your child feel that you need to speak to a counselor. Additionally, your child will be asked about their own interaction with the criminal justice system, all answers and information provided will be confidential and no one will have access to their responses except for the researcher and her advisor. Your child's participation will add tremendously value to the field of research and our understanding of the relationships processes associated with having a parent incarcerated. While the results of this study may be published or otherwise reported to scientific bodies, your child's identity will in no way be revealed.

In the event you have questions or require additional information, or you would like to request results from this study's findings. you may contact the researcher: Celeste Jackson, National-Louis University, 708-584-3661; COIPstudy@gmail.com.

If you have any concerns or questions before or during participation that you feel have not been addressed by the researcher, you may contact my graduate advisor: Dr. Tiffeny Jimenez,

630.874.4257; Tiffeny.Jimenez@nl.edu.;or NLU’s Institutional Research Review Board: Dr. Shaunti Knauth, NLU IRRB Chair, [shaunti.knauth@nl.edu](mailto:shaunti.knauth@nl.edu), 312.261.3526, National Louis University IRRB Board, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60603.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant/Child Name (Print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent Name (Print)  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent Name (Signature)

**Celeste Jackson**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher Name (Print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

There is the potential for this research to expand in the future and your child may be eligible to participate in additional compensated studies. Do you consent to being contacted in the future for further studies conducted by this researcher? Your information will never be shared with anyone for solicitation purposes. **If you agree, please provide your phone number and email.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email

## **APPENDIX C: Study II -Caregiver Informed Consent- COIP Study**

*“Examining the Relationship among Protective Factors that Promote Resiliency in Children of Incarcerated Parents”*

### **PARENTAL INFORMED CONSENT**

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Celeste Jackson, LPC, doctoral student at National Louis University, Chicago, Illinois. The study is entitled “Examining the Relationship among Protective Factors that Promote Resiliency in Children of Incarcerated Parents”.

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between parent child contact during incarceration and perceived wellbeing of adolescents with an incarcerated parent. With your consent, you will be invited to participate in one-on-one in-depth interview that will last approximately 55 minutes. I am interested in learning about the positive outcomes of children who experience parental incarceration. I recently conducted a survey with youth to understand their self-perceptions of well-being and if they felt having contact with their incarcerated parent had any positive impact on their psychological well-being. The findings have led me to further explore that question by interviewing caregivers to understand their perceptions and view of the impact of parent-child contact during incarceration.

The interview will explore your background about yourself, information about the child or children whom you care for that experienced parental incarceration and the relationship and types of contact that child or children has with the incarcerated parent.

**Participation in this study is voluntary.** You will be compensated \$30 cash for your participation upon completion of the interview. The Cash compensation will be provided at the conclusion of the interview. If you decide to continue with the interview, you may discontinue participation at any time, with no penalty. You will only receive the cash compensation however upon completion of the interview. The interview will be recorded and transcribed for data analysis and review. **All information gathered in the study will remain confidential.** Only myself and my advisors will have access to the recordings and transcriptions.

Use of Participant Data - The data from this study will be used for an independent research project and only. A team of researchers will be analyzing and discussing the findings of this research. It is possible that the findings may be published, and in that case, we will ensure that the data will be discussed in an anonymous way so that no one individual can be identified.

Protection of Data & Ensuring Confidentiality - Upon completion of the interview, the recorded interviews will be saved and stored on an external hard drive which will be password protected. Only myself and my advisors will have access to the information. The data will remain on an external hard drive for the duration of the study. The recordings will be transcribed and cleaned for any personal identifying information (e.g., names, addresses) and provided an accompanying participant ID number. Personal identifying information will be stored with the assigned ID number in a separate excel file so the primary investigator may identify the participant but that will be unidentifiable to others. Therefore, transcribed data will not be identifiable to anyone in

the case that the security of my personal computer is breached. These interview data will be stored for 3 years as I proceed to write up and possibly publish these findings.

Your participation will add tremendous value to the field of research and our understanding of the relationships processes associated with having a parent incarcerated. While the results of this study may be published or otherwise reported to scientific bodies, your child's identity will in no way be revealed.

In the event you have questions or require additional information, or you would like to request results from this study's findings, you may contact the researcher: Celeste Jackson, National-Louis University, 773.289.8755; COIPStudy@gmail.com.

If you have any concerns or questions before or during participation that you feel have not been addressed by the researcher, you may contact my graduate advisor: Dr. Tiffeny Jimenez, 630.874.4257; Tiffeny.Jimenez@nl.edu.; or NLU's Institutional Research Review Board: Dr. Shaunti Knauth, NLU IRRB Chair, [shaunti.knauth@nl.edu](mailto:shaunti.knauth@nl.edu), 312.261.3526, National Louis University IRRB Board, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60603.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent Name (Print)  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent Name (Signature)

**Celeste Jackson**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher Name (Print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

There is the potential for this research to expand in the future you and your child may be eligible to participate in additional compensated studies. Do you consent to being contacted in the future for further studies conducted by this researcher? Your information will never be shared with anyone for solicitation purposes. **If you agree, please provide your phone number and email.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Phone Number**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Email**

## Appendix D: CIP Caregiver Interview Protocol

### Introduction

*Hello, My name is Celeste Jackson and I am doctoral student at National Louis University. Thank you for agreeing to speak with me today. You have identified yourself as the caregiver of a child who has a parent that is incarcerated. This interview is for research purposes and will be utilized for my dissertation. I am interested in learning about the positive outcomes of children who experience parental incarceration. I recently conducted a survey with youth to understand their self-perceptions of well-being and if they felt having contact with their incarcerated parent had any positive impact on their psychological well-being. The findings have led me to further explore that question by interviewing caregivers to understand their perceptions and view of the impact of parent-child contact during incarceration.*

*I would like to share that my mother was incarcerated for 17 years and working with and understanding youth who shared experiences and challenges has always been a focus of mine. During this interview you will be asked questions about your child, the parent who is incarcerated, your perceptions of their relationship, your child's well-being and other factors related to their development. Some questions may not apply to the current situation and there are no right or wrong answers, I just want you to be as honest and truthful as you can. I will be recording this interview, as outlined in the consent form. The purpose of this is so that I can go back and listen and ensure not to miss any important information that you share. If your child's parent has been incarcerated more than once think of the most recent or most prominent incarceration experience when answering questions.*

*Questions about caregiver: I'd like to learn a little bit about you. Your life experiences are important and understanding you also helps me understand your child/ren?*

1. Can you begin by telling me a little about yourself? What you do? Where you grew up? What has been your most positive life experiences?
2. If you could give 3 adjectives to describe yourself what would they be?
3. How would you describe yourself as a parent?
4. Can you talk about your relationship between you and the child's (incarcerated) parent?
  - a. Who are they to you?
5. What type of relationship did you have with (incarcerated) parent prior to incarceration?
  - a. Where you close? Did you live together? Did you communicate often?
6. What type of relationship do you have with them now?
7. What has been your experience with the criminal justice system? Have you ever been directly involved?

*Questions about child: Let's start talking about (Childs Name).*

8. How old is s/he? Is s/he an only child? How would you describe her?
  - a. What types of grades does s/he get in school? How many extracurricular clubs/sports are they involved in? Have they had any behavior problems at school?
  - b. What types of things does s/he enjoy and do for fun?
9. How can you tell when things are going well for (child's name) such as they are happy and feel good about themselves? How can you tell when things aren't going well and they aren't happy and don't feel good about themselves?

10. How old was (child's name) when (incarcerated) parent went to prison or jail?

*Questions about the relationship and types of contact: Let's shift now and begin talking about the relationship between (child's name) and (incarcerated) parent.*

11. Describe the type of relationship (child's name) and (incarcerated) parent had prior to their incarceration? x
- Was (incarcerated) parent a custodial parent prior to incarceration?
  - Did they live in the home?
  - Did they have good communication?
  - Did (child's name) see them as a positive figure?
  - Were there barriers or factors that affected their relationship?
12. Did you notice any change in behavior when (incarcerated) parent was incarcerated?
13. Was (child's name) present when (incarcerated) parent was arrested?
14. What details does (child's name) know about the IP case?
- How and when did you share details?
  - What factors determined if/what you shared?
15. To your knowledge, Does (child's name) share with people or talk about the fact that they have an incarcerated parent? x
16. How do you think (child's name) thinks about the fact they have a parent incarcerated?
- Does it bother them? x
17. In what ways, if any do you see the incarceration of (child's name) parent has affected them?
- Positively or negatively?
  - How can you tell?
  - How have you observed these changes?
18. How often does or did (Child's Name) have contact with their (incarcerated) parent?
- Via phone
  - Via letters
  - Via face to face visits
19. How do you think (child's name) feels about the contact they have with their IP
- How would you say that (child's name) feels about the frequency/types of contact? Do you think they want more or less or indifferent? x
20. Is there anything in addition that you would like to add or share that we have not discussed?

*Conclusion: I would like to sincerely thank you for taking the time to share with me today! Everything that you have given is extremely valuable and I hope to use your stories to help create a clearer picture for children and families impacted by incarceration. Is there anything in addition that you would like to add or do you have any questions for me*

## Appendix E: Study I Institutional Research Review Board Approval



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Office of the Provost  
122 South Michigan Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois 60603-6162

www.nlu.edu  
P/F 312.261.3729

February 16, 2018

Celeste Lewis  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Dear Celeste Lewis:

The Institutional Research Review Board (IRRB) has received your application for your research study "Examining the Relationship between Parent Child Contact During Incarceration and Wellbeing among Adolescents with an Incarcerated Parent". IRRB has noted that your application is complete and that your study has been approved by IRRB. Your application has been filed as Full Review in the Office of the Provost.

Please note that the approval for your study is for one year, from February 16, 2018 to February 16, 2019. At the end of that year, please inform the IRRB in writing of the status of the study (i.e. complete, continuing). During this time, if your study changes in ways that impact human participants differently or more significantly than indicated in the current application, please submit a Change of Research Study form to the IRRB, which may be found on NLU's IRRB website.

All good wishes for the successful completion of your research.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Shaunti Knauth".

**Shaunti Knauth, Ph.D.**  
Chair, IRRB

## Appendix F: Study II Institutional Research Review Board Approval



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ACCESS. INNOVATION. EXCELLENCE.

Office of the Provost  
122 South Michigan Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois 60603-6162

www.nlu.edu  
P/F 312.261.3729

April 19, 2019

Celeste A. (Lewis) Jackson  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Dear Celeste A. (Lewis) Jackson:

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) has received your application for amendment of your research study "Protective Factors and Resiliency in Children of Incarcerated Parents". The amendment is approved.

Please note that the approval for your study is for one year, from April 19, 2019 to April 19, 2020. As you carry out your research, you must report any adverse events or reactions to the IRB.

At the end of your approved year, please inform the IRB in writing of the status of the study (i.e. complete, continuing). During this time, if your study changes in ways that impact human participants differently or more significantly than indicated in the current application, please submit a Change of Research Study form to the IRB, which may be found on NLU's IRB website.

Please also ensure that your Human Subjects Research (HSR) certification stays active throughout any amendments to your research period.

All good wishes for the successful completion of your research.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Shaunti Knauth".

**Shaunti Knauth, Ph.D.**  
**Chair, IRB**