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The Impact of the Transgenerational Cycle of Prison on Attachment Among Black Individuals

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The Impact of the Transgenerational Cycle of Prison on Attachment Among Black
Individuals

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A Clinical Research Project submitted to the Faculty of the Florida School of Professional Psychology at National Louis University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Psychology in Clinical Psychology.

Tampa, Florida
August, 2020

The Doctorate Program in Clinical Psychology
Florida School of Professional Psychology
at National Louis University

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

Clinical Research Project

This is to certify that the Clinical Research Project of

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has been approved by the
CRP Committee on August 14th, 2020
as satisfactory for the CRP requirement
for the Doctorate of Psychology degree
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Abstract

This empirical study assessed the impact of incarceration on an individual's attachment style and explored protective factors that moderate these overall outcomes. The study sought to answer the following questions: (a) Are there differences related to the gender of Black participants and the gender of their incarcerated parent? and (b) Will affective expression and/or sense of community serve as protective factors and mediate the attachment style of Black individuals who have been incarcerated? The sample consisted of 98 adults (45 of whom indicated being a part of the transgenerational cycle of prison) ranging from 18 to 68 years old. Participants were instructed to complete the Sense of Community Index, Affective Style Questionnaire, and Hazan and Shaver's (1987) three-category Attachment Measure. Data were analyzed using chi-square, Fisher's exact test, and multinomial logistic regression analyses. Results found relationships between gender and attachment style, age and attachment style, and particular affective expression styles and gender, but overall results did not support the hypotheses. It is believed, in the future, with a larger sample size, results may potentially show more statistical significance. Implications for these results, as well as possible future directions, are discussed.

**THE IMPACT OF THE TRANSGENERATIONAL CYCLE OF PRISON ON
ATTACHMENT AMONG BLACK INDIVIDUALS**

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my entire village. Thank each and every one of you for all of the love, support, and guidance over this long journey and beyond. To my dearest cousin, thank you for always believing and investing in me—you are so missed. Last, I would like to thank Dr. Patricia S. Dixon for her encouragement and supervision not only on my manuscript but throughout my entire growth as a future clinician.

Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract.....	i
Dedication.....	iii
Table of Contents	iv
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Overview of Attachment Theory.....	1
Link Between Attachment Styles and Psychological Outcomes	3
Historical Context of What It Means to be Black and Potential Protective Factors.....	4
Transgenerational Cycle of Prison and Importance	5
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	7
Being Black in America.....	7
Incarceration and Attachment.....	8
Culture and its Role as a Protective Factor.....	10
Affective Expression in Three Styles.....	11
Infancy Attachment in Correlation with Adult Attachment	12
The Impact of Incarceration on Black Individuals and the Fatherless Child.....	15
CHAPTER III: METHODS.....	17
Participants.....	17
Measures	17
Demographic questionnaire	17
Adult Attachment Scale (AAS).....	17
Sense of Community Index (SCI)	17

The Affective Style Questionnaire (ASQ).....	18
Procedures.....	18
Analysis	19
CHAPTER IV: POWER ANALYSIS.....	20
Fisher’s Exact Test	20
Multinomial Logistic Regression	20
Hypothesis One	21
Hypothesis Two.....	22
Affective expression	22
Sense of community.....	24
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION.....	25
General Limitations	29
Future Directions.....	30
References.....	32
Appendix A.....	36

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Recent statistics show that one of three Black males will be incarcerated in their lifetime. If this statistic was not alarming enough, consider that Black individuals, who only represent 12% of the nation's population, make up over 36% of the 1.5 million people in prison (Fritz & Whiteacre, 2010). According to Mumola (2000), 1 in 15 Black children have an incarcerated parent and are 7.5 times more likely than White children to face the battle associated with parental incarceration. As if being one of the 1.5 million people in prison was not a traumatic and life-altering scenario, consider the outcomes for the 1.7 million children who lost their parent to this alarming statistic, specifically when it comes to the crucial aspect of attachment (Kubiak et al., 2010).

Overview of Attachment Theory

According to the early work of attachment researcher John Bowlby (1998), an attachment can be best described as an intrinsic working model where conscious and unconscious mental processes are built based on repeated interactions with prominent individuals such as a parent or caretaker. Attachment not only is a predisposition for how an individual views social expectations but also heavily influences an individual's methods of coping and emotional regulation skills (Bowlby, 1998). While attachment begins to occur as a survival method in the early months of infancy, it is continuously at work until an attachment style is established at around two years of age (Ainsworth et al., 2015). According to Ainsworth et al. (2015), there are four established infant-caregiver attachment styles: secure, anxious-resistant, anxious-avoidant, and disorganized. More specifically, regarding these attachment styles, a secure attachment can be observed through a child who has developed feelings of security and, therefore, openly explores their environment, knowing they can be comforted by their caregiver consistently and

sensitively when needed. The three remaining attachment styles are categorized as insecure attachment styles due to the caregiver's inability to care for the child's needs consistently and sensitively. While an anxious-resistant style is developed through a mixture of anger and helplessness, the child may act passively, showing insecurity. This attachment style is typically developed when a caregiver is inconsistent with tending to the child's needs, sometimes being attentive and sometimes neglectful. The anxious-avoidant child is typically described as emotionally distant as a result of their caregiver being disengaged or emotionally distant from them. Due to the distant nature of the relationship, the child learns they cannot rely on their caregiver, creating the anxious-avoidant attachment. Last, the disorganized attachment style has been expressed as the most harmful in terms of future outcomes. The disorganized attachment style can be characterized by children who may display depression, anger, or apathy due to their caregiver acting in varying extremes. This attachment style has been associated with caregivers who may be abusive or struggle with severe substance abuse (Ainsworth et al., 2015).

Using Bartholomew and Horowitz's (1991) extension of infant-caregiver attachment theory, attachment styles can be easily translated into a four-group model of attachment styles in adults. Each style illustrates a positive or negative sense of self-image and interpersonal concept. Like the secure attachment style of infancy, the secure adult attachment style is characterized by a comfortable and positive view of self and others. The preoccupied attachment style is characterized by a highly negative view of self while still maintaining a low but positive view of others, thus creating a preoccupation with relationships. Similarly, the fearful attachment style can be characterized as a highly negative view of self and a highly negative view of others. Due to such, individuals who fall in this attachment style often are fearful of intimacy and, as a result, may be socially avoidant. Last, the dismissing attachment style is characterized by a low yet

positive view of self and a highly negative view of others, creating an interpersonal pattern where individuals are typically dismissive of intimacy and can be counter-dependent (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

Examining the evolution of attachment theory even further, Hazan and Shaver (1987) conceptualized romantic love as an attachment process. They created a self-report measure classifying adults in three categories that correspond to the three infant attachment styles. For this dissertation's purpose, this model was utilized to identify best and examine adult attachment styles. Using the defining characteristics of parent-child relationships that differentiated the four infancy attachment styles identified by Ainsworth et al. (2015), Hazan and Shaver (1987) examined how those determinants were also among adults' attachment styles when examining interpersonal relationships and romantic love. Three attachment styles were established: avoidant, anxious/ambivalent, and secure. The avoidant attachment style is characterized as being afraid of intimacy, often experiencing unhealthy levels of jealousy and emotional highs and lows. Someone with an anxious/ambivalent attachment style may view love obsessively, with a strong need for constant validation. These individuals also experience unhealthy levels of jealousy, extreme sexual attraction, and emotional highs and lows. Last, the secure attachment style can be described as an individual having a friendly, trusting, and happy relationship. They accept their partner regardless of their faults and tend to have long and fulfilling relationships.

Link Between Attachment Styles and Psychological Outcomes

While extensive research has centered around identifying the attachment styles, research has also identified overall life outcomes associated with each style. According to Diehl et al. (1998), individuals with a secure attachment style have higher levels of self-confidence, psychological well-being, more positive views of their family, and overall higher functioning in

the social world. A central tenant of attachment theory states that attachment relationships develop as a result of the child's interactions with their primary caregiver, which directly translates into an individual's basic beliefs regarding themselves, others, and the social world. Thus influencing and heavily impacting the formation and maintenance of close relationships for the remainder of an individual's life (Bowlby, 1978). Research indicates adolescents with insecure attachment styles have been shown to have more externalizing problems such as aggression and maladaptive behaviors, internalizing problems such as depression and anxiety, and overall poor interpersonal relationships with peers (Allen et al., 2008).

Historical Context of What It Means to be Black and Potential Protective Factors

To understand what it means to classify oneself as Black, one would need to have a quick rundown of American history. Colonial America was once a melting pot, with the term *race* created as a social construct with the intent to classify people based on their skin tone. This classification system enabled the European view of "the conquered and enslaved peoples," which established a social hierarchy and provided justification for the practice of slavery (Lowe, 2010). Being Black in America was decided not only by one's skin tone but also by one's physical characteristics, which is similar to today's widespread human acceptance of these racial categories (Lowe, 2010). When utilizing the term *ethnicity*, one's regional origin is considered, often incorporating a sense of belonging to a group connected by heritage, values, traditions, and often language (Phinney & Ong, 2007). To provide consistency while being culturally inclusive, identification of being a Black individual utilized an ethnic-identity framework and was defined as any person who identified themselves as Black, non-Hispanic.

Specifically looking at the Black community, research has identified spirituality, communalism, and affect as three important expressions of Black heritage (Jagers & Mock,

1993). Research has yet to identify potential protective factors that may mediate a Black individual's attachment outcomes and how it relates to their incarceration history. However, the three concepts of spirituality, sense of community, and affective expression have been operationalized and studied as a paradigm for describing cultural orientation among Black individuals (Jagers & Mock, 1993).

Transgenerational Cycle of Prison and Importance

A long-term national study examining adult offender rates found that 26% of children who had incarcerated parents growing up were subjected to incarceration themselves, providing a working definition for the transgenerational cycle of prison (Murray & Murray, 2010). Black Americans are disproportionately affected by incarceration, with both Black men and women being imprisoned at a higher rate in all age groups (Carson & Sabol, 2012). While this speaks to the current statistics of disproportionality in the United States prison system, historically speaking, Black individuals were also 17% more likely than their White counterparts to have a previous history of incarceration (Carson & Sabol, 2012). The United States has the highest incarceration rate in the world (World Prison Brief, 2021). With no plans to slow down, clinicians must know the implications of after incarceration and its impact on the upcoming generations of Black children who have fallen victims to the transgenerational cycle of prison. This dissertation intended to explore how parental incarceration has impacted attachment styles among Black individuals. By further exploring these crucial interpersonal patterns and the ability to connect with others, this dissertation further explored how we could build upon the strengths of the Black family to control what small factors we can (i.e., attachment), reduce the number of Black people falling victim to incarceration, and expand on potential intervention strategies that implement a cultural component to current prison programs.

More specifically, the following research questions were explored:

RQ1: Are there differences among gender related to the gender of Black participants and the gender of their incarcerated parent?

RQ2: Will affective expression and/or sense of community serve as protective factors for the attachment style of Black individuals who have been incarcerated?

RQ3: Does a Black parent's history of incarceration impact their perceived attachment relationship with their child?

It was hypothesized:

H0₁: Black male participants will be more likely to have an insecure attachment style than Black female participants regardless of their parent's gender.

HA₁: Black males who had an incarcerated father are more likely to experience negative attachment outcomes versus their female counterparts.

H0₂: The affective expression will serve as a mediator for attachment style among Black participants who have been incarcerated themselves or who had a parent incarcerated.

HA₂: Positive community connection will serve as a mediator for attachment style among Black participants who have been incarcerated themselves or who had a parent incarcerated whose parents were in prison during childhood.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

As discussed in the introduction, attachment can be best described as an intrinsic working model where both conscious and unconscious mental processes are built based on repeated interactions with prominent individuals such as a parent or caretaker. Attachment not only paves the way for how the individual will view social expectations but also heavily influences an individual's methods of coping and emotional regulation skills (Bowlby, 1998). Seeing how attachment is responsible for paving the way on how individuals experience the world around them is associated with various aspects of positive functioning. When this close relationship is not secure, there can be significant negative consequences.

The fine balance of a healthy and secure attachment on an individual's overall functioning has been linked to decreasing negative outcomes such as depression, aggression, delinquency, decreased interpersonal functioning, and more (Fritz & Whiteacre, 2016). All of these listed negative outcomes that increase as an individual's attachment security decreases can profoundly impact an individual's quality of living. What happens when an insecure attachment style is paired with an individual faced with an already preexisting set of societal and life difficulties?

Being Black in America

According to the literature, Black individuals report less social support satisfaction than their White counterparts, and their racial identity alone has been linked with lower psychological health and overall feelings of well-being (Sellers et al., 2003). As if social disadvantages did not already pose a particular set of social difficulties for Black individuals, 1 in 15 Black children have an incarcerated parent and are 7.5 times more likely than White children to face the battle associated with parental incarceration (Mumola, 2000). While the United States is the fastest-

growing country in terms of incarceration rates, the incarcerated population has been recorded to be disproportionately Black since at least the 1990s (Western & Beckett, 1999). While the various potential impacts of incarceration are lengthy and will be further explored, parental incarceration among Black individuals is crucial in understanding the transgenerational cycle of prison and its impact on attachment.

Incarceration and Attachment

The long-term national study by Murray and Murray (2010) suggests that parental incarceration equates to insecure attachment, which can further exacerbate future psychopathology, specifically externalizing behaviors. In addition to externalizing behaviors, Murray and Murray (2010) suggested that incarcerated parents induce a significant amount of additional life stressors onto their child(ren), further influencing future behaviors. These significant life stressors, in conjunction with stigma, inability to openly communicate with the parent resulting in poor attachment, poor emotional regulation skills, and increased risk for internalizing and externalizing behaviors, negatively impact the Black child's ability to be a successful functioning individual.

The four attachment styles of Ainsworth et al. (2015) are developed from research on interactions the child has or does not have with their caregiver. Marikav and Shaver (2010) suggested the idea of intergenerational transmission of attachment, which refers to the idea that an individual's attachment pattern is not only a product of the relationship between that child and their caregiver, but rather it is a collective stream of influences that run through multiple generations. The authors continue to state that caregivers of insecurely attached children are less likely to have open discussions regarding emotions, compromise, provide justification for their punishments or reasoning for their decisions, and/or resolve conflicts. Recognizing that these are

daily decisions a caregiver can make to engage their children and improve overall attachment outcomes, incarcerated parents are faced with an inability to engage in these parenting style tasks frequently. While the caregiver may attempt to provide direction for the child on occasion, Marikev and Shaver (2010) provided a reason to state that insecurely attached kids are less compliant and receptive to these directives. The lack of ability to resolve conflict in conjunction with higher externalizing behaviors and the inability to express and explore negative emotions create the potential for the child to fall into a dangerous result of potential incarceration for themselves. Supporting this idea of a transgenerational cycle of attachment and incarceration, Kjellstrand et al. (2013) found that 70% of incarcerated adults themselves had a parent who was incarcerated while they were children.

Allen et al. (1996) found that adolescents' criminality and drug use could be predicted from insecure attachment and unresolved states of mind from their childhood. The incarcerated parent themselves are disproportionately insecure, known to have had numerous problems prior to incarceration—related to attachment insecurity such as poor parenting skills, inadequate supervision of their children, harsh parenting attitudes, and previous criminal convictions (Marikev & Shaver, 2010). Marikev and Shaver (2010) laid out an attachment-focused model suggesting an incarcerated parent's family background, which often includes the individual having an association with past drug/alcohol use, amplifies the cycle of disorganized attachment patterns and overall interpersonal difficulties. This disorganized attachment style leads to the incarcerated parent having a disorganized and insecure relationship with their child long before incarceration. Following the parent's eventual incarceration, the child is then faced with relational and further attachment strains, negatively impacting their overall outcomes.

Continuing the trend that children are more disadvantaged when it comes to the overall attachment with their incarcerated parent, Shlafer and Poehlmann (2010) conducted a study that found children with incarcerated parents indicated feeling more alienated and isolated toward their parents, which resulted in an increase of behavioral problems. In addition to an increase in behavioral difficulties, research suggests that up to 50-83% of kids with incarcerated parents have problems in school, and an alarming 10-30% also face legal difficulties resulting in arrest or incarceration, further amplifying the transgenerational cycle of prison (Murray & Farrington, 2008).

Culture and its Role as a Protective Factor

Children who had incarcerated parents were twice as likely to exhibit detrimental impacts in adulthood, such as increased externalizing behaviors, academic and interpersonal difficulties, and a higher likelihood of self-incarceration (Mumola, 2020). While research continues to examine factors that could help alleviate some of these negative psychological and life outcomes, empathy has been identified as a key protective factor. According to Dallaire and Zeman (2013), empathy is an essential part of interpersonal relationships and prosocial development. When comparing a predominately Black sample to a control group, children who had been separated from their parents due to incarceration versus another reasons showed no difference in outcomes when they were able to show empathy toward their parent's situation. In contrast, children who displayed limited empathy showed increased aggression and insecurity in their interpersonal relationships, consistent with previous research findings. When looking at Black individuals' cultural domain, research has suggested three expressions that are important in Black heritage: spirituality, communalism, and affect (Jagers & Mock, 1993). While spirituality is often associated and expressed in God's concept, research suggests this expression is also related to a

higher transcendence of physical death and a sense of continuity with one's ancestors. While an important concept, the idea of spirituality can be difficult to define conceptually, given its highly personal and subjective nature. Communalism reinforces the idea that one's identity is tied to a group membership rather than an individual status. Last, the expression of affect implies the importance of emotional expressiveness and a general sensitivity to emotional cues (Jagers & Mock, 1993). The three elements of spirituality, communalism and affect may be imperative in targeting and cultivating a preventative intervention to incarceration, and its impact on attachment styles may be imperative in using a culturally responsive approach to understanding the Black experience. By threading empathy into these three domains of cultural expression within the household, perhaps parents and clinicians can begin to strengthen a protective factor against the transgenerational cycle of incarceration and its negative impacts on attachment and overall psychological outcomes. In addition, this potential intervention strategy may benefit multiple generations because when compared to low-risk community samples, incarcerated mothers had higher rates of insecure attachment themselves and reported higher levels of depressive symptoms, lower parenting competency, and lower satisfaction with their social support networks than other mothers who displayed secure attachment styles (Borelli et al., 2010).

Affective Expression in Three Styles

While communalism is operationally defined in the paragraph above, the literature broadly describes affective expression as the ability to appropriately identify, label, and express one's own emotions and the ability to be aware of others' emotional cues. While this definition broadly identifies important aspects of emotional regulation, Hofmann and Kashdan (2010) further supported three general strategies that individuals used to handle emotional reactions:

concealing, adjusting, and tolerating affective expression. When referring to the concealing approach, the strategy can be described as an individual utilizing suppression and other response-focused strategies to avoid the emotion after it arises. Individuals who possess the tools to readjust emotions as needed to navigate the situational needs successfully are known to have the adjusting approach. Given the ability to appropriately adapt given the situation, individuals with an adjusting approach have been characterized as more able to access and utilize emotional information, giving them a better ability to modulate their emotional experiences and expressions (Mennin et al., 2002). Last, the tolerating approach is characterized by individuals who can respond to arousing emotional experiences in a non-defensive and comfortable approach. Given their ability to respond to emotional experiences in the present moment, these individuals tend to have a strong tolerance for distress (Hofmann & Kashdan, 2010).

Infancy Attachment in Correlation with Adult Attachment

As briefly mentioned in the introduction, infancy attachment styles identified by Ainsworth et al. (2015) can be translated into adult attachment styles and romantic love. Hazan and Shaver (1987) found that individuals with secure attachment styles tend to have healthy, trusting, long-lasting, and fulfilling relationships characterized by an overall acceptance of their partner's faults. In contrast, individuals with insecure attachment styles are often afraid of intimacy, typically experiencing unhealthy levels of jealousy and emotional highs and lows or viewing love obsessively, with a strong need for constant validation. While unfortunate, these results may not be surprising given the inability to connect securely and healthily interpersonally.

While infant attachment is believed to be established by two years of age, it continuously marks an individual's outcomes and has been correlated to an adult attachment model (Ainsworth et al., 2015). Using Bartholomew and Horowitz's (1991) extension of infant-

caregiver attachment theory, adult attachment styles illustrate a positive or negative sense of self-image and interpersonal concept. Like the secure attachment style of infancy, the secure adult attachment style is characterized by a comfortable and positive view of self and others. The preoccupied attachment style is characterized by a highly negative view of self while still maintaining a low but positive view of others, thus creating a preoccupation with relationships. Similarly, the fearful attachment style can be characterized as a highly negative view of self. However, these individuals also maintain a highly negative view of others. Because of this, individuals within this attachment style often are fearful of intimacy and socially avoidant as a result. Last, the dismissing attachment style is characterized by a low yet positive view of self and a highly negative view of others, creating an interpersonal pattern where individuals are typically dismissive of intimacy and can be counter-dependent.

When examining the impact adult attachment styles can have in interpersonal relationships, Simpson et al. (1992) conducted a study examining how an intimate dyad reacts when confronted with an anxiety-provoking situation. Results revealed that individuals with more secure attachment styles showed more support to their provoked partner by offering supportive comments, physical contact, and other various efforts to seek and give emotional support. In contrast, it can be assumed that the individuals classified with insecure attachment styles were unable to provide emotional support to their partner in times of distress. This lack of ability to provide support and emotional comfort to their intimate partners when challenging times are presented aligns with their original lack of ability to forge a strong emotional bond with their primary caregiver as an infant.

Adults who have insecure attachment styles have shown an unwillingness to rely on others in close relationships and show higher levels of insecurity, trauma, unresolved loss, and

inability to discuss positive emotions (Roisman et al., 2007). Nonetheless, while it has been established that insecure attachment styles in childhood can lead to significant externalizing behaviors and poor emotional regulation skills, insecure attachment styles continue to be detrimental in adulthood. Shorey and Snyder (2006) proposed that attachment theory is vital for understanding how adults perceive and relate to the world around them. Therefore, clinicians should partake in a thorough understanding and assessment regarding an individual's attachment style for treatment planning purposes, as adult attachment styles also dictate how people respond to various treatment interventions. Assuming that attachment styles are constantly shaping how one views the world around them, these schemas could very well shape a pre-disposition to psychopathologies and treatment outcomes, which becomes ever more important when working with more vulnerable populations such as the incarcerated. To further support the idea that infant attachment can be linked with adult attachment styles and psychopathology, Carlson (1998) investigated the relationship between disorganized attachment at age 2 and later attachment at age 19. The results revealed that children who had developed a disorganized attachment exhibited significantly more problems throughout their development, including behavioral difficulties, psychopathology by their formative years, dissociative qualities, and strained relationship with their parents. Carlson (1998) continued to propose that these results suggest disturbances in the child-caregiver relationship at a young age can, in turn, lead to an inability to effectively regulate their emotions and social feedback, in turn, negatively impacting their attachment styles, adult relationships, and psychological outcomes.

Similarly, Shorey and Snyder (2001) found that adult attachment styles mediated an individual's own parenting style and adult mental health. While insecurely attached children are likely to develop insecure adult attachment styles, the research also indicated seven potential

factors that could lead to a secure child becoming an insecurely attached adult, one of which being the loss of a parent (Waters et al., 2000). While losing a parent to incarceration can negatively impact attachment, research on forced parent-child separation may also lead to the individual developing poor adaptive strategies and low self-esteem (Solomon & Zweig, 2006). With infancy attachment styles heavily predicting adult attachment styles, the underlying cycle of insecure attachment styles among the transgenerational prison cycle is heavily underway.

The Impact of Incarceration on Black Individuals and the Fatherless Child

Looking more specifically at the impact of incarceration on Black individuals and their children, Geller et al. (2009) conducted a longitudinal study. Results found that children of incarcerated parents faced more psychological difficulties and tended to experience more economic and residential instability than their counterparts. In addition, results found that sons of incarcerated fathers displayed more behavioral difficulties. The fatherless Black child is a growing concern but has limited studies exploring the prevalence, importance, and potential impacts. A study conducted by Murray and Farrington (2008) supported the previous findings suggesting that growing up with an incarcerated father as a son could be more detrimental in increasing the son's likelihood of engaging in delinquent or antisocial behaviors. While there are prison-run programs and nurseries that attempt to focus on the attachment concerns with children and their incarcerated parents, the issue remains that these programs focus on the mother-child relationship and not the father-child relationship. Overall, these programs have been shown to have success in increasing attachment bonding between mother and child and lowering rates of psychopathology. However, they have also been criticized by participants for not providing adequate facilities, medical care, and more (Fritz & Whiteacre, 2016). In addition, while these programs have been shown to have success, there is concern regarding the very limited number

of programs across the country, the difficulty of being qualified for entrance into one of these programs, and the lack of attention paid to the father-child relationship (Fritz & Whiteacre, 2016).

Infancy attachment is a vulnerable time for individuals to shape how they view and interact with the world around them for their entire developmental trajectory. By potentially disrupting a secure attachment in childhood by removing the ability for a child to properly bond with their caregiver due to parental incarceration, a plethora of negative outcomes such as insecure attachment, an increased likelihood for a transgenerational cycle of incarceration among the family, and overall increased interpersonal difficulties, externalizing behaviors, and psychopathology present themselves. With Black children and families being heavily impacted by incarceration at a significantly higher rate than their White counterparts, this issue of the transgenerational cycle of prison and its negative impact on attachment is of utter importance. By understanding how the transgenerational cycle of prison may be specifically impacting attachment styles among Black individuals, clinicians can work to target protective factors within the household, improve and advocate for culturally appropriate intervention strategies, provide imperative and correct psycho-education, and build upon and provide diversity training and strategies to target this ever-growing problem.

CHAPTER III: METHODS

Participants

A total of 103 people participated in this study. However, due to missing data and lack of inclusion criteria, the following analyses were based on 98 adults ranging from 18-68 years old ($M = 35.5$, $SD = 11.3$). The total sample included 60 males (61.8%) and 37 females (38.2%). Among these 98 participants, 100% of them identified as Black, non-Hispanic. Additionally, 46 participants (47.4%) reported having a parent incarcerated during their lifetime, leaving 51 participants (52.6%) who were not a part of the transgenerational cycle of prison but had a personal history of incarceration.

Measures

Demographic questionnaire. Participants completed a basic demographic questionnaire (see Appendix A), including age, gender identity, sex, highest level of education, marital status, ethnic identity, as well as self and parental incarceration history.

Adult Attachment Scale (AAS). The AAS is a three-item self-report questionnaire to assess adult attachment styles as avoidant, anxious/ambivalent, and secure. Participants are asked to select one of three descriptions that best characterized their experiences with romantic love relationships. The scale has been used frequently throughout the literature when assessing for adult attachment.

Sense of Community Index (SCI). The 12-item SCI is derived from the work of McMillian and Chavis (1986), who proposed a four-dimension model to identify one's sense of community. The SCI items are rated as "true" (1) or "false" (0), with 4 reverse-scored items resulting in a total SCI ranging from 0-12. Three items per subscale are summed, yielding four subscales scores: membership, influence, the fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional

connection. The unidimensional internal consistency reliability was good ($\alpha = 0.80$).

The Affective Style Questionnaire (ASQ). The ASQ (Hoff & Kashdan, 2010) is a 20-item self-report rating scale to assess three distinct affective styles (i.e., concealing, adjusting, and tolerating). Items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “Not true of me at all” (1) to “Extremely true of me” (5), with higher scores reflecting a preference for an affective style. In the initial validation study of undergraduate students, the concealing subscale had a mean of 22.60 ($SD = 6.31$, range: 8-40). The adjusting subscale had a mean of 20.96 ($SD = 5.15$, range: 7-35). The tolerating subscale had a mean of 15.47 ($SD = 3.43$; range: 6-25). The ASQ demonstrated acceptable internal consistency for all three subscales, ranging from 0.68 (tolerating) to 0.84 (concealing). Factor analysis supported the three-factor structure with concealing accounting for 22.2% of the variance, adjusting accounting for 15.8%, and tolerating accounting for 10.1%.

Procedures

The study survey was distributed online to adults in the United States. Participants were recruited from the campuses and other community facilities, as well as online via Facebook. This study’s inclusion criteria were that the individual was 18-years or older, identified as Black non-Hispanic, and had a history of incarceration themselves and/or their parent was incarcerated while growing up. After reviewing and signing the informed consent, participants were asked to complete a survey assessing demographic information, followed by another self-report survey assessing the transgenerational cycle of prison and parental incarceration. Last, participants were instructed to complete the Attachment Assessment Scale by Hazan and Shaver (1987), SCI by Perkins et al. (1990), and the ASQ created by Hoffman and Kashdan (2010). All data were entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences for data analysis.

Analysis

Data were analyzed using version 26 of IBM's Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Descriptive statistics were used to explore sample characteristics. A power analysis was conducted, and data were examined for statistical outliers and missing data. A total of 103 people participated in this study; however, due to 4 people not meeting inclusion criteria and one individual identifying as gender non-binary, analyses are based on 98 adults. At least one expected cell frequency was less than five failing to meet this assumption of the chi-square test for association. Consequently, a Fisher's exact test was conducted between gender and attachment style. Multinomial logistic regression was used to predict attachment outcomes based on a sense of commonality and affective expression. It was hypothesized that (a1) Black male participants would be more likely to have an insecure attachment style than Black female participants regardless of their parent's gender, (a2) Black males who had an incarcerated father would be more likely to experience negative attachment outcomes versus their female counterpart, (b1) affective expression would be a significant predictor of attachment style among Black participants who had been incarcerated themselves or who had a parent incarcerated, and (b2) positive community connection would be a significant predictor of attachment style among Black participants who had been incarcerated themselves or who had a parent incarcerated whose parents were in prison during childhood.

CHAPTER IV: POWER ANALYSIS

The sample was random, variables were categorical, and groups were independent, thereby meeting those assumptions.

Fisher's Exact Test

A Fisher's exact test was conducted to explore the research questions examining the relationship between the variables of a person's personal or parental history of incarceration and attachment style outcomes. Compared to the chi-square, Fisher's exact test can be applied in an analysis with a small sample size given that the chi-square does not have a list of assumptions that must be met for statistical analysis. After calculating the exact p -value using a contingency table, an alpha of 0.05 was used when determining statistical significance.

Multinomial Logistic Regression

To investigate whether the study's independent variables, such as age and gender, predicted an individual's overall attachment style, a multinomial logistic regression was conducted. Compared to the linear regression, the multinomial logistic regression was an attractive choice given its more flexible design when comparing assumption needs. For example, while the assumption of homoscedasticity was not assumed while utilizing the multinomial logistic regression, it did require that there should be no multicollinearity among the independent variables (i.e., age and gender).

All models were re-estimated with the number of months parents spent in jail and the number of times the respondent went to jail to test whether this correlation created any multicollinearity issues. Using the variance inflation factor with a cutoff of five, the remaining estimates' results were low and similar, which indicated that no multicollinearity issues were present.

Standard multiple regression was used as a diagnostic tool for outliers. Four outliers with a significantly higher number of incarcerated times were identified, and six outliers had parents who spent a long time in jail. To test the level of influence of these outliers, models were re-estimated with their exclusion. However, the results were very similar to the original models, so the outliers were kept in the analysis to maximize the sample size. Finally, the stability of the model specification was examined by adding one variable at a time and comparing the estimates. Adding new variables did not change the significance or the sign of the coefficients, which means that the models consistently estimated the coefficients.

Hypothesis One

The first hypothesis stated that Black males who had an incarcerated parent would be more likely to experience negative attachment outcomes versus their female counterparts. The majority (65.2%; $n = 30$) of participants with a history of parental incarceration were male. There was an insignificant chi-square ($p = .134$, Fisher's $p = 0.176$), which suggests that although there appeared to be a different distribution between males and females, the small sample did not have enough statistical power to find a significant difference.

When combining anxious and avoidant into a general insecure attachment category to try to give the statistical analysis more power, one observes that the relationship between having a parent incarcerated when growing up and attachment type was still insignificant for females ($p = .16$, Fisher's $p = .191$) and males ($p = .063$, Fisher's $p = .110$).

To compare participants who were a part of the transgenerational cycle of prison versus those who were not, a second chi-square was conducted. There was a higher impact on attachment incomes for participants who were a part of the transgenerational cycle of prison compared to Table 1 and Table 2. However, this finding still fell short of being significant ($p >$

.1), suggesting that having a parent in jail or not leads to no meaningful difference in the attachment styles of males or females.

To explore what factors determine the attachment style of respondents, a multinomial logistic regression was utilized. Results suggested that gender was the only variable significant for the category of avoidant attachment style ($P = .030$) and age was significant for the secure attachment category ($P = .011$), suggesting that gender mattered for the formation of an avoidant attachment style and age for the formation of a secure attachment style. Parent's personal history of incarceration, both measured as a binary or a continuous variable, did not influence attachment style. Overall, regardless of incarceration history, females were much more likely than males to be in the avoidant or secure categories instead of the anxious-ambivalent category.

Hypothesis Two

The second hypothesis explored affective expression and communalism as protective factors. It was hypothesized that affective expression and communalism would be statistically significant predictors of attachment outcome for participants with a history of parental incarceration. Due to the small sample size, the two categories of avoidant and anxious-ambivalent attachment style were collapsed into a general insecure attachment category. When it came to affective expression, three affective styles were assessed: concealing, adjusting, and tolerating.

Affective expression. Based on results from a binomial regression analysis, concealing affective expression had no influence on attachment style. However, gender and age were significant. Results suggested that females were much more likely to be avoidant or secure when compared to their male counterparts ($P = .000$). In addition, results suggested that with every

year of age increase, a person is 1.3 times more likely to be in the secure attachment category versus an insecure attachment category.

Table 3

Attachment Style on Predictors Including Concealing Affective Expression

Attachment Style	B	SE	Wald	Sig	Exp(B)	95% CI
Avoidant						
Intercept	-.365	3.780	.009	.923		
Female	19.478	.837	540.967	.000	287759868.09	[55744795.042 - 1485443468.322]
Age						
How many months total did your parent and/or caregiver spend being incarcerated?	.186	.143	1.675	.196	1.204	[.909-1.595]
How many times have you been incarcerated?	.001	.007	.020	.886	1.001	[.987-1.015]
Concealing affective expression	-.020	.083	.060	.806	.980	[.834-1.152]
Secure						
Intercept	-2.996	3.965	.571	.450		
Female	18.766	.000			141207903.889	[141207903.889 - 141207903.889]
Age						
How many months total did your parent and/or caregiver spend being incarcerated?	.253	.147	2.974	.085	1.288	[.966 - 1.717]
How many times have you been incarcerated?	-.009	.009	1.056	.304	.991	[.973 - 1.009]
Concealing affective expression	-.030	.094	.103	.748	.970	[.807-1.166]
Concealing affective expression	-.092	.098	.898	.343	.912	[.753 - 1.104]

When exploring the impact of adjusting affective expression, results suggested that females were much more likely than males to display this affective style ($P = .000$). Participants with adjusting affective expression had 22% fewer odds $(1 - .777) * 100\%$ of being in the avoidant attachment style category compared to the anxious/ambivalent reference category. Those with adjusting affective expression had 24% fewer odds $(1 - .757) * 100\%$ of being in the avoidant attachment style category than the anxious/ambivalent reference category. With every year increase in age, a person had 55% higher odds $(1.52 - 1) * 100$ of being in the secure category compared to the anxious/ambivalent reference category.

Last, participants who identified with the tolerating affective expression style had decreased odds of having a secure attachment style by 49% = $(1 - .509) * 100\%$ and 54% = $(1 - .460) * 100\%$ decreased odds to having an avoidant attachment style compared to the anxious/ambivalent attachment category.

Sense of community. It was hypothesized that a positive community connection would serve as a mediator for attachment style. Regression analysis showed that community connection did not influence Black participants' attachment style ($P > 1.0$). Similarly, as mentioned above, gender and gender combined with age increased the odds of being in the avoidant or secure attachment styles.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

This study explored the impact parental and self-incarceration had on Black individuals' attachment styles and examined the potential protective and mediating factors affective expression and sense of community could have on said attachment outcomes. The study divided each variable into an individual hypothesis to better understand its impact on attachment outcomes. Within the first hypothesis, which stated that Black males who had an incarcerated parent would be more likely to experience negative attachment outcomes versus their female counterpart, the results of the study demonstrated that although there appeared to be a different distribution between males and females, the small sample did not have enough statistical power to show a significant difference. This suggests that an individual's gender may play a role in the way they attach to their incarcerated caregiver; more specifically, male individuals may be more susceptible to developing an avoidant attachment style, specifically when they have an incarcerated parent. While the literature exploring the fatherless Black child due to incarceration within the Black community is close to nonexistent, research has shown both supporting and dissenting hypotheses that male individuals are more susceptible to developing avoidant attachment styles when compared to females. Regardless, the avoidant attachment style has consistently been characterized by emotional distance and disengagement. This potential finding could begin to lead the way to understanding gender-specific incarceration outcomes (i.e., are Black males more susceptible to falling victim to the transgenerational cycle of prison due to the socially disengaged characteristics of the avoidant attachment style?) and potential intervention strategies for Black individuals who are either a part of the transgenerational cycle of prison or grew up with an absent parent due to parental incarceration.

In addition to assessing potential specific incarceration outcomes, future directions should continue to explore gender-specific intervention strategies specifically targeting the fatherless Black child. For example, prison nurseries have shown a promising policy response to attachment disruption concerns due to incarceration, with recent outcomes reporting increased attachment and bonding between parent and child, with a yearlong stay providing the most positive outcomes (Fritz & Whiteacre, 2016). However, while research on prison nurseries finds continuous positive impacts such as increased self-reported parent self-esteem, confidence in parenting skills, and parenting efficacy, prison nurseries continue to be criticized by participants for failing to provide adequate care, facilities, and most importantly, are only geared toward the mother and child opposed to father-child attachment (Fritz & Whiteacre, 2016). Knowing the crucial and necessary need for future research to continue exploring overall outcomes, influences, and intervention strategies for the fatherless Black child, perhaps the exploration and growth of a preexisting but not-well supported and culturally geared program could be the start of positive change.

The second hypothesis sought to break down the two potential mediating variables of affective expression and sense of community and stated that each of these variables would serve as a mediator for the participant's attachment style. While this study did not assess the individual's level of spirituality given its complex and subjective nature, future research should consider utilizing the Spiritual Health Inventory by Korinek and Arrendondo (2004). While spirituality may be a difficult concept to categorize concretely given its very personal and subjective nature, research supports the overall expression of spirituality to be a key piece of Black cultural identification but has not explored its potential to be a mediating and/or protective factor to Black individuals who are faced with or have experienced incarceration.

Results indicated that concealing affective expression had no influence on attachment style. However, it was suggested that a female was much more likely to be avoidant or secure when compared to their male counterparts. Opposite to this finding, the literature shows some evidence that men may tend to report higher avoidance levels. However, these findings were inconsistent, controversial, and likely to be adaptive (Scharfe, 2017). Given the potential adaptability of these gender differences, this finding further supports the need to focus on the impact of the fatherless Black child due to parental incarceration. It may influence the type of insecure attachment an individual is developing. In addition, results suggest that with every year of age increase, a person is 1.3 times more likely to be in the secure attachment category than in the anxious attachment category. Results suggested females were much more likely than males to have an adjusting affective style and participants with adjusting affective expression have 22% fewer odds of being in the avoidant attachment style category compared to the anxious /ambivalent category. Given the well-accepted idea of gender socialization, women tend to be more emotional and nurturing than men, which would heavily impact how they receive social interactions and navigate emotional complexities, potentially creating a higher likelihood to display an adjusting affective style (Bem, 1993). In addition, with every year increase in age, a person has a 55% higher chance of displaying a secure attachment style. This finding created an interesting paradigm within the therapeutic setting because the characteristics of a secure and trusting relationship may be more prevalent and easily created within the therapeutic alliance. Using a lifespan approach to therapy, this finding could heavily impact the client's psychopathology, clinician intervention strategies, and overall approach to interpersonal and emotional functioning. In addition, this finding could help identify a lifespan intervention approach to tackle specific parenting and interpersonal skills that may further perpetuate the

transgenerational cycle of prison and the related attachment outcomes. Last, participants who identified with the tolerating affective expression style also had decreased odds to have a secure attachment style by 49%, and 54% decreased odds to be in avoidant attachment style compared to the anxious/ambivalent attachment category.

When exploring the mediating relationship between sense of community and attachment outcomes, results indicated that a strong sense of community does not influence the attachment style of Black individuals. Similarly, as mentioned above, gender and gender combined with age increased the odds of being in the avoidant or secure attachment styles. There are many potential reasons gender and age are such impactful variables. In general, as individuals age, they likely experience an increase in overall life and interpersonal experience, an increase in internal locus of control, an increase in social support, and an overall desire to improve life outcomes. When it comes to the variable of gender, research has suggested that it can be utilized to predict emotional dependency and attachment style (Arbiol et al., 2002). As mentioned earlier, the literature has shown very inconsistent and controversial results when it comes to linking the variable of gender to attachment outcomes. However, there appears to be a consistent trend that gender roles, which are achieved through gender socialization, can impact an individual's attachment outcome due to the socialization that women should have higher levels of lovability and greater fear of abandonment and rejection (Arbiol et al., 2002). In an attempt to avoid the fear of abandonment and/or rejection, females may lean toward a more avoidant and/or secure attachment style.

In the future, a potential third hypothesis could be explored that identified what effect a Black individual's history of incarceration would have on their view of the attachment relationship with their child.

Overall, since results of the attachment style by incarceration since children were born with parents who had and had not been incarcerated were consistent with the overall attachment style by incarceration since children were born, we can conclude that there is likely no relationship between having been incarcerated while children were alive and the attachment style. Yet again, the sample size was small and to determine if there was such a relationship for the respondents whom themselves had an incarcerated parent while growing up, we need to retest this hypothesis with a larger sample.

General Limitations

The present study established some evidence that there may be a relationship between Black individuals' personal factors and attachment outcomes and a relationship between affective expression and attachment styles. However, there were limitations to the study. If considered for future research, it would allow for a deeper understanding of these intersecting points and a more thorough examination of all of the presented variables. For example, due to the variable's complexity, the study did not assess the relationship of spirituality and perceived attachment for those participants who indicated having children. Assessing for these variables would be key in better understanding the impact the transgenerational cycle of prison has on Black individuals and attachment and would explore another key potential protective factor to help mediate the cycle of prison and overall attachment outcomes. In addition, the study had strict inclusion criteria and, therefore, limited access to a wide range of Black individuals who had experienced incarceration either themselves or parental incarceration as children. Due to limited access, the study had a small sample size, which created difficulty in adequate statistical power, potentially leaving some findings unfound.

Last, the self-report nature of the study created an overall limitation. Self-report data were a subjective experience on behalf of the participants subjected to many biases, such as the attribution bias, where the individual attributes positive events to one's agency and negative events to external forces. Seeing how the entirety of this study was based on self-report measures, future research may benefit from analyzing potential biases when analyzing or collecting initial data.

Future Directions

Although the research did not support many of the hypotheses, future studies exploring the impact the transgenerational cycle of prison has on Black individuals' attachment styles and potential protective and mediating factors is crucial. While we know that 70% of incarcerated adults themselves had a parent who was incarcerated and Black men and women are being imprisoned at a higher rate than any other racial group, research has yet to tackle the implications of this transgenerational cycle of prison (Kjellstrand et al., 2013). These alarming statistics are only continuing to increase, and the negative consequences of incarceration are becoming more visible. However, appropriate intervention strategies and the untangling of a very complex issue have just begun. While there is ample research identifying the problem that Black individuals are being targeted, charged, and imprisoned disproportionately, there has been no identification of any factors that could be targeted to help alleviate the impact of incarceration. Additionally, with the current racial, political climate and added layer of transgenerational trauma placed on the Black community, this topic is under-researched and growing ever more important. By identifying potential protective factors that already exist within the Black community, research could shift focus from a deficit-based approach and could focus on a strength-based approach by

identifying and narrowing in on preexisting elements within the community that promote resilience, strength, and hope.

In the future, it would be beneficial to focus on how to access this population better to gain a more thorough and undistorted understanding. With this research, clinicians, laypeople, law-making personnel, and more can begin to understand and create more rehabilitative treatment programs and alternatives to the prison system, create and fund post-incarceration assistance, and target and increase protective factors in high-risk Black communities in an attempt to curb the alarming incarceration statistics and potential negative attachment outcomes that follow. In addition, future research should continue to expand on the implications of the fatherless Black child.

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Appendix A

A. What is your current age:

B. Which of the following best describes your gender identity:

1. Male
2. Female
3. Non-Binary

C. What is the highest level of schooling you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

1. Less than high school degree
2. High school degree or equivalent (GED)
3. Some college but no degree
4. Associate degree
5. Bachelor degree
6. Graduate degree

D. What is your marital status:

1. Single
2. Married
3. Widowed
4. Divorced
5. Separated

E. Do you ethnically identify as Black?

1. Yes
2. No

F. How many times have you been incarcerated:

G. How many months *total* have you spent being incarcerated:

H. Growing up, were any of your parents and/or caregivers incarcerated:

1. Yes
2. No

I. How many months *total* did your parent and/or caregiver spend being incarcerated (please put "0" if this question is not applicable to you):

J. How many children do you currently have:

K. Have you been incarcerated since your child(ren) have been alive?

1. Yes
2. N