ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: FATHERING AFTER INCARCERATION: NAVIGATING THE RETURN OF YOUNG BLACK MEN TO FAMILIES, JOBS, & COMMUNITIES

John Rennie Hart, Doctor of Philosophy, 2017

Dissertation directed by: Professor Kevin M. Roy
Department of Family Science

Incarceration, and reentry after incarceration, is the most common experience for young, low-income Black men across their life course (Tierny, 2014). While most Black men work, go to school, get married and start families, others, especially those who are low-income are at a higher risk to experience incarceration. As a result, incarceration challenges these men's ability to reconnect with social institutions such as work, school, and marriage post release. More importantly, incarceration separates these men from their families for extended periods of time. This dissertation utilized social ecological theory and life course theory to examine the lives and families of these Black fathers. I recruited 40 incarcerated fathers for life history interviews in a local department of corrections, and I analyzed how incarceration re-arranged the lives of these men as well as the development of their children, and how men reentered their families and communities after incarceration.

FATHERING AFTER INCARCERATION: NAVIGATING THE RETURN OF YOUNG

BLACK MEN TO FAMILIES, JOBS, AND COMMUNITIES

by

John Rennie Hart

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Advisory Committee:

Professor Kevin Roy, Chair
Professor Mia Smith-Bynum
Professor Joseph Richardson Jr.
Professor Amy Lewin,
Professor James Butler III

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

For Black men in their 20's and early 30s without a high school diploma, the

incarceration rate is so high – nearly 40 percent nationwide – that they're more likely to

be behind bars than to have a job.

Tierny, 2013

African-American men have long been more likely to be locked up and more likely to die

young, but the scale of the combined toll is nonetheless jarring. It is a measure of the

deep disparities that continue to afflict black men — disparities being debated after a

recent spate of killings by the police — and the gender gap is itself a further cause of

social ills, leaving many communities without enough men to be fathers and husbands.

Wolfers, Leonhardt, & Quealy, 2015

According to John Tierny, incarceration is perhaps the most common experience

for young, low-income Black men across their life course. If that is true, what does this

mean for other aspects of their lives? For example, most Black men work and go to

school. How does incarceration shape those aspects? In addition, Wolfers, Leonhardt, and

Quealy (2015) suggest that the disparities that exist with high incarceration rates and

shortened life span for young, low-income Black men impacts family life as these men

are either separated from their families and perhaps more importantly, their children, or

they do not live long enough to experience marriage and/or fatherhood. In other words, if

we think about the life course of young, low-income Black men, what does it mean when

incarceration becomes a primary organizer of their lives and replaces education, work,

and family? In this dissertation project, I explored the implication of this historic shift.

The Era of Mass Incarceration

The United States has the largest prison population in the world both in terms of the actual number of inmates and as a percentage of the total population (Wyler, 2014). The United States currently has 2.4 million citizens locked up in federal penitentiaries, state corrections facilities, and local jailhouses – the triad of the nation's prison industrial complex (Wyler, 2014). The incarceration rate are nearly 3.5 times higher than that of Mexico and beween five and ten times higher than those seen in Western Europe. In fact, the United States is home to nearly a quarter of the world's prisoners, despite accounting for just five percent of the overall global population (Wyler, 2014). Since 1980, the number of incarcerated citizens in the U.S. has more than quadrupled; an unprecedented rise in American history (Wyler, 2014).

In order to manage this significant amount of individuals flowing in and out of the criminal justice system, the creation of laws and policies and the trend of building prisons has become the norm. According to Alexander (2012), mass incarceration is a system that not only refers to the criminal justice system but also to a larger web of laws, rules, policies, and customs that control those labeled criminals both in and out of prison. Once released, former prisoners enter a hidden underworld of legalized discrimination and permanent social exclusion. She states, "they are members of America's new undercaste" (Alexander, 2012, p. 13).

Recidivism is an individual's relapse into criminal behavior, often after he/she has received sanctions or undergoes intervention for a previous crime. Recidivism is measured by criminal acts that result in re-arrest, reconviction or return to prison with or without a new sentence during a three-year period following the prisoner's release

(National Institute of Justice, 2014). Bureau of Justice Statistics studies have found high rates of recidivism among released prisoners. Durose, Cooper, and Snyder (2014) tracked 404,638 prisoners in 30 states after their release from prison in 2005. The researchers found three notable results. First, within three years of release, about two-thirds (67.8 percent) of released prisoners were rearrested. Second, within five years of release, about three-quarters (76.6 percent) of released prisoners were rearrested. Third, of those prisoners who were rearrested, more than half (56.7 percent) were arrested by the end of the first year. While recidivism is one of the most fundamental concepts in the criminal justice system, these high recidivism rates suggest that first time incarceration is more likely to increase one's likelihood of continued involvement with the criminal justice system. And as a result, mass incarceration is viewed as a necessary tool for maintaining law and order.

While many U.S. individuals are being incarcerated at significant rates, Black persons, especially low-income Black males, make up a disproportionate percentage of the prison population. According to recent estimates, low-income Black males are imprisoned at an overall rate of nearly seven times that of non-Hispanic white males (Johnson, n.d.). In the present trends continue, the United States will imprison one-third of its Black population (NAACP, 2014). Alexander (2012) asserts this high rate of young Black males experiencing mass incarceration is actually a comprehensive and well-disguised system of racialized social control that functions in a manner similar to systems such as Jim Crow and slavery – resulting in a racial caste system. She expresses that mass incarceration is a type of stratification wherein Black people are kept in an inferior position. Its emergence, she believes, is a direct response to progress made by the Civil

Rights Movement.

The Origins of Mass Incarceration

Mass incarceration did not occur in a vacuum. Scholars such as Cornel West and Michelle Alexander have argued that mass incarceration is based on the history of racial social control in the United States dating back to the Jim Crow era and even further back to slavery. Specifically, the re-emergence of racial social control after the dismantling of slavery and Jim Crow has been championed by "proponents" of racial hierarchy and that the strategy has been to appeal to the prejudices and insecurities of lower-class Whites.

Slavery

Alexander (2012) argues that became an issue once Europeans began colonizing other countries. Afraid to use Native Americans for free labor due to perceived damages and losses accrued from potential rebellions, plantation owners in the U.S. started to use both European White and Black indentured servants and Black slaves. Nathaniel Bacon, a White property owner who was upset about the way the poor were treated united European and Black indentured servants, Black slaves, and poor White people to overthrow the elite. After the Bacon rebellion, plantation owners decided to ship in slaves from Africa instead of slaves or indentured servants from Europe because they thought that the African slaves would be less likely to form an alliance with the poor whites and the white people indentured servants. This served as a justification to view Africans as the safest slaves because they were less likely to rebel or cause any issues.

After the rebellion, the involvement and colonization of Africa grew rapidly while efforts to take over the land from the Native Americans in America was simultaneously occurring. Europeans felt superior in both circumstances and used negative media outlets

(e.g., books, newspapers, magazines) to turn both Native Americans and African slaves into "savages" instead of people. Kilty and Swank (1997) assert that these media representations were so effective because they made both groups be viewed as less than human and made it acceptable to treat them as lesser - "eliminating 'savages' is less of a moral problem than eliminating human beings (p. 106)." This notion suggests that slavery could not have existed without turning the non-White races into less than human. Gradually, Native Americans and Africans were both held down as a group because they were seen as "uncivilized...lacking in intelligence (Alexander, 2012, p. 28)." Africans were seen as even more savage and unintelligent than Native Americans and that further justified the idea of enslavement. The United States Constitution was then created to keep this social caste system intact and to maintain non-Whites as less than people. In the U.S. Constitution, slaves were counted as 3/5 of a person and not as a whole person. This event solidified that American democracy was created around making sure that African slaves were dehumanized.

Slavery flourished for more than four centuries and even though it ended after the Civil War, the idea of White supremacy over all other races not only remained but also intensified. A narrative about Blacks lacking in their character and actions started to develop from most White people and this gave Southern legislatures to create "Black codes." Black codes is a term referring to laws passed after the Civil War that had the intention and the effect of restricting Blacks' freedom, and compelling them to work in a labor economy based on low wages or debt (Lynch, n.d.). Alexander (2012) argues that Black codes did two things. First, Black codes foreshadowed the creation and era of Jim Crow and its laws; and second, Black codes established systems of peonage meaning that

they were still holding Blacks on a certain level of freedom. Scholars have also indicated that during the creation of Black codes, prisoners became younger and Blacker and the length of their sentences soared (Gilmore, n.d.; Alexander, 2010). Alexander (2012) highlights that this was the first example of mass incarceration in the past that still exists today. This suggests that slavery was not completely wiped out from society and instead transformed into a new caste system.

Post-Slavery – Convict Leasing

The Thirteenth Amendment to United States Constitution abolished slavery and involuntary servitude *except* as punishment for a crime (Raghunath, 2009). On December 18, 1865, Secretary of State, William H. Seward proclaimed its adoption. The Thirteenth Amendment was the first of the three Reconstruction Amendments adopted following the American Civil War (DuVernay, 2016). After the Civil War, the South's economy, society, and government were in shambles. Southern state governments struggled to raise money to repair damaged infrastructure and to support new expenses such as universal public education. The prison problem was especially challenging, as most prisons had been destroyed during the war. Previously, Black slaves had been subjected to the punishments at the hands of their owners. With government ineffectiveness and an increase in both white and black lawlessness, the problem of where and how to house convicts became significant (Blackmon, 2009).

Originally, states paid private contractors to house and feed the prisoners. Within a few years, states realized they could "lease out" their convicts to local planters or industrialists who would pay minimal rates for the workers and be responsible for their housing and feeding -- thereby eliminating costs and increasing revenue (Blackmon,

2009). Soon, markets for convict laborers developed, with entrepreneurs buying and selling convict labor leases. Unlike slavery, employers had only a small capital investment in convict laborers, and little incentive to treat them well. Convict laborers were often dismally treated, but the convict lease system was highly profitable for the states and the employers. Interestingly, as public sympathy grew towards the hardships of convict laborers, Southern states struggled over what to do. The loss of revenue was significant, and the cost of housing convicts high. Eventually, many southern states stopped leasing out their convict laborers, instead keeping them to work on public projects in chain gangs (Blackmon, 2009).

Jim Crow

As the Reconstruction era began and unfolded, Blacks were given legal rights. This made many White supremacists upset and yearning for restoration. As a result, Alexander (2012) argues that White proponents of racial hierarchy "once again created vagrancy laws and other laws defining activities such as 'mischief' and 'insulting gestures' as crimes that were enforced vigorously against Blacks (p. 31)." These laws were being passed in attempt to solidify Blacks in a situation where rights could be stripped form them completely. Simultaneously, a Populist radical philosophy of racial integration (viewed as a symbol of commitment to class-based unity), gained the attention of Blacks during this time since they viewed it as a vehicle for racial equality. Even though this philosophy was successful, the social gains made many Whites to rightfully discriminate seeped through and Blacks were placed in the inferior position that they were formally in again. New laws (Jim Crow laws) were formed that went against Blacks in the South and that disenfranchised Blacks and discriminated against them in

every aspect of their lives (Alexander, 2012).

Jim Crow laws cemented Blacks in the lower class. Many Whites recognized discrimination and segregation as legitimate practices and it was considered a must as it became very common (Packard, 2003). Jim Crow laws started to drive a wedge between poor Whites and Blacks. Specifically, discriminatory practices encouraged lower-class Whites to retain a sense of superiority over Blacks, making it far less likely that they would sustain racial political alliances aimed at toppling the White elite. William Julius Wilson (1978) exclaims, "as long as poor Whites directed their hatred and frustration against the Black competitor, the White elite were relieved of class hostility directed at them."

Moreover, Alexander (2012) states that Jim Crow laws were completely against Blacks and their freedom, "politicians competed with each other by proposing and passing ever more stringent, oppressive, and downright ridiculous legislation…such as laws specifically prohibiting Blacks and Whites from playing chess together (p. 35)." This quote suggests that this new racial caste system became not only a law, but also what seemed to be an everyday ritual that Black individuals had to go through just to get through the day. The Jim Crow laws created a re-emergence of this racial caste system - a complete replacement to what had existed during slavery.

Whites believed that the Jim Crow laws would have to be revised and modified, and if not, overthrown. This heightened the resentment for White proponents of racial hierarchy. While there is much less certainty about the beginning of the end of the Jim Crow era, certain events like the Brown v. Board of Education debate on ending racial segregation in schools in the South, created hope for the rights of Blacks. This also

brought anger and denial upon Southern Whites, as they were fighting for the Jim Crow Laws to come back into full effect. Alexander (2012) argues that despite the fact Brown had made his point very clear and concise, new Jim Crow Laws were being added to the list. As a result, violence erupted as groups such as the Ku Klux Klan instilled fear in Blacks through their actions of harassments and killings as they felt the end of the Jim Crow era.

Post Jim Crow Era – Peonage

Peonage, also called debt slavery or debt servitude, is a system where an employer compels a worker to pay off a debt with work (Daniels, 1972). Legally, peonage was outlawed by Congress in 1867. However, after Reconstruction, many Southern black men were swept into peonage though different methods, and the system was not completely eradicated until the 1940s (Blackmon, 2009). In some cases, employers advanced workers some pay or initial transportation costs, and workers willingly agreed to work without pay in order to pay it off. Sometimes those debts were quickly paid off, and a fair wage worker/employer relationship established. But on the other hand, there were also situations in which workers became indebted to planters (through sharecropping loans), merchants (through credit), or company stores (through living expenses) (Blackmon, 2009). Workers were often unable to re-pay the debt, and found themselves in a continuous *work-without-pay* cycle.

Yet the most corrupt and abusive peonage occurred in conspiracy with southern state and county government. In the south, many black men were picked up for minor crimes or on trumped-up charges, and, when faced with staggering fines and court fees, forced to work for a local employer would who pay their fines for them (Blackmon,

2009). Southern states also leased their convicts en mass to local industrialists. The paperwork and debt record of individual prisoners was often lost, and these men found themselves trapped in inescapable situations (Blackmon, 2009).

Civil Rights Movement

As time went on, economic issues emerged as a major focus of discontent. Political scientists Piven and Cloward (1966) have asserted "Blacks became more indignant over their condition – not only as an oppressed racial minority in a White society but as poor people in an affluent one." This led to activists organizing boycotts, picket lines, and demonstrations to attack discrimination in access to jobs and the denial of economic opportunity during the Kennedy administration. Following the Kennedy assassination, President Lyndon Johnson launched his "War on Poverty," an agenda focused on addressing a high national poverty rate. This legislative agenda aligned with the Civil Rights movement bringing together the concerns not only about Black poverty but White poverty as well. The alignment of these two agendas (class and racial) addressed racial inequality through addressing economic and political equality (McKnight, 1998). This became a unifying, color-blind agenda for the nation that helped spark consistent gains by the Civil Rights movement. Yet, Alexander (2012) states that proponents of a racial hierarchy started to think of and install a new racial caste system without violating the law or the new limits of acceptable political discourse.

The Mechanisms of Mass Incarceration

Alexander (2012) indicates that mass incarceration works the "War on Drugs" as a primary tool for enforcing traditional, as well as new, modes of discrimination and repression that disproportionately impact Black men. Specifically, four prominent

policies - arrest rates, sentencing, recidivism, and zero-tolerance – have disproportionately impacted young Black men. Policies such as New York's Stop and Frisk law have contributed to high arrest rates of young Black men (Gelman, Fagan & Kiss, 2007). For example, crime/drug arrest rates increased: Blacks represented 12% of monthly drug users but comprise 32% of persons arrested for drug possession. This law provided both discretion and authorization to utilize racial bias when policing – making it commonplace for police to investigate Blacks more often (Alexander, 2012).

Sentencing policies have increased young Black men's involvement with the criminal justice system as well. Mandatory minimum sentencing refers to laws requiring binding prison terms of a particular length for individuals convicted of certain federal and state crimes. These inflexible, "one-size-fits-all" sentencing laws have led federal and state prison populations to soar – with Black male offenders being the second largest group negatively impacted (FAMM, n.d.). In addition, there is the discriminatory sentencing guideline for the War on Drugs. Sentencing guidelines punish crack offenders harsher than cocaine offenders – disproportionately discriminating against African Americans, since approximately 93 percent of crack offenders were Black.

Attempting to curb the rates of habitual offending, policies have been created to reduce recidivism rates. For example, the Three Strikes Rule is a California law that significantly increased the prison sentences of persons convicted of a felony who have been previously convicted of two or more violent crimes or serious felonies, and limits the ability of these offenders to receive a punishment other than a life sentence (Stanford Law School, n.d.). Because many of these laws include drug offenses as prior "strikes,"

more Black than White male offenders have been subject to life sentences under a Three Strikes law.

In addition, the zero tolerance policy, a school policy of punishing any infraction of a rule, regardless of accidental mistakes, ignorance, or extenuating circumstances, has disproportionately impacted Black male students across all school ages (Verdugo, 2002). Specifically, 35% of Black males grades 7-12 have been suspended or expelled at some point in their academic careers compared to 20% of Hispanics and 15% of Whites males. Alexander (2012) also mentions that zero-tolerance policies allow the criminal justice system to create a pipeline for young Black youth to enter the criminal justice system earlier and faster based on the concept of "charging ahead" (i.e. youth of color being more likely to be arrested, detained, and transferred to adult court compared to White youth). While these current policies have recently exacerbated the racial disparity in the criminal justice system for young Black men, Alexander (2012) argues that these policies have socio-historical ties to the mission of "keeping Blacks in check" – especially Black men.

Felony Disenfranchisement

Since the Jim Crow era, states have restricted the voting rights of individuals even after a person has served his or her prison sentence and is no longer on probation or parole (Manza & Uggen, 2008). English colonists brought to North America the common law practice of "civil death," a set of criminal penalties that included the revocation of voting rights. Early colonial laws limited the penalty of disenfranchisement to certain offenses related to voting or considered "egregious violations of the moral code (Ewald, 2002)." After the American Revolution, states began codifying disenfranchisement

provisions and expanding the penalty to all felony offenses (Behrens, Uggen, & Manza, 2003). Many states instituted felony disenfranchisement policies in the wake of the Civil War, and by 1869, 29 states had enacted such laws (Liles, 2007). Elliot argues that the elimination of the property test as a voting qualification may help to explain the popularity of felony disenfranchisement policies, as they served as an alternate means for wealthy elites to constrict the political power of the lower classes (Behrens, Uggen, & Manza, 2003).

In the post-Reconstruction period, several Southern states tailored their disenfranchisement laws in order to bar Black male voters, targeting those offenses believed to be committed most frequently by the black population (Holloway, 2009). For example, party leaders in Mississippi called for disenfranchisement for offenses such as burglary, theft, and arson, but not for robbery or murder (Mauer, 2002). The author of Alabama's disenfranchisement provision "estimated the crime of wife-beating alone would disqualify sixty percent of the Negroes," resulting in a policy that would disenfranchise a man for beating his wife, but not for killing her (Shapiro, 1993). Such policies would endure for over a century. While it is debatable whether felony disenfranchisement laws today are intended to reduce the political clout of communities of color, this is their undeniable effect.

The political impact of the unprecedented disenfranchisement rate in recent years is not insignificant. One study found that disenfranchisement policies likely affected the results of seven U.S. Senate races from 1970 to 1998 as well as the hotly contested 2000 Bush-Gore presidential election (Uggen & Manza, 2002). Even if disenfranchised voters in Florida alone had been permitted to vote, Bush's narrow victory "would almost

certainly have been reversed. Furthermore, restoring the vote to persons leaving prison could aid their transition back into community life. The revocation of voting rights compounds the isolation of formerly incarcerated individuals from their communities, and civic participation has been linked with lower recidivism rates. In one study, among individuals who had been arrested previously, 27 percent of non-voters were rearrested, compared with 12 percent of voters (Uggen & Manza, 2004). Although the limitations of the data available preclude proof of direct causation, it is clear that "voting appears to be part of a package of pro-social behavior that is linked to desistance from crime (Manza, Brooks, & Uggen, 2004)."

The Collateral Consequences of Mass Incarceration

One critical example of collateral consequences that has shaped these men and their families is Clinton's One Strike, You're Out. The Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 predated One Strike, You're Out and outlined eligibility requirements public housing authorities were to use to screen candidates (Dzubow, 1996). Legislation mandating the eviction of tenants whose housing units are the scene of criminal actions was passed by the United States Congress in 1996 and signed by President Bill Clinton. In his 1996 State of the Union Address, President Clinton laid the foundation for the One Strike policy: "I challenge local housing authorities and tenant associations: Criminal gang members and drug dealers are destroying the lives of decent tenants. From now on, the rule for residents who commit crimes and peddle drugs should be one strike and you're out. I challenge every state to match federal policy to assure that serious violent criminals serve at least 85 percent of their sentence (Bowser, 2003)." The provisions of the law took effect gradually and were essentially fully in place nationwide by 1998.

This policy was drafted by Housing and Urban Development Secretary Henry Cisneros, as a part of the Housing Opportunity Extension ("HOPE") Act of 1996. Six months following the creation of the policy 3,847 people were evicted from various housing projects across the country. Public housing projects saw an 84% increase in the number of evictees six months prior to the signing of the law (Bowser, 2003). While many types of crime are covered by the law, the vast majority of the evictions pursued under it have involved acts of physical and sexual violence and the sale and/or possession of illicit drugs (Menard, 2001). The intentions of the One Strike, You're Out policy is that the offending tenant is banned for life from receiving any form of federal public housing assistance. But, a mechanism exists for the evictee to apply for reinstatement after three years (with no guarantee that this application or any future such application, will be granted). Individual states are also permitted to opt out of the law or modify its provisions as they see fit such as by imposing a temporary rather than a lifetime ban or limiting the ban to certain offenses (Strand, 2002).

The most explicit consequence of mass incarceration has been at the societal level, in that it legitimates and reinforces deeply embedded racial stereotypes and contributes to the persistent chasm in this society between young Black men and all other social groups in society (Devah, 2007). But, the high rate of incarceration of Black males also raises concerns about its impact, not only on the individuals who are incarcerated, but on their communities, as well (Moore, 1996; Mincy, 2006). As increasing numbers of young Black men are arrested and incarcerated, their life prospects are seriously diminished. These men tend to experience a range of health issues (London & Myers, 2006). Their possibilities for gainful employment and livable wages are significantly

reduced (Holzer, Raphael, & Stoll, 2004), thereby making them less attractive as marriage partners and unable to provide for the children they father (Blank & Gelbach, 2006). This in turn contributes to the deepening of poverty in low-income communities.

The large-scale rates of incarceration may contribute to the destruction of Black communities. According to (Roberts, 2004), the consequence of mass incarceration in the Black community is three-fold – it damages social networks, distorts social norms, and destroys social citizenship. Mass incarceration of young Black men adversely affects social networks because it impedes the formation of social capital (i.e. the capacity of individuals and groups to achieve important goals through their connections with others). Mass incarceration not only overwhelms the small, isolated kin networks prevalent in poor Black communities, but also makes it hard for residents to form expansive networks that are most adept in at producing social capital (Clear, Rose, & Ryder, 2001).

Pertaining to distorting social norms, mass incarceration weakens the community's infrastructure and it threatens a community's foundation of informal social control. This massive movement of young adults between prison and community impedes the ability of families and other socializing groups (churches, social clubs, and neighborhood associations) to reach consensus on common values and on avenues for solving common problems (Sampson, 1987; Smeeding et al., 2011). Finally, mass incarceration dramatically constrains the participation of Black communities in the mainstream political and labor economy. According to Roberts (2004), the civic exclusion stems largely from the invisible punishments that accompany a prison sentence and the labor market exclusion that is tied to having served time. Moreover, slavery, Jim Crow and War on Drugs eras have provided critical contexts for the existence of mass

incarceration and suggest that structural factors have always shaped young, Black men's incarceration patterns more so than their poor decision-making.

Young Black Fathers & Mass Incarceration

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, in 2007 an estimated 744,200 state and federal prisoners in the United States were fathers to 1,599,200 children under the age of 18 (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008). In addition, Mumola (2006) suggests that 7,476,500 children have a parent (mother or father) who is in prison, in jail or under correctional supervision (2006). A special report from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Parents in Prison and their Minor Children*, is the most complete resource available to date for descriptive information on incarcerated fathers and their children. The report is based on findings from the Surveys of Inmates in State and Federal Correctional Facilities conducted in 2004, and on National Prisoners Statistics program custody counts. The Surveys of Inmates includes quantitative data collection with a representative sample of 18,185 persons incarcerated in state and federal prisons. Important descriptive statistics about fathers in prison are as follows:

- The median age of incarcerated fathers was 32 among those in state facilities and 35 among those in federal facilities in 1997 (Mumola, 2000). While the rate of incarcerated fathers is high for those between the ages of 24 years and younger (40%) in state and federal prison, higher percentages of incarcerated fathers fall between the ages of 25-44 (60-75%) (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008).

- In 2007, a disproportionate number of fathers incarcerated in state prison were African American (42%) or Latino (20%). African American (49%) and Latino (28%) men made up a disproportionate share of fathers in federal prison as

well (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008).

- In 1997, most incarcerated fathers reported incomes below the poverty line prior to incarceration, with 53% earning less than $12,000 in the year before their arrest (Mumola, 2000).

- Over half of incarcerated fathers (54%) reported that they were the primary source of financial support for their children prior to their incarceration (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008).

- Of the state and federal prisoners who had minor children in 2004, 92% were men (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008).

- Of the total number of parents in federal prison, 36% were married and 25% were divorced or separated. Among state prisoners, 23% of parents were married and 28% were divorced or separated (Mumola, 2000).

- Among male inmates in state prison, 71% of those who were married were parents to minor children, compared to 44% of those who were never married, 55% of those who were divorced, and 64% of those who were legally separated. Among federal inmates, 77% of married men had minor children, compared to 58% of never-married men, 59% of divorced men, and 69% of men who were separated (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008).

Studies indicate that the average incarcerated father has 2.1 children and forty-two percent of state prisoners reported living with one or more of their minor children in the period immediately prior to their incarceration (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008). Descriptive statistics indicate that:

- The average age of children with an incarcerated father is 8 years old with

83% falling between the ages of 1 year – 14 years old (Mumola, 2000).

- Most incarcerated fathers (88%) report that at least one of their children is in the care of the child's mother (Glaze and Maruschak, 2008).

- Of children with an incarcerated father, 12% live with a grandparent or other relative and 4% live in foster care or with a non-family member (Johnson, 2006).

The type of offenses incarcerated fathers experience is notable. In 2000, 23% of incarcerated fathers were in prison for a first-time offense (Mumola, 2000). Nonviolent offenders, particularly drug offenders, make up an increasing proportion of the U.S. correctional population and are heavily represented among incarcerated fathers (70%) (Western & Beckett, 1999; Mumola, 2000). In addition, the sentence lengths these fathers experience further complicate their life course. In 1997, Mumola (2000) reported that the average sentence length for fathers was 6 to 7 years among state inmates and 8 to 9 years among federal inmates. Recent estimates from Mumola (2006) suggests that sentence length characteristics remained relatively unchanged as of the 2004 Surveys of Inmates, with fathers incarcerated in state prison expected to serve an average sentence of six years and ten months. Eighteen percent of fathers were expected to serve less than two years (Mumola, 2006).

Young, low-income Black fathers significantly contribute to the well-being of their families. In terms of their families, Hammond and colleagues (2011) found that young low-income Black fathers are critical in providing both financial and emotional support to their families. These contributions are significant in addressing issues such as poverty. Research also suggests that young, low-income Black fathers tend to be involved

fathers with a female partner who works (i.e. dual earning couple) and that low-income Black fathers equally engage in critical caregiving tasks with their children (Hossain and Roopnarine, 1994; Cabrera et al., 2008). This improves relations between the parents and alleviates burdens on the mother (Sobolewski & King, 2005). While the narrative has been the opposite, non-residential low-income Black fathers also provide nurturance to their children (Roy & Cabrera, 2010). Studies have also found that low-income Black fathers "do parent" at all developmental ages and that their parenting behaviors are associated with positive social, cognitive, and developmental outcomes for their children (Shannon, Tamis-LeMonda, London, & Cabrera, 2002).

Yet, persistently imprisoning a significant number of young, low-income Black men removes and separates them from their families and their communities. It damages the ability of these men to father their children and provide financial and relational contributions to the well-being of their families and community while in prison. Even when released from prison, being incarcerated serves as the final experience that incapacitates these men from fulfilling any manly role or expectation (as father, son, brother, uncle, boyfriend, husband, mentor, community member, worker, etc.). Addressing the policies and studying the effects of mass incarceration on minority families through scholarship and programs is a growing public health initiative with hopes to reduce the magnitude of this phenomenon. Yet, more attention is needed on focusing on the experiences of young, low-income Black fathers who have been incarcerated since they are significantly more at risk of interfacing with the criminal justice system and having their life course trajectory derailed as they transition into adulthood.

   Therefore, the purpose of this dissertation is to provide an in-depth exploration of the trials and tribulations young Black men in urban communities experience with their fathering, especially after experiencing some form of incarceration. As previously stated, young Black men are more at risk for experiencing high levels of incarceration and because such institutions complicate their ability to be involved in their children's lives, these men and their families are more at-risk for adverse outcomes. This study will use qualitative methods and both symbolic interactionism and life course perspectives to examine young Black men's narratives about their involvement with the criminal justice system and how it shapes their paternal identities over their life span. In addition, this study will examine the implications of mass incarceration on young Black fathers as they transition to adulthood with the hope of informing policy, programming, and practice regarding this unique population.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to present a synthesis of the empirical, theoretical, and programmatic publications related to young Black men's experiences with social institutions, fatherhood, and mass incarceration from their adolescence to their emerging adulthood. The focus of this literature review will be directed at work that attempts to understand these phenomena among young Black men in low-income urban areas. Disadvantaged young Black men continue to be left out of empirical and theoretical research. Therefore, when possible, this review highlights work that specifically addresses the experiences of young Black men living and dwelling in low-income urban areas. I offer summaries of the literature relevant to the issues addressed in this dissertation and identify gaps in the literature concerning young Black men as fathers and experiencing mass incarceration.

I start the first section by presenting an overview of the policy and empirical literature on the experiences of Black males as youth who interface with the juvenile justice system and the associated links to their involvement with this punitive system. Then, I discuss their emerging adulthood processes while examining their involvement with social institutions. Next, I will follow up the first section to add another component to these men's lives – fathering. Specifically, in this section, I will provide theoretical and empirical background on the general literature on fathering (e.g., identity, involvement, behaviors, contexts that shape fathering, etc.). Then, I will focus on the experiences of fathering in young low-income Black men using empirical research to highlight similarities and conflicts about this phenomenon. This section will be followed with an extensive social and non-empirical presentation of how mass incarceration has shaped the

well-being of young Black men and their ability to be involved and effective fathers to their children.

Understanding Mass Incarceration Through Social Ecological Model & Life Course Theory

While the transition to adulthood framework and model has opened the door to understanding one of the hardest transitions in human development, both the social ecological model and life course theory are prominent theoretical frameworks that provides significant depth to fully tracking the complicated transition to adulthood for low-income, young Black men as they manage life events such as fatherhood. But, life course theory is even more appropriate and useful framework for studying the new "underclass" of Black men – incarcerated Black men (Alexander, 2012).

Social Ecological Theory

It is critical to highlight that these men and the criminal behaviors that they engage in are not just a product of "choice" when we examine factors that lead to re-offending. There are structural factors that influence the types of decisions low-income Black men make while trying to take care of their children and their families. According to Sampson and Groves (1989), low economic status, ethnic heterogeneity, residential mobility, and family disruption leads to vulnerable communities experiencing further social disorganization, which in turn, increases criminal behaviors in young men of color. In addition to clarifying these factors, social ecological theory suggests that in order to prevent recidivism, it is necessary to act across multiple levels of the model at the same time (Gorman-Smith, Tolan,& Henry, 2000). This approach is more likely to sustain decreasing recidivism over time than any single intervention.

Individual

The first level of this model identifies biological and personal history factors that increase the likelihood of engaging in criminal activity and being incarcerated. Some of these factors are age, education, income, substance use, or history of abuse. Prevention strategies at this level are often designed to promote attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that ultimately prevent violence. Specific approaches, even in detention centers, tend to include education and life skills training.

Relationships

The second level examines close relationships that may increase the risk of experiencing incarceration. A person's closest social circle, such as peers, partners and family members, influences their behavior and contributes to their range of experience. Prevention strategies at this level may include parenting or family-focused prevention programs, and mentoring and peer programs designed to reduce conflict, foster problem solving skills, and promote healthy relationships.

Community

The third level explores the settings, such as schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods, in which social relationships occur and seeks to identify the characteristics of these settings that are associated with being incarcerated. Prevention strategies at this level are typically designed to impact the social and physical environment – for example, by reducing social isolation, improving economic and housing opportunities in neighborhoods, as well as the climate, processes, and policies within school and workplace settings.

Societal

The fourth level looks at the broad societal factors that help create a climate in which the incarceration of young, Black men is encouraged. These factors include policies at the local, state and federal levels and social and cultural policing strategies that support locking up Black men as an acceptable way to resolve community conflicts. Other large societal factors include the health, economic, educational and social policies that help to maintain economic or social inequalities between groups in society.

Life Course Theory

The life course perspective offers tools for understanding the dynamics of relationship and identity formation in context and over time. One of the best attributes about life course theory is that it is a developmental approach inextricably tied to the dynamic concerns and the unfolding of biological, psychological, and social processes through time (Laub & Sampson, 1997). According to Bengtson and Allen (1993), life course theory considers how changing social contexts transform normative roles like fatherhood. In particular, a life course perspective offers four sensitizing concepts (Patton, 2002) that I will use as a complimentary piece to frame fatherhood and incarceration and potential changes with these two events over time: human agency, linked lives, location in context, and multiple rhythms of time (Giele & Elder, 1998).

Agency

According to Giele and Elder (1998), individuals actively make decisions and organize their lives to achieve goals, such as being an involved father or re-offending. However, the ability to make specific choices depends on opportunities and constraints. Young Black fathers who have been incarcerated end up being disenfranchised and further marginalized (Edelman et al., 2006). As a result, their "planful competence" (a

term in life course theory that describes the thoughtful, proactive, and self-controlled processes that underlie one's choices about institutional involvements and social relationships; Clausen 1991) is complicated by such challenges/experiences. The implication from such a process is that young Black fathers must carefully manage their identities (e.g., father, ex-offender, etc.).

Linked Lives

As mentioned before, fathers are embedded in a family network of linked lives through which social expectations, norms, and meanings of fatherhood are integrated and internalized (Giele & Elder, 1998). As a result, when macro-level events such as mass incarceration occur, individuals (e.g., young Black men) are negatively impacted – along with their families as well (e.g, mother of the child, children, community, etc.). Events such as incarcerating a father can trigger patterns of stress and vulnerability for the family since the removal of this individual undermines the needs of the family as a collective unit.

Location in Context

This concept refers to the notion that an individual's own developmental path is embedded in and transformed by conditions and events occurring during the historical period and geographical location in which the person lives. For example, macro events (e.g., mass incarceration), economic cycles (e.g., recessions), and social and cultural ideologies (e.g., strong emphasis on law and order) has shape people's perceptions and choices (e.g., young Black men, employers, communities) and alter the course of human development. As a result, the behaviors and decisions of these young Black fathers

before, during, and after incarceration do not occur in a vacuum – since people and families interact within socio-historical time (Marsiglio, Roy, & Fox, 2005).

Multiple Rhythms of Time

According to Price, McKenry, and Murphy (2000), three types of time are central to the life course perspective – individual, generational, and historical. Individual *or* ontogenetic time refers to chronological age. It is assumed that periods of life, such as childhood, adolescence, and old age, influence positions, roles, and rights in society, and that these may be based on culturally shared age definitions (Hagestad & Neugarten, 1985). Generational time refers to the age groups or cohorts in which people are grouped, based upon their age. Younger Black men may be a part of the millennials whereas older Black men may be a part of the Generation X. Historical age refers to the similarities among cohorts of men across families that reflect the effect of socio-historical time. For example, the distinct ways in which cohorts of young Black fathers (compared to young White fathers) experience the same historical event, mass incarceration (for example), shapes how these men father.

Mass Incarceration: Juvenile Justice System

The focus of this study is to examine the life course experiences of young, Black fathers' involvement with incarceration at some point in their life and their re-entry process. Mass incarceration has been and is generally studied or examined solely at the adult level. But the growing research over the years have suggested that there is developmental value in understanding these young, Black males' experiences in jail not just at the adult stage but also in earlier years. Therefore, I will provide a brief literature review on policies, factors, and experiences of low-income young, Black youths involved

with the criminal justice system. Since the late 1980's, juvenile justice policies such as criminalizing juvenile delinquents, judicial waiver, incarcerating youth in adult institutions, and juvenile life without parole (JLWOP) sentences have hampered the developmental trajectories of many youths of color by placing them behind bars with harsher sentences. These policies have also exacerbated mass incarceration at the adult level as it has created a strong pipeline for Black youths to graduate within the confines of the jail system to become Black men behind bars. In addition, research has consistently found that factors such as neighborhood, parental incarceration, parenting behaviors and peer deviance significantly contribute to juvenile delinquency.

Policy: Mechanisms of the Juvenile Justice System

Mass incarceration is not only developmentally tied to young male adults but towards youths, as well. Although the future of juvenile justice policy is uncertain, the impact of policies from the 1990s is clear: despite declining juvenile crime rates, the adultification of youth continues to include punitive and exclusionary sanctions (Benekos & Merlo, 2008). Attitudes toward offenders are ambivalent, but there is evidence that legislators and the public are reluctant to abandon the punitive policies of the 1990s, which have exacerbated mass incarceration rates for young, Black males.

Executing Youth Offenders

Even though cruel and harsh punishments such as executing youth offenders was practiced, it has been receding over the last decade (Benekos & Merlo, 2005). In March, 2005, the U.S. Supreme Court determined that executing juveniles under the age of 18 constituted cruel and unusual punishment in violation of the Eighth Amendment (*Roper v. Simmons*, 2005). Death row inmates who had been sentenced as juveniles typically

received life sentences after *Roper*. In *Roper*, the justices concluded that juveniles, compared to adults, were perceived as less culpable. In particular, they expressed that juveniles are less blameworthy than adults because they are more immature and less responsible than adults, more likely to be influenced by external pressure including peer pressure, and more vulnerable, in part, because they have less control over the environment than adults (Benekos & Merlo, 2005). Lastly, the justices noted the differences in character between juveniles and adults: "The personality traits of the juveniles are more transitory, less fixed" (*Roper v. Simmons*, 2005, p. 16). While this supreme court decision helped lessen the extreme punishment of executing youth offenders, it has been replaced by a system that keeps these offenders behind bars for the rest of the life or for the minimum of 40 years before they are considered for parole; thus, hampering both these youths' and their family's development.

Criminalizing Juvenile Delinquents

Even though juvenile crime, as measured by arrest, has continued to decline since the mid-1990s (Snyder, 2008), the get-tough legislation enacted during that decade, which targeted youthful offenders, resulted in adultification policies that increased the number of youth in criminal court and the number of youth incarcerated in adult prisons (Benekos & Merlo, 2005). According to Griffin (2003), there are three primary mechanisms the U.S. has used for referring youth to criminal court: judicial waiver, statutory exclusion, and direct file. The criteria for *discretionary judicial waiver* generally emphasize "the best interests of the child and the public" but identify age, offense, and prior record as "threshold" considerations in determining jurisdictional transfer (Griffin, 2003, p. 4). The threshold criteria also determine which youth qualify

for *statutory exclusion* from juvenile court and therefore begin their judicial process in criminal court. And with *direct file*, offense seriousness generally "triggers" appearance in criminal court (Griffin, 2003, p. 10). Since the enactment of these policies, legislatures have accomplished the following:

- Increased the number of crimes eligible for judicial waiver

- Lowered the threshold age for waiver

- Designated certain crimes for automatic waiver

- Specified certain crimes for presumptive waiver

- Expanded prosecutorial authority to review cases

As a result of these legislative changes, approximately 210,000 adolescents nationwide are now prosecuted in adult courts each year (Urbina, 2005, p. 148). The National Campaign for Youth Justice (n.d.) also reports that about 250,000 youth under 18 are "tried and sentenced in adult courts each year" (p. 1). Benekos and Merlo (2008) reports that this adultification policy occurs "despite the fact that research shows that trying and sentencing youth as if they were adults does not increase public safety or reduce crime" (p. 11). Moreover, as Sontheimer and Volenik (2004) observed, "As a society, we have decided that people who break the law as children should pay heavier and longer lasting consequences for that behavior than we exacted from them in the past" (p. 1). But more importantly (and sadly), the those serving heavier and longer lasting consequences for their actions are low-income Black youths.

Youth Incarcerated in Adult Institutions

The incarceration of juveniles with adults has a long history in the United States. The deleterious effects associated with housing children with adults were cited by

reformers in Cook County, Illinois, to support the creation of a separate juvenile court in 1899 (Tanenhaus, 2004). Beginning in the 1990s, there is evidence that the United States regressed to this approach with little consideration of the long-term and short-term consequences. Demographically, youth in prison tend to be overwhelmingly male. In 2002, males comprised 96% of the new court commitments. In addition, new prison commitments of youth under 18 were disproportionately Black. For example, when Black and White inmate admissions were compared, Blacks outnumbered Whites by 2 to 1 in 2002 (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006, p. 238).

Although it is generally assumed that youth in prison are primarily sentenced as adults only after conviction for a violent offense, this is not always the case. In fact, there is evidence that juveniles may be sentenced more harshly than adults for similar kinds of criminal activity. According to data from 344 counties, juveniles who were transferred to adult court and convicted of larceny, burglary, or weapons offenses in 1996 faced a greater likelihood of incarceration in prison than adult offenders who were convicted of similar crimes (Sickmund, 2003, p. 28). In addition, juveniles who were convicted of murder and weapons offenses were also more likely to be sentenced to longer terms of incarceration in prison than their adult counterparts (Sickmund, 2003, p. 28).

These disparate sentencing practices are not inconsequential. Kurlychek and Johnson (2004) examined the sentences of juveniles (under 18) and young adults (18-24) in Pennsylvania. They found that during a 3-year period from 1997 to 1999, juveniles were sentenced more harshly than young adults (p. 500). "Overall, juveniles appear to be more likely than young adults to be incarcerated for lesser offenses and they tend to receive considerably longer sentence lengths for more serious offenses" (Kurlychek &

Johnson, 2004, p. 502). They contend that it is possible that judges may view youth who are transferred to adult court as more culpable and dangerous than young adult offenders (Kurlychek & Johnson, 2004, p. 505).

It is also important to consider the impacts of incarcerating youth offenders in adult institutions from a health and well-being standpoint. One of the consequences of sentencing juveniles to adult jails and prisons is the increased risk of suicide. This risk occurs for youth under 18, who are incarcerated in local jails as well as in state prisons. Juveniles incarcerated in adult prisons face greater risks of being physically and sexually abused than adults (Redding, 1999, p. 121). In a study, Austin and colleagues (2000, p. 8) and Schiraldi and Zeidenberg (1997) found that the incidence of sexual attack or rape, being "beaten up" by staff, and the likelihood of being attacked with a weapon were much higher among juveniles in adult prisons than juveniles in juvenile institutions. The Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch summed it up best when they expressed that "these teenagers are ill-equipped to deal with the prison milieu, "and it is also an unlikely place for them to gain the life experiences and education necessary for healthy mental and physical development." But more importantly, these harsh experiences in adult institutions alter and negatively impact youths 'attitudes and behaviors when released back into society and their adjustment during re-entry.

Juvenile Life Without Parole (JLWOP)

One of the biggest policies of the get-tough, punitive legislation that characterizes adultification policies is life sentences for offenders who commit their crimes before age 18. From their comprehensive study of "child offenders" sentenced to life without parole (JLWOP), Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch identified that 2,225

prisoners in the United States "have been sentenced to spend the rest of their lives in prison for the crimes they committed as children" (Benekos & Merlo, 2008). This policy has been so problematic for various reasons but two issues are very notable. First, many juries are not properly briefed on the consequences on convicting youths in trials. For example, in Mississippi, the Court of Appeals upheld the life sentence of Tyler Edmonds who was 13 when he killed his half-sister's husband (*Edmonds v. Mississippi*, 2006). One of the challenges in *Edmonds* was the trial court's failure to inform the jury that conviction would result in a life sentence. The Appeals Court found that no error occurred "in refusing to inform a jury of the mandatory life sentence that the defendant would receive if convicted" (*Edmonds v. Mississippi*, 2006, p. 48).

Second, as reported by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, "Although it has never ruled on the constitutionality of life without parole for children, the U.S. Supreme Court has often highlighted the inherent differences between youth and adults in the criminal law context" (Benekos & Merlo, 2008). As mentioned earlier in this section, *Roper* (2005) recognized the immaturity, irresponsibility, and diminished culpability of youth; in response to this court decision as it relates to JLWOP, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch concluded that punishment for children "should acknowledge that substantial difference." The implication of such decisions are that there are poor Black youths who are not just incarcerated at higher rates but whose life course experiences revolve around spending most of their life behind bars – away from positive institutions such as school, jobs, and marriage.

This review of policy trends in waiver, adult incarceration, and life without parole for young offenders indicates that these punitive legislative reforms of the last decade are

well entrenched in juvenile justice policy. The next part of this literature review section will examine empirical articles across various disciplines that will shed light on prominent factors and associations tied to the Black male youth's involvement with the juvenile justice system during their adolescent years.

<div align="center">**Empirical Studies: Developmental Factors**</div>

School

One of the prominent and controversial policies in the school system that has disproportionately impacted Black male youths than any other group has been zero tolerance policy. Emulating state and federal laws passed in the 1990s, such as the federal Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994, that were based on mandatory sentencing and "three strikes and you're out" policies, many educators first invoked zero-tolerance rules against those kids who brought guns to schools. But over time the policy was broadened, and now includes a range of behavioral infractions that include everything from possessing drugs to harboring a weapon to *threatening* other students – all broadly conceived. For instance, in many districts school administrators "will not tolerate even one instance of weapon possession, drug use, or harassment" (Beem, 2000, p. 3A). Studies have indicated that due to their harsh environments where they deal with structural issues such as community violence and extreme poverty, they are more likely to have weapons for source of protection, drugs to sell to make money, and are likely to show aggression and hyper-vigilance due to chronic exposure to violence (Webster, Gainer, & Champion,1993; Black & Ricardo,1994; Rosario, Salzinger, Feldman, & Ng-Mak, 2008). The problem is that these structural issues do not stop impacting Black male youths at the door of the school and end up "spilling over" into their lives as students. Consequently,

these acts end up violating extremities of such as zero tolerance policies placing Black male youths at a consistent risk for expulsion and arrest during adolescence.

Insidiously, zero-tolerance policies, while a threat to all youth and any viable notion of equal opportunity through education, reinforces in the public imagination the image of students of color as a source of public fears and a threat to public school safety. Zero-tolerance policies and laws appear to be well tailored for mobilizing racialized codes and race-based moral panics that portray black and brown urban youth as a frightening and violent threat to the safety of "decent" Americans (Giroux, 2003). Most of the high-profile zero-tolerance cases generally involve African American male youth, and as a result they reinforce the racial inequities that plague school systems across the country. For example, Tamar Lewin (2000), a writer for the *New York Times*, has reported on a number of studies illustrating "that black students in public schools across the country are far more likely than whites to be suspended or expelled, and far less likely to be in gifted or advanced placement classes" (p. A14). The major implication from such a policy has been the school to prison pipeline, which refers to this growing pattern of tracking students out of educational institutions, primarily via "zero tolerance" policies, and, directly and/or indirectly, into the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems. The school to prison pipeline has emerged in the larger context of media hysteria over youth violence and the mass incarceration that characterize both the juvenile and adult legal systems.

Neighborhood Risks

The research on neighborhood functioning has increased significantly across many disciplines due to the fact that it has been linked to processes in microsystems such

as the family and peer group to transmit the effects of neighborhood risk to youth (see

Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2004; Sampson, Morenoff, & Gannon- Rowley, 2002;

Beyers, Bates, Petit, & Dodge, 2003; Brody et al., 2001; Rankin & Quane, 2002; Tolan,

Gorman- Smith, & Henry, 2003). Neighborhood *structure* refers to sociodemographic or

compositional features of communities (e.g., employment rate) and is typically measured

using data collected from the U.S. Decennial Census; neighborhood *social processes*

refers to the community's social organization (e.g., social connections among neighbors)

and is usually evaluated on the basis of residents' perceptions of how their communities

function. According to Sampson and Groves (1989), weak neighborhood structural

factors (e.g., concentration poverty, racial-ethnic heterogeneity, residential mobility) are

linked to higher rates of juvenile delinquency because it leads to the "the inability of a

community structure to realize the common values of its residents and maintain effective

social controls."

The empirical study of neighborhood effects on juvenile offenders has been

mixed due to studying this topic from two models. The *relationships and ties* model and

the *norms and collective efficacy* model (see Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2004). The

relationship and ties model stems heavily from family stress theories (Conger, Ge, Elder,

Lorenz, & Simons, 1994; McLoyd, 1990) and suggests that the link between

neighborhood disadvantage and delinquent outcomes is mediated by parenting behaviors

(e.g., supervision) and characteristics of the home environment (e.g., level of economic

hardship); The norms and collective efficacy draws heavily from the previously

mentioned social organization framework and suggests that the association between

neighborhood disadvantage and delinquency is largely mediated by peer group norms and

behavior (e.g., level of deviant attitudes and activity). With the relationships and ties model, a number of studies have indicated that youths who live in poor, crime-ridden neighborhoods (compared with safe, resource-rich communities) report having less parental support and supervision (Klebanov, Brooks-Gunn, & Duncan, 1994), both which are related to higher levels of antisocial behavior and other deviant outcomes during adolescence (Beyers et al., 2003). Quite consistent with norms and collective efficacy model, there are studies that have also found that youths' involvement with deviant peers is an important mediator of neighborhood effects on offending. Specifically, community disadvantage and social disorganization are positively related to youths' association with deviant friends (Brody et al., 2001; Ge, Brody, Conger, Simons, & Murry, 2002), and the effects of neighborhood social functioning on antisocial behavior are transmitted through these relationships (Rankin & Quane, 2002).

Parental Incarceration

A number of small scale studies have found that the effects of parental arrest and incarceration on an adolescent's development are profound. Overall, these adolescents may suffer from psychological conditions such as trauma, anxiety, guilt, shame and fear. Negative behavioral manifestations include sadness, withdrawal, low self-esteem, decline in school performance, truancy, and use of drugs or alcohol and aggression (Gabel & Johnston, 1995; Glaze & Maruschak, 2008; Rodriguez, Smith, & Zatz, 2009). Dr. Denise Johnston, Director of the Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents in California, specifically studied the impact of parental incarceration on adolescent development and highlighted her findings in the chart below:

Developmental Stage	Developmental Characteristics	Developmental Tasks	Influencing factors	Effects
Middle Childhood (7-10 years)	Increased independence, ability to reason, importance of peers	Sense of industry, ability to work productively	Parent-child separation, enduring trauma	Acute traumatic stress and reactive behaviors
Early Adolescence (11-14 years)	Increased in abstract thinking, future-oriented behavior, aggression, puberty	Ability to work productively with others, control of emotions	Parent-child separation, enduring trauma	Rejection of limits on behavior, trauma-reactive behaviors
Late Adolescence (15-18 years)	Emotional crisis and confusion, adult sexual development, abstract thinking, independence	Achieves identity, engages in adult work and relationships, resolves conflicts with family and society	Parent-child separation, enduring trauma	Premature termination of parent-child relationship; intergenerational crime and incarceration

Multiple parental arrest and the resulting pattern of parent-child separation can be devastating for adolescents and have severe social consequences. Especially for adolescent Black boys, research has shown paternal imprisonment increased their likelihood of displaying and engaging anti-social behaviors and serving time in the juvenile justice system (Murray & Farrington, 2005; Murray, Farrington, & Sekol, 2012). Interestingly, growing research on children of incarcerated parents are also highlighting positive effects. Among the positive experiences were comfort in their foster care

placements and with their grandparents, new opportunities in new schools, and improved

communication with their incarcerated parent (Muhammed, 2011).

Parenting Practices & Deviant Peer Groups

In the parenting literature, dating back to Baumbrind's 1960 conceptualization of

parenting behaviors and styles, it has been strongly established that parents who show a

combination of strong supervision and positive involvement help to protect youths

against delinquent outcomes, including violent offending (Furstenberg, 1999; Gorman-

Smith et al., 2000). These findings have been studied and demonstrated across

demographic groups—including race and socioeconomic status—and across study

designs—including both cross-sectional and longitudinal research (e.g., Dishion &

McMahon, 1998). When examining the associations between parenting behaviors and

juvenile delinquency, empirical studies have established critical links between low

parental support and youths' involvement with deviant friends (Loeber & Stouthamer-

Loeber, 1998; Forgatch & Stoolmiller, 1994) and between peer deviance and adolescent

offending, including violent outcomes (Lempers, Clark-Lembpers & Simons, 1989 ;

Keenan, Loeber, Zhang, Stouthamer-Loeber, & Van Kammen, 1995; Patterson et al.,

2000).

Specifically, studies have shown that the majority of crimes committed by

teenagers occur in groups and that youths' association with deviant peers may be the best

predictor of participation in future, potentially more serious forms of antisocial activity

(Dishion, Andrews, & Crosby, 1995; Hawkins, Catalano, & Miller, 1992; Henry et al.,

2001; Patterson et al., 2000). A few scholars have contended that associating with

delinquent friends, particularly those who engage in violent behavior, is the *strongest*

proximal risk for individual antisocial outcomes. Henry and colleagues (2001) tested this hypothesis relations between family interactions, peer relationships, and antisocial behavior among 246 boys living in inner-city Chicago neighborhoods. The scholars found that adolescents who experienced low emotional support and inconsistent discipline from their parents, compared with youths from families characterized by warm interpersonal relationships and consistent discipline, reported having more deviant friends (2 years later) and being involved with more violent and nonviolent delinquent behavior (5 years later).

Parenting, Deviant Peer Groups, & Neighborhood Effects

Due to the harsh conditions that poor Black youths experience during their teenage years and the amalgamating effects of the factors previously discussed, a slim yet growing part of the literature of juvenile offending is starting to examine potential mediation of parenting behaviors and deviant peer groups on neighborhood effects. Rankin and Quane (2002) showed that higher rates of community collective efficacy were related to better parental supervision, fewer deviant peer affiliations, and lower levels of adolescent problem behavior. As hypothesized, the researchers found that parenting and peer group influences mediated the link between collective efficacy and deviance. However, they did not, find any direct relations between weak community structure (poverty and residential instability) and any of their study variables. From this, they concluded that only neighborhood social organizational (but not structural) characteristics were indirectly related to deviant outcomes.

A year later, Tolan and colleagues (2003) strengthened this area of study by testing the mediating role of parenting practices and peer deviance in the same model of youth violence. Using longitudinal data, Tolan and colleagues showed that both parenting

practices and youths' affiliation with deviant peers served as important mediators of neighborhood effects on violent offending. More specifically, the researchers found that weak neighborhood structural and social characteristics were indirectly related to gang membership through their effects on parenting practices (low monitoring, harsh discipline, and low parental involvement) and that gang affiliation mediated the influence of ineffective parenting behavior on individual violence. In this way, Tolan and colleagues demonstrated how community characteristics acted as ecological determinants to "frame" the developmental influence of parents and peers on youth violence, and they argued that a focus on only one of these microsystems can lead to overly simplistic or even inaccurate models of risk. Recently, Chung, Mulvey, and Steinberg (2011) examined relations among neighborhood structural and social characteristics, parenting practices, peer group affiliations, and delinquency among an economically disadvantaged group of urban, ethnic serious adolescent offenders. They found that weak neighborhood social organization is indirectly related to delinquency through its associations with parenting behavior and peer deviance. They suggested that a focus on just 1 of these microsystems can lead to oversimplified models of risk for juvenile offending. The researchers also find that community social ties may confer both pro- and antisocial influences to youth, and they advocate for a broad conceptualization of neighborhood social processes as these relate to developmental risk for youth living in disadvantaged communities.

Understanding Emerging Adulthood for Young, Black Men

One of the dynamic questions to be addressed in the empirical literature over the last two decades has been: what does it mean to make the transition from adolescence to adulthood? Historically, the age range of emerging adulthood has been 18-21 and has

even moved up to the age of 26 (Aquilino, 2006). But due to the economic recession of 2008 and the rising costs of public goods such as education, health and housing, families have found themselves assisting their adult children significantly more and re-launching them later in life. Thus, research has suggested that to conceptually capture the transition to adulthood in this economy, the age range for this developmental period should now extended all the way up to 29-31 (Cote, 2008). The literature on examining the transition into emerging adults has consistently found that young Americans view the transition to adulthood as marked mainly by individualistic character qualities such as accepting responsibility for one's self, making independent decisions, and becoming financially independent (Arnett, 2000, 2001; 2003; Crockett & Shanahan, 2000; Greene, Wheatley, and Aldava, 1992; Benson & Furstenberg, 2003). Though most of these studies have predominantly White, middle-class American samples, much of the findings have been generalizable since many Americans have traditionally regarded specific events such as finishing education, beginning full-time work, and marriage, as relevant to the attainment of adult status. But, there is a growing consensus in the literature that the transition to adulthood for ethnic minorities, while they share some similarities with their white counterparts, involve other notable experiences than young White emerging adults.

For example, Arnett (2003) found that African Americans, Latinos and Asian emerging adults are similar to their White counterparts in that ideals such as "accepting responsibility for the consequences of your actions," "deciding on personal beliefs and values," "financially independent from parents," and "establishing equal relationship with parents" are notable for emerging adulthood. Yet, the differences were notable and consistent on three subscales of criteria for adulthood: Family Capacities, Norm

Compliance, and Role Transitions. The family capacities scale contained a variety of gender-specific items pertaining to capacities such as supporting a family financially, keeping a family physically safe, and caring for children (significant for the males in the sample). The norm compliance scale, one which examines the likelihood to follow the rules, found that ethnic minority groups were more likely to follow norms due to fear of being viewed poorly by others racial groups. The role transitions scale focused on the importance on transitions such as "married," "finish education," and "become employed full time" and found the ethnic minorities more strongly valued these transitions as strong criteria for adulthood than their white counterparts.

Ethnic minorities' experiences emerging into adulthood have been further complicated by recent political, economic, and racial changes in the United States. A particular ethnic and gender group disproportionately impacted by the significant changes in this country is low-income, young, Black males. Emerging adult Black males' notable struggles during the transition to adulthood tend to revolve around school, jobs, romantic relationships, and fathering. But in the era of mass incarceration, the criminal justice system has now become a primary organizer of their life course during this developmental period. In her book, *Invisible Men*, Pettit (2012) argues that because prison inmates are not included in most survey data, statistics that seemed to indicate a narrowing black-white racial gap on educational attainment, work force participation, and earnings. Instead these datasets fail to capture persistent racial, economic, and social disadvantage among African Americans. As a result, these Black men are invisible to most mainstream social institutions, lawmakers, and nearly all social science research that isn't directly related to crime or criminal justice. Since merely being counted poses

such a challenge, inmates' lives—including their family background, the communities they come from, or what happens to them after incarceration—are even more rarely examined.

Black Men's Involvement with Social Institutions

The persistent marginalization of young Black men, over the last few decades, has placed them in a current disadvantaged social position. Yet, when discussing the transition into adulthood for young Black men, it is often characterized as these men disconnecting themselves from these institutions. Not all of the studies presented in this section focus directly on the disconnection or low involvement experiences young Black men have with social institutions. Rather, these studies focus on relevant outcomes that will add to this narrative by depicting the structural inequalities that simultaneously play a significant role in their transition into adulthood.

School

According to normative transition into adulthood (Arnett, 2000), finishing high school and moving on to college to obtain a degree is the beginning stage of young adults becoming self-sufficient and responsible for the future. While this developmental sequence may be ideal, the likelihood of disadvantaged young Black men completing this stage is comparably low (Patterson, 2006). The empirical literature, both quantitative and qualitative, on young Black men's ability to engage and complete school has focused on the impact of poverty, the resilience of academically strong young Black men, and comparing the gendered differences of young Black men and Black women at both the high school and college level.

The impact of poverty has been examined, as an important contextual factor, which shapes the engagement and educational attainment of young Black teenagers.

From a measurement standpoint, the impact of poverty has been measured via neighborhood effects, residential segregation, and school effects.

Harding (2003) examined neighborhood effects of poverty on dropping out of school and found that Black youths from high-poverty neighborhoods were more likely to drop out of school than those from low-poverty neighborhoods. Another study conducted by Crowder & South (2011) used the Panel Study of Income Dynamics dataset and found that young Black youths living in socioeconomically advantaged neighborhoods had higher graduation rates than those who lived in neighborhoods with higher poverty rates. Similarly, Wodtke, Harding, and Elwert (2011) used the same dataset and found that sustained exposure to poor neighborhoods has a severe impact on high school graduation – growing up in disadvantaged neighborhoods reduced the probability of graduating from 96 to 76 percent for Black youths (compared to 95 to 87 percent for non-Black youths).

Residential segregation has also been considered a measurement for poverty when examining school engagement and education attainment. A recent empirical study conducted by Quillian (2014) examined the effects of residential segregation on the basis of poverty status and race for high school and college completion. This quantitative design drew data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics and the decennial censuses. It was found that poor-non-poor segregation was associated with lower rates of high school graduation among young adults from poor backgrounds, but had no effect on rates of graduation for young adults from non-poor backgrounds. In addition, Black-White segregation was associated with lower rates of high school graduation and college graduation for Black students (especially men), but had no effect on graduation rates for White students. An empirical review by Williams and Collins (2001) indicated that

earlier studies used residential segregation and found that high percentage of Black youths in certain school districts was associated with high concentration rate of poverty. In terms of educational attainment, these studies found that when compared to schools in middle-class areas, Black youths were more likely to average lower test scores, have fewer qualified teachers, and higher dropout rates (see Orfield & Eaton, 1996).

School effects studies are similar but focus on the advantages of affluent or white schoolmates, contrasted with poor or nonwhite schoolmates. A study conducted by Rumberger & Palardy (2005) used the National Education Longitudinal Survey of 1988 to estimate multilevel models of achievement growth between Grades 8 and 12 in mathematics, science, reading, and history for a sample of 14,217 students attending a representative sample of 913 U.S. high schools. The study found that the average socioeconomic level of students' schools had as much impact on their achievement growth as their own socioeconomic status. In addition, they found that school socioeconomic status had as much impact on advantaged as on disadvantaged students, and almost as much impact on Whites as on Blacks. Another study conducted by Owens (2010) used data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health and found that low odds of educational attainment among Black students from are reduced even more (outside of neighborhood effects) when a Black student attends school with more white and high-SES peers. In contrast, Rose (2013) found that for high-achieving Black males, socioeconomic status was not found to be a statistically significant predictor of bachelor's degree attainment. Rather, attending an urban school was found to decrease their likelihood of attaining a bachelor's degree.

The findings from these studies have indicated that young Black youths and adults are negatively impacted by both poor neighborhoods and low-diverse schools. Yet, concerns still exist about the differences in measuring poverty. As Brantlinger (2003) suggested, measuring poverty using any of these indicators is not strong enough because while they conceptually estimate each other, their inherent theoretical concepts can still lead to varying results on educational attainment for Black youths. This notion suggests that teasing out critical ways Black youths, especially Black males, engage school and attain a high school diploma while living in poverty may be best served in finding consensus on the measurement for poverty.

Understanding young Black men's experiences with connecting to school and attaining an education can be examined through a focus on poor young Black men who are academically strong. For example, Foeman, Brown, Pugh, & Pearson (1996) interviewed inner-city Black men at a parochial high school about their academic studies. They found that young Black men's ability to be connected to school and be labeled as high achieving was associated with their determination to do well as Black men (based on defeating stereotypes) and having aspirations. Similarly, Graham and Anderson's (2008) case study of three academically gifted African American youths found that connecting to school and high achievement also shaped how these young men value expressing their "Blackness" along with being tied to social networks that expose them to their social injustices within the world at an early age.

Some studies have used concepts such as racial identity and connection to school to provide in-depth examination about young Black men's experiences. Wilkins (2014) used interview data with students attending predominantly white four-year research

universities to investigate the integration experiences of Black and first-generation White

men. Intersectionality theory drove this comparison research design in hopes of teasing

out how race, class and gender map onto young adults' experience engaging in school.

The researcher examined each group's accounts of both high school and college. The

sample included 26 interviews – 18 with young Black men and 8 with young White men.

The researcher found that young Black men struggled to socially integrate in college

using identity strategies ("being the cool Black guy") that were successful in high school,

and, they documented the emotional and educational attainment costs to these difficulties.

White men continued to use the identity of "being normal" and had no repercussions. In

addition, the researcher found that both young Black men and White men entered college

from high school with similar goals to succeed academically but could not create equally

satisfying pathways to adulthood – specifically, young White men were "allowed" to

adopt adult-oriented identities whereas young Black men were not (adolescent-oriented

identities).

Young Black men go through unique experiences with regard to racial identity

when connecting to school. While these studies focus on high-achieving young Black

males, it seems likely that low-achieving young Black males (those who are less likely to

be connected to school) experience similar situations regarding the conflict and struggle

of being "Black and smart." These findings are supported by studies that focus on racial

identity and educational outcomes for Black youths. For example, Chavous, Rivas-Drake,

Smalls, Griffin, & Cogburn, (2008) assert that racial identity, school-based racial

discrimination experiences, and school engagement are associated, and that Black male

youths, are more likely to disengage from school earlier than Black female youths

because they are overwhelmed from both real and perceive discrimination from school administrators and teachers about their behaviors and their competence (e.g., Osbourne, 1999).

The few studies that have compared young Black men's experiences with school to those of their Black female counterparts have provided insight into structural disadvantages that dampen young Black men's ability to connect to school and attain an education. Demographically, women (regardless of race and socioeconomic status) are more likely than men to attain an education at all levels (Edelman et al., 2006; McDaniel, DiPrete, Buchmann, & Shwed, 2009). Empirically, studies have found the same trends. For example, a study conducted by LaViest and McDonald (2002) used cohort data from Black and White individuals born in the late 1950's and 1960's and found that Black women were more likely than Black men (even White men and White women) to graduate from high school and college.

Studies have specifically attributed Black men's inability to stay connected to school to the harsh treatment (lack of support and punishments) young Black males experiences from school administrators compared to Black females. In her book, *Bad Boys: Public schools in the Making of Black Masculinity*, Ferguson (2000), utilized participant observation to examine how a group of young Black males were identified by school personnel as "bound for jail" and how the youth constructed a sense of self under such adverse circumstances that led to disengagement and low attainment. For example, a study conducted by Saporu (2009) examined potential factors associated with this educational gap between young Black men and women – especially at the college level. This study used data from the National Educational Longitudinal Survey to examine the

roles of academic preparation, school discipline, social support, and financial aid information. The results indicated that differential levels of financial aid information and resources partially explain lower rates of enrollment and higher rates of delayed enrollment among Black males. This notion suggests that trying to figure out the financial aspect of college for poor young Black males is quite critical for continuing their connection to school. These studies have consistently indicated that young Black men are more likely to experience disengagement from school and not attain an education (at both the high school and college level) due to structural and social factors beyond their control.

Labor Market

Over the last five decades, especially at the height of welfare reform (in the mid-1990's), the employment and participation rates in the labor market for low-income young Black males have continued to be severely impacted by economic downturns more than any other social group (Skinner, 1995; Cregan, 2002). Disconnection from the labor market, as conceptualized by Edelman and colleagues (2006), involves unemployment for a year or longer. Based on this definition, Danziger & Ratner (2010) remarked that poor young Black males are more likely than any other social group to be highly disconnected from the labor market as they transition into adulthood.

Many explanations/theories have been explored to examine why poor young Black males significantly struggle with employment during economic downturns – culture of poverty (Wilson, 1987), welfare-dependency thesis (Greenstein, 1985; Tienda & Stier, 1991), spatial-mismatch (Freeman, 1991), skills-mismatch (Holzer & Vroman, 1992), human capital development (Mollenkopf & Castells, 1991), full employment

(Blank & Blinder, 1986), and dual labor markets (Boston, 1990). All of these explanations have shaped the current empirical literature on the poor young Black males' experience with the labor market. There are three noteworthy trends in this literature to highlight: there is a strong economics perspective tied to the empirical examination; the majority of these studies compare experiences between young Black males and White males; and the majority of these studies use quantitative research designs.

Research has focused on the low levels of participation rates in the labor market for young Black males by comparing them to White men across different regions in the U.S. For example, a study conducted by Cohn & Fossett (1995) examined employment inequality between 25–59-year-old White and Black men in U.S. metropolitan areas in 1980. They found greater inequality in employment in the Northeast and Midwest than in the South and West. Their results were two fold. First, area variation in employment inequality was closely associated with variation in unionization strength, presence of large firms, and labor demand. Second, regional patterns suggested that the substantially lower employment inequality in the South and West was attributed to the more robust economies, smaller average firm size, and lower levels of unionization in the metropolitan areas in these regions.

Similarly, Ellis and Odland (2001) conducted a study on the Black-White male employment gap and area location. The researchers found that young Black men's labor force participation is more sensitive to local metropolitan labor market conditions than is the case for White men. This finding suggests that shifts in these conditions cause larger swings in Black labor force participation than they do for Whites (a finding that aligns with previous and later literature; for example, McLennan, 2003). In addition, the

researchers found that within each group, the impact differs - among Black men, those who are young, unskilled and unmarried are the most sensitive to local metropolitan labor market conditions and thus less engaged from the labor market. Lastly, the researchers found that in times of economic transition, young White men appear more likely than Black men either to change their characteristics in place (e.g., more education and/or getting married) or move to places where their characteristics are more suited to the local labor market. These findings contradict an earlier study conducted by Leigh (1976) that examined "market segmentation" for young Black men (compared to young White men) and found that region and local industry had little to no effect on the occupational advancement of Black men but that most of the variance between the two groups was explained by differences in education attainment.

The basis for many of these studies have included the rationale that place-to-place variation will inform key measures of the labor market (such as wages, industrial and occupational distributions, accessibility to jobs, local discriminatory practices and the institutional environment including the presence of unions) that expand the racial gap between young Black men against White men.

Black men have unique attitudes about the labor market itself and related components (e.g., wages). One of the most controversial notions about the joblessness of young Black men is that racial inequality in the labor market is not based on structural factors (e.g., poverty) but it is more about young Black men being less willing to seek out employment (Kluegel, 1990; Mead, 1992). Studies such as the one conducted by Andrisani (1977) examined the attitudes of young Black men about employment and found that young Black men's joblessness was significantly explained by their low

internal outlook (as measured by taking initiative, competence, and having a strong propensity to influence one's environment) compared to White men.

On the other hand, Laester (1997) interviewed 18 young black men (16-30) from West side of Chicago and found that younger Black males (16-19 years old) were "aspirers" (avoiding fatherhood, drugs, gangs, etc.) and believed that their hard work and education would result in success in the labor market whereas the older men (20-30 years old) were "non-aspirers" with modest attitudes about the labor market because of their struggles with school and feeling hopeless. Similarly, Peterson (1997) study used the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth data to examine if young Black men have priced themselves out of the labor market because of their attitudes (e.g., reservation wages of jobs theory) and found that young Black men do not experience any more or less joblessness than their White counterparts because of their attitudes on the lowest acceptable wage offer they are willing to take. These findings are critical in debunking previous findings that only young Black men have poor attitudes about the wages being offered to them and that explain their joblessness (Mead, 1992).

This literature on attitudes about working has been a long-lasting and controversial issue as it is closely tied to the narrative that individual factors such as temperamental personality and poor attitudes are the primary causes of young Black men's joblessness. On the contrary, it seems that persistent structural factors (e.g., discrimination) have plagued young Black males to the point where their participation in the labor market is adversely impacted.

Another dimension of the racial gap in employment between young Black men and young White men that has been considered is the impact of skills young Black men

both have and do not have to participate in the labor market (Neal & Johnson, 1996).

Some studies focus on the presence of skills for the labor market and the impact on their

annual earnings. Bound and Holzer (1993) used micro census data to estimate the effects

of skills and industrial shifts for young Black men in the 1970's and found that there was

a significant decline in employment and participation in the labor market for young Black

men who were less-educated and who had skills that did not "fit" with the local markets.

Similarly, Gabriel (2004) used the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (sample –

2000) to examine the role of racial differences in skills and labor market experience on

earnings differences between young Black and White men. They found that

approximately 44% of the racial earnings gap resulted from higher average skill and work

experience levels that young White men had that young Black men did not possess.

Other studies focus on young Black males and the lack of soft skills – personal

attributes tied to having motivation, taking initiative, and the ability to interact well with

customers and co-workers (Moss & Tilly, 1995, 1996, 2000). As mentioned before, the

economy over the last few decades has slowly moved towards a service-oriented

economy that demands the employees exhibit personable and relational skills in addition

to manual and cognitive skills (Smeeding et al., 2011). Results have been mixed. Studies

have shown that employers tend to disproportionately rate African Americans negatively

in terms of these standards of interaction (Moss & Tilly, 2001). On the other hand,

research has also shown that young Black men do not experience soft skill discrimination

in any year; rather, Black men appear to experience discrimination in occupations that

require technical skills rather than soft skills (Reid, 2003). It is noteworthy that the

conversation of having skills and obtaining employment has changed from having hard

skills (e.g., reading, math, technical) to now also having soft skills (social and relational) that has now informed labor market experiences of young Black men as they transition into adulthood.

Marriage

Low education attainment and higher rates of joblessness has made the institution of marriage less of a consideration for young Black males as they transition into adulthood. Wilson (1987) asserted that the decline in marriage rates among Black, particularly among poor inner-city Blacks, is due primarily to declining Black male employment levels, resulting in a shrinking pool of acceptable marriage partners for Black women. And as a result, the marital rates in the Black community, especially among low-income Blacks, have been relatively low. Wilson's hypothesis has sparked growing interest in examining poor young Black men's experiences tied to getting married.

Correlational studies have found that the low rates of marriage among young Black men have been associated with their struggles and inability to obtain (and at times, maintain) employment. For example, Wood (1995) found that not only employment, but also income level, provides a strong indication for young Black men to consider marriage and also be considered a "marriageable" partner by Black women. Another study conducted by Oppenheimer, Kalmijn, and Lim (1997) analyzed the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth dataset to examine whether marriage formation is associated with career entry process for young Black men. They found that young Black men who struggle with establishing a career delayed marriage. Similarly, Koball (1998) used data from the National Survey of Families and Households to examine young Black men's involvement

and timing of marriage. Results indicated that while increased enrollment in higher education is associated with more involvement with marriage, lack of full-time employment for young Black men delayed marriage formation.

On the other hand, a more recent study conducted by Hurt (2013) found that only 8% of the 52 participant sample of poor young Black men in the study cited income as a barrier to getting married (compared to other strong barriers that were cited – such as personal reservations or previous relationships). This finding provides a counter narrative that employment tends to be the sole barrier behind poor young Black men's low marital rates. Moreover, studies also indicate racism plays a key role in driving marital rates down for poor Black men. Negative stereotypes in society portray poor young Black men as untrustworthy, shiftless, uneducated, criminal and dangerous and such views foster discrimination in many areas of life, including the economic sector, that disconnects them from marriage (Majors & Billson, 1992; Young, 2004).

Not surprisingly, many of these studies of young Black men's connection to marriage were conducted during welfare reform, a period when policies made it harder for poor young Black men to obtain employment and therefore negatively impacted their decisions to consider marriage. Even though many of the studies used different large datasets, the consistent finding was that young Black men's involvement with marriage formation (and even timing of marriage) was tied to their experiences to attain an education and obtain employment – areas of life in which they have persistently experienced negative stereotypes and discrimination (Mincy, 2006).

Summary

As seen in this section of the literature review, low engagement with social institutions such as school, the labor market, and marriage have been a unique and prominent experience for poor young Black men who are transitioning into adulthood. Pertaining to interactions with school, poverty complicates young Black men's ability to engage school and attain an education ranging from living in impoverished neighborhoods to attending poor schools. The treatment of young Black men in school adversely impacts their ability to succeed and feel supported in what is supposed to be a nurturing environment. And when compared to their female counterparts, poor young Black men are stereotypically managed and handled more negatively (e.g., labeling and extreme punishment) which plays a strong factor in not allowing them to experience engagement to school. The literature on this issue focuses a lot on comparing poor young Black men with their gender, racial, and higher income counterparts. Conducting less race comparative designs and focusing more in-depth on the unique experiences of young Black men connecting to school may be more helpful in understanding young Black men's transition into adulthood.

Young Black men's low participation rate in the labor market has been associated with the economy of local markets, poor attitudes, and the lack of soft skills. Research suggests that young Black males in metropolitan and urban areas compared to other areas are more sensitive to economic downturns and at greater risk for persistent unemployment. Studies have also given attention to whether the attitudes (and work-ethic) of poor young Black men play a role in their participation with the labor market. The results have been mixed in which some studies find that poor attitudes of these men significantly impact their employment whereas other studies have found that there is a

good portion of poor young Black men who have positive attitudes and outlook on obtaining and maintaining employment. And finally, the literature has suggested that poor young Black men's low participation to the labor market is tied to their lack of soft skills in a more service-oriented market. Much of this literature is driven by an economic perspective. Research from a developmental and social science perspective along with variation in research designs (e.g., qualitative studies) will contribute to the literature on young Black men's transition into adulthood.

Lastly, lack of education and employment has shaped young Black men's engagement and timing of marriage. Research suggests that young Black men who are less educated and experience high unemployment are less likely to get married. More recently, research is suggesting that finances (and employment) are not prominent explanation as to why poor young Black men are less likely to marry. Notable trends in this literature are that it focuses on young Black men's inability to marry solely based on employment and less on other factors (e.g., relationships). These studies do not consider the actual perspectives of these men about their inability to marry. Conducting more qualitative studies may be helpful in this regard because it will provide accurate narratives from the men themselves about their experiences with marriage as they transition into adulthood.

Fathering for Young Black Men

For poor young Black men, fathering becomes a circumstance that also shapes their transition into adulthood. This dissertation project focuses on five prominent aspects of fatherhood – father identity, father involvement, co-parenting, parenting, and kin

support – to provide both conceptual and empirical basis for exploring the experiences poor young Black men have while becoming adults.

Father Identity

Identity theory suggests that the self emerges from social interactions based on the social positions or statuses one holds (e.g., father, spouse) in society (Stryker, 1980/2002), the expectations or roles attached to such positions (e.g., caregiver, providing) and the set of meanings or identities one ascribes to particular roles (e.g., good caregiver means being available, arranging appointments; strong provider means making financial and other resources available; Burke & Stets, 2009). Three prominent concepts consistently appear in the fathering literature – identity, salience, and commitment (Stryker, 1980/2002; Burke & Stets, 2009).

Conceptually, fathers who expect to provide for their children and desire to provide well will likely spend more time engaging in behaviors associated with being a provider, such as working longer hours to earn more money. Salience, which are identities hierarchically organized to reflect behavior, indicates that a father whose identity as good provider is most salient is expected to spend more time in related activities (e.g., working more hours for pay) than is a father whose most salient identity is associated with caregiver role and allocates time to providing child care. The concept of commitment, defined as the level of commitment tied to the salient identity, refers to the fact that a father may lose some relationships following divorce with a former spouse, in-laws, or friends and these losses impact his identities (e.g., caregiving) which then translates into the way he engages in caregiving.

Researchers have conceptualized father identity in a range of ways. A section of the literature primarily focuses on salience and centrality (a term commonly interchanged with salience) with fathering behaviors. For example, Pleck and Stueve (2004) suggested that the centrality of a role (e.g., father) is a stronger predictor than centrality of a status (e.g., caregiver). Similarly, Adamson and Pasley (2013) found that both mothers and fathers who rated fathering roles as important reported greater father involvement over time. Similarly, other studies focus on the link between identity commitment and fathering behaviors, with some finding that commitment was associated with status-level behaviors (Maurer, 2007) whereas others that commitment was not associated with status or role-level identities and behaviors (McBride & Rane, 1997)

A final set of studies revolves around the exploration of factors affecting the link between father identity and behavior. Studies that have examined moderating effects of child characteristics (e.g,. child age, sex) and certain contextual factors (e.g,. resident of father, marital status) have found that the relationship between status centrality and involvement (e.g., engagement, caretaking, warmth) was stronger for fathers of infants who were boys (Bronte-Tinkew, Carrano, & Guzman, 2006), salience and engagement did not differ by resident status among fathers of younger children (Bruce & Fox, 2001), and divorced fathers with younger children maintained higher salience and involvement than those with older children (DeGarmo, 2010).

The literature on father identity in young, low-income Black men emphasizes the provider role and the ability of these men to provide both financial and emotional support to their children. This particular focus has been noteworthy given the socio-historical shifts low-income Black men have negatively experienced with education and

employment (Daly, 1995; Tamis-LeMonda & Cabrera, 1999). Earlier studies such as the one conducted by Cazenave (1979) indicated that the provider role is very salient for low-income African American fathers but there is also a strong recognition of their daily interactive relationship and closeness as core to a sense of father identity. Many low-income African American fathers desire to be responsible fathers and provide for their children but see themselves limited by material and structural challenges (Threlfall, Seay, Kohl, 2013). Hammond and colleagues (2011) interviewed a sample of 18 low-income African American father and their experiences with the provider role. Participants expressed significant struggles managing their identities of both providing money and resources and providing emotional care to their sons. Low-income African American fathers' identity is not one-dimensional, and these men are aware of other types of identities to inform their father involvement.

The meaning of being a father constantly shapes men's motivation and behavior as parents (Marsiglio, 1995; Lamb, 2000). To build meaning into their involvement with children, men reflect on how other important family relationships have changed over time. In this process of identity formation as a father, men's relations with their own fathers have taken on new significance (LaRossa, 1995; Snarey, 1993). This is especially prominent for low-income Black men and their father identity-formation. Reflection on these father-son relationships suggests that, during the course of personal development and family transitions, "age returns you to your father" (Wideman, 1994).

For example, Roy (2006) used life course theory and conducted life history interviews with 40 low-income African American fathers about their paternal identities and how the narratives about their fathers shaped their own father identities over time.

Roy found three narrative themes (stability, liminality, and inquiry) gave significant meaning to men's struggles to becoming involved fathers and linked these narratives to similar challenges faced by their own fathers years earlier. Similarly, Shannon, McFadden, & Jolley-Mitchell (2012) interviewed a subsample of African American fathers who reflected on their father's experiences with them (disengaged, accessible, not present) and found that those who had negative experiences with their own fathers expressed strong desire to parent their own children differently by being more accessible and engaged with them or being positive role models. These findings suggest that men perceive their relationships with their fathers as a central influence on their father identity and that experiences in childhood are linked to father involvement.

Quality and Quantity of Father Involvement

Father involvement is a concept that highlights how men "do fathering" in a family system context. The seminal paper by Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, & Levine (1985) conceptualizes father involvement with three constructs – engagement, availability, and responsibility. Engagement refers to the direct contact a father has with his child through caretaking and shared activities. Availability is a concept that reflects the father's potential availability for interaction, by virtue of being present or accessible to the child whether or not direct interaction is occurring. Responsibility is defined as the role father takes in making sure that the child is taken care of and arranging for resources to be available for the child. The researchers argue that the quantity of father involvement, as measured through these three concepts, can have a substantial influence on their children's development, both by way of their direct effect on the children, and by way of their influence on mothers, who in turn affect children. These three concepts have

facilitated subsequent literature on father involvement to extensively examine how it relates to child outcomes (Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004; Marsiglio, 2006).

However, father involvement has been measured in many different ways over time, which can be problematic for building a rigorous understanding of the concept. Across studies over many years, father involvement has included time spent together, quality of father-child relationship, and investment in paternal role. Father involvement measured as time spent together has included frequency of contact, amount of time spent together (doing things such as shared meals, shared leisure time, or time spent reading together), the perceived accessibility and availability of the father, and time spent performing routine physical child care (e.g., bathing) (Yeung, Sandberg, Davis-Kean, & Hofferth, 2001). The quality of the father-child relationship has also been measured as father involvement (Stewart, 2003). In this regard, a father is defined as an involved father if his relationship with his child can be described as being sensitive, warm, close, friendly, supportive, intimate, nurturing, affectionate, encouraging, comforting, and accepting (Pleck, 1997). Father involvement has also been measured as investment in paternal role and assessed by the level of investment in child rearing, including the father's ability to be an authoritative parent, the degree to which he is facilitative and attentive to his child's needs, and the amount of support he provides his children with school related activities (Christiansen, & Palkovitz, 2001).

There has been extensive empirical debate about measuring father involvement as a uni-dimensional versus a multi-dimensional concept. Earlier in the dabate, direct engagement, as indicated by Lamb, Pleck, and Levine (1987) tended to dominate assessments of father involvement. But over time, empirical work has been carried out to

tease out the complicated nature of father involvement leading to arguments about the importance of considering father involvement as a multidimensional construct (Schoppe-Sullivan, McBride & Ringo Ho, 2004). For example, Palkovitz (1997) broadened the conceptualization in reference to 15 categories of paternal involvement. Moreover, empirical studies have suggested that the nature of father involvement changes over time as a function of children being at various stages of development and fathers themselves undergoing various developmental challenges over time (Parke, 2000) and are associated with distinct experiences based on ethnicity (Parke, 2000), culture (Hewitt, 2000), and social class (Fein, 1978) when examining both between and within group variation. Recently, Pleck (2010) argues that just like mothers, fathers are capable of displaying both nurturance and closeness with their children and that these concepts should broadly be incorporated in examining father involvement.

Studies of father involvement in African American families have relied on a full range of designs for data collection. They include detailed observations in field settings about frequency counts and durations of individual behaviors with children (Flinn, 1992; Roopnarine, Fouts, Lamb, & Lewis-Elligan, 2005), Likert-type behavioral ratings from videotapes of paternal sensitivity to children (Shannon, Tamis-LeMonda, & Margolin, 2005), self-reports of parenting behaviors on questionnaires (Roopnarine & Krishnakumar, 2011), telephone interviews with specific family members who estimate levels of father involvement in different activities inside and outside of the home (Yeung, Sandberg, Davis-Kean, & Hofferth, 2001), focus groups with African American men about their father involvement (Brown, Anderson, & Chevannes, 1993), and face to face interviews with these men in different caregiving and social activities (Roopnarine et. al,

1995). However, the measures of these varied approaches lack convergence. In addition, many researchers have speculated about the conflation of African American men self-reports of their involvement (Yeung et al., 2001) and actual observations (Roopnarine et al., 2005). They have critiqued the cultural appropriateness of questionnaires used to examine African American men's involvement and a lack of cultural validity. In terms of research design, studies have focused on cross-sectional designs (with a lack of longitudinal studies).

Economic circumstances of Black families have been associated with low-income men's father involvement. Hossain and Roopnarine (1994) found that in lower income African American two-parent families in which both parents have stable jobs and in which the mother worked full-time, fathers spent more time with their children with feeding, cleaning, and playing (infants, in this study) than African American fathers in two-parent families in which the mother worked part-time. In lower-income African American families with pre-school and elementary school children, African American fathers are consistently involved in basic caregiving, direct interaction (playing, talking) and going on social outings just as European American fathers (Fagan, 1998, Yeung et al., 2001; Cabrera et al., 2008).

Low-income African American fathers report that it is imperative to "want to be there for their children" to fulfill and acquire a sense of responsibility as fathers (Allen & Doherty, 1996; Ray & Hans, 2001). Due to economic and structural disadvantage, many of these fathers establish social alliances with kinship and non-kinship members to assist in their involvement with their children (Hamer & Marchioro, 2002; Perry, 2009). In this regard, residency plays a critical role as involvement between low-income African

American men and their children vary based on their residence. Researchers have advocated the notion that quality and not quantity is more informative of father involvement for young non-resident men (Roy & Cabrera, 2010). Resident low-income African American fathers see their children regularly (at least 4 days per week; Black, Dubowitz, & Starr, 1999) whereas nonresident low-income African American fathers' involvement is more intermittent (Greene & Moore, 2000). Subsequently, low-income nonresident African American fathers appear to have more involvement with their children than previously surmised (Cabrera et al., 2004; Mincy & Oliver, 2003), even when it comes to decision-making (Shannon, Tamis-LeMonda, London, & Cabrera, 2002).

Co-parenting

As previously mentioned, young low-income African American men, especially those with a lack of ties to school and employment are less likely to be married. These men are more likely to experience transient romantic relationships that may result in having children. As a result, the relational dynamics between biological parents tend to include situations in which the mother and father are coparenting in the context of an enduring relationship, coparenting after ending a romantic relationship and coparenting in the absence of an affiliated romantic bond (Waller, 2012; McHale, 2007; Isacco, Garfield, & Rogers, 2010). Thus, research considers the context of coparenting for young Black men in low-income families.

Families formed outside of marriage face even more formidable challenges as a result of their economic vulnerability, age, family complexity and other risk factors (McLanahan, 2009). Coparenting, for example, has been highlighted as an important

family dynamic that disproportionately impacts all members in fragile families (i.e. those headed by low-income, unmarried parents, both those cohabiting and those living apart), compared to those living in marital and intact families (McLanahan, 2009). Most researchers have conceptualized coparenting styles based on the combination of two dimensions of interaction quality between the biological parents - cooperation and conflict. These two dimensions have been a focus in understanding how the coparenting relationship shapes men's involvement, especially among low-income men of color (e.g., African American men). Maccoby & Mnookin (1992) identified four prominent coparenting styles based on the interaction quality dimensions and found two distinct styles – cooperative and disengaged. These patterns were consistent with findings that Furstenberg and Cherlin (1991) found in post-divorce relationships. Maccoby & Mnookin further identified a conflicted and mixed parenting style. Waller (2012) conducted a qualitative study from the Fragile Families Study confirming these prominent coparenting styles. It is important to note that most of the empirical studies focused on coparenting relationship experiences in low-income African American men and their families use the Fragile Families Dataset.

Earlier studies indicated a possible link between less cooperative coparenting and father withdrawal (Furstenberg & Nord, 1987), but these studies focused more on couples who were married and whose marriages ended in divorce. More recent research by Carlson, McLanahan, and Brooks-Gunn (2008) and by Sobolewski and King (2005) has shown that cooperative coparenting is highly predictive of nonresident fathers' involvement with children. In addition, both studies also offer strong evidence that the direction of causality runs from coparenting to father involvement rather than the reverse,

and that this connection holds across different demographic subgroups. It is important to note, however, that these studies focused only on coparenting following relationship dissolution, and newer evidence suggests that coparenting may have a different relationship to paternal involvement in co-residential and nonresidential contexts (Fagan & Palkovitz, 2011). Findings concerning links between coparenting conflict and father involvement have been more mixed (Sobolewski & King, 2005). While some studies show inter-parental conflict to be associated with less warmth, engagement, and responsibility among co-resident fathers (Cabrera, Shannon, & La Taillade, 2009; Hohmann-Marriott, 2011), others fail to find such associations among nonresident fathers (Sobolewski & King, 2005).

However, there is a lack of attention on African American families. Many of the studies that examine coparenting style and father involvement tend to use nationally representative samples and control for race (Homann-Marriot, 2011) or study this family dynamic in other ethnic groups (Cabrera et al., 2009). Second, since poverty impacts African American families differently than other social groups, the important role of extended family and fictive kin have come to dominate studies of coparenting dynamics and child adjustments in single-mother headed households (Jones, 2007). As a result, most of these studies tend to examine the biological mother's coparenting style with grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, siblings, and friends (Jones, 2007). More attention is needed on the varied experiences of low-income African American fathers attempting to coparent with their significant others and family members.

Coparenting relationships in low-income African American families is strongly correlated with child adjustment. Studies of coparenting style and child adjustment have

consistently shown (both cross-sectionally and longitudinally) that higher levels of cooperative coparenting and lower levels of conflicting coparenting are associated with favorable outcomes in children as indicated by fewer symptoms of internalizing and externalizing problem behavior (Fagan, 2007; Riina & McHale, 2014; Teubert & Pinquart, 2010; Van Ergeren, 2004). The few studies on the impact of coparenting styles and child adjustment have shown that higher levels of coparenting conflict were associated with more adjustment problems (i.e. internalizing and externalizing behaviors) and/or greater levels of coparenting support were associated with more child social and cognitive competence (i.e. sociability at school and strong academic performance) in African American families (Gonzales, Jones, & Parent, 2014). The examination of how coparenting style impact child adjustment specifically in low-income African American families is important to further examine; when African American children (especially male children) exhibit adjustment problems, they experience a disproportionate rate of harsher punishments (Dodge & Pettit, 2003).

Parenting

Drawing from attachment theory, researchers of parenting practices assume that sensitively-attuned parent-child interactions help facilitate the development of secure bonds to both mothers and fathers (Ainsworth, 1989; Lamb & Lewis, 2010). Specifically, parental responsiveness is associated with social and cognitive skills in children (Tamis-LeMonda, Bornstein, & Baumwell, 2001) whereas restrictive and harsh parental practices negatively impact verbal and social competence (Roopnarine, Krishakumar, Metindogan, & Evans, 2006).

The parenting practices of African American are often compared with European American families and associated child outcomes (Taylor, Chatters, Tucker, & Lewis, 1990; Bakermans-Kranenburg, van Ijzendoorn, & Kroonenberg, 2004). Moreover, most studies focus on the parenting practices of the mother (especially African American mothers). However, over the last decade, there has been a growing interest in exploring the behavioral qualities of African American fathers' parenting practices. The overall research provides insightful findings of how low-income African American fathers parent their children (at all developmental stages).

African American fathers, especially those of lower socioeconomic status, engage in both responsive didactic behaviors (positive affect, positive touch, amount and quality of language, etc.) and negative-overbearing behaviors (e.g., negative affect, negative touch, negative verbal statements, teasing, etc.) with infants and younger children (as shown in qualitative work of Shannon et al. 2005; Shannon, Tamis-LeMonda, Kahana-Kalman, & Yoshikawa, 2009). With infants, low-income African American fathers engage in sensitive caregiving and basic care just as much as low-income African American mothers (expect for feeding the infant) (Cabrera & Tamis-LeMonda, 2013). The most noteworthy findings with low-income African American fathers address verbal stimulation and affection. Roopnarine and colleagues (2005) found that African American fathers provided more verbal stimulation and showed more affection to infants than mothers did (as found with Hewlett, 1992 & McAdoo, 1988).

Researchers have also examined low-income African American fathers' parenting with slightly older children. For example, Kelly and colleagues (1998) observed paternal sensitivity (facial expression, vocal expressions, position and body contact, expression of

affection, etc.) in low-income African American fathers during a brief unstructured 3-minute play interaction with their 1-3 year old children. They found that these fathers showed high levels of sensitivity but found gender effects in that fathers were less sensitive toward boys than girls – researchers attributed this finding to fathers providing gender socialization to boys when handling difficult social ecologies. These overall findings with young children have been similarly found in subsequent studies (Mitchell & Cabrera, 2009; Tamis-LeMonda, Kahana-Kalman, & Yoshikawa, 2009; Cabrera, Hofferth, & Chae, 2011). Studies with African American men fathering adolescents and teenagers, have also found that positive parenting behaviors (e.g., warmth, support) as well as critical parenting practices (e.g., racial socialization, gender socialization) promote positive well-being of their adolescents (Salem, Zimmerman, & Notaro, 1998; Crouter, Baril, Davis, McHale, 2008; Dillorio, Lehr, Wasserman, Eichler, Cherry, Denzmore, 2006).

The full range of parenting behaviors that low-income African American men engage in with their children are associated with many childhood outcomes. Pertaining to language use (and complexity of language), fathers who were more dominating during dyadic conversations with children influenced their children language skills negatively (Fagan & Iglesias, 1999). Restrictive parenting was negatively related to children's cognitive and motor development (Kelly et al., 1998). Positive parenting practices have been associated with significant positive child outcomes: supportive fathers had children with higher cognitive scores (Dubowitz et al., 2001); greater positive father engagement reduce the risk of developmental delays at 24 months (Shannon et al., 2002); father nurturance associated with children's receptive vocabulary scores (Black et al., 1999);

father parenting satisfaction predicted lower behavioral problems in children; and responsive-didactic scores correlate with infants and children's scores on social-communication (Shannon et al., 2006).

African American men, especially low-income African American men, are not only involved in their children's lives but also contribute to their child's development through a range of parenting practices. While many researchers have acknowledged the varying contexts in which low-income African American men parent (e.g., race, poverty, incarceration, etc.), more studies need to further tease out how these contexts shape parenting behaviors of these men. Understanding fathering practices within these varying contexts may shed light on more accurate parenting experiences for these men.

Multiple Partner Fertility

Multiple-partner fertility also has important consequences for children. When men father children with more than one woman, they are faced with competing demands on their time and resources, which may lead to "swapping" their commitment from children they had in a previous relationship to children with whom they are currently living (Meyer, Cancian, & Cook, 2005; Manning & Smock, 2000; Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000; McLanahan & Titler, 1999). This reduces social and economic investments in non-resident children as fathers take on new parenting roles (Manning & Smock, 2000). For example, among non-resident fathers, those with biological children in a new union pay significantly less child support than other non-resident fathers and, after controlling for the amount of child support ordered, the amount of total support paid decreases with the number of previous birth partners (Meyer, Cancian, & Cook, 2005).

Having children in multiple households also affects fathers' visitation with their children. One study found that an increase in the number of co-resident biological and step-children of fathers is associated with a reduction in the frequency of visitation with biological children in other households (Manning & Smock, 1999). An analysis of children born in urban areas indicates that fathers who have children with previous partners are less likely to have contact with a subsequent child within about three years of the birth (Carlson & Furstenberg, 2005). The link between multiple-partner fertility and lack of contact is of particular concern because low levels of contact are associated with reduced psychological well-being and lower academic achievement among children, as well as with greater behavioral problems and more troubled peer relationships (Harris, Furstenberg, & Marmer, 1998; Peterson & Zill, 1986). Father-absent families may also experience uneven or inconsistent parenting behaviors, which can also have negative consequences for children (McLanahan & Tietler, 1999).

The literature highlights critical factors associated with young, Black men to experience multiple partner fertility. Family factors have gained much prominence on studying MPF in young, Black men. Researchers have consistently found an association between living in a non-intact family in childhood and union dissolution and non-marital childbearing in adulthood, highlighting intergenerational trends in family formation patterns (Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000; McLanahan & Bumpass, 1988). And some research has found that family structure is associated with multiple-partner fertility. For example, growing up with two biological parents is associated with reduced odds of multiple-partner fertility among urban parents (Carlson & Furstenberg, 2006).

Additionally, there are other socio-demographic factors for young, Black men experiencing having children with multiple women. More religious mothers and fathers with college degrees were less likely to have children with multiple partners (Carlson & Furstenberg, 2006). Conversely, mothers who worked in the year before their baby's birth, mothers and fathers who thought about aborting the focal child, men in only fair or poor health, and fathers with some history of incarceration had increased odds of experiencing multiple-partner fertility (Carlson & Furstenberg, 2006; Fragile families Research Brief, 2006). In analyses of young Black men and their fathering patterns, Carlson, McLanahan and England (2004) found that men who have ever been incarcerated are also more likely, on average, to report multiple-partner fertility.

Kin Support for Fathering

A growing emphasis on examining family networks has recognized the interdependence of lives as well as intergenerational relationships between grandparents, parents, and children (Marsiglio & Roy, 2012). They tend to show that support from these family networks includes various forms of support such as financial and emotional and that such support is associated with promoting the well-being of the mother and the child (Hogan, Ling-Xin, & Parish, 1990; Taylor, Seaton, & Dominguez, 2008; Taylor, 2010). Research has also indicated that low-income mothers utilize a range of strategies to recruit the baby's father into being an involved father (Roy & Burton, 2007). Yet, support is also valuable to men and their families. Specifically, kin support can offer the father resources to help him forge his father identity and even secure his involvement with his children (Marsiglio & Roy, 2012).

Kin work encompasses the myriad ways adults and older children offer their

support for daily living, social mobility, and care for younger children (Stack & Burton, 1993). Studies of parenting among poor women and women of color tend to focus on how mothers coordinate care for children, aging parents, and other kin (Radey & Padilla, 2009). Kin work helps shape fathering patterns in young Black men through recruitment of these men to explore caregiving roles and providing important support to their fathering behaviors (Roy & Dyson, n.d.). Poor young Black men in supportive kin networks tend to be recruited by and socialized by other family members, usually their mothers or sisters, to be involved with and help care for younger children (e.g., siblings) (Burton, 2007). This socialization allows fathers to try out their roles and to learn the limits of family expectations for what male caregivers should and should not be under the supervision of these men's grandmothers, mothers, and sisters.

In addition, kin support from extended family is critical for poor Black men's fathering patterns. Paternal grandparents, especially paternal grandmothers, provide support to their grandchildren based on the fathers' needs and capabilities. For example, paternal grandparents may ease the transition for their son into fatherhood by providing the necessities of life (e.g., place to live, food, laundry, a telephone, a car) to their son, his female partner, and their children (Black et al., 1999). Also, paternal grandmothers are instrumental in helping their sons establish a relationship with their children – defining paternity and resolving conflict between their son and the baby's mother (Roy, Dyson, & Jackson, 2010; Marsiglio & Roy, 2012).

Qualitative studies have been utilized to provide in-depth examination on the role kin support plays in the experiences of low-income Black men. Madhavan & Roy (2012) used a comparative framework to conduct ethnographic and life history interviews with

Black men in South Africa and the United States to examine how these men work with their kin to secure fathering in economically marginalized communities (i.e. communities marked by racism and high levels of incarceration). They found that young Black men's efforts to care for their children were supported by their own kin (paternal kin) and the kin of the mother of their children (maternal kin). These groups of people negotiate everything from the everyday necessities of diapers, food, clothes and medicine to intangibles such as future obligations of children to kin.

Similarly, Roy (2004) observed the ecological spaces and processes and explored life histories of young Black fathers in violent and marginalized parts of the city of Chicago. Fathers secured their fathering and involvement in their children's lives by developing critical kin work which included constructing "three- block" safe spaces for family interaction, relying on paternal kin (paternal grandmother), making use of neutral spaces, and managing complex negotiations with their children's mothers and maternal kin.

In these ways, kin systems may be resources by which low-income Black fathers can give meaning to their roles and can secure involvement with their children (Hamer, 2001; Waller, 2002). Specifically, low-income Black fathers may be able to turn to paternal kin to create social capital linkages for their children, supporting their well-being by securing and managing connections with motivated kin and caregivers (Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000).

Summary

While research has emphasized financial provisions as central to men's identities as fathers, emotional support to their children may be just as central for identities of low-

income Black men. Low-income Black men's ability to form an identity around fathering is also shaped by their own experiences with their own fathers. A positive experience may foster a healthy and successful father identity while a negative experience can provide either a healthy or unhealthy identity surrounding fathering. Father identities for low-income Black men are not one-dimensional; rather they are equally as dynamic as for other men regardless of race and socioeconomic status.

While studies have found rich data on how involved low-income African American men are in their children's lives, results also indicate that structural disadvantages (e.g., poverty, unemployment, incarceration) negatively impact father involvement, although low-income African American men engage in other fatherly duties with their children (e.g., caregiving). Men who are non-resident fathers spend time with their children and actually assist in important decision-making concerning their child's well-being.

The literature on coparenting and father involvement in low-income African American families is limited, due to overemphasis on coparenting of mothes and other kin members (e.g., grandmothers, mothers, sisters, etc.). Yet, the literature that has examined the coparenting experiences of low-income Black men tends to focus on child outcomes and has suggested that when men's coparenting experiences with the baby's mother involves more conflict than cooperation, their children are more likely to experience adjustment problems (e.g., more internalizing and externalizing problems) (Lewin, Mitchell, Beers, Feinberg, & Minkovitz, 2012). Coparenting relationships with more cooperation and support fosters both social and cognitive competence in their children. More attention on these men's experiences in coparenting relationship and how

it shapes their fathering will be beneficial in understanding family dynamics in such families.

Researchers are beginning to understand how low-income African American fathers actually participate in parenting. Developmental psychologists have found that low-income African American fathers engage in many parenting behaviors at all developmental stages of the child. For infants, these fathers provide both responsive didactic behaviors and negative-overbearing behaviors that both stimulate and hinder social and cognitive growth; for older children, Black fathers tend to use play with their children and provide rules for managing social spheres; and for adolescents, Black fathers provide essential socialization experiences to their children as it revolves around race and gender. Overall, the research has found that the parenting of low-income Black men (which includes warmth, guidance, support, socialization) is linked to successful developmental trajectories for their children in lieu of harsh contextual circumstances.

Supportive kin networks help shape fathering in young Black men by recruiting these men to explore caregiving roles and by providing important support to his fathering behaviors. Men tend to be recruited into caregiving roles in their family of origin at early ages, socializing them to engage in fatherly roles. As they become fathers themselves, they utilize both their paternal and maternal kin to secure involvement. Families can offer assistance entering fatherhood (e.g., defining paternity, gaining resources for children) and provide "safe havens" for these men to be present and involved with their children as they battle harsh circumstances (e.g., community violence). Since not all family dynamics are healthy, more research is needed on the extent to which both cooperative and conflictive kin networks shape men's ability to be involve in their children's lives.

Incarceration of Young Black Men

The Impact of Incarceration

There are noteworthy individual and systemic effects of being incarcerated for low-income African American men. Due to the disproportionate rates of incarceration these men experience compared to their racial and class counterparts, scholarship has provided growing attention to the experiences of not only these men but their families and communities as well.

Individual Effects

At the individual level, the general structure of the prison institution encourages young Black men to develop particular attitudes and coping mechanisms that affect not only themselves, but for those who are fathers, their relationships with their children. Compared to young White men, they exhibit different attitudes during incarceration. They focus more on their freedom and are less willing to submit to the system, whereas young White men focus more on their need for social support and following prison environment and rules (Toch, 1992).

In her book, *Fatherhood Arrested*, Nurse (2002) describes common reactions young fathers of color experience while incarcerated. Due to the prisons becoming more and more crowded and violent, young fathers of color experience "hard-timing" – because they feel stressed and overwhelmed by life in the institution that they cut off all ties to the outside world. Nurse describes that it is too difficult for them to deal with problems inside and outside of the institution simultaneously. Another reaction, "flashing," is a response to the punitive nature of the prison system. Prison rule dictates that infractions are dealt with swiftly and often harshly and employed arbitrarily. Men are treated like children in that every aspect of their life is controlled - being told when to

sleep, when to eat, and watch television. This engagement with prison staff models the idea that losing one's temper quickly (the definition of flashing) is the best way to manage a stressful environment by acting out of frustration and retribution.

Nurse (2002) brings more attention to an often neglected reaction by fathers of color who are incarcerated – misogyny and the gendered nature of the prison. Specifically, the gendered nature of the prison system (an environment dominated by men) has profound implications for these men to display their masculinity. Literature has discussed hegemonic masculinity (see Connell, 1990; Segal, 1990; Messerschmidt, 1993; Connell, 1995) as men's ideals surrounding masculinity through participation in the labor market, the subordination of women, heterosexism, uncontrollable sexuality of men along with practices associated with authority, control, competitive individualism independence, aggressiveness, and capacity for violence. In the prison system, as Nurse (2002) highlights, men enter prison with these ideals and use many techniques (e.g., exerting violence, sexual assault, talking about past sexual liaisons about women and negatively commenting about women) to maintain their masculinity, but more importantly, to survive.

It is also important to note that while there are negative individual effects of being incarcerated, incarcerated young Black men may also receive some form of benefit from being locked up. For example, the prison system forces these men to experience some form of solidarity with other inmates via allocating goods, disseminating information and providing personal identity as a response to the deprivation imposed by the prison structure (Sykes, 1958). McDermott and King (1992) highlights that incarceration for these men provides them with time to think and fantasize about life after prison, doing

right by their loves ones (e.g., their children), and their individual success (e.g., getting a job, getting money, etc.). Nurse (2002) provides insight into how some important classes (e.g., anger management, parenting, etc.) for these men to take (although not voluntarily, more mandated participation) actually force them to confront both individual and systemic issues that will serve them well after their prison term has been served.

Trauma During Incarceration

One of the most prominent individual effects of incarceration is coping with trauma from incarceration. The prison experience is unlike any other. Sociologist Donald Clemmer discussed in his classic book, The Prison Community, that the prison experience is neither normal nor natural, and constitutes one of the more degrading experiences a person might endure (Parsons-Pollard, 2005; Kling, 1941). People in prison are likely to report that their adaptations to the constant scrutiny of guards and the lack of privacy are psychologically debilitating (Kupers, 2008). Some literature suggests that people in prison experience mental deterioration and apathy, endure personality changes, and become uncertain about their identities (Greenberg, & Rosenbeck, 2008). Several researchers found that people in prison may be diagnosed with posttraumatic stress disorders, as well as other psychiatric disorders, such as panic attacks, depression, and paranoia; as a result, these prisoners find social adjustment and social integration difficult upon release (Blaauw, Arensman, Kraail, Winkel, & Bout, 2002; Miller& Najavitis, 2012).

Other researchers found that the incarceration experience promotes a sense of helplessness, greater dependence, and introversion and may impair one's decision-making ability. This psychological suffering is compounded by the knowledge of

violence, the witnessing of violence, or the experience of violence, all too common during incarceration (McCorkle, 1992). Some assert that the psychological effects of incarceration, developed during confinement, are likely to endure for some time following release (Travis et al., 2001). There is an unprecedented number of people being released from prison, and the rate at which the release is occurring is just as significant. These trends make reentry a pressing contemporary social problem since young, Black men are more likely to be incarcerated and also experience a traumatic even during every stint of incarceration (Harer & Steffensmeier, 1996).

The traumatic experience of incarceration is likely to be varied and to produce both negative and positive psychological results post-release among the formerly incarcerated, in some ways similar to repatriated prisoners of war (Elbogen, Johnson, Newton, Straits-Troster, Vasterling, Wagner, & Beckham, 2012). An experience, without more, does not make an event traumatic. The conceptualization of trauma is created by the relationship between the event, the individual involved, and the reaction to it (Brewin, Andrews, & Valentine, 2000). Mika'il DeVeaux (2013), Executive Director of Citizens Against Recidivism, Inc. and Lecturer in Sociology, City University of New York, recalled various traumatic moments he experienced when he was convicted of murder in the second degree at only 23-years old:

- I can still see the murders I witnessed. I still see the image of a person being hit at the base of his skull with a baseball bat on a warm, sunny afternoon during recreation hours. The entire scene plays like a silent movie. He is smashed in the back of his head, crumbles, and falls to the

ground. While he lays helpless on the ground, his head is smashed again and again until the sight of blood seems to satisfy his attacker (p. 265).

- I can still see the rapid hammering motions of a hand plunging an ice pick-like object into the back of another person standing with his hands in his pockets. It began, "some- body died today" — a nameless body with a hood covering a head, face down in a pool of blood (p. 266).

- I can recall two men engaged in a fistfight after one of them had been stabbed in the neck with a "homemade" knife. What made this fight more memorable than others was that one of the men fought while the handle of the knife protruded from his neck on one end, while the point of the blade showed on the other (p. 266).

- I can still hear a prison guard saying, "get in the cage, nigger," with a stinging voice that continues to slice through time. I remember the threats of being told by the guards, "one of these days..."(p. 266).

These quotes describe the harsh and brutal nature of the prison culture – one in which hegemonic domination is the way of life. And for young, Black men with little experience in adult prison institutions fall prey to harm or exploitation from the "OGs" (i.e. a colloquial term referencing an experienced person in the prison systems). As a result, trauma seems inevitable and places the body in constant fight or flight mode. Additionally, incarceration experiences such as experiencing and witnessing prison rape, physical beatings and torturing from correctional officers, attempted suicides, and overdosing from drugs are negative events that can facilitate traumatic experiences in young, Black men in prison (Pollock, 2013). Just as DeVeaux concluded in his paper,

both social support networks, along with mental health resources are critical for managing the residual effects of being incarcerated. More importantly, addressing these individual effects from incarceration such as trauma is important to preventing a "spillover effect" to their children and their families and increase recidivism.

Systemic Effects

The effects of mass incarceration extend beyond the prisoner and his immediate experience of confinement, and can have a significant impact on the prisoner's family. The wave of mass incarceration contributes to the decline of Black families and the social fabric that binds them, leading to the further disintegration of already-disadvantaged inner-city neighborhoods (Western, 2002).

Men's ability to form and maintain potential and current intimate relationships is damaged by incarceration. In her book *Doing Time Together*, Comfort (2007), uncovers the reality of the wives and girlfriends of incarcerated men as costly travel to distant prison facilities, expensive collect calls, long waiting times during visitation hours, and disrespectful treatment by prison staff. Comfort argues that these experiences constitute a secondary imprisonment of the women who wait for and visit their incarcerated partners. The incarceration of Black men also jeopardizes the romantic relationship. For example, in her book studying father's experiences in prison, Nurse (2002), portrays these men's ability to maintain romantic relationships with partners "on the outside" as brutal, as these men experience a prison phenomenon known as the "summer shake." This phenomenon refers to the female partners of these men breaking off the relationship during the summer time due to these men's lack of physical involvement, in addition to the warm weather that elicits these men's female partners to wanting "something better."

Stable romantic relationships are harmed during incarceration, but they also provide positive outcomes for these men. For example, Petit and Western (2004) have found that marriage is associated with lower recidivism for Black men once released from prison. In addition, Laub and Sampson (2009) found that delinquent males experienced improved trajectories after marriage. Specifically, the researchers found that wives instilled discipline in their partners, leading them to abandon their deviant peer groups in favor of focusing on building a family life. Since having served time in prison reduces the likelihood that a man will marry, formerly incarcerated men often do not experience the positive impact of marriage on preventing recidivism.

Parenting by young Black fathers becomes problematic behind bars. Young Black men with children struggle to be involved and active fathers because of the prison system structure. Some men are able to contact their children via writing letters, making and receiving phone calls, and visitation rights. For the most part, parenting tends to happen through these particular contexts, as these men attempt to provide some parenting support and ideas about their child's development with the baby's mother, their paternal kin, and the maternal kin (Alexander, 2005).

The lack of physical presence makes it hard for children (particularly young children) to grasp the idea of their father when they are released from prison (Geller, 2013). Prison policies, limit the number of people allowed to visit the father, which is especially problematic for Black men who have multiple children with multiple women. They also restrict the face-to-face interaction between these men and their children during visitation hours, causing shame for these men and distress for the children (Hairston, 2003). In addition, the responses of incarcerated fathers during incarceration have

implications for parenting. For example, hard-timing significantly reduces the involvement and interaction between men and their children as they manage a stressful environment. In addition, flashing leads these men to become more abusive both physically and mentally with their children. As a result, it is critical that these men to take parenting classes and other forms of classes during incarceration systemically benefit their ability to be effective fathers both during and after prison (Nurse, 2002; Modecki, 2009).

Community Effects

Mass incarceration in the United States does not only impact young Black men individually and their families but the communities they reside in as well. Concentrated numbers of incarcerated young Black men have significant impacts on their communities (Braman, 2004; LeBlanc, 2004; Christian, 2004; St. Jean, 2006; Clear, 2007. For example, Clear (2009) highlights that mass incarceration of young Black men weakens labor markets, especially by weakening the earning power of people who cycle through the prison system. Relatedly, mass incarceration increases the economic strain on the families and the community (Sabol & Lynch, 2003). As mentioned before, mass incarceration of young Black men reduces the rate of marriage among African Americans (especially for African American women) (Thomas, 2005).

Research indicates that mass incarceration damages life chances of children of these men who go to prison, especially by increasing their risks of involvement in the juvenile justice system that damages their school prospects and served as a risk factor in mental illness (Murray & Farrington, 2007). People who lose a loved one to prison are also affected in ways that can negatively influence social cohesion and control in the

family and the community and lead to sexual behaviors that can result in STD's and teenage-births. As a whole unit, communities experiencing mass incarceration of young Black men have negative attitudes toward the police and the criminal justice system (Taylor & Fagan, 2005).

Re-entry & Recidivism: Theory and Research

Re-entry & Recidivism: Theoretical Model

While there has been significant research conducted on the experiences of young, Black men behind bars, and the impact that their incarceration has on their children, families and communities, little is known about their re-entry (and persistent recidivism) experiences and the factors that either buffer or instigate re-offending. In addition, much of the theoretical and empirical literature focused on re-entry and recidivism of young, Black men is grounded in criminology and law disciplines. For example, prominent theoretical and empirical work on this topic has been conducted by Sampson and Laub (1993)/Laub and Sampson (1993) in which they use a "criminal life course" theoretical framework to study how cumulative disadvantage for young men of color precipitate their recidivism across their life course.

In their prominent theoretical paper, Laub and Sampson (1997) argue that "cumulative disadvantage suggests a snowball effect – that adolescent delinquency and its negative consequences (e.g., arrest, official labeling, incarceration) increasingly mortgage one's future, especially later life chances molded by schooling and employment." Research even dating back to the 1960's has found that many jobs formally preclude the hiring of ex-prisoners (Glaser, 1969). This makes re-entry very hard and complicated to the point where old habits pick back up, thus increasing the

likelihood of re-offending. Additionally, criminal justice sanctions provoke future defiance of the law when offenders have weak social bonds to both sanctioning agents and the wider community. Studies such as Laub and Sampson (1993) and Maruna and Roy (2007) notably suggest that the concepts of "knifing off" and "cumulative continuity" are most salient in explaining the structurally constrained life chances of the disadvantaged urban poor. This means that among those in advantaged positions that provide continuity in social institutions and resources over time, both non-offenders and offenders alike are not just more motivated but better able structurally to establish binding ties to conventional lines of adult activity. And if anything, engaging in prosocial middle-class roles provides further advantages in maintaining the status quo and counteracting negative life events (e.g., being fired). As a result, legal deterrents work better as they reduce future offending as classical theory suggests they should (Sherman, 1992).

Returning Citizens: Empirical Research

Re-entry is defined as the process of leaving prison and returning to society. For the most part, all prisoners will experience re-entry regardless of their release or form of supervision, if any (Bushway, 2006). Both prisoners who are released on parole and those who are released when their prison term expires experience re-entry. Because of the disparities that exist in mass incarceration, a significant number of young African American male prisoners are returning home, having spent longer terms behind bars, less prepared for life on the outside, with less assistance in their reintegration (Cnaan, Draine, Frazier, & Sinha, 2008). Especially in the state of Maryland, young, Black men with a felony encounter at least 1,100 collateral consequences when released from prison

(Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform, 2016). Often they will have difficulties reconnecting with jobs, housing, and even their families when they return, and will remain struggling with both health and mental health problems. Unfortunately, most will be rearrested, and many will be returned to prison for new crimes or parole violations (Marbley & Ferguson, 2005). And this cycle of removal and return of large numbers of individuals, mostly young African American men, is increasingly concentrated in a relatively small number of communities that already encounter enormous social and economic disadvantages (Travis, Solomon, & Waul, 2001; Richardson, 2003).

Following release from prison, inmates are moved directly from a very controlled environment to a low level of supervision or complete freedom. They may immediately be exposed to high-risk places, persons, and situations and few have developed relapse prevention skills during their incarceration to deal with these risks. Prisoners facing release often report feeling anxious about reestablishing family ties, finding employment, and managing finances once they return to their communities (a common experience labeled "gate fever" (Waller, 1974; Howerton, Burnett, Byng, & Campbell, 2009). Released offenders tend to cope with everyday problems in ineffective and sometimes destructive ways. Some offenders are unable to successfully recognize and deal with problem situations, leading to increased stress levels and rash, often criminal reactions (Zamble & Porporino, 1988). Prisoners return to their homes at odd hours of the night, making it difficult for them to connect with family and service providers during the critical first few hours following release. They also return home without important pieces of identification necessary to obtain jobs, get access to substance abuse treatment, or apply for public assistance (Nelson, Deess, & Allen, 1999). An important aspect of re-

entry is post-release supervision (e.g., probation, drug testing, home confinement, etc.) and these supervisory strategies do not reduce recidivism for young Black men if there is no treatment aspect of their release (Maruna, Immarigeon, & LeBel, 2004). Researchers have focused five important aspects of young Black men's experiences once released from prison - substance abuse, mental health, housing, employment, and families – and how they serve as challenged for re-entry (Travis et al., 2001).

Substance Abuse

Substance abuse among young Black male prisoners presents significant challenges to the reentry process. Studies have found that while most prisoners have a history of drug or alcohol abuse, only a small portion actually receive treatment while incarcerated and upon release (Petersilia, 2003). Transitions from confinement to total freedom and liberty back to their old neighborhood where the setting and the presence of familiar friends/associates present high-risks for potential relapse and parole violations. Many have argued that the extent to which substance abuse problems are treated both prior to and following release from prison for young Black men has significant implications on the outcomes of their recidivism during re-entry (Beck, 2000).

Mental Health

The extent of mental health disorders experienced by young Black males both before and during re-entry is relatively high. Serious mental health disorders such as schizophrenia/psychosis, major depression, bipolar disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder are more common among prisoners than the general population (Haney, 2003). In addition, the rates of mental illness among incarcerated men are at least twice (range sometimes as high as four times) as high as the rates in the overall U.S. population

(Ditton, 1999). Also, it is estimated that between 8 and 16 percent of the prison population have at least one serious mental disorder and are in need of psychiatric services (Haney, 2003).

Successful re-integration of young Black men into the communities requires evaluation and treatment of mental health disorders of these men once they have returned back to their communities. Research indicates that the co-morbidity that exists between mental health issues of depression, PTSD and other conditions, and substance and alcohol abuse (Compton, Conway, Stinson, & Grant, 2006). Unfortunately, several studies have concluded that parole agencies are unable to effectively identify and address the needs of young Black men who may suffer from mental health issues (Lurigio, 2001).

Jobs

There is a complex relationship between crime and employment (Travis et al., 2001). Having a legitimate job lessens the chances of reoffending following release from prison. Also, the higher the wages, the less likely it is that returning prisoners will return to crime (Kling, Weiman, & Western, 2000). For example, a study found that a 10 percent decrease in an individual's wages is associated with 10 to 20 percent increase in his or her criminal activity and the likelihood of incarceration (Geller, Garfinkel, & Western, 2006).

However, studies also show that released prisoners, especially young prisoners of color, struggle with a diminished prospect for stable employment and decent wages throughout their lifetimes (Holzer & Offner, 2006; Pager, Western, & Sugie, 2009). Young Black men struggle significantly with employment during re-entry for three reasons. First, the stigma attached to incarceration makes it difficult for these men to be

hired. This suggests that employers are reluctant to hire individuals with a criminal record, because it signals that they may not be trustworthy (Bushway, 2000). A survey study of employers in five major cities across the country revealed that two-thirds of all employers indicated they would not knowingly hire an ex-offender and at least one-third checked the criminal histories of their most recently hired employees. (Holzer, 1996). Second, ex-prisoners are banned from working in certain fields and restrictions are imposed on hiring ex-prisoners for particular professions including law, real estate, medicine, nursing, physical therapy, and education (Rottman, 2000). And third, time out of the labor market interrupts their job experience which prevents them from building important employment skills. In addition, during the prison experience, they also become exposed to a prison culture that frequently serves to strengthen links to gangs and the criminal world in general (Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999). Pager (2008) concludes that structural factors such as racial discrimination and felon disenfranchisement are important reasons why many ex-prisoners soon find themselves back in the realm of poverty, underground employment, and crime that led them to prison in the first place.

Housing

Few studies of young Black male ex-prisoners focus on experiences with housing. Housing struggles are similar to those experienced by these men when re-entering the labor market (Travis et al., 2001). One of the first things a prisoner must do upon release is to find a place to stay. Because of their criminal past, housing presents problems, for several reasons (Petersilia, 2001; Petersilia, 2003). Returning prisoners rarely have the financial resources or personal references necessary to compete for and secure housing in the private housing market. In addition, federal laws bar many ex-prisoners from public

housing and federally assisted housing programs. And lastly, some numbers of prisoners are not welcome back in their families. One reason for this is that family members living in public housing may not welcome a returning prisoner home when doing so may put their own housing situation at risk. These familial relationships may also be so severely strained that staying with family members or friends is not a viable option.

Families

When it comes to young African American men's experiences leaving prison and returning home and their communities, the return to their families (paternal/maternal kin, mother of the children and children) is one of the most critical transitions that they need to make. Newly released men encounter issues with the mother of their children – for the most part, most men find that they have changed. Women become much more independent and self-sufficient, and sometimes they will not want to go back to a more submissive role (McCubin, Dahl, Lester, & Ross, 1975; Hunter, 1986; McDermott & King, 1992).

Men's parole status gives these women more control over them as well, altering the balance of power. Since women know that violations to their parole sends these men back to prison very quickly, reporting them becomes an "instrumental" tool in shaping interactions (Nurse, 2002). Sometimes the outcome of both of these circumstances (mother of children becoming more independent and the power imbalance) leaves these men more likely to end the relationship. Unfortunately, this outcome shapes their interactions with their children.

Especially for those who are fathers, many of these men come home from prison with high expectations for their own fathering behavior. As Nurse (2002) describes

"many have spent hours in prison fantasizing about the relationship they will build with their children…they imagine activities they will engage in together and how their children will…their children will respond to them as daddy." For some of these fathers, especially for those whose children were very young when they entered prison, being incarcerated struggled with their children forgetting them or not knowing who they are to them (Clarke, O'Brien, Day, Godwin, Connolly, Hemmings, & Van Leeson, 2005). A potential reason for this dynamic is that incarceration of these men provoked other father figures (e.g., brothers, uncles, grand-fathers, baby mother's new beau, etc.) to serve as the child's father (Nurse, 2002).

Parenting sometimes becomes problematic for these men as they try to conceptualize their father identity along with asserting their parenting role with their children (Tripp, 2001; Alexander, 2005; Mustaine, & Tewksbury, 2015). For example, Kelly-Trombley, Bartels, & Wieling (2014) found that many men struggle to find effective ways to discipline children, dealing with child developmental patterns (e.g., caring for a newborn versus an adolescent), and manage their own feelings of disappointment and shame about their fathering.

Managing both paternal and maternal kin for support after prison release is a complimentary process for successful re-entry. Anderson (1990) found that paternal kin, especially mothers, play a critical role in determining and shaping men's involvement with their children. In addition, the mother tends to be the one who provides support and care for the child and enlists other family members to participate. Furstenberg (1995) found that the expectations and behavior of the mother's family also have a significant impact on the father. Families that expect a low level of involvement by the father

transmit this feeling and help create a self-fulfilling situation. In addition, maternal kin who disapprove of the young father can serve in a gatekeeping capacity to prevent him from seeing his child (Allen & Doherty, 1996). These conflicting styles of cooperation and conflict between a young father's paternal and maternal kin create problems for fathers to fully participate in the development of their families (e.g., mother of the children and children).

Re-entry and Social Capital

There is growing research that reentry may affect social capital either positively or negatively, depending upon how ex-offenders, family members, and neighbors react to reentry problems as they arise (Rose & Clear, 2002). Though there have been mixed definitions for social capital (Coleman, 1990; Portes, 1998; Putnam, 1993), a scholarly accepted definition for social capital is "a by- product of social relationships that provides the capacity for collective understanding and action (Rose & Clear, 2002)." Social capital is important for neighborhoods because it is the resource residents need to realize their collective goals: reduced crime, increased supervision of children, the accumulation of new resources, etc. In a qualitative study conducted by Rose, Clear, and Ryder (2000), they proposed four domains of how processes of incarceration and re-entry shape families and communities: finances, stigma, identity, and relationships.

Finances

It was found that ex-offenders return to their communities with limited financial resources but with many financial needs. Not only do they need the fundamental means for survival (food and shelter), they regularly need money for new clothes, transportation and, frequently, for criminal justice costs too. Upon their return to the community, these

individuals had three financial choices: find a job, remain unemployed, return to crime. Jobs available to ex-offenders tend to be low-paying and highly unstable. Unemployed individuals typically relied upon their families for financial support. As a result, families experienced additional financial strains. The researchers found that a byproduct of large-scale unemployment experienced by high incarceration neighborhoods is the increase in men congregating on street corners, oftentimes near, or in front of, local stores. They found two effects. First, shop owners reported fewer legitimate customers willing to shop. Second, the appearance of disorder means customers from outside the neighborhood are reluctant to frequent stores within the neighborhood and outside investors do not see these neighborhoods as places to establish businesses. Lastly, ex-offenders returned to crime to resolve their financial needs. In the aggregate this reduces community safety. To the extent it makes residents fearful, it also reduces community-level trust.

Stigma

The researchers found that offenders in transition report a sense of being stigmatized by their communities and fellow residents. Their families reported similar feelings. The ex-offenders sensed that they were labeled as "bad" or otherwise flawed by those living near them. Dealing with stigma offers four possibilities. Those who feel stigmatized may: 1.) actively try to change the others' opinions, 2.) go on about their business, heedless of these opinions, 3.) isolate from others who judge them, or 4.) move to a new community and start over. Effectively changing the opinions of others has positive implications for social capital. When neighbors form an improved opinion, as the respondents reported they were ready to do if the person's behavior warrants this change,

it promotes a renewed sense of re-connectedness within the family and between the family and the community. This would enhance both belonging and empowerment domains of social capital, as both residents and ex-offenders learn they can influence one another's beliefs and mutually share a sense of connection. It also would enhance a sense of trust among members of the community.

The other options for dealing with stigma had less positive implications for social capital. Either ignoring one's neighbors in daily business or isolating from them promotes a sense of alienation. The participants in this study reported that those who are stigmatized avoid contact with others, stop participating in social functions such as church services, and look upon their neighbors with distrust and foreboding. Lastly, ex-offenders had the option of moving to a new neighborhood entirely. While some ex-offenders reported their success was due to the help they received from family members when they moved back to the old neighborhood, some attributed their success to their decision to move to a new environment altogether. Family members, in this study, discussed moving as a strategy they sometimes employed in anticipation of a loved one's return from prison as a way of enhancing the likelihood of successful reentry.

Identity

Incarceration impacts how both offenders and their families feel about themselves. It also effects how residents in high incarceration neighborhoods perceive themselves and the communities in which they live. Rose and Clear (2003) found that ex-offenders often made a positive change in their self-perceptions and sometimes, residents believed, these changes could not have happened without the individual serving a prison sentence. Positive changes in offenders have the potential to improve social capital in a

few ways. Maruna (2001) has shown that when ex-offenders try to succeed, they rebuild

a sense of their "personal narrative," and adopt a revised version of their life story, one

which reinterprets life events and personal priorities in potentially pro-social ways. Even

though members of high incarceration neighborhoods frequently call for more crime

control in their communities, there also are mixed feelings about the relationship between

residents and the police and the criminal justice system in general. Reentry exacerbates

these feelings as ex-offenders are returned to communities where residents have little say

in the process.

Relationships

By first removing people from the neighborhood, incarceration interferes with

local social networks by disrupting marriages, families, and friendships. Reentry also can

impact supporting networks and reciprocity negatively. Upon reentry, ex-offenders were

faced with the task of piecing together their lives. While this often entails finding

housing, obtaining employment, and other necessities, it also is a period when individuals

need to repair relationships with family members. Rose and Clear (2003) argue that,

while family and friends may be glad to be reunited with those who have been gone, the

social networks suffer another strain: trying to figure out how to reincorporate into the

relationship ex-offenders who themselves are relearning how to be "husbands" and

"fathers." This is true particularly when a spouse has moved on to another relationship

but the returning ex-offender wants to be reunited with his children. Reentry poses ex-

offenders and their families with a challenge: whether or not to rebuild the relationship.

Rebuilding the relationship means relations can be restored, resulting in enhanced levels

of trust and empowerment, both within the family and within the community-at- large.

Choosing not to rebuild impacts levels of trust, norms and values and an overall sense of belonging.

Summary

Over the last three decades, mass incarceration has become a prominent experience, not only for young African American men, but also their families and their communities. Whether it was spurred because of the rising crime rate in urban cities, the war on gangs and drugs, or hostile race relations in the United States, mass incarceration has exacerbated the structural inequalities that have been perpetuated throughout the era of slavery and Jim Crow control and confinement.

Experiencing imprisonment tends to have negative effects on young Black men themselves. During imprisonment, many of these men develop ineffective coping strategies (e.g., hard-timing, flashing) to deal with the violent and crowded environment. These men also battle significant masculinity issues while being surrounded with so many other men exerting their masculinity. This may include using sexual assault, violence, and demonizing women via gender and sexual talk. Yet, "doing time" gives these men time to think about their transgressions and fantasize about a positive life when released. Systemic effects include intimate partners becoming frustrated and alone with other aspects of life (e.g., finances, parenting, etc.) and struggles with children outcomes while they grow up without their fathers/father figures. Moreover, communities of these men also disintegrate as potential wage earners, business owners, and role models never appear to curb the economic strain and relational conflict in the communities.

Re-entry receives tremendous attention because the experiences during their prison term make it a hard transition for young Black men to released back to their

families and into their communities. Men will most likely struggle with substance abuse and relapse (if part of their release is not drug treatment) and pre-existing and emergent mental health issues that may go untreated, since the communities these men are released back into have scarce resources to treat them. Employers and the labor market both ignores and mistreats these men as they try to seek full employment and appropriate wages, and they experiences discrimination with obtaining adequate and affordable housing. These issues, if not fully attended to, create higher risks for recidivism.

Pertaining to re-entering their families' lives, intimate partners change during men's imprisonment and become more powerful after their release (affecting the relational dynamics). Children struggle with relating to their father and attaching, paternal kin attempt to be as supportive while maternal kin tend to display more conflict. These familial dynamics complicate the lives and transition of re-entry for young Black men and may also serve as risks for recidivism.

Research Questions

The aim of this dissertation is to examine young Black men's experiences with fathering their children after their transition out of the criminal justice system. Young Black men, especially those who are poor, are significantly more likely to experience incarceration as they transition into adulthood. Once they become involved with the criminal justice system, they struggle with being involved with their families and children. Empirically, it has been established during their re-entry process that young, Black men encounter problems with the mothers of their children; they have fear and uncertainty of their own fathering; and they have cooperative and conflicted ties to both paternal and maternal kin for support. Yet, we know less about contexts and processes of

the dissolution or maintenance of romantic and co-parenting relationships when men leave prison; the processes of re-establishing parenthood; how Black fathers conceptualize successes and failures with their parenthood; and the extent to which paternal and maternal kin serve as a complimentary social support system for successful re-entry. As a result, this research study provides an in-depth examination of the fathering experiences of young Black men. The research questions are:

- How do young Black fathers engage and nurture their children after incarceration? How is this engagement shaped by prior involvement as a residential or incarcerated father?

- How does the experience of incarceration influence the prospects of housing, employment, health, and relationships with current or former partners, as well as extended kin? How does mass incarceration influence the lives of men's family members, in particular the well-being of their children?

Chapter 3: Methodology

Methodological Approach

I conducted a qualitative methodological approach to this research inquiry. Qualitative research focuses on understanding "how" a phenomenon is experienced, in comparison to positivist quantitative methodologies, which emphasize explaining causal relationships between variables. A qualitative approach allowed me to describe the nature and contents of cultural, social, and personal values and experiences surrounding the fathering and incarceration experiences of young Black men (Luborsky & Rubin, 1995).

Qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews, timelines, and field and participant observations were utilized for this research project. In-depth interviews with young Black men helped me gain insight into how they respond to fathering and incarceration while also allowing me to understand how they make sense of these realities for their own lives. I created a life history calendar for each participant to track developmental periods (e.g., age, turning points) for when their engagement with social institutions deteriorated, fatherhood, and incarceration (Freedman, Thornton, Camburn, Alwin, & Young-DeMarco, 1988). In addition, field and participant-observations of these young men were created to help me to better understand the contexts in which their experiences interfacing with social institutions, fathering, and incarceration are situated. This was critical because, as mentioned before, young low-income Black men manage a number of culturally and contextually-specific factors that shape their responses to disconnection, fathering, and incarceration. This provided strong interpretations of these realities and highlighting the implications for their transition to adulthood. These qualitative methods served as "tools" of social constructionism (e.g., talk-centered

activities) and ethnographic methods (e.g,. observation and field notes) that provided a thick description of a phenomenon that brings forth the nuance of the experience (Daly, 2007).

Field Site

Since August 2015, Dr. Kevin Roy and I have worked with the program staff of the Reentry Program at the Prince Georges County Detention Center in Upper Marlboro, Maryland. We cleared security review measures and were provided with security badges for entry into the facility to provide social support services within the Program Services department. We also received a letter of support to conduct research. This research project took place in a unit with a specific population of inmates who are close to their release date (1-10 months). With approval from the detention center, we developed a curriculum that focused on fatherhood and incarceration to utilize when facilitating groups at the detention center. The goal of this program activity was to build relationships with the program members at the detention center while also providing opportunities to introduce the proposed research opportunity to these men in the classes. The information from the fatherhood groups was not a component of this research project conducted in the facility; no data from these groups are used the analysis.

I have prior experience in working with community-based programs for young men of color, and in recruiting and interviewing them for research. I assisted Dr. Roy with the Fathering Adult Sons in Transition (FASIT) study, a larger parent project at College Park. This project explored the intergenerational influences on the transition to adulthood for low-income men of color who would be considered disconnected from traditional pathways to school and employment. This project was funded by the William

T. Grant foundation and featured research goals that included gaining insight as to how family and kin networks support young men during transition to adulthood. Methods used in this project included in-depth interviews, participant observations via life skills presentations led by research team members, and with staff personnel were conducted at young development programs in Baltimore City, Langley Park, and Riverdale, MD.

Being engaged in these research activities helped me become aware of how disengagement from school and the labor market negatively shapes the life course, but also the critical impacts of fatherhood and being locked up, for young Black men. Unprompted stories about struggles with social institutions (e.g., school, labor market), "baby-mama drama" (a cultural term referencing a mother who is not married to her child's father and persistent negativity stemming from a romantic and co-parenting relationship comprised of poor communication, poor problem-solving, conflictive power dynamics, and potential violence) and kids, and experiencing some form of incarceration arose during the interviews and participant interaction and observation. I also experienced the same exact process and insight about young Black men's lives while conducting fieldwork, as an assignment for my doctoral qualitative research methods course, at the Maryland Multi-Cultural Youth Center in Silver Spring, MD. While the FASIT project is more focused on the transition into adulthood and the support from kin, this dissertation was focused on exploring young, low-income men's experiences with fathering and incarceration across their life course and understand how these experiences shape their transition to adulthood.

Sample Recruitment

I recruited 40 young, low-income Black men who were involved the re-entry program at the Upper Marlboro detention center. Qualitative researchers have argued that for phenomenological studies, 30 to 50 interviews and/or observations are appropriate for ethnographies and grounded theory research (Morse 1994; Roy, Zvonkovic, Goldberg, Sharp, & LaRossa, 2015). The recruitment process had five steps. First, I, along with Theresa Dozier (Re-entry Coordinator) entered the unit and asked the guard to call all of the men present, to make a general announcement. At the initial announcement, I expressed "Thanks for coming down today. I am part of a group of fatherhood researchers from the University of Maryland, and we would like to begin a fatherhood discussion group twice each week here in the unit meeting room. We would also like to have the chance to talk to you personally, one-on-one, about your experiences as a father. If you are interested in either or maybe both of these activities, please fill out a slip for us. If you're not interested, please check "not interested."

Second, I passed out individual slips for men to indicate their name and if they would like to participate in either or both of the activities. Men filled out these slips, folded them, and passed them to us to maintain confidentiality regarding their interest in participating. Third, Dr. Roy and I proceeded with the three-week discussion group for interested fathers. It should be noted that some men within the discussion group were interviewed, as well as men who had not taken part in the group but preferred only an interview. Information or experiences shared during these fatherhood discussion groups are not included in the analyses.

Fourth, I provided a list of fathers who were interested in interviews to DOC staff, to clarify if fathers were eligible, based on their age, parenting status, continued residence

in the unit, or possibility of early release. The DOC staff reviewed the list for a few basic reasons. They have the most accurate data on their age and parenting status, which would confirm their eligibility for the program. They also know if participants are still residing in the same unit, since inmates are moved to different units on a daily basis. I found this to be critical because there were cases with interested participants who were no longer available for program services or research because they were moved to a higher security unit or even relocated to another facility. Moreover, interested participants leave the facility to attend final court hearings and even return home on a regular basis. The staff was helpful in providing information on whether an inmate had been released and was no longer available for interview.

If an inmate was deemed not eligible by DOC staff, I contacted them and met with the interested father. I explained, "Staff here at the facility have reviewed your interest in doing an in interview with us. Unfortunately, you are not eligible to participate in the interview for this project. You may be younger than 18 or older than 31; you may not have biological children; or you may not be participating in the re-entry program at this moment. Thanks so much for your interest in our research project."

Fifth, I entered the unit in the facility and asked the guards to contact each participant individually. I met with each eligible participant in a unit facility room to schedule an interview and fill out a demographic sheet, and then again to conduct the interview. When I met with them, I expressed, "Thanks for your interest in doing an interview with us. We have talked with the staff, and you are eligible for this study. We would like to schedule a time that you are able to meet. We would also like you to fill out this sheet to provide some more information about you."

Sample Stratification

I utilized a purposeful sampling strategy to ensure variation (see demographic table on page 108) (Patton, 2002). In terms of age, I purposefully sought two groups within the indicated age range – one group between the ages of 18-24 and the other group age 24 and older. The variation between these two age groups will highlight important developmental periods in these men's lives and how fathering and incarceration shape their transition into adulthood. Additionally, I recruited men who self-identified as either Black or African American, who were between the ages of 18-33, and who had biological children or step-children between the ages of infancy to 16. In addition, it is noteworthy to mention that social fathers were also included. Social fathering refers to a male relative or family associate who demonstrates parental behaviors and is "like a father" to a child (Tamis-LeMonda & Cabrera, 1999). Particularly for low-income Black families, in which complex and fluid marital and living arrangements exist (Jayakody & Kalil, 2002; Richardson, 2009); it was important to also capture the experiences of these young Black men who consider themselves social fathers since it informs the cultural context of parenting and provide variation to examining Black fatherhood. Variation with these aspects of family life allowed me to capture the complexities of their fathering experiences. Moreover, focusing on men who have children between the ages of infancy-16 allowed for exploration of the developmental processes of children of incarcerated fathers.

Pertaining to incarceration, I purposefully sought variation in the re-entry context among those who have had extensive prior involvement with being incarcerated (or experiencing some form of punishment from the criminal justice system) and those who

had negligible prior involvement with incarceration or experiences with the criminal justice system. The rationale behind this purposeful variation is that it allowed me to examine the enduring effects of incarceration on fathering for these men. With recidivism rates particularly high for young Black males (Reisig, Bales, Hay, & Wang, 2007), this variation is critical in understanding how incarceration shapes their transition into adulthood. In addition, I was mindful that not all young Black men may experience being locked up when interacting with the criminal justice system and that other resulting criminal punishments will be important to track and examine their impact on the fathering of these men.

Table 1. Demographic Table

Variable	Frequency
Age (years)	
18-22	20% (n = 8)
23-27	35% (n = 14)
28-33	45% (n = 18)
Race	
African American	97.5% (n = 39)
Bi-racial	2.5% (n = 1)
Prior Incarceration Spells	
1-2	25% (n = 10)
3-5	45% (n = 18)
6-10	10% (n = 4)
10-15	10% (n = 4)
16+	10% (n = 4)
Number of Kids	
1 child	60% (n = 24)
2 children	30% (n = 12)

3 children   10% (n = 4)

Age of Kids (years)

    0-4   43% (n = 43)
    5-8   30% (n = 17)
    9-13   21% (n = 12)
    13+   6% (n = 3)

Ties to the Child

    Biological child   97.5% (n = 39)
    Mixture (bio + non-bio)   2.5% (n = 1)

Multiple Partner Family

    Fathers with 1 Baby Mama   80% (n = 22)
    Fathers with Multiple Baby Mama   20% (n = 8)

High School Diploma (HSD)

    Fathers with HSD   47.5% (n = 19)
    Fathers witout HSD   52.5% (n = 21)

Data Collection

I used three complimentary methodological techniques to collect data for this research project – field notes, in-depth interviews, and life history calendars. Field and participant observations provided me with opportunities to take field notes – a record of my observations and interpretations of what has occurred at the field site. Interviews supplemented my observations of these participants and their settings by engaging them in a process of dialectic "give and take" aimed at confirming my observations while also learning about their experiences (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). Life history calendars provided me with specific time and developmental information about each participant that will complement the information the information they provide during the interviews (Freedman, Thornton, Camburn, Alwin, & Young-DeMarco, 1988).

Field Observations

I spent one to two days a week in the site as a participant-observer. Throughout the week, I co-facilitated fatherhood groups. Both before and after these groups, I sat in various areas of the detention center such as the release room, the waiting room, security checkpoints, etc. to observe. I gained insights into these men's experiences of dealing with social institutions, staff, correctional officers, administrators, etc. Specifically, I jotted field notes about my observations and interactions with program members and staff. While the notes were not used in the findings section, these notes on the staff helped to sensitize me to the controlling and demanding environment these men endure on a daily basis. Additionally, these notes on correctional officer staff and program staff further contextualized institutional factors within the criminal justice system. Prisons and jails tend to promote violence, control, force, and compliance both from the correctional officers and fellow inmates can create traumatic experiences for these men that may spillover into their re-entry patterns. As a result, field notes on the staff interactions was critical. After each site visit, I transformed my jottings into detailed field notes (as suggested by Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1997) in Microsoft word two hours afterwards. In-depth interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim.

In-depth Interviews

I conducted in-depth interviews with 40 young, low-income Black men (LaRossa, 2005). The goal of these interviews was to gain a rich understanding of the process, context, and meaning of disconnection, fathering, and incarceration (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). I interviewed young men at the program site using a semi-structured interview technique (Daly, 2007). This approach provided me with a focus for the

interview while allowing me the critical flexibility to adapt to the idiosyncrasies of each participant's experience. In addition, semi-structured interviews are advantageous in that they allow for "structured discovery" – an interview approach that ensures the researcher covers all protocol domains during all participant interviews while allowing the flexibility to discover unexpected themes (Roy, Tubbs, & Burton, 2004). Interviews lasted approximately 90 minutes and each participant was reimbursed $20 for their participation. The research protocol guiding the semi-structured interview was built around sensitizing concepts (van den Hoonard, 1997) in the literature on young Black men, fatherhood, and incarceration, the transition to adulthood, and urban communities.

A small pilot study was conducted in the Spring 2014 as part of my graduate Qualitative Research Methods course with Dr. Kevin Roy. I conducted four, in-depth interviews exploring transition into adulthood and disconnection with young, low-income Black men at the MMYC organization in Silver Spring, MD. These interviews provided me with insight into the prominent experiences of young, low-income Black men transitioning into adulthood and gradually informed the interview protocol development for this project. Protocol domains included questions designed to uncover young, low-income Black men's experiences with disconnection, fatherhood, incarceration, and transition into adulthood.

Life History Calendars

 I utilized a life history calendar, a structured interview tool that utilizes a timeline format to facilitate rapid and accurate recall, on a year to year basis, of life events surrounding school, jobs, housing, incarceration, and fatherhood. According to Freeman, Thornton, Camburn, Alwin, and Young-DeMarco (1988), there are two advantages to

using life history calendars for collecting retrospective survey data. First, it can improve the quality of the retrospective data by helping the participants to relate, both visually and mentally, the timing of several kinds of events. Events more readily remembered such as fatherhood, incarceration, and marriages provide important reference points for recalling less salient events such as the details of employment and living arrangements. Second, very detailed sequences of events are easier to record with a life history calendar than with a conventional questionnaire. Questionnaires would require obtaining and recording the beginning and end dates of many short time intervals spent at each event. The calendar, on the other hand, the recording can be done graphically with much less difficulty, using symbols to mark the beginning and ending timeframes (e.g., years) and connecting them with lines to indicate continued activity (e.g., incarceration).

Data Management

All digital recorders were stored securely in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's office along with participant consent forms and any documents containing participant identifying information. Electronic transcripts of the interviews were generated by the researcher and a team of trained undergraduate research assistants (UGRA's). All participant names were replaced with pseudonyms in order to further protect against the identity of the interview participants. All transcripts, including memos and field notes were entered into Dedoose, a qualitative data analysis software that assists with data management, manipulation, and analysis (Version, 2016).

Data Analyses

I utilized a modified grounded theory approach will be used for data analyses (LaRossa, 2012). Derived from the triadic coding scheme, LaRossa (2005), I coded the

data in three waves: 1) open coding, 2) axial coding, and 3) selective coding. Transcribed

interviews entered, read and coded using Dedoose. First, open coding involved reading

each transcribed interview line-by-line to identify key indicators that provide insight into

the project's goals (LaRossa, 2005). Before this stage of coding, *a priori* codes was

compiled based on sensitizing concepts from prior research and will be used to help pick

up key indicators during data analysis (van den Hoonard, 1997). The sensitizing concepts

I began with were based on my literature reading, pilot study, and research questions:

disconnection, school, graduation, degree, job/employment, labor market, wages,

finances, fathering, father identity, father involvement, co-parenting, parenting, kin

support (family, friends), incarceration, impact of incarceration, re-entry, substance

abuse, housing, family, and future plans. It is important to note that, in line with a

modified ground theory approach, I also developed new codes based on key words,

phrases, or sentences, or a series of sentences emerging from reading the data (LaRossa,

2005).

Many of the codes for the analysis was derived from this phase of coding and that

a set of central codes applied repeatedly throughout the open coding of interviews

emerged as well. Paragraphs of interview text were compared within each interview to

determine if new codes should be created or if indicators fall under existing codes.

Questions were asked of the transcribed interview data in order to uncover a deeper

understanding of the interview text. The questions included: What is going on here? What

are young men saying or doing? How does the context shape what is happening here?

What is the nature of the process by which young men experience disconnection,

fatherhood, and incarceration and construct meaning? Under what conditions did this

process develop? and What is contributing to change in this process? (Charmaz, 2006; Emerson, 2005).

The next phase, axial coding, included using the technique of constant comparison (LaRossa, 2005) to understand the similarities and variation in young men's experiences in transitioning into adulthood, fatherhood, and incarceration. I identified key concepts that emerged throughout the 40 coded interviews and examined them across the cases in order to discover the dimensions of concept. For example, if dropping out of school is a salient experience for young, Black men, I instructed Dedoose to generate a code report containing all the coded text related to dropping out of school across of the interviews. Then, I analyzed all of the pulled paragraphs in order to understand the dimensions of young, low-income Black men's experience of dropping out of school. For example, some young men may have dropped out of school because they were not learning anything while others may have dropped out to obtain employment in efforts to help the family as the man of the house (eliciting different implications).

The last stage of analysis, selective coding, included developing a core category with dimensions describing young men's experiences. In order to construct meaning around their experiences of transitioning into adulthood, I crafted a concept from this core category that accurately captures young Black men's experiences with re-entry as fathers across their life course

Data Quality

Krefting (1999) outlines Guba's model for assessing the quality of qualitative research to be used as a standard to ensure the rigor of this qualitative study. It is inefficient and ineffective to apply strategies to assess the quality of quantitative designs

to this qualitative study because of the different goals and methods applied (Krefting, 1999). Guba's model was useful for assessing data quality for this project because it provided me with the language and lens to evaluate aspects of quality research for both quantitative and qualitative research. The dimensions of this model include truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality (Krefting, 1999).

Truth value

This term refers to establishing credibility. It is very comparable to establishing internal validity in quantitative research or ensuring that a measure captures what it is intended to measure so that changes in the dependent variable can be accurately attributed to changes in the independent variable (Krefting, 1999). In qualitative research, truth value was established by accurately capturing and interpreting the multiple realities of the lived experiences I am working to understand so that others who "share that experience would immediately recognize the descriptions" (Krefting, 1999, p. 218). Truth value, once established, enabled me to have confidence in the truth of findings based on this study's design, the research participants, and the context in which the study is situated.

Applicability

 Applicability is tied to the concept of external validity in quantitative research and deals with the generalizability of the findings (Krefting, 1999). In quantitative research, this was achieved via representative sampling techniques designed to increase the researcher's ability to generalize the findings to the broader population. But, in qualitative research, my goal was to capture lived experience and achieve a "thick description" of young, Black incarcerated fathers. According to Guba's model, while the

goal is not to generalize findings, my qualitative findings contain enough description of the processes examined so that the findings are "transferable" – capable of being examined in different contexts and samples in following research studies (Krefting, 1999).

Consistency

Consistency deals with data trustworthiness and is related to the concept of reliability in quantitative research. It focuses on whether a study's findings can be replicated and obtain similar results. As a result, quantitative studies utilize methods that help to control for variation across the data and the research setting. In qualitative research, replication of findings is not a focus – it is concerned with capturing multiple realities and understanding the uniqueness of the experience. Therefore, I purposefully sought variation in the data in order to arrive at a rich and full understanding of the phenomenon of interest. Additionally, in qualitative research outliers in the data provide important information about the range of experiences; unlike in quantitative research, outliers are problematic for data analyses that work to pinpoint the average experience (Krefting, 1999).

Neutrality

Neutrality is highly relevant and critical for positivistic research methodologies. This term refers to the researcher's obligation to remain objective and bias-free so that the data are not influenced by the researcher and that the methods and analyses are not influenced by the data (Krefting, 1999). Specifically, quantitative studies promote the objectivity of the researcher and distancing oneself from the data. On the contrary, qualitative research promotes the idea of increased value in the data can be achieved

through diminished distance between researcher and the participants (Krefting, 1999).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert that repeated and prolonged engagement to the research

participants and the context that shape the lives of the research participants can increase

the researcher's ability to form trust with the participants and gather rich data. As a result,

an evaluation of neutrality is focused on examining the neutrality of the data is

determined by the credibility and applicability achieved in the study (i.e., confirmability)

(Krefting, 1999).

Strategies

I used a variety of methods to establish the truth value (credibility), applicability,

consistency, and neutrality of the data to ensure high quality data for this project

(Krefting, 1999). These strategies included prolonged engagement, triangulation, peer

examination, and reflexivity.

I enhanced my credibility by spending a year and a half as a participant-observer

and interviewer. This prolonged engagement at the site allowed me to strengthen

relationships with program staff and participants over time. As mentioned, I conducted

field work at MMYC in Silver Spring, MD and before conducting interviews with young

Black men there, a colleague and I spent five months at the program site assisting along

with interacting and establishing trust, rapport, shared language, and a showing of

advocacy and support with the program staff and program participants. This prolonged

engagement made recruiting and officially conducting study goals much easily.

In addition, Krefting (1999) also notes that such engagement positioned me to

better identify themes and patterns in the interview data. I planned for the same results

with the Re-entry program at the detention center. Detailed field notes were taken during

periods of observation and all interviews will be digitally recorded and transcribed.

During data analysis, selective coding, especially, the words of the participants were used

to support a think description of the data to ensure the "voices" of the participants will be

represented and enhance credibility, applicability, and dependability of the data

(Krefting, 1999).

Multiple methods of triangulation were used to enhance the data quality of this

study. Triangulation of data sources was used to obtain data on young men's experiences

with social institutions, fatherhood, and incarceration (via young men, program staff,

other program participants) and triangulation of methods was achieved through in-depth

interviews and participant-observation. My life history calendars were used to also track

developmental periods (e.g., age, turning points) for when events related disengagement

from social institutions, incarceration, and fatherhood occurred. This served as a method

for checking data interviewees provided and to highlight the experiences of these three

issues across their life course. I utilized my advisor and UGRA's to help establish

triangulation of investigators. Specifically, I regularly processed these insights drawn

from the data and compare this with the observations the UGRA's were making, as well.

This increased the credibility and confirmability of the data (Krefting, 1999).

I utilized peer examination as a strong feature of ensuring high data quality. Due

to the extensive work I have been involved in with many colleagues in the doctoral

program, who are also qualitative researchers, I held monthly peer examination meetings

to process my observations in the field and in the data. These colleagues provided critical

feedback about themes I observed in the data. This process was a critical aspect during

the selective coding phase of data analysis as I worked to develop a core story about the research findings.

Reflexivity

In order to maintain the credibility and confirmability of this research project, I regularly engaged in a reflexive process to examine the ways in which my social position and personal background and knowledge of transition into adulthood, fatherhood, and incarceration might be shaping the data collection, interpretation, and analyses (Daly, 2007). My social position as an African American male in my early thirties with a post-secondary education shaped experiences in the field and my interactions with the data. Age, race, and gender provided points of commonality from which participant and researcher jointly identified; whereas my educational level created discrepant points in our lived experiences. During previous research field-work with the FASIT project or with MMYC, my outsider status as a highly educated Black male in part, afforded me the opportunity to interview select young men, merely through their interest in going to college and having fun and also making "real money."

But, my experiences have also shown me that this particular aspect of my social position has been somewhat of a challenge because participants have looked at me and also expressed that getting a Ph.D means that I am either better than them, I come from money or "don't know nothing about the hood." As a result, I minimized this dynamic by matching the style of conversation with the participants (e.g., easy-going tone, less academic jargon, and more slang), as I have tended to do with family and friends (outside of the school and work). I used these techniques for this research project but my previous field experience with young men of color over the last six years assured me that I will not

have much problem connecting with young men of color, building trust and respectful relationships and collect data successfully.

As a researcher, I brought personal experiences of many Black male family members and friends experiencing entering adulthood and their issues related to school and work, fatherhood, and incarceration. Since middle school, I have seen approximately ten to twelve close male family members and friends struggle with disconnection, fatherhood, and incarceration at some point in their life course.

Two distinct experiences stand out to me and are very sensitive to me. First, when I was a freshman in college 11 years ago, my closest male cousin got a girl pregnant and right after was locked up for a non-violent crime (selling drugs). He was locked up during my whole college career and when he was released, he struggled significantly with re-entry (fathering, co-parenting, employment, etc.). Second, one of my closest friends (very dear to me) did not finish high school, dealt with multiple partner fertility, and got locked up for offenses such as robbery and assault. Observing his downfall, continues to stick with me and I'm very sensitive to these issues and engendered a strong concern for young, low-income Black men.

While as a researcher and interviewer these experiences motivate me and equip me to share the voices of these men, challenges may still arise. I realized that my reactions and constructions of these issues became the filter through which I explored disconnection, fatherhood, and incarceration. I tracked this process by monitoring my paths of inquiry during the interviews (e.g., Am I listening for my own reactions to these issues in interview responses or am I attentive to their unique experiences?) and write reflexive memos about this challenge.

Another critical part of my social position is that I am a Licensed Graduate Marriage and Family Therapy (LGMFT). Daly (2007) cautiously asserted that clinicians should carefully monitor their stances as researchers and clinicians during interviews. I managed my identity as a clinician because there are certain aspects of these men's experiences that deal with mental health (e.g., trauma, violence, substance use, etc.). There were benefits and challenges to me being a clinician. Pertaining to challenges, my role as a clinician affected my stance with the interviewee (e.g., questioning, tone, etc.) in which I wanted to engage in intervention, but realized it was best to report any mental health issues I had about the participant, to the unit correctional officers and the clinicians in the detention center. Yet, the professional identity as a clinician benefitted my field-work – it assisted me in reframing questions (if necessary), being empathic and present during the interviews, and promoted a safe and non-judgmental environment. I also used memos to track this process to balance all the identities of my social position. Regularly monitoring my reflexivity increased the credibility and confirmability of the data.

Chapter 4: Problematizing Re-entry

Re-entry is usually the process of leaving prison and returning to society (Bushway, 2006). Though in casual conversation, in scholarship, and in seeking effective intervention, the singular version of this word implicitly suggests that individuals who are incarcerated have been incarcerated once and that the "re-entry" they will soon experience will be their first time leaving and returning to society. Prominent criminal researchers such as Laub and Sampson (1993; 1997) have argued that because of the "cumulative disadvantages" experienced by young men of color across their life course, recidivism for this population becomes commonplace. As a result, I found that multiple spells of incarceration actually lead to multiple re-entries and that these men are quite familiar with the transition from prison to society.

In this dissertation, I learned very quickly that I was working with a population in which recidivism was quite high. Demographically, each of the 40 men in my sample had prior convictions before their current sentence at the time of participating in this study. Men in the sample were incarcerated 1-47 times across their life course before their current stint. Again, the men in this sample were individuals who were being held at a detention center awaiting for pre-trial. When the data was collected, the average amount of days spent in the detention center was 300 days (10 months). As seen in Figure 1, these percentages give some insight into my data and into the conceptualization of studying re-entry. Re-entry is not just a singular, one-time moment in these men's lives. Rather, it is a repetitive process they have endured multiple times due to being incarcerated multiple times in their lives.

For some men who have been incarcerated multiple times, their identity and sense of self ends up becoming fused with going to jail and being a prisoner to the point where it feels normal. For example, JC was a 27-year-old father who was serving time for a murder charge. JC had been locked up 22 times before his current sentence at the time of the interview. In this quote, JC talked about what being locked up 23 times has been like for him as a father:

> You start to get used to jail and being incarcerated. I started getting more comfortable with being with jail and that took me away from my daughter. Been locked up almost her whole life. She still calls me daddy and it's amazing how she's still there for me. I'm so much of a daddy when I'm home that she never forgets the moments that I'm there, I do everything for her and a dollar she wants she can get it out of my pocket but when I'm locked up man… (shakes his head)

It is scary that the first thing to come out of JC's response was the notion of the acceptance of incarceration as normative. From an outsider's perspective, that is not one of the common experiences to get used to during transition into adulthood. Many individuals get used to being in school around that age, working a job, and hanging out with friends and family. But, for JC, he was so used to getting locked up, leaving prison, and going back to prison the point where he admits that he is comfortable with being in jail. The fact that he was comfortable being in jail suggests strongly that every time JC left prison, his re-entries had been filled with an uncomfortable feeling. It may be uncomfortable to do right by his loved ones, and it may be uncomfortable getting formal employment, going to school, getting married, etc.

JC had an 8-year-old daughter and he has spent most of her life inside jail. Being locked up 23 times is a lot but it also suggests that he had 22 previous re-entries back into society, his family's life, and his daughter's life. Many people would think that the only disruption in families in which there is an incarcerated parent that the parent being locked up is the only source of trauma. But, with JC's resume, re-entering 22 times presents this revolving door of entering and leaving, entering and leaving, and entering and leaving. Social ecological theory posits that experiencing incarceration twenty times over his life course is indicative more of structural factors across multiple levels that hinder JC's re-entry than JC himself choosing to re-offend (Bronfenbrenner, 1992; Gorman-Smith, Tolan,& Henry, 2000). For the adults in JC's life, he shared that they are highly upset with him about his chronic spells of incarceration. They have judged him and have said to him on numerous occasions "you keep making the same mistakes…when are you going to learn?" But, there was something very powerful and touching as JC talked about how he is amazed at the fact that his daughter still views and relates to him as her "daddy" even though he has not been a consistent figure in her life. With that part of the quote, I could tell that he was under the impression, that over time, the same disappointment and disdain he was receiving from the adult family members that his daughter was going to display those same attitudes and behaviors towards him. This is an important point as we think about re-entry not just being a singular process/moment.

Being incarcerated 22 times prior to his current stint has also meant 22 times in which he has created grief, disappointment and hurt in his adult family and friends. Why not with his daughter? This is quite intriguing because in this quote, JC talked about how when he is home he is an involved father. The level of involvement and bond that he has

with his daughter when he is not locked up and is at home with her is powerful enough to almost override any potential feelings of resentment or disappointment. Additionally, JC suggests that since he knows the risky lifestyle he lives will lead him back into jail, he intentionally over-compensated his father involvement during his re-entries. This intermittent style of fathering seems to be an adaptive strategy for parenting when experiencing both multiple spells of incarceration and re-entries. JC shook his head at the end of this quote, which is very telling about the self-disgust JC had for himself. He was so disgusted by the thought of not being there for his daughter all the time that he stopped talking and just shook his head. This disgust seemed to stem from the realization in the moment that even though he was proud of the fact that his daughter still loved and adored him after all these spells of incarceration, being currently locked up reminded him of who he was disappointing – his daughter.

A critical finding about the concept of re-entry that came from these interviews is that there are important distinctions on the extent of the involvement these offenders have every time they interact with the criminal justice system. Words such as conviction, sentenced, stint and bid each have different implications for an offender's re-entry trajectory and even whether or not the offender considers a given interaction with the criminal justice system as an incarceration or not. An offender is convicted when there has been a formal declaration of their guilt of a criminal offense. In these interviews, the men used the expression "I beat the case" to indicate that they were not convicted of the alleged crime. This means that they were able to be released without any punishments. Most of the men in this sample, though there were held in jail before their court date, believed that by beating the case, they were not incarcerated. But when they were

convicted, they were given a punishment or they were held in jail until the judge provided a punishment. This process is known as being sentenced. For these men, it was explained that if they served serious time (i.e. a sentence of 8 years or more), they would use the term "bid" whereas if they were sentenced to shorter term sentences (i.e. sentence of 5 years or less), they would use the term "stint." The distinctions of these criminal law terms also shaped how re-entry was defined for these men and their families. The men in this sample shared that re-entry was an expected process to plan and coordinate for since it was quicker to serve 3 years out of a 5-year sentence and return home; compared to those who had to serve 8 years out of a 10-year sentence and who were not going home anytime soon. These distinctions became a prominent notion when listening to the retrospective narration of these men's experiences with the criminal justice system.

Not everyone in this sample experienced multiple spells of incarceration. A few fathers wanted to distance themselves from the negative label of getting locked up a lot and even shed light on how that is the case. Participants such as Boxer Shawty, a 22-year-old father who was finishing up serving four months for V.O.P (violation of probation) had only been locked up once before his current stint. He stated:

> This my second time being locked up, and this the longest I've been locked up, so, I don't really come to jail. And if I do it's for something petty and the police just want to decide to lock somebody up. They release me the very next day, [inaudible] it's crazy and I don't count those things.

Boxer Shawty's quote highlighted a few notions about this population, the criminal justice system and even re-entry. Boxer Shawty indicated two things right off the bat that made him quite different than the other fathers in this study: first, Boxer

Shawty had only been locked up one time prior to his current stint and second, this was the longest stint that he had done. Boxer Shawty's life course experience with the criminal justice system was interesting because in my sample, the average number of times incarcerated was 7 times and the average length of incarceration was 10 months. I remember when talking with him he was very explicit and straightforward about not being perceived as one of those guys who was constantly getting locked up. Specifically, by expressing "I don't really come to jail" allowed him to distance how he viewed himself versus those other men in the study who have experienced extensive interface with the criminal justice. Every participant I interviewed in this study talked about how disappointed they were in themselves in being in their current situation ("I was so stupid," "I should have known better," and "I'm pissed off at myself"). As a result, it made sense for someone like Boxer Shawty to distance himself from those who have been locked up several times because it helps to preserve his ego and self-esteem when coping with the stigma of being locked up.

Boxer Shawty's notion that if he had been arrested and locked up, it had less to do with him engaging in behaviors that really warranted such a consequence and more with the policing that led to incarceration. Specifically, the Stop and Frisk policy allowed for sweeping up and disproportionately charging men of color for various reasons – the main mechanism behind that policy was discretion. Policing strategies with similar frameworks placed men like Boxer Shawty in a position in which they constantly experienced the police as being petty, locking them up repeatedly for conduct that held no merit, and releasing them the very next day. This constant pestering by the police was a common experience shared by the other participants, and while men like Boxer Shawty were

annoyed and frustrated, the last part of his quote "I don't count those things" showed his dismissive attitude about these petty interactions with the police. For example, fathers such as JC and Darin reported being locked up at least 20 times but Boxer Shawty reported being locked up twice while mentioning that he has been locked up many times for petty charges that "do not stick" but only considers two of these instances as legitimate incarceration. Boxer Shawty's dismissive attitude about the petty jail stints also elicited insight into how scholars should re-conceptualize "serving time" especially if individuals believed that doing an overnight or a one-day stint should not be considered "doing time" on their record or life course resume.

One of the unintentional consequences from experiencing multiple spells of incarceration is that one can become quite a savant of the criminal justice system. Take Darin's situation for example. Darin was a 32-year-old father who was serving a simple assault charge and he had been locked up 20 times before his current stint. He talked about how his extensive experience with the criminal justice system allowed him to know when he would serve time and thus prepare ahead of time of his jail stint:

> I was down the street [serving time in a detention center], and everything. I couldn't believe as that was like my fourth, fifth assault. They're gonna lock me up. But the lawyer be there for me but he got me into probation and right now and that was a relief. But I try to stay out of trouble and 4 months later, I come here. When asked what was going on for him because he was charged back-to-back for assault charges:

Oh, I knew I was going to jail. I was just in here prior to going to jail for that, so I was stacking my money. I got get out of here and get money and get on the right way.

Darin's quote starts off immediately highlighting that he had been in jail many times with least a quarter of his stints being collars for assault. Just like so many of the other participants in this study, violence and collars for acts of violence has been a consistent theme. As JC discussed earlier, when fathers were locked up as many times as he and now Darin described, they almost became a savant of the criminal justice system. Specifically, Darin knew that after receiving four to five previous convictions for assault that when he got his current charge, he had a feeling that he was going to get locked up. This accumulation of arrests and serving time for assault is exactly the kind of snowball effect, Laub and Sampson (1997) asserted, when discussing cumulative disadvantage with crime. Richardson (2003) suggested the with every stint of incarceration, the future of these men are mortgaged and further relegated to a life of crime instead of a life of prosperity. What was disheartening about Darin's situation was that he had gained experience in going to jail, being released, committing crimes again to know what charges he was going to be beat and which charges he is not going to beat. This notion was discussed with every participant in that being incarcerated and getting released multiple times created a mental gauge for these guys to know when they had to serve time versus other forms of punishment.

When it comes to other forms of punishment, Darin's point about his lawyer being there for him and getting him probation instead of jail time added to the commentary about re-entry. Most of the time when we think about re-entry, we assume

that these men are only leaving jail and prison – as if jail and prison are the only forms of punishment within the U.S. criminal justice system. There is a difference between receiving probation as an original consequence to a crime or violation versus being placed on probation after serving time in prison or a detention center. The former allows individuals to forgo being locked up. As a result, they have not been taken away from their children and community and so re-entry, especially from a physical standpoint, does not occur. The latter form of probation does have implications for re-entry since an individual is held for some time and then released back into the community under strict supervision. For example, Darin's sign of relief about receiving probation as an original consequence was understandable because being on probation allowed him to still be physically tied to his family, his child, and his community while under strict supervision. And while individuals like Darin prefer probation over serving time, the level of strict control and supervision for individuals on probation makes it very easy for them to end up in jail due to V.O. P's (violation of probations). For Darin, he violated his probation and was locked up four months after being placed on probation.

Since many men like Darin became quite familiar with the criminal justice system due to their chronic spells of incarceration, they started to become proactive and prepare themselves and their families for their re-entry back into the criminal justice system. The second part of Darin's quote in which he talked about knowing he was going to serve time for another assault (this is what caused his V.O.P. for the assault of the previous case in which he was placed on probation) is telling as he talked about preparing for serving time. Darin knew that previous convictions for assault and violating his probation would lead him back in jail. He decided to prepare for going away to jail stacking his

money to benefit his family and his child. Darin made a poor decision and landed himself in a position that took him away from his loved ones. But, he stepped up as a man, knowing the consequences were coming, and started to provide for his family during his absence. This is not to suggest that Darin should not be held accountable for his actions. Even Darin held himself accountable. And lastly, Darin talked about his upcoming release and re-entry as he focused on getting money and getting on the right way. Darin had been locked up about 20 times and strongly believed that getting money would help him get on the right track. Darin was not alone when thinking that money is the primary factors for successful re-entry, and there is some truth to needing income and resources. It was the way of getting money, as most of the participants have discussed, that tended to be problematic. Illegal means of getting money increased their chances of violating probations and leading back into prison. Darin did not talk much about the means of getting money during his re-entry, he just knew he had to get money to do better…and that was a problem in and of itself.

As mentioned before, re-entry, as a term and a concept, does not fit the experiences of young Black men who interact quite often with the criminal justice system. Boxer Shawty's quote also speaks to this point of re-entries and not just a re-entry. Boxer Shawty described his annoying experiences being locked up but hidden within that part of his above quote is that these multiple petty locked up stints created multiple re-entries for him. Even though at times he was released a day later in these circumstances, he is still physically removed from his community, from his child and his family, placed in a detention center and then released – that is also re-entry. Regardless of how JC, Darin and even Boxer Shawty conceptualized whether it is a legitimate

incarceration, their multiple run-ins with the criminal justice system across their life course also suggested that they have experienced re-entry too many times and are actually knowledgeable about what re-entry is and what to do. Re-entry is not an unknown; rather, it is anticipated as a loss and these men and their families are socialized to not just re-entry but to absence and transition as well.

Summary

In this chapter, I re-conceptualized the re-entry experiences of young Black fathers from the criminal justice system by arguing that these men do not leave prison and re-enter their communities and the lives of their family and their children only once. Repeated spells of incarceration naturally lead to repeated re-entries. As presented in my descriptive statistics, the majority of the sample in this study had prior convictions and had served time in jail/prison before their current sentence. The range for the number of times incarcerated before sentence was from 1-47. Another conceptual finding from the men in this study is that there are nuances in distinguishing what incarceration means. While scholars may have their own understanding and definition for what would be considered incarceration, the men in this study were also "scholars" through extensive involvement with the criminal justice system which enabled them the ability to articulate whether it was appropriate to label one situation as being incarcerated versus the other. Although criminal law definitions exist for words such as convictions, sentenced, stint and bid, the fathers in this sample were very adamant on using the correct label for their incarceration experiences.

Repeated spells of incarceration have increased the literacy and knowledge of the criminal justice system for many of the fathers in this study. Many of them expressed the

gratitude of not just having a lawyer but being able to advocate for themselves. This was mainly possible because of their constant run in with the criminal justice system. One of the noteworthy findings from this claim is that the fathers in this sample were knowledgeable of the law and their upcoming sentencing and knowing that some jail time would be handed down to them, would take the time before being locked up to prepare their families and their children for the upcoming absence. The level of preparation these men put their families through highlights the extent the criminal justice system has repeatedly played in the family development of these families. As a result, re-entries into the prison system and back into the community has a family effect and a child effect – though different – that end up becoming long-term problems.

Chapter 5: Coming Home to the Streets

Re-entry was not a singular experience for young, low-income Black men but was more like a revolving door experience of being incarcerated, being released, committing a crime, and then being incarcerated again. Researchers note how recidivism is inherently concerned with housing, substance abuse, mental illness and family (Travis, Solomon, & Waul, 2001; Richardson, 2003). However, the men in this study discussed that "the streets" were a critical element of chronic recidivism. Scholars use terms such as "community" or "neighborhood" when discussing where these men are being released to from jail. None of the 40 participants in this study used that term or language when discussing where they are being released back to from jail. Outside of being released back into their family and children's lives with every incarceration and release, men realized that the "streets" were the ecological space that facilitated their repeated offenses. Three themes come out of the data about the streets – *Streets Are the People in my Life, Streets as Money To Support and Streets As A Drugs.*

The Streets Are the People in My Life

When the fathers in this study talked about "the streets" and how critical the streets played a role in their chronic spells of incarceration, these men were not just referring to the physical space they and their neighbors inhabit every day. The term metaphorically speaks to the relational ties these men had with their peers and other individuals in their communities, and how these people were figures that had direct impact on committing crimes. According to Anderson (2000), inner-city Black America is often stereotyped as a place of random violence, but in fact, violence in the inner city is regulated through an informal but well-known "code of the street." Anderson (2000)

further argues that this unwritten set of rules—based largely on an individual's ability to command respect—is a powerful and pervasive form of etiquette, governing the way in which people learn to negotiate public spaces.

Most of the fathers in this sample talked about the gravitational force the streets had on their level of involvement in criminal activity. This force was dictated by what these men identified as "the code" of the streets. The code is a set of implicit and explicit norms and rules of the neighborhood that provide guidance on how these man should act, behave and think towards each other and their communities. These men discussed that the code of the streets was the underlying mechanism that bound them to these peers and criminal activity. For example, Ocho was a 19-year-old father of a 1-year-old daughter. Ocho talked about his process of change and how it was going to be difficult not to respond in ways he was used to responding when the streets call him to act:

> A lot of times I am the person they [my friends] call. That is probably 92% of the time. "Oh let's call Ocho, he is going to handle the situation right if niggas want to mess with us, he's our guy for that kind of situation." It is like you can't call on me no more, I have got responsibility, I have a responsibility now, I can't always come to your rescue. You got to man up.

Re-entry studies tend to overlook relational ties these men have in the neighborhoods that they return to after incarceration. Ocho's quote shows the complex nature of the relationship these men have with the streets. Fathers talked about one of the main qualities that define a man is responsibility. While each of these men talked about responsibility to their family, their girlfriend/wife/baby-mama, and their children, these men also acknowledged the responsibility they had to their boys (a.k.a. clique),

neighborhood, and the streets. Balancing these two sets of entities for a young Black man was be very problematic. Ocho described this phenomenon as he talked how he was the main person, 92% of the time, who his boys called when there was a problem that needed to be addressed in the streets in a violent manner. Similarly, research has shown that maintaining relationships with deviant peers in the neighborhoods can lead to violent outcomes (Lempers, Clark-Lembpers & Simons, 1989; Keenan, Loeber, Zhang, Stouthamer-Loeber, & Van Kammen, 1995). In general, an individual's friends are an important social support network. But a different code within the streets are applied to friendships and bonds to cliques when understanding young urban men's experiences with the balance of responsibility with their family and the streets. As Anderson (1994) asserts as well, the dilemma of adhering to the code was due to three unintentional consequences for not responding when the streets called: one, reputation in the streets took a hit leading to potential safety issues such as being violently targeted; second, they would become isolated if they did not respond. Third, the threat in the streets came to find these men if these men did not take care of said threat first. Each of these three unintentional consequences had critical safety issues for young men like Ocho. This begged the question on whether the code of the streets was too much for men to exert agency and "just say no" to the streets when either their lives or the lives of their loved ones could be at stake.

"The streets are my people in my life" is real for guys like Ocho as he reflected on ways that he had changed. Ocho had been known in his neighborhood and by his clique as one of the best fighters. So when it came to time to getting violent or exerting force on someone else or on another group in the streets, his number was always called. But, he

had realized that the balance of his responsibility as a man could no longer be skewed towards the streets anymore because he was a father to an 11-month old girl. Ocho seemed to understand that in order for him to be a present and involved father to his daughter, he needed to communicate to his friends very clearly that he could no longer be the gladiator that he was known to be. As other fathers have shared in their interviews, when they were in the streets they were not present in their child's lives because the drama of the streets became time-consuming, and if they broke the law, they ended up locked up and away from their children. When Ocho expressed "I can't always come to your rescue...you got to man up" he was letting his boys know that they would need to grow up and start to handle their own "beefs" in the street. Ocho made it clear that if he needed to respond to any new threats in the streets, he would only react to direct threats towards him and his family. The last line of his quote suggested that his boys did not have a choice anymore and that they needed to man up and be able to deal with their own issues as he focused on fatherhood.

For marginalized men of color like Rico I, the streets allowed and promoted attractive ways of getting enough money to sustain one's self through criminal activity. Rico I was a 27-year-old father serving a 4-month stint who knew he needed to leave the streets. But the streets were tempting when he had bills to pay:

She [his mother] always say you need to separate yourself from that neighborhood. You don't do nothing to get in trouble around here, but *I couldn't see that*. I was young. My girlfriend lives in that neighborhood. So, number 1 my environment and the people that I associate myself with will have to change. 2, I

would have to let these people know that I do have a game plan. Right before I came in, I know I wasn't working. I had a couple of hustles, you know.

Rico recalled when he was a teenager how adamant his mother was that he needed to change his environment because he was constantly getting into trouble. Sampson and Graves (1989) assert that weak neighborhood structural factors creates an inability for most of the members in the neighborhood, as Rico's mom argued, for him to maintain effective social control against criminal activity. But having a girlfriend in the neighborhood made it very hard for Rico to realistically stay away from that neighborhood. The inability to cut ties with folks who lived in problematic neighborhoods increased Rico's risk of continued criminal behavior. Just like Ocho, Rico understood that "being in the streets" and having "strong ties to the streets," that he was intimately tied to problematic communities and the people there. For men like Rico, it was not an easy process where they could cut ties and move on with their lives. For example, separating himself from the neighborhood compromised Rico's romantic relationship with his girlfriend because she lived there.

The line "but I couldn't see that" suggests two themes. One, Rico implies that he was not able to hear his mother and take her advice seriously because he was young and wanted to do things his own way. And second, it implies that when men were in the streets and embedded in the norms, values, code and conduct that came with it, it was hard to accept anything outside of that world. Many of the other participants talked about this as well. When they were in too deep sometimes it was hard for them to know or hear anything else. Breaking away becomes very hard – much harder than what Rico's mom suggested to him. As he described steps of getting out of the game, Rico sounded quite

similar to Ocho – explicitly letting his boys and the streets know that he would have change the nature of their relationship or completely disassociate themselves from these peer groups and these neighborhoods.

After being "captive" in the streets since adolescence, a handful of the fathers fully disclosed in their interviews how the streets were now holding their own children captive and shared thoughts about this unfortunate circumstance. Baby Jesus was a 32-year-old father who realized how his involvement in the streets may have played a role in his 13-year-old son being heavily involved in the streets now:

> Feel what I'm saying and you [my son] don't, we may be assuming even when I'm not around, you feel what I'm saying, bills get paid. You in the best school in of the Malboro. What else, what do you want? You got all the shoes, you got all the clothes. What are you trying to do? Who are trying to be? The streets ain't shit. Like, you don't even know who the streets is for real. The most you're going to meet at streets is what you seek so stay up in your kid lane. You feel what I'm saying? I don't know if it's the dudes that he hanging around or what. It'll really hurt, man. Not that cut, it will really hurt coming up here to see him here or in another jail cell somewhere. Because I feel like it's my fault. He trying to follow my path. I think there's more so for him, it's like monkey see monkey do. But I can't, I can't because I do it. I preach to him, I'm like, you're not me. You feel what I'm saying. You're a child.

Baby Jesus may be changing and leaving the streets alone but his role in the streets may have facilitated his adolescent son's involvement in the streets and thus lead to incarceration. Throughout the quote, Baby Jesus rhetorically talked to his son as he

questioned his son's behavior in light of the resources he has provided for his son. I found this conversation with his son interesting because I could hear the father inside of him getting angry and disappointed that his son wanted to be in the streets even he was not "fit" for the streets as a kid. The line "the streets ain't shit…like you don't even know who the streets is for real" reminded Baby Jesus of himself, that he was a man who knew the streets very well and knew the trouble the streets could cause. Baby Jesus had been incarcerated 46 times before his current stint and had been shot a few times across his life course, so he was filled with fear and disappointment. One of the underlying claims that Baby Jesus made to his son was that the streets and their illegitimate way was not a path to providing for kids. As a product of the streets since he was young, Baby Jesus was a credible evaluator on who could handle the streets and who could not. Baby Jesus evaluated his son and ruled "so stay up in your kid lane" as a way to express to his child that the streets were for grown folks.

Baby Jesus also realized how painful it would be for him as a father to visit his son in jail following in his footsteps. This fear Baby Jesus has of seeing his son offend and potentially end up in jail is real as research has shown the high degree of intergenerational transmission of offending for low-income minority families (Farrington, Coid, & Murray, 2009). Specifically, studies have found that convicted parents or incarcerated parents struggle to be "credible" agents of change in their delinquent adolescents (Murray & Farrington, 2005). I heard this particular hypocrisy over and over with other men as well. It was not a big deal for these fathers to be in the streets hustling, but they did not want to even fathom their own children being in the streets engaging in the same way. Baby Jesus was so heavily involved in the streets and so uninvolved in his

son's life, and he shamefully accepted the fact that his son might have modeled his behavior. By expressing "he trying to follow my path. I think there's more so for him, it's like monkey see monkey do," Baby Jesus was holding himself accountable for his son's actions. Even admitting that he was preaching and pleading with his son placed Baby Jesus in a hard position as a father. He knew that the streets called whether young men were actually ready and able to deal with it or not, they had better respond. As Baby Jesus thought about moving forward with his life after release, he understood that the streets would continue to suck him back in as long as his son was heading down this dangerous path.

Streets as Money to Support

Outside of the peer and relational ties to the streets, money kept these men in the streets and increased their chances of incarceration. Many of the men strongly attested that obtaining money to provide for their family was their primary motivation of obtaining money from the streets. But, there were other sources of motivations such as reputation and complications that these men discussed.

Many young adults have a resume that encompasses various activities such as volunteer opportunities, internships, and formal employment. For the men in this sample, their resumes highlighted mostly illegal activities. Every activity in the street had been based on their need, affinity, and hyper-focus on getting money. For example, Mike was a 20-year-old father who talked about the extent of his resume in the streets and how it was all about money:

> I used to sell weed. I used to go I am not going to sit here and lie to you. I used to
> go to people's houses, basically get things to make the sale. to get money. used to

go down to my dad's shop. and used to try to hustle. work on cars to try to get

money. I used to try to do everything I can so I can have money in my pocket. and

then it was like. It wasn't enough. so I had to find another way to try to get money.

Mike's quote highlighted the mental and physical focus he had to develop to

obtain money. Money was an important resource for anyone's survival. But Mike barely

finished high school and he already had an extensive record with the criminal justice

system at 20-years-old. He knew that hustling to make money was going to be his

employment. As mentioned before, being in the streets constantly became a part of the

identity for these men and one of the most important aspects in being in the streets is

"getting money." As another participant said, "when you're in the streets, it's all about

being on that grind and gettin' that bread." Work in the streets meant that money should

be accompanied with true grittiness and most of the time, the grittiness opened up the

door for these men to engage in criminal and illegal acts to the get the money. Similar to

findings from LaPorte (2016), getting money through illegal and criminal activity

romanticized and glorified the true grit much more than mainstream paths to providing.

These men experienced hard decisions when thinking about effective ways to

obtain financial resources. Rico I expressed how hard it is to obtain money without

engaging in criminal activity and risking going back to jail. He stated:

I had a couple of hustles, you know. Legitimate hustles to where I ain't have to do

nothing bad like rob people, sell drugs, stuff like that but legitimate hustles don't

always pay the bills. It may help out but not on big bills.

The last part of Rico's quote addressed leaving the illegitimate means for the

legitimate means of getting income. Rico shared that before serving his current stint, he

was not working, and money was not coming his way. He described the dilemma of trying to go legit but the money not being good enough to pay bills. This has been one of most common factors for men like Rico to re-offend during re-entry – they only formal employment these men can get with a history of spells of incarceration are seasonal, temporary, inconsistent jobs that do not pay well (Travis et al., 2001). Most of the men in this sample like Rico did understand that getting money through legitimate means relieved them of the burden and fear of getting caught up by the law and the criminal justice system. This is one of the premiere reasons why their family and loved ones were always upset when they get incarcerated – these men did know the consequences of being in the streets and engaging in illegitimate means for money, and they still continued to do it. As a result, family and loved ones found these men's involvement with illegal and illegitimate ways as very selfish since incarceration took these men away from them. Rico had a period in his life recently where he had legitimate hustles, and this was noteworthy and reassuring for him as he thought about his upcoming release. But the rubber met the road for Rico, as the other men in this study, when he realized that the legitimate means did not usually provide enough money and resources for him and his family to survive. This became the underlying problem for successful re-entry: legitimate means keep these men out of prison but they do not provide fast sufficient and resources to survive.

As many of the participants shared during their interviews, being on the grind constituted having multiple hustles on a plate in order to make enough money for the day, for the week, and for the month. Mike understood this concept as he described the extent of the hustles on his plate: selling drugs, robbing people, selling valuables, and working

on cars. The irony for Mike with having all of these hustles in an attempt get money is that the money from these endeavors were still insufficient for him – "it wasn't enough…so I had to find another way to try to get money." This involvement became a frustrating cycle of increased risk and disappointment. As a result, these men felt that they had failed as providers for their family and their children. Sadly, big pay days in the streets usually came from illegal activities that would land these men in jail, taking them away from their children and from any opportunities to continue to make money.

The hunger for money and the success it represented consumed the lives of many of the men in this sample. King was a 24-year-old father serving a few months for possession of a concealed weapon. He talked about how he dedicated his life to getting money, which led to his spells of incarceration:

> That materialistic stuff like I always kind of like, I'm not saying money hungry but when I was going like, if it didn't make me money, I wouldn't do that. My only talk was a discussion about money. If there was no money involved, a lot of times, I did not want to do things or go places or you become the same to other people if there was no money involved. That's not who I am because money is the reason I'm here now. Money is the reason why I was incarcerated all those times. Money and money.

King's materialism shaped his dedication and obsession with needing to get money. While many people tended to argue that "money is the root of all evil," King's mention of seeking materialistic things reflects the reach of globalization and consumption. The more things that a man has, the more important and/or attractive he is to others, and the more power and prestige he has. For example, in the streets, King and

other participants described how much of a big deal it was to not just have a wad of cash

in their pocket but to have a fancy ride, jewelry, fresh clothes, some J's (known as

Jordan's for Michael Jordan's shoe collection in which each of shoes cost at least $300),

and a very attractive woman. In order to understand why an attractive woman is on the

list of materialistic things it is important to view it from the perspective of "when you got

bread, girls want to be with guys who have things instead of guys who don't have shit" as

King mentioned later on in this interview.

Another important aspect of this quote from King is that he mentioned how the

pursuit of money organized his life. He only talked about money, he only socialized into

activities that were about making money, and he did not associate with people who were

not dedicated to making money. Men like King were highly obsessed with money

because they were coming from communities with high levels of poverty and having

money would give them a path out of out of marginalized positions (Promislo, Deckop,

Giacalone, & Jurkiewicz, 2010). However, King made it very clear that he was not so

much worried about getting out of the hood per se (he still wanted to live a better

lifestyle) but he was focused on the tangible materialistic things that he felt brought him

happiness. Additionally, men like King recognized that to obtain these materialistic

items, the ties they had to the streets could not be broken if they wanted to a consistent

source of income.

Fathers also found that an obsessive focus on making street money could get out

of control and lead to poor decision making. This focus could have grave consequences:

multiple spells of incarceration. King took full accountability for his experiences with

multiple spells of incarceration by admitting that the devotion to money and making

money has led him to lose many years of his life even at the age of 24-years-old. He had

been locked up 3 times prior to this current stint but had served at least two years for each

of those stints. It was even telling that as King completed this particular sound bite on

this topic, with "money and money." Street money is a real life motivation for young,

urban Black men who find their lifestyle constantly in the streets.

Money was an important resource for these men and their families to fulfill their

needs but each of these men talked about how making so much in the streets could impact

their families as well. For example, Brian was a 21-year-old father and he described how

money ruled not just in the streets but also in his family:

> There is money outside on the streets. I thought why am I going to school when
>
> there is money outside on the streets. I don't gotta go to school. With my son
>
> mother, I'm going to let that bitch know like, I'm here to see you now. Now, I'm
>
> older. I'm hip see. You need money holding. When the money disappears, you
>
> didn't even want to let me see my son.

Brian's first part of his quote is a powerful example on how the streets socialized

a young man to commit fully at a young age, in order to make money. Streets deliver

money quickly, but rewards from school take too long. As other participants made

explicitly and implicitly clear, Brian mentioned that "I don't have time for no damn

geometry and algebra shit…I'm not gonna waste my time watching other niggas getting

money and I am sittin in a classroom." As I mentioned earlier in this section, money

consumed the lives of these men and because most of these men figured that they would

not live longer past their late 20's, the earlier they can make money the better their

situation will be for their life. When mass incarceration and community violence are the

primary factors that organize their lives more than school, jobs, and marriage, making money is an urgent and immediate needs. This has meant that when asked about their involvement with both school and formal employment, most of the participants in this study responded using Sweet Brown's famous line: "man, ain't nobody got time for that."

There is a systemic twist to Brian's quote as he angrily talked about how money had negatively shaped his interaction with his son's mother. Brian expressed that his son's mother loved money just as much as he did and when the money was coming to her, she "allowed" for him to see his son. But when Brian was not able to consistently bring in the money, his son's mother would not allow him to see his son. This was an unintentional consequence of the street money phenomenon "spilling over" into the family unit in which the mother of his child held his son from him when the money was not coming in at all. Other participants who mentioned the same thing and even blamed themselves for making their baby-mama this way. They felt that because they were so consumed with money, they socialized their baby-mama to become consumed with money as well and relationship fallout might be related. In this way, the street money intervened in fragile relationships during re-entry. Either way, Brian's ability to be an involved father became challenged as money was a constant struggle for the parental subsystem.

And lastly, Brian seemed quite perturbed about his son's mother refusing to allow him to see his son and talked about having a few words with his son's mother about her behavior of regulating his time with his son. When he mentioned "I'm here to see you now…I'm older…I'm hip see," I felt Brian was talking out loud about how he planned on approaching his son's mother when he was released. The level of anger and resentment

that he expressed worried me about how this conversation may play itself out without assistance. Without resolving the vulnerable feelings towards his son's mother, he might further isolate himself from his son because the mother was upset about his attitude and his involvement.

Streets As A Drugs

One of the dangerous ways that being in the streets has led to chronic spells of incarceration for these men has been drugs. Being in streets not only involved using drugs but also symbolized the addictive nature the streets provided for men and facilitated repeated spells of incarceration. The men in this study were not able to talk about their involvement in the streets without talking about their involvement with drugs. Their involvement with drugs was with either selling or using them. Many scholars assert that drug use led these men into incarceration. But with re-entry, it seems that leaving prison and going back into the streets, means a potential re-engagement with drugs – thus creating an ongoing struggle with both staying clean and staying out of prison.

As a child, growing up in adverse circumstances can provide important context to understanding adult behaviors. A quarter of my sample went into detail about their experiences growing up with extensive drug use. James, for example stated:

It's just like, basically drugs man all drugs. My mother use drug, my father use drug, my father diagnosed with different diseases cause of it. I was like drug infested, drug house, drugs was around me so right now, as I was coming up drugs is like normal for me. So, when I got high on drugs, it was like, nothing cause my mother she was into drugs all her life when I grew up.

James' quote about drugs highlights how his current struggles with drugs was associated with his experiences growing up with a family who extensively used drugs right in front of him. To label his home growing up as drug infested was a vivid picture of the turmoil that a young child experiences in which parenting is lacking, safety is lacking, and healthy environment is lacking. Other children tend to have memorable family moments growing up with their family such as family traditions, family outings, and family vacations. But for James, family traditions, outings and vacations solely have revolved around drugs. The fact that he mentioned that "drugs is like normal for me" suggests that he did not know anything else. He was not going to be able to think about school, jobs, and relationships if his life and his purpose was dedicated to drugs. For both of his parents to be addicted to drugs and actively use in front of him, likely increased the risk that James would engage in the same behavior across his life course (Bahr, Hoffmann, & 2005). When James mentioned that drugs led to his father currently battling multiple diseases because of a long history of drug use, James shrugged his shoulders, as if it he was non-verbally admitting "well it is what it is." James' reaction reflected accountability for his father's own actions and at the same time, it underscored James' realization of how intense the struggle with drugs are when released back into the streets as he had been locked up 11 times prior to his current sentence for drug use. This trend indicates that re-entry for men like James come with an extra demon: staying clean in an environment that prides itself on the facilitation and usage of drugs – the streets (Beck, 2000; Travis et al., 2001).

While it is one thing to grow up as a child seeing drug use, it is another to start using drugs and engaging in risky behavior because of drug use. Drue was a father in this

sample who openly talked about his experiences and relationship with drugs and the impact it had on his behavior and conduct as a teenager:

> At 13, I was using drugs, selling drugs I was smoking weed, PCP, and that limited my brain – that made me go harder than I already was going in the streets, I was already going hard so they made me start doing crazy stuff. I used to hop out of the car to get donuts off the side of the street and I didn't think anything of it because I was so high I didn't know I was doing anything wrong.

Thirteen-years-old is very young for a child to be using and selling drugs like weed. But, for a 13-year-old to be engaged with a drug like PCP, that was scary to hear. According to Drue, PCP was a fun and common drug that most of these men were using and selling outside of weed. The scary thing about using drugs like PCP is that the type of erratic behaviors it causes in its users can lead to poor decision making as he described. National research from the National Institute of Drug Abuse found similar trends in the behavioral patterns of adolescents who use serious drugs like Drue – the physical and psychological health of risk-taking adolescents living in poor environments were exacerbated by using drugs (Johnston, O'Malley, Bachman, & Schulenberg, 2007). In this case, PCP made Drue much riskier with behaviors such as jumping out of the car. Just like James, Drue understood that his re-entry came with the burden of staying away from drugs such as PCP. But his re-entry becomes compromised by hanging around the same peers who are using PCP and being back in an environment that can socially and even chemically pressure him to use and get incarcerated again.

The state of being high was a constant theme for each of these participants when exploring the factors associated with their multiple spells of incarceration. Even Drue

admitted that he was not able to distinguish between right and wrong because he was high. This cloudy judgment that comes with being high can and will led to their involvement with the criminal justice system. Ninety percent of these men's spells of incarceration had to do with using drugs and being high, selling drugs, or violence associated with drugs (e.g., drug deals and gang activity).

Even though most of the participants in this sample talked about their struggle with drug use and the negative consequences that stemmed from this behavior, some fathers like Thomas shared a few success stories about times in their lives when they were clean from drug use:

> The four years of probation was great because it gave me a period of time not to get high, but I would drink. Even though I was selling drugs, I was up on my game, you know what I'm saying? I wasn't at a downfall because every time I get high, I'm at the downfall in my life. I'm like I'm going to be like you with the waves, keep my image up for the ladies and stuff like that, but it really helped me get some me time together. Like I said, I end up meeting my daughter's mom and then end up having a baby a year later. That was a good point in my life right there, that four to five years of probation was a good time for me in my life because I really was on top of my game.

When talking about their involvement with drugs, fathers distinguished between selling versus using drugs. As Thomas shared, even though he was not using he was still selling. This is a common and important distinction in the streets. Many participants have talked about how a great drug dealer is one who does not use or smoke his product. Not every guy in the streets follows this rule and end up meeting their demise. This goes to

the first part of Thomas' quote when he expressed that he was not high during these good times in his life. Second, fathers like Thomas shared that being clean came with so many positive experiences in his life. Not using drugs allowed his physical image to improve, he met the mother of his child, and he had a child a year later. Each of these fathers in this section talk about how the drugs can "play tricks on their mind" that can result in risky behaviors.

Summary

In this chapter, I explored and challenged the conceptualization of re-entry and then untangled the important contexts and processes that undermine young, Black fathers' ability to stay out of the prison system. Re-entry is the process of being released from prison into society. We should be mindful of the semantics of using re-entry when studying the prison population. In my sample, each of these men in this sample have been locked up more than once and that means that the word itself, re-entry, does not fully depict the accurate picture of what involvement with the criminal justice system looks for you Black men. Across their life course, young Black fathers actually experience multiple re-entries and every re-entry does not look the same for the same individual. For those individuals like JC, who were locked up about 20 times, he had shared that his releases back into society looked relatively different for various reasons.

Many scholars have argued all types of factors that will increase a man's odds of re-offending. These factors have included mental health and substance abuse issues, housing problems, and lack of jobs. But in this study, I found that men's involvement in the streets is the key factor in re-offending. The streets provided these men with code, structure, employment and a purpose. Their dedication led them to engage in many risky

behaviors that drove their high incarceration rates. Three themes were derived from the experiences of being the streets. The first theme, *Streets Are People in my Life*, concretized the streets into the actual relational ties these men have with friends and neighborhood associates who engage in risky and criminal activity. The fathers in this study expressed dealing with pressures experienced from these individuals since these individuals were a part of their social networks and there was a street code that dictated how these men should act and respond when these individuals needed their assistance. Unfortunately, these people and the code of the streets jeopardized the of these fathers' recidivism in past situations as the assistance needed tended to be wrapped around in criminal activity which landed them back into prison

The second theme was the *Streets as Money to Support*. This theme was derived from the constant finding from these fathers that since money is a necessity for the survival of themselves and their families, these men relied on the streets as their labor market to obtain financial resources. The reason for relying so heavily on the streets was that the men in this sample had demonstrative criminal resumes that blocked opportunities they might have had in the mainstream labor market. The fathers talked about how the streets not only provided a means to obtaining money but it provided a more appealing and faster way to obtain money than what the mainstream labor market provides for other young adults. Though the rewards from collecting money from the streets were intriguing, the likelihood in returning back to prison was much higher than if they were to collect money through formal employment.

The third theme out of this chapter is *Streets as Drugs*. The idea behind this concept was that majority of the fathers in this sample had significant struggles with

substance abuse – even dating back to their childhoods. This ongoing struggle with drugs created a cyclical pattern of incarceration and re-entry for these men during both their adolescence and their young adulthood. The streets allowed and even permitted the facilitation and the usage of drugs. Such norms have consistently challenged the sobriety of these father every time they left prison. When they were released from juvenile detention or adult lockup back into the streets, these men were quickly locked up again as being around and/or using drugs usually compromised the terms of their parole or probation.

Chapter 6: Building Reciprocal Trust Between Men and Their Families During Re-entry

Since multiple spells of incarceration come with multiple re-entries, these soon to be released individuals did not and have not experienced re-entry alone. When a person is locked up, their loved ones also experience the incarceration. One of the most important indicators for successful re-entry is the person's involvement and positive relations with their family unit (Anderson, 1990; Furstenberg, 1995; Wieling, 2014). Sampson and Laub (1997), in their prominent work, have found that the family unit can be one of the strongest protective factors to keeping these men on the right track – especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Specifically, both paternal and maternal kin have played significant roles in promoting a man's involvement with their children during re-entry. Family members can use their social capital to help these men get a job and assistance, the family can provide shelter and resources, as well as provide encouragement and emotional support (Allen & Doherty, 1996; Tripp, 2001). Although these are positive ways a family unit can support their newly released loved one, there are many complications within these family dynamics which can directly and indirectly facilitate a man to re-offend.

From a family systems perspective, a young man's involvement in the streets and the many spells of incarceration he has experienced negatively shape the family unit in various ways. Every time he gets locked up, the family takes a hit, which can lead to renewed conflict and fallout. This section fills in the missing gaps as to why this family conflict happens and how it shapes these men's re-entry. I found that the existence of complex family dynamics *before* and *during* the inmate's current incarceration also

jeopardizes a young man's family ties and his ability to use them as a protective factor against re-offending.

Family Distrust of Men Over the Long Run

When interviewing the fathers in this study, this particular concept became very prominent and relevant as they discussed family members' genuine ambivalence, resentment, and caution about the upcoming release of fathers who are inmates. In particular, men worried a lot about the level of caution their families displayed towards them during their release. For example, when talking about how his family received and treated him when he returned home soon, Donnie, a 30-year-old AA father serving time for drugs, expressed:

> I got my father saying "man, where you going to come at, who you going to live
> with" They going to want me in ways that I can't go nowhere. So I think the
> biggest beef is where I'm going to go at. I got my mother being like "alright now,
> you finessed us into believing you changed, so are you really going to do this, are
> you really going to go forward and change?" That my mother's, probably, first
> question. My father probably going to your son home.

This quote from Donnie highlighted an important dynamic men returning from jail endure with their families. Every single participant like Donnie discussed control because of their multiple "fuck ups" via their multiple spells of incarceration. Family members have systemically gone through these multiple spells of incarceration and they got fed up. It was natural for family members to become exhausted and become resentful towards their incarcerated loved one. As a result of these feelings of resentment, family members ended up imposing a certain amount of control they need over the incarcerated

individual when they were released and even complicated the housing situation for these men. This is similar to the findings (Petersilia, 2001; 2003) found with the families of men who are leaving prison in which some men are not fully welcomed back to live with them. Additionally, Donnie mentioned "they going to want me in ways that I can't go nowhere." Control was an unintentional consequence that these men are finding out about with their family members. After the first and second incarceration, the level of support and cooperation from their families were high but as the spells of incarceration piled up over time, family members were wary of continued cooperation "you finessed us into believing you changed," almost to connote that Donnie tricked them before and they were cautious about his tendency to "play games."

Due to the extreme caution with Donnie's upcoming release, there were a lot of questions family members had for their loved one. All throughout Donnie's quote, both his father and his mother asked many questions to Donnie about his plans during re-entry. The level and number of questions coming from family members symbolized not just the caution but a strong level of reassurance they needed. Questions were a way to seek information and guys like Donnie had talked about how they understand why their families questioned their motives. Many of the men in this study talked about holding themselves accountable first, knowing that their family was the second round of accountability. It is important to acknowledge that Donnie understood that this level of questioning was not coming from a lack of love from their loved ones, but from a place of emotional safety and reassurance. He recognized that every incarceration bred another experience of hurt for the family members, and family-learned defense mechanism kicked in to prevent repetitive hurt.

Donnie's parents also presented many demands of him about his upcoming release. Each participant talked about the importance of parental support but also how they felt infantilzed by their parents' level of scrutiny and monitoring. Donnie talked about how his parents needed to relate to him much differently because he was a father too and should be shown a level of respect. But even though these men were grown fathers themselves, their multiple spells of incarceration fatigued the family unit to the point where it jeopardized the respect and autonomy they received from the family – especially their parents. By asking "who are you going to live with?," Donnie's father showed his fatigue in having stepped up with support many times, but getting fooled – and not wanting to be fooled again.

Having experienced multiple problems with incarceration and illegal activity in the streets, some families allowed their tone and their actions to become offensive. For example, Boxer Shawty described potential intense interaction with his family when he left prison:

> That conversation might start off as a good conversation and end up wildly, because everybody going to be talking about something, why are you getting locked up ? why are you doing this? why are you doing that ? I told you not to do this , when you come home don't do this, don't do that , everybody is going to be trying to tell me what to do and I don't really like being told what to do, that's another reason why I don't like being in jail, because they always telling somebody what to do and you have to do it but I feel that it might I mean it might be a good little a good little talk, tell everybody to stop telling me what to do, stop

trying to run me, and stop trying to run me and dictate my life, that's what I don't like people trying to dictate my life.

Criminology research asserts that families tend to serve as a strong protective factor towards re-offending for young, Black men (Laub & Sampson, 1997). But, multiple spells of incarceration experienced by the families created a distrust in them towards these men. This level of harsh questioning reflected the level of trust and reassurance that family members was lacking. When Boxer Shawty expressed "everybody going to be talking about something," he referenced the underlying notion that family members felt as though their incarcerated loved one constantly put them through so much and one of the first reactions from the family was to provide a long retelling of past perceived slights and offenses. This dutiful retelling was the first step of family's right to accountability. There might be two reasons for this "family intervention." First, a meeting such as this one provided a cathartic release for family members to not just hold these men accountable, but to express the hurt and fatigue that they have about these men. Second, this meeting elicited information from men that allowed their families to evaluate where their minds and hearts were after incarceration.

Similar to Donnie, Boxer Shawty explicitly got upset when he talked about the level of control he felt his family exerted on him when he left prison. Questioning was appropriate, perhaps, but he became upset during the interview when he recalled how his family would commend him to "do this, not do this." Since families were not going to be fully accepting of their behavior on return from prison, communication could be problematic in re-connecting with their families. For families dealing with an incarcerated loved one, communication breaks down for various reasons. But specifically

as it relates to re-entry, communication breaks down when home is not a safe environment. Families need to be heard and understood, and these men also needed to be heard and understood. With safety for all parties, and low levels of emotion, families might set appropriate expectations and transparent boundaries. But according to Boxer Shawty, this conversation would go "wildly" and he would grow very upset because he did not want people trying to dictate his life.

Men also had negative control experiences with correctional officers in the unit, and these experiences, shaped reaction to family control as well. Nurse (2002) talked about "flashing" when men left prison and struggled with environments that mimicked the control and punishment contexts of prison. The fact that Boxer Shawty was aware of how sensitive he was about being told what to do and when to do it was admirable. Yet, the problem comes down to how he reacted during moments in which his family exerted their boundaries and expectations of him. Boxer Shawty knew of his serious anger issues and tendency to get physical and violent when pushed. As he implicitly states in his quote, he cannot "pop off" on the correctional officers, he just dealt with them in a way that did not jeopardize his upcoming release. However, he was released, he had not learned new strategies for dealing with these feelings if they were to be elicited by his family.

On the other hand, participants such as Jay, a 25-year-old father from Washington D.C., alluded to the fact that he was not worried about the ambivalence and caution they had as long as they held him accountable and supported him in order to not come back to jail:

No, for me, it was understood, don't need to be explained. I can't stay this way

and still be a bullshit, I'm changing mentally more than anything. I'm going to try

my best to stay focused, I'm going to need their support to keep me all focused.

More than anything, I'm trying my best to keep going forward and I know I can't

go backwards. When I go backwards, It's going to be a long trip next time.

Because that is gonna be a long trip. I know I'm about to come home, and this shit

is all staying back here when I come home.

Acknowledging that he knew that there were going to be a lot of boundaries and

expectations placed on him from his family, Jay showed a uniquely high level of

accountability. Many of the men in this sample described their interactions with their

family as a potential hostile intervention about changing their ways. But for someone like

Jay, he admitted that none of the talking and scolding from the family was going to be

necessary because he himself was proud of the change that he dedicated himself to while

serving time for his current stint. In this sample, only few other participants expressed

their true understanding behind their family's fatigue with their chronic spells of

incarceration and the caution about their upcoming release and that there was nothing that

they could do other than to take any backlash, adhere to boundaries and expectations and

show them through action that they have changed. At the detention center, there were

mental health and support groups like T4C (Think 4 Change) that helped inmates learn a

healthier style of thinking when in tough situations that promoted better decision-making.

MacKenzie (2006) argues that programs such as T4C promote individual responsibility to

think differently to reduce criminal activity of offenders and delinquents. Jay

acknowledged that his mental shift was the main reason why he believed that he was ready to move on with his life in a positive way.

Jay was open and willing for his family to hold him accountable from the minute he left prison. In fact, he explicitly noted that he neede it – "I'm going to need their support to keep me all focused." This was a different tone than someone like Boxer Shawty who made it clear that he would not respond well to his family telling him that to do. Jay, who had been incarcerated 4 times prior to his current stint had realized that he lacked his family's involvement in his life during previous re-entries. Instead of being problematic, Jay's family would provide this type of support – even if it meant dealing with the constant control and boundaries exerted on him from family. In order for Jay to stay "all focused" on the straight and narrow path, he was going to need his family to hold him accountable and help him work on all types of aspects of his life – school, work, fatherhood, etc. This was the price for his previous spells of incarceration he put his family through.

Jay faced a particularly tough road because any return to prison would result in serving "serious time," due to his long record of previous convictions. This particular re-entry would be a defining moment for the rest of his twenties and it had to be the last time he re-entered from jail. Jay had to be done not just with being in the streets and committing crimes but also leaving behind the jail routine and lifestyle. To both be locked up and successfully survive the prison life, one had to make behavioral, mental and psychological adjustments while serving time, and these adjustments did not translate in healthy ways when back out in society among others – especially family and children. Jay's insight that no good can come from a potential spillover effect from his demeanor

and behavior behind bars to moving forward in his life shows how important detachment from prison life could be.

Problematic Family Dynamics During Re-entry

The relationship between these men and their families during re-entry may be unidirectional in that the family is the hurt and upset party about the chronic spells of incarceration. But the participants shared that they themselves feel hurt and anger towards family members. This anger comes from the mismanagement of their current incarceration and unresolved family dynamics from the past.

While serving time, a few fathers talked about growing hostility towards their family how "stewing" was setting them up for potential problems. Edward, a 29-year-old father serving time for 4th degree burglary, expressed how when he got released soon, he would display resentment towards his family for the lack of support while serving his 5-month stint:

> I think the conversation would be, that I might take lead in that conversation because I'd ask them, "How come none of ya'll ain't came to see me," or "I could have been in the hole," or anything could have been going on, but when I come home everybody wants to, "Oh welcome back!" Like, the crazy thing is I got a short bond and I can't even get that paid and that upsets me a little bit because it seems like ya'll want me to stay away from my kids for a little while and that's not hurting me, well it is hurting me, but it also hurting them because I'm sure everybody want's their father. I just have a lot of questions for them, like "Why ya`ll didn't support me," or "You ain't even sent me a letter or, anything." Nobody

gave me no contact whatsoever, like, ya'll knew I was going to do some time.

Y'all have problems too, ya'll own a mirror, right?

Edward seemed to be very upset and hurt about his family's inaction while he had been serving time for his current stint. He was so perturbed that he envisioned himself being the one to lead the conversation. In particular, Edward seemed very offended that his family would look him in the face and welcome him back home after not providing financial and emotional support. Perhaps he would not have been as upset if his family was not perceived as "two-faced." This term is usually associated with terms such as insincere, shady, deceitful, and not consistent. Within the contexts of being in the streets and being behind bars, these men took certain codes of conduct like "keeping it real" and "no faking" very seriously and any deviation was an egregious violation of the code and came off as disrespectful.

Edward also brought up the notion that his fathering had been impacted by his family and he felt serious resentment. Specifically, he reported being disheartened that his family refused to pay for the minimal bond for his current stint. Interestingly, research has consistently found that families tend to show support for young, Black fathers through financial and emotional means and such support is associated with increasing father involvement and improving the well-being of the children (Hogan, Ling-Xin, & Parish, 1990; Taylor, Seaton, & Dominguez, 2008; Taylor, 2010). Yet, for families of incarcerated men, these families get tired and become resentful when experiencing multiple spells of incarceration, which tends to play out in the ways family members attempt to teach their loved one a lesson. Common examples included not paying bond, not bailing them out, adding nothing to their commissary or phone account, and no visits.

Other inmates who experienced similar situations had shared the same type of resentment and it leads one to suspect that, once released, these men's relational ties with their families will become compromised.

As Edward argues, the quarrel that occurs between these men and their families can have serious implications for their fathering and their children. The refusal to pay his bond kept Edward apart from his children. In response, families might argue "well, you were not thinking about being with children when you were out there doing what you was doing." This back and forth is symbolic of the nature of the relationship these men will have with their families when released from prison. From what he shared, Edward understood that being away from his children was hurtful because his children wanted to be around their father, but he decided that his family was to blame for this reference.

Lastly, "y'all have problems too, y'all own a mirror, right?" was a critical question loaded with so much emotion but it also highlighted the hypocritical dynamic that existed between these men and their family members. Even though men like Edward admitted to putting their families through a lot with their multiple spells of incarceration across their life course, these men strongly believed that their family members were not perfect and also had problems. Edward felt strongly that his family needed to look at their own problems and poor decisions as well. This sentiment was explicitly shared in most of the interviews in which these men did not want to be attacked by their family members knowing that these same individuals had many flaws.

Re-entry was not only complicated for these men and their families based on their recent current incarceration, but also due to family of origin issues dating back to growing up within their families. For example, Scott, a 20-year-old father with a daughter

described how his re-entry with his family might play out, especially since there were unresolved family of origin problems:

> I think it would look like an intervention episode, I've seen enough love, in one word that's the only way I can explain it because like I said, it was so much during the time of me growing up, me being a teenager. I would, for me, I would have to start all the way to when I was a kid, and address a lot of the issues and questions that I never had answers for growing up.

Scott believed that in order to have a successful re-entry, he would need to have a serious conversation with his family to address some family-of-origin issues that might still be relevant today. He described the scene as an episode of the reality television series focused on individuals struggling with drugs and the impact it had on those around them. In this television series, family and friends had an intervention in which they confronted their loved one struggling with drugs as a group in which they provided boundaries, expectations, and even ultimatums if the struggling addict did not agree to attend treatment. When Scott compared his situation to an intervention episode, I thought about his family and the mother of his child sitting around him engaging in the same manner as loved ones do in the intervention episode. In the series, reaction of the identified patient can range from positivity such as acceptance for treatment, to negativity such as denial and isolation. Scott seemed to feel that although it may look similar to an intervention episode that his ties with his family were positive and would be filled with love during re-entry – a notable memory he actively recalled dating back to his childhood.

Scott's quote illustrated how family of origin issues, especially those that are unresolved and not addressed, come back over time and have implications for current and

future relationships. As a mental health professional, specifically as a marriage and family therapist, I was impressed with his connections about potential family problems that may have systemically shaped his young adulthood experiences. Research shows that unresolved family-of-origin issues manifest into unhealthy coping strategies, poor maintenance of romantic relationships, parenting problems, and intrapersonal conflicts (Bowen, 1974). Scott was only 20-years-old and though he was an adult, he was very young and still close to his childhood and adolescent experiences just based on his chronological age. By mentioning that "I have to start all the way to when I was a kid, and address a lot of the issues and questions that I never had answers for growing up," Scott identified some relational, individual, emotional, psychological stress and conflict over experiences with his family.

Scott specifically brought up unresolved and conflictive feelings and thoughts regarding his relationship with his own father as well:

> If I had a conversation with my dad, I would have to jump back to when I was 13 and understand why would, in the class that we were, even with me, me being so young and you being so old, why do we, I feel like we're not even, I always said that growing up, that he wasn't even my dad, I just feel like I was a standing for the wrong man, that he was just tolerating me for some years until I was 18, and that's a lot of questions that I would bring up. So it would look like a Jerry Springer show.

He was upset talking about his father and their relationship when he was growing up. He talked openly about how complicated the father-son relationship can be over time, especially when sons reach physical and emotional maturation. Scott expressed that his

father treated him poorly when he could not fully control his son anymore, which still affected Scott to this day. It was symbolic of the nature of his relationship with his father that he did not feel that his dad treated him like he was his biological son. I could remember the disappointment and resentment on Scott's face as he talked about this dynamic with his father. Roy (2006) found that one of the ways that young, Black men conceptualize their fathering patterns is by recalling and making sense of their relationships with their own fathers. Scott knew how to be a better father to his daughter, but it was in his best interest to work on the unresolved issue with his dad, confronting his father about these unresolved issues "like [on the] Jerry Spring show," complete with all the drama, fighting, and hostility. Like Scott, other participants reflected on how unresolved relational dynamics from their family of origin may have played a role in their current situation, and also how their own family members had problems that would shape the success of their re-entry back into family life.

Summary

This section attempted to peel back the different layers behind the potential dynamics these men experienced with their families during re-entry. The quotes and situations from the fathers in this section highlight that the relationships that they had with their families not only reflected the current state of the relationships these men have with their family. In addition, these quotes and situations showed that multiple spells of incarceration over the years wore down the family to the point where they explicitly and implicitly isolated their incarcerated loved one. The consequences of such a gesture from the family unit ended up communicating the same message to all these men in this study but the way it was received and handled was much different.

Many in the men talked about their social support system being primarily derived from their families. Some men admitted that the caution and resentment from their families was understandable and well-deserved. This group of men understood that having an extensive criminal record communicated to their families that they were selfish. As a result, they were well aware that their family was ready to receive them filled with tough love, cautious compassion, and emotional ambivalence. On the other hand, there were fathers in this study who were very upset with the treatment they were receiving from their family while serving their current stint (e.g., lack of communication, no money on commissary, no visits, etc.).

The data in this section also highlighted how unresolved family of origin issues impacted young men as they transitioned into adulthood, and how these same family issues, if still unresolved, would create problems for their upcoming release from prison. This spillover effect of young men who grew up in potentially toxic homes with their families took on new relevance as they had their own children. While a few fathers talked about needing to address and confront certain family members, each father in this study realized that it was not going to be a completely positive homecoming from prison and that worried them significantly.

Chapter 7: Resolving Baby-Mama Drama During Re-entry

In addition to family members, the mothers of their children have a very strong influence on fathers, and can shape what fatherhood may look like during re-entry. Fathers realized during their incarceration that things have changed between them and their child's mother (McCubin, Dahl, Lester, & Ross, 1975; Hunter, 1986; McDermott & King, 1992). As a result, when they are done serving time, the changes of the child's mother may either benefit these men as fathers or complicate their ability to be fathers. The literature talks about how many factors between the man and the mother of his child will shape the romantic relationship, the co-parenting relationship, and the welfare of the child (Nurse, 2002). During re-entry, men are on probation for the most part. With this strict form of supervision over their heads, newly released men encounter issues with the mother of their children.

"Maternal gatekeeping" (i.e. behaviors and beliefs that inhibit a father's involvement) can negatively impact the co-parenting relationship (Allen, & Hawkins, 1999). Fathers who have been incarcerated and not in their children's daily lives, have to re-establish their parenthood, and gatekeeping can create further hostility, further alienating them from their children. In this study, fathers were concerned about their actual ability or desire to be in their child's life but more worried about whether they would get a chance to show their dedication to their children. Three critical themes emerged in this data as men explored how re-establishing parenthood will have to go through the mother and the difficulties with her ahead.

When the Baby-Mama is Fatigued

 As seen with the father's own family, the mother of his child has also experienced and endured multiple spells of incarceration from risky conduct in the streets. This concept came to me as I consistently heard over and over about each father talk about how the mother of his child was also getting fatigued with his chronic spells of incarceration. Men discussed how these mothers felt abandonment both as a partner and a parent, discouragement about their future, and disgust with their poor decision-making.

For fathers such as Malik (30-years-old), there was a strong sense that one of the primary ways that his child's mother plans on holding him accountable for his actions moving forward when released is to make sure he is actually congruent with his words and actions:

> My baby mother will probably tell me, actions speak louder than words. I could tell her something but she just want to see. Because she told me a lot she thinks I'm just saying I'm changing because I'm here, I'm locked up. "You're just saying that because you're locked up now." She want to see it instead of me say it. That's what most of them want to say, I want to see you before I say it.

Malik was sure that the mother of his child was so fed up with his multiple spells of incarceration that she was not interested in listening to whatever he planned on telling her about when he was released from prison. For mothers, actions are more important than words; as Malik noted; "she just want to see." When men said things and did not act in accordance, the men were perceived as incongruent, untrustworthy, and not credible. Malik illustrated this by further noting: "she thinks I'm just saying I'm changing because I'm here, I'm locked up." But this dismissal took on greater salience when we note that Malik has been locked up seven times previously, and that she was not "buying what

Malik is selling." If Malik's baby-mama was not interested in him telling her what he would do different, it underscored that she was fed up because there was significant trust and hurt that needs to be resolved.

Malik asserted that he "is changing;" and this was a common phenomenon among fathers in this sample. While change is inevitable, change also comes about through experience and actions, and for Malik, he was genuinely telling his child's mother that he has changed and that he was a completely different man. These fathers have talked about changing behaviorally, mentally, spiritually, and psychologically. The fathers also understood the relational implications for the growth and change that they been going through while serving time. Fathers understood they would need to be a bit more congruent because they had not held up their end of the bargain in the past. Being fed up with his multiple spells of incarceration, it was going to be hard for Malik's baby-mama to truly believe that Malik had changed, especially to the degree to which he believed he had.

Similarly, fathers like Mike (20-years-old) mentioned that congruency in words and actions had to be matched by consistency with mothers as well:

I feel like the only way she would be secure enough to feel like I'm in my daughter's life is only she could see that I want to change or she sees that I change. That's the only way. Show her that I changed like me having a job, me basically like, me not doing the same things that I was doing before. She seeing that I was trying the first time and then it all turns out I got locked up and she basically was over there like this whole time, you weren't trying or this whole time that you sitting here doing what you were supposed to do but you got

yourself in a situation again. You got yourself in a situation that you wanted to get yourself into.

Maternal gatekeeping should not be conceptualized as a vindictive way that mothers prevented fathers from involvement with their children. There are times in which the risks of the father's behavior and presence is more detrimental to the child's well-being. Multiple spells of incarceration, as experienced by Mike and his loved ones, can be a traumatic experience for children, as well as parents. The phrase "be secure enough" suggested that his multiple spells of incarceration and his strong ties to the street had made her feel insecure - especially emotionally insecure. Feelings of hurt and disappointment, experiences of rejection and abandonment, lack of trust and consistency and poor communication tended to be the underlying mechanisms that fueled one partner to feel emotionally insecure with the other. In this case, Mike understood that his child's mother felt emotionally insecure and was fed up with what he has put her through. Since he had been the main source of her current emotional state, his only chance of fatherhood was to reconcile with her as best as possible.

Mike described the specific changes he would need to show his child's mother if she was going to allow him back into his daughter's life. The first thing that came out of Mike's mouth was getting a job. Getting a job was one of the most common ways in which these fathers moved forward. But it was also one of the common ways each father described how they could show the mother of the child that they were serious. I assumed that the children's mothers needed financial assistance from the fathers. On the contrary, from what fathers described, mothers were more concerned about the father being off the streets, being productive, and making money the legitimate way – all three factors

associated with lowered rates of recidivism. Even Mike admitted that getting a job and not going back to fights and drug use would be clear indicators of his changed ways.

Fathers in this sample talked about how a real man took responsibility for his actions and why they were in their current predicament. Mothers knew clearly that, as Mike said, "You got yourself in a situation that you wanted to get yourself into." These mothers were critical of father's explanations and held them accountable for past transgressions. Research on co-parenting patterns with Black couples find that less cooperation in the co-parenting relationship is associated with low levels of father involvement (Sobolewski & King, 2005; Carlson, McLanahan, & Brooks-Gunn, 2008). Less cooperation is reciprocal – the mother is fatigued of the multiple spells of incarceration and less likely to cooperate and the father gets perturbed by this and becomes less cooperative as well. Mike, like other fathers in similar situations, realized that his child's mother was fed up and did not want to go through incarceration again. As a result, men also recognized that mothers were going to talk and treat them any kind of way. Men had two reactions: they accepted it as they acknowledged "I put her through too much," or blamed her ("man, she's no angel").

Melvin (24-years-old) discussed how he had brought so many problems into his child's mother's life because of the multiple spells of incarceration and how moving forward, the child's mother would put him through the ringer:

> For her the only thing I would have to bite bullet to hear all the little bullshit she got to say, with the yelling and screaming and hollering, and sit there and taking the criticism, you know, I am saying she gonna give me and then just let her know that I ain't even trying to hate her, I'm trying to be in my daughter's life. Whatever

you need me to do, we are going to do it, whatever it takes, whatever you want to do, I'm willing to do it.

Melvin's quote highlighted the level of reactivity that his baby-mama was going to have when he left prison and re-engaged her after spending three months in jail. He expected her to yell, to scream, and to holler at him and he conceptualized these behaviors as something that he had to put up with because of the number of negative situations he has put her through. Research asserts that cooperation in a co-parenting relationship is critical for father involvement that Melvin seemed to conclude that by allowing his child's mother to have this reaction was necessary (Fagan, 2007; Riina & McHale, 2014; Teubert & Pinquart, 2010; Van Ergeren, 2004). Melvin felt that her intense behaviors were expected and natural, but more importantly, beneficial for both of them to move forward as partners and co-parents. It was almost as if Melvin knew that lashing out and expulsion of the hurt and pain was going to be necessary. Most fathers in this sample made it clear that they would not tolerate anybody disrespecting them, – especially their baby-mamas. As a result, these conversations usually ended up becoming very hostile on both ends and creating further problems. Melvin, in contrast, seemed to understand that this hurt was natural. He was very calm and relaxed about the idea of his baby-mama "going off" on him and did not express any threat to his masculinity (as other fathers expressed). By handling this situation this way, Melvin understood that he lost as a father by not re-establishing ties with his baby-mama regardless of the treatment.

I was very intrigued when Melvin mentioned that he wanted to let his baby-mama know that he was not trying to hate her, but his intentions were to get into his daughter's life. Melvin, though, wanted to make it clear to his baby-mama that he was not going to

yell or scream at her at all because he had a lot of love for her as a person and as the mother of his daughter. He even admitted that the significant resentment, not hate, that he felt for his baby-mama went away when he attended a few workshops that are offered in the jail units like anger management. Moreover, urgency and plea for wanting to be a father again to this daughter was evident, although he knew that most of re-establishing his parental ties to his child was not solely up to him.

The last part of Melvin's quote seemed to be his olive branch to his baby-mama and a push for compromise on his part. It is admirable that Melvin made it clear to his baby-mama that he wanted to work things out together with her and that he knew that he had to do things much differently for them to move forward. He took accountability not just for past transgressions but for the present and future, he's willing to go at the pace of his baby-mama and with whatever she wants to do. This notion of being a "yes man" seems to be an unintentional consequence of Melvin's history of putting his baby-mama through so much turmoil that his last attempt to be in his daughter's life was to be compliant with whatever his baby-mama wanted and needed.

Unresolved Conflict

Another critical theme that came up for a majority of the fathers in this study was that the extensive and also volatile relationship history between these men and the mothers of their children. Each father in this situation shared some genuine concern that maternal gatekeeping had less to do with their ability and desire to be fathers, but more about, unresolved experiences and feelings stemming from actual romantic relationships.

For example, Boxer Shawty went into great detail about the complex, fiery relationship he has with the mother of his child and how this relationship had been a major facilitator in him going to jail:

In other words, we had gotten into an altercation one day while she was pregnant. She said some smart stuff out of her mouth, and I tapped her and I just smacked that shit down, I didn't want to do nothing, but she tried to swing on me. And I avoided her. I grabbed her arms and her legs, and you know, she did what she did, I did what I did. She snapped off. That was the end of it right there. The police report was wrote, all that. It was just, kept taking me back for court, the break up, started talking to another nigga, it's just nuts. She get wild out there and she, I don't really want to really talk about all that though. It's just crazy, but she a wild one. But I love her though. And I've had a lot of wild dreams about her while I was in this joint. A lot of wild dreams. I asked God for a sign, my future woman, every time I dream about her. Every time.

Violence has always been a sensitive and complicated pattern – especially within romantic relationships. In this quote, Boxer Shawty recalled a time when he and his baby-mama got into a physical altercation, during pregnancy, which had more critical ramifications. Boxer Shawty had almost a stoic, "I don't care," look on his face, which suggested to me he was aware that she was pregnant. Like the majority of fathers, he struggled with emotional regulation and reactivity. Many of these men talked about having a lack of control, but more specifically, on anger as a "fire within that grows overtime." These sound bites are similar to findings from research that indicated that involvement with the criminal justice system can increase the odds of domestic violence

in men towards their female partners (Hilton, Harris, Popham, & Lang, 2010). I have to note that violence was unfortunately not only a part of life in the streets but also in their romantic relationships. With full involvement in streets and without healthy socialization, these violent reactions may spill over to their romantic relationships. For example, Boxer Shawty's rationalized his violence because she "said some stuff out of her mouth," which coincides with the constant talk about respect in the streets. There were significant consequences in the streets for not addressing disrespect, and when it happened with relationships, men handled it with a as response as well.

According to many fathers, both they and their children's mothers exhibited unhealthy behaviors and conduct. Boxer reported that he and his child's mother were both violent towards each other, in fact, he recalled 4 other times he and his child's mother were in a full blown physical altercation. Boxer also recalled police involvement, unfaithful cheating on her part, court visits to address relationship violence. As Boxer talked, he grew more ashamed, and finally did not want to continue talking about his relationship and the fire that existed.

Similarly, Lucky, a 31-year-old father of a 7-year-old girl, gave an account about the situation that led him in jail for violation of probation as it involved an altercation with the mother of his child. After leaving the house to smoke weed because of a violent altercation with the mother of his child about weed, Lucky recounted what happened when the mother of his child called the police on him knowing that he had weed on him:

> When I saw the police pull up to me, I threw the weed down on the ground and they arrested me, wait, they ain't arrested me, detained me. Took me back to the scene before with some of our apartment windows open and she was like, "Lock

his bitch ass up. lock his ass up, I said lock his ass up he violent." He broke my fucking window and all this and I was like, that was a fucking accident man. You see what I'm saying? And I knew she was going to act like that because this all stem on some fucking weed.

Lucky was very intense as he recalled this particular time with his child's mother. Lucky had a lot of "venom for this heifer." The amount of expletives used to describe his child's mother was very extensive. As he talked about their relationship, I could sense the anger and hurt on his face and in his body language. In this quote, Lucky recalled a moment in which his child's mother called the police after arguing about marijuana.

Lucky was quite adamant that he was not arrested but he was detained. In detention, the police only need *reasonable suspicion* to stop an individual, and a reasonable person would feel as though they could leave in a short amount of time. This timeframe can vary a bit based on the circumstances, but the U.S. Supreme Court has held that 20 minutes or so is a reasonable timeframe for detaining someone. For the police to arrest an individual, law enforcement officers need *probable cause*. An arrest is characterized by the idea that a reasonable person would not feel free to leave due to the actions of the law enforcement officers. This usually means that the officers take the individual into custody.

With the behaviors of his child's mother such as calling the police, yelling out of the window for the police take him, the emasculating words she used to describe him ("bitch ass"), and providing a strong plea for him to assure his arrest, I get a sense of an intense history between these two individuals. Research in the field of couple's counseling argues unresolved conflict between the partners that stem from poor

communication, lack of trust, and poor problem solving skills accumulate to the point where the perception of one's partner (as Lucky perceives his child's mother) becomes very negative (Stanley, Markman, & Whitton, 2002; Stackert, & Bursik, 2003). Moreover, Lucky, in one of our fatherhood group sessions went into detail about how he despised the mother of his child because when she got pregnant, she told him that she did not want to have the baby. He gave her money for an abortion and she decided not to get the abortion and use his money for other things. All of these prior interactions make "the backstory" of re-entry more significant, perhaps, than the events at hand.

These two quotes highlight unhealthy patterns of interaction with fathers and the mother of the children. Relational issues such as domestic violence, infidelity, and drug use contextually played a part in these interactions, but each father throughout their interview talked about how nasty and intense things had always been with the mother of the child. I actually walked out of each of these interviews thinking very hard about the various interventions that may have helped these couples all throughout the relationship. Situations such as these in which the birth of the child started out with lack of trust and hostility make co-parenting and being a father quite problematic.

Staying Out of the Way

The third theme that came out of analyses of baby-mama drama was the potential for fathers to stay out of involvement with their kids temporarily, in the best interest of the children. Their child would avoid ongoing pain and hurt due to men's absence and need for growth, or due to the involvement of other male figures in their lives.

For example, James (II), a 30-year-old father who had been incarcerated 12 times since 17 discusses how he's come to realize that his son was better off without him for right now because of a lack of maturity:

> Uhm, they [family] said I can't fully change. I really want to change and become a different man because of my child's situation. At first I knew that I was selfish before I had a child. Then, everything I did only affected me. Now, I do know everything comes back down to my son. I think about the way I grew up and I don't want him to grow up like that. So, I felt like change has to happen even though there's things I still struggle with at that moment. And I now know the best choice for my son is for him to be without me.

In this quote, James realized that he does not have the full confidence from his family and his child's mother about his recent changes. He strongly felt that he had changed in many ways and that his motivation for this change had been for his son. James recalled over his history of being locked up 12 times that his son's emotional well-being had declined. His child's mother had made it clear that James had been the reason for her child's positive demeanor changing. Most of the men in this study explicitly dedicated their change to their children and wanted to be better fathers to children. Men in our fatherhood discussion groups consistently described a father as a man who is selfless and who puts his children's needs before his own. But James utilized a common adjective describing the lack of fathering that they themselves displayed over their life course – selfish. Men, who realized that they were selfish in the streets and getting locked up faced a hard realization that their families, especially their children, have suffered the most because of these extracurricular activities. In this way, mothers acted in

strategic ways to protect both her and her child's ego from further hurt. These feelings became more pronounced when these men tried to conceptualize what being an involved father looked like. Fatherhood research tends to use time spent together, quality of father-child relationship, and investment in paternal role as indicators of father involvement (Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004; Marsiglio, 2006). But a quote like James II highlights that consistently being physically away from his child due to multiple spells of incarceration has shaped not only father involvement but it has also created intrapersonal feelings of shame and disappointment on his father identity as well.

While being locked up was associated with many negative outcomes for men who are fathers, there is some acknowledgment that being behind bars gave much needed time for these men to slow their lives down, to build order and structure, and to reflect about their lives. James thought a lot about his upbringing and how it was riddled with so much pain and hurt due to abandonment by his parents. He seemed to understand that the life he had been living for most of his 30 years had unintentionally hurt his only child. The shame on his face when he mentioned "the way I grew up I don't want him to grow up" was very vivid. I felt it was in that moment during his interview, he realized that every stint of incarceration had done the exact opposite of that gesture. The urgency of this change seemed to be very pressing when it came to how he planned on re-establishing his parenthood.

Lastly, James made an important decision as he thought about leaving two weeks from this interview date – that he was not mature and capable of being an involved father and that his son as of right now was going to be better without him. This seemed to be that symbolized his growth as a man and as a father. Many people would be upset and

mad about his decision to stay out of his son's life, but I was not shocked nor was I judgmental about this decision. Without the mental spiritual, and behavioral changes necessary to being a father right now, he might create a self-fulfilling prophecy of his failure – jumping back into his child's life feeling inept, doing a poor job, feeling bad about himself, being criticized by loved ones, and perhaps landing back to the streets. James also made it clear that he did not plan on being out of his child's life forever. There are many situations in which young, low-income men "ghost" or "knife" themselves off from loved ones, from their neighborhoods, etc., to get their minds right. Having to let go of fathering, for men like James was not an easy decision and actually come from a well-intentioned mindset.

Similarly, Maurice, a 32-year-old father finishing up a 4-month stint for V.O.P., shared the process of making the hard decision to give up his paternal ties to his child to his child's mother's new beau:

> You know what I'm saying? I can't have any beef with her no more, so we're cool. I'm good. You know what I'm saying? I don't, you mean I don't even thing that's like a problem no more. We were on the same page with that. She might have felt like didn't want to deal with me because she's been doing me a favor. I've done all you all don't even deal with you neither but, the thing that I can give her credit for is that she still try to insert my daughter in my life even though she's trying to please main man at the same time like, I don't want to ruin my relationship by trying to insert you in our life because she got a good father right now and I'm like that's cool. I ain't mad. You know what I'm saying? I can't be mad because I've been gone. He is her father. I can't take that away from him. I cannot take that

away from that man. I cannot say get away from them. So you know, I can't be mad at that.

It was clear for Maurice, and other fathers, that they did not plan on engaging in more arguments and hostility with their children's mothers anymore. Maurice and his child's mother had been talking and had gotten to a place where they both had outgrown the poor communication and unhealthy patterns of interactions that they have displayed since meeting in high school. For these poor dynamics to no longer prevent them from working on the co-parenting relationship was quite admirable. The damage that had been done to them and their children's mothers seemed irreconcilable and continued to plague their co-parenting and fathering duties. Maurice seemed comfortable and at peace knowing that his child's mother was putting in effort to making sure he was involved in his daughter's life as much as possible. Maurice even admitted that his daughter's mom went out of her way to do him favors for the sake of their daughter and he acknowledged her sacrifice to not just think about her own feelings and use his daughter in an unhealthy way between the two of them.

Maurice's situation, like a few of the other fathers in this sample, was complicated with the presence and involvement of his child's mother's new beau. The "new man" with the child's mother usually brought much hostility and anxiety to the family system, especially with unresolved feelings, poor boundaries, and potential conflict between two males competing to be in charge. She clearly decided that Maurice's return would jeopardize her new relationship, and Maurice accepted this. Many fathers in re-entry realized that time had not waited for them; people's lives had moved on. In a

way, fathers calmly "passed the torch" in their child's best interest, relinquishing paternal duties to their children's mother's current partners.

To be considered a "good dad," most families and parents expect that men need to be present in their children's lives. Yet, research has found that in unmarried men of color, claiming their fatherhood becomes challenged when the relationship between the parents' end, and when the mothers of their children move on to newer romantic relationships with other men (Edin, Tach, & Mincy, 2009). Maurice felt that he had not been doing a good job and that if another man was doing a better job, he should fall back. He stated, that "I can't take that away from him…I can't say get away from them…I can't be mad at that." Maurice had thought long and hard about it being unfair to his daughter to remove her from this man's life, and to this man, to remove him from her life after putting so much time and energy into a child not even his by birth. But, there were men who felt that they would never fall back regardless of any potential hurt or lost that they brought into their children's lives. In discussion groups, fathers commented, "I would never let another man take my place with my child" or "a real man does not leave his child with another man." These typical sentiments made Maurice's perspective even more astonishing, but perhaps more realistic, in the face of many challenges to relationships during re-entry after incarceration.

Summary

Every father in this study expressed not having fears or worries about when they leave the detention center. Yet, the only situation that they all had a strong concern about was their relationship with their child's mother and how that was going to shape their fathering during re-entry. As mentioned before, many of these men did not question their

dedication to fathering their children, but they were fully aware that much control for re-establishing their ties with their kids lied heavily with their child's mother. Three consistent themes came up in this chapter.

Families were not the only individuals in these men's lives who were resentful and cautious about the selfishness displayed by these men with their constant lifestyle of trouble and spells of incarceration. Children's mothers had also been fed up. Fatigue with these men and their antics led some women to demand more of these men during their re-entry to protect themselves from the hurt they experienced from the past. Values of sacrifice, congruency and consistency were main points stressed from these women to these men as they re-entered society.

One of the most concerning themes out of this section was the fact that these men have very volatile relationships with their child's mother. The fact that there was extensive history of conflict between these men and these women made it more likely that unhealthy dynamics would re-emerge during re-entry. As a couple of the fathers discussed, these unhealthy dynamics had also played a significant role in these men being locked up and taken away from their children.

The majority of the fathers in this sample were leaving prison to become re-engaged in their children's lives. But there were a few fathers in this sample who talked about letting go and removing themselves out of their children's lives. Issues such as the child's mother having a new partner, lack of maturity as a parent, and a need for knifing off were common factors. These factors had led some fathers to contemplate and even start the process of breaking their paternal ties to their child as a sign of commitment to their children's well-being.

Chapter 8: Discussion

Summary of Findings

The focus of this dissertation was to provide an in-depth examination of the processes and contexts young Black men in urban neighborhoods experience in their fathering after experiencing some form of incarceration. As previously stated, young Black men are more at risk for experiencing high levels of incarceration, and because such institutions complicate their ability to be involved in their children's lives, these men and their families are more at-risk for further adverse outcomes. In this study, 40 self-identified African American fathers, between the ages of 18-33 years old, were interviewed in a re-entry program at the Prince George's County detention center. This study used qualitative methods and life course perspective to examine young Black men's narratives about their involvement with the criminal justice system and how it shapes their paternal identities over their life span. Additionally, this study examined the implications of mass incarceration on young Black fathers as they transition to adulthood with the hope of informing policy, programming, and practice regarding this sub-population.

The study problematizes our conceptualization of re-entry. Each of these men in this sample have been locked up more than once, and therefore, each father had multiple re-entry experiences as well. The repetitive cycle of chronic spells of incarceration leading to chronic re-entries means that the theoretical conceptualization of re-entry needs critical evaluation. Beyond federal, state, and local policies, research has asserted that there are many factors associated with the chronic spells of incarceration of young, African American men. Men are tied to the criminal justice system through ties to the

streets. The streets offer these men with a distinct lifestyle that provides resources and identity. Their dedication to the streets has tended to lead them to engage in many risky behaviors that drove their high incarceration rates. Three prominent themes about the streets shed light on trials and tribulations that commonly arise during the transition to adulthood for these young men.

First, these fathers expressed true desire to leave the streets, to focus on being a better man but those close relationships with peers in the streets did not allow these men to leave so easily. Fathers in this sample discussed the internal and external conflict with breaking ties with the streets for a life without crime. Second, money and the need to provide was the main motivator for high involvement in the streets. The fathers in the sample make it very clear that because of a lack of education, their only true way of making money is through illegal means. Finally, some fathers were deeply embedded in significant struggles with either using and selling illegal substances.

Incarcerating young, Black men, also systemically locked their families in the criminal justice system as well. Although research suggests that families may serve as a strong protective factor for these men to prevent them from re-offending, this study found that long-standing reciprocal conflict and tension between these men and their families can actually isolate and destabilize them. The men in this study asserted that family members showed extreme caution and higher levels of resentment due to chronic incarceration, all of which complicated and threatened successful re-entry. Three thematic narratives arose out of the drama these men encountered with their families during re-entry.

Family members typically provided returning fathers with tough love, cautious compassion, and emotional ambivalence. A few of the fathers empathized with this interaction pattern, after realizing that their chronic spells of incarceration have had unintentional consequences that spilled over to their family members. On the other hand, some fathers struggled with their own feelings of resentment and hurt from how their family handled their current stint (e.g., lack of communication, no money on commissary, no visits, etc.). Lastly, pertinent and unresolved family of origin issues came up for many of these men in this sample.

Fathering experiences of young, African American men who are released from prison are predominantly shaped by the mothers of their children. Similar to the experiences with their own families, these men's chronic spells of incarceration unintentionally tied their children's mothers to the consequences of long-term repeated stints of incarceration as well. As a result, mothers developed resentful and negative attitudes, and a sense of distrust. These complicated dynamics between fathers and mothers jeopardized the potential for romantic relationships to stabilize and grow, and then further reduced their involvement with their children to intermittent fathering. Research recognizes that a shift in power between partners during re-entry is important, but three additional narratives from this study provided insight into challenges for fathers during re-entry.

Children's mothers were vocal about the fatigue that they expressed with chronic spells of incarceration. Being fed up with these men and the antics led some women to set stringent expectations, a cautious way to protect themselves from the hurt they experienced from the father's past interactions with criminal justice. It is clear that fathers

and mothers often have little productive ground to build a relationship of support, especially with a history of violence and conflict. Men in this sample admitted that a share of the spells of incarceration stemmed from the volatility of the relationship with mothers and expressed anger that "baby-mama drama" took them away from their children. Lastly, a sizeable sub-sample of this study abdicated their paternal roles with their children because the mothers had moved on with a new beau, men admitting to a lack of maturity as a parent, or they felt a potential need for "knifing off" (Maruna & Roy, 2007), everything associated with their past and criminal lifestyle – even at the risk of leaving their children. These critical constraints regarding relationships with mothers tended to place them in a world of uncertainty as it pertains to their fathering experiences.

Theoretical Contributions

Re-entries

Given these findings, there are notable theoretical contributions to the scholarly research on mass incarceration and Black fatherhood. A portion of individuals in the U.S. may experience incarceration at some point in their life, and if so, they may only experience such an event once in their life. But, marginalized social groups such as young, Black men have the highest life course rate of not only experiencing incarceration but experiencing chronic incarceration (Johnson, n.d.). A critical aspect of the prison industrial complex is the proliferation and maintenance of prisons for profit. The premise is to have every cell filled with a body at any given moment, creating a "churning process" in which individuals leave and come back (Barish, Duvernay, & Averick, 2016). In order to continue this churning operation, policies and systemic factors exert control over individuals who leave prison (e.g., probation) and place them at significant

vulnerability for returning to prison. Unfortunately, due to higher rates of recidivism, young, Black men have become the primary "cash cow" for the prison industrial complex (Alexander, 2012). This trend has called for significant attention to re-conceptualize the theoretical concept of re-entry – especially for young, Black men.

As mentioned before, re-entry is defined as the process of leaving prison and returning to society. All prisoners will experience re-entry regardless of their release or form of supervision, if any (Bushway, 2006). Both prisoners who are released on parole and those who are released when their prison term expires experience re-entry. From a conceptual standpoint, the word "re-entry" focuses on a one-time process. This term and concept of re-entry is appropriate primarily for individuals who have experienced incarceration only once in their lifetime. But, young, Black men's chronic spells of incarceration across their life course means that these men are re-entering society and their communities multiple times. As a result of this trend, the appropriate term that accurately captures the experience of young, Black men is not re-entry – *it's re-entries*!

The fact that young, Black men actually will experience re-entries means that they are vulnerable to re-offending. In this study, the average number of spells of incarceration was seven times. This number suggests that on average, these men have re-entered society 6-8 times. Research has found that most Black men, when rearrested, return to prison for new crimes (Marbley & Ferguson, 2005). In this study, the opposite was found. Most of the rearrests for the men in the sample were not for new crimes but for violations of probation such as missing appointments with probation officers, failing to be present or participate in drug tests, etc. Additionally, it was found that although these men had already experienced re-entry multiple times, there was significant variation among these

re-entry experiences across their life course. For example, the re-entry experience from the juvenile justice system at 16-years-old looked quite different than re-entry experience at 22-years-old for an African American father like Malik. Specifically, he talked about how school was still an available option encouraged by the system and his family at 16-years-old, but when he was released from prison at 22-years-old, his perceived prospect for schooling seemed grim. His age shaped the resources available and his connection to institutions such as school during two distinct re-entry experiences. This study found that every re-entry experience involved different protective and risk factors that shaped these fathers' vulnerability to re-offend and go back into the prison system. By reframing the concept to study "re-entries" for young, Black men, this study asserts that more accurate information can be gathered to promote developmentally-appropriate interventions for this underprivileged social group.

Derived from their criminal life course framework, Laub and Sampson (1993) developed the notion of "cumulative disadvantage" to explain a snowball effect in which adolescent delinquency and its negative consequences (e.g., arrest, official labeling, incarceration) increasingly mortgages one's future, especially later life chances molded by schooling and employment. This notion was supported in this study as I found that chronic delinquency and its consequences did damage potential long-term connections to institutions. But more specifically, the men in this study articulated that they themselves perceived their ability to garner support from the streets, family and mothers diminished with every incarceration as a teenager and a young adult. As a result, these men found themselves actively pursuing other means to obtain resources such as money. Laub and Sampson (1997) later argued that it is important to consider structural problems such as

the preclusion of hiring ex-offenders to be problematic for these men during every stint of re-entry. Yet, fathers like Malik Rakim talked about how even though prospects with school and jobs were bleak by the time he was 22-years-old, he was still able to obtain formal employment in the past by relying on family members and friends who owned their own businesses or who had connections to individuals who could help. This is an important notion for the literature to pay attention to, because policies can provide many resources, however, they are not typically well-suited to rebuild relationships. Cumulative disadvantage gives insight about how re-offending can keep occurring for young, Black men since every incarceration mortgages the future of these men. This study adds important context on how experiencing multiple re-entries can condition these men to accept their repeated fate as leaving prison back into the streets just to end up back into prison.

Incarceration as Centerpiece of Life Course for Black Men

As mentioned in the introduction chapter, the incarceration rate is so high – nearly 40 percent nationwide – that young, Black men are more likely to be behind bars than to have a job (Tierny, 2014). Incarceration is a more common experience for Black men between the ages of 18-35 than school, jobs, and marriage, and this dramatic shift suggests that the criminal justice system is the most prominent organizer across the life course of young Black men.

Life course and social ecological theory were appropriate theories for understanding how incarceration is the primary organizer for the lives of young, Black men. Research has asserted that due to poverty, disadvantaged adolescent males are sometimes adultified at early ages in which they take on extensive labor duties such as

getting a job to make money (Burton, 2007). This creates a different developmental

trajectory for alternative outcomes. Being adultified at an early age played a significant

role in these men becoming involved with the criminal justice system. Majority of the

men in this study described how they had to grow very fast during the prime of their

teenage years and were making decisions that men in their late 20s and 30s were making.

Sadly, the criminal justice system also creates developmental confusion for young, Black

men as the system is less likely to punish them in a developmentally appropriate manner.

Black youths are more likely to "graduate" from juvenile detention centers to adult prison

institutions much earlier in age than their racial counterparts (Benekos & Merlo, 2008).

Even though young, Black men experience an accelerated life course trajectory

from the demands of their families and from policies in the criminal justice system that

racially discriminate against them, these men also endure arrested development during

every incarceration stint. These men are spending longer terms behind bars and end up

being less prepared for life and prospects for schools, jobs, and long-term relationships.

The personal experiences these men shared during these interviews suggested that there

are damaging effects of this start and stop way of life. But more importantly, the stories

of these men also highlighted how structural factors (e.g., poverty, mass incarceration)

were more problematic for these men before their first stint of incarceration.

In general, institutions such as school and the labor market facilitate the shaping

of a man's paternal identity, attitude, involvement, and parenting. The literature asserts

that low-income Black men emphasize the provider role and the ability of these men to

provide both financial and emotional support to their children. This particular focus has

been noteworthy given the socio-historical shifts low-income Black men have negatively

experienced with education and employment (Daly, 1995; Tamis-LeMonda & Cabrera, 1999). For example, the fathers in this study primarily focused on being a financial provider as a prominent aspect of their fathering before talking about providing emotional support to their children. But, the most important factor to shape their father identity and level of involvement was being locked up and taken away from their children to jail repeatedly only to return again and again back into their children's lives to re-establish their parenthood. Especially for Black men, theoretical conceptualization around fatherhood has indicated that the various social, economic, and racial contexts shape a Black father's ability to efficiently and effectively be a father (Tamis-LeMonda & Cabrera, 1999; Roopnarine, Fouts, Lamb, & Lewis-Elligan, 2005; Roy, 2006). This study enhances previous theoretical conceptualization of Black fatherhood by examining Black fatherhood within this era of mass incarceration. Based on the findings from this study, we must recognize how *incarceration significantly shapes Black fatherhood* in today's society.

The fact that Black men are not just incarcerated at higher rates than other social groups, but are also at greater risk for multiple spells of incarceration across their life course, suggests that if these men do have children, their fathering is primarily shaped around their incarceration. For example, every participant in this study described and conceptualized their fathering experiences surrounding interactions with the criminal justice system more than their interactions with any other social institutions. Specifically, these men described their fathering experiences in three phases – before prison, during prison, and after prison (re-entry). Since Black men are culturally and structurally vulnerable to incarceration, the fatherhood researchers, especially those studying Black

fathers, would be remiss if they did not incorporate the idea of incarceration into their work as a major factor shaping Black fathers' interactions with their children. This study and its findings argue that this shifting paradigm for conceptualizing Black fatherhood is now mandatory as long as there are criminal laws and policies like the 13th amendment that allow for racial inequality to persist.

One of the underlying premises of this new theoretical insight for Black fatherhood and incarceration is that incarceration makes fatherhood more challenging. Low-income African American fathers report that it is imperative to "want to be there for their children" to fulfill and acquire a sense of responsibility as fathers (Allen & Doherty, 1996; Ray & Hans, 2001). Black men do have a desire to be as involved as much as they can – even just as much as the mothers (Hossain & Roopnarine, 1994). The men in this study all expressed that this same desire to be in their children's lives even while they themselves personally struggle in life with chronic spells of incarceration. Due to economic and structural disadvantages, many of these fathers establish social alliances with kinship and non-kinship members to assist in their involvement with their children (Hamer & Marchioro, 2002; Perry, 2009). This same trend existed for the men in this study in that every time they were arrested, adjudicated and sent to prison, these men rallied their paternal and maternal kin to take care of their children and keep them involved in their children's lives. Each father appreciated this type of support for their children but there was hurt and disappointment that their fathering was significantly impacted both during and after prison. For men who are fathers in prison, there are major implications for revisiting policies of the detention centers and prison to consider effective ways to help these men maintain their ties to the children while serving time.

Clearly, raising the level of involvement during stints of incarceration will positively impact successful re-entry into their children's lives.

Even though this study focused on the young, Black men who were incarcerated or who had experienced re-entries before, it is important to acknowledge that not all young, Black men experience incarceration or indulge in compelling life of the streets. What makes these young, Black fathers who live in these same disadvantaged communities resilient to these same structural factors and policies. Research has suggested that there are individual characteristics that promote healthier trajectories for these sub-sample of young, Black men (Payne, 2011). These factors of resilience have included stable, positive emotional relationships with at least one adult figure (Woodland, 2008), experiencing some form of academic or athletic success (Swanson, Cunningham, & Spencer, 2003), healthy and active coping behaviors (Zimmerman, Ramirez-Valles, & Maton, 1999), and having a positive temperament and optimistic outlook on life (Werner, 2000).

Re-measuring Fathering Involvement

Can incarceration and re-entry be incorporated into common concepts of father involvement? Father involvement is a concept that highlights how men "do fathering" in a family system context. Father involvement has been conceptualized by three constructs – engagement, availability, and responsibility (Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, & Levine,1985). Incarceration shapes these three aspects of father involvement for Black men. Black fathers in this study talked about the lack of physical availability in their children's lives. These men talked about how seeing their children here and there behind the glass was insufficient and played on the way they perceived themselves as fathers. There was a

caveat about father involvement when it came to availability – these men talked about "doing fathering" during their stint through using the phone to talk and parent behind the phone. When these men leave prison during re-entry these men talked about how the physical presence can seem quite hard as their family and children have a routine that has not included them and their presence alone can be a burden.

Engagement and responsibility are other prominent aspects of father involvement. For Black fathers who are released from prison, these constructs look quite different. Findings from this study suggest that these men believe that their main responsibility of being a father is providing for their children. Though they are disenfranchised from obtaining high quality jobs and wages, these men struggled to find money and resources. But, the fathers in the study talked about how when this process is not going well, they go to know what they know – the streets. Men tried to be responsible fathers to their families during every re-entry. Structural factors such as discrimination towards ex-offenders forced these men to go "underground" and engage in criminal activity to obtain money for their families. The time spent underground also obfuscated the time potentially spent with their children and their availability by increasing the risk of incarceration. For example, a few fathers in this study understood that during re-entry and on probation, they were risking being sent back to jail by being in the streets in order to put food on the table and clothes on their child's back. This is a critical aspect of the fathering experiences for these men because many of the men in this sample had a common charge that led them back in prison during re-entry – violation of probation. As a result, father involvement, especially for Black men tends to look different now with the criminal justice system looming over their heads during their re-entry.

The literature on Black fatherhood asserts that Black men do engage in other aspects of father involvement such as spending quality time with their children, child rearing, and shaping positive outcomes in their children (Mitchell & Cabrera, 2009; Tamis-LeMonda, Kahana-Kalman, & Yoshikawa, 2009; Cabrera, Hofferth, & Chae, 2011). Yet for Black men who leave prison, their father identity and their father involvement seems to look different. The father identities of these men in this study revolved around being physical present and providing for their children. Even when it came to spending time with their children, it still revolved around having money in that they felt that taking their children to the park or to McDonalds, they still needed financial resources of some sorts. This is not to say that there was not any mention of other aspects of father involvement from these men. Some fathers talked about engaging in parenting behaviors such as taking their kids to school as one of the ways they were involved in their children's lives. Yet, other continuously focused on actively recalling not being there physically (due to spells of incarceration) or having money than the positive levels of involvement in their children's lives during the interviews. Moreover, the over-emphasis of not being physically present allowed for Black fathers like Maurice to pass the torch to another man. It seemed that incarceration obfuscated the way Black men perceive their roles and function in their children's lives.

Contextualizing Known Re-entry Factors

Multiple factors tend to create difficulties for these men reconnecting with jobs, housing, and even their families when they return. Additionally, unresolved mental and physical health issues have prevented full participation in social institutions like the labor market. For instance, drug use and substance abuse over one's life course can increase the

likelihood of developing drug dependence and drug addiction which has been associated

with molecular, cellular, and physical brain complications that lower job prospects during

re-entry (Hyman & Malenka, 2001). A few of the fathers in this sample mentioned

having "brain complications" due to a long history of drug use. This trend is more likely

to occur in the neighborhoods these fathers return back to after serving time which

suggest that there may be more young, Black men with undetected brain complications

from extensive drug use. One of the most cited factors that has led to multiple re-entries

for the men in this study was substance abuse. Researchers have found that while most

prisoners have an extensive history of drug or alcohol abuse, only a small portion actually

receive treatment, not just while incarcerated, but also upon release (Petersilia, 2003).

This finding was supported in this study. These men, who mostly are from the

Washington, D.C. area, reported being heavily socialized around drugs by their

neighborhood and even by their parents. The age range of the men in this sample suggests

that this is a population whose parents lived during and possibly participated in substance

use during the crack wars of the 1980s and 90s. These men had significant substance

abuse problems not just with using, but also, with selling drugs. The men reported that

multiple spells of incarceration due to substance use were associated with failing urine

tests and possession. Beck (2000) argued that the extent to which substance abuse

problems are treated both prior to and following release from prison for young Black men

has significant implications on the outcomes of their recidivism during re-entry. Men in

this study talked about how their struggles with substance abuse were more successful

and manageable during certain periods of re-entry compared to others, in part due to

receiving treatment during their stint and also having drug treatment support in the community that was reliable.

Employment/jobs is the other prominent factor that influences the potential of a young, Black man to be locked up again during a re-entry phase. Research has found that having a legitimate job decreases the chances of re-offending. In addition, the higher the wages, the less likely it is that returning prisoners will return to crime (Kling, Weiman, & Western, 2000). In this study, many of the men argued that their ties to the streets complicated their ability to both focus on formal employment and exert patience towards working for a livable wage. But because of structural inequalities such as racial discrimination, institutional discrimination, and unfair hiring practices towards offenders (Bushway, 2000), these men feel that they do not have the time to deal with the racism and the low wages that come with the types of jobs they qualify for during re-entry. They noted how their job prospects declined with every stint of incarceration, and as a result, every subsequent release from prison was much harder than the last one. For some men, this cycle kept them secure in wanting to go back to prison whereas for others, it facilitated their involvement with underground/informal jobs that risk re-offending. While Laub and Sampson (1993) argued that attention needs to be given to studying factors that prevent these men from obtaining jobs, this study adds to that notion that multiple re-entries should be the focus when studying recidivism of young, Black men since jobs look different and the economy changes over time.

For young, Black fathers, child support has been one of the underlying mechanisms that can further complicated the relationship with their baby-mamas and potentially land them back into prison (Eckholm, 2006). All noncustodial parents, the

majority of whom are men, are legally obligated to pay child support. But for those fathers who are poor, it simply compounds their poverty and their incarceration (Holzer, Offner, & Sorensen, 2005). The racial wage gap shows that White men get paid an average of $21 dollars an hour while Black men get paid an average of $15 an hour. Child support data isn't collected by race, but given Black men's disadvantage in the workplace, it's safe to presume they also disproportionately owe child support when they cannot afford it. This inability to pay child support creates tension between these fathers and the mothers of their children.

A few fathers in this study expressed that because of a good rapport with their baby-mamas, they were able create an informal agreement in which they negotiate the amount of money and resources they provide for their children without fear of the baby-mama seeking child support. On the other hand, fathers talked about how baby-mama drama can fuel the mother's tendency to put create a formal agreement put placing the father on child support. The minute these fathers are placed on child support, they are further marginalized as their wages are garnished and they are locked up for consistent lack of payment (Mincy, 2006). "Twenty percent of the people in the criminal justice system shouldn't be in there because they're too poor," says David J. Pate, an Associate Professor of Social Work at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. "Those $10,000 or even $20,000 earners." The government, according to Pate, is owed $115 billion in child support, but 70% of that money is owed by Americans who make less than $10,000 a year (Meyerson, 2016). This quote suggests that it is counterproductive to the father, his children, and the government to lock him up for lack of child support payments when young, Black men experience significant structural inequalities in the labor market.

Dynamic Families During Re-entry and Over the Life Course

This study centers families in the study of incarceration and Black fatherhood. Mass incarceration and parenting research is housed in the disciplines of sociology, psychology, criminology, criminal law, and economics, and often overlooks process, context, and meaning in families. Specifically, most of the studies that examine paternal incarceration do so through an individualized lens on these men's experiences while mapping onto critical outcomes (Murray & Farrington, 2005; Murray, Farrington, & Sekol, 2012). In addition to the policies that have created and maintained mass incarceration in this country, empirical studies tend to frame explanations and even solutions through an intrapersonal framework. The purpose and findings of this study provided a systemic and interpersonal framework around mass incarceration and Black fatherhood to champion a newer, and more accurate outlook –*incarceration and re-entry is a reciprocal affair between fathers and families*.

The theoretical ideal that incarceration is a family affair stems from fundamental principles of family systems. In this theory, relational feedback loops within the family unit facilitate both direct and indirect actions and re-actions from one family member to the next (Bowen, 1990). This notion suggests that experiences, problems and solutions are not rooted in solely examining individual effects within the family unit but how experiences, problems and solutions are created and maintained through bi-directional and at times multi-level, relationships. Even complimentary theories such as Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory suggest that macro-level factors such as mass incarceration can contextualize the experiences of both the individual and their family (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). The findings from this study showed that removing young,

Black men and placing them into the criminal justice system, changes the lives of not only the men, but their extensive social networks. These men are someone's son, brother, father, step-father, uncle, cousin, and neighbor, and thus the spillover effect of these men's incarceration naturally occurs with those biologically and socially tied to them. Another way to understand this perspective is that these families are locked up within the criminal justice system as well when we lock up these men.

One of the primary functions of a family is to provide nurturance and support to its members. Yet, this study found that families became wary of providing support to these men after every stint of incarceration. The men in this study shared that they understand that their families actually do care about them and love them but getting locked up too many times has burned bridges with their parents – even to the point where parents advocate implicitly (e.g., by not paying bond for the men to be released until their court dates) or explicitly (pleading with the judges and prosecutors to lock up their loved one) to eventually lead to some change of this behavior of repeated spells of incarceration (Richardson Jr, Johnson Jr, & St. Vil, 2014). The men in this study understood that losing that kind of social capital did keep them away from their children. A few men in this study were quite upset with their families when they decided not to pay low-level bonds as a way to teach him a lesson. Unintentionally, this type of lesson created distrust and distress in these men since they were not able to return back to their children. This highlights the reciprocal distrust and frustration these men and their families have toward each other that further complicates their re-entry.

The repeated transitions of entering and leaving prison across the life course of these men created persistent shock and trauma within families which manifested in

arrested family development. Similarly, Alexander (2012) compares this systemic shock that families experience with incarceration with that of the systemic shock that occurred when Black men were removed from their families during slavery. This study found that the families of these men experienced short term and long term effects both from the chronic spells of incarceration and re-entries. Clinically, the trauma associated with repeated removal and re-insertion for incarcerated families is similar to that experienced by military families (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1989; Figley, 1993; Arditi, 2012). Specifically, "re-integration stress" as a type of stress that is disruptive and hazardous to military families due to the unexpected and quick transitions men experience while being in the military (Peebles-Kleiger & Kleiger, 1994). In a similar way, these fathers articulated that their re-entry will be jeopardized because of the re-integration stress that is part of the systemic nature of their incarceration. As a result, policies and interventions should re-evaluate their efforts and values to incorporate families as the centerpiece for the prison population and re-entry assistance. Specifically, there needs to be education, support and treatment for Black families with an incarcerated family member to prevent the accumulation of stress and strain from the traumatic removal and re-insertion of these men and their families.

Managing both paternal and maternal kin for support is a strong complimentary process for successful re-entry (Anderson, 1990). Yet, this family process involves relational damage for *both* parties. Research focuses on the uni-directional effects of family members' anger and resentment of incarcerated family members, shaping the outcome of the re-entry experience (Arditti, 2006; Nasher & Visher, 2006). This study adds to the empirical literature and theoretical conceptualization of incarceration and

fatherhood (parenting) by finding that these family dynamics are actually bi-directional. Men argued that they are resentful towards their family for the recent lack of support during their current stint and their persistent internal struggles that stem from unresolved family of origin issues. This is an important insight to use when creating and re-evaluating interventions for these families as they deal with re-entry.

Housing is another primary factors associated with successful re-entry for young, men of color (Petersilia, 2001; Petersilia, 2003; Travis et al., 2001). For most of the men in this study, a lack of a stable housing situation has been a persistent problem throughout their life course not just during re-entry. Some fathers admitted that being physically in prison was one of their most stable housing situations since on the outside they are "staying" with loved ones and not "living." Being locked up can become relief from an inconsistent experience with housing on the streets. Since families are the primary social support system to provide an initial stable housing environment when released from prison, making sure these men and their families are in a healthy place is critical. In addition, federal laws bar many ex-prisoners from public housing and federally assisted housing programs (Braman, 2004; Nasher & Visher, 2004). One reason for this is that family members living in public housing may not welcome a returning prisoner home when doing so may put their own housing situation at risk. Moreover, familial relationships may also be so severely strained that staying with family members or friends is not a viable option. Since incarceration and re-entry should be treated as a family affair, this means that housing organizations and policies should re-visit values behind their efforts by incorporating the intentional and unintentional consequences these policies have on incarcerated families.

The trauma and bi-directional relational strains that stem from chronic spells of incarceration call for innovative re-entry support for incarcerated families. An example of a beneficial prisoner re-entry intervention is the Community Mediation Maryland. This innovative phase of a prisoner re-entry mediation program is one that can be conducted prior to the prisoner's release and clinical family therapeutic intervention. Re-entry mediation was designed to respond to the needs identified in criminal justice literature for positive relationships and to reduce the likelihood of recidivism (Flower, 2014). Although incarcerated individuals may choose to mediate with any number of people, most people choose to mediate with family members. Specifically, mediation helps people reach agreements, rebuild relationships, and find permanent solutions to their disputes (Hart, Roy, & Charkoudian, 2017). As these men discussed in their interviews, there is genuine fear that during re-entry there will not be a safe space to discuss their plans with their families without things becoming hostile and out of control. Mediation provides a healthier forum for both parties to calmly create a re-entry plan for the incarcerated family member and the family. Mediation is a process that allows individuals to speak for themselves and make their own decisions. There are important values behind mediation – it is non-judgmental, confidential, and voluntary. For example, in the state of Maryland, community mediation has served as a vital role for the re-entry process of individuals leaving the prison system and has had effects such as lowering recidivism and reducing family conflict (Flower, 2015).

Focus on Healthy Relationships

In this study, findings suggested that one of the prominent relationships that shape father involvement for Black fathers when they are released was the relationships

with the mothers of their children. The term baby-mama drama was used to describe the complicated nature of these relationships. It is a cultural term referencing a mother who is not married to her children's fathers and persistent negativity stemming from a romantic and co-parenting relationship comprised of poor communication, poor problem-solving, conflicting power dynamics, and potential violence. Specifically, majority of the men in this sample discussed that baby-mama drama, was actually fueled by these mothers becoming fatigue with the multiple stints of incarceration, unresolved conflicts from the past, and the mothers finding new male partners. The dilemma behind baby-mama drama for young, Black fathers is that as these unhealthy pattern of interactions intensify, the drama then becomes a self-sustaining cycle beyond the control of either parent and the most significant result of this cycle is that the father is further isolated from his child.

Though the relationships these fathers had with their baby-mamas after every stint with incarceration was marred with negative interactional patterns, there are far more important contexts that that shape these interactions. Due to the general structure of the prison institution in which hegemonic domination are prominent, research has found that men develop particular attitudes and coping mechanisms that affect not only themselves, but for those who are fathers, their relationships with their baby-mamas and their children (Toch, 1992). Unhealthy coping strategies such as hard-timing (i.e. isolation), flashing (i.e. losing temper and engaging in forceful behavior), along with attitudes of misogyny, are developed during incarceration (Nurse, 2002). In addition, traumatic experiences such as physical violence and sexual assault experienced in prison, if untreated, will have a spillover effect in how these men manage the relationship with their baby-mamas. A few fathers in the sample recalled engaging in abusive behaviors towards their baby-mamas.

While most of these men were not able to make the connection of the being hardened by the prison experience and the spillover in their relationships, my clinical expertise allowed me to conclude that the violent nature of the relationship with their baby-mamas may be a consequence of flashing. Domestic violence tends to decrease trust, communication, and emotional connection between the partners – all critical aspects of healthy romantic and co-parenting relationships (Henning, K., Jones, A. R., & Holdford, R. (2005).

Power dynamics play a significant role in the relationships these men have with their children's mothers during re-entry. In this study, majority of the re-offending stemmed from violations of their probation. As the literature indicated, these men leave prison in a "one-down" power position in which their children's mothers can call the police or the probation officer to instigate their return back to prison (Nurse, 2002). A couple of the fathers in this sample discussed how their baby-mamas used calling the probation officer or parole officer as a power play. In terms of co-parenting, the literature suggests that maternal gatekeeping is a relational dynamic between co-parents that can significantly reduce fathers' involvement in their children's lives. The men in this study did describe certain aspects of maternal gatekeeping but there was one particular finding that contextualized why mothers regulated the involvement in their children's lives – fatigue. Majority of the fathers shared that maternal gatekeeping was not always present. In fact, they shared that their children's mothers wanted them to be present (even if they were no longer romantically involved). Maternal gatekeeping became more present after every return from jail because their baby-mamas became frustrated and exhausted of carrying the relationship and parenting duties and this would lead some fathers to end up

slowly watching their children's mothers moving on to a new male partner (Nurse, 2002).

Interestingly, a sub-sample of these fathers realized how their lack of presence (due to

chronic spells of incarceration) would lead to fatigue and push their baby-mamas to move

on to men who could provide much more efficient relationship and co-parenting support.

There were no notable trends based on age with whether or not the baby-mama decided

to move on with a new male partner.

Even though only 20% of the fathers in this sample had multiple children with

multiple women, their experiences with both fatherhood and incarceration was quite

unique. A couple of the fathers talked about how during their spells of incarceration and

re-entries over time was complicated with structural factors, the relational ties they had

with the mothers of their children were just as stressful. Some fathers discussed how their

children did not know of each other because the mothers of the children did not like each

other. On the other hand, some fathers had a meeting of the minds where they brought of

their baby-mamas together before getting locked up in an attempt to clear the air.

Interestingly, positive results occurred for men who held these kind of meetings as the

mothers of the children banded together to support each other during every spell of

incarceration of the father.

The challenges of multiple partner fertility are twofold (Guzzo, 2014). A

important question to explore is how can we support families such as Mark and Thomas,

who are already experiencing MPF? An underlying problem is that existing policies for

child support, custody, and visitation, as well as our various social institutions (such as

schools and health care systems for which parents must define and establish relationships

with and between children), ascribe to an increasingly outdated family model (Sweeny,

2010). Revising policies and guidelines is a daunting task, necessitated by the sheer volume of nontraditional families yet complicated by the myriad forms today's families take. Another question is how can we minimize the growth in family complexity? Families experiencing incarceration endure significant complexities. Although many point to cultural and normative changes weakening individuals' commitments to unions and children, it is imperative to not ignore the role of structural factors, such as labor market restructuring, rising costs of higher education and home ownership, and barriers to family planning services, that make it difficult to achieve a stable life and, by extension, stable families (Guzzo, 2014). Sadly, there are no simple solutions, and there is a need for systemic policies and economical investments to address the structural and normative changes that both lead to and affect the consequences of complex families.

Nationally, there has been a growing call for helping young adults establish and maintain healthy romantic relationships as a way to address issues such as teen pregnancy, children out of wedlock, dating violence and multiple partner fertility (Gardner, Giese, & Parrott, 2004; Kerpelman, Pittman, Adler-Baeder, Eryigit, & Paulk, 2009). One of the most critical but volatile relationships in these fathers' lives was the romantic and co-parenting relationships with their children's mothers. The literature has indicated that young, Black men are more likely to experience transient romantic relationships that may result in having children. As a result, the relational dynamics between biological parents tend to include situations in which the mother and father are coparenting in the context of an enduring relationship, coparenting after ending a romantic relationship and coparenting in the absence of an affiliated romantic bond (Waller, 2012; McHale, 2007; Isacco, Garfield, & Rogers, 2010). This study found that

these men had various types of romantic relationships with women. For example, one of the fathers in this sample had three kids with three women and he described how his fathering looked different with each of his kids because the first mom he had a bad breakup with, the second mom is a really good friend, and with the third mother he is currently in a romantic relationship. The men in this study expressed that because they had multiple children with multiple women, they have a genuine need for learning, understanding and establish healthy boundaries and roles for the sake of their children – even in prison. Specifically, men in this study expressed that both during their prison stint and their re-entry, complicated relationships with the child's mother shape their fathering. The findings from this study suggest that interventions such as workshops providing psychoeducation to these fathers on family development may be an important way to assist these men with fathering during re-entry.

Relational patterns such as cooperation and conflict have always shaped whether co-parenting will be successful (Waller, 2012; McLanahan, 2009). As mentioned before, incarceration, especially chronic incarceration for Black fathers, alienates their child's mother to parenting alone and resentment grows over time. The men in this study all talked about how the co-parenting relationship was significantly impacted because of the lack of stability created by being locked up consistently. Co-parenting relationships in low-income families, especially those formed outside of marriage, face even more formidable challenges as a result of their economic vulnerability, age, family complexity and other risk factors (McLanahan, 2009). While research has been much clearer about how cooperation in a co-parenting relationship plays a role in shaping father involvement, research has shown mixed results on the role of conflict. This study sheds

some light on the role of conflict in co-parenting relationships for vulnerable Black

families such as incarcerated Black men and their families. The findings indicated that

the volatile history between these men and their children's mothers contributed

significantly to the strains that were present in the co-parenting relationships. Conflicts

such as domestic violence was such a prominent experience that many of these fathers

talked about how domestic violence (bi-directional domestic violence) placed them back

into prison for probation violation or for a new charge which kept them from being

present in their child's life. These findings suggest that interventions such as co-parenting

relationships, community mediation Maryland, and couples' therapy for these men and

the mothers of the children before and immediately after release may provide effective

outlets for assisting these men and their families.

Methodological Contributions

In addition to theoretical contributions, this dissertation project also provided

methodological contributions that will continue to further the empirical understanding of

incarcerated Black fathers and their families. A qualitative approach was used because it

allowed me to describe the nature and contents of cultural, social, and personal values

and experiences surrounding the fathering and incarceration experiences of young Black

men (Luborsky & Rubin, 1995). These two methods included the fatherhood discussion

groups and the incarceration/fatherhood timeline.

Qualitative researchers who study re-entry tend to collect data from men who

have recently left jail or prison (Binswanger, Nowels, Corsi, Long, Booth, Kutner, &

Steiner, 2011; Binswanger, Nowels, Corsi, Glanz, Long, Booth, & Steiner, 2012). This

study did not collect data from men who were recently released from the detention center

and tracking their experiences with re-entry. By re-conceptualizing re-entry not just as a singular experience from a single stint of incarceration, but as multiple re-entries stemming from multiple spells of incarceration, this study utilized retrospective narratives about previous re-entries to build insight into these men's lives. Retrospective narratives were found to be just as useful as tracking these men during their current release because it allowed for an important finding to arise – every re-entry experience these men had was relatively different than the previous re-entry experience.

The fatherhood discussion group was a critical and valuable method for the success of this dissertation project. With the approval of PGDOC Department of Programs, I developed a curriculum that focused on fatherhood and incarceration to utilize when running groups at the detention center. This has allowed us to build relationships with the program members at the detention center while also providing opportunities to introduce the proposed research opportunity to these men in the classes. I conducted a total of 6 Fatherhood Discussion Groups in pre-approved prison units (by PGDOC staff). There was a two-week gap between each group to allow for in-depth interviews to be conducted. Each group will consist of a total of 12 fathers. For the Fatherhood Discussion Groups, there was only one requirement – they only need to self-identify as biological or social fathers with children between the ages of 1-17. Race and age did not disqualify participants.

The Fatherhood Discussion groups were facilitated by myself and my mentor and advisor, Dr. Kevin Roy. The group met twice each week for 3 weeks inside the prison unit. Important topics explored during these groups included what does it mean to be a father, how incarceration affects children, how to better communicate with your children,

and how to co-parent. During these discussion groups, there was no recording or note taking of participants' responses and engagement. The goal of these groups was not to conduct research, but to provide social support services for incarcerated fathers. These groups were piloted over the past year in order to build rapport with fathers and trust with PGDOC staff, as well as to learn about the family contexts of men's lives in the facility.

In addition to the fatherhood discussion groups, I created my own version of a life history calendar. According to Freeman, Thornton, Camburn, Alwin, and Young-DeMarco (1988), there are two advantages to using life history calendars for collecting retrospective survey data. First, it can improve the quality of the retrospective data by helping the participants to relate, both visually and mentally, the timing of several kinds of events. Events more readily remembered such as fatherhood, incarceration, and marriages provide important reference points for recalling less salient events such as the details of employment and living arrangements. Second, very detailed sequences of events are easier to record with a life history calendar than with a conventional questionnaire. Questionnaires would require obtaining and recording the beginning and end dates of many short time intervals spent at each event. The calendar, on the other hand, the recording can be done graphically with much less difficulty, using symbols to mark the beginning and ending timeframes (e.g., years) and connecting them with lines to indicate continued activity (e.g., incarceration). In my own version of a life history calendar, I created a timeline format, instead of a grid-like one, to facilitate rapid and accurate recall, on a year to year basis, of life events surrounding school, jobs, housing, incarceration, and fatherhood. Specifically, my goal was to track developmental periods (e.g., age, turning points) for when their engagement with social institutions deteriorated,

fatherhood, and incarceration (Freedman, Thornton, Camburn, Alwin, & Young-DeMarco, 1988).

During the interviews with these fathers, the timeline activity proved to be a valuable experience for both the researcher and the participant. When filling out the timeline, I made sure to make this document visible to the participant and I explicitly asked them to help me fill it out. As a researcher, it made it very easy to track the participant's life course experiences as they talked. Rather than try to keep up with the participant with writing extensive, narrative notes, the format of my life history calendar made note-taking much more fluid since using symbols and drawing lines were quicker hand gestures than writing many words. This life history calendar also facilitated better questions for me to ask during the interview because the graphic nature of these timelines allowed me to view the bigger picture of the participant's life in any given year. My timeline version of a life history calendar assisted the actual interview process for these participants because they were able to digest this tool and participate easier than with a grid-like format.

When creating this tool, I was mindful about the limited educational experience of these men and did not want to create a complicated tool that would hinder participation because that may hinder their energy during the interview and potentially information that could be helpful. I learned that because my tool was easy to digest, each of these participants actively participated and even provided me with feedback that the timeline helped these men themselves to see their lives in a different format. For example, participants who were incarcerated many times across their life course were quite shocked to see the multiple indications in the incarceration row of the timeline.

Policy Considerations

This dissertation project highlighted how strenuous and complicated fatherhood is for Black men in this era of mass incarceration. Policymakers should focus on reducing mass incarceration in two critical ways – tackling the rate and length of sentences. Following three decades of policies that increased the prison population through changes in sentencing and (to a lesser degree) post-release supervision, policymakers will not reduce the individual, community and systemic effects of mass incarceration without directly taking on the rate and length of sentences. In early 2009, seventeen states passed sentencing reforms in hopes of reducing incarceration and were widely publicized by the Sentencing Project (Clear & Austin, 2009). Some of these reforms altered the nature of community supervision, some created non-incarceration alternatives more attractive, and some set up advisory commission to provide strategies for reducing prison costs. Yet, none of these 17 reforms did not change the length of sentences or reduce restrictions on the use of probation as a sentence.

Authentic policy reform would be to reduce the amount of people going into prison. This can be achieved in two ways. One, eliminate mandatory sentencing and, two, eliminate violations of probation and parole. The main reason for prison growth in the United States in the 1980s was a reduction in the use of probation as a sentence for people convicted of felonies, especially drug crimes. Before laws mandating prison sentences in place of probation came into effect, drug offenders were a small fraction of the U.S. prison population, about six percent; they are now about twenty percent (Wilson & Davis, 2005). By eliminating mandatory prison terms across the board, it would have a significant effect on the size of the prison population – especially with drug offenses. It is

better to enable judges to choose non-prison penalties for other kinds of felonies which would also have an effect on the size of the prison population.

Violation of probation was a common way these men in this sample found themselves back into jail. When a person who is under supervision fails to comply with the requirements set by probation or parole, such as "reporting when directed," the privilege of community supervision can be revoked, and the person can be sent back to prison or jail, even if no new crime is alleged. Most experts recognize that cycling minor violations, even criminal ones, through prison is expensive and counterproductive. They propose developing a range of sanctions that replace return to prison and yet reinforce the importance of complying with supervision requirements and avoiding infractions. Referred to as "graduated problem-solving responses," these strategies deal with misconduct through a variety of in-community controls in place of return to prison (Clear & Austin, 2009).

Pertaining to the length of incarceration, the average time served by people going to prison has almost doubled, and the amount of time felons spend under parole supervision has also increased (Petersilia, 2003). As a result, lengthening prison terms and high rates of violations of probation/parole have resulted in a consistently growing prison population, even in the face of declining crime rates (Travis, 2003). Decreasing a prisoner's length in prison is one the most controversial policy proposals in the discussion of criminal justice reform. Supporters of reducing length of incarceration have articulated that a prisoner's length of stay does not lead to an increased chance of recidivism (if anything, the relationship is in the other direction), and because almost everyone going to prison gets out eventually, we can reduce sentence lengths

substantially without affecting crime rates or prison reentry rates (Nagin, Cullen, & Jonson, 2009). Specifically focusing on extremely long sentences would be the best place to start. They used to be rare in the United States but are becoming more common. According to Clear and Austin (2009), currently, 140,000 prisoners are serving life terms (twenty-eight percent without possibility of parole), and one-fifth of prisoners serve sentences with a minimum term of twenty-five years or longer. People who receive sentences of this extent receive these types of punishment due to both the atrocities of the crime and public outrage for justice. The problem is that the outer years of these terms have no public safety value - most people who serve long sentences and reach their forties or fifties pose little threat to the public's safety. Policy makers should consider imposing an upper limit on sentences and making release more readily available to people in their fifties which would help reduce incarceration with little effect on public safety.
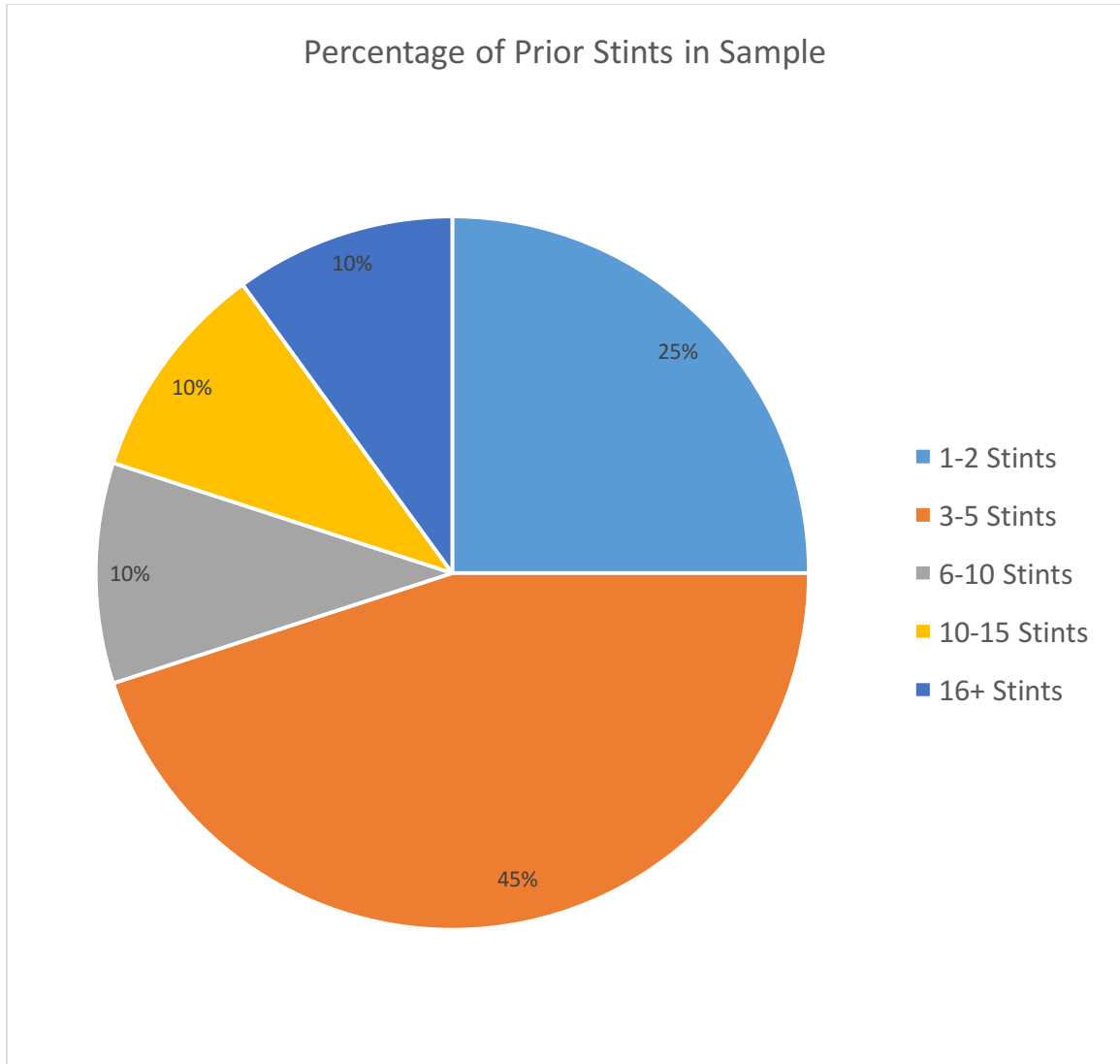
Limitations & Future Directions

There were notable limitations to this research project. One of the most notable limitations to this project is that these men were only interviewed once. A more accurate picture of these men's experiences during re-entry can be achieved by interviewing these men multiple times after the initial interview. The rationale is that so many life events can occur for these men from the point they are released from their current prison stint to the first year. These life events may include having more children or being locked up again. As a result, future directions should consider tracking these men's experiences through a qualitative longitudinal design in which data collection should occur on a monthly and yearly basis. It is important to collect data at monthly and yearly time points since the

findings from this study suggested that the different aspects of these men's lives such as school, employment, housing, fatherhood and incarceration can change at any given moment. Tracking these fathers at these interval points will be sufficient enough to accurately capture the process and finer details behind every re-entry experience these men and their families endure.
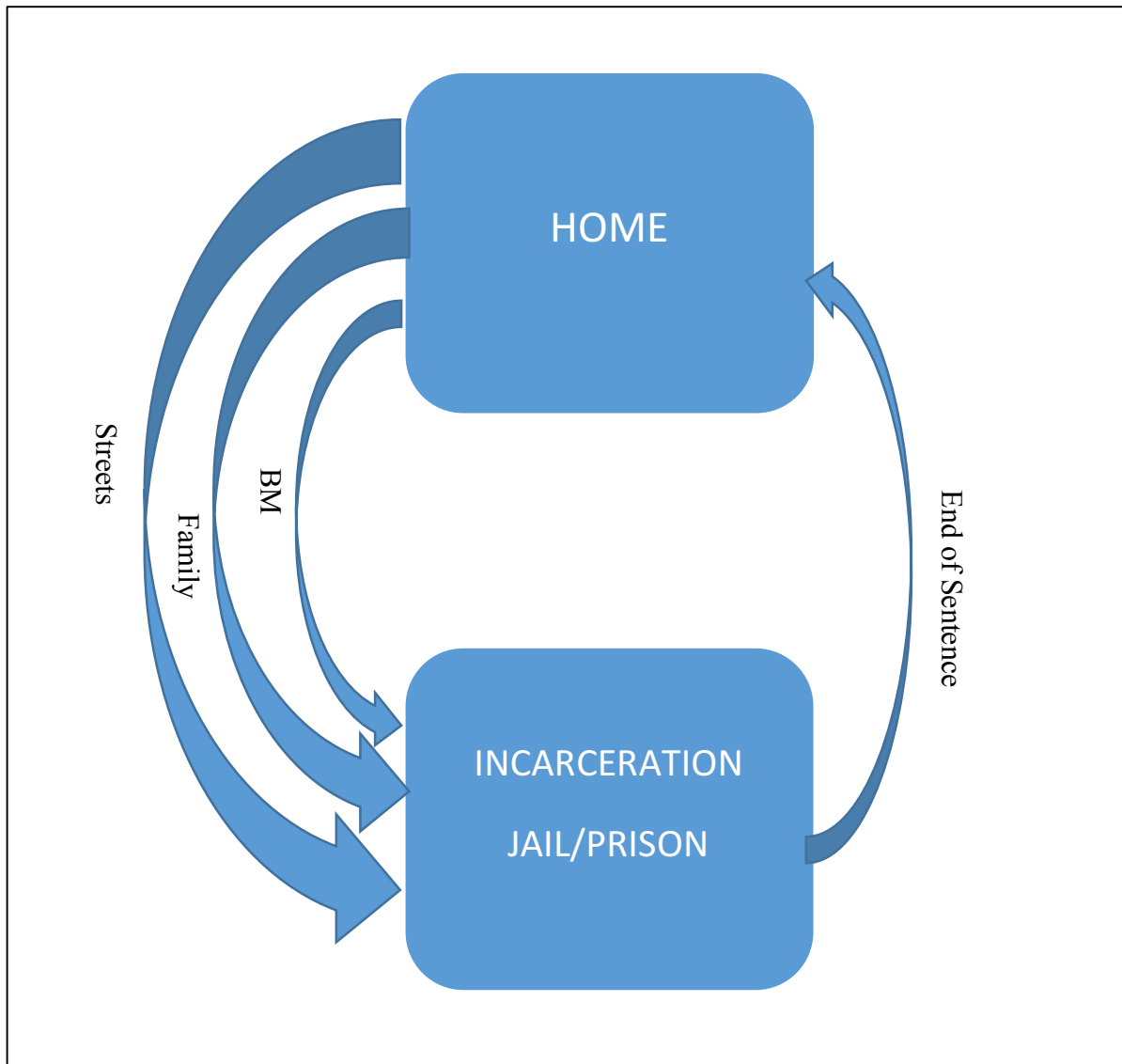
Similarly, another limitation to this study is the self-report data collection method from these men. During these interviews, recall was slightly harder for some fathers in this sample due to an extensive history of substance abuse or brain complications. Additionally, the fact that this study only interviewed these men and not family members and the mothers of their children, the study was limited in fully capturing a fuller picture of the systemic impact of incarceration and fatherhood. In order to address both problems, future research should consider interviewing critical individuals in these men's lives such as their family and children and even friends. Interviewing the social support networks for these men will accomplish two tasks – first, it will give direct information on the systemic experiences these men have with their families during re-entry and second, it will provide and authenticate the information provided by these men during their interviews.

Though this project was affiliated with the re-entry program at the detention center, conducting interviews and collecting data in the center was another notable limitation. The environment of the detention center, characterized by extreme control, routine, and force, made it a bit unnerving for these men and I to engage in the research tasks for this project. Additionally, the unpredictability of the detention center complicated the research agenda of this project several times. For example, if the

detention center or the unit when data was being collected was in lock down, civilians

were not allowed inside and it derailed data collection. At least three times when I was

collecting data in the unit, the unit went into shutdown and I had to be removed by

correctional officers. Future research should be mindful of the nature of detention centers

and if possible, collect data about these men in community re-entry programs. These are

community venues where individuals released from prison are recommended to visit as

they provide these newly released individuals from prison with resources and assistance.

Appendix A: Figure 1: Percentage of Prior Stints of Incarcerations

Percentage of Prior Stints in Sample

Appendix B: Figure 2: The Cycle of Re-entry

Appendix C: Short Summaries of Each Participant

James (30)

James is a 30-year-old father with a 3-year-old son. Growing up drugs have played a significant role in his life course. His mother, father, and siblings all struggled with drugs. He raised himself and found a life in the streets with selling weed for money. He embraced and continues to embrace fatherhood even though he has chronically dealt with incarceration (mainly for drugs). His living situation has always been unstable – times when he is not locked up he is with staying with someone different. He seems quite grounded about leaving prison and entering back into society. His focus seems to be working and being involved in his child's life. He is quite aware being an AA man is going to make it hard to bounce back but he is ready. His advice to other young Black fathers in the same position is one in which he preaches accountability "if you want to go do right, go do it. Simple as that."

JC (27)

JC is a 27-year-old father with two kids (one is his biological daughter). JC came from a very involved and loving family – his mother and father are married and showered him with not just tough love and affection but with materialistic things and trips across the world. JC makes it clear that he has lived a double life – one in which he is smart and articulate and charming and another where he is a violent drug dealer/user who can run the streets "with the best of them and with ferocity." JC's revolving involvement with incarceration has stemmed from two things – deviant peer groups and his baby-mama. Both of these groups of people have played a role in his fighting/violence and his poor decision-making. Although he has spent most of his time in jail, he loves his daughter so much. He talks about ways to improve himself as a man and making sure she is the focus.

DeAnjre (19)

DeAnjre is a 19-year-old father with a child who is 1-year-old. He is the youngest participant in my sample with an extensive juvenile record with charges such as shoplifting, simple assault, and drugs. He is quite small but has a strong stature and presence. His case is unique in that he is in jail due to confrontations with his family (especially his mother). His relationship with his siblings seem quite strong. He has a very close relationship with his girlfriend/baby-mama. He worries about her a lot. Without her, his stint with homelessness would have been extensive. His thoughts on life and re-entry is that he will figure it out himself and does not want to seek help. He is all about controlling his own destiny and that potential barriers to re-entry are not a big deal "because I do not worry about it because I have control of my mind and my body."

Boxer Shawty (22)

Boxer Shawty is a tall and charismatic 22-year-old father with a 1.5-year-old daughter. He talks about his family being such a strong social support for him not just his whole

life but as he serves his time. Yet, he does not interact with them much due to the shame he feels for letting them down and landing in jail. He has only been locked up twice – both of which deal with fighting altercations. He expresses going through a lot with his fatherhood – problems establishing paternity with a lying baby-mama and being an involved father as his baby-mama's new boyfriend controls her and tells her what to do. He is worried about his involvement as a father "because of that nigga" (referencing his baby-mama's new boyfriend). Throughout it all, Boxer Shawty talked all the time about training to being a boxer and hopefully winning the heavyweight title in his near future and being with his daughter.

Halim (33)

Halim is a cool and calm 33-year-old father who has a daughter and stepson. Halim, notably has experienced tremendous loss throughout his life – his mother died when he was 7 years old, his father was locked up for 20 years when was around the same age, his grandmother passed away a few days before being released from prison and he had a falling out with his uncle who he stole his inheritance from his grandmother. He has only been locked up twice for various charges such as gun possession and cocaine possession. The most important relationship to him has been his relationship with his girlfriend/baby-mama. They have been through so much together and he loves her dearly. He is a man of faith (an avid Muslim), accountability, and perseverance. He is not a fan of the direction the country is moving when it comes to race as he admits at the end of his interview "I would punch Donald Trump in his face."

Mark (24)

Mark is a very charismatic 24-year-old father of two kids (with two different women). He is very charming and quite articulate. Mark is very adamant that his faith in Islam and Allah has been very critical to him doing time and coping with being away from his family. Mark has only been locked up twice for the same charge – 1st degree burglary. Unfortunately, his first charge was "bad because it was a misunderstanding and they did not consider all of the evidence" and so after spending 5 months on probation, that charge was dropped. Mark comes from a very involved family unit. His dad, his grandmother, his aunt, his sister and his two baby-mamas have been highly involved in supporting him while in and out of prison. Notably, both of his baby-mamas get along very well and work together. This happened because he sat both of them down at a table and facilitated an open discussion with both women making sure they function as a family. Even he was surprised – "they were hugging and shaking hands and planning days for my son and daughter to hang out…I was kinda mad."

Maurice (32)

Maurice is 32-year-old father with a 12-year-old daughter. He has been locked up 5 times for various charges. His longest stint was 8-9 years for 1st degree burglary and selling drugs. He also talked about his brother being locked up in PA and how that hurts that he is locked up as well. Maurice talked about being on the streets most of his life to make a

living selling drugs (even after his daughter was born. Maurice was very open about how when he was going his 8-9 bid, that he realized that his daughter is growing up without him and that she should be fathered by his baby-mama's new beau (who was very active in his daughter's life – "she's being fathered where she's at so I stepback"). Maurice also spent a lot of time talking about his re-entry in terms of being a Black man and how things such as police brutality play on his mind and is an actual worry for him moving forward.

Mike II (20)

Mike is a 20-year-old father who considers himself the type of guy "who knows how bounce back." Most of his incarceration bids are due to him following friends who were committing crimes. At times, he describes himself "as dumb" because he can't believe that he had to serve time for just being around the "wrong crowd." He talks about being blessed with a very helpful and supportive family but has learned that overtime they were not supporting in jail (though supporting his daughter and baby-mama) because they were tired of him making the same mistakes. Throughout the interview, Mike talks about accountability and making sure he is on the right path. He talks about how much he has changed and wants to pursue a career in the military because they teach discipline and accountability. He has a 4-year-old daughter who he loves dearly and understands that continuously getting locked up makes it hard for his fathering and that it is letting down his baby-mama. "I need to show her I'm serious moving forward."

Jay (25)

Jay is a 25-year-old father of his daughter and two stepchildren. Jay entered fatherhood as a stepparent. He is very open and proud about being the father figure to his baby-mama's children and treats them as his own. "She means the world to me and so they do as well. Jay mentions the only important person in his life is his girlfriend/baby-mama. He and his girlfriend have been through violent, serious histories and throughout it all, they both talk about being married when Jay is released soon. Jay understands that there are many problems facing himand his girlfriend moving forward. For example, both have bi-polar disorder and they both have chronic drug problems that if they do not address, Jay knows bad things are going to happen. At the end of the interview, Jay is comfortable that he will bounce back on his feet and be an amazing father because of programs out in DC.

Z (24)

Z is a 24-year-old father. He is quite cold and detached emotionally. Throughout the interview, he was very stoic, he laughed during moments about violence and crimes, he was nonchalant talking about missing time from his girlfriend (even laughed as he talked about getting revenge on her for cheating by cheating with her best friends) and even missing time with his child. But, he did talk about how he put himself in these situations and he wants to do better – he just does not think he is fully motivated outside with doing other than not wanting to come back to jail. His transition to adulthood is interesting – he had great jobs (even a supervisor's role at Zips cleaning) and also sold drugs and

committed crimes. He did describe many savvy ways of dealing with potential mistreatment from society when he gets back into society from prison.

David II (25)

David is a 25-year-old father who is a man of very few words. He does not give much depth to his responses but when ready was able to emphasize important points – his love for his daughter and baby-mama, ways that wants to change after this stint, and time missed. David was constantly in trouble with and drugs and hanging out with the wrong crowd. The most impactful experience in David's life is that he was arrested the day of his daughter's baby shower and ended up missing her birth because he was in jail. He talked about how that "hurt me deeply." But, one of his biggest accomplishments is that he was able to finish getting his high school diploma in jail when he was locked up the semester of graduating. Apparently, one of the jail administrators took a liking to him and made sure he completed it. David emphasized how proud his mother was to hear that he actually received it even while locked up.

Malik (20)

Malik is a 20-year-old father. He looks very young for 20 – I actually thought he was a teenager with boyish innocent looks and small physical frame. Malik is a thoughtful young man. He has dedicated his time in prison to making himself better. He has participated in 3 groups in the prison – anger management, domestic violence, and Thinking for a change (T4C). He appreciates what he has learned. Additionally, he has turned his life over to Islam and prides himself a strong Muslim. He has served time only twice but he has realized that his time in the streets has impacted his family tremendously. He also talks about how hard it is for his baby-mama to be out there upset with him and hurt that he is not involved with their child's life because "I keep fucking up…I know she is upset with me about this." He had many promising ventures such as boxing, tattooing, and supervisor at Home Depot but hanging around the wrong crowd got him locked up. He is dedicated to helping out other people such as juveniles.

Ocho (19)

Ocho is a 19-year-old father of a 1-year-old girl. He is very polite and quite articulate. He made it very clear that he is not a bad guy – "I just was at the wrong place, at the wrong time." He comes from a very close family in that the couple of times he has been locked up, his immediate and extended family have been by him and supported him during incarceration. Interestingly, he is one of four guys in my sample who became a father before ever experiencing incarceration (the other 36 had been locked up before their first child was born). Ocho loves his baby-mama A LOT and he is very protective over here – "I will go off on anybody that messes with her." Ocho made it clear that he is all about holding himself accountable and strongly believes that his re-entry is about getting back on his feet on his own and if he cannot, he will look into programs such as project empowerment.

Darin (32)

Darin is 32-year-old father who has been locked up and/or been under some type of probation and house arrest for a total of 20 times. He is constantly getting locked up for drugs and assaults. He discusses how he noticed that the only time in his life where he was not involved with the criminal justice system in some way was for 2 years and that was because he was working 3 jobs – "I got no time for getting into trouble." But, Darin spends a good amount of time talking about how amazing his lawyer has been to him over the years and the way he was able to pay for his great lawyer was with drug money. He talks about how complicated his relationship is like with his baby-mama and how after the child was born, the connection and communication have been very poor but the co-parenting has been quite stable. The only person who Darin believes has his best interest at heart is his mother and feels that she has always been a stable figure in his life. He plans on owning his business one day.

James Long (24)

James Long is a 24-year-old father of twin boys. He is a proud father of his twin boys as he constantly mentioned that having boys has always "been an important thing to me." James has been locked up a total of 12 times. Because he has been locked up so many times (even stemming back from his juvenile experiences), he strongly believes that one of biggest issues with re-entry after serving this current stint will be his baby-mama. He talks about how "she is very upset with me and feels that I am not learning my lesson." He talks about how he is not sure if she is going to prevent him from seeing his boys but it worries him dearly. James did admit that he was in the streets a lot trying to "survive" but has started to realize how his behavior is preventing him from being with his kids. That is why he mentioned being dedicated to being involved with anything and anyone who is about being positive.

VJ (21)

VJ is a 24-year-old father from Washington, D.C. He was very open about how tough his upbringing was. From my knowledge, his juvenile record was one of violence and drugs from the age of 11 to 18. He was constantly locked up during his teenage years. Pretty much every year of his life, he was in some facility for violent crimes. His first incarceration was at 11 years old. VJ later on in the interview discuss his battle with mental health issues such depression and ADHD and how that has impacted him severely heading into his adulthood years. He has a son and talked very candidly about the violent and complicated nature of his relationship with his baby-mama and how he knows that she is going to be a significant problem for him when he gets out of jail. He strongly believes that he can be helped by organizations when he re-enters society but feels that his baby-mama "is going to bring me down and get back in here [jail]."

Rico II (26)

Rico is a 26-year-old father who has gone through a lot throughout his transition to adulthood. His current situation is he fighting a false identification on an attempted murder which he claims he was not part of (but was with the wrong crowd). He talks about how one of his problems with his family and his girlfriends (and baby-mama) is that he has mental health issues and anger management problems. Having violent tendencies has complicated his relationship with his baby-mama which made his ability to be a father a tough one. Because of his violent tendencies and because of his gangster ways, he has experienced chronic homelessness throughout his transition to adulthood – sleeping in hotels, abandoned buildings, on the streets, some family and friends houses for a few days, and in shelters. He seems very optimistic about his life moving forward and seems dedicated to being a better father to his daughter.

Dave (32)

Dave is a 32-year-old father who is very funny and charming. He is an easy-go-lucky guy who laughs and smiles a lot. Dave talks about how being incarcerated has made him very careful while in jail because "you got dudes in here who aren't going home anytime soon and they can fuck your shit up." He talks about having a strong routine to keep him sane from missing his daughter so much. Dave has had a rough relationship history with his BM and strongly attests that their relationship has made it so hard for him to consistently be in his daughter's life consistently. He even admitted that his involvement declined drastically after tragedies in his life such as his mom passing away suddenly but that his co-parenting relationship is a big reason. At the end of the interview, he talks about seeking support on helping him and his baby-mama on doing a better job for the sake of his daughter because "I'm tired man…I'm tired."

J. Man (29)

J. Man is a 29-year-old father with 3 kids. He is quite the character. I found him to be very slick and sly and a bit shady. DOC staff and the COs shared the same sentiment. He comes off as a con-artist such as during the interview seeing my watch and saying "nice watch, can you take it off so I can see it much better." He is in jail for a violation of probation and he talks about how his recent incarceration dealt with being in the streets and selling drugs. He lost his parents young and stayed in foster care for some time. He does admit that he put his foster parents through "hell" and regrets it. He talks about missing his kids a lot but is not "a fan of my two baby-mamas acting a fool with me." He talks about leaving out of jail and wanting to just be with his kids but is not happy that he has to deal with their mothers.

Dochi (25)

Dochi is a proud 25-year-old father with 3 kids (1 set of twins). Dochi's current circumstances are a bit unclear. He is currently serving time for an attempted murder charge but strongly attests that it is a false identity charge and was told that he will only have to serve 6 months as trial occurs and he may be it. Dochi preaches humbleness and talks about how his devotion to being a good Muslim and serving Allah has been his

biggest motivation for change. He has lived a life in the streets slinging all types of drugs and committing all types of crimes. He has been incarcerated 6 times and impressively talked about how his incarceration systemically impacts his family – especially with his girlfriend/baby-mama ("the stress on her impacts my kids a lot and that stress comes from me not being there with her…that is too much on one's shoulder to take care of three kids. I know she's upset and hurt cause of me"). Dochi got shot a total of 8 times in his life (one in the head and another in the back). He is focused on beating this serious charge and moving forward being a better father to his kids.

Baby Jesus (32)

Baby Jesus is a 32-year-old father with a unique perspective and style. He is a very good looking man with quite the charm (a certain charm that can give him power to do many things – hence, I learned the name Baby Jesus in the unit). He considers himself a rap artist and entrepreneur. He grew up struggling with drugs – using and selling. He recalls that doing and selling was not when his life went downhill – it was actually meeting his baby-mama because "she fucked my whole life up." He describes how his fathering is impacted by both incarceration but also dealing with a crazy baby-mama who is all about money. He had been locked up 20+ times. He is open to getting involved in his 13-year-old son's life when he gets out but realized during the interview he needs to go through the mom.

Drew (25)

Drew is a 25-year-old father of two kids with two different women. He is currently battling three felonies and two misdemeanors. Drew discussed how he found Christianity while serving time and feels that his life will be better moving forward because of his faith. Drew experienced significant paternity issues with his first child and did not believe she was his. That created significant riff with the baby-mama. When his son arrived, he expressed that while he acknowledging that the trauma of having paternity issues with his first child upset him. He actually did not get locked up much throughout his transition but this current charge (or charges) is pretty serious. He expresses that his goal for re-entry is being an involved father to both of his kids but knows that both baby-mamas need to come together (to bring the kids together).

Marcus (25)

Marcus is a 25-year-old father with a 2-year-old daughter. He is serving 20 months for handgun possession and violation of probation. He is a man of very few words and his responses were quite terse. He talked about his transition to adulthood as one in which when he lived with his mom, he was incarcerated; he did well in school but wanted to go for girls; and being in the streets with his boys. He talks about fatherhood as not being ready "whatsoever because I did not know what I would be doing…taking care of a child." Though he spent a lot of his time during the interview expressing that his "saving Grace" from falling much farther has been the social support he has received from his family. Especially when it comes to his daughter, he has been able to enclose her with a strong social support even while in prison. And to him, he considers that fathering with how he has protected her.

JJ (23)

JJ is a 23-year-old father with a 2-year-old daughter. He is very quiet and does not like to talk but appreciated being open about his experiences with fatherhood and incarceration. JJ has consistently been in the streets dealing with violence, drugs, and guns. Most of his charges revolve around violent crimes. His current situation is a 1st degree attempted murder. When we talk about his re-entry he describes his re-entry as "fucking different because people think I shot this man and so they are going to be looking for me." This is rough and he even admits that this is going to hurt his fatherhood because he will not be able to function the way he can. It almost reminded me of Roy's Three Block Fathers. JJ is adamant that he wants to do right by his own mother because she has been there for him with all of his spells of incarceration. JJ ended his interview understanding that being a black male with a record will be hard but strongly feels that the history of black Americans and their struggles gives "me the strength to overcome this crap."

Thomas (33)

Thomas is a very outgoing and loquacious 33-year-old father with two teenage kids. His story is one in which it was filled with chronic and severe drug abuse – "PCP was my father, it was my child, it was my world…I wanted was PCP." Even as a teenager, he grew up using and selling A LOT of drugs such as PCP. He has lived a very rough and violent life – he was shot 8 times and was in a coma for a month and a half. He talks about how his family, especially his mother was very worried. He has two kids with two different women and he acknowledged that his chronic drug abuse, his chronic incarceration, and being high most of the time. He gets upset reminiscing missing so much time of his kid's lives and how that he is clean now, he wants to leave jail soon dedicated to his children and making things work out with his family. But he also knows he does not stay clean, he will continue to struggle.

Rico (32)

Rico is a 32-year-old self-proclaimed "pretty boy" who is a father. Rico has lost a lot of great opportunities throughout his transition to adulthood. He was playing football and was recruited to D-1 schools but lost it due to drugs. He was going to be recruited to play professional football but got locked up because of drugs and liquor. He got a great job at the Library of Congress but lost it due to incarceration. His list goes on and on and talked about the shame behind losing things they he has. He loves being a father and understands there are ways he can improve being a father to his daughter. He even acknowledges that "if I don't stop with the liquor and the weed, I ain't gonna be shit to my daughter." His relationship with his baby-mama is a good one but knows that he has done damage to that relationship because of his chronic incarceration. Rico does not think both his mom and his baby-mama are going to be hesitant to him being an involved father when he leaves prison soon.

Scott (20)

Scott is a 20-year-old father with a 7-year-old daughter. Scott is a quiet yet insightful guy. He is very upfront about why he is currently in jail (and it is a very silly and ridiculous situation that landed him in here) and missing time from his daughter. He is one of the very few guys I interviewed who was very hard on himself on being away from his daughter "I am such a fucking idiot, I was fucking selfish and I look like an idiot not being there for my daughter…shit man, look at me right now." He was very intense thinking about missing a lot of time of daughter's life so far with a couple of jail stints. Scott is pretty hopeful that he can get things back on track when he gets out. Though, he admits he has a serious drug issue with PCP and weed. He was very appreciative for me sitting down with him and getting to know him and his story before "anybody get it twisted."

Bernard (28)

Bernard is a 28-year-old father who talked about being very disappointed in himself by being locked up 7 times losing 8 years of his first daughter's life (who is currently 10-years-old) and taking advantage of his grandma who has bailed him out on so many occasions when he went through re-entry in the past. He struggles significantly with drugs and feels that he has a serious addiction problem and worries his family and friends when he leaves prison for this stint. He has two daughters with two different women and he is quite nervous that his two baby-mamas are going "to give me hell about me not being around anymore because I have not been around in the past." He talked a good amount time about trying to do better moving forward but is not sure because of the drugs.

Mike (29)

Mike is a 29-year-old father who has two kids. He has a serious drug problem all throughout his life. He has been in and out of rehab many times throughout his life for struggles with PCP. He has been locked up about 4 times with issues with drugs and violence. Mike talked about his fatherhood as being very complicated. He has had a rocky and "fucked up" relationship with the mother of his older daughter's mother but has had a "very tight" relationship with his second daughter's mother. He has always been in his second daughter's life but non-existent in his first daughter's life and got upset about it throughout the interview. But now that his children are getting older, he goes out of his way (especially while in jail) to foster a relationship not just with him but also between each of his daughters.

King (24)

King is a 24-year-old father with two kids with two women. He is a very very insightful man. Throughout his interview, he was talking to me about his growth and change and expressed that the "vehicle behind my growth is KOS – knowledge of self." He talked about how he did not have KOS during his teenage years as he made significant mistakes that impacted his life. King graduated high school, went to college but had to leave

because he got into trouble with drugs and being in the streets. When his children were born, he talked about his KOS "got stronger and made him a better parent." He is and has always been involved with his children's lives and has made significant effort to have positive relationship with his baby-mamas. He understands that his re-entry is going to be hard proving to his family that he now has KOS but he has to show it to them more than ever.

Melvin (24)

Melvin is a very charming and well-spoken 24-year-old father of a two-year-old girl. He is one of the biggest figures in this jail unit. Everybody knows Melvin and everyone talks to him and seeks advice from him. Melvin was one of the most memorable fathers in our very first fatherhood groups. Though he is 24, he has quite the mature perspective (at times). He has struggled with serious drugs such as cocaine and PCP since he was 13 and he has served a lot of time during his teenage and transition to adulthood years. He has missed out of many important events but the one that stands out is being locked up 4 days before his daughter's birth – "I was so pissed and mad when they came and got me man." He talks about how hard it has been being a father behind bars but being a partner has been the biggest issue because he loves his girlfriend so much. And he knows he is disappointed her because she talks about feeling abandoned by him. Melvin is big on being a chef and owning his own restaurant when he gets out at some point (he was later convicted on murder and sentenced to 30 years two months after this interview).

Edward (29)

Edward is a calm and insightful 29-year-old father with a 4-year-old daughter. Edward is pretty good at "waxing poetic" about the important themes we talked about. Edward has served serious time during his teenage years for charges such as robbery and burglary and missing out on a chuck of his transition to adulthood. Edward is mindful that he should not have been doing those things but he admits that "the streets was all I know while I did not know myself." But interestingly, Edward bounced back significantly from his serious juvenile stint. He went to school, went to community college, got a great job, got his own place. But, sadly "I lost it all again because I did not have my mental faculties together." He went back into the streets and he got locked up for serious charges. When he had his daughter before he went in, he expresses how he hoped to stop doing these things but understands that he needed to learn harder lessons to be the father to her down the line. He is excited about getting out in a couple of months and doing right by her. He feels nobody can stop him from doing good moving forward.

Lucky (31)

Lucky is 31-year-old father who has been in too many circumstances that have prevented from reaching some significant professional and personal goals. He is very athletic and had a scholarship to many colleges but he bounced around from school to school (actually 3 times) for getting incarcerated for various issues such as sexual assault, drugs, and assault. He admits that he was the downfall for himself "I can't blame anybody but

myself and that's all on me that I am not in the NFL." Sadly, the same patter occurred when he was out of school permanently and he was working full-time at great places. He was consistently getting locked up and things got worse when he met his baby-mama. While he has always been involved in his daughter's life both in prison and outside of prison, he has a complicated and volatile relationship with his baby-mama. He talks about her with disgust and anger as he recalled how her actions jeopardize a few promising opportunities. He is uncertain how to move forward with her when he gets out soon.

Marc (29)

Marc is a petite 29-year-old father with a fiery yet charming personality. He has long dreads (almost going down his back) and has a wide smile. He is an easy go lucky guy but as I talked to him about his experiences being incarcerated he reveals an angry soul. Marc is wrapping up a serious charge – 1st degree assault. He is actually being released to go home in two days (from this interview). He is on cloud nine. He, just like the other guys I have interviewed, actually had a lot of promising opportunities growing up whether in school or with jobs but "with the streets calling, it's hard to not pick up and say 'hello'." Marc describes missing out a lot of time of his 8-year-old son's life and talks about how as his release date has been nearing, he has asked his baby-mama to bring his son to talk and start connecting with him. Marc is proud about his growth and change and felt that doing such a long stint has him motivated to never come back here "I'm done with this place…no doubt." But, he also knows he has a lot of making up to do as well.

John (30)

John is a 30-year-old father of two adolescent boys. John grew up struggling with drugs. Both parents did drugs most of his life and he was taken away from them because of their extensive drug use. John felt that was a big turning point in his life because it was then he started to feel abandoned "I just felt that they left me for drugs and that I did not matter so I said fuck it and went with my grandma." John also had his share of problems with drugs as he started selling cocaine at 13 years old. His juvenile record is quite extensive but most of his time behind bars as he transitioned into adulthood with serious charges such as distribution and attempted murder. He has two kids with two women. He has juggled being a father but his stints get in the way constantly. Both baby-mamas are turned off by his behavior and he talks about how he will struggle significantly being a father to his two boys.

Brian (21)

Brian is a 21-year-old father who is very confident about his upcoming release from prison. He has a son who he was not around for (even missing the birth) and he also has a lot of social capital to help him get back on his feet. He talks about dark times during his teenage years where he was constantly fighting, constantly doing drugs, and constantly being locked up. He is open about feeling shame about his previous transgressions and talked half of the interview about changing – "I am not a saint and will never act like I am but I do realize that I was not mature and that coming into my own has helped me to

know how to be a man and not a boy." Brian even admitted that being a father is more than giving money and wants to strive to being a better father and to not be in the streets. Brian wants to be a better father than his own father who was around but not involved at all – "now that shit was hurtful."

Donnie Kelly (30)

Donnie is a 30-year-old father to two boys with two different women. Donnie has lived the life of a mob boss. His case is pending and he will be released from this jail relatively soon (for a basic violation of probation) but will be caught up by 1st degree murder and RICO charges (that will send him away for a minimum of 25 years). He is very upset with himself about getting caught (not so much doing the things that he was doing). He understands that his re-entry will be very brief and very quick before he goes off "down the road" for his organization's crimes. He knows that his sons will grow up without him as they have been doing and talks about how hurt that makes him because "I always wanted to be the father my father was to me but I just took a completely different route." He is not sure what story will be told to his sons about him but he does want them to know that "my father was a big nigga in the streets making moves. Donnie does not know much about his fate but does know that he loves his sons.

David (32)

David is a 32-year-old father with three kids (though one of his twins died during childbirth). David is the only veteran from the military in my sample. He fought in the Iraq war and loss a lot of his peers. It is also important to note that before he joined the military he had lost a lot of his friends by violence in the streets before the age of 18. Combine losses from childhood, losing his peers during the war and finally losing his daughter, he went downhill very fast with poor coping skills. David used drugs extensively to deal with the PTSD and the trauma from all of this loss. He talks about how his marriage took a major tool from his mental health and drug issues. After being locked up a couple of times, he got into a drug program and talks to a therapist. Though he relapsed (current stint) and is serving a couple of months in jail. Because of a violent crime he committed earlier in life, he talked about how his fathering has been impacted in many ways "man, I am not even allowed to go on field trips with my kids because I had a felony…that shit sucks man."

RambodaSambo (30)

RambodaSambo is a 30-year-old father who is one of the most memorable fathers who I interviewed for this study. He has done so many drugs over his lifetime that interviewing him was very complicated. The damage of the drugs really showed itself. He would be talking and then stop. He would talk about one topic and then talk about something completely different than the next. He could not recall a significant part of his life. These things made this interview very hard. He was still very funny and charming. He does not have any biological kids at all but he cares for his girlfriend's 3 kids. He talks openly about being a stepdad and how much he enjoys it. He is serving time for violent crimes

and talks about how he should stop these behaviors "because I need to step up and show my girl and her kids that I am here for them and not the streets."

Malik Rakim (30)

Malik Rakim is a deep-thinking 30-year-old father of a 2-year-old son. Malik has been through a lot in the streets but he focused a lot of his interview when talking about his transition to adulthood, his trouble with the law, and issues with fatherhood with two people – his mother and his baby-mama. Throughout the interview, he talked with much disdain (and almost venom) when talking about his baby-mama and his mother. He would consistently refer to them as "bitches." Specifically, he believes that his mother treated his father like "shit" when his father was locked up and "it is the same damn thing my bitch ass baby-mama is doing to me when it comes to my son. Saying shit like your daddy ain't shit and never gonna be shit." Malik feels that he is a loving devoted father but having a baby-mama who "disrespects a man" it is going to be hard for him to be a father. Malik is quite ambitious when it comes to his re-entry as he talks about going for higher education, running a business, being a father, and owning a huge house.

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