

COUNSELING CHILDREN OF INCARCERATED PARENTS

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Children of incarcerated parents are often forgotten as victims of crime. The ambiguous loss of a parent to incarceration can be a difficult process, made more so by general reluctance to share the fact of an incarceration with peers or adults outside of the family. Studies show the effects of parental incarceration to be overwhelmingly negative, both in school and afterwards. Children may develop and exhibit external or internal behavioral issues. My study is a content analysis of books used by counselors and teachers of children of the incarcerated. Through such analysis, the most frequently used mechanisms and strategies were discovered. By also regarding the use of play therapy in counseling children, this study could lead to the creation of new methods to be tested for use with children of incarcerated parents. Children are most often taught about the emotions they may be experiencing regarding the trauma of a parent's incarceration and the importance of building strong relationships within the family and with others. This study shows the impact that the mechanisms of counseling have on children of incarcerated parent's future development.

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This research must mainly be dedicated, however, to the families that are affected every day by incarceration, in hopes that they will become more than an afterthought, and will receive the help and comfort that they deserve.

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## **Introduction**

### Children: The Hidden Victims of Crime

Children of incarcerated parents, referred to in literature at times as the “hidden victims” of crime, are surprisingly common. “Of the Nation’s 72 million minor children, 2.1% had a parent in State or Federal prison in 1999” (Mumola, 2000: 1). In the same government funded Bureau of Justice study published in 2000, it was found that “parents held in U.S. prisons had an estimated 1,498,800 minor children in 1999,” a number that is sure to have increased in the last decade (Mumola, 2000: 1). While these may be small portions of the population, the traumatic event of having a parent arrested and incarcerated is of vast importance to these youth.

### Demographics

In Mumola’s (2000) report, many statistics about children with a parent in prison were stated. Over half of prisoners report having minor children, 22% of whom were under age 5. “The majority (58%) of the minor children reported by State and Federal inmates were less than 10 years old, and the average age of these children was 8 years old” (Mumola, 2000: 2). The fact that most children are in the middle of their youth and formative years is cause for great alarm, as they are greatly affected by the traumatic event of parental arrest and incarceration.

It is important to note certain disparities in both the prison population and their families. Mumola (2000) reported that black children were nine and hispanic children

were three times more likely to have an incarcerated parent than white children. The racial disparities inside prisons are often discussed as an issue in the criminal justice system. Clearly, it is also a problem for the families affected by a parent's incarceration. "About 1 in 7 parents in State prison reported indications of a mental illness" and "70% did not have a high school diploma," leaving their children at a greater disadvantage in the education setting (Mumola, 2000).

Different effects are seen between having a mother or father being incarcerated. Fathers are more likely to be imprisoned, consistent with general crime statistics showing more male participants than female. "At yearend 1999 an estimated 1,372,700 minor children had a father in State or Federal prison, while another 120,100 children had a mother in prison" (Mumola, 2000: 2). No statistic exists for the number of children with both parents in prison.

### Mothers in Prison

The incarceration of the mother seems to have a greater impact than the incarceration of the father on children, mainly because of the roles each parent plays in the lives of their children prior to incarceration.

Mothers were more likely than fathers to report living with their children prior to admission. About 64% of mothers in State prison and 84% of those in Federal prison reported living with their minor children prior to admission, compared to 44% and 55% of fathers, respectively. (Mumola, 2000: 4)

More mothers live with their children and are primary caregivers prior to imprisonment. “Thirty-one percent of the mothers in prison had been living alone with their children compared to 4% of fathers” (Mumola, 2000: 4). The incomes of mother inmates, however, are often less than a father’s income. More mothers than fathers reported incomes of less than \$1,000 prior to their arrest (Mumola, 2000).

While children more often lived with their mothers before the woman’s arrest, almost twenty percent of mothers in the State system were homeless in the year before their arrest and incarceration (Mumola, 2000). The instability in the home environment continues after the arrest and conviction, as children are often moved to a new caregiver or placed in the foster system. Most parents remaining in a relationship cited their partner as the primary caregiver after their incarceration, with the remaining claiming other relatives, particularly grandparents, as the new caregiver (Mumola, 2000). Fewer mothers than fathers cited the outstanding parent as the child’s current caregiver, fathers were less likely to remain with children while mothers were incarcerated (Mumola, 2000). Due to the nature of their crimes, parents in prison reported average sentences “over 12 years (146 months) in State prison and 10 years (121 months) in Federal prison” (Mumola, 2000: 6).

Recidivism remained an issue despite the children left behind during incarceration, “over 75% of parents in State prison reported a prior conviction; 56% had been incarcerated” (Mumola, 2000: 7). Between the lengthy sentences and the high

likelihood of readmission, children rarely saw their parents during any stage of their adolescence without visitation. This is often difficult because “over 60% of parents in State prison were held more than 100 miles from their last place of residence,” and a majority of both mothers and fathers report having no personal visits from their children during their incarceration (Mumola, 2000: 5). Children are separated from their parents for long periods of time, with little logistical reality of visitation.

#### Effects of Incarceration

There are many negative effects of parental incarceration on children, stemming both from the ambiguous loss that is incarceration and the secrecy associated with the imprisonment of a family member. A parent that is incarcerated is viewed as an ambiguous loss because they are still there mentally, but their physical presence is nonexistent apart from rare visits to the prison in which they are housed. The likelihood of recidivism also contributes to this ambiguity, as their return is never a certainty. Families often do not share all of the factors surrounding an arrest and sentencing with younger children. This is done with the intention to protect the child as well as to maintain privacy for the family. However, because the child does not have complete disclosure of information from their family, they are often timid to share what information they do have with outsiders.

Studies have shown negative effects in children’s behavior after a parent’s incarceration. Behavioral shifts are generally put into one of two categories. *Externalized*



*behaviors* include aggressive acts, violence, verbal reactions, and otherwise notable behaviors. *Internalized behaviors* occur when a child seems depressed, anxious, grows quieter or more subdued, or likewise behaviors.

### **Research Question**

This project will look into the content of books written for counselors of children with incarcerated parents. Both counseling guides and instructional books will be used to gain insight. Counseling guides include books that contain material for sessions with groups of or individual children. Activities, lesson plans, games, and discussion guides mentioned will be analyzed. Instructional books include those books written for children, but in the manner of educating rather than story telling. The idea behind these books is to begin a discussion of the issues they deal with, leading to further counseling for children of incarcerated parents. Using sociological analysis, the books will be searched for common themes and strategies used by counselors and taught to the children with whom they are working.

What strategies are employed by counseling guides working with children of incarcerated parents to help children with their struggle of parental incarceration?

What themes emerge in language when discussing incarceration and its effects on the family and children?

## **Methodology**

For this project, content analysis is the most logical research method to use. The study involves both children and prisoners, who are difficult populations to study; both are particularly vulnerable populations. Children, especially in the kindergarten to sixth grade age group specified for this study, are much less likely than adults to understand the implications of participation in a study. Their participation must be approved by an adult guardian, as the children themselves are not informed enough to properly consent.

Prisoners are also vulnerable, despite the fact that they are, for the purposes of this study, legal adults. Prisoners are made vulnerable because of their incarcerated status, which makes their voluntary consent questionable. Social pressures to participate are more greatly felt by these vulnerable populations. By using content analysis, the difficulties encountered through attempted interaction with these populations are avoided.

A content analysis of guides for counselors working with children of incarcerated parents gives a fuller picture of the material available than would an interview or other form of research. All guides used are publicly available, making them likely resources for professionals or other adults who may encounter these types of families. Analyzing the content of these books shows common themes as well as what areas may be lacking in treatment practices. This allows for a prediction of ways to improve current methods. As a research method, it is easier to code themes in the wording used in books than to

analyze the content of actual sessions with children of incarcerated parents, particularly under the time constraints of this study.

Content analysis uses various forms of media to look at the presentation of a particular issue. In this study, the content being analyzed are guides for counselors of children with incarcerated parents. Content analysis develops a system of counting and categorizing various terms or patterns in the chosen form of media to create an idea of the social implications or perceptions of an idea. Content analysis is particularly useful because it is easy and inexpensive in comparison to other forms of research (Babbie 1992). It is generally reliable and easy for other researchers to imitate to achieve similar results. According to Babbie (1992), content analysis also has the benefit of eliminating much of the bias that comes in interviews and surveys because it is an objective collection of data, and because it is unobtrusive and the researcher cannot influence the content, as it is already published.

There are some limitations to content analysis. There can be researcher bias, like in any method of research. Removing personal biases is challenging, but made easier through content analysis through the objective and more impersonal nature of the method of study. Because of this impersonal nature, content analysis does little to note relationships between individuals, which is a critical part of many research projects. This is difficult in this study, because the relationship between the counselor and the child is very important for success. In this study, the content is but a small sampling of one type

of the many varieties of literature available to the families of the incarcerated. Despite these drawbacks, however, content analysis is the most useful method for this particular project.

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Ambiguous Loss Theory and Children of the Incarcerated**

Families of the incarcerated are seen by many researchers as suffering from ambiguous loss. “The loss connected to incarceration can be defined as ambiguous, because it remains unclear, indeterminate, and validated by the community” (Arditti, Lamberet-Shute, Joest 2003: 196). As discussed previously, families of the incarcerated are often isolated in their community and cannot properly grieve the loss of the individual for fear of the associated stigmatization. The loss of a parent to incarceration is made more ambiguous because “the cycle of imprisonment and release tends to be *repeated*” (Wildeman, 2010: 286). There is no sense of finality when such repetition can, and often does, occur. Theories of ambiguous loss describe the issues that accompany the irregularity of such a situation as incarceration.

Parental loss due to incarceration “produces effects similar to the effects of parental loss by other means” through the children’s need to bond with adults outside of their family (Bockneck, Sanderson, Britner IV 2009: 324, 331). When a bond with a parent is broken through loss, similar bonds are sought out in others such as the caretaker or a therapist, thus emphasizing the need for strong mentors to children of incarcerated

parents. Ambiguous loss can force bonds outside of the family by creating family boundary ambiguity, where “family members are uncertain in their perception about who is in or out of the family and who is performing what roles and tasks within the family system” (Bockneck, Sanderson, Britner IV 2009: 324). Children can be confused by the loss and the subsequent changes in the family that lead to confusing situations in living and responsibilities. “Separation caused by parental imprisonment may be more harmful for children than other forms of parent-child separation, because the nature of the separation during parental imprisonment is more traumatic” (Murray, Farrington 2008: 275). While some effects may be the same, due to the ambiguity and trauma associated with incarceration and the surrounding events, parental loss from imprisonment is cause for serious emotional distress in children.

“Often people who experience ambiguous loss resist clarifying information for fear of the consequences of knowing” (Bockneck, Sanderson, Britner IV 2009:329). Children are often told false stories, or very little information about the incarceration of their parent. In Ambiguous Loss Theory, what information they do gather is very basic because knowing the truth can be harder than believing fantasy. In gathering clarifying information, children can begin to see their parent as “bad” rather than an individual who simply made a bad choice. “Children must deal with a [parent’s] absence, make sense of confusing or nonexistent explanations for [their] absence, and visit foreboding institutions such as prisons” (Wildeman 2010: 286). For these and related reasons,

counselors working with children of incarcerated parents must be knowledgeable in the effects of parental incarceration on various aspects of family life before effectively helping their wards.

## **Literature Review**

### Children of Incarcerated Parents

America's criminal justice system has a higher incarceration rate than any other country today. Some scholars estimate "that about 10 million children are affected by parental involvement with the criminal justice system" (Arditti, Lamberet-Shute, Joest 2003: 196). Most researchers cite the same statistics that an estimated one and a half million children had a parent in prison in 1999 and "another 3.5 million children have a parent on parole or probation, with the number likely increasing each year. (Arditti, Lamberet-Shute, Joest 2003:196). "One-fifth of these children are under 5 years of age" and "58% were under 10 years of age" (Clopton, East 2008: 195). Parental incarceration is difficult, but even more so at this particularly vulnerable period in a developing child's life.

Some effects of parental incarceration are strongly supported in the academic community, such as the increased risk of criminal activity and incarceration. "Children with parents in prison are 5-6 times more at-risk to become involved in the criminal justice system" than their peers (Miller, 2006: 478). This is a startling statistic, which often leads people to question the biological and environmental determinants of crime.

Children may be learning crime as a way of life through their upbringing in a type of criminal culture, or they may be predisposed to it due to some genetic factor. What is sometimes referred to as the “mass imprisonment” of the lower classes “may contribute to a system of stratification in which crime and incarceration are passed down from fathers to sons (but not daughters)” (Wildeman, 2010: 285).

As are the poor, people of color are a disproportionate representation in the correctional system. Consequently, African American children are nine times more likely to have an incarcerated parent and Hispanic children are three times more likely to have a parent in prison. (Miller, 2006: 483-4)

Socioeconomic and other factors must be considered when attempting to understand the full impact of a parent’s incarceration on children. Prisoners and children are two of the most protected groups in terms of research, making studies of children of incarcerated parents difficult to conduct. “The rare look into children’s views exists largely in non-empirical venues such as newspaper accounts or support group websites” (Nesmith, Ruhland 2008: 1119). What research does exist, however, shows the alarming effects that the loss of a parent to incarceration can have on children.

#### Changes in Academic Performance After Parental Incarceration

Children that have a parent in jail have been shown to be “at increased risk for academic failure and school dropout” (Dallaire, Ciccone, Wilson 2010: 285). Behavioral problems cause issues in school, as children of incarcerated parents often act out or internalize their feelings in ways that are inappropriate in a learning environment.

Teachers and students both notice the changes in children of incarcerated parents, in a survey of teachers “more than 50% of the participants reported that children with incarcerated parents experienced more of the problem behaviors. . . , and fewer of the non-problematic behaviors. . . than other children in their class” (Dallaire, Ciccone, Wilson 2010: 283). Children similarly describe their poor academic and behavioral performances in school (Bocknek, Sanderson, Britner, IV 2009: 328).

Some explanations exist for the lower performance level of children of incarcerated parents in school, ranging from phobias to lower IQs in this population. Multiple studies have found that children of incarcerated parents “showed lower IQ scores and lower achievement on standardized tests at age ten” (Dallaire, Ciccone, Wilson 2010: 281). Teachers, too, may affect the child’s ability in school as their own perceptions and stereotypes can affect their treatment of a child. When a child is not expected to perform to the same standard as others, the often will not perform as well in school. An “indication of transient school phobia among the six-to-eight-year-olds” of recently incarcerated parents could result in poorer academic performance (Sack, Seidler, Thomas 1976: 624). Inability to go to school, and a related fear of the institution, assumedly would lead to poor performance. The child’s home life must also be accounted for, as “the quality of the care giving situation and the stability of care were the greatest risks to children’s academic achievement cited by these teachers” (Dallaire, Ciccone, Wilson 2010: 283). A child’s home life undoubtedly changes drastically with the loss of a



parent to incarceration, which can lead to stress in other areas of life, such as academics, as well.

### Social Standing of Families of the Incarcerated

The social stigma associated with having been incarcerated is well known, but the stigma created for the family of the incarcerated is less noted. Children assume this stigma because of caregiver expectations and behaviors. “Partners of incarcerated men often withdraw from social networks (Braman 2004), thereby diminishing the number of ties children can draw upon” (Wildeman, 2010: 287). The “unwanted state” of having an incarcerated parent is understood by children as they attempt to hide this fact from peers and adults outside of the family (Lange, 2000). “Society offers the children no means of rationalizing or justifying their loss, no honorable way out,” most often labeling the children, too, as deviant, merely for their parent’s actions (Sack, Seidler, Thomas 1976: 623).

Children learn from their caregivers to avoid questions about their incarcerated parent, also avoiding “rejection by withdrawing from meaningful relationships” (Miller, 2006: 477). If they do not themselves withdraw from relationships with peers, many are “told by friends that they couldn’t come over to the house because ‘your dad’s in jail’” (Sack, Seidler, Thomas 1976: 623). Caregivers and the children of incarcerated parents often feel as though they are constantly being scrutinized because of the incarcerated person’s actions (Harman, Smith, Egan 2007).

Because children and their caregivers spend so much time practicing secrecy and learning to be comfortable on their own, they become hardened to the system and to others around them. “The concern, naturally, is that if the resiliency of the children and their caregivers is emphasized too much, then the hard-won sympathy for these families will be at risk” (Nesmith, Ruhland 2008: 1127). As people begin to understand an individual situation, they come to see that it is not the fault of the child or caregiver, leaving these parties free from the stigma attached to incarceration. When they are again a part of the norm, their struggle is lessened because it is no longer viewed as a problem. The stigma has negative effects, but it also ensures that the family of the incarcerated is noticed if dangerous behavioral or familial changes occur.

#### Likelihood of Delinquency for Children of Incarcerated Parents

It is commonly understood that having a father in prison is “the single best predictor of criminal behavior” (Lange, 2000: 62). Children may mimic the lost parent’s behavior in order to maintain a type of relationship with them, commonly resulting in antisocial behavior or delinquency (Sack, Seidler, Thomas 1976). Other factors must be accounted for, such as the changes in the family that are consequent of a parental incarceration. According to some researchers, “aspects of family life contribute more to children’s maladjustment than the single factor of having a history of parental incarceration” (Aaron, Dallaire 2010: 1482). The chaotic home environment that may be a result or cause of parental delinquency has just as much effect, if not more, on juvenile

delinquency as parental incarceration. Because a child remains in that environment when a parent goes to jail, it is assumed that the environment plays a large role in likelihood to commit crime. “Older children may show the cumulative effects of a chaotic childhood with a parent involved in the criminal justice system” (Dallaire, Ciccone, Wilson 2010: 285).

The stereotypes and academic struggles of children of incarcerated parents also play a role in their delinquency. Children of incarcerated parents, as well as the incarcerated parents themselves, are often impulsive and do not think about the consequences of their actions, which “has also been shown to be a key determinant of criminal activity and child behavior problems” (Geller, Garfinkel, Cooper, Mincy 2009: 1193). Delinquency can often be predicted by earlier behaviors. Changes in behavior after a parent is incarcerated “may include emotional withdrawal, low self esteem, failure at school, acting out or anti-social behaviors, delinquency, and an increased risk of intergenerational incarceration” (Lopez, Bhat 2007: 140). If noticed and treated at an early stage, the behavioral problems experienced by children of incarcerated parents can be stopped before they lead to larger problems of delinquency.

#### Behavioral Changes in Children of Incarcerated Parents

“Many ex-inmates who gain or regain custody of their children find that their children have more significant behavioral problems” than prior to the events surrounding incarceration (Lange, 2000: 65). Parental incarceration is seen as a negative behavioral

influence in two ways, through both internalizing and externalizing behaviors.

Internalized behaviors include “guilt, rage, sadness, depression, and anxiety,” in other words, personality and more subtle behavioral changes (Bocknek, Sanderson, Britner IV 2009: 324). Externalized behaviors occur when a child acts out, and can include “truancy, pregnancy, drug abuse, diminished academic performance, and disruptive behavior” (Miller, 2006: 477-8). Externalizing behaviors are more noticeable, and therefore more often treated, but internalizing behaviors can be even more serious, if not more so. Mere exposure to the trauma of a parent’s arrest and incarceration can lead to symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder. “Prisoner’s children tend to experience more childhood adversities than their peers” which can also contribute to their behavioral challenges in various circumstances (Murray, Farrington 2008: 276). Some initial studies in the area have shown that children “would manifest symptoms in internalizing or externalizing behaviors if the parent in prison was a female or male, respectively” (Bocknek, Sanderson, Britner IV 2009: 330).

#### Internalizing Behaviors

“Virtually nothing is known from high quality studies about the risk of internalizing problems for prisoners’ children in the short or long term,” however the symptoms of internalized behavior are often discussed as effects of parental incarceration (Murray, Farrington 2008: 274). The two most commonly mentioned reactions are depression and lack of attachments (Miller, 2006). Losing a parent during childhood “can

negatively affect children's sense of security, and cause internalizing problems in the short and long term" (Murray, Farrington 2008: 274).

Insecure attachments created by the loss of a parent and subsequent changes within the family can lead children to view themselves and others in an extremely negative light (Schlafer, Poehlmann, Coffino, Hanneman 2009). Children lose their sense of self-worth, and begin to lack trust in others. Children attempt to maintain what they can of a relationship with their lost parent, oftentimes by taking "on some of the parent's characteristics, even if antisocial" (Sack, Seidler, Thomas 1976: 625). These antisocial behaviors can also come from other factors, "either by choice or the circumstances of a complicated family environment" (Bocknek, Sanderson, Britner IV 2009: 329).

As children often blame themselves for their parent's wrongdoing, anxiety and depression are common among children of incarcerated parents. "Anxiety and depression are the main dimensions of internalizing disorders, and are highly correlated" (Murray, Farrington 2008: 279). Because children have not yet fully developed cognitively, their emotions are harder to control. They often do not understand and cannot express what they are feeling. In traumatic circumstance, "children are vulnerable to a host of negative emotions, including sadness, anxiety, fear, anger, depression, and guilt" (Lopez, Bhat 2007: 142). Girls are more likely to internalize their behaviors in reaction to parental incarceration and other stressors, while boys are more likely to exhibit externalizing behaviors (Wildeman, 2010).

### Externalizing Behaviors

Caregivers “tended to see their children as having grown more disruptive and aggressive and less obedient” during the incarceration of the parent (Sack, Seidler, Thomas 1976: 624). Often such externalizing behaviors are the result of internal turmoil that “can be manifested in reactive behaviors such as physical and verbal aggression, withdrawal, hyper vigilance, or sexualized behavior” (Nesmith, Ruhland 2008: 1120). Children of incarcerated parents more easily fall victim to their frustrations, and were observed to make “frequent trips to the nurse’s office, but did not have any noticeable physical symptoms” (Dallair, Ciccone, Wilson 2010: 284). The most commonly observed externalizing behavior is aggression, which can be seen both at home and in a school or otherwise public setting. “These aggressive reactions were more likely in response to feelings over the loss of the father,” which is more common in parental incarceration than the loss of a mother (Sack, Seidler, Thomas 1976: 626).

There have been some observed differences between male and female children’s behaviors in relation to parental incarceration. “Studies conclude that boys respond to paternal absence with increased externalizing behaviors” (Wildeman, 2010: 287). The separation of a boy child from their prime male role model can be more difficult than other types of separation, and it often falls to teachers or counselors to reduce their aggressive behaviors (Gellar, Garfinkel, Cooper, Mincy 2009). Teachers often feel a greater sense of responsibility to students that appear to be going through an emotional

struggle that is evident in a change of behavior. Whether internalized or externalized, a notable change in behavior is a serious sign to teachers that their pupil may need greater assistance.

### Explaining Incarceration

When a parent is arrested and incarcerated, it is left to the caregiver to explain where the parent has gone and why. “Explanation is often vague or deceptive, and many of the children learn to cope with the reactions of their peers by practicing their own evasions and deceptions” (Sack, Seidler, Thomas 1976: 623). Children learn the cues about how to explain their parent’s absence through the explanation that is given to them. This makes the caregiver’s role all the more important, because the initial explanation shapes the entire process of grieving and coping for the child and their loss of a parent to incarceration.

### Caregiver’s Explanations to Children of the Incarcerated

Because the caregiver is often the spouse of the incarcerated, or is somehow closely related to the individual their own personal grief “often inhibits the familial communication necessary to process loss” (Bocknek, Sanderson, Britner IV 2009: 331). While caregivers are often advised to be honest in their explanations, this is typically not the case, particularly for the youngest children. “Often, only the older children knew the truth” (Sack, Seidler, Thomas 1976: 621).

The most common theme found in explanations given to young children about their parent's absence is deception (Lange, 2000). This "deception leads to confusion, distrust, and uncertainty" (Miller, 2006: 476). Parents often change the stories and provide vague explanations such as "he did wrong and had to be punished" (Sack, Seidler, Thomas 1976: 621). Caregivers attempt to protect children from the truth, which they fear to be a difficult story to comprehend. In doing so, children are often left hoping for more information, and in some cases are left with whatever their own imagination creates as the story for their parent's absence.

Just as the caregiver determines the explanation that a child will receive, they too control who knows of the incarceration outside of the family. "There is growing recognition in the empirical and therapeutic literature that teachers can provide valuable support to children with incarcerated parents," but due to the social stigma associated with such events many caregivers are wary to share such information (Dallaire, Ciccone, Wilson 2010: 282). Taking into account the teacher as an individual, "their personal experiences with a teacher and the individual needs of a particular family," the caregiver must do what is in the best interest of the child and family when deciding whether or not to inform those outside the family of an incarceration (Dallaire, Ciccone, Wilson 2010: 289).



### Children's Explanations of Parental Incarceration

Because children are not often given the full story behind an incarceration, their imaginations and personal perceptions greatly influence their opinion of the truth. They are often more fearful because of the lack of understanding they are given by caregiver explanations (Lange, 2000). Children are generally less interested in the process or what happened, more focused on the fact that their parent is now gone (Sack, Seidler, Thomas 1976). Commonly, with the explanations they are given, children begin “identifying one’s parent as *criminal* and therefore *bad*” (Bocknek, Sanderson, Britner IV 2009: 329). With the conflicting emotions a child can experience based on the confusion accompanying the incarceration and subsequent explanations and events, privacy becomes an important issue for many children of incarcerated parents.

The deception and secrecy typically embedded in caregiver’s explanations translates into children of incarcerated parents demonstrating a need for privacy and a value of privacy in family matters (Nesmith, Ruhland 2008). Making it even more difficult to discuss their trauma, “children were usually instructed not to discuss their imprisoned parent with peers” (Sack, Seidler, Thomas 1976: 623). The desire for privacy in these matters stems from the stigmatization that is felt by the families of incarcerated individuals. While the child may not experience it directly, the caregivers also must their of the risks they face in society. In one study, “nearly all the children and youth understood their need or desire to reveal their secret with others and the risks associated

with doing so” (Nesmith, Ruhland 2008: 1123). Just as they comprehend more of the incarceration than caregivers believe, they also are more attuned to their emotions than many therapists understand. Children’s dangerous internalizing behaviors are magnified by the feeling of exposure, as they “may worry about how to answer questions about their incarcerated parent or in some cases they have been told not to share the information” (Clopton, East 2008: 195). Adding another reason to cause anxiety creates further turmoil for what are typically already pained children.

#### Effect of Age on Explanations About Incarceration

Younger children receive less of an explanation of the incarceration than their older siblings or counterparts. This is often due to the caregiver’s “belief that it is harder for a young child to cope with parental incarceration than it is for an older child” (Dallaire, Ciccone, Wilson 2010: 284). It is shown that “developmental stages play a significant role in the child’s ability to comprehend parental involvement in the criminal justice system. In fact, they are a major determining factor of how a child will respond” (Miller, 2006: 483). Young children are often more affected by parental incarceration because they often spend more time with their parents, not being in school fully yet, “because of their needs at the early stages of development, and because they may be more likely to witness a parent’s arrest” (Dallaire, Ciccone, Wilson 2010: 285). That being said, there is a general idea that elementary teachers more often have a greater involvement in the family lives of their students and are more aware of their family

situations, making an intervention in the school more possible for younger children (Dallaire, Ciccone, Wilson 2010).

### Changes in Family Structure After Incarceration

Individuals that are incarcerated typically share some common features in their background. “Prisoners are more likely than the general population to be unemployed, to have low social class, multiple mental health problems, many criminal convictions, marital difficulties, and their own experiences of abuse and neglect” (Murray, Farrington 2008: 276). These histories hold true in the lives of their children as well, and for “children raised in high-crime neighborhoods, incarceration loses its novelty, or even worse, becomes a sort of badge of honor for some” (Nesmith, Ruhland 2008: 1120). Children of incarcerated parents are used to the factors most often associated with crime and crime itself, making crime a sad, but real, part of life. “It is common for this population to join gangs and become involved in perennial delinquent activity that leads to involvement” in various stages of the criminal justice system (Miller, 2006: 478).

Children are “likely to live in single-parent, impoverished households characterized by residential mobility” (Shlafer, Poehlmann, Coffino, Hanneman 2009: 508). Residential instability is perhaps the most disturbing, as at times the child does not know where they are sleeping that night, or may not have anywhere to sleep at all. The impoverished nature of families of the incarcerated is amplified by their often minority status. In looking at the population in question “children were most likely of color and

reported living in families of color” (Bocknek, Sanderson, Britner IV 2009: 327). The single parent is most often the child’s mother or the spouse of the parent in prison, which is most often their father.

One of the common themes in children of the incarcerated is anticipation of the incarcerated parent’s return. “Legal parent-child reunification is not always an option,” however, because “police dictates that if a child is in foster care for 15 of 22 months, parental rights are terminated” (Miller, 2006: 474-5). Oftentimes children live with other family members and thus reunification is possible, but in those instances where both parents are incarcerated, or a child is unable to reside with other family members, it can be difficult for parents to regain custody upon release from prison. The life of a child before, during, and after a parental incarceration can be full of turmoil.

Children of prisoners experience years of trauma and disruption while their parents are engaged in criminal activity, then are subjected to separation from their parents and potentially additional trauma in witnessing arrests, and finally suffer a lack of support necessary to heal. (Bocknek, Sanderson, Britner IV 2009: 324)

Because of the traumas and other changes that a child encounters with the incarceration of a parent, many familial strains are amplified to the child, despite efforts to keep them hidden.

### Economic Struggles for Families of the Incarcerated

Incarceration affects future and current income of both the individual that is jailed and their family. “Prisoners earn little while incarcerated and even after release, men with

a history of incarceration face structural and social barriers to employment” (Geller, Garfinkel, Cooper, Mincy 2009: 1187). Because families cannot count on the imprisoned parent for stable, sufficient income, the caregiver and other families are put at greater economic strain. For some, “women appeared to gain a new sense of financial independence and reexamined the value of their partner” but this is not the case in the majority of families (Harman, Smith, Egan 2007: 799). Most look forward to the return of their partner’s support financially, and during the incarceration have an increased reliance on public assistance and a decrease in true independence (Harman, Smith, Egan 2007).

“Families of incarcerated parents have more financial problems and poorer health than before the incarceration” (Aaron, Dallaire 2010: 1481). This is due to

material hardships as a mother’s report that she has not met at least one major need in the past year due to the lack of financial resources, including: requiring subsidized or free food, losing phone service, losing utility services, being evicted, not paying the full utility bill, not paying the full rent or mortgage, or not seeing a doctor when one was needed. (Geller, Garfinkel, Cooper, Mincy 2009: 1191)

The sole income of the caregiver is little to live on in today’s material culture, and many families of the incarcerated must go without basic needs while the parent is in prison.

Apart from the loss of another stable income with a parent’s incarceration, “the unavailability or loss of child support, and new expenses associated with incarceration including the sharing of financial resources with the inmate” also contribute to a lack of

monetary resources for the family of the incarcerated (Arditti, Lamberet-Shute, Joest 2003: 200).

Even after an inmate is released from prison, financial hardships continue for the families. “Parents suffer financial hardships confounded by stigma connected to incarceration, and also potentially by societal stigmas associated with public assistance” (Arditti, Lamberet-Shute, Joest 2003: 202). After release these hardships continue because these stigmas do not easily go away.

#### Added Responsibilities of Children of the Incarcerated

While children are often kept from the truth of an arrest and incarceration, they are greatly affected by its consequences for family life. Children of incarcerated parents have to mature quickly to deal with the circumstances, “a function of having more responsibilities on their shoulders and of rising to the challenge of being more self sufficient” (Nesmith, Ruhland 2008: 1127). The loss of one parent to incarceration leads to an increased need for help inside and outside the home to maintain a functioning lifestyle. “For some children, it gives them a sense of purpose and ability. . . . For others it brings out a nurturing side of them” (Nesmith, Ruhland 2008: 1124). Children of incarcerated parents have increased expectations in the home because of greater strains in the household, but in a main study on the topic, “children spoke of their lives in a positive light despite the adversities they confronted” (Nesmith, Ruhland 2008: 1127).

### Changing Caretaker Relationships Accompanying Incarceration

Families of the incarcerated form a strong bond in the absence of that individual. According to Nesmith and Ruhland's study, "children were remarkably sensitive to, and attentive of their caregivers' needs and emotions" (2008: 1124). The subjects in this study

expressed a great deal of appreciation and gratitude for the caregiver's efforts in raising them in the face of challenges. The children were observant of their caregiver's emotions, reflecting their understanding of the caregiver's needs with precocious clarity and empathy. (Nesmith, Ruhland 2008: 1124)

Children can also react to the relationship of the caregiver and the incarcerated parent. This often leads to conflicting emotions as the child worries "about both parents, while feeling pressured to conceal or understate the concern over the incarcerated parent" (Nesmith, Ruhland 2008: 1124).

The family life of children with incarcerated parents must also be considered in a discussion of their relationship with their caregiver. In Aaron and Dallaire's 2010 study, it was found that the more recent the incarceration, the more familial conflict was experienced. This would lead to the belief that as the term of incarceration is carried out, the family learns to deal with the added stressors associated with the loss. "Some women were left to care not only for their own children but also for the biological children of the incarcerated partner" (Harman, Smith, Egan 2007: 799-800). Increased by the other stressors on the family due to incarceration and other societal burdens, "many children described complicated relationships with current caregivers, including several children

who described abuse in their current families” (Bocknek, Sanderson, Britner IV 2009: 328).

#### Relationship of Children with their Incarcerated Parent

A child’s relationship with their incarcerated parent is critical to maintain, despite the difficulties doing so may pose for the family and others involved. “Children’s reactions usually centered around the prisoner’s return, which heightened for both prisoner and spouse the importance of the parental role” even while away (Sack, Seidler, Thomas 1976: 624). Children saw their incarcerated parents as “just as helpful as their non-incarcerated caregivers, suggesting that the children in this sample perceived their incarcerated parent to be an important person in their social support network” (Bocknek, Sanderson, Britner IV 2009: 330). While children may feel that the relationship with their incarcerated parent is still essential, many of the incarcerated “noted that their absence had eroded their credibility and ability to provide a consistent role model” (Harman, Smith, Egan 2007: 804). It is most often the father that is imprisoned, causing a loss of a consistent male role model for children of the incarcerated.

#### Programs for Families of the Incarcerated

Prisons sometimes offer supportive programs for families of the incarcerated. One such example is Girl Scouts Beyond Bars, which helps daughters of incarcerated mothers “enhance their relationships through frequent visits, decrease stress of parent-child separation, and reduce anxiety about post-incarceration reunification” (Miller, 2006:



479). Living Interactive Family Education is a similar program, which works “to increase familial unity between male inmates and their children” (Miller, 2006: 480). These programs are also helpful for the caregiver because they help facilitate relationship building in ways that are sometimes financially or logically impossible for the caregiver alone (Miller, 2006). For many of the programs related to the prison, “the active inclusion of the family in any program of rehabilitation for the prisoner” proves most beneficial to both the prisoner and their family (Sack, Seidler, Thomas 1976: 627).

Programs are also offered that provide mentors to disadvantaged youth. This includes both one on one mentoring and support groups consisting of others that are also affected by an incarceration. It is typically the father that is incarcerated, and in one study of parental incarceration “almost none of the boys could name a male role model” (Nesmith, Ruhland 2008: 1123). This is partially due to the environment in which they reside, which is full of similar individuals to the parent that was incarcerated. “The majority of the children, however, stated that they did not know others outside their own family with a parent in prison” (Nesmith, Ruhland 2008: 1123). “Children report not having someone to talk to about these issues” which leads to the behavioral and other problems most often noted after a parent’s incarceration (Clopton, East 2008: 195).

Support groups can be beneficial in providing a venue in which children can express their feelings and have them validated and explained by others in similar situations. Groups and mentoring programs provide “social support in an environment

where they could safely discuss their thoughts and feelings regarding the incarceration of a loved one” (Lopez, Bhat 2007: 143). Incarceration is often not a validated loss because of the stigma it is associated with. By meeting others in the same situation, the incarceration can be realized. Efforts of programs for the families of the incarcerated should emphasize the “integration of the experience of parental incarceration into family life” (Lange, 2000: 68).

#### Problems in the Mentoring Relationship

Despite evidence that programs for families of the incarcerated are incredibly beneficial, they oftentimes do not work to their full potential. Five of the most common reasons for mentoring relationship termination include “scheduling conflicts, personal or family issues, residential mobility, mentors underestimating the commitment, and match incompatibility” (Shlafer, Poehlmann, Coffino, Hanneman 2009: 513). Children in mentoring programs are typically there because they have few, if any, role models and strong emotional relationships. “Some children seemed to view the mentor as an adult who provided material goods, rather than viewing the mentor as an adult who provided emotional or social support” (Shlafer, Poehlmann, Coffino, Hanneman 2009: 514). Because children do not have many stable supportive relationships, they are unsure how to maintain an effective mentoring relationship.

### Coping Strategies for Dealing with Incarceration

The incarceration of a parent is a traumatic event to a child, whether they are there to witness the arrest or not. Much like age can affect the explanation that a child receives for why their parent is no longer with the family, so to does it affect the methods they employ for coping with the loss. Older children often have “more advanced coping mechanisms to deal with the stresses of parental incarceration” (Dallaire, Ciccone, Wilson 2010: 285). Most commonly, children cope best when they become involved with extracurricular activities, which serves

several purposes for the youth: 1) they were able to engage in something that built some confidence through new skills, 2) it was an outlet for anger or frustration, 3) it provided a focus beyond the stress at home, and 4) often it opened them to new opportunities for friendship (Nesmith, Ruhland 2008:1127).

Children are much more knowledgeable of their surroundings than they are often accredited for, and in one study’s interviews they “offered ideas about navigating their home environments, maintaining contact with their incarcerated parents, and coping with their feelings” (Bocknek, Sanderson, Britner IV 2009: 32).

Children create their own strategies based on their personal knowledge and experience. For counselors, “books about parents who are incarcerated will allow some children the opportunity to ‘see themselves in the books on your shelves’” (Clopton, East 2008: 196). With someone to relate to in their learning environment, children can learn more effective strategies for dealing with stressors and the many emotions that

accompany parental incarceration, because “when children have access to resources that help them cope with developmental challenges, they successfully achieve developmental tasks” (Miller, 2006: 478).

### Visitation and Contact With an Incarcerated Parent

It is believed by most researchers and professionals in the field that contact with the incarcerated parent is incredibly important for the child’s proper development, however, “little research exists about the effect visiting a parent in prison has on a child” (Clopton, East 2008: 196). “The lack of a parent-child relationship can cause irreparable damage to family bonds; therefore, face-to-face contact or written communication is encouraged” (Miller, 2006: 475). Visitation by children is somewhat rare, as “approximately one-half of parents in the correctional system do not receive visits, and the other half report infrequent visits from their children” (Miller, 2006: 476). Visitation is a long process, and can be detrimental in a few ways, as it “generally involves a great deal of time, effort, and money” (Arditti, Lamberet-Shute, Joest 2003: 197). Inmates are often housed very far from their last place of residency, raising the cost of visitation even higher. “Once children are separated from their parents, they often do not have frequent and/or consistent personal contact with their parents (Bocknek, Sanderson, Britner IV 2009: 323).

The most common means of contact with incarcerated family members are phone calls and letters, which can be just as costly as a long drive to the prison itself. In their

study, Harman, Smith, and Egan found that “only collect calls were allowed and often cost between \$1 and \$3 a minute” (2007: 798). Children maintain contact through letters and drawn pictures sent to and from their incarcerated parent. This type of contact is ideal for most families because it is the least costly, but also has shown benefits for the child in that they can release some of the emotions that are contained during a parent’s incarceration. Families of the incarcerated were often disadvantaged prior to the incident, thus making the incarceration and subsequent visits more difficult to manage financially. If a family does have the means to fund a visit, it is sometimes avoided “because of sterile or uncomfortable visiting rooms, child-unfriendly visitation rules, or concerns that prison is not the right place for a child” (Nesmith, Ruhland 2008:1121). Some child-unfriendly rules were found by Harman, Smith, and Egan to be that “children needed to be on visitation lists to enter the prisons, mothers were not allowed to bring diapers or bottles, and obtaining child care was expensive” so visiting with young children proved to be the most difficult, while also thought to be the most beneficial to the child (2007: 797).

When a child does visit their parent in prison, emotions play a large role in decision making. The children, “as one mother said, ‘They don’t react to the place. They react only to their Dad, and ignore the surroundings’” (Sack, Seidler, Thomas 1976: 621). Positive effects of visitation have been shown in that it “may reassure a child of their parent’s well-being, alleviate negative feelings associated with the separation such as

guilt and rejection, and be important in the process of family reunification” (Clopton, East 2008: 196). On the other hand, some children do not wish to visit their parent in prison, having been greatly affected by the trauma of their arrest and incarceration. By avoiding visitation, the child feels they can “protect themselves from further disappointment” in their parent (Miller, 2006: 476)

Prisoners, particularly on the first visit, have to answer many of their children’s important questions that they are afraid to ask their caregiver, such as “When are you coming home?” or more rarely “Why are you here?” (Sack, Seidler, Thomas 1976: 622). Despite such questioning, Sack, Seidler, and Thomas’ study found that “in all cases in which the children did visit, the experience was uniformly described by the prisoner in positive terms” (1976: 622). The caregiver’s emotions must also be accounted for, and because the caregiver often has put so much effort into their relationship, they are more willing to remain faithful and devoted to their incarcerated family member (Harman, Smith, Egan 2007). Caregivers that help maintain a relationship between the child and their incarcerated parent with frequent contact help the child later in life by easing some of the issues associated with parental incarceration (Miller, 2006).

#### Children’s Beliefs About Prison

Prison and incarceration is not often addressed with children at a young age, with such conversations not occurring in a formal setting until later in the school career.

Most of their perceptions made it clear that there was little opportunity for children to learn accurate and balanced information about what prison is like and what it is about. In the absence of information, children will turn to their imaginations (Nesmith, Ruhland 2008: 1126).

Children held a wide variety of beliefs about what prison is like for the incarcerated, “children who had never visited their parents in prison. . . . revealed a wide range of images of prison, from frightening to almost enjoyable” (Nesmith, Ruhland 2008: 1126). The most common theme in children’s answers about prison in Nesmith and Ruhland’s study was fear. Children tended to answer quickly, evidence that they were asked this often or thought about it often. Outside of the population of children with incarcerated parents, there is no data existing that reveals common perceptions of prison.

While they may be sheltered by caretakers in the explanations they are given, most children of incarcerated parents are at a point in cognitive development where they begin “to recognize that there should be consequences to illegal behavior” (Nesmith, Ruhland 2008: 1126). They do not always understand the concept of punishment, but the idea is becoming more relatable to them as they age and participate in school activities that also have rules. These early stages of understanding relate also to the motivation to commit crime, as children see adults “as powerful and self-determining, they are likely to . . . attribute a parent’s unexplained absence from a family as a life choice” (Lange, 2000: 63). Parental incarceration can instill fear in two ways, then, both fear for the parent’s safety and worry about why the choice to commit the crime was made.

### Play Therapy

Play and group therapy are the most effective techniques used when working with children of incarcerated parents. Group therapy creates social structures and allows for the formation of relationships that cannot be had in individual sessions. Play therapy, in combination with group therapy, addresses the main issues of children of the incarcerated by providing easy relationships to build and likely means of communication through play.

### Children and Play Therapy

Play therapy was designed for use with children, for as they develop, their mind works differently than an adult's. "Children's natural language is play," so to effectively communicate with and understand children, play is the most obvious function (Ray, Armstrong, Warren, Balkin 2005: 361). Play therapy is appropriate for all levels of developing youth, as "play is the way children learn what no one can teach them" (Landreth, Bratton 1998: 1). Children's mental processes are different than those of adults, but "all individuals, *including children*, have the innate human capacity to strive toward growth and maturity" (Guerney, 2001: 15).

Play therapy is useful for children that have dealt with or experienced trauma. "Children are unable to express certain complicated emotions, such as guilt or resentment, because of the need for abstract thought to understand such emotions" (Ray, Armstrong, Warren, Balkin 2005: 360). Because of the difficulties children have in expressing such complicated emotions, play is useful in reducing children's defenses



(Hall, Kaduson, Schaefer 2002). “The child plays out feelings, bringing them to the surface, getting them out in the open, facing them, and either learning to control them or abandon them” (Landreth, Bratton 1998: 2). During play therapy, the child can act out the entire experience and feelings rather than simply discuss events. This is more comprehensible to the child’s mind, and allows for better treatment of the child.

#### Methods and Practices of Play Therapists

Play therapy is a noteworthy practice because it treats the patient, rather than the problem. “The approach is not symptom specific or problem oriented. . . rather directed at the internal self of the child--that part that is not necessarily apparent in external behaviors” (Guerney, 2001). There is a general “trend toward the preventative role of play therapy” in that it seeks to adjust behaviors before they escalate into more pressing issues (Landreth, Bratton 1998: 3). Play therapy also focuses on developing the relationship between the child and therapist, claiming that the emotional bonds will lead to better interpretations of behavior as well as more truthful dialogue within the sessions.

Art is a large part of play therapy. “Most children find it more comfortable to express their fears through drawing as opposed to verbalizing them” (Hall, Kaduson, Schaefer 2002: 519). It is the therapist’s task, then, “to put into words what is experienced and observed in the child’s” actions in each session (Landreth, Bratton 1998: 6). Play therapy is sometimes criticized for its lack of structure. The thought behind the non-

structured play in therapy is that the child can charter the course of the therapy so that it best helps him or her.

There are a few major tenets in play therapy that are critical in its application. Landreth and Bratton outline the most crucial roles of play therapy and guidelines to its use. The role of the therapist, while secondary to that of the child, is important in facilitating a child's development in play therapy. The therapist is meant to ensure that the child feels safe emotionally and physically, and to gain an understanding of the child's world through their play. Therapists are meant to encourage play and expression of emotions as well as promote the child's own decision making rather than reliance on the therapist. The two most important are likely the therapist's maintenance of an atmosphere where the child is safe "to assume responsibility and to develop a feeling of control" and to ensure that the child directs the therapy (Landreth, Bratton 1998: 6) (Guerney, 2001). Play therapy is helpful for children because they learn their own sense of self control and develop a greater sense of the emotions that are experienced, particularly in traumatic events.

#### Goals and Benefits of Play Therapy

Play therapy proves beneficial for children who have experienced trauma because they learn to deal with their internal turmoil before it is expressed externally.

In the CCPT [Child Centered Play Therapy] relationship, children learn 1) to accept themselves, 2) to respect themselves, 3) to assume responsibility for themselves, 4) to be creative and resourceful in confronting problems, 5) self-control and self-direction, and 6) to make choices and to be responsible for their choices. (Landreth, Ray, Bratton 2009: 283)

Children gain much from their play therapy. They can more properly express their difficult emotions than prior to therapy, and they become more self-sufficient in decision making and responsible behavior.

For children of incarcerated parents, play therapy's benefits are critical in proper development. There is great trauma associated with an incarceration, as well as added responsibility after the parent is jailed. Through the play therapy process children learn to cope with conflicting emotions that are often experienced in a parent's incarceration.

#### Contributions of the Current Study to Literature on Incarceration

Current research discusses the effects of incarceration on children, focusing on behavioral changes and social adaptations. The current study will look into the ways that counselors are aiming to help children whose parents have been incarcerated. These books rely on prior research in their assessment of children whose parents are incarcerated. Lessons, stories, and activities are based on research that describes behavioral changes in children of the incarcerated. By combining existing research with the current study, trends in counseling can be discovered that can help to better treatment and aide for children of the incarcerated.

## **Results**

The content analyzed for this study was found in five books created for use with children of incarcerated parents. Two of the books were activity guides; the rest were primarily story books, but were included because they were more educational in nature. Results of this analysis have been categorized into five main distinctions. Within these five categories, further separations of the content were made. The categories are: It's Not Your Fault; It's Okay to Feel; Let's Understand; Let's Stick Together; and Let's Keep in Touch. Each category describes a theme of information provided by the texts in the content.

### **It's Not Your Fault**

The first category, It's Not Your Fault, refers to language that assures the child that he or she was in no way a factor in the events leading to parental incarceration. There are two main variations of the assurance that maintain a focus on the child. There were eight occurrences of "not your fault" and six of "you are not a bad person." This second phrasing leads to another subsection within this first category. There are six main terms found in this subsection, the two most common being "bad" and "choice" with twelve mentions each. Other terms include consequences and shame with three occurrences, and guilt. The third subsection within this category is describing children's reasons for feeling guilt about their parent's incarceration. While not often mentioned, there were three variations of instances, with not being worthy or good the most common idea.

Common Terms		Focus on You		Reasons for Guilt	
bad	12	not your fault	8	not worthy/good enough	2
choice	12	you are not a bad person	6	wished for it	1
consequences	3	you've done nothing wrong	4	too much responsibility	1
shame	3	you haven't changed	1		
guilt	2				
<b>Total Appearances</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>Total Appearances</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>Total Appearances</b>	<b>4</b>

### It's Okay to Feel

The second category in this analysis was that It's Okay to Feel. This was the largest of the categories, with the largest data set. The main focus in this category as a whole is addressing the various emotions that are felt by children during a parent's incarceration, and dealing with strategies for handling and expressing said emotions. The largest of any sub section in the study is the expression of negative emotions. Negative emotions, most commonly include anger or hatred with twenty-nine occurrences; sadness with twenty occurrences; and confusion with sixteen. There were a total of ten divisions in the negative feelings subsection, with a total of one hundred forty-six mentions of negative emotions. Relatedly, another subsection in the feelings category is the expression of positive feelings. There were twenty total mentions of positive emotions, with safety being the most common at seven mentions. Most of the positive emotions were written in relation to either a visit with the incarcerated parent or the parent's return home after their sentence was complete. A third subsection in this category is that of normalizing vocabulary. There were eight instances of both the words "okay" and "normal" when talking about a child's emotional reactions to a parent's incarceration. The

final subsection describes methods in the content for coping with the changes that occur after a parental incarceration. Encouraging expression and understanding healthy ways to express emotions are the most common ideas found in this area of content.

<b>Positive Feelings</b>		<b>Negative Feelings</b>		<b>Normalizing Emotions</b>		<b>Coping with Changes</b>	
safe/relieved	7	anger/hatred	29	okay	8	encouraging expression	6
excitement	4	sad/hurt/depressed	20	normal	8	understanding	5
love	4	longing/loneliness	19	others	3	ways to express emotion	5
happy	3	confused/mixed	16			changes in responsibility	4
hope	2	ashamed/embarrassed	15			trauma and nightmares	4
		fear/scared	13			safe place	4
		worry/anxiety	10			parents as an example	3
		shy/nervous/stressed	10				
		grief	8				
		unloved/rejection	6				
<b>Total Appearances</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>Total Appearances</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>Total Appearances</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>Total Appearances</b>	<b>31</b>

### Let's Understand

The third category for analysis is Let's Understand, which encourages learning and comprehension. Being books created mainly for the purposes of education, this category had the largest number of subsections. The first subsection is understanding prison life. The content often described what life is like in prison to the children. They describe daily life as well as various protocols for inmates. The second subsection is a description of the proceedings associated with an arrest. Children are not often able to be present at proceedings, particularly the trial and often the arrest. This subsection discusses the court, judges and lawyers, and sentencing four times, as well as the arrest,

booking, and even the actual illegal act. The most informative of these subsections is the simplest. Two of the books had a glossary page, while the others contained detailed descriptions of various vocabulary words for a total of fifteen occurrences. There were two analogies found in almost all the books, relating prison to the idea of “time-out” eight times, and the idea of laws as rules four times. The next subsection is a focus on developing future and goal setting skills in five places and other life skills such as social skills in four places. The final subsection contains ideas about explaining the event of incarceration. The text focused on allowing the child to ask questions and letting the incarceration serve as a tool for education and learning.

<b>Prison Life</b>		<b>Proceedings</b>		<b>Vocabulary</b>		<b>Developing Other Skills</b>		<b>Explaining Incarceration</b>	
orders	4	court	4	general	15	future	5	questioning	5
release	4	judge/jury	4	time-out	8	skills	4	learning	4
schedule	3	sentence	4	laws as rules	4			protecting	2
uniforms	2	arrest	3					truth/honesty	2
		booking	2						
		illegal activity	2						
		trial	1						
<b>Total Appearances</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>Total Appearances</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>Total Appearances</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>Total Appearances</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Total Appearances</b>	<b>13</b>

### Let' Stick Together

Let's Stick Together serves as the fourth category for analysis. This category is formed on the basis that children need to build a system of supportive people around them to help them through a parent's incarceration. The most common person cited as a means of support is a teacher or counselor with twenty-one, followed by other adults with

fifteen mentions. Friends, the non-incarcerated parent, and other adult relatives are all cited only six times each. Also discussed in this category are the challenges to building a support system. One is the idea of group therapy rather than individual, with eight mentions, which gives children more peer support, but perhaps less adult attention in the group. The difficulties children have with trusting others and the trouble that schools may have identifying the population also gain mention in the content.

Supportive People		Challenges	
counselor/teacher	21	group therapy	8
other	15	building trust	6
group of similar children	8	identifying the population	2
friends	6		
parent	6		
other relative	6		
<b>Total Appearances</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>Total Appearances</b>	<b>16</b>

### Let's Keep in Touch

The final category is Let's Keep in Touch. This section mainly includes methods of keeping in contact with the incarcerated parent along with other topics associated with maintaining the parent child relationship while imprisoned. Letters were the most often mentioned means of contact, with twenty-three cites; visitation was just behind at seventeen; and phone calls had six mentions in the texts. Other ideas for discussion included rules and challenges of visitation seven times; the benefits of contact five times; and most often a call to the counselor to help the family maintain contact with the incarcerated individual.



Finally a chart was made categorizing the activities found in two of the books into the five aforementioned distinctions. This chart can be found in Appendix A. The fewest activities were focused on the idea that it's not the child's fault, with only two activities in this section. There were forty-seven activities dealing with emotions and expression, and forty-three that focused on education and understanding. These two categories also provided the most information in the analysis of other content.

<b>Types of Contact</b>		<b>Other</b>	
letters	23	need for aide	12
visitation	17	rules/challenges	7
phone call	6	benefits of contact	5
<b>Total Appearances</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>Total Appearances</b>	<b>24</b>

### **Analysis**

The content will be analyzed sociologically in two ways. First, the repetition of the coded words or phrases offers significance. Analyzing the large presence or absence of any number of themes is telling for the outcome of the research. The second method of analysis is to looking at the context of some of the content, as it can alter the meaning of the text, and offers the reader further insight into the author and the experts in the field.

#### It's Not Your Fault

Children often feel that they are in some way the cause of their parent's incarceration. More frequently mentioned in other research directly involving the parent, child, or family, the common feeling of guilt or inadequacy is common among children affected by incarceration. Acknowledging these and other reasons for guilt is important

because it normalizes the children in their minds among their peers. Stating that this was a normal assumption, and later discussing the fact that it is not true, is beneficial in a child coming to terms with their parent's incarceration.

The title of this category comes from the most common focus on the child. Since these are counseling guides for children of the incarcerated, there will be a focus on the child in therapy. The emphasis, however, is placed upon the children themselves and not on their incarcerated parent or any person's actions. Reassurance for the child that the incarceration is not his or her fault is critical to aide in their processing of the incarceration as well as their healthy development in the future. Other ideas in this category serve simply as more specific ways to assure the child that it is not their fault, they have done nothing wrong, and they are not a bad person.

There is an overwhelming presence of the word "bad" in discussions of parental incarceration for children. It is commonly used in conjunction with the idea of a parent's choice to commit an illegal act, or with the idea that neither the parent nor the child is a bad person. The emphasis on choice is very important. Children are influenced by society in the opinion that criminals are bad people. Constant repetition that the person is not bad, simply their choice was bad, helps the child internalize this belief. Teaching children about choice also serves as an opportunity to understand the consequences of their own choices, and how to make good choices in the future.

Although only a small portion of the data, the discussion of guilt verses shame is important. The lengthy discussions of choice likely influence this lack of acknowledgement of guilt and shame, because the content is focused on helping the child realize that the incarceration had nothing to do with him or her. Guilt and shame are very different emotions. While guilt is completely acceptable in certain situations, in cases of parental incarceration, the child should not feel guilt. Because they have done nothing wrong, there is no reason for a child of an incarcerated individual to feel guilt. Shame is made out to be worse than guilt by the content in which it is discussed. Shame comes from embarrassment, and shame is likely just as common as guilt among children of the incarcerated, if not more so. Children feel the need to keep their parent's incarceration a secret because of the social stigma they are taught through experience and familial relationships and teachings. This secrecy leads to feelings of shame about the current state of their family. While incarceration is not a desirable state, it is nothing that a child should feel guilty about or ashamed of, as they were in no way a cause of its occurrence.

#### It's Okay to Feel

Before discussing the types of emotions mentioned in the content, it is important to note the ideas of the books about normalizing children's experiences. Telling children that what they are experiencing is "normal" or "okay" helps them develop the confidence they need to express their emotions. Seeing that other children also struggle gives them a peer group that shares a common understanding. Because of the secretive nature of many

families regarding an incarceration, children often can think that they are the only ones experiencing such a loss. These guides, particularly used in group therapy settings, show children not only that they are not alone but also that they are just like a large group of other children in similar situations.

### Negative Emotions

By far the majority of the emotions mentioned and discussed in the texts are identified as negative. Anger and hatred are the most repeated. These words acknowledge the externalized behaviors that are most commonly seen in children of the incarcerated. Aggressive acts are often fueled by anger, and these acts are most commonly cause for the events which lead a child to counseling. Hatred is mentioned in several different contexts. Hatred of the incarcerated parent or even self-hatred in the child is described as bad and unhealthy. Hatred of the police who made the arrest or the judge, jury and other participants in the trial and sentencing are also noted as improper placements of such an emotion. The “right” hatred is an expression of hatred toward the act that lead to the parent’s incarceration or the choice that the parent made.

Other negative emotions occur quite frequently as well. Sadness, hurt and depression as well as longing or loneliness also have high numbers in the content. This seems logical because of the alienation that can accompany the social stigma of having an incarcerated parent. Most often, longing is expressed as a child in a story saying that he or she misses a mother or father. This longing is compounded by the potential loss of

friends after an incarceration, and the sadness can lead to the internalized behaviors such as depression. Similar to these common expressions are feelings of rejection. Despite the similarities between these groups of emotions, rejection by the incarcerated parent is the least often mentioned emotion. This could be due to the idea that children in prior research most often express positive views of the incarcerated parent. Rather than increase potential negative biases about the relationship, the content acknowledges rejection as a possibility, but focuses less on the emotions in a relationship and more on the purely individual feelings of the child.

Embarrassment, discussed as shame in the previous category, is also connected to society's ideas about inmates and their families. Fear is most commonly identified as for the safety of the parent while he or she is incarcerated. It can also be fear in relation to the experience of the arrest or the act itself. If a child was witness to the arrest, he or she likely has stronger emotions of fear and social anxiety because of the traumatic event. Anxiety and nervousness are mentioned the same amount in the content. This could be due to their close link in actuality; anxiousness is often cause for nervous behaviors, and vice versa. These feelings, much like sadness and longing, can lead to internalized behaviors because of the social anxieties they could create.

Confusion is another common emotion in the content, but more interesting is the occurrence of mixed feelings. Children sometimes cannot identify the emotion that they are experiencing. Their "feelings vocabulary" may not be fully developed, which is why

play is very important in counseling children. Through play, the counselor is able to identify the emotions a child may be feeling despite his or her inability to express them verbally. One book describe the mixture of emotions a child may have as “scrambled eggs feelings.” Feeling “all mixed-up” or having these “scrambled eggs feelings” refers to the turmoil that a child can be experiencing that cannot be described. Children can be feeling a great number of emotions all at the same time, making them like “scrambled eggs.” This description is easy for children to understand because they have a visual association to something tangible, which makes it easier for them to verbalize and understand.

### Positive Emotions

Outside of the great variety and number of negative emotions in the content, there are mentions of positive feelings as well. The majority of positive emotions have to do with the relationship the child has with his or her incarcerated parent. The most common, that of safety or relief, is most often linked to a child’s relief at hearing from the incarcerated parent that they are safe. Children rely on their caretakers, most often the non-incarcerated parent, to provide a safe, stable, and healthy home environment. While prior research indicates that such an environment oftentimes does not occur, counseling books aim to cast a positive light on the relationships a child has after the incarceration of a parent. Counselors are expected to provide a safe place for children to interact with the

counselor and their peers, as well as a safe place to express any and all of the emotions they can be experiencing.

Other positive emotions are excitement, love, happiness, and hope. Excitement refers to, most often, a child's visit with their incarcerated parent. Only one book mentioned that a child might not feel excitement over a visitation period. This implies that a child will probably be excited to see their parent. Based off of the great prevalence of negative emotions, it is strange to assume that a child would be excited to see a parent who makes them angry, sad, worried, and embarrassed, among other things. Children are also positively reassured that they can and should still love the parent that has been incarcerated. This can be difficult, however, because sometimes the relationship between the incarcerated parent and the child's current caregiver is incredibly strained. When the non-incarcerated parent has a negative opinion of the incarcerated parent, it is even more important for counselors to affirm the child's love for the parent they have temporarily lost.

Happiness and hope, much like excitement, refer in all instances either to a visit to the prison or jail, or to the parent's return home after the completion of his or her sentence. This lacks the acknowledgement of two highly likely scenarios in incarceration. A parent could be incarcerated for a very long time, perhaps even an entire childhood. Looking forward to the parent's return, then, will only lead to more emotional problems in the future. Happiness, hope, and excitement over the return of the parent also fail to

recognize the high rates of recidivism among American criminals. It seems that the texts are avoiding pessimist biases, by allowing children to be hopeful about their parent's return. This makes the future potential, and somewhat likely, separation incredibly more difficult according to Ambiguous Loss Theory.

Also in this category are discussions of the variety of ways that are mentioned in the content for helping children cope with the changes they may experience after a parental incarceration. Most common are calls to have adults encourage a child's expression of emotion as well as his or her understanding of what happened and the changes that will likely be experienced. The idea of safety for children is discussed in the need for counselors and families to help create safe places for children to express their emotions in healthy ways. Anger, as the most common emotion mentioned, is discussed here in that there are methods seen as both healthy and unhealthy ways to express anger. Children are meant to identify healthy and unhealthy ways to express anger, or other emotions, and practice methods for healthy expression. The underlying theme here of understanding emotions that will later be expressed is so prominent that it leads to the formation of my third category.

#### Let's Understand

Being that this content comes from educational and instructional materials, there is a large focus on understanding. Two of the books had a page completely devoted as a glossary, defining words that children might not yet know. This general knowledge is



applicable in everyday life as well because some words, like embarrassed, can be used in other contexts. There are two main comparisons made in the texts, those of prison as a “grown-up time-out” and those of laws as rules. These explanations are geared toward younger children and help begin the explanations of questions like “What is jail?”, “Who goes there?”, and “Why?”

With these two explanations as a base, the proceedings of the criminal justice system are also explained to the child. From the arrest through the court and trial process all the way to booking and fingerprinting, the basics of the process by which a person is sentenced to jail are outlined so that children can better understand. By gaining a basic understanding not only of why their parent has gone to jail, but also how, children can better cope with their emotions because they are able to use more cognitive skills and logic.

Once a parent is incarcerated, because the explanations given to children by their primary caretaker are often vague and deceptive, children are left to their imagination to determine what life in jail is like. Some children think of jail as a kind of vacation in which their parent is just lounging around with other adults that made bad choices. Thus, the extremely structured nature of daily life in prison is described, as well as the strict schedule, the importance of following the orders of security officers, all the way down to detail about how uniforms are required. The more detail a child has about the

imprisonment and about prison life, the more well-equipped he or she will be on a visit and later in life should they be put in a similar situation.

A guide for parents or the counselor for how they should explain incarceration to children can be created with the content. The two main themes are to allow children to comprehend at their own pace, and to be truthful, but selective if necessary. The first theme is the most cited. Allowing children to ask questions and using an interaction or activity as a learning experience helps make them more comfortable with the event and with the fact that their parent is incarcerated. The second idea is incredibly important, whether it is often mentioned or not. Young children do need to be spared certain gruesome details of their parent's illegal act, arrest, or life in prison. That being said, the most complete truth and honesty are necessary and useful in helping a parent explain the incarceration.

### Let's Stick Together

The importance of building a system of supportive adults and peers is another crucial element of the content in this analysis. The most surprising result here is the low expectation of parental support. The support of the non-incarcerated parent is mentioned equal to the support of friends and other adult relatives, only six times through the five books. Being that children often reside with their non-incarcerated parent, it would seem logical to rely on them for support. This data is potentially skewed simply because of the audience intended for the books. Counselors and teachers are the most often cited group

for support of children, and they are also the intended consumer for the content. The prevalence of groups of children in similar situations is also interesting to note. As the benefits of group therapy are often discussed both in prior research and even in some of the content in this analysis, the number of appearances of this group as a means of support was surprisingly low.

The low mention of certain types of support, mainly parental support and group therapy, can relate differently to two main ideas in the content. Both supports can be difficult to create and maintain because of the difficulty children can have building trust in relationships. After the loss of a parent to incarceration, a child's trust is wounded because of the betrayal they can feel by that parent. It can be difficult for him or her to trust others because the trust with their incarcerated parent has been breached. Recreating a trustworthy relationship with adults can take a long time, which is why the books and prior research on play therapy recommend multiple sessions over an extended period of time. A second difficulty for counselors and teachers is trying to identify the population. Again the secrecy of families of the incarcerated can make such identification challenging because they do not want to bear the stigma of social acknowledgment of their familial incarceration. Once children and families of the incarcerated are identified, creating groups of children for sessions or offering other forms of support is much easier and more beneficial.

### Let's Keep in Touch

The benefits of continued contact with the incarcerated parent are well researched and expansive. Continuance of the relationship leads to a fuller development of the child later in life. While society may not see them as the most positive influence, parents serve as the most constant and logical role model for children, despite bad choice they may make through the life course. The benefits of contact are mentioned only a few times in the content, but the times they are mentioned they are long discussed and enumerated.

The most frequently mentioned form of contact between children and their incarcerated parent is through letters. This is the least expensive form of communication, and often times the easiest. Children and parents are able to express almost anything in letters, only monitored by the potential that they may be read by security officials at the prison. In one of the books in this analysis, each lesson has an addition to a series of letter correspondences between a young boy and his imprisoned father. These letters contain the ideal communications in this relationship, but not necessarily the most likely. They serve simply as a starting point for children and their counselors to generate ideas for their own letters to parents in prison.

The least cited form of contact is by phone. Phone calls to or from prison and jail are very expensive, making them illogical for families that are often already financially struggling. The expense of remaining close with an incarcerated family member serves as a contention point of sorts within the content. There is often a call for the users of the

guides to help families in whatever way they can to maintain relationships between the child and his or her incarcerated parent. This aide often comes in the form of transportation or monetary support. Monetary support is not an expense of the counselor; it is often in the form of research to find fundraising opportunities or programs that donate to families in need.

While letters may be the most cited form of contact with an incarcerated parent, visitation seems to be the undisputed most important means of communication. It also appears the most controversial. Parents may want to protect their child from seeing the incarcerated parent in prison, which can be a traumatizing experience in itself. The content in this research at times discusses the process of a visit to prison. There are many rules accompanying visiting an incarcerated parent. There are time restrictions and strict rules on contact and location, not to mention some more obscure rules such as what a visitor is permitted to wear. By addressing the potential procedures of a visitation period, the content can begin to desensitize visitation for young children. Children can focus on their parent during the visit rather than the many things occurring around them. Much focus is put on the various emotions that can be experienced before, during, and after a visitation. Some discussion even occurs about possible topics for conversation.

### Activities

In the books that contained activities and worksheets for use with children of incarcerated parent, a few trends can be identified. Each activity or worksheet can be categorized into one of this study's five existing categories, but there was a large disparity between some of the categories. It's Not Your Fault, which was highly emphasized in the content itself, was the main focus of only two activities. These activities still did not focus on the child as an individual, one of them was merely educational material on the idea of stigma. The second was a worksheet called "Like and Different" which led children in their identification of traits that make them both similar to and different from their incarcerated parent. In helping the children see that they are different from their incarcerated parent, this activity gives children the idea that they are not destined to the same fate of incarceration. Identifying similarities, however, helps them to maintain their connection with the incarcerated parent through their own personality. Both ideas, despite their seeming opposition, are critical for the child's processing of the issue of parental incarceration

The second smallest category was the focus on Let's Keep in Touch. The five activities here range from three activities focused on identifying happy memories with the absent parent, to an activity that helps the child write a letter to their incarcerated parent expressing his or her anger at any part of the situation. While this letter is helpful in beginning the child's acknowledgment and expression of their anger or other feelings, it

is not intended for mailing unless it is approved or prefaced with an explanation to the recipient. These results are not truly telling of the focus that counseling has on keeping children in touch with their incarcerated parent. Many activities that focus on maintaining contact, specifically through letters, are likely conducted in counseling sessions, but not necessarily written about or outlined as an individual activity.

The remaining three categories were all much more prominent in the content. Let's stick together, or activities focused on relationship building and support systems, were the focus of twenty-four separate activities. Almost all were intended to help children develop relationships with their peers. Eight of the twenty-four were specifically designed to help children in group sessions relate to each other through commonalities or through starting conversations. Another critical focus in these activities was on the act of asking for help. Activities looked at and discussed different methods for asking for help, various individuals that one could ask for help, and other factors that could affect the process. A telling example is the "Asking for Help" role plays which provides sample scenarios in which the children then act out the best or worst ways to ask for help. All of the activities in this category are beneficial particularly for children with internalized behavior issues because they are given tools for starting conversations and building relationships.

Forty-three activities were devoted to the Let's Understand category. Many of them were the most basic form of understanding and learning. They focused their

material on defining terms associated with incarceration and identifying confusing parts of the process. The remaining activities were aimed at developing children's skills in different areas. Some were meant to help children identify future goals, while others helped build the skill sets needed to achieve those goals. Because children exhibiting externalized behaviors, such as aggression, are most often sent to counseling, activities in this category dealt with learning to listen and follow directions, creating self-control, and other important skills to help a child in the classroom. Some activities, similarly, focused on identifying a child's feelings and the healthiest ways to express their emotions, particularly anger.

That being said, activities in the It's Okay to Feel category were the most prominent, with forty-seven appearances. There was an expansive range of emotions covered in this category and the activities found within its limits. Activities ranged from dealing with specific issues of emotion to broader understandings of the child's internal struggle. There was a focus on identifying feelings within the individual and teaching the children to identify emotions in others. This skill is useful for children of incarcerated parents when interacting with others. Activities in this section also brought about discussions of the event of arrest and incarceration, requiring children to share and be open about the occurrence and their involvement in it. The main idea about these activities was this openness and sharing. Teaching children to share their emotions in healthy and supportive environments ideally allows them to continue such expression



both after the counseling has ended and later in life. The activities in this and the other sections are focused on helping the child process the events of their parent's incarceration as well as preparing them for a successful future.

### **Conclusion and Implications**

In this content analysis of books designed for use with children of incarcerated parents, interesting trends were found and further questions can be raised. The themes of shame, confusing emotions, education, building support systems, and maintaining relationships with the incarcerated parent are prevalent throughout each book used for study. Further research should focus on these categories as they are applied in the actual counseling of children of incarcerated parents. Further research could also identify these themes in family counseling of the incarcerated, and their appearance in the family setting. As a content analysis, this research can serve as a starting point for other research in the area that includes interviews and interaction with the at risk population. These children as hidden victims of crime cannot be ignored any longer without dire consequences. Their futures depend on the help they can receive in this trying time in their lives, and the future of the nation depends on its children. By steering children of incarcerated parents away from crime through counseling and aide, the future crime rates in America could drop, and other unforeseeable benefits could be felt by all.

Appendix A  
List of Activities

It's Not Your Fault	It's Okay to Feel	Let's Understand
looking at stigma	scribble your feelings	what a rule is
like and different	guess the feeling on my face	why we have rules
	feeling monsters	what consequences happen
	ways to express anger	what I have learned
	worry bees	how optimism and pessimism work
	I'm special	my possibilities
	I am good	goal setting
	levels of anger	listening to directions
	anger role play	anger in my body
	feeling anger in my body	dealing with anger scavenger hunt
	feelings leading to anger	problem balloons
	being assertive	ways to calm my anger
	asking before acting	angry uno
	the optimistic story	stinkin thinkin can lead to anger
	true or false game	friendly behaviors
	trust factors	consider the consequences
	my skills	what will I be like
	ice cube	understanding what happened
	chasing away shame	the purpose of laws
	stop the stinkin' thinkin'	realistic vs. unrealistic
	the weight of shame	understanding what is happening
	helpful or unhelpful	wordsearch
	fishing for positive self talk	definitions
	looking at shame	roadblocks to paying attention
	get rid of that stinkin' thinkin'	study habits
	changing bad dreams	impulse control in the classroom
	handling emotions	scrapbook
	this is me	optimism for the future
	I am competent	I'm too good for that
	standing out	if I were a...
	feelings charades	I am a rule follower
	my feelings first aid kit	opportunity quote
	the person i miss	listen and follow direction
	chinese proverb	memory game
	feelings	taking steps towards my goal
	measuring feelings of grief	self-control race
	sad feelings	bag of tricks

<b>It's Not Your Fault</b>	<b>It's Okay to Feel</b>	<b>Let's Understand</b>
	worries	the last thing I said game
	junk in my bucket	top ten list
	belly breathing balloons	school favorites
	extreme makeover-bad dream edition	how do I learn best?
	my story	the golden rule
	relaxation story	my dream house
	seeing the arrest	when I grow up
	looking at distressing situations	
	pushing out pushy thoughts	
	hot seat	
	putting myself on the line	
<b>2</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>44</b>

<b>Let's Stick Together</b>	<b>Let's Keep In Touch</b>
get to know you	staying connected
what's changed	photo frame
how much can you handle alone	memory book
tree of support	complete these sentences
mine field	angry letter
support needed	
asking for help role plays	
trust	
appreciating my caregiver	
asking for support	
getting support	
helping hands	
autograph book	
developing hobbies	
encouragement hot potato	
have you ever	
problems, problems, problems	
putting yourself in someone else's shoes	
showing an interest in others	
social skills tic tac toe	
my future relationships	
meet and share	
autograph books	
commonalities	
<b>24</b>	<b>5</b>

Appendix B  
List of Books Used

- Bender, Janet M. 2003. *My Daddy Is In Jail: Story, Discussion Guide, and Small Group Activities for Grades K-5*. Chapin, SC: Youthlight, Inc.
- Burgess, Stacey, Tonia Caselman and Jennifer Carsey. 2009. *Empowering Children of Incarcerated Parents*. Chapin, SC: Youthlight, Inc.
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- Wittbold, Maureen. 2003. *Let's Talk About When Your Parent Is in Jail*. New York, NY: Rosen Publishing Group, Inc.
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