# Experiences of Professional School Counselors with Children of Incarcerated Parents: A Case Study

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Emily Courtney Brown

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## Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to all of the children of incarcerated parents who shared their stories with me during my years as a professional school counselor. Your vulnerability, courage, and resiliency in the face of adversity inspired me to want to know more.

**Acknowledgments**

I am grateful for family and friends who supported me in this journey. Thank you to my parents, sisters, friends, and extended family for your continual encouragement, understanding, and love. Mom and Dad, you believed in me, gave me the confidence to reach my academic goals, and encouraged me along the way. I would not be here without you.

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## Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to describe the experiences of professional school counselors (PSCs) with children of incarcerated parents (CIP). The study addressed three research questions: *In what ways do PSCs conceptualize the needs of CIP*? *In what ways do PSCs work with CIP*? and *How do PSCs experience barriers in their work with CIP*?

An instrumental case study design (Stake, 1995) was used to consider the experiences of PSCs in a single school district in a Southeastern state. Data sources included interviews with fifteen PSCs, observation of PSC professional development, and document review of policies and practices guiding PSCs in the school district. Themes emerged from analysis of the data sources within the context of the case. Findings suggested PSCs noted observable impacts of parental incarceration among school-age children, including emotional responses, behavioral or cognitive responses, and academic problems. PSCs in the study conceptualized loss experiences for CIP in a way that was consistent with ambiguous loss theory (Boss, 2006), describing changes in family relationships, uncertainty, and stigma. Findings also suggested PSCs sought to meet the needs of CIP using skills inherent in their professional role; however, they experienced barriers navigating professional roles and meeting the needs of CIP. Based on these findings, implications for PSCs and counselor educators and recommendations for future research were provided.


*Keywords*: children of incarcerated parents, school counseling, ambiguous loss, case study

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## Chapter One: Introduction

The prison population in the United States has dramatically increased over the past few decades. An estimated 2.3 million adults are currently behind bars, and over one-half of these inmates are parents of children under the age of 18 (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2010). This prison population includes 1.1 million fathers and more than 120,000 mothers (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2010). Two-thirds of incarcerated parents are serving time for nonviolent offenses, with one quarter of these convictions relating to drug offenses (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2010).

More than 2.7 million children, one of every 28 children in the U.S., currently have a parent in prison (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2010). However, the number of children impacted by parental incarceration is considerably higher. Recent estimates indicate that more than five million children under the age of 18 are currently living or have formerly lived with a parent incarcerated at some point since the child's birth (Murphey & Cooper, 2015). This correlates to one in every 14 children in the United States. Because nonresidential parents are not included in these figures, this is likely an underestimation of the number of children impacted by parental incarceration (Murphey & Cooper, 2015).

Children of color are more likely to experience parental incarceration due to disproportionate incarceration rates among persons of color (Graham & Harris, 2013). Recent studies found that 11.5% of Black children, 6.4% of Hispanic children, and 6.0% of White children experience parental incarceration (Murphey & Cooper, 2015). Children who live in poverty are also over four times more likely to experience parental incarceration than those who do not live in poverty (12.5% vs. 3.9%) (Murphey & Cooper, 2015). Because of the higher numbers of men in jail, most children of incarcerated parents (CIP) experience separation from a father. Over 40% of the total numbers of incarcerated parents are Black fathers (Pew Charitable

Trusts, 2010).

Having an incarcerated family member is an adverse childhood experience (ACE) (Anda et al., 2006; Felitti et al., 1998). CIP are more likely to experience multiple additional ACEs, such as parental divorce, neighborhood or domestic violence, and living with parents who are mentally ill, suicidal, or abusing substances (Murphey & Cooper, 2015). These multiple ACEs connect to health risk factors and may cause long-lasting harm for children's well-being and development (Anda et al., 2006; Felitti et al., 1998). Although the factor of parental incarceration is difficult to separate from other ACEs (Johnson & Easterling, 2012), several researchers found parental incarceration to have unique influence on physical and mental health problems and behaviors in children and adolescents (e.g., Geller, Garfinkel, Cooper, & Mincey, 2009; Geller, Cooper, Garfinkel, Schwartz-Soicher, & Mincy, 2012; Lee, Fang, & Luo, 2013; Murphey & Cooper, 2015; Porter & King, 2015; Turney, 2014; Wildeman & Turney, 2014). CIP have an increased risk for antisocial behavior (Murray, Farrington, & Sekol, 2012) and may demonstrate academic and behavior difficulties at school (e.g., Cho, 2011; Johnson, 2009; Murphey & Cooper, 2015; Nichols, Loper, & Meyer, 2016; Turney & Haskins, 2014). In Chapter Two, I describe the body of literature providing evidence of the increased vulnerability of CIP.

The rest of Chapter One introduces a conceptual framework for understanding the impact of parental incarceration, particularly losses in family circumstances and social acceptance. I describe key services and interventions for CIP and the potential for professional school counselors (PSCs) to respond to the needs of CIP. The problem and purpose of this study as well as research questions that guided the case study follow. I define key terms and provide an overview of the study's delimitations and limitations. Finally, I describe the organization of this dissertation.

## Conceptualizing Loss for CIP

Various conceptual frameworks attempt to explain the connection between parental incarceration and children's well-being, including ambiguous loss theory (Johnson & Easterling, 2012). Ambiguous loss theory (Boss, 2004, 2006) is a framework for understanding losses that are traumatic and stressful due to a lack of resolution or potential for closure. Ambiguous losses are unclear because a loved one is either physically absent but psychologically present or psychologically absent but physically present (Boss, 2006). Because incarcerated parents are physically absent but psychologically present, CIP may remain uncertain about the circumstances of their parents' return and experience a profound sense of loss. Ambiguous loss theory can explain some of the emotional distress and possible traumatization experienced by CIP (Arditti, 2003, 2005, 2012a, 2012b; Bocknek, Sanderson, & Britner, 2009; Johnson & Easterling, 2015).

Based on the literature, I categorize the losses experienced by CIP as losses of family connections, family stability, and social acceptance. CIP may experience losses in family connections through changes in contact with incarcerated parents or experiences of caregiver distress (Arditti & Savla, 2015; Glaze & Maruschak, 2008; Murray & Murray, 2010; Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008; Poehlmann, 2005; Poehlmann, Dallaire, Loper, & Shear, 2010). CIP may experience family instability related to economic hardship, residential moves, recidivism, and the secrecy of parental incarceration (Geller et al., 2012; Glaze & Maruschak, 2008; Holmes, Belmonte, Wentworth, & Tillman, 2010; Pew Charitable Trusts, 2010; Poehlmann, 2005). CIP may experience a loss of social acceptance due to the stigma of parental incarceration (Arditti, 2012b; Holmes et al., 2010; Luther, 2016; Phillips & Gates, 2010), thus facing the potential of navigating these losses without adequate support (Naudeau, 2010). I outline some services

provided to CIP, including those provided by PSCs, in the next section.

## Services to Support CIP

Services and interventions to support CIP include community interventions, individual and group counseling, peer support groups, and mentoring (Johnston, 2012; Jones & Wainaina-Woźna, 2013). Throughout the literature on services for CIP, there are recommendations for service providers to support CIP and their caregivers with acceptance and understanding (e.g., Allard & Greene, 2011; Boudin & Zeller-Berkman, 2010; Graham & Harris, 2013; Phillips, 2010). Service providers may facilitate interventions in the community or schools using curricula and resources specific for CIP (e.g., Roberts & Loucks, 2015; Spanne, McCarthy, & Longhine, 2010).

Little empirical evidence exists to support certain approaches as most appropriate or effective for CIP (Graham, Harris, & Oliver Carpenter, 2010; Murray et al., 2012). Despite this lack of empirical evidence, PSCs and clinical mental health counselors provide therapeutic services to CIP through individual and group counseling. In fact, 43% of children in mental health services have experienced parental incarceration (Phillips, Burns, Wagner, Kramer, & Robbins, 2002), and there is some evidence that PSCs are providing counseling and other consultative services for CIP (e.g., Lopez & Bhat, 2007; Nichols et al., 2016; Shillingford & Edwards, 2008a).

As outlined by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2012), PSCs address students' academic, career, and personal/social development needs by designing and delivering comprehensive school counseling programs that promote student success. ASCA (2012) provides a National Model for school counseling programs that describes this work in four components: foundation, management, delivery, and accountability. PSCs work with other

educators and use skills of collaboration, leadership, and advocacy to promote change across all four of the components of the model (ASCA, 2012). The ASCA National Model (2012) provides a conceptual framework for the work of PSCs providing services to CIP (Petsch & Rochlen, 2009). However, there is little empirical evidence in the literature about how PSCs understand the needs of and provide services for CIP.

## Statement of the Problem

To address challenges to student success, PSCs first need an awareness and understanding of barriers students experience (ASCA, 2012). ASCA's (2016) ethical standards stated that PSCs need an understanding of "how prejudice, privilege and various forms of oppression based on ethnicity, racial identity, age, economic status, abilities/disabilities, language, immigration status, sexual orientation, . . . appearance and living situations (e.g., foster care, homelessness, incarceration) affect students and stakeholders" (B.3.i). Recognizing the impact of incarceration on students and families is important for PSCs. Although this ethical code refers to youth incarceration, PSCs can also consider the impact of parental incarceration. Incarceration is a social justice issue relevant to PSCs, and understanding the impact of incarceration on students and stakeholders is a personal responsibility for ethical PSCs.

Although this understanding of how incarceration affects students in schools relates to an ethical mandate for PSCs, previous research has not focused on PSCs' understanding of parental incarceration. Other studies of educators' perceptions of CIP found teachers and school officials may lack knowledge and further stigmatize CIP (Dallaire, Ciccono, & Wilson, 2010; McCrickard & Flynn, 2016; Morgan, Leeson, & Carter Dillon, 2013). This is particularly troubling given the aforementioned ambiguous losses and needs of CIP. Although other researchers have begun to consider how educators understand CIP, the efforts of PSCs to

understand and respond to the needs of CIP needs research attention.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore experiences of PSCs serving CIP. This initial inquiry of ways PSCs serve and conceptualize the needs of CIP sought to fill a gap in the literature about school counseling services for CIP. The study added additional insight into manifestations of the needs of CIP in schools, knowledge about how PSCs serve CIP, and information about barriers responding to the needs of this population. Through this study, I provided implications for PSCs and counselor educators about serving CIP. The study also provided foundation and direction for further research.

The study used an instrumental case study approach that allowed for an in-depth exploration of the issue within a bounded system (Stake, 1995). This method is appropriate when the context and setting is relevant for considering the issue (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The phenomenon of school counseling for CIP occurs within the context of social, political, and cultural systems. Therefore, this approach was an appropriate methodological choice. My case study design defined the bounds of this case as a single school district in a Southeastern state. Data sources included interviews with PSCs, observation of PSC professional development, and document review of policies and practices guiding PSCs in this district. Through this instrumental case study of the experiences of PSCs with CIP in a single district, there was an opportunity to understand more about the issue of how PSCs work with CIP.

## Research Questions

The three research questions that guided this study were:

1. *In what ways do PSCs conceptualize the needs of CIP*?
2. *In what ways do PSCs work with CIP*? and

3. *How do PSCs experience barriers in their work with CIP*?

I analyzed data gathered from PSCs in a single school district to explore these questions.

## Definition of Terms

Several key terms appeared throughout this study. Here I define these terms: children of incarcerated parents, professional school counselors, school counseling programs, and ambiguous loss.

*Children of Incarcerated Parents (CIP)* - For the purposes of this study, children of incarcerated parents are defined as minors under the age of 18 with an imprisoned father or mother. Although Murphey and Cooper (2015) expanded the parameters of the term to include children who previously experienced parental imprisonment, this term most commonly refers to children with currently incarcerated parents. The term CIP includes children and adolescents with parents in jail or state and federal prisons.

*Professional School Counselors (PSCs)* – Professional School Counselors are certified counselors and educators with a master's degree in school counseling who are employed in elementary, middle, or high schools to help students overcome barriers to learning.

*School counseling programs* - School counseling programs are comprehensive efforts led by PSCs to promote student achievement through attending to the academic, career, and personal/social needs of all students in the school (ASCA, 2012).

*Ambiguous loss* - Boss (2004) defined ambiguous loss as "a situation of unclear loss resulting from not knowing whether a loved one is dead or alive, absent or present" (p. 554). I use this definition for the purposes of this study.

## Delimitations

This study sought to explore ways PSCs work with and understand the needs of CIP. The main delimitation of this study was the case boundary necessitated by the single instrumental case study design. Only certified PSCs employed in Redmond County Schools, the pseudonym for the selected school district in the Southeastern region of the United States, were eligible to participate in focus groups and interviews during the study. The period for data collection further delimited the sample of participants to those employed in the spring of 2017. Another delimitation in this study was the reliance on self-report interview data from PSCs to understand the topic rather than observations or case note documents from counseling sessions with CIP.

## Limitations

Although case study design provides opportunities for an in-depth exploration of issues, the design also has limitations. Some limitations of single qualitative case study include issues of generalizability, reliability, validity, and researcher subjectivity (Merriam, 1998). These limitations affect the trustworthiness of results and the applicability of findings. This study explored ways PSCs in Redmond County Schools conceptualized the needs of CIP and served CIP, and these findings from a single instrumental case study are not generalizable to the experiences of PSCs in other school districts. I provided more description of case study limitations in Chapter Three.

## Organization of the Study

This chapter introduced the study. In Chapter Two, I describe some conceptual theories found in the CIP literature, including ambiguous loss theory. I review the literature on the impact of parental incarceration framed through loss experiences. I also review literature regarding CIP in schools. A review of services and interventions provided to CIP, including community and

school mental health interventions, follows. Chapter Two concludes with a discussion of connections between literature regarding PSCs and CIP framed through a presentation of the ASCA National Model (2012).

Chapter Three presents an overview of qualitative research and a thorough description of qualitative case study as the methodology for this study of PSC experiences with CIP. A description of my case study design follows, including the boundedness of the case, recruitment procedures, and participants. Chapter Three concludes with my procedures for data collection and data analysis, including my positionality within this case study. Chapter Four reports the finding of the case study after analyzing the data, detailing themes and patterns that emerged for each research question. Chapter Five provides a critical discussion of findings, implications for PSCs and counselor educators, and recommendations for further research. Finally, I provide references and appendices for the study.

## Chapter Two: Review of Literature

Historically, the prison population and population growth were proportionate; however, the prison population in the United States has dramatically increased in the last four decades (Arditti, 2012b). Mandatory minimum sentencing, harsher sentencing laws, the criminalization of drug offenses, and detention of immigrants often target vulnerable populations and are contributing factors for the dramatic growth of the prison population, also known as "mass incarceration" (Kilgore, 2015). Mass incarceration affects families, communities, and prisoners and contributes to a growth in the population of CIP (Kilgore, 2015). In 1985, one in 125 children had an incarcerated parent; the number increased to one in 28 in 2010 (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2010). Parental incarceration affects more than five million children in the United States (Murphey & Cooper, 2015), and more than half of these children currently have a parent in prison (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2010). These children are disproportionately children of color and children who live in poverty (Murphey & Cooper, 2015).

The impact of parental incarceration on children is a relatively new focus of academic research (Wildeman, 2009). Academic database searches of "incarcerated parents" and "parent imprisonment" reveal much of the research on this topic occurred since the late 1990s. Although there have been children of prisoners in the United States for hundreds of years, increased attention to incarcerated parents and their children emerged with the rise in incarceration rates (Craig, 2009). Scharff Smith (2014) credited increased attention on the societal effects of incarceration to the ways mass incarceration makes the problem impossible to ignore. This increased attention comes from both policy makers and academic researchers who investigate consequences of parental incarceration for families and communities. Wildeman (2009) highlighted the importance of this research stating "the American experiment in mass

imprisonment might also have altered the social experience of childhood for recent birth cohorts" (p. 265).

I divide this chapter into five primary sections: conceptual frameworks for CIP, impact of parental incarceration, school experiences of CIP, interventions for CIP, and PSCs and CIP. In this chapter overview, I briefly describe each of these sections.

The first section of the chapter describes ambiguous loss theory as a conceptual framework for understanding experiences of loss by CIP. Ambiguous loss theory (Boss, 2006) provides a way to understand the needs of CIP and explain stress and trauma reactions. I describe this theory and links in the literature between CIP and ambiguous loss theory. I then describe three broad categories of loss for CIP: loss of family connections, loss of family stability, and loss of social acceptance. I connect literature on experiences of CIP to the tenets of ambiguous loss theory by describing parental incarceration as an ongoing situation filled with uncertainty, changes in family stability, and social stigma.

Next, I review research on the impact of parental incarceration on children. I include three sections that describe studies of ACEs, empirical research focused on the physical and mental health of CIP, and research methodological challenges. This section describes correlation and higher incidences of physical and mental health problems for CIP but cautions against inference from these findings.

Next, I describe school experiences for CIP. Some CIP struggle academically, behaviorally, and socially in the school setting. I describe research on educational outcomes for CIP, relational experiences of stigma from peers and teachers at school, and teacher perceptions of CIP. The literature on teacher perceptions of CIP describes the need for additional understanding by educators of how to conceptualize and intervene with this population.

I then describe the literature on interventions for CIP. I review literature describing two conceptual frameworks for developing interventions for CIP, interventions and services provided to CIP, and challenges with interventions for CIP. I categorize five types of interventions for CIP: community interventions, counseling, group counseling and peer support, mentoring, and utilizing resources. I describe both conceptual intervention literature and the few studies providing evidence of effectiveness of services for CIP. This section demonstrates the need for additional empirical research to determine appropriate interventions for CIP.

The final section of the chapter links literature on PSCs and CIP. I use the ASCA National Model (2012) to conceptualize services and interventions provided to CIP. This model describes the functions of PSCs within the components of foundation, management, delivery, and accountability. This section describes the ethical responsibility of PSCs to understand the impact of parental incarceration. Although the literature linking PSCs and CIP is scarce, I include references to PSCs in the CIP literature, and I describe the theme of advocacy for CIP as a responsibility of PSCs. This section demonstrates the need for additional research focused on PSCs' conceptualization and work with CIP.

## Conceptual Frameworks for CIP

Various models conceptualize the needs of CIP and explain links between parental incarceration and children's well-being. Johnson and Easterling (2012) provided a review of several of the most commonly used conceptual frameworks within the literature on CIP, including ambiguous loss theory (e.g., Arditti, 2012b), attachment theory (e.g., Murray & Murray, 2010; Poehlmann, 2005), the bioecological perspective (e.g., Arditti, 2005; Poehlmann et al., 2010), and social bond theory (e.g., Murray et al., 2009). Other conceptual frameworks used in the literature on the well-being of CIP include social interaction learning theory

(Kjellstrand & Eddy, 2011) and stress process theory (Turney, 2014). Johnson and Easterling (2012) recommended additional research for empirical support of these conceptual frameworks.

Because there is not a dominant conceptual framework within the literature, I highlight ambiguous loss theory as a conceptual framework for the purposes of this study. In this section, I describe ambiguous loss theory and applications of ambiguous loss theory to CIP. Based on tenets of ambiguous loss theory, I then describe three broad categories of loss for CIP. These three categories include: loss of connections, loss of family stability, and loss of social acceptance.

**Ambiguous Loss Theory**

Pauline Boss (2016) developed ambiguous loss theory during the 1970's based on her work with families in distress. Boss's early research with families of missing in action pilots following the Vietnam War and families dealing with dementia and Alzheimer's disease guided theory development. Boss (2006) extended the theory for clinical treatment based on her experiences with families of missing workers in New York City following the September 11, 2001 attacks. Throughout her career, Boss (2016) led efforts to test the usefulness of ambiguous loss theory with various populations, including families of missing children, adolescents leaving home, critically ill, immigrants, and those impacted by disasters such as the 2011 tsunami in Japan. Research and clinical work shaped theoretical assumptions and presuppositions for ambiguous loss theory (Boss, 2016).

From the tenets of family stress theory, an ambiguous loss is "a situation of unclear loss resulting from not knowing whether a loved one is dead or alive, absent or present" (Boss, 2004, p. 554). An ambiguous loss is usually more traumatic and stressful than other losses because there is no resolution or certainty about whether the person will return or if life will be as it was

before the separation (Boss, 2006). Family roles, relationships, and functions may become confused or frozen without closure (Boss, 2006). There are two situations of ambiguous losses: in one situation, a loved one is physically present but psychologically absent. In the other situation, a loved one is psychologically present but physically absent. Examples of physical presence with psychological absence situations include dementia, traumatic brain injury, autism, addiction, and depression. Examples of psychological presence with physical absence situations include missing persons from war, desertions, or kidnapping; immigration or migration; military deployment; and incarceration. Both types of ambiguous loss affect relationships and resiliency and can lead to feelings of helplessness and confusion (Boss, 2006).

There are several key components of ambiguous loss theory that emerge in the literature (Boss, 2004, 2006). First, an ongoing situation results in an unclear loss. Second, perceptions of the loss lead to boundary ambiguity. Boss (2006) defined boundary ambiguity as "not knowing who is in or out of your family or relationship" (p. 12), and she noted this variable ranges from high to low for individuals and families. Boundary ambiguity can create problems both sociologically and psychologically. Sociologically, family roles are ignored, decisions are put on hold, or important rituals are cancelled; psychologically, feelings of hopelessness can lead to depression, guilt, anxiety, and frozen grief and coping processes (Boss, 2004). Third, stress results from living without clarity and answers, and trauma can result if the stress becomes unmanageable, immobilizing, and critical (Boss, 2006). Ambiguous loss is a relational disorder with an ongoing trauma, which differs from the traumatic events leading to psychic dysfunction in Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Boss, 2006). Boss (2006) stated, "trauma is the inherent core of PTSD, critical incidents, and ambiguous loss, but ambiguous loss is a relational stressor" (p. 46). Fourth, resiliency is a clinical treatment goal to help individuals and families

cope with the ambiguous loss.

Scholars have tested and applied ambiguous loss theory to various populations to frame and understand loss experiences (Boss, 2016). Carroll, Olson, and Buckmiller (2007) provided a review of 37 research studies of family boundary ambiguity for a range of family experiences: missing-in-action; death of a spouse or child; divorce, remarriage, or stepfamily situations; family member illnesses of dementia, AIDS, or epilepsy; demands on clergy families; and loss of children due to placing them for adoption or adolescents moving to college. Carroll et al. (2007) called for additional research to test the construct of boundary ambiguity with various family situations. Recently, the *Journal of Family Theory & Review* (Blume, 2016) published a special issue on ambiguous loss theory. This special issue included scholarship applying ambiguous loss theory with situations of foster care, caregiving following traumatic brain injury, youth gender transition, and politically enforced or voluntary migration (Blume, 2016). Scholars continue to explore connections between ambiguous loss and grief responses.

CIP experience an ambiguous loss with the psychological presence but physical absence of the incarcerated parent. Parental incarceration is the ongoing situation for CIP that makes the loss unclear. CIP experience boundary ambiguity when family relationships, roles, and circumstances change. CIP can experience stress and trauma in the uncertainty of family situations. The next section describes the application of ambiguous loss theory as a conceptual framework to understand the experiences of CIP.

**Ambiguous loss theory and CIP.** Ambiguous loss theory is one framework for understanding the profound sense of loss CIP may experience. Johnson and Easterling (2012) suggested ambiguous loss theory could offer a conceptual model for understanding the internalizing problems and depressive symptoms of CIP. Arditti (2003, 2005, 2012a, 2012b)

used ambiguous loss theory to explain some of the emotional distress of CIP. She (2012a) suggested confusion and ambiguity from parental incarceration explain posttraumatic stress symptoms and trauma documented among CIP.

The results of two studies offer support for the use of ambiguous loss theory as a conceptual framework for CIP. Bocknek et al. (2009) conducted semi-structured interviews and standardized assessments measuring social supports and symptomology with a sample of CIP ($n$ = 35) ranging from first to tenth grade. Open coding of qualitative interviews supported themes of complex family relationships, stress and coping, and community risk factors. Children reported poor coping skills, hypervigilance, and psychosomatic complaints during interviews. On standardized measures, 77.7% of children interviewed had scores above the clinical cutoff for posttraumatic symptoms on the *Child Report of Posttraumatic Symptoms* measure, and 30.4% of children scored above the clinical cutoff for the Withdrawn subscale on the *Youth Self Report for Ages 4-18* (Bocknek et al., 2009). These posttraumatic stress symptoms and withdrawn behaviors point to internalizing symptoms in CIP when dealing with ambiguous loss (Bocknek et al., 2009).

In another study applying ambiguous loss theory, Johnson and Easterling (2015) interviewed a sample ($n$ = 11) of youth of incarcerated parents about reentry expectations or experiences. Youth in the study had varying definitions of family and described complex relationships and perceptions of incarcerated parents. Youth described shifts in assuming parental roles and responsibilities, including advising incarcerated parents on ways to be successful after incarceration. Youth also communicated uncertainty about their parents as they discussed hopes and expectations upon reentry of their incarcerated parents. These findings are consistent with the uncertainty and changes in family roles that are components of ambiguous

loss theory (Johnson & Easterling, 2015).

These studies support conceptualizing the experiences of CIP through the framework of ambiguous loss theory. Both Bocknek et al. (2009) and Johnson and Easterling (2015) described stress and coping for CIP dealing with the loss of a parent. CIP in both studies describe elements of boundary ambiguity when relationships and contact with incarcerated parents shifted. CIP also expressed uncertainty about parental release from prison and about their reentry expectations, and this aligns to the uncertainty of ambiguous loss theory (Boss, 2006). These findings are similar to experiences of uncertainty and changing relationships I describe in the next section.

## Loss Experiences for CIP

I categorize the losses experienced by CIP as losses of family connections, family stability, and social acceptance. Although there is some overlap in the literature, I will use these three broad categories to describe the literature about loss experienced by CIP. CIP have losses in family connections through changes in contact with incarcerated parents and experiences with caregivers. CIP may experience family instability related to financial stressors, recidivism, and the secrecy of incarceration. CIP may experience a loss of social acceptance due to the stigma and shame of parental incarceration. The following sections describe these losses.

**Loss of family connections.** Ambiguous losses are relational problems (Boss, 2006). The ambiguous loss of a parent to incarceration leads to changes in family relationships and connections for CIP. The literature describes changes in patterns of contact with incarcerated parents and changes in relationships and attachments with both incarcerated parents and caregivers. This section describes literature about the loss of family connections for CIP.

***Contact with incarcerated parents.*** Parental incarceration restricts communication between parents and children. In a special report on incarcerated parents from the Bureau of

Justice Statistics, 78.6% of parents in state prison and 91.2% of parents in federal prison reported some contact with their minor children since incarceration (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008). This contact was more likely to include exchanging letters (70% of parents in state prison and 84% of parents in federal prison) than phone calls or personal visits. Although 19% of parents reported personal visits with their children at least once a month, 59% of parents in state prison and 45% of parents in federal prison had not seen their children since imprisonment (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008). Parents more likely to have contact with their children included mothers, parents residing with their children in the month before the arrest, and parents with shorter prison sentences. These changes in communication and contact can be a loss experience for CIP.

Poehlmann et al. (2010) reviewed 36 studies of incarcerated parent-child contact. They found complex factors influenced the quality and outcome of contact between incarcerated parents and their children, including developmental considerations and the nature of parent-child relationships before imprisonment. For example, mail contact was beneficial for CIP; however, the benefits of prison visitation appear to be limited to the context of intervention programs, with negative or neutral outcomes otherwise. Poehlmann et al. (2010) highlighted barriers to parent-child contact including financial stressors, scheduling difficulties, location of prisons, conditions of visitation, or beliefs that visiting will be harmful for children. More recently, Arditti and Savla (2015) found that prison visitation is distressing for CIP and elevates child trauma symptoms. Both of these studies highlighted the potential distress of prison visitation for CIP and demonstrated that prison environments can negatively influence personal visit contact between children and their incarcerated parents (Arditti & Savla, 2015; Poehlmann et al., 2010). Caregivers are often the gatekeepers for children's contact with incarcerated parents (Murray et al., 2012; Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008), and the next section describes CIP experiences with

caregivers.

***Caregivers.*** While experiencing a loss in contact with incarcerated parents, some CIP also experience changes in caregivers. Most children with incarcerated fathers reside with their mothers whereas children with incarcerated mothers often reside with grandparents, other relatives, or family friends (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008). Glaze and Maruschak (2008) reported that 11% of children with incarcerated mothers reside in foster care or with an agency.

The policies of social services for maintaining parent-child relationships when CIP are in foster care vary by state (Holmes et al., 2010). However, the Adoption and State Families Act of 1997 is a federal law that affects all CIP. With this law, states terminate parental rights for children who have been in foster care for 15 of the past consecutive 22 months and not residing with relatives (Holmes et al., 2010). Thus, mandatory minimum sentences have repercussions for parents and CIP (Holmes et al., 2010). These policies limit parenting capacity during and after incarceration (Arditti, 2005).

Introduction of replacement caregivers into children's environments affects emotional support and connections children experience during parental incarceration. The burden of caretaking may compromise caregivers' abilities to offer emotional support or child care during parental incarceration (Allard & Greene, 2011; Murray & Murray, 2010; Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008; Turanovic, Rodriguez, & Pratt, 2012). CIP may assume new family roles and responsibilities in response to experiences with caregivers, such as caring for younger siblings, caregivers, or parents after reentry into the home (Johnson & Easterling, 2015; Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008).

In a series of qualitative interviews with CIP ($n$ = 34), Nesmith and Ruhland (2008) found children were aware of their caregivers' stress, and some CIP were caught between

relationships with caregivers and incarcerated parents. CIP were also aware of caregiver emotions and attitudes about the incarcerated parent. For example, one child expressed his concern for a caregiver who "breaks herself a lot" and expressed his vulnerability wishing "she wasn't as fragile" (Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008, p. 1124). CIP may experience a loss of emotional support in these situations.

Stable caregiving environments can help CIP deal with the loss of family connections. Poehlmann (2005) found CIP who resided with the same caregiver since separated from their mother were 85 times more likely to have a secure relationship with the caregiver than those with different placements. Poehlmann (2005) also found more secure attachments with caregivers when children received honest, open, and developmentally appropriate information about their mothers' incarceration. Murray and Murray (2010) also reviewed research on attachment relationships between children and incarcerated parents. Although they described a link between attachment insecurity and child psychopathology, Murray and Murray (2010) argued that risk factors before incarceration need to be considered as an explanation for this link.

***Loss of family connections summary.*** This section described relational changes experienced by CIP as losses of family connections. I described changes in parent contact and experiences with caregivers that influence changes in relationships and attachments for CIP. Children also experience losses in family stability during parental incarceration, and I review literature describing that experience in the next section.

**Loss of familial stability.** Ambiguous losses are ongoing situations that contribute to uncertainty and family instability (Boss, 2006). The ongoing situation of parental incarceration creates uncertainty and a loss of security for CIP. CIP can experience the loss of family stability through economic hardship, the cycle of recidivism, and secrecy. This section describes literature

about the loss of family stability for CIP.

***Economic hardship.*** Having an incarcerated parent increases children's risk of economic hardship and household instability (Geller et al., 2012). The financial impact is most significant for families in which the incarcerated parent had an active role before arrest and for families that devote financial resources to caring for the CIP or sending money to the prison (Hairston, 2007). Glaze and Maruschak (2008) reported that 54% of incarcerated parents provided primary financial support for their children before imprisonment. In a report of family income prior to and during incarceration periods, the average family income while a father is incarcerated is 22% lower than it was the year before he was incarcerated; even in the year he is released, family income is 15% lower than it was the year prior to incarceration (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2010).

Economic hardships during parental incarceration may force residential moves into less expensive (and often less safe) housing (Holmes et al., 2010). Some families become homeless during parental incarceration (Kilgore, 2015). Families of CIP may have less money for extracurricular activities or may be unable to purchase school clothes after parental incarceration (Hairston, 2007). When families must move, children's new living arrangements may be treated as temporary, especially when caregivers lack information about the length of time parents will be incarcerated (La Vigne, Davies, & Brazzell, 2008). Taken together, these changes to children's environments from economic hardship undermine a sense of stability.

***Recidivism.*** Cycles of parental incarceration compound family instability (Murphey & Cooper, 2015). Glaze and Maruschak (2008) reported incarcerated parents are more likely to have a criminal history compared to other prisoners. As parents are in and out of prison, children face physical, financial, and relational instability repeatedly. Murray and Murray (2010) reviewed literature that described the uncertainty of parental arrest, trial, and sentencing and

argued these experiences are disruptive for CIP. In one study of incarcerated parents ($n$ = 95), most had been incarcerated more than once (75%), and some reported children were exposed to their criminal activity (37%), arrest (26%), and sentencing (11%) (Dallaire & Wilson, 2010). CIP's ongoing contact with law enforcement officials, corrections systems, and child welfare systems can add to stress and traumatization (Murphey & Cooper, 2015). The incarceration of both parents compounds CIP's risk for problems (Arditti, 2012a; Geller et al., 2009; Wildman & Turney, 2014). Allard and Greene (2011) reported CIP might react to this cycle of parental incarceration with aggression, withdrawal, or feelings of anxiety and fear.

***Secrecy of incarceration.*** Some CIP have a heightened loss of stability and security because they lack information about their parents' incarceration (Holmes et al., 2010; Parke & Clarke-Stewart, 2004). Family members may tell children their parents are away at school, work, or even that they are dead rather than disclosing the parent is in prison (Krupat, 2007). Parke and Clarke-Stewart (2004) reported that nearly one-third of families engaged in some deception about parental incarceration. However, children may know more about their parents' incarceration than caregivers believe (Krupat, 2007; Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008; Poehlmann, 2005). Allard and Green (2011) reported feelings of betrayal and issues with trust for CIP not given the truth about a parent's incarceration. This uncertainty from not knowing or fully understanding the situation adds to the ambiguous loss for CIP.

***Loss of family stability summary.*** Children experience losses in family stability because of parental incarceration. Experiences of economic hardship, recidivism, and family secrecy are examples of loss of family stability. CIP experience the ambiguous loss of parental incarceration through uncertainty in their environment and circumstances.

**Loss of social acceptance.** Stigma and discrimination offer another layer of distress for those attempting to cope with an ambiguous loss (Boss, 2006). CIP experience a loss of social acceptance through experiences of stigma and discrimination connected to their parents' incarceration. This section describes the literature detailing experiences of loss of social acceptance for CIP.

The stigma of incarceration is evident in the treatment of prisoners within society, such as laws restricting the rights of former convicts to vote or access public assistance (Holmes et al., 2010). In addition to implications of criminal behaviors, variables such as race, poverty, mental illness, or addiction also stigmatize and marginalize many inmates (Arditti, 2005). This stigma extends to CIP (Luther, 2016; Phillips & Gates, 2010). CIP may experience stigma and shame about parental incarceration while receiving little support (Naudeau, 2010). CIP may attempt to manage stigma by concealing parental incarceration from peers or community members who might judge or look down on them (Luther, 2016). When families and CIP disclose parental incarceration, two common responses occur:

> 1) That the child is better off without the incarcerated parent who by virtue of her incarcerated status is assumed to be a "bad" person/influence; and 2) that the child is "the apple who did not fall far from the tree" and will likely follow in his/her parent's footsteps. (Krupat, 2007, p. 40)

These stigmatizing responses demonstrate the loss of social acceptance for CIP.

The stigma and shame of incarceration can lead children and families to experience this ambiguous loss as disenfranchised grief. Disenfranchised grief occurs when people experience a loss that is not "openly acknowledged, socially sanctioned, or publicly mourned" (Doka, 2009, p. 378). Because society affirms incarceration as a deserved consequence, CIP may not receive

social validation or legitimacy for their grief. This social stigma leads to disenfranchisement of the loss of parents to prison. CIP must grieve without sympathy or support for the ambiguous loss they experience (Arditti, 2012b). This section described a loss of social acceptance for CIP resulting from stigma and disenfranchised grief. A summary of the three categories of loss for CIP follows.

**Loss experiences for CIP section summary.** This section described literature supporting three broad categories of loss for CIP: loss of family connections, loss of family stability, and loss of social acceptance. I described losses of family connections related to changes in contact with incarcerated parents and experiences with caregivers. I described losses of family stability connected to economic hardship, recidivism, and the secrecy of parental incarceration. Finally, I described the loss of social acceptance for CIP resulting from stigma. These experiences support the conceptual framework of ambiguous loss with CIP by providing evidence that CIP experience ongoing situations of loss with uncertainty and changes in family roles and functioning. Next, I summarize conceptual frameworks for CIP.

**Conceptual Frameworks for CIP Section Summary**

This section opened with a description of conceptual frameworks in the CIP literature, including ambiguous loss theory (Boss, 2006). Ambiguous loss theory provides a framework for understanding ongoing situations of loss that create disruptions in relationships, ongoing uncertainty, boundary ambiguity, and stress and trauma. I described literature using ambiguous loss theory to conceptualize CIP. I then used a loss framework to categorize and describe common experiences of CIP. I described the loss of connections for CIP, including changes in family communication and contact as well as changes in relationships with caregivers and new family roles. I next described the loss of family stability for CIP, including economic hardship,

recidivism, and secrecy. Finally, I described the loss of social acceptance for CIP from experiences of stigma and disenfranchised grief. Together these experiences can affect the well-being of CIP. The next section describes research regarding the impact of parental incarceration on children's well-being.

## Impact of Parental Incarceration

A growing body of research about CIP examines the impact of parental incarceration on children's well-being. Most of this research stems from the academic disciplines of sociology, psychiatry, and criminology, and these lenses influence the focus of the current body of research on the mental and physical health of CIP. Researchers agree that CIP are more likely than other children are to have health problems. However, researchers have not verified that parental incarceration causes these health problems. This section reviews a body of research focused on the impact of parental incarceration, including studies of ACEs, findings from several national studies exploring the physical and mental health of CIP, and methodological research challenges.

### Adverse Childhood Experiences

One of the earlier studies to highlight the impact of parental incarceration was the ACE Study (Felitti et al., 1998). The ACE Study connected childhood experiences of abuse, exposure to domestic violence, and household dysfunction (e.g., familial incarceration) with adult health behaviors, and researchers found adults with multiple ACEs had more health risk factors compared to peers with fewer ACEs. These health risk factors included increased risks for alcoholism, drug abuse, depression, suicide attempts, smoking, poor self-rated health, more than 50 lifetime sexual partners, sexually transmitted diseases, physical inactivity, severe obesity, and five categories of disease conditions. Researchers have continued to support the finding that multiple exposures to ACEs can lead to lasting harm for children's well-being and brain

development (Anda et al., 2006).

Murphey and Cooper (2015) conceptualized parental incarceration as an ACE and found CIP had higher rates of ACEs than other children, even after controlling for demographic variables and other adverse experiences. Across age groups, CIP had an average of 2.7 other ACEs compared to the average 0.7 ACEs for children with no experience of parental incarceration (Murphey & Cooper, 2015). CIP were more likely to have lived with someone who had a substance abuse problem (54.7% vs. 7.4%), to be witness or victim to domestic abuse (36.9% vs. 5.1%) or neighborhood violence (32.7% vs. 6.8%), and to have lived with someone who was mentally ill or suicidal (27.8% vs. 7.2%). CIP were also more likely to experience parental divorce or separation (57% vs. 17.3%) and even parental death (9.8% vs. 2.6%). Given the increased potential for toxic stress and trauma associated with multiple and cumulative ACEs (Anda et al., 2006), Murphey and Cooper's (2015) findings highlight the potential for harm connected to parental incarceration. The next section describes other research exploring well-being of CIP.

**Impact on Well-Being**

Empirical findings regarding connections between parental incarceration and children's well-being vary. A trend in some recent studies is using data collected from national surveys to estimate the influence of parental incarceration (Geller et al., 2009; Geller et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2013; Murphey & Cooper, 2015; Porter & King, 2015; Turney, 2014; Wildeman & Turney, 2014). Several recent meta-analyses of research on CIP offer rigorous analyses of the impact of parental incarceration (Murray, Farrington, Sekol, & Olsen, 2009; Murray et al., 2012). Within this research, conflicting findings may be due to the use of different population groups, points in time, research designs, and other contextual variables. I describe results from these studies in this

section.

Several empirical studies highlight the impact of parental incarceration on child and adolescent behaviors. There is some evidence that paternal incarceration increases risk for expressive or "acting out" delinquent behaviors (e.g., fighting, seriously harming someone, and damaging property) in adolescence (Porter & King, 2015). Other studies exploring behavior problems with CIP also found more behavior problems connected to paternal incarceration compared to maternal incarceration. Boys with incarcerated fathers are marginally more likely than other children are to demonstrate aggressive behavior problems (Geller et al., 2009). Geller et al. (2012) found significant and robust relationships between paternal incarceration and both aggression and attention problems for children at age 5. Although children with incarcerated mothers demonstrated more problems than peers across all areas of behavior problems (e.g., aggression, attention, social, self-control, internalizing and externalizing behaviors), Wildeman and Turney (2014) found null effects of maternal incarceration on children's behaviors in their rigorous analyses of the data. These three studies are samples of the literature on behavior problems in CIP and point to the complexity in understanding the consequences of parental incarceration (Geller et al., 2009; Geller et al., 2012; Wildeman & Turney, 2014).

Two studies focused on health factors for CIP. Lee et al. (2013) found a statistically significant prevalence of health problems in a sample of young adults with a history of parental incarceration, including depression, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, high cholesterol, asthma, migraines, HIV/AIDS, and self-reported fair/poor health. Using individual logistic regression models by parent gender, paternal incarceration was associated with physical and mental health problems, whereas maternal incarceration was only associated with mental health problems (Lee et al., 2013). Turney (2014) found childhood health outcomes significantly

independently associated with parental incarceration included learning disabilities ($b$ = .201, OR = 1.22, $p$ < .01), attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) ($b$ = .389, OR = 1.48, $p$ < .001), behavioral or conduct problems ($b$ = .356, OR = 1.43, $p$ < .001), developmental delays ($b$ = .211, OR = 1.23, $p$ < .05), and speech or language problems ($b$ = .287, OR = 1.33, $p$ < .05). Both studies offer preliminary evidence that physical and mental health problems are a consequence of parental incarceration (Lee et al., 2013; Turney, 2014).

Recent meta-analyses and systematic reviews offer alternative findings regarding the impact of incarceration. Both Murray et al. (2009) and Murray et al. (2012) included samples of international studies of CIP in their reviews. Murray et al. (2009) conducted a review and meta-analysis of 16 studies and concluded CIP had twice the risk for antisocial behavior and mental health problems compared to peers. Murray et al. (2012) analyzed 50 samples from 40 empirical studies and found evidence that parental incarceration increased children's risk for antisocial behavior, but not mental health problems, drug use, or poor educational performance. Murray et al. (2012) hypothesized that differences in findings about mental health may be due to larger samples and criteria for inclusion in the meta-analysis. Researchers in both meta-analyses cautioned readers against making causal conclusions regarding effects of incarceration on children. The next section further describes CIP research challenges.

**Research Challenges**

A major challenge in research regarding the impact of parental incarceration is separating the influence of incarceration from other ACEs and contextual factors. Scholars debate if and how parental incarceration affects well-being beyond influencing other risk factors for the population. Johnson and Easterling (2012) described some methodological challenges for researchers of CIP, including selection bias and a lack of rigor. Researchers experience issues

including inherent differences between CIP and other children based on cultural variables and environmental factors and the impossibility of true experimental designs. Johnson and Easterling (2012) also noted difficulty comparing the results of studies when researchers aggregate children with different experiences of parental incarceration and do not fully describe samples of participants. They reviewed ten studies of experiences of CIP that used comparison groups and found a lack of evidence for uniform negative effects of parental incarceration.

Wildeman, Wakefield, and Turney (2013) offered a commentary on the Johnson and Easterling (2012) article and argued for a broader inclusion of research studies to address claims of a lack of rigor and lack of negative effects of parental incarceration. Wildeman et al. (2013) reviewed 12 additional studies of parental incarceration they believed better represented research in the field and offered empirical evidence regarding the negative effects of parental incarceration for some CIP. Both Johnson and Easterling (2012) and Wildeman et al. (2013) agreed on the need for conceptual frameworks and additional research to understand how parental incarceration affects children's well-being.

**Impact of Parental Incarceration Section Summary**

This section described research on the impact of parental incarceration on children's well-being. The section began with a review of ACEs and CIP. I next described some empirical studies exploring consequences of parental incarceration on children's physical and mental health. Finally, I discussed challenges researchers face when exploring the effects of parental incarceration. Overall, this section demonstrates that parental incarceration impacts children's well-being, but the research does not offer solid evidence that incarceration causes these effects. The next section describes research about the impact of incarceration within the context of school settings.

## School Experiences for CIP

Given that CIP between the ages of 5 and 18 spend much of their time at school, I give attention to the school setting in this review of the literature. The literature on CIP at school is limited, but there is some evidence that CIP have challenges at school demonstrated through difficulties with academics, behavior, peer relationships, and teacher stigma. I begin this section with a review of the research on educational outcomes for CIP. Next, I describe relational experiences with peers and teachers. Finally, I describe three studies of teacher perceptions of CIP.

### Educational Outcomes

Parental incarceration connects to educational opportunities and academic success. Although the United States college graduation rate is 40%, children of incarcerated mothers have a college graduation rate of between 1 and 2 percent, and children of incarcerated fathers have a college graduation rate of about 15% (Hagan & Foster, 2012). Differences in school achievement appear as early as elementary school. Children of incarcerated fathers were 1.47 times more likely to experience retention between Kindergarten and 3rd grade than their peers ($b = .384$, $p < .01$) (Turney & Haskins, 2014). Turney and Haskins (2014) also found preliminary evidence that teacher-reported proficiency explained grade retention more than children's test scores or behavioral problems (-1.132, OR = .32, $p < .001$). Turney and Haskins (2014) hypothesized stigmatization or a more accurate understanding of academic achievement than test scores may explain findings about the influence of teacher perceptions on retention and promotion.

CIP may experience academic and behavioral difficulties at school. Murphey and Cooper (2015) noted a statistically significant negative relationship between school well-being and parental incarceration. Forty-four percent of CIP ages 6 to 11 and 43% of CIP ages 12 to 17 had

school problems (i.e., grade retention or contact initiated by the school to caregivers about problems at school) compared to 35% of children with no history of parental incarceration (Murphey & Cooper, 2015, p. 7). CIP ages 6 to 11 also had lower school engagement compared to their peers. In another study, Johnson (2009) found 22.8% of children with a history of paternal incarceration and 14.3% of children with a history of maternal incarceration had been suspended or expelled from school, compared to only 4% of children without a family history of deviant behavior.

Although Murray et al. (2012) did not find a relationship between parental incarceration and educational outcomes, several other researchers noted connections between parental incarceration, school dropout, and truancy for adolescents with incarcerated parents. Cho (2011) studied high school dropout rates of adolescents with incarcerated mothers. After controlling for other factors, adolescents with imprisoned mothers ($n$ = 2,109) were 1.23 times as likely to drop out of high school than youth whose mothers were in local jails for one week or less ($n$ = 3,899) (Cho, 2011). Nichols et al. (2016) examined factors of school connectedness for CIP. Using weighted hierarchical multilevel modeling, they found an association between parental incarceration and youth truancy (PRV = 0.03) reduced by small school size and on-site mental health services. These studies provide some evidence that incarceration can create school-connectedness challenges for students. This section reviewed research on educational outcomes for CIP. The next section reviews relational experiences for CIP at school.

**Relational Experiences at School**

This section describes examples of experiences with peers and teachers. Children may encounter the stigma and shame of parental incarceration in school settings. Some children and families may not share information about incarceration with peers, teachers, or other school

officials for fear of ostracism (Naudeau, 2010). Managing this information at school is a challenge when peers and teachers ask about parental involvement and availability (Hairston, 2007). Some CIP reported a strong wish for privacy and feelings of frustration and anger when peers at school learned or spread these secrets (Morgan et al., 2013; Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008).

In addition to the stress of managing stigma, CIP and their caregivers reported anecdotal incidences of bullying and harassment from peers about parental incarceration (Allard & Greene, 2011). This included telling the child they were not welcome or calling the child or incarcerated parents names, saying "you're going to be just like your daddy or just like your mamma" (Allard & Greene, 2011, p. 21). Krupat (2007) reported CIP lost friends or experienced accusations of stealing when items went missing in the classroom after peers and teachers were aware of parental incarceration. These incidents demonstrate some of the relational and social challenges CIP experience at school and provide additional evidence of losses of social acceptance described earlier in this chapter. The following section further explores research on the perceptions of educators about CIP.

**Teacher Perspectives**

Although the literature on the school experiences of CIP is limited in general, research about the perceptions and understanding of educators working with CIP is particularly limited. Only three recent studies examined educators' perceptions about CIP. Dallaire et al. (2010) interviewed and surveyed teachers in the United States about their experiences and expectations for CIP. Morgan et al. (2013) surveyed and interviewed head teachers and other educators in England about support for CIP. McCrickard and Flynn (2016) conducted a similar survey in Australia exploring how educators respond to CIP. I outline findings from these studies below.

Dallaire et al. (2010) conducted two studies of teachers' experiences with CIP. In Study

1, the researchers interviewed teachers ($n$ = 30) and conducted a thematic analysis about their experiences with CIP. Participants in the study included elementary ($n$ = 12), middle ($n$ = 9), and high school teachers ($n$ = 9). The following themes emerged in the study: unstable or inadequate caregiving situations are a great risk to CIP's academic achievement; CIP have distinct behavioral and emotional reactions; the age and developmental level of CIP impacts coping and supports; maternal incarceration impacts children more than paternal incarceration; and other teachers may stigmatize CIP.

Based on results from this study, Dallaire et al. (2010) conducted an experimental design study in which they presented elementary school teachers ($n$ = 73) with hypothetical scenarios about children separated from their mothers and asked them to rate behavioral competence, home support, academic competence, and social competence. Teachers rated children separated due to parental incarceration as less competent than children separated because of rehabilitation, school, or being away. The ratings for female children with incarcerated mothers were statistically less positive than ratings of competency in other scenarios ($t$ (31) = 3.18, $p < .01$, $d$ = 1.19). The findings only approached statistical significance for male children with incarcerated mothers. This study provided evidence of potential for stigmatization or lowered expectations when teachers are aware of parental incarceration.

Morgan et al. (2013) described findings from a research project about support in schools for CIP. They conducted questionnaire surveys ($n$ = 19) and follow up semi-structured interviews ($n$ = 21) with educators in a local authority in South West England. Most survey respondents were Head Teachers or Deputies ($n$ = 12), and most interview participants were stakeholders such as probation officers, educational psychologists, or educational welfare officers ($n$ = 11) and head teachers ($n$ = 10). Four main areas emerged outlining suggestions for schools to support

CIP effectively: raise awareness and train staff about this group of students, focus on individual needs of children, use available resources to support CIP, and support children's rights to contact and visitation with imprisoned parents through leniency towards absences. Morgan and colleagues noted that school officials in the study recognized the need to support CIP but reported not feeling prepared to do so.

McCrickard and Flynn (2016) presented findings from semi-structured qualitative interviews and a focus group with educational stakeholders ($n$ = 8) from the state of Victoria in Australia who had worked with at least one child or family with parental imprisonment. The educators in the sample included wellbeing coordinators ($n$ = 3), administrators ($n$ = 3), a psychologist ($n$ = 1), and a classroom teacher ($n$ = 1). Participants described negative and troubling behaviors in CIP such as anxiety and depression. Educators noted stigma experiences for CIP including labeling by peers that sometimes led to troublesome behaviors. Participants also reported a lack of general knowledge in schools about parental incarceration or specific knowledge about individual needs of CIP related to parental imprisonment. They identified a lack of policy in schools about how to identify and respond to CIP. In particular, participants reported struggling to balance protecting rights to confidentiality and privacy of CIP and families with helping teachers and school staff understand the needs of CIP. McCrickard and Flynn (2016) concluded that schools need additional information about CIP to provide appropriate educational opportunities and best support the well-being and socialization of this population.

In all three studies, educators reported academic, behavioral, and emotional challenges for CIP. Educators expressed difficulty identifying CIP within the schools and a lack of understanding about how to appropriately respond to the needs of CIP. Evidence of stigmatizing experiences with teachers or peers were reported in interviews in all three studies, and Dallaire et

al. (2010) provided quantitative evidence of teacher stigma for CIP. Consistent in all of these studies was recognition regarding the need for school officials to support the unique needs of CIP in school settings and recommendations for additional training for teachers and school officials about parental incarceration (Dallaire et al., 2010; Morgan et al., 2013; McCrickard & Flynn, 2016). The next section summarizes the literature on school experiences for CIP.

### School Experiences for CIP Section Summary

This section described literature about the experiences of CIP in school settings. The section began with a review of educational outcome studies demonstrating CIP face academic and behavior challenges in schools. Next, I described some relational experiences and challenges with peers and teachers connected to social stigma of incarceration. Finally, I described three studies of teacher and educator perceptions about CIP. Findings from these studies support a need for understanding the needs of CIP and responding with interventions and services. I describe some of the interventions and services currently offered to CIP in the next section.

## Interventions for CIP

Throughout the research identifying problems faced by CIP, scholars recommended services and interventions to support this population. Some CIP are already receiving these interventions, as 43% of children in mental health services have a history of parental incarceration (Phillips et al., 2002). In the COPING Project, a comprehensive study of the mental health needs and intervention responses for CIP in the UK, Germany, Romania, and Sweden, nearly 75% of CIP reported receiving additional help because of parental incarceration (Jones & Wainaina-Woźna, 2013). Mental health services may help CIP develop healthier coping strategies and increase resiliency (Bocknek et al., 2009).

Several interventions for CIP are components of other community services provided by

correctional facilities or other social services providers (Johnston, 2012). These programs may include wraparound services for CIP and families with prison visitation, communication between children and incarcerated parents, and social and emotional support. Other interventions designed to help children cope with parental incarceration include counseling, peer support groups, mentoring, and utilizing available resources such as books or multimedia. The following sections describe conceptual frameworks guiding these interventions and a review of services and interventions currently in use. The section concludes with limitations of these interventions for CIP.

**Conceptual Framework of Intervention Development**

Two conceptual frameworks underscore the development of interventions to address the needs of CIP: a procedural justice framework and a developmental epidemiologic framework (Phillips, 2010). The procedural justice framework seeks to minimize or eliminate unjust consequences of parental imprisonment. Interventions for CIP from this framework might focus on maintaining relationships and contact with imprisoned parents, coping with incarceration through support groups and mentoring, and supporting caregivers so children are not punished for the crimes of their parents (Phillips, 2010). The developmental epidemiological framework considers the many risk factors of CIP and focuses on preventing serious emotional and behavioral problems (Phillips, 2010). Interventions from this perspective seek to address specific grief, attachment, and emotional and behavioral needs of CIP while understanding the mitigating effects of ACEs for this population.

These conceptual frameworks overlap at times in intervention development, and current interventions and services use both of these frameworks. Although no research supports the use of the procedural justice over the developmental epidemiological framework, the interventions

and services described in the following sections follow these conceptual models. Most of the community interventions, peer support groups, and mentoring programs follow the procedural justice framework, while individual and group counseling interventions generally follow a developmental epidemiological framework. The following section reviews interventions and services for CIP.

**Interventions and Services for CIP**

This section describes five categories of interventions and services for CIP: community interventions, counseling interventions, group counseling and peer support groups, mentoring, and utilizing available resources. I describe the use of these interventions and services with CIP as well as support or limitations of these approaches found in the literature.

**Community interventions.** Community interventions provide support for CIP, their parents, and other caregivers. Several community initiatives are components of wraparound services provided by social service or correctional agencies to indirectly intervene with CIP through parenting classes or support groups for incarcerated parents or other caregivers (Phillips, 2010). Other community interventions directly address the needs CIP through academic support or child care (Johnston, 2012).

Although only available in a few prisons, initiatives including prison nurseries allowing children and incarcerated mothers to reside together or Head Start daycare or preschool programs hosted at the prison offer early interventions for young CIP (Johnston, 2012). Prison nursery programs may promote resilience and positive behavior development for young children with incarcerated mothers. Goshin, Byrne, and Blanchard-Lewis (2014) found preschool-aged children who previously resided in prison nurseries with their mothers ($n$ = 47) had lower mean anxious/depressed behavior scores than children separated from their mothers in infancy or

toddlerhood due to incarceration ($n$ = 64), even after controlling for gender, cumulative risk, and propensity ($t(92) = 2.18$, $p = .03$). Outcomes from prison-based Head Start programs are unknown; however, Head Start agencies evaluate these programs to ensure effectiveness (Johnston, 2012). Overall, available research support for these programs is limited; however, these wraparound services may address some of the early attachment and developmental risk factors for CIP and their families.

Some community initiatives seek to foster relationships between children and incarcerated parents. These programs are typically organized and supported by community organizations or faith-based organizations. In these programs, CIP participate in child-friendly activities, such as scouting or reading, during visitation with parents in prisons (Phillips, 2010). Girl Scouts Beyond Bars is an example of a program designed to support girls and their incarcerated mothers (Grant, 2006). Originally established in 1992, this program spread to over 30 states before federal funding ended in 2013. Girls participate in regular Girl Scout troop activities in their communities and attend weekend troop meetings in prisons with their mothers; incarcerated mothers and caregivers also receive parenting skill workshops and mental health support from Girl Scout volunteer staff or prison therapists (Moses, 1995). Other initiatives focused on reading and literacy include programs such as Reading Unites Families (RUF), a program held at a prison in Maryland that organizes literacy-based activities for incarcerated fathers and their children during visitation (Gardner, 2015). Some programs designed to help children connect with incarcerated parents may focus on providing transportation for children and caregivers to prisons for visitation or organizing televisiting (Osborne Association, n.d.). All of these programs focus on sustaining and supporting relationships between children and incarcerated parents; however, little research support exists for these initiatives.

Other community organizations seek to help children cope with parental incarceration through social and emotional support and leadership training. Recreational activities and summer camps are available to foster coping skills and reduce stigma among CIP. One example of this is Project Avary (www.projectavary.org), a program that offers weekend and summer camps, leadership training, and mentoring for CIP. In addition, organizations may be involved in advocacy and policy initiatives such as sentencing reform and training of law enforcement officers when taking parents into custody (Phillips, 2010). Project WHAT!, a service of Community Works West (www.communityworkswest.org), is an example of an advocacy program that trains adolescents impacted by parental incarceration to be voices in their community for the rights of CIP and families. Although many of these community programs have an established history of providing interventions with CIP and families, no outcome data is available to support their effectiveness (Johnston, 2012).

Overall, these community interventions may be useful in meeting the needs of CIP and families; however, they need additional evidence to support their effectiveness (Johnston, 2012). The community programs and initiatives described here are only available in select communities across the United States, and many of these programs require significant financial and staffing resources to implement. These factors limit their reach for CIP. The next section describes counseling interventions as another available service to respond to the needs of CIP.

**Counseling interventions.** Counseling interventions may help CIP cope with parental incarceration (Allard & Greene, 2011; Phillips, 2010). Individual counseling can help CIP deal with "emotional problems due to the child/parent separation, relationship, care issues, and school related issues" (Jones & Wainaina-Woźna, 2013, p. 80). Although Graham and Harris (2013) recommended counseling as an intervention to address the emotional needs of CIP, Jones and

Wainaina-Woźna (2013) found it was rarely offered as an available service. The literature on counseling interventions with CIP is scarce, and I was unable to find empirical data supporting individual counseling interventions with CIP. Therefore, the following sections describe conceptual literature for counseling CIP, including ecological conceptualizations, choice theory, and systemic counseling. This section concludes with a review of play therapy for CIP.

***Ecological client conceptualization.*** Most of the literature on counseling interventions with CIP is conceptual, and a common theme in this literature is the need for a culturally competent conceptualization of the needs of CIP before providing counseling interventions. Three conceptual articles draw from Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory to consider the influence of the environment and family structures on the development of CIP (Arditti, 2005; Graham & Harris, 2013; Holmes et al., 2010). Arditti (2005) conceptualized the needs of CIP from an ecological model and recommended strength-based therapeutic interventions to help CIP cope with stigma, disenfranchised grief, and ambiguous loss. Graham and Harris (2013) proposed a cultural-ecological model for conceptualizing the needs of CIP of color. Holmes et al. (2010) also provided an ecological systems approach to conceptualizing and intervening with CIP and emphasized the need for collaboration between mental health providers, correctional facilities, and schools.

All three of these articles view CIP as individuals embedded in complex systems, and they recommended counselors consider the influence of contextual factors such as families, school, or society when conceptualizing the needs of CIP (Arditti, 2005; Graham & Harris, 2013; Holmes et al., 2010). Although lacking empirical support, these conceptual frameworks offer a foundation for approaching counseling services with CIP.

***Choice theory.*** Shillingford and Edwards (2008b) proposed choice theory as a theoretical framework to help PSCs understand and respond to the needs of CIP. The authors conceptualized incarceration as a loss of connection that may lead to the development of seven deadly habits that further damage relationships (Shillingford & Edwards, 2008a). A reality therapy approach could help CIP develop positive habits as they recognize their power to make positive choices, even when their parents made negative choices (Shillingford & Edwards, 2008a).

Shillingford and Edwards (2008a) described a case study in which a child who experienced paternal incarceration learned to recognize his behaviors as negative choices when the counselor used choice theory therapeutic strategies. This approach helped the client in the case study improve personal, academic, and behavioral functioning at school. Choice theory interventions with CIP need future research support.

***Systemic counseling.*** Graham and Harris (2013) recommended a multisystems approach to therapeutic interventions specifically designed for CIP of color. Counselors may serve in various roles (e.g., advocate, mentor, caseworker) to support CIP and their families. Within the model, Graham and Harris (2013) outlined three levels of engagement for counselors. In Level 1, counselors help CIP and their families reconstruct individual and family identities and ways of functioning during parental imprisonment. Therapeutic interventions in this level include helping CIP process feelings about their parents, discussing wishes and goals for parental reentry, and developing realistic expectations for parental reentry. After incarcerated parents return to the family, counselors help CIP and families adjust to changes in family structure and manage expectations through techniques such as family role play. In Level 2, counselors help families establish and use social and community resources such as babysitting, transportation, and friendships. Counselors in Level 3 help empower families and minimize the need for future

counseling through development as community activists. In these three levels of counseling intervention, Graham and Harris (2013) focused on providing services to caregivers and parents as a key for therapeutic intervention with CIP of color. There is no research-based support for this therapeutic approach.

***Play therapy.*** Play therapy is a responsive counseling intervention for CIP dealing with the loss or absence of a parent (Petsch & Rochlen, 2009). The literature on play therapy with CIP is both conceptual and empirical. Child-centered play therapy may help young CIP cope with the ambiguous loss of parents to incarceration (Brown & Gibbons, 2016). Arditti (2003) recommended offering play therapy groups in correctional facility waiting rooms as a creative solution for bridging lack of child-friendly visitation policies and access to mental health services.

Two studies offer empirical evidence that child-centered play therapy can be an effective intervention with CIP (Harris & Landreth, 1997; Landreth & Lobaugh, 1998). In both studies, incarcerated parents received training in filial therapy prior to conducting play sessions with their children during visitation, and this intervention helped increase parental acceptance, increase children's self-esteem, and decrease children's behavior problems compared to control groups (Harris & Landreth, 1997; Landreth & Lobaugh, 1998). Incarcerated mothers ($n$ = 22) had statistically significant increases in observable empathic interactions with their children, reported increased parental acceptance, and reported fewer behavior problems among their children at post-test (Harris & Landreth, 1997). Similarly, incarcerated fathers ($n$ = 32) had statistically significant increases in reports of parental acceptance and decreases in reports of parental stress; their children had increases in self-esteem after play sessions (Landreth & Lobaugh, 1998). These studies support filial therapy as an effective intervention to build parent-child relationships

despite environmental circumstances.

***Counseling interventions summary.*** This section described counseling interventions with CIP. The literature on counseling interventions with CIP describes models for clinical conceptualization, including ecological theory, choice theory, and systemic counseling. The section included a review of play therapy interventions with CIP and empirical support for filial therapy with incarcerated parents and their children. The next section describes group interventions with CIP.

**Group counseling and peer support.** CIP participating in group interventions receive peer support and social validation. Group experiences for CIP can occur in therapeutic counseling interventions led by mental health professionals or in support groups facilitated by community agency workers. I differentiate between these two types of groups according to group facilitator. Johnston (2005) recommended support groups for CIP include three goals: developing trusting relationships, identifying feelings, and developing new coping strategies. Many of the therapeutic group interventions and support group interventions for CIP described in this section include these three goals.

***Therapeutic groups for CIP.*** A review of academic journals found three group counseling interventions designed for elementary school CIP (Lopez & Bhat, 2007; Lopez & Burt, 2013; Springer, Lynch, & Rubin, 2000). Each of these articles outlined group sessions facilitated by PSCs or mental health clinicians and provided recommendations for future group design and implementation. Only one study (Springer et al., 2000) provided outcome data to support group interventions with CIP. Descriptions and results from these three counseling groups are included below.

Lopez and Bhat (2007) outlined an eight-session counseling group for elementary

students with incarcerated parents. The group was designed to provide social support to help CIP discuss feelings about parental incarceration, learn positive coping strategies, reduce stigma, and connect with peers having a similar experience. The authors described their person-centered theoretical framework, group development process, screening, and activities used in each session. These activities included ice breakers for establishing group trust, self-esteem art activities, bibliotherapy for discussing parental incarceration and related feelings, and discussion about sources of support. Based on their experiences and positive pilot group feedback from participants ($n$ = 3), Lopez and Bhat recommended group counseling interventions for CIP struggling to adapt to the changes in their environments and displaying negative behavior problems such as aggression, defiance, antisocial behavior, or lack of self-esteem at school.

Lopez and Burt (2013) described a six-session group appropriate for CIP in second through fifth grade. This group was a school-based intervention to target CIP with multiple recent incidences of severe behavioral problems, including fighting, verbal attacks on peers, four or more unexcused absences, and suspension. Mental health clinicians and PSCs need creativity when working with CIP and to implement activities that build social and relational competencies for group members. Lopez and Burt noted the need for collaboration between counselors, other educators, and families to provide effective interventions for CIP. They did not report outcome data for this conceptual group intervention.

Springer et al. (2000) provided a solution-focused mutual aid counseling group for fourth and fifth grade CIP who identified as Hispanic ($n$ = 10). They developed a six-session group to enhance self-esteem. After screening participants, group facilitators conducted individual meetings to explain the purpose of the group, help members develop target goals, and collect additional background information from students about their incarcerated family members.

Group activities included sharing goals, creating a collage, discussing prison life and visits to prison, and celebrating progress at the end of the group. Compared to a control group, members of the experimental group demonstrated some increases in self-esteem from pretest to posttest on Hare Self-Esteem Scale (HSS) measures: pretest = 91 and posttest = 95.6. However, they did not find statistically significant differences between groups on posttest scores using analysis of covariance, and they computed an effect size of .57. Springer and colleagues concluded that measuring change in self-esteem is difficult during a six-week intervention and recommended future researchers consider measuring other outcome variables.

***Support groups.*** Support groups offer CIP an opportunity to gain information and provide mutual support when dealing with parental incarceration. Johnston (2012) reviewed the history of support groups provided by the Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents (CCIP). Although CCIP workers facilitated hundreds of support groups for CIP, there is little empirical support for the effectiveness of these groups, and few appear successful as stand-alone interventions (Johnston, 2012). This section describes some support group interventions for CIP facilitated by community agency workers.

Roberts and Loucks (2015) reviewed programs and support services available to CIP in school settings in the United States and Australia. Their review included several support groups facilitated by community agencies but provided in schools. Among these groups was SHINE for Kids, KidPACT by Peanut Butter and Jelly, and ROOTS from Community Works (Roberts & Loucks, 2015). In each of these programs, group facilitators used creative approaches such as art and drama as they encouraged CIP to identify strengths, build coping skills, and support peers. Funding and available resources limited these types of support groups; practitioners also noted difficulty identifying appropriate participants in the local community (Roberts & Loucks, 2015).

Although there is little empirical support in the literature for support groups, Boudin and Zeller-Berkman (2010) described the importance of peer support for adolescents with incarcerated mothers. In interviews with high school participants in a peer support program, teens reported a sense of relief that they were not alone in their experiences of parental incarceration. Peer support groups offered a space for participants to feel normal, and teens appreciated acceptance and understanding from peers. Participants reported that support groups helped them cope with stigma, engage in fun and positive socialization, and experience self-acceptance and growth (Boudin & Zeller-Berkman, 2010). I describe limitations for group counseling interventions in the next section.

***Group limitations.*** Two major limitations of the research on group interventions with CIP are the lack of empirical evidence to support this intervention modality and limited cultural representation in groups with CIP. Although Boudin and Zeller-Berkman (2010) provided some qualitative support for support groups with teen CIP, only Springer et al. (2000) included any outcome data for their study, finding little impact on the self-esteem of participants. In all, group interventions with CIP need additional empirical evidence.

Cultural considerations are another limitation in the literature on counseling interventions with CIP. Springer et al. (2000) conducted groups with fourth and fifth grade students who identified as Hispanic. Although Lopez and Bhat (2007) did not identify demographics of the group members, they implemented the group in an elementary school with an 85% Latino/a population. In addition, Lopez and Burt (2013) designed their group to target CIP from low socioeconomic status backgrounds. Based on this literature, future research of group interventions for CIP should include careful attention to inclusion of CIP from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, socioeconomic backgrounds, and age ranges. The next section describes

mentoring interventions for CIP.

**Mentoring.** Mentoring programs seek to support CIP through positive one-on-one relationships with non-relative adult volunteers. Several programs found in communities across the nation provide mentoring services for CIP, including Big Brothers Big Sisters, Angel Tree Prison Fellowship, and Amachi Mentoring. These community organizations and faith-based initiatives use mentoring as an intervention designed to improve relationships, emotional well-being, academic achievement, and character development of youth (Jarjoura, DuBois, Shlafer, & Haight, 2013).

Mentoring services for CIP vastly increased in the United States following the development of the Mentoring Children of Prisoners Program in 2003. This initiative supported by President George W. Bush provided nearly $55 million in federal funding for 52 mentoring programs in 2003 and 219 mentoring programs in 2006, connecting thousands of CIP with mentors (Jarjoura et al., 2013).

Challenges in mentoring relationships with CIP include high match termination, difficulty establishing trust and relationships, and problems managing expectations from CIP and families for financial and other support (Jarjoura et al., 2013; Jucovy, 2003; Shlafer, Poehlmann, Coffino, & Hanneman, 2009). Factors such as instability and disruptions in the lives of CIP, moving, scheduling challenges, match incompatibility, and family issues may explain high match termination (Shlafer et al., 2009). Mentoring interventions for CIP are more successful with longer duration, frequent meetings, thorough mentor training, and ongoing support (Jarjoura et al., 2013; Laakso & Nygaard, 2012).

Results vary about the effectiveness of mentoring interventions with CIP. Jucovy (2003) and Shlafer et al. (2009) provided preliminary evidence to support the use of mentoring with

CIP. In an evaluation of Amachi mentoring matches that had been meeting for at least 12 months, 93% of mentors and 82% of caregivers reported improved self-confidence in children, and most participants reported improvements in mentees' school performance and behavior (Jucovy, 2003). A sample of CIP in a Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring program that remained in the program and met more frequently with their mentors had fewer internalizing and externalizing behavior problems (Shlafer et al., 2009). However, Jarjoura et al. (2013) concluded empirical evidence does not support the potential for mentoring to affect CIP significantly. Despite support from policy makers, Jarjoura et al. (2013) recommended additional research to establish the evidence base for mentoring CIP. They also noted mentoring may be one of multiple interventions and services in which CIP are participating. The next section describes books and other resources available for counselors and caregivers working with CIP.

**Using available resources.** Several resource guides assist counselors and others providing mental health interventions and support to CIP and families. A common section within these guides is books for children and youth that deal with the topic of parental incarceration. When used within a context of bibliotherapy, these books can help CIP make meaning of their grief and loss experiences (Hames & Pedreira, 2003). Suggested titles appropriate for elementary school students include: *Visiting Day* (Woodson, 2002), *My Daddy is in Jail* (Bender, 2003), and *What Do I Say About That?* (Cook, 2015). *Wish You Were Here: Teens Write about Parents in Prison* (Spanne et al., 2010) includes a compilation of essays written by teens about their experiences and emotions related to parental incarceration, and editors include discussion questions following each essay for personal or group reflection and processing. All of these books use children or teen perspectives to share experiences of parental incarceration, including negative emotions, sense of loss, and questions that arise as a result.

Another resource available to support CIP is Sesame Workshop's (2013) *Little Children, Big Challenges: Incarceration* toolkit. This toolkit, which is available online and as a mobile application, provides developmentally appropriate tools for children ages 3 to 8 that describe feelings and experiences common for CIP. The toolkit also includes information, tips, and handouts for service providers and caregivers with suggestions to help support CIP. The toolkit includes video clips of Sesame Street characters, Muppets, and children talking and singing about incarceration, feelings about incarceration, coping strategies for dealing with missing a parent, and experiences visiting parents in prison. The toolkit emphasizes four protective factors to build social-emotional and academic resiliency in CIP: "circle of care (attachment), sense of self, emotional understanding and knowledge, and problem-solving skills" (Oades-Sese, Cohen, Allen, & Lewis, 2014, p. 193). There is no empirical evidence for the use of these books or resources with CIP; however, an evaluation study of the Sesame Street toolkit is underway (Oades-Sese et al., 2014). The next section describes limitations to interventions for CIP.

**Intervention Limitations and Implications**

Although there is a growing body of literature regarding the needs of CIP and recommendations for interventions, there is a lack of research to support the use of specific interventions with CIP (Graham et al., 2010; Johnston, 2012; Murray et al., 2012). Currently there is not enough evidence to determine what types of interventions are most effective with CIP (Murray et al., 2012). One barrier to determining "what works" when intervening with CIP is developing a common understanding of complex and varying needs of CIP across subgroups (Phillips, 2010). Some CIP need interventions to deal with abuse while others are dealing with issues of homelessness or parental substance abuse. Some CIP demonstrate great resilience and may not need additional interventions (Graham & Harris, 2013; Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008).

Researchers can continue to gather evidence regarding the needs and effectiveness of interventions with CIP, and those providing services for CIP should develop an understanding of the unique needs of the population (Phillips, 2010).

Another limitation of current interventions is a potential mismatch between services offered and services desired or needed by CIP. Johnson (2012) investigated the perspectives of adolescents with incarcerated parents ($n$ = 14) about service needs. Adolescents most valued services that helped caregivers meet basic needs (e.g., food, shelter, finances), and they valued services offered to CIP and families without judgment by staff (Johnson, 2012). Adolescents of incarcerated parents also valued specialized services such as mental health counseling and substance abuse treatment that aided in physical, emotional, psychological, and behavioral health (Johnson, 2012). Of moderate importance to youth in the study were programs that supported family relationships during and after incarceration, supported the personal development and future growth of CIP, and offered supportive relationships through mentoring or counseling. Despite widespread use of mentoring programs with this population (Jarjoura et al., 2013; Jucovy, 2003; Shlafer et al., 2009), mentorship was one of the lowest priorities noted by adolescents with incarcerated parents. Although CIP prioritized services that help caregivers meet basic needs, most interventions outlined in this review of the literature do not include this focus. This potential mismatch may cause CIP and families to feel as if service providers do not understand or meet their needs.

To address these limitations, Johnson (2012) recommended that service programs find ways to help families meet basic needs and train program staff to recognize their biases when working with CIP and families. Youth recognized the importance of support programs but may need services beyond traditional mentoring, prison visitation, and peer support programs

currently offered. Johnson (2012) stated, “Many adolescent youth may need more consistent psychological services provided by culturally competent clinicians who are knowledgeable about the kinds of challenging life situations, personal barriers, and general hardships frequently experienced by children of offenders” (p. 62). Others concur with this recommendation to provide counseling and psychological services to address the needs of CIP (e.g., Allard & Greene, 2011; La Vigne et al., 2008; Naudeau, 2010). PSCs are one group of mental health workers who can support the needs of CIP in school settings, and I describe their efforts below.

**Interventions for CIP Section Summary**

This section began with a description of two conceptual frameworks that underscore the development of interventions to address the needs of CIP: a procedural justice framework and a developmental epidemiologic framework (Phillips, 2010). Next, I reviewed literature describing five categories of services and interventions provided to CIP: community interventions, counseling, group counseling and support groups, mentoring programs, and using available resources. Finally, I described some limitations for providing interventions to CIP and implications for service providers, including providing psychological services for CIP. The next section describes efforts by PSCs working with CIP.

## PSCs and CIP

The newest ethical standards for PSCs include a professional responsibility to understand the impact of incarceration on students and stakeholders (ASCA, 2016, B.3.i). This responsibility fits within the work of PSCs who develop school counseling programs to promote the achievement and success of all students (ASCA, 2016). PSCs recognize and respond to diverse student needs (ASCA, 2012). To respond to the diverse needs of CIP, PSCs need to be able to identify the impact of incarceration and intervene when necessary (Allard & Greene, 2011;

Petsch & Rochlen, 2009).

The ASCA National Model (2012) provides a framework for comprehensive school counseling programs. This model provides a conceptual framework to consider how PSCs address the needs of CIP. This section describes the ASCA National Model (2012) and connections in the literature between PSCs and CIP.

**ASCA National Model**

The ASCA National Model (2012) provides guidelines for PSCs to develop comprehensive programs to meet the needs of every student. The principles of advocacy, leadership, collaboration, and systemic change guide comprehensive school counseling programs following the ASCA National Model (2012). These four themes connect to each of the components of a comprehensive program: foundation, management, delivery, and accountability. PSCs can address the needs of CIP within each of the four program components. This section describes ways PSCs work with CIP within each of these components and advocate for CIP across the model.

**Foundation.** The foundation of school counseling programs includes beliefs, vision, mission, and goals established at the onset of program development (ASCA, 2012). Professional competencies that guide the work of PSCs include school counselor competencies and ethical standards. The *ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors* (ASCA, 2016) provides guidelines for appropriate ethical behaviors and responsibilities to students, parents/guardians, school, and self.

One of the primary ethical tasks of PSCs includes providing culturally competent counseling and advocacy (ASCA, 2016). As a component of developing culturally competent awareness, knowledge, and skills, PSCs need to "understand how prejudice, privilege and

various forms of oppression based on ethnicity, racial identity, age, economic status, abilities/disabilities, language, immigration status, sexual orientation, . . . appearance and living situations (e.g., foster care, homelessness, incarceration) affect students and stakeholders" (ASCA, 2016, B.3.i). The 2016 revision of the ethical code is the first to include living situations including incarceration as a cultural factor affecting students. Although this ethical code refers to situations of youth incarceration, PSCs may consider the impact of incarceration on the family for a broader cultural context. The ethical code acknowledges incarceration as a relevant social justice issue for PSCs.

**Management.** The management component of the ASCA National Model (2012) provides guidelines for organizing comprehensive programs that are responsive to the needs of students. Within this component, PSCs self-evaluate their professional competencies and programs, consider how they spend their time, and review school data to guide comprehensive programs. Many of the potential difficulties for CIP outlined previously in this literature review (e.g., suspension rates, retention rates, truancy, postsecondary enrollment rates, difficulties with parent or guardian involvement) may come to the attention of PSCs through this component of an ASCA National Model program. CIP participating in counseling are also at an increased risk for poor academic outcomes (Nichols et al., 2016). Therefore, PSCs can target academic achievement as well as social/emotional needs of CIP as they develop action plans and lesson plans in the management component.

**Delivery.** Delivery within the ASCA National Model (2012) includes direct student services and indirect student services that account for a recommended 80% of a PSC's time. Direct student services may include responsive services such as counseling and crisis response to meet student needs. Indirect student services include referrals, consultation, and collaboration.

PSCs may provide some of the services for CIP previously reviewed, including individual counseling, group counseling, and utilizing available resources. PSCs may also collaborate with other stakeholders who are providing community interventions or mentoring. The following sections describe direct and indirect student services PSCs may provide for CIP and challenges to providing these services.

***Direct student services.*** Scholars include implications and recommendations relevant to PSCs working with CIP. These include recommendations for PSCs to provide group counseling for CIP (Lopez & Bhat, 2007; Lopez & Burt, 2013; Petsch & Rochlen, 2009) and play therapy for CIP (Brown & Gibbons, in review; Petsch & Rochlen, 2009). Petsch and Rochlen (2009) also advised PSCs to provide classroom guidance lessons that use a social justice perspective to help build school-wide empathy and acceptance for CIP.

There is some evidence in the literature that PSCs are aware of and responding to the needs of CIP through individual and group counseling interventions. Shillingford and Edwards (2008a) presented a case study of individual counseling with CIP based on Shillingford's work experience as a PSC. Springer et al. (2000) reported developing their group counseling intervention because a PSC was concerned about the increase in CIP and the "trauma-reactive behaviors" (p. 435) demonstrated in her school. The counseling group piloted by Lopez and Bhat (2007) was developed while Lopez was a school counseling intern after realizing that half of the students on her caseload were experiencing parental incarceration. These examples offer evidence of PSCs directly responding to the needs of CIP.

***Indirect student services.*** PSCs may also refer CIP to community interventions and collaborate with educators about CIP as indirect student services. This can include consulting or collaborating with teachers and administrators about academic or behavioral needs of CIP or

helping teachers unsure of how to support CIP (Dallaire et al., 2010; Morgan et al., 2013; McCrickard & Flynn, 2016). Petsch and Rochlen (2009) advised PSCs should help meet the needs of CIP by working with caregivers and making referrals to community practitioners or agencies as needed. There is evidence in the literature of PSCs providing indirect student services. Roberts and Loucks (2015) noted PSCs were able to identify and refer CIP to in-school support groups facilitated by community agencies. These examples offer some ways PSCs can provide indirect student services for CIP.

***Challenges with delivery services.*** PSCs can help CIP by addressing the barriers of access to services and stigma for receiving mental health treatment faced by many CIP (Nichols et al., 2016). One mention of PSCs in the CIP literature demonstrated ineffective school counseling that further stigmatized an adolescent dealing with parental incarceration. The adolescent shared a story of a PSC violating her privacy about her father's incarceration:

> I went down to her office and my friends are all trying to look through the cracks through the door. And then she just started talking to me about it. And then I just started crying and I was really angry. Then I stormed out of her office and I just went and cried in the bathroom. And all my friends were like what's wrong, oh my gosh... If I was standing in the hall she [the counselor] would come up to me and ask 'so... how is you feeling today? How is everything going?' Right in front of everyone. (Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008, p. 1123)

Although this was the only mention of unethical school counseling services for CIP in my review of the literature, this example does highlight the importance of focused attention for PSCs about the needs of CIP and appropriate delivery services for this population.

**Accountability.** PSCs must evaluate program effectiveness in ASCA National Model (2012) programs. To do this, PSCs collect and analyze data and make program adjustments as needed. The literature lacks efforts to evaluate the effectiveness of school counseling services for CIP. Earlier in this chapter, I noted the general lack of empirical evidence for interventions with CIP. The few delivery interventions found in the literature and delivered by PSCs lack accountability (Lopez & Bhat, 2007; Shillingford & Edwards, 2008a). This component needs further attention to support the efforts of PSCs working with CIP.

**Advocacy.** Scholars emphasize the need to advocate for CIP in order to effect change at an individual, community, and societal level (Allard & Greene, 20111; Arditti, 2005; Graham & Harris, 2013). Advocacy is a theme across the ASCA National Model (2012). As PSCs respond to the needs of CIP through all of the model components, they are advocating for this population (Petsch & Rochlen, 2009). Advocating for students includes helping students and families access resources as well as identifying and removing barriers to success (ASCA, 2012). ASCA endorsed a set of competencies for advocacy that outline the knowledge and skills counselors need to advocate for and advocate with students (Lewis, Arnold, House, & Toporek, 2003). Across all advocacy domains, PSCs are leaders for social justice and recognize the importance of identifying allies and collaborating for change.

The San Francisco Children of Incarcerated Parents Partnership (SFCIPP) developed a bill of rights for CIP that is a widely-used tool in advocacy efforts for this population (Krupat, 2007). The bill includes the rights of children of prisoners "to support as I face my parent's incarceration" and "not be judged, blamed, or labeled" (SFCIPP, 2005, p. 1). SFCIPP developed an agenda in 2005 to move these rights to realities, and PSCs are a part of these efforts. To provide support to CIP, SFCIPP (2005) outlined a plan to "train adults who work with young

people to recognize the needs and concerns of children whose parents are incarcerated, [and] provide access to specially-trained therapists, counselors and/or mentors" (p. 1). To help CIP deal with the shame they experience, SFCIPP (2005) recommended "creat[ing] opportunities for children of incarcerated parents to communicate with and support each other" (p. 1). PSCs receiving training about the special needs of CIP, training other educators about these needs, and providing individual and group counseling to CIP are responding to the needs of children of prisoners and advocating as outlined in the bill of rights.

### PSCs and CIP Section Summary

As the numbers of CIP continue to rise, PSCs can address the needs of these students in comprehensive school counseling programs. This section described the work of PSCs with CIP across the components of the ASCA National Model (2012). The *ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors* (2016) provides a foundation for the importance of understanding the impact of incarceration on students. PSCs recognize the needs of CIP through the management component of the model, and they provide direct and indirect student services to respond to these needs. PSCs use data to demonstrate accountability and program effectiveness when developing and providing services for CIP. Finally, advocating for the rights of CIP is a role of PSCs across all components of the model.

## Chapter Summary

After describing the history of research on parental incarceration, I presented the literature in five primary sections: the conceptual framework for CIP, the impact of parental incarceration, school experiences of CIP, interventions for CIP, and PSCs and CIP. Here I summarize each of these primary sections in Chapter Two and key findings from this literature.

The first primary section of the chapter described conceptual frameworks in the CIP

literature and focused on ambiguous loss theory (Boss, 2006) as the framework for this study. I described literature linking CIP to ambiguous loss theory (Bocknek et al., 2009; Johnson & Easterling, 2015), and I used loss as a framework to describe common experiences in the literature for CIP. I categorized three main loss experiences for CIP: loss of family connections, loss of family stability, and loss of social acceptance. Loss of family connections was evident through changes in contact with incarcerated parents (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008; Poehlmann et al., 2010) and experiences with caregivers (Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008; Poehlmann, 2005). CIP experience the loss of family stability through economic hardship, recidivism, and the secrecy of incarceration (Geller et al., 2009; Glaze & Maruschak, 2008; Parke & Clarke-Stewart, 2004). Finally, CIP experience a loss of social acceptance through stigma and discrimination inferred based on parental incarceration (Arditti, 2005; Doka, 2009; Krupat, 2007; Luther, 2016). This section described the ongoing challenges and uncertainty CIP experience individually, in families, and in their communities.

The next section described research on the impact of parental incarceration. I described studies of ACEs that highlighted the health risk factors connected to multiple cumulative adverse exposures (Anda et al., 2006; Felitti et al., 1998), and I highlighted the literature describing CIP as a population with higher rates of ACEs than peers (Murphey & Cooper, 2015). Next, I reviewed several studies exploring connections between parental incarceration and well-being that found higher rates of behavior problems (Geller et al., 2009; Geller et al., 2012; Porter & King, 2015) and health issues (Lee et al., 2013; Turney, 2014) for this population. I then included research challenges as described by Johnson and Easterling (2012) and Wildeman et al. (2013). This section highlighted connections between parental incarceration and children's well-being, but I emphasized that the research does not infer causation between parental incarceration

and these outcomes (Murray et al., 2012).

The following section described experiences of CIP at school. This section opened with a review of the literature on educational outcomes for CIP, and I described potential for academic challenges (Cho, 2011; Hagan & Foster, 2012; Nichols et al., 2016; Turney & Haskins, 2014) and behavioral challenges at school (Johnson, 2009; Murphey & Cooper, 2015). I described relational challenges at school with the potential for stigma from peers and teachers (Allard & Greene, 2011; Hairston, 2007; Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008). I next reviewed three studies of teacher and educator perceptions of CIP that highlighted these challenges for CIP at school and the need for additional training for educators about parental incarceration (Dallaire et al., 2010; Morgan et al., 2013; McCrickard & Flynn, 2016). This section demonstrated schools are a setting where the needs of CIP are evident and educators can respond to these needs.

Next, I reviewed literature describing responsive interventions with CIP. The first part of this section described the conceptual frameworks guiding interventions: a procedural justice framework and a developmental epidemiologic framework (Phillips, 2010). I described five categories of interventions with CIP: community interventions (Johnston, 2012; Phillips, 2010); counseling interventions (Graham & Harris, 2013; Harris & Landreth, 1997; Jones & Wainaina-Woźna, 2013; Landreth & Lobaugh, 1998; Shillingford & Edwards, 2008a); group counseling with therapeutic groups (Lopez & Bhat, 2007; Lopez & Burt, 2013; Springer et al., 2000) and peer support groups (Boudin & Zeller-Berkman, 2010; Roberts & Loucks, 2015); mentoring (Jarjoura et al., 2013; Jucovy, 2003; Shlafer et al., 2009); and using available resources (Hames & Pedreira, 2003; Sesame Street, 2013; Spanne et al., 2010). This section concluded with a review of limitations of these interventions, including a general lack of empirical evidence (Murray et al., 2012) and the potential mismatch between the needs of CIP and services offered

(Johnson, 2012). This section described the importance of understanding the needs of CIP to appropriately respond.

Finally, I described the work of PSCs with CIP. I used the ASCA National Model (2012) as a framework to describe the work of PSCs with CIP through the components of foundation, management, delivery, and accountability. I described the ethical mandate for PSCs to understand the impact of parental incarceration (ASCA, 2016) and the responsibility of PSCs respond to CIPs' needs through delivery services and advocacy (ASCA, 2012; Petsch & Rochlen, 2009). This section highlighted the gap in the literature for understanding how PSCs conceptualize and experience work with CIP. I describe my research methodology in Chapter Three.

# Chapter Three: Methodology

This study used a qualitative methodological approach to explore the experiences of PSCs working with CIP. I collected data from PSCs in a single school district to answer my research questions: *In what ways do PSCs conceptualize the needs of CIP*? *In what ways do PSCs work with CIP*? and *How do PSCs experience barriers in their work with CIP*?

This chapter describes the methodology I used for my study. I begin with an overview of qualitative research and describe my selected approach of qualitative case study. Next, I explain advantages and disadvantages of case study research. I include a description of case study research in school counseling within my rationale for why case study was an appropriate approach. The next section provides descriptions of the case study, including boundedness of the case, procedures used for recruitment, and participants. The final sections of the chapter outline data collection and analysis procedures.

## Qualitative Research and Case Study

### Overview of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is an umbrella term for research that has these essential characteristics: "the goal of eliciting understanding and meaning, the researcher as primary instrument of data collection and analysis, the use of fieldwork, an inductive orientation to analysis, and findings that are richly descriptive" (Merriam, 1998, p. 11). Qualitative researchers gather human perceptions and experiences with the recognition that personal interpretation is important for understanding. This approach to research relies on researchers as the "main research instrument" (Stake, 2010, p. 15). Researchers generally use fieldwork (e.g., going to sites and engaging with participants through interviews and observations) in order to form themes or theory that explain a phenomenon (Merriam, 1998). Findings are often reported and

supported in descriptions of contexts and through participants' own words (Merriam, 1998). These general characteristics of qualitative research differentiate it from quantitative approaches.

Tracy (2010) described eight criteria of high quality qualitative research: a "worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethics, and meaningful coherence" (p. 839). The procedure of triangulation, in which multiple sources of data, methods, researchers, and/or theoretical lens support findings, enhances the credibility of qualitative research (Tracy, 2010). The researcher's responsibility to be well informed and to inform readers about subjectivity or positioning is also a best practice in qualitative research (Stake, 2010). Qualitative researchers use empathy in their inquiry of the human experience (Stake, 2010). These practices for qualitative research help address some of the criticisms of the approach: its subjectivity, questions about the reliability and validity of findings, and the high cost in time and resources (Stake, 1995).

Qualitative researchers often use a constructivist framework (Stake, 2010). The constructivist paradigm typically has these characteristics: an assumption of multiple realities, a co-creation of understanding by researchers and respondents, and data collection in naturalistic settings (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). This paradigm links to interpretivist philosophy with the purpose of understanding the meaning of human action through the interpretation of the action in context (Schwandt, 2000). Stake (2010) argued that "perhaps the most distinctive feature of qualitative research is that it is interpretive, a struggle with meanings" (p. 38). Qualitative research allows for the researcher's interpretation of events, provided the researcher spends time in the field and maintains an awareness of subjectivity (Stake, 1995).

Creswell (2013) suggests there are five often used approaches in qualitative research: narrative study, ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory, and case study. Each of these

approaches shares the basic characteristics of qualitative research. Researchers select a qualitative approach based on the purpose of the study and research questions (Stake, 2010). Using one of these approaches helps provide a structure for the researcher and an approach for reviewers to evaluate the study (Creswell, 2013). Case study research was the best approach for answering my research questions, and I describe this approach in the next section.

**Case Study**

Creswell (2013) defined case study research as an approach in which "the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a *case*) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving *multiple sources of information* . . . and reports a *case description* and *case themes*" (p. 97; emphasis in original). Although Creswell (2013) presented a consensus definition of case study, approaches to case study research vary among prominent methodologists. Merriam (1998), Yin (2003), and Stake (1995, 2005) are three prominent qualitative case study methodologists with approaches to case study research. I briefly describe the approaches of Merriam (1998) and Yin (2003) before expounding upon Stake's (1995, 2005) approach primarily used in my research.

Merriam (1998) broadly described case study methodology in educational research. She conceptualized a case as a person, program, institution, process, or policy, and she defined case study as "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon" (Merriam, 1998, p. xiii). She stressed the importance of the literature review to guide the case study and provided a thorough guide to data collection and analysis procedures. Merriam (1998) presented data collection and analysis as a simultaneous process. Yin (2003) presented both quantitative and qualitative approaches to case study. Yin's (2003) structured approach to case study research uses theoretical propositions to guide case study design, data collection, and data analysis. This

approach to case study advances a detailed case study design as key for reliability and validity, and Yin (2003) advocated for this methodology as a legitimate research strategy.

Stake (1995) presented his report of the Harper School in Chicago as an example of case study research in his book for student researchers, *The Art of Case Study Research*. Stake (1995) defined case study as "the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case" (p. xi) and emphasized that a case is "an integrated system" with "a boundary and working parts" (p. 2). Stake (2005) described requirements for case study researchers: defining the case, selecting phenomena or issues to study, data gathering, triangulation, learning from the case, and reporting the case. Several of these requirements are true for all qualitative research, but Stake (1995, 2005) described their use in case study.

**Defining the case.** Defining the case is a foundational step for case study research. Stake (1995) emphasized the need for boundedness or specificity of the case and suggested cases are often people or programs rather than events or processes. There are three types of case study with different purposes: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective (Stake, 2005). Intrinsic case studies provide an in-depth exploration of the particularities and uniqueness of a case. This approach is often exploratory in nature and chosen when the focus is on the case itself rather than attempts to extend theory. Instrumental case studies provide insight into an issue and advance understanding of a phenomenon. For instrumental case studies, the case plays a supportive role and "facilitates our interest of something else" (Stake, 2005, p. 445). Collective, or multiple, case studies help researchers compare cases to better understand a phenomenon or condition. Collective case studies are instrumental case studies applied to multiple cases. As my study focused on exploring the work of PSCs with CIP in a single school district, it used an instrumental case design.

**Selecting issues.** For instrumental case studies, the issue of study is the dominant focus (Stake, 1995) and provides a conceptual structure and research questions for the case study (Stake, 2005). Issues of study are "intricately wired to political, social, historical, and especially personal contexts" (Stake, 1995, p. 17). The case is situated within these contexts, and considering these contexts helps researchers understand the complexity of the issue (Stake, 2005). The issue of my study was PSCs' work with CIP. Contexts considered in my study included personal characteristics and assumptions of PSC participants; the competence and experience of PSC participants; the role and responsibilities of PSCs within the schools and district; school district policies; the political and historical nature of mass incarceration at the time of the study; and the sociopolitical views about prisoners and CIP within the county, state, and nation. These contexts are relevant and influential to the issue.

**Data gathering.** Case study research includes observation, interviews, and document review as data sources (Stake, 1995). Before collecting data, case study researchers develop a plan and identify helpers and data sources, outline needed time and resources, and determine intended reporting procedures (Stake, 1995). Case study researchers guide interviews to purposefully gather information about the study. Transcribed audio files of interviews are often a part of the data set. Whereas Stake provided a brief chapter on these three types of case study data, Merriam (1998) expanded this information into four chapters with detailed recommendations for novice researchers. She provided guidelines and techniques for conducting effective interviews, being a careful observer, and mining data from documents. I used recommendations from both Stake (1995) and Merriam (1998) to guide observations, individual interviews, and document review in my study.

One approach to interview data collection uses focus groups. Although focus groups

receive little attention in case study research literature, focus groups provide qualitative data to help researchers understand the topic of interest (Krueger & Casey, 2015). Focus groups involve using a small group of homogenous participants to provide insight or facilitate understanding of a focused topic. A moderator facilitates these groups, and focus groups create opportunities for researchers to explore a range of opinions or perceptions about an issue, practice, or idea (Krueger & Casey, 2015). Focus groups are appropriate when ideas emerging from the group can provide insights in ways other methods cannot. Krueger and Casey (2015) recommended conducting three or four focus groups with five to eight participants in each group for most studies; however, smaller groups of four to six participants are appropriate when participants share experiences or have greater levels of expertise on the topic. I incorporated these recommendations in my use of focus groups in this case study.

**Triangulation.** Triangulation is a process of "using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation" in qualitative research (Stake, 2005, p. 454). Triangulation offers an opportunity to confirm findings across different data sources, by different researchers, or through various interpretations (Stake, 1995). Triangulation provides both accuracy and alternative explanations in case study research (Stake, 1995) and is one way to enhance the reliability and internal validity of findings (Merriam, 1998).

Evers and van Staa (2009) compiled a list of six types of triangulation for case study analysis: data source triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, methodological triangulation, data type triangulation, and analysis triangulation (p. 749-750). Using multiple triangulation strategies "adds to the investigator's depth and breadth of understanding of a phenomenon" (Evers & van Staa, 2009, p. 750). Another approach to verify understanding is member checking or validation. Tracy (2010) recommended a process of

"member reflections" that "allow for sharing and dialoguing with participants about the study's findings, and providing opportunities for questions, critique, feedback, affirmation, and even collaboration" (p. 844). I describe triangulation efforts later in this chapter.

**Learning from the case.** Case study researchers gather data and seek to understand and learn from the case as they prepare to transfer knowledge to readers (Stake, 2005). Stake (1995) defined data analysis as taking apart our observations and impressions to give meaning (p. 71). This effort to communicate understanding occurs throughout the data collection process. In instrumental case study analysis, researchers use categorical aggregation or direct interpretation to understand the issue (Stake, 1995). One technique for this type of analysis is a search for correspondence, or patterns, within the data. Categorical aggregation involves coding and tallying repetitions within the data, whereas direct interpretation involves asking, "What did that mean?" (Stake, 1995, p. 78). Stake's presentation of data analysis is vague, especially for novice researchers.

Merriam (1998) provided additional guidelines and techniques for data analysis in qualitative research and case study. Like Stake (1995), she presented data collection and analysis as simultaneous processes. Merriam (1998) also provided detailed guidelines for using a constant comparative analysis approach that is similar to Stake's (1995) categorical aggregation strategy. I used recommendations from both Stake (1995) and Merriam (1998) for data coding and analysis.

**Reporting the case.** Case study researchers are responsible for condensing large amounts of data gathered and deciding what to report to readers at the conclusion of the study. Stake (2005) highlighted the influence of the case study researcher on determining the presented narrative. More than simply telling a story, the case study report can provide a report on the

development of the case, the researcher's view of coming to know the case, or a description of major components of the case (Stake, 1995). The researcher may include several vignettes as rich descriptions illustrating an aspect or issue of the case. Stake (1995) provided a critique checklist for case study reports to help researchers monitor issues such as readability, structure, and subjectivity in their writing (p. 131). For instrumental case studies, the case report shows readers how the issue exists within the case (Stake, 2005). Ultimately, this report needs to answer the research questions in a way that readers can understand.

**Advantages and limitations.** Advantages to case study methodology include the ability to provide an extensive in-depth understanding of the case or issue (Creswell, 2013). The in-depth look at the case offers additional insight and learning about the phenomena of study through multiple sources of data (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Case study research is highly personal and allows for consideration of cultural context and researcher's curiosity within the methodology (Stake, 1995). Stake (1995) described the finishing of a case study as a researcher's "work of art" and an:

> opportunity to see what others have not yet seen, to reflect the uniqueness of our own lives, to engage the best of our interpretive powers, and to make, even by its integrity alone, an advocacy for those things we cherish. (p. 136)

These advantages of case study design and analysis are also limitations of this methodology. Case studies can be difficult to define and too broad or narrow in scope (Creswell, 2013). Even with a developed plan for data gathering, researchers might not receive access to requested observations or interviews. The process of managing and analyzing vast amounts of data can be overwhelming for researchers (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Report writing with this much data can lead researchers into the pitfalls of not knowing where to begin (Merriam, 1998) or

"being distracted by the mounds of interesting data that are superfluous to the research question" (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 555). Like other forms of qualitative research, critics of case study research question, "what can you possibly tell from an *n* of 1?" (Merriam, 1998, p. 202). This type of questioning about the reliability and validity of case study research presents a challenge to establishing the trustworthiness of the study.

Generalizability is both an advantage and a limitation within the literature on qualitative case study. Stake (1995) argued that generalizability is not the aim of case study research, and single-case designs offer a "poor basis for generalization" (p. 7) to a population. However, he later asserted that "people can learn much that is general from a single case" (p. 85) through naturalistic generalizations. Flyvbjerg (2006) argued that careful case selection, intentional design, and thorough triangulation lead to a potential for generalizability. Researchers enhance the potential for case study generalizability through rich, thick description, describing the typicality of the case, and using multisite designs (Merriam, 1998). By following ethical practices, case study researchers can address potential limitations. I incorporated careful case selection and intentional design into my methodology, and I used rich, thick description to report the results in Chapter Four. The next section describes examples of qualitative case study in school counseling research.

**Case Study in School Counseling Research**

The field of education readily allows for case study research (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). Although case studies are a common pedagogical tool in counselor education, case study research as a methodological approach receives less attention in counseling and psychotherapy (McLeod, 2010). A database search for evidence of case study research in counselor education yielded several recent journal articles in school counseling issues. School counseling researchers

used case study methodology to explore parental involvement at an urban elementary school (Bower & Griffin, 2011), perceptions of high school PSCs about family and consumer science programs in Iowa (Betz, 2010), and exemplar college access centers in six high schools using a collective case study design (Stillisano, Waxman, Brown, & Alford, 2014). Militello and Janson (2014) conducted a case study of an urban school district with PSC participants to explore how school counseling practices aligned with the district's vision. Watkinson (2015) conducted a case study examining elementary school PSCs response to a professional development series. Each of these five studies defined the case as a school or school district and used interviews with PSC participants as one source of data in the case study (Betz, 2010; Bower & Griffin, 2011; Militello & Janson, 2014; Stillisano et al., 2014; Watkinson, 2015). Although none of these studies used focus groups within data collection, focus groups are an effective approach for counselor education researchers to collect descriptive data from participants (Kress & Shoffner, 2007). These studies offer support for using qualitative case study methodology in my study of PSCs and CIP.

**Qualitative Research and Case Study Section Summary**

The introduction section of Chapter Three outlined qualitative research and the case study approach, including strengths and limitations. I focused on Stake's (2005) approach to instrumental case study emphasizing the importance of defining the case, selecting phenomena or issues to study, data gathering, triangulation, learning from the case, and reporting the case. I included evidence of case study research in school counseling to provide justification for this methodology in my study. The next section of Chapter Three describes the case study.

## Current Case Study

With this framework, my research study explored how PSCs work with CIP within a single school district. I chose instrumental case study methodology for this project as it provided opportunities for an in-depth analysis of my research questions. I considered participants' experiences with CIP within the context of the school environment and the professional roles and responsibilities of PSCs. By focusing on the case of one school district's approach to serving this population, I sought a deeper understanding of the experiences of PSCs working with CIP. In the rest of this chapter, I describe the boundedness of my case study, recruitment procedures, and participants. I also describe data collection and data analysis procedures. Table 3.1 provides an overview of my research methodology as outlined in the remainder of this chapter.

### Boundedness

One of the primary tasks for qualitative case study methodologists is determining the boundedness of the case (Stake, 2005). The unit of analysis, or the case, for this study was a public school system in a Southeastern state. I use Redmond County Schools as the pseudonym

*Table 3.1: Research Methodology Outline*

| Research Questions | Research Design | Boundedness of the Case | Data Collection Sources | Data Analysis |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1) In what ways do PSCs conceptualize the needs of CIP?<br><br>2) In what ways do PSCs work with CIP?<br><br>3) How do PSCs experience barriers in their work with CIP? | Qualitative Instrumental Case Study | Southeastern public school district employing 89 PSCs in 54 schools | Focus groups, follow up one-on-one interviews, document review, observation of PSC meetings, researcher journal | Reviewing the data and creating codes; comparing codes for patterns and categories; developing and verifying themes; developing assertions |

for this school district. I used this case to explore the issue of PSCs' work with CIP. This case was bound by the factors of time and place. The time boundary was the duration of the data collection and study (Spring 2017), and the place boundary was the district's collection of schools within the system.

I used purposive sampling to choose this school system as a typical school district in the state (Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) recommended typical case sampling to profile and illustrate an average case, one that "is not in any major way atypical, extreme, deviant, or intensely unusual" (p. 236). Although I withhold some identifying information about the district to protect confidentiality, Redmond County Schools is in the top 10% in the state for the size of the district (54 schools) and number of students served (more than 32,000 students in grades PK-12). However, various demographic factors, including racial and socioeconomic diversity of students, school attendance, average class size, and teacher qualifications, were similar to state averages at the time of the study. The student ethnic and racial distribution in 2016 was around 60% White, 22% African American or Black, 12% Hispanic, 5% Multiracial, and less than 2% Asian, Native American, or Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. More than 65% of students in the district received free or reduced rate meals in 2016. According to the school district's website, this is an urban school district. Although 34.5% of the county population resided in the city limits of the county seat, most students resided outside of these city limits and attended schools in a suburban or rural locale. At the time of the study, 89 PSCs worked in elementary, middle, and high schools in the district.

**Recruitment**

Stake (1995) advised researchers to consider ease of access when selecting cases. To determine if the selected school district would be hospitable to this study, I emailed the Director

of Counseling Services in October 2016 and inquired about willingness and procedures for participation in the study. The Director expressed an interest in participation and consulted with district personnel to determine research procedures. The district provided a letter indicating support pending university Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (Appendix A).

With the approval of the district and following IRB approval, I invited all PSCs in the district to participate in focus groups for the study. The Director of Counseling Services forwarded an email message approved by the University of Tennessee IRB that included an invitation to participate (Appendix B) and an informed consent statement for focus groups (Appendix C). At the invitation of the Director of Counseling Services, I also attended a professional development meeting for PSCs in Redmond County Schools in February 2017. At this meeting, I announced the study and answered questions about the study. In response to my email and announcement, I received 18 signed informed consent forms.

**Participants**

Because the purpose of the study was to explore the work of PSCs and CIP, selecting participants to interview for case study data collection required purposive sampling (Patton, 2002). Inclusionary criteria for interview participants included professional training and licensure as a PSC in the state and employment by Redmond County Schools. In addition, I screened participants for some experience working with CIP as a PSC. Participation was voluntary, and participants were able to withdraw from interviews at any time. Participants did not receive remuneration for their time. I maintained privacy through various actions that promoted confidentiality (Tracy, 2010). This included withholding identifiable information and assigning pseudonyms for participants and the school district in this dissertation.

Fifteen PSCs in Redmond County participated in focus groups and/or individual

interviews in this study. Participants included 13 females and two males, and two African American participants and 13 White participants. Participants had an average of 10.75 years (*SD* = 9.83) of experience as a PSC, with a range of two months to 29 years at the time of the study. Participants had an average of 11.75 years (*SD* = 9.56) of employment in Redmond County Schools, with a range of two months to 29 years. All participants were licensed school counselors in the state; all participants held master's degrees in counseling, and two participants also held doctoral degrees. Additional credentials for participants included Licensed Professional Counselor (*n* = 2), National Certified Counselor (*n* = 2), and National Certified School Counselor (*n* = 1). All participants agreed (*n* = 8) or strongly agreed (*n* = 7) they had training on the ASCA (2012) National Model. Most participants (*n* = 11) reported they were implementing the ASCA National Model in their school counseling program.

Participants worked in various school levels, including elementary (*n* = 5), middle (*n* = 8), high (*n* = 1), and district office (*n* = 1). Some participants had previous years of experience in other school levels. For example, at least two participants (Teresa and Irene) had previous high school counseling experience. These PSCs represented 10 of the 54 schools in the district, including diverse locations in the county.

Five participants estimated that less than 10% of the students at their school experienced parental incarceration, and 10 participants estimated that between 11 to 25% of their students experienced parental incarceration. Participants indicated the frequency of providing responsive direct or indirect school counseling services (other than classroom guidance lessons) to CIP as a few times a year or less (*n* = 4), a few times every one or two months (*n* = 5), at least once a week (*n* = 5), and multiple times a week (*n* = 1). Table 3.2 provides participant demographics.

*Table 3.2: Participant Demographics*

| Coded Name | Position or School Setting | Gender | Race | Years as PSC | Years in district | Interviews |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Irene | Director of Counseling Services | Female | White | 23 | 22 | Individual |
| Vera | High School (9-12) | Female | White | 25 | 15 | Individual |
| Nicole | Middle School (6-8) | Female | White | 5 | 5 | Focus Group 1 |
| Rachel | Middle School (6-8) | Female | White | 5 | 4 | Focus Group 1 |
| Noelle | Middle School (6-8) | Female | White | 12 | 9 | Focus Group 2 |
| Rebecca | Middle School (6-8) | Female | White | 3 | 3 | Focus Group 2 |
| Richard | Middle School (6-8) | Male | Black | 4 | 4 | Focus Group 3 |
| Teresa | Middle School (6-8) | Female | White | 9 | 20 | Focus Group 3 |
| Gretchen | Middle School (6-8) | Female | White | (2 months) | (2 months) | Focus Group 3 |
| Nancy | Middle School (6-8) | Female | White | 26 | 26 | Focus Group 3, Individual |
| Anne | Elementary School (K-5) | Female | White | 3 | 3 | Focus Group 1, Individual |
| Steven | Elementary School (3-5) | Male | White | 5 | 5 | Focus Group 1 |
| Isabelle | Elementary School (K-2) | Female | White | 4 | 10 | Focus Group 1 |
| Andrea | Elementary School (2-5) | Female | Black | 29 | 29 | Focus Group 2 |
| Natalie | Elementary School (K-5) | Female | White | 8 | 21 | Focus Group 2 |

## Data Collection

Data collection occurred during the spring of 2017. Following IRB guidelines and with explicit permission from participants, I collected multiple sources of data. Data sources included focus group interviews, follow-up individual interviews, observations, and district documents. Interviews provided the primary method of data collection in this study. Stake (1995) described interviews in case study research as "the main road to multiple realities" (p. 64). Thus, interviews offered perspectives from various PSCs within the district about information that is not observable. Interviews for this case study occurred in both focus groups and one-on-one settings. Observations and district documents provided contextual information. Here I describe data sources and data management for this case study.

### Focus Groups

Focus groups created opportunities for groups of PSCs to communicate similarities and differences in opinion about serving CIP in schools. I followed Krueger and Casey's (2015) recommendations allowing for small focus groups of four to six participants for these in-depth conversations. Based on availability and feedback from PSC participants, I scheduled three focus groups at various middle school locations in the county. Each focus group lasted approximately one hour. One focus group had five participants, and two focus groups had four participants. I indicated focus group participation in *Table 3.2: Participant Demographics*. At the beginning of each focus group, I collected demographic data from participants using a participant information form (Appendix E).

I conducted semi-structured focus groups with participants. I selected semi-structured interviews to have an outline of questions and topics for discussion but some flexibility to respond to emerging ideas from participants (Merriam, 1998). I used my research questions,

review of the literature, and feedback from my dissertation committee to develop interview guides for focus groups and individual interviews; these interview guides are included in Appendix D. I probed for additional information and clarification during the focus groups.

**Individual Interviews**

I planned for follow-up interviews after focus groups to obtain additional insight into experiences with CIP. I conducted individual interviews with an elementary, middle, and high school counselor and the Director of Counseling Services. Each of these interviews occurred at the participant's school or office location, and individual interviews lasted between 30 to 45 minutes.

I conducted follow-up interviews with an elementary school counselor (Anne) and a middle school counselor (Nancy). These two participants indicated a willingness to participate in a follow-up interview on the participant information form (Appendix E) collected during focus groups. I selected these participants based on their indicated interest, perceived openness during focus groups, and varied school demographics. Following the individual interview guide (Appendix D) with these participants allowed for additional examples of experiences with CIP and deeper personal reflections.

Although three high school counselors signed informed consent forms, no high school counselors participated in focus groups. Two high school counselors did not respond to repeated scheduling attempts or focus group invitations. One high school counselor, Vera, did not participate in scheduled focus groups, but she was willing to participate in an individual interview. During this individual interview, I asked questions from the focus group and individual interview guides (Appendix D). I also invited Irene, the Director of Counseling Services, to participate in an individual interview. During this interview, I asked questions from

the individual interview guide and questions about policies and procedures for school counseling in Redmond County Schools. I collected participant information (Appendix E) from Vera and Irene during individual interviews.

**Observations**

Observations help the researcher understand the case and explore contexts (Stake, 1995). Although more attention is given to observed contexts in an intrinsic case study, Stake (1995) suggested instrumental case study researchers should observe contexts and discern the importance of contexts to understanding the issue of study. Since the focus of this instrumental case study was the issue of PSCs' conceptualization and experiences with CIP, I observed PSCs' meetings and work settings for context of these issues.

I used a researcher journal to record field notes. Following Stake's (1995) guidelines for observation data gathering, I detailed the events and physical situation of a district meeting of PSCs in February 2017. I also recorded observations from my experiences at six schools and the district office building in Redmond County that I visited for focus groups and individual interviews. I recorded experiences entering the buildings, the interactions of focus group participants before and after interviews, and descriptions of meeting spaces. These observations added to my understanding of the context of school counseling in Redmond County Schools.

**Document Review**

Merriam (1998) encouraged case study researchers to identify useful documents that can "furnish descriptive information, verify emerging hypotheses, advance new categories and hypotheses, offer historical understanding, track change and development, and so on" (p. 126). I identified two document sources for this study: policy documents and training handouts. These documents provided descriptive information and historical understanding for the case and issue.

First, I collected public policy documentation provided on the Redmond County Schools website about the role of PSCs. This information provided contextual information for my findings. Second, I collected handouts from a PSC professional development meeting held in September 2016. These documents included the agenda for the meeting and four handouts provided by a guest speaker from a state-wide advocacy program for CIP. This information provided background information and context to consider participants' professional development experiences and training on the needs of CIP.

### Data Management

Data management is one of the challenges with case study design (Merriam, 1998). To help manage data for this case study, I used online tools for data storage and analysis. I scanned and uploaded documents into a secure Google Drive folder. I created audio files from individual interviews and focus groups using .mp3 recorders and transferred files into a Google Drive folder on my password-protected computer following interviews. I submitted audio files to Rev (www.rev.com) for secure and confidential transcription services. I verified transcripts and cleaned transcripts to remove identifiers, including names of people, schools, or programs that would identify the district or state, in an effort to support confidentiality. I uploaded cleaned transcripts into Dedoose (2017) software for coding and analysis. The next section describes my data analysis procedures.

## Data Analysis

As previously stated, case study data collection and analysis occur simultaneously (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). Throughout the process of collecting data, I synthesized and analyzed the information gathered. I developed a plan for data analysis based on a review of the literature. Here I describe data analysis guidelines for my study and specific procedures used.

## Data Analysis Guidelines

To develop a plan for data analysis, I began with a review of qualitative and case study literature. Houghton, Murphy, Shaw, and Casey (2015) illustrated qualitative case study data analysis with an example from their research. Houghton et al. (2015) used Morse's (1994) cognitive processes for data analysis and Miles and Huberman's (1994) analysis strategies. I considered these approaches to data analysis along with Stake's (1995) and Merriam's (1998) recommendations for coding and category analysis.

Based on this literature, I developed a plan for data analysis with four stages: 1) review the data and create codes; 2) compare codes for patterns and categories; 3) develop and verify themes; and 4) develop assertions. Table 3.3 outlines these data analysis procedures guiding my understanding and my data analysis plan. The first two columns in Table 3.3 are adapted from Houghton et al. (2015), and the next two columns demonstrate how my plan aligned with recommendations by Merriam (1998) and Stake (1995). Overall, Table 3.3 demonstrates similar concepts using different terminology found in the literature describing qualitative data analysis.

## Data Analysis Procedures

I used four stages of data analysis: 1) review the data and create codes; 2) compare codes for patterns and categories; 3) develop and verify themes; and 4) develop assertions. These stages provided a system for organizing and understanding the vast amount of information gathered during the case study. Here I describe procedures for each stage of data analysis.

**Stage 1.** I reviewed the data by reading the full interview transcripts and field notes before coding. I coded transcripts in the order in which I conducted the interviews, beginning with Focus Group 1. I used open coding as I made margin notes of key terms and repeated words and phrases. Some of my codes were in vivo and some were a descriptive label of what the

*Table 3.3: Data Analysis Framework and Strategies*

| **Cognitive processes (Morse, 1994)** | **Analysis steps (Miles & Huberman, 1994)** | **Analysis strategies (Stake, 1995)** | **Levels of analyses (Merriam, 1998)** | **Current Study: Data Analysis Plan** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1) Comprehending | Coding | Reviewing raw data | Creating descriptive accounts; Constructing categories | Reviewing data; Creating codes |
| 2) Synthesizing | Pattern coding; Memoing | Searching for correspondence and patterns | Comparing categories with the Constant Comparative Method | Comparing codes for patterns and categories |
| 3) Theorizing | Distilling and ordering; Testing executive summary statements | Drawing tentative conclusions | Testing hypotheses | Developing and verifying themes |
| 4) Recontextualizing | Developing propositions | Developing assertions | Developing theory | Developing assertions |

participant was saying. These terms guided a second coding as I systematically reviewed each line of the transcript for Focus Group 1 and developed codes. With this list of codes, I then once again went through the text to combine similar codes. Some codes were based on the open coding process, and some codes derived from the literature. Stake (1995) recommended approaching the data with some pre-established codes while searching for additional ones. For example, I used the code *recidivism* when PSCs described the cycle of parents going in and out of jail based on my knowledge of this term in the literature. I used terms from the CIP literature, such as *family stability* and *stigma*, when coding descriptions of loss experiences. I followed these same procedures to code the transcript for Focus Group 2. After coding both of these transcripts, I compiled the list of codes to create a master list.

I used Dedoose (2017) software to organize coding and analysis. I uploaded the seven transcript files into Dedoose and created a "code tree" in the software by entering the master list of codes generated from the first two transcripts. Using the master list of codes, I examined each additional piece of data for other incidences. I coded the seven transcripts in Dedoose by applying codes entered in the code tree. I added new codes that emerged and reviewed previously coded transcripts for these codes. For example, PSCs described *assessing for safety* during Focus Group 3, and I reviewed previously coded transcripts to ensure I was not missing information.

**Stage 2.** The second stage in my data analysis plan was to compare codes for patterns and categories. Stake (1995) stated the "search for meaning often is a search for patterns" (p. 78). In this stage, I followed Stake's (1995) guidelines for looking for patterns: "code the records, aggregate frequencies, and find the patterns" (p. 78). Using the Dedoose (2017) software, I examined the number of instances of each code. I generated a report of all codes with excerpts

from the data that I used to identify patterns. All of the codes assigned during Stage 1 had multiple occurrences in the data; however, only one participant described some codes. For example, only Vera, the high school counselor, described the code *resiliency*. As I searched for patterns, I organized *resiliency* as a coping behavior in response to parental incarceration. Combining codes into patterns helped me begin to synthesize findings.

I also organized codes and patterns into categories. Merriam (1998) advised that categories should *reflect the purpose of the research* and be *exhaustive*, *mutually exclusive*, *sensitizing*, and *conceptually congruent* (p. 183-184; emphasis in original). I followed Merriam's (1998) guidelines to create category names that were reflective of the essence of the phenomenon and derived from researchers, participants, or the literature. I drafted categories for my patterns and presented this information to a fellow doctoral candidate with qualitative research experience in the Counselor Education program during a peer debriefing meeting. Peer debriefing (Spall, 1998) is a process in which a researcher and impartial peer discuss findings, explore possible bias, and test ideas about data analysis. During peer debriefing, the peer reviewed the codes of two transcripts for agreement with my labels, and I shared a draft of codes and categories. Conversations during peer debriefing helped me begin to solidify my interpretation of the findings and develop themes. Following peer debriefing, I revised some codes and categories based on feedback.

**Stage 3.** Next, I developed and verified themes. Stake (1995) reminded case study researchers that the purpose of understanding the issues of the case frames this analysis. I compared perspectives from participants, considered how patterns were linked, and considered this case within sociopolitical contexts. I used categories developed in Stage 2 and my interpretation of findings to develop themes. I documented potential emerging themes in my

researcher journal throughout this process, and I revised themes several times as I revisited the data and synthesized findings. I discussed themes with my advisor, and I shared a summary of themes and findings with participants during a member check. I also compared themes to the literature. These steps helped me verify themes for the study.

**Stage 4.** Finally, I developed assertions to explain my findings. Stake (2005) defined assertions as "a researcher's summary of interpretations and claims" (p. 169). Throughout the analysis process, my understanding of the issues and research questions grew, and I was able to make claims about the case in the case report. Conversations during peer debriefing and with my advisor helped me conceptualize assertions. I demonstrated support for my case study assertions throughout Chapters Four and Five. I considered the influence of observations from my time in the field and my subjectivity on findings (Stake, 1995).

This data analysis plan provided structure and rigor to my findings. The next section describes additional strategies I used to establish trustworthiness.

**Establishing Trustworthiness**

Evers and van Staa (2009) suggested triangulation is a useful element of data collection and analysis. I triangulated this study by using multiple sources of data and multiple methods to confirm findings (Merriam, 1998). I used data source triangulation as I gathered data from multiple PSCs at various school sites at different moments in time. Methods triangulation occurred as I conducted individual interviews, focus groups, observations, and document review. This triangulation provided interview transcripts and written documents. These triangulation approaches provided greater insight into the case study and offered evidence to support findings (Evers & van Staa, 2009).

Member reflections provide an opportunity to collaborate with participants and gather

additional perspectives and insight (Tracy, 2010). I invited members to share questions, critique, or feedback with me during the analysis process. I emailed a summary of findings to all participants. This summary described research questions, themes, and key quotes that demonstrated patterns and categories. In my email to participants, I asked them to review the summary and respond to these questions: *How accurately does this capture the system as a whole? How accurately does it capture your experiences? What is missing?* One participant, Irene, responded to the member check email by thanking me for sharing the information. I did not receive any feedback from participants that changed the findings.

**Positionality**

Clarifying researcher bias is another strategy that enhances the validity of findings (Merriam, 1998). My role as a qualitative researcher is to engage in the field with sincerity and self-reflexivity (Tracy, 2010). I conducted the study in a school district where I have professional relationships. I had some degree of being an *insider* to this district, although my role as a researcher made me an *outsider*. I remained mindful that in my role of researcher, I approached the district and counselors aware of my privilege as an academic. I was also mindful of the potential for power and privilege in interview experiences through differences in race, culture, socioeconomic status, or other personal characteristics. I sought to be mindful of the implications of these cultural concerns as I approached data collection and analysis. I maintained a researcher journal throughout the study to reflect on my insider and outsider status and cultural implications. This journal was a tool for my continual awareness of subjectivity in this qualitative case study.

I also recognized that my experience as a former PSC influenced my interest in the topic and shaped my perceptions and assumptions. My work as a PSC with CIP created expectations

for ways other PSCs might serve this population and potential biases about how PSCs should work with CIP. My professional background as a former PSC shaped my belief that counselors are advocates and should be aware of social justice issues within their schools. I recognize that not all PSCs have the same emphasis, so I attempted to refrain from expecting the same beliefs and perspectives among participants in the study. To help me reflect on these beliefs and experiences, I participated in a bracketing interview with a peer prior to data collection. A fellow doctoral student in the Counselor Education program facilitated a bracketing interview using the semi-structured interview guide for participants (Appendix D). She probed for additional exploration around issues of culture, privilege, and assumptions during this interview. Transcribing this interview and journaling about the experience added to my awareness of perceptions and biases.

## Chapter Summary

This chapter began with a description of qualitative research and instrumental case study as the chosen approach for my study. Next, I described the boundedness of the case, recruitment procedures, and participants. Table 3.1 outlined my research methodology, and Table 3.2 provided participant demographics. I described data collection procedures and data sources, including focus groups, interviews, observations, and documents. Finally, I described my data analysis framework and procedures, including procedures for establishing trustworthiness and positionality. In the next chapter, I describe findings from this case study.

# Chapter Four: Findings

The focus of this chapter is to present findings from my analysis of the interviews, observations, and document review gathered during the case study. Overall, this chapter seeks to provide evidence to answer the research questions guiding the study: (1) *In what ways do PSCs conceptualize the needs of CIP* (2) *In what ways do PSCs work with CIP?* and (3) *How do PSCs experience barriers in their work with CIP?* In this chapter I discuss the context of the case and the themes that emerged during my analysis, with examples from the PSCs' own words.

## Context of the Case

On an early dismissal day for students, PSCs in Redmond County gathered for professional development focused on a new school counselor evaluation instrument aligned with the ASCA National Model (2012). PSCs from across the school district gathered in a meeting room at the local community college and attentively listened to a state-level trainer describe the elements of this new instrument. In the final few minutes of the meeting, the Director of Counseling Services introduced me to attendees. I had an opportunity to describe my research and invite participants to the study.

After recruiting participants to the study through this meeting and an email to the 89 PSCs employed by the school district, I returned to Redmond County three times in the following two months to meet with 15 PSCs in focus groups and individual interviews. I entered six elementary, middle, or high schools across the county to meet with participants and hear about their experiences serving CIP. Thirteen PSCs participated in three focus groups, and I had three individual interviews with an elementary, middle, and high school counselor. I also interviewed the Director of Counseling Services for the district. I included demographic information for each participant in Chapter Three. The conversations and observations presented

in this chapter provide insight into ways PSCs in Redmond County are conceptualizing the needs of and working with CIP.

Participants' awareness of CIP was a part of the context of the case study. PSCs in Redmond County Schools described learning about parental incarceration from students, family members, the news, or other school staff. Other school staff reporting parental incarceration to PSCs included teachers, administrators, secretaries, school resource officers, and bus drivers. Noelle and Rebecca, co-counselors at a middle school, included a question about parental incarceration on a student needs assessment survey at the beginning of the school year.

PSCs reported learning about parental incarceration within the context of individual counseling or academic planning. Participants believed students' willingness to disclose parental incarceration may depend on children's trust in the PSC. They also provided examples of students who disclosed parental incarceration when asked to obtain a parent's signature or to identify support systems. Nancy, a middle school counselor, described receiving referrals for academic or relational reasons and then learning about parental incarceration.

High school counselors may have unique ways of learning about parental incarceration. Irene, the Director of Counseling Services with over twenty years of experience as a high school counselor, reported, "the time when it becomes most known is when you're doing financial aid forms." Students who ask for help on financial aid forms may reveal a parent's imprisonment when unsure how to report the parent's financial information. Vera, a high school counselor, also reported learning about parental incarceration when reading a college scholarship essay about experiences overcoming adversity.

Several PSCs mentioned using public online databases that contained photos and arrest records. Richard, a middle school counselor, mentioned using these databases "if we have

concern[s] about a parent not being present or we haven't seen a parent." Noelle described an individual counseling session with a student who "pulled up the parent's mugshot, um, on Chromebook, and you know, we just talked about all the details." PSCs described this online arrest database as both a useful information source that can provide information about the parent's accessibility and as a source for speculation for "whose parent is that? Whose brother is that? Oh, he used to go here, you know." This background knowledge and awareness of CIP is the context in which PSCs conceptualized the needs of and served CIP. The themes and patterns described in the next section emerged within this context.

## Overview of Themes

The four themes that emerged in the data were: 1) observable impacts, 2) conceptualization of loss experiences, 3) professional roles, and 4) delicate navigation. In this chapter, I describe the categories and patterns that comprised each of the themes. I use data from interviews, participant information forms, documents, and observations to support these emerging themes in this case study. Table 4.1 provides an overview of these emerging themes, categories, and patterns with the corresponding research questions.

## "That's their Storm": Conceptualizing the Needs of CIP

The first research question for this study was: *In what ways do PSCs conceptualize the needs of CIP*? PSCs noted observable impacts of parental incarceration within the school setting on students' emotions, behavior, and academics. PSCs conceptualized loss experiences for CIP in a way that is consistent with ambiguous loss theory (Boss, 2006). PSCs also described corresponding factors between loss experiences and observable impacts. Two themes emerged to answer the first research question: *observable impacts* and *conceptualization of loss experiences*. I describe these themes with supporting patterns in the data in the following section.

*Table 4.1: Overview of Findings*

| **RQs** | **Theme** | **Categories and Patterns** |
|---|---|---|
| (1) *In what ways do PSCs conceptualize the needs of CIP?* | Observable impacts | • Emotional responses<br>• Behavioral or cognitive responses<br>• Academic problems |
| | Conceptualization of loss experiences | • Loss of family connections (Family relationships; Lacking support)<br>• Loss of family stability (Family stability; Secrecy of parental incarceration; Exposure or loss of innocence; Recidivism/normalcy of parental incarceration)<br>• Loss of social acceptance (Social acceptance or stigma; Tension of family versus child)<br>• Complicated influences on needs of CIP (Individual responses; Developmental differences; School environment; Influence of crime type) |
| (2) *In what ways do PSCs work with CIP?* | Professional roles | • Direct student services (Individual counseling; Crisis response; Group counseling; Responsive intervention techniques)<br>• Indirect student services (Referrals/support; Working with caregivers/parents; Collaborating with school or agency staff) |
| (3) *How do PSCs experience barriers in their work with CIP?* | Delicate navigation | • Ethical and legal issues (Privacy and confidentiality; Custody concerns; Lack of training<br>• Issues with stakeholders (Family systems barriers; Uninformed; Educator perceptions)<br>• Managing professional limitations (complexity of needs, navigating family tension) |

**Observable Impacts**

PSCs conceptualized the observable impacts of parental incarceration. Three patterns provide evidence of the observable impacts of parental incarceration among school-age children. PSCs in Redmond County Schools noted emotional responses, behavioral or cognitive responses, and academic problems. They connected these responses to the experience of having an incarcerated parent.

**Emotional responses.** Anger was the most commonly named observable emotion for CIP. CIP were angry with the incarcerated parent, teachers, authority figures at school, or the PSC. Other identified emotions included sad, anxious, nervous, confused, and embarrassed. Rebecca, a middle school counselor, mentioned a student who felt "depressed and suicidal" when her mom "really kept letting her down. Um, [mom] was incarcerated, and she would come out and she would do the same things over and over." PSCs observed a range of emotions in CIP. Rebecca said, "Their range of emotion is so different, um, sometimes they're angry, sometimes they're sad."

**Behavioral or cognitive responses.** PSCs described student behaviors during parental incarceration. Following parental incarceration, "there's usually some noticeable change um in that student" (Richard). PSCs described internalizing behaviors for CIP, including withdrawing and shutting down. Isabelle observed students becoming "withdrawn in the classroom and not participating like they were supposed to be." Anne described some changes in play behaviors on the playground and with friends that may be unique to the elementary school setting. She referenced a student who was outgoing prior to parental incarceration but is now "very introverted at this point. Doesn't like to talk to people. Doesn't like to play with his friends. Um, prefers just to kind of sit by himself in the cafeteria. Doesn't really play with anybody." These

withdrawn behaviors may lead to changes in friendships and peer relationships. Teresa reported students have told her "they don't trust other students with that information so they block themselves off so to speak." Anne and Richard described students who stopped participating in extracurricular activities they previously enjoyed following a parent's incarceration. Some CIP want to talk about their experiences with PSCs while others avoid these conversations. Gretchen reported, "Some will tell you about it and some will skirt around it and some will just be like 'I'm not talking about it.'"

PSCs noted CIPs' externalizing behaviors, including lashing out, seeking attention, showing defiance, refusing to follow directions, and getting into conflicts with peers and teachers. Nicole said CIP may demonstrate "aggressive behavior, maybe because they learned some of that at home." Richard also noted some CIP "become aggressive as a result of a parent not being present due to incarceration." Anne noted "behavior changes before visits or after visits or around the phone call time. That's when I see spike." Behavior responses to parental incarceration may differ depending on whether this is an initial experience or repeat experience with parental incarceration. Anne observed,

> The ones that this is new and this is the first time the parents are incarcerated, that there's usually - they're quiet, more withdrawn. And when it's been multiple times of being arrested and going to jail, then I'm seeing the acting out and kind of attention-seeking behaviors. That seems to be a pattern.

The ways students respond to parental incarceration may reflect the ways they are thinking about the experience. Vera, a high school counselor, talked about differences in the "personal processing of the loss" that could "lead to, you know, whatever outcome for that student." Students could believe "I've either got [to] achieve and do better because I don't want

to end up like my father, my parent. Or I'm gonna be just like my parent" (Vera). These mindsets may contribute to a "'what's the use' kind of attitude, so they, some just actually give up. They're not thinking about the future. They're just giving up in the present" (Vera).

Only one PSC mentioned positive coping behaviors and resiliency when discussing impacts of parental incarceration on CIP. Vera described a high school senior who experienced parental incarceration when she was younger and "was able to disclose the trauma that led to the incarceration to- to turn that into a full ride to a scholarship, I mean to a college of you know, her first choice." Vera said there is "a resiliency there in her story that, um, is amazing" and that the student has "come a long way" in "articulat[ing] her- her story and find[ing] her voice." Some of this student's other positive coping behaviors included enrolling in a criminal justice course through a dual enrollment program and participating in extracurricular activities.

**Academic problems.** PSCs in Redmond County Schools reported academic problems among CIP, including academic performance and attendance. Academic performance problems for CIP may connect to changes in support at home. Steven suggested CIP who previously had help with homework from the incarcerated parent might get "further behind because they're not getting that reinforced at home." For students who are already struggling with academic performance, this created additional concern among PSCs. Irene described her work with a high school student who "wasn't always super motivated to meet educational expectations" and the challenges the student faced following her mother's imprisonment. For Anne, the CIP she worked with were "either on tier plans or needing academic or EC support services to begin with." Andrea reported a student's grades dropped following his father's incarceration. High school students "may be even at risk for dropout" (Vera). Behavior problems in the classroom may connect with these academic concerns as well. Isabelle referenced a specific student with

"decreased academic performance because they're not able to stay in the classroom because their behaviors and they're not participating. And when they are in there they're being disruptive and getting some hell for that."

PSCs in Redmond County were also concerned about CIP attendance. Nancy described her work with a student who "doesn't like coming to school, so has been in trouble with attendance and is on probation." Attendance changes may be a red flag for PSCs indicating problems at home. Richard described efforts to track data for all students in Redmond County Schools, and he said educators may "notice a decrease in attendance and you start to see that a student that was coming to school every day suddenly out of school two or three days a week." Teresa described the influence of fear of parental arrest on attendance:

> Academics certainly takes a hit when they can't focus. I think attendance is sometimes impacted because they just can't face school when they've got all this other stuff going on at home. Especially - I've had students before that were uncertain whether a parent was going to be there when they got home because it happened so often or they knew of something that was pending so they were scared to come to school for fear that when they got home the parent would be arrested. So the attendance was certainly impacted.

Irene also saw academic implications for CIP connected to this uncertainty and concern for parents: "You don't even know what's happening with your parents. How can you focus on, you know, [state testing]?"

**Conceptualization of Loss Experiences**

PSCs in Redmond County Schools conceptualized parental incarceration as a loss experience. PSCs had different perceptions of the issue of parental incarceration as a unique risk factor. Noelle believed parental incarceration was "a huge risk factor group." However, Rachel

believed "there's not really much of a difference between a student who has a parent incarcerated or a student who has a parent who is left or died or just absent." Steven was in the same focus group with Rachel, and he expressed uncertainty about whether this issue is different from other losses. Regardless of whether the issue was different from other losses, Steven believed "the biggest thing at that moment, that's their storm, that's what they're going through." Rebecca believed the experience of parental incarceration was "like the stages of grief. I think they go through similar stages when they have a parent that's incarcerated."

I asked PSCs to describe loss experiences for CIP, and their personal knowledge of students' experiences provided examples of these losses in the lives of CIP. PSCs conceptualized loss experiences for CIP in a way that is consistent with ambiguous loss theory (Boss, 2006). Using deductive codes from my review of the literature presented in Chapter Two, I analyzed interviews for evidence of "loss of family connections," "loss of family stability," and "loss of social acceptance." I remained open to new loss experiences when coding the data; however, all of PSCs' descriptions were adequately captured in these three broad categories. I describe these three categories and the corresponding patterns in this section. I also include PSCs' conceptualizations of influencing factors on loss experiences and subsequent needs of CIP.

**Loss of family connections.** PSCs described the loss of family connections for CIP in Redmond County. These loss experiences led to changes in relationships with incarcerated parents and caregivers and changes in emotional or academic support. Two patterns in the data describe the loss of family connections: family relationships and lacking support.

***Family relationships.*** CIP in Redmond County had various relationships and connections with incarcerated parents. The experience of having an incarcerated parent was "a loss that involves more than just, 'I don't get to see my father as often, or my parent'" (Vera). CIP may be

"kind of disconnected to that parent because they haven't seen them in so long, they haven't lived with them in so long" (Nancy). Some CIP in Redmond County maintained limited contact with incarcerated parents. Students told Richard, a middle school counselor, "'hey, I've talked to my mom last week on the phone' or 'we're going up to see my dad this weekend.'" Teresa worked with one student dealing with some "normal middle school crises" whose incarcerated mother was "the one that she felt like was offering her the most support. So there was - she was still seeking support from that parent although it was limited."

Some students decided if they wanted to visit their incarcerated parent. Irene, the Director of Counseling Services, mentored a middle school student who was the only one of her siblings willing to visit her father in prison on family day. This student wanted to visit "because I want my dad to know, um, that I expect him to do better." Irene also worked with a high school student who was initially uninterested in visiting her incarcerated mother who was "a little manipulative so using the daughter to try to get her to do different things and that kind of thing, that the daughter wasn't comfortable with, so she just, you know, for a while cut ties with mom." Rebecca worked with a student who did not want to visit her incarcerated father because she felt "anger towards him, and she wouldn't she wouldn't even visit him."

PSCs described grief reactions of CIP missing their incarcerated parents. Nicole reflected, "I've found no matter what the mother and the father have done, even if it was to them, to get them in prison, they want so desperately for their mother and father to be there." CIP may question their importance to the incarcerated parent: "they may deal with that piece as well, well if he really cared or she really cared about me, she wouldn't continue to make these choices that lead to this" (Teresa). Parental incarceration may affect CIPs' ability to cope with other losses. Rachel reflected:

> It's almost then harder for them to deal with other losses. So when they have such a big loss of a parent, then when other things come along like a teacher steps out mid-year or a breakup with a boyfriend or girlfriend, it almost makes it harder for them to then navigate the grief process of that situation, because of the giant grief that they have with the loss, I'll say, of mom or dad in jail.

Andrea extensively described her work with an elementary school student whose father recently received a twenty-year sentence. The father was not regularly connected with the student prior to incarceration, but the student still "knew he had his daddy, and, and he took his daddy for the good that was in him." Andrea repeated the child's processing of this loss: "I'm only in, um, 4th grade and I don't have a daddy." Andrea reflected upon the student's profound sense of loss as similar to grieving the death of a parent.

Parental incarceration may change family dynamics and relationships with caregivers. Nancy reported CIP may have to "either live with a family member or they're left with um maybe even a stepparent that they may or may not be close to that now is the parent . . . that takes getting used to for the child." Natalie described a loss for an elementary school student whose mother entered a romantic relationship during his father's imprisonment. She said this experience was "horrible to the little boy" who seemed to feel alone because "dad's in jail and now mom's got her new friend, her new life, and here he is. And so, I think it was kind of a, almost a loss of mom too because she was moving on." Anne described her work with a student whose grandmother pushed for contact with the incarcerated father: "[grandmother] was the one kind of pushing the daughter to still talk about daddy and still 'I want you to have visits with daddy and I want all these things' and the child wasn't ready for that." These family dynamics added to loss experiences for CIP.

***Lacking support.*** Some CIP experienced a loss of emotional or academic support during parental incarceration from absentee parents or caregivers. PSCs saw differences in CIPs' needs depending upon the level of support they received from other caregivers. Nicole believed CIPs' coping "depends on if someone in their family or another positive adult has stepped in to fill that role, because if they have that gap there is a significant behavior issue with them, quite frequently." Steven saw a difference when a student had a "supportive aunt and supportive uncle foster care." However, even with supportive caregivers, CIP missed their parents. Steven said, "it's not enough for someone else to fill that who is - they're getting love, they're getting support on a lot of different levels, but it's not the same as that of a mother and a father."

CIP lacked support when absent parents or caregivers did not reinforce academics or attend school events. Irene described trying to put a support system in place for a high school student with an incarcerated mother. For this student, "there wasn't a consistent [support]. There was an older sister that was in and out, there was, there were a couple of aunts that were in and out." Nancy noted CIP might not have parental attendance at conferences with teachers, and Steven described a lack of homework reinforcement for CIP that had students "getting further behind." Teresa described the loss CIP experience when "there are certain events or sporting events where parents are able to come to and their parents are not there. There's a loss there in feeling like their- their life is somehow different from everybody else's and they're not normal."

**Loss of family stability.** PSCs in Redmond County Schools described the loss of family stability for CIP. This type of loss experience connected to changes in family finances and resources, the secrecy of parental incarceration, exposure to the criminal justice system, and recidivism. This category includes four patterns that describe the loss of family stability: family stability, secrecy of parental incarceration, exposure or loss of innocence, and

recidivism/normalcy of parental incarceration.

***Family stability.*** CIP experienced the loss of family stability and the uncertainty of life during parental incarceration. Steven described this loss of stability at home:

> Sometimes when that person goes away, their home life changes. They're moving to another address, they're going to another place, they're going to a foreign area. So there's that grief of, I used to have this room, I used to have this house, I used to be on this neighborhood, I used to have these friends, now that's been taken away.

CIP may experience stress from having to move schools: "if they're staying with a different family member or they're in foster care, then they have to change schools so that's multiple adjustments at the same time they're dealing with" (Richard). Changes in living situations or family members in the home may affect family stability. Teresa described the impact of the "time of transition, when they're looking forward to them being released, and then once they're released that adjusting to that person coming back into the family or them going to live with the family member that's been incarcerated."

The uncertainty of parental incarceration affects family stability. Nancy described loss of stability that results from "all of a sudden everything's up in the air. They're not sure what's gonna happen." Teresa and Nancy mentioned working with students who were uncertain and anxious about parental arrest during school. This uncertainty leads to a "loss of security as well because they don't have that um sense of everything's gonna be okay" (Teresa). Students often hope that a parent's release from jail or prison will restore stability in the home. Richard gave an example of "the student's telling me that 'well as soon as my dad comes home, we don't be struggling anymore. We'll be taken care of. Everything will be fine.' Um and oftentimes that isn't the case for those families."

PSCs described the impact of parental incarceration on financial stability. Nicole reflected, “transportation is a barrier, money is a barrier. You know if you have, specifically with incarcerated parents, if one of them is not making any money because they are in jail, there’s a lot that goes on with the one that’s here.” Parental incarceration affected family stability, regardless of the family’s previous financial status. Irene stated, “incarcerated parents can impact any, you know, socioeconomic status. So, but I think the way that is plays out can be different.” Irene provided an example of a high school student who dealt with the transition of becoming almost homeless in her final two years of high school after maternal incarceration. The student had “a relatively affluent life with mom, um, prior to the incarceration” but had to start “working during that time to help pay for herself. Um, because she didn’t have, you know, the financial resources of, from mom anymore.” Irene described the challenges for this student with her “attention being split between, oh ‘okay I want to graduate school but I’ve also got to, you know, pay for my car insurance, pay for those kinds of things.’”

***Secrecy of parental incarceration.*** One of the factors that contributed to the loss of family stability for CIP in Redmond County was secrecy of parental incarceration. PSCs encountered this secrecy in two primary scenarios: family members did not inform CIP about parental incarceration, and CIP sought to maintain the secrecy of parental incarceration.

CIP who lacked accurate information about parental incarceration did not understand reasons for parental absence or arrest. PSCs in elementary schools described how families hid parental incarceration from students; middle school counselors described how CIP held inaccurate or incomplete information about parental crimes and sentencing. Anne, an elementary school counselor, described times she worked with caregivers who shared details of parental incarceration with her but withheld them from the child. In Isabelle’s experiences, young

elementary school students “might not even know they’re in jail. They might think they’re visiting somewhere else. And so then there’s that trust thing too. My dad was supposed to see me this weekend, he didn’t come see me.” This secrecy created a loss of trust for CIP who anticipated seeing their father, but “daddy never comes back” (Isabelle). Nancy, a middle school counselor, worked with a student who was “unsure about why dad would actually be arrested . . . you could tell that the dad had, was, was keeping some of that from him and was acting like he is wrongly accused.” Irene worked with a middle school student struggling with the uncertainty of parental incarceration, and she reflected, “I don’t know how much the family has informed them. But yet they hear enough to just be concerned.”

Students and family members sought to maintain the secrecy of parental incarceration from PSCs and school staff, and PSCs conceptualized this as pressure to maintain family secrets. Anne reported, “Parents discourage the kids from talking about it.” Her elementary school students received messages from family of “shh, don’t tell. We’re not gonna discuss it. I don’t want you to tell your teachers. Don’t talk about it with anybody.” Richard provided an example of asking a student “hey what’s mom’s number? And his response was can’t talk about mom.” Richard later learned this mother was in jail but said “we had no idea that that was going on in his life, we were just mainly concerned with the behaviors we see at school.” Irene identified the difficulty of trying to serve CIP when family members want to maintain privacy: “when the family wants to hide it we, we can’t- we don’t know, we can’t help them.” In an effort to maintain secrecy and protect parents, some CIP withhold information from PSCs about new criminal behaviors. Nancy observed the student “doesn't share as much. Like they may see things going on and they know, but they don't want to get their parent in trouble again. You know so all the sudden, they kind of stop sharing as much.”

PSCs reported that acknowledging parental incarceration helped CIP experience a sense of relief. Andrea worked with a student dealing with parental incarceration and described the relief of "he doesn't have to keep it a secret from us, and we still love him the same way." Richard believed that even with the unique experiences for each CIP, "I think the consistency is they do want someone to know even if they don't want to talk about it. But they do want someone at the school to be aware."

***Exposure or loss of innocence.*** PSCs described the loss of innocence for CIP due to exposure to the criminal justice system or criminal behaviors of the incarcerated parent. CIP experience "stress and anxiety leading up to when their parents are actually - you know they're incarcerated because they know when the court date is" (Nancy). CIP in Redmond County had exposure to criminal behaviors when parents were using drugs or demonstrating violent behaviors. Nancy described her work with a student who had witnessed her father's arrest and was anxious again when he was using drugs upon release from jail. Anne provided two examples of exposure to parental arrest or criminal behaviors. One first grade student "had seen drug deals go down and she had seen dad overdose on the front lawn and, um, paramedics had to revive him" (Anne). Another student had an initial trauma when "the swat brought the kid to school and he didn't know what was going on" (Anne). These types of encounters contributed to the uncertainty and instability CIP experienced.

CIP experienced a loss of innocence when put in adult roles following parental arrest. Noelle described the "loss of innocence because they're exposed to conversations and, um, court terminology, and, and, and legal jargon and stuff like that, that their peers have no reason to know." Irene provided the example of the high school student who was "thrust into independence sooner than she was ready for, I'm sure" when she had to get a job and pay for car

insurance after her mother's incarceration. This student also had conversations with Irene about "this is the date mom is turning herself in." Teresa shared a situation in which "a student was in conversation with the um other adult in the home about whether to bail a parent out." Vera worked with a high school student whose father shot the mother, and the student has "helped her mother through the- the healing process."

CIP may struggle with a sense of justice or blame themselves for their parents' behaviors. CIP who were told their parent was wrongly accused may lose trust in the justice system or hope for fair treatment. Nancy described this loss experience: "if they've been told that their parent didn't really do anything wrong and they're still arrested, then there's a loss in confidence in our system and what's right." Richard referenced several situations with students who "blame[d] themselves for the parent's decisions." Richard noted these were "cases where those things had nothing to do with the child at all, but the kid will say 'maybe if I had done this my dad wouldn't have gotten arrested." This guilt is another example of a loss of innocence for CIP.

***Recidivism/normalcy of parental incarceration.*** Some CIP experienced long-term parental incarceration or a cycle of incarceration that made this a "normal" experience for them. PSCs described examples of recidivism: "dad has been incarcerated, um, in pretty much all of her life off and on" (Nancy); "a first grader and her dad has been in and out, in and out, in and out" (Anne); "dad would come out, and dad would go back in. And it was just that revolving door" (Natalie). CIP may seem desensitized to this cycle of parental incarceration. Rachel stated, "Sometimes it's just the norm. It's just- yeah my dad's in jail or mom went to jail last night and it doesn't affect them as much." Nancy reported "they're used to it by this point. Some of their parents have been incarcerated as you know for about as long as they can remember, and they've just kind of carried on with their life." Nancy reported for these students "it's almost not that big

of a deal to them anymore, even though it is." Isabelle reported young CIP at her school might accept this experience as normal: "for that particular child going to jail is normal. And so, 'what do you mean that's not good?'"

**Loss of social acceptance.** PSCs described experiences of stigma that created a loss of social acceptance for CIP. Vera expressed "whether it's perceived or not, there's stigma attached to having a family member in prison." Two patterns describe this loss experience for CIP: social acceptance or stigma and tension of family versus child.

***Social acceptance or stigma.*** PSCs described parental incarceration as a stigmatizing experience. Having an incarcerated parent created "a loss of a parent that has a stigma with it, that there's shame there, there's you know lots of other feelings that go along with it" (Nancy). The stigma of parental incarceration leads to differences in the way CIP receive support for this type of loss. Nancy said,

> They may not even want to share that, their peers may not know that. Um so they're experiencing loss, but they're not gonna get the same support by some people, either their peer group or their teachers or whoever because their parent did something wrong. Um so they may, hopefully not from the counselors and the teachers, but from some not get the support that they typically would if it was another loss like a death or something like that.

CIP may withdraw from peer groups and relationships because of the shame associated with parental incarceration.

PSCs described CIP's feelings of shame and embarrassment about their parents' incarceration. Andrea reported one student feared "you're going to think different about me now that my daddy's killed somebody." The shame may be isolating for students. Vera believed CIP may experience a "loss of status, like 'I've got a parent in jail. You know, therefore I'm not

normal. I'm not like anyone else because nobody has a parent in jail.' . . . the student probably feels like nobody understands them." These beliefs could affect CIPs' sense of self and identity. Peers may unintentionally add to the embarrassment students experience if joking about parental incarceration. Nancy said middle school students sometimes "crash on each other about a parent being in prison. Um, whether it's true or not, but especially for the ones that it is true, um you know that's that can be hurtful."

CIP may experience stigma from the way others respond to news of parental incarceration. The response to parental incarceration in a small community may lead to increased awareness of stigma. Rebecca believed "even in a small town. I think that could be hard. Oh, that's you know so-and-so's kid or he's, you know, he's incarcerated or he's in jail," and Noelle thought "you can really stereotype a kid. Oh, he's from that neighborhood, or, oh well, his daddy blah blah blah." Anne described the response at her school to a high profile parental arrest covered in the news. She reported, "It spreads like wildfire. People are texting or calling or 'did you see the news?' Or, 'here's the article.'" She described an experience when a student was "very aware of people whispering about it as he walked in the building and, um- staff as well as kids." She referenced this example later in her interview and recalled "the child just, you know, just straight ahead, just- 'I just want to get out of here. I want to qu- You know, I want everybody to quit. I don't want to- I want to just disappear.'"

***Tension of family versus child.*** The stigma and shame surrounding parents' criminal behaviors may add to the tension of loving someone who has done something against the law. Nicole described this tension for CIP: "they love their parent but they know their parent has made some bad choices. So it's kind of like a protection of this person that I love." Anne said "a lot of times the kids feel torn of, 'well my dad just did this horrible awful thing. I shouldn't love

them, but they're still my dad and I still love them.'" Richard described the difficulty of this tension for CIP:

> It's hard to - to hear that kind of stuff, hear negative things about somebody you love so much. Hear negative things about somebody that's taken care of you and been there for you, even if they made some poor choices. In your heart and in your mind you know that that person's always been there for you to take care of you. Um and they're not a bad person. Um and so that's just hard for young people to deal with.

Rebecca believed coming to terms with the criminal behaviors of a parent is confusing for CIP: "my parent that I love and trust is gonna get taken away because they did something wrong or they did something to hurt someone or something illegal." As CIP attempt to make sense of this, they may experience inner turmoil. Rebecca worked with a student who idolized her father as a sixth grader and "would write him notes and she missed him and her dad. Her dad kind of the grasses is always greener I really like my dad. And by eighth grade she wouldn't even speak to him."

PSCs described negative family views or messages about incarcerated parents that added to the tension. Vera shared an example of academic advising for a high school student whose mother wanted him enrolled in honors classes so he would not end up like his incarcerated father. Vera recalled the mother was "pushing" the student towards honors courses with statements such as "I don't want you to end up like your dad in prison. You're- you're smarter and you can do really well and you can take honors classes. You're not gonna be some lowlife like your dad." Vera also referenced "I've actually heard parents say that you know to their- their child, like 'you're going to end up just like your dad.'" Noelle recalled an instance when a parent at school was trying to help correct a student's behavior and "the parent said something about,

‘well, you saw me get arrested in our front yard’ . . . trying to say, you know, ‘don't follow in my footsteps” kind of thing.’ Anne observed family tensions with extended family members either “putting rose colored glasses” on or saying “‘He’s trash. He’s no good. He’s not your daddy anymore. A daddy doesn’t act like that.” These types of messages added to the tension of family love or loyalty versus a new path for CIP.

**Complicated Influences on Needs of CIP.** PSCs conceptualized several influencing factors on the impact of parental incarceration and subsequent needs of CIP. PSCs connected observable impacts and loss experiences with individual, developmental, and environmental factors. Four patterns in the data provide descriptions of these complicated influences on the needs of CIP: individual responses, developmental differences, school environments, and influence of crime type.

***Individual responses.*** Although they discussed some common observable impacts of parental incarceration, PSCs repeatedly emphasized that each student and situation is unique. Anne declared, “It’s very hard to generalize” and noted that responses were “student-specific” in the cases she described. Rachel noted that responses to parental incarceration “depend on the student, their personality.” Gretchen declared that the students she was working with are “all different. And they all react differently to it.” Noelle described her work with siblings who were dealing with a parent’s incarceration, and she said, “Even, you know, siblings took completely different ways to process.” Richard conceptualized unique responses to experiences of parental incarceration in this way: “I always look at every student as an individual, and each student is different. And each student, because of the way their DNA is, they react to it differently.”

Individual responses to parental incarceration led to differences in readiness to talk about experiences. Anne shared an example of pulling a student the day he returned to school after a

parent's high profile arrest. She asked the student "how he felt coming back to school, and what were his thoughts or what do you think people were saying . . . and he did everything he could to avoid. So, he wasn't ready." Anne described the importance of "being careful that you don't strip their defense mechanisms in order to make them talk." Steven also said PSCs need to "show compassion but not put them - take them to a place they don't want to go. But then also if they go there, you know, be willing to stay with them on that journey."

***Developmental differences.*** PSCs described differences for CIP based on age and cognitive development. Noelle noted the impact of a parent's incarceration "means something different to them as they move through the developmental levels." She connected the impact of parental incarceration to grief responses:

> Just like with grief, you know, if kids experiences the grief when they're in 2nd grade, then as they, you know, move into their formal operational thought in middle school, they start asking completely different questions, and it starts having different meaning to them. So, I think the same thing is true, um, as they're moving into adulthood or, you know, they're, um, gender role, whatever that's gonna be, um, as they're moving forward. So, so I think they just start asking different questions, um, when they get to middle school.

She then noted the differences in the processing of a sixth grader versus an eighth grader, and Rebecca, another middle school counselor, laughingly said "but, then, even don't forget the seventh grader."

Several PSCs referenced differences in the impact of parental incarceration for students in elementary or middle school settings. The age of CIP in these settings may influence understanding and awareness of parental incarceration. Isabelle, an elementary school counselor for students in Kindergarten to Second grade, described examples of students not knowing the

reasons for the absence of incarcerated parents. In the same focus group, Nicole stated "by the time they get to middle school, they have a better understanding of what's going on and there's more honesty."

CIP's repeat experiences with parental incarceration may also contribute to differences seen by middle school counselors. Middle school counselors believed "some students are used to it by the time they get to this age so it's not as big a deal" (Teresa) and "at the middle school level it just becomes more of the norm" (Rachel). Rachel also suggested,

> It might not be a big deal to them by middle school that their father's been in and out of jail 10 times. That might just be another day to them, and so that's not what on the forefront of their minds, but maybe it's making the seventh grade basketball team that's on their mind.

PSCs in elementary, middle, and high school settings may have different knowledge of students and families. PSCs suggested that it was harder to learn about parental incarceration and determine the impact of parental incarceration at the middle or high school level. Based on her work as a high school counselor, Irene, the Director of Counseling Services, said, "From a high school perspective, quite often we don't know. Um, unless the students tell us." She hypothesized that parental incarceration "maybe better known at the elementary schools where there's smaller populations, and, um, the parents are more involved so you kind of get the feel but it's not necessarily shared up." Richard, a middle school counselor, described the difficulty of assessing how parental incarceration is impacting students because "at the middle school level, it's hard because these students come in as sixth graders so we don't know if this is a change in their behavior from the previous year." Vera, a high school counselor, echoed this missing background information as she described a student's sad affect: "I don't really know,

you know, is that simply her personality and her demeanor or is that part of the trauma that she, you know, encountered at a young age."

***School environment.*** Some PSCs described differences in school environments across Redmond County. Differences in school demographics potentially connect to the number of CIP served by PSCs. Andrea said "the population of kids . . . makes a difference," and Vera referenced her previous position at an alternative school and said "the population when you serve an alternative school, you're- you're gonna see more." The influence of the school environment is an important consideration for PSCs. Gretchen reflected, "no community's the same. Just like our students who have parents incarcerated are not like other areas of Redmond County."

Anne spoke most extensively about the influence of the school community on the experiences of CIP. Her statements point to connections between school environment and potential stigma experienced by CIP. She described her elementary school setting as a "neighborhood school" and "a small knit community." The "majority of our families are, are married, and you know, intact families and … I don't think the percentage is very high of incarcerated parents." In this small community, generations of family members attended this school. Anne said,

> Everybody seems to know other people's business, and um, they like to be viewed in a very positive way. And you know, when there is legal issues or there is, um, jail involved, it's- it's very embarrassing for the, uh, extended family members and for the child.

Her relationships with caregivers in this small community enabled her to provide support and services for CIP, but she also found "unless I already have a very good relationship with the family, a lot of times at this school it's not talked about." Anne contrasted this school

environment to her previous work as a therapist consultant for Head Start where parental incarceration was "very common and it was no big deal . . . it was kind of more of a tie that bind."

Several PSCs referenced school as "safe" (Noelle, Steven, Anne) or "stable" (Richard). The constancy of the school environment may influence ways CIP cope with their experiences outside of school. Noelle found that "some kids at school, they don't want to talk about it. Because this is the place that hasn't changed, nothing's changed here, so it's safe." Disruptions in this safe environment may influence the impact of parental incarceration. Anne said, "This is the safe place. And then people are whispering, especially when it's people you care about and the adults. I think that's the hard thing."

***Influence of crime type.*** Several PSCs referenced types of crimes committed by incarcerated parents as a factor that influenced experiences of CIP. These crimes included "problems with drugs" (Nancy), "serving time for involuntary manslaughter" (Vera), "shooting the mother" (Vera), and "charges for check fraud" (Anne). PSCs connected crime types to the impact of parental incarceration and believed some CIP may experience additional stigma with the extra publicity surrounding arrest and sentencing for high profile crimes. Anne described this impact:

> In the past two years, most of our parents that had been arrested, it's been either on TV or it's been in the news. So more people find out about it, um, whether it's a drugs thing or a bigger situation. It gets amplified and kids even see it as opposed to just parents whispering about it.

Media involvement was also a part of the negative experience for a student with whom Andrea worked. Andrea described her experiences with a student whose father was recently incarcerated

because “he murdered some, he, it was drunk driving, it was repeated drunk driving, and he finally hit someone and killed them, and it was a prominent person.” Following his arrest, “the news media . . . were all around their house” since it was “a murder, so it was widely publicized” (Andrea).

The type of crime committed influences the length of a parent’s sentence in prison. The length of a parent’s sentence may affect the grief process for CIP. As other PSCs in the focus group described the impact of parental incarceration, Andrea suggested differences in the impact connected to the length of the sentence and the type of crime. Although “their children have a sense that they may come out some,” her student has said “I’m not gonna have a daddy.” Andrea later reflected,

> I’ve had through the years incarcerated parents, but they’ve been for drugs, and it’s been in and out, and um, it wasn’t such a final thing. But with this child, 20 years, and even if it’s not 20 years, it’s pretty much known it’s gonna be a long, long, long time.

The type of crime committed led to this juxtaposition of hopefulness in a parent’s release from prison for short-term sentences and the finality of the loss of a parent when the child will be an adult upon release.

**“That’s their Storm” Summary**

PSCs described *observable impacts* and *conceptualizations of loss experiences* to answer the first research question, *In what ways to PSCs conceptualize the needs of CIP?* PSCs described the observable impact of parental incarceration at school, including emotional responses, behavior and cognitive responses, and academic problems. PSCs described losses of family connections, including changes in family relationships and instances of CIP lacking emotional or academic support. PSCs described losses of family stability from factors including

uncertainty and financial implications, secrecy, exposure to the criminal justice system and parental criminal behaviors, and recidivism. PSCs conceptualized losses of social acceptance for CIP through stigma and the tension of family versus child. Finally, PSCs conceptualized the differing needs of CIP from factors such as individual reactions, developmental differences between elementary, middle, and high school students, the influence of the school environment, and the influence of parental crime type.

## Responding with "the Skills of the School Counselor": PSCs Working with CIP

The second research question, *In what ways do PSCs work with CIP?*, is answered through the theme of *professional roles*. When describing the services she provides as a PSC, Vera said, "I just call upon the skills of the school counselor" to serve CIP. This quote captures the essence of the way PSCs in Redmond County Schools described their work with CIP in the context of their comprehensive school counseling programs. PSCs' efforts with CIP were similar to their work with all students as a part of a comprehensive school counseling program. In this section, I provide context for school counseling in Redmond County Schools and then describe ways PSCs used the skills common in their professional roles to provide delivery services to CIP.

### Context of School Counseling in Redmond County Schools

The professional roles and responsibilities of PSCs found on the district's website provide some context to their work. The website for Redmond County Schools describes the counseling department in a way that aligns with the ASCA National Model (2012):

> School counselors provide a comprehensive school counseling program that improves student achievement and enhances the academic, career and personal/social development of all students. The comprehensive school counseling program is delivered through classroom lessons, individual student planning sessions, and individual and group

> counseling. School counselors collaborate with parents, teachers, administrators and other school staff to promote student success. School counselors also provide leadership and advocacy to promote equity and access to opportunities and rigorous educational experiences for all students.

Irene, the Director of Counseling Services, described efforts to further connect the work of PSCs in the district to the ASCA National Model (2012) through professional development and resources. The participants in this study agreed ($n$ = 8) or strongly agreed ($n$ = 7) they had training on the model. Most participants ($n$ = 11) indicated they were implementing the ASCA National Model in their school counseling program, and some participants ($n$ = 4) neither agreed nor disagreed they were implementing the model.

PSCs frequently described roles and responsibilities from the ASCA National Model (2012) as components of their services to students. These services are a part of the Delivery System within the ASCA National Model (2012). PSCs completed an information sheet before interviews, and the 14 PSCs currently in elementary, middle, or high school settings indicated providing a broad range of services to identified CIP within the current school year. The most commonly offered services were individual counseling, consultation, and referrals; see Table 4.2 for a complete list of services offered to CIP this academic year.

**Professional Roles**

PSCs in Redmond County Schools believed their work with CIP aligned with their professional roles and responsibilities. Several PSCs used the phrase “meet them where they are” (Rachel, Noelle, Steven) to describe their purpose as a PSC. Steven said the work of PSCs is to “work with all students, meet them where they’re at, give them resources where we can, offer assistance where we can.” These efforts to respond to the needs of all students connect to

*Table 4.2: Participants' Services for CIP*

| | **Individual Counseling** | **Group Counseling** | **Crisis Counseling** | **Academic or postsecondary planning** | **Referrals for therapy** | **Referrals to social services** | **Consultation about behavior** | **Consultation about academics** | **Consultation about social/emotional** | **Consultation with caregivers** | **IEP/RTI meetings** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Vera | x | | | x | | | | x | | | | 3 |
| Nicole | x | | | | x | | x | x | x | x | | 6 |
| Rachel | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | | 10 |
| Noelle | x | | x | | x | x | x | x | x | x | | 8 |
| Rebecca | x | x | x | x | x | | x | x | x | x | x | 10 |
| Richard | x | | | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | 9 |
| Teresa | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | 11 |
| Gretchen | x | | x | | x | x | x | x | x | x | | 8 |
| Nancy | x | x | | | x | | x | x | x | x | | 7 |
| Anne | x | | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | 10 |
| Steven | x | | | | | | x | x | x | x | | 5 |
| Isabelle | x | | x | | x | | x | | x | x | | 6 |
| Andrea | x | x | | | x | | x | x | x | x | | 7 |
| Natalie | x | | | | | x | x | x | | x | | 5 |
| | 14 | 5 | 7 | 6 | 11 | 7 | 13 | 13 | 12 | 13 | 4 | |

the intentionality of considering the unique needs of CIP. Richard described this overall purpose and efforts to serve CIP:

> My overall goal as a counselor is to eliminate any barriers to student success, and I think that definitely fits in. Um if a student's concentration is on things going on outside of school, whether that be an incarcerated parent or anything else, um it is part of my duties and responsibilities to try to support that student as much as possible and try to get them focused on academics.

In addition to helping students succeed academically, Isabelle also mentioned "doing whatever we can to help that child behaviorally and academically, socially, just helping them to be a better student." Rachel believed this work with CIP was "not much different" from serving other students, and Vera agreed "I'm not serving them in a particular direct way."

Several PSCs described their professional role and responsibilities as an advocate for CIP. Advocacy efforts included connecting families with resources and speaking up on behalf of students. Nancy said her "work as the school counselor I think is, um, to be a advocate for chil- for all children. Um, to help with, uh, their safety, and so that's that's how this fits in too." Nancy mentioned initiating academic support services and "look[ing] into what they may need because there's nobody else to speak up for them." Natalie said CIP need advocates if school staff "might look down on that child. So, that child needs somebody in his or her corner to, to make sure needs are being met." The unique relationship PSCs have with CIP helps PSCs advocate for them. "You're one-on-one with them, you know a little bit of their backstory. So, I think, like you said, we have a, we're more able to be the advocate for that child because the teacher's like I've had enough" (Rebecca).

PSCs used their professional skills to work with CIP directly and indirectly. The delivery

component in the ASCA National Model (2012) has two areas of services: direct student services and indirect student services. I use these two areas as categories to describe the work of PSCs with CIP.

**Direct student services.** Direct student services as described in the ASCA National Model (2012) include school counseling core curriculum (instruction and group activities), individual student planning (appraisal and advisement), and responsive services (counseling and crisis response). PSCs in Redmond County Schools described response services for CIP including individual counseling, crisis response, and group counseling. They also described responsive intervention techniques used with CIP.

***Individual counseling.*** All PSCs in the study ($n$ = 14) indicated using individual counseling with CIP this school year. Often PSCs received self-referrals or referrals from other stakeholders about social-emotional or academic concerns, and students disclosed parental incarceration during individual counseling. When students were referred or asked to speak to the PSC, "it's usually not with the intention of, 'oh my dad just got put in jail. I need to talk about it.' It's something else that's going on. From there, that comes out" (Rachel). Nancy also worked with CIP who were initially referred to individual counseling for other reasons:

> It's not that I usually that I have found out that their parent has been incarcerated and then I pull them in. It's the low academic performance or the sudden drop or the conflict with peers or something else gets them to me. Or they're referred to me and then I find that out.

Once a student has disclosed parental incarceration, Nancy will "just say 'have you seen your dad in a while?' And that, that's usually enough for her to talk about that situation."

PSCs described individual counseling with CIP as an opportunity for students to process

their concerns and emotions about a variety of problems. Nancy described a student she sees for individual counseling and reported "you can tell that even though she has other things going on … that's in the back of her mind all the time … whether one day she's gonna find out that he's had to go back to jail."

PSCs described the importance of listening to students during individual counseling: "I'm just there to listen to him" (Isabelle) and "I'm just listening . . . and being there for them" (Andrea). During individual counseling, CIP may process emotions about their incarcerated parent. Anne described individual counseling that helped a child "get some of those feelings off her chest so that she's not holding in. Because when she's at home, she's not allowed to talk about it." Anne worked with another student who was not aware of some of the details surrounding a parent's incarceration; individual counseling offered an opportunity "to vent without necessarily talking about dad being in prison for the rest of his life." CIP experience "so much uncertainty because what they think is gonna happen often doesn't happen… but yet they hear enough to just be concerned" (Irene). CIP may process this uncertainty and other emotions during individual counseling.

Individual counseling may offer CIP needed support and validation. Irene described her work with a student who experienced maternal incarceration during junior year of high school. During individual counseling sessions, Irene and the student "dealt with a lot of, oh the emotional stuff" including the student's anger towards her mother, and Irene was able to help when the student "had, you know, questions that she might normally would have asked her mom." Irene provided support to this student who was not comfortable with other family members. As PSCs support CIP, they are offer validation and reassurance. Teresa said she tried to "reassure [CIP] that their parents' choices are not because of them and that it doesn't - their

choices aren't . . . a reflection of how, you know, how they feel about them and how they care about them." Richard also described his approach to reassuring CIP or other students dealing with an absent parent:

> There may be some years that you don't get to see your parent um and that's okay. Uh because that does not mean that your life must stop because your parent is not present in your life. Um there are goals that you have, there are um things that you want to accomplish, there's a life that you want to live um and you have to focus on that. Um and continue to move forward.

PSCs believed this reassurance was helpful for CIP. Being about to talk openly with a PSC without judgment offers validation that CIP may not receive from others. "It's given them somebody that'll listen to their fears about it, to their, um, you know, their ideas about it without judgment. Um, so that, in that way, I feel like I've helped" (Nancy).

PSCs used individual counseling to help students set goals and to teach coping skills. Nicole reported efforts to "get them thinking forward and what are your goals, what do you want to do, what do you need to do to reach your goals?" Rachel also described using individual counseling to "create a plan with them. Okay, how are you going to do this, and what are you doing now that's going to help you get to those- to those goals that you have?" These efforts may help CIP "see what their choices are" (Noelle). Nancy reported teaching coping skills such as "writing in a journal, or exercising, um to you know, reduce stress." Nancy believed students "need those kinda skills to deal with lots of things they're gonna be dealing with. And having a parent in prison is - is one of the things that, you know, they can use it for too."

Some middle school PSCs offered psychoeducation about addiction during individual counseling. Noelle reported that if she is aware of a student's family drug history and has a

relationship established with a student, then she would "usually kind of have a let's get real, um, about what that means for our biology" conversation. Noelle wanted students to know "it doesn't mean if they're an addict you'll definitely be an addict, but it's kind of like your body's more likely to say yay." These conversations attempted to "help them understand the power that they have of, at this juncture in their lives, of choosing to or not, to use or not to use themselves" (Noelle). Teresa also wanted to reassure CIP dealing with addiction issues that many people have similar experiences. "You know there's addiction involved then have a conversation about that to look at whatever issues are involved to help them kinda understand it from a big picture that um really they're not alone in this" (Teresa).

***Crisis response.*** There were times PSCs offered crisis response to help stabilize CIP in need of immediate services or basic needs. These times PSCs saw their "role as the crisis interventionist in that sense. Just arranging for services and making sure we've got this" (Anne). Andrea described her work with a student and caregiver when "this is just real fresh right now, so they need a lot of support." Natalie reported that there have been times "we've had to provide clothing, or their food" when families are in crisis. Nancy also mentioned having some CIP in an assistance program that sends a backpack of food home on the weekends. When responding to crises, PSCs may connect families with other resources to ensure they met basic needs. Richard said this might occur "if that parent that is now no longer in the home was one of the primary caregivers, then they may be struggling with trying to get all the bills paid," and additional resources may help the family "get through that difficult time."

One way PSCs provided crisis response for CIP was by assessing for safety. Nancy described her work with a middle school student anticipating his father's arrest during school hours. Nancy recalled the student's "elaborate plan of how he and his brothers were gonna

survive, um, without the dad there" by hunting for food with his bow and arrow. Nancy had to assess for safety with this student, and she said, "My plan was to call grandparents, um, or possibly even call [social services] if I found out that dad did actually go to jail." One of her responsibilities as a PSC was "making sure that [students] are cared for, and that they're, you know, that they are safe" (Nancy). Vera provided an example of assessing for safety when a father recently released from prison came to pick up his child even though he did not have custody rights. The father entered an alternative school setting and demanded access to his child. Vera recalled the student "didn't want to leave to go with the father. She was afraid of him." Vera was "very concerned for the student that didn't want to go home with him." Richard described challenges when assessing for the safety of CIP during parental incarceration and after release:

> If that student is in a safe home environment … it's kind of difficult to know if that student is still in that environment or if that parent has came out of prison and decided to make a change and not engage in those activities anymore. Um so that's a challenge, um and you don't want to - when you see how much it hurts the student to be separated from their parent, um it's oftentimes very difficult to make that [social services] complaint if you find out something else is going on in the home.

***Group counseling.*** PSCs in Redmond County Schools served CIP in group counseling; however, these groups did not target CIP. Isabelle said when "pulling groups, I don't call it, you know, incarcerated kids group. It's a loss group." CIP may receive group counseling for extra support such as "a friendship group or a socialization group" (Rachel). Rachel said,

> When we do groups, chances are someone will be in that group with us, not with the intention of speaking about their loss or their mother or father going to jail, um, but

typically groups are formed for those who need extra support and they would fall into that category.

The unique situations faced by CIP made PSCs hesitant to offer group counseling targeted to CIP. Rebecca said, "We would have enough, easily for a group, but I think everyone's circumstances are so different and individual that it wouldn't even make sense to put them all together." Anne did try to offer group counseling for CIP, but "it never got off the ground" because she "couldn't get the parents to agree to it. Those that did agree to it, um they were younger, so we had a hard time with the confidentiality." Several PSCs expressed concerns about confidentiality in group counseling; I describe these privacy concerns later in this chapter as a barrier to supporting CIP.

***Responsive intervention techniques.*** PSCs used various techniques to respond to the unique needs of each student dealing with parental incarceration. Gretchen reflected, "you have to approach them differently too, you can't treat all of them the same." Some PSCs use books with CIP that help normalize the experience. Anne has books that she uses "to kind of talk about changes that might happen at home, the changes that might happen, um, with the relationship, what happens when you can't have contact and you can't see them as often." Irene described a training she attended focused on CIP where she learned about a Sesame Street project with free books, and she signed up for these books following the training. As Director of Counseling Services, Irene coordinated a professional development workshop about CIP for all PSCs in Redmond County Schools. The guest speaker at this workshop had a list of resources for CIP, and Irene recalled that the "books were pretty well representative, you know, very diverse and, um, you know, good for students, I think, to have that little resource."

Other techniques used in elementary school counseling with CIP included games, letter

writing, and check-ins. Anne described "game playing" in her elementary school counseling sessions to facilitate discussions about "situations and changes and how that's kind of affecting how they feel and their friendships and the relationship with the parent that's still at home." She also has done "letter writing to family members in prison." Letters helped CIP maintain a connection with their incarcerated parent. Anne used "letters and sending pictures and drawings and things like that so that there is that connection so that the dad can still have contact." At one time, she unsuccessfully tried to arrange "a phone call through the school" to an incarcerated parent. Several elementary PSCs mentioned using brief check-ins for CIP when they see them during the school day. Steven reported that when he sees CIP "in the hallways, I might stop them quicker, you know, and check on them a little bit." These brief interventions offered support for CIP when they were upset. Isabelle mentioned times she helped "get him away from the situation that was upsetting him and let him have a little brain-break, or just a time to get away." Anne also reported being able to provide support at CIP when they are having issues at school. She said, "If they're having a meltdown and I'm not teaching classes, I can go get the child."

Vera reported unique supports for CIP in the high school setting, including college planning and chaperoning a field trip to prison. She described work with a senior who wrote a college scholarship essay about a traumatic experience of parental violence and incarceration. Some of the techniques she used in this role included editing and providing comments on the essay and facilitating mock interviews with the student to prepare her for scholarship interviews. Vera also had a unique experience where she chaperoned a field trip to a jail and a prison with a criminal justice course that happened to have a CIP enrolled. On this field trip, Vera "kept an eye on her during that time just to see how she responded."

**Indirect student services.** Indirect student services as described in the ASCA National Model (2012) include referrals, consultation, and collaboration. PSCs work with other adults, or stakeholders, to promote student achievement. I describe three patterns in this category: referrals/support, working with caregivers/parents, and collaborating with school or agency staff.

***Referrals/support.*** PSCs in Redmond County frequently refer students to mental health counseling for additional or more intensive support. The school district employees two Mental Health Clinicians who receive referrals from PSCs and serve as liaisons to connect families with appropriate mental health services. The school district also has partnerships with five mental health agencies that offer school-based therapy. Mental Health Clinicians and local agencies seek to accommodate the insurance and financial needs of families so that all students have some access to mental health services. Irene, the Director of Counseling Services, sees this mental health referral system as a strength in the district and an asset to PSCs. She said, "We're not there to do therapy. We don't have time to do therapy." Through the mental health referral system, PSCs help "make connections to more higher levels of care than we're able to provide, so ... I think there are better resources and better connections than there ever have been in this district" (Irene).

This description of the mental health referral system provides the context in which PSCs make referrals for additional support for CIP. Most participants indicated making referrals for therapy or mental health services (including drug and alcohol treatment, behavioral health, mobile crisis) ($n$ = 11) and referrals to other social services agencies (i.e., child protective services, truancy court) ($n$ = 7) for CIP this school year. PSCs in all three focus groups referenced using school-based therapy services for CIP. PSCs "referred to mental health therapy" (Andrea) and "worked a lot with the school-based therapist to get services in place" (Isabelle).

As with individual counseling services PSCs provided, referrals for services were often for students who had multiple presenting problems. Nancy described "doing a referral for school-based therapy, it may not necessarily be just for [parental incarceration]. You know there's other issues that I've probably done referrals." Anne saw a benefit of these mental health services as offering additional support to students and caregivers "so that they've got kind of a more frequent, um, supports that, you know, they can be seeing once a week as opposed to haphazardly whenever I can get to them."

PSCs also used mentors to provide support for CIP. Andrea connected a student with a mentor and believed this mentor was "a really good, positive role model. And I think that's what he needs." Rachel described establishing informal mentor relationships when students needed additional support, for example by "reaching out to a coach, not telling the coach what's going on, but asking them to be kind of mentor, be around or check in with them" so that students feel supported as an adult takes "an extra special interest." In her role as Director of Counseling Services, Irene served as a mentor for a student with an incarcerated parent at a middle school.

***Working with caregivers/parents.*** PSCs in Redmond County Schools responded to requests for help from caregivers and contacted caregivers about concerns. Anne believed she spent "more time with the caregivers than I actually do the child." She worked with parents or other caregivers, including grandparents who "don't have custody of the children, but grandparents have been raising the child because the parent has been in and out, whether it's jail or just taking off of whatever." As she worked with caregivers, Anne would "give them skills to help support [CIP], tell them things to look for, what to do, how to do, hook them up with services." Natalie believed "sometimes they need somebody just like the child does."

PSCs emphasized the importance of working together with caregivers to support the

child. Rachel reached out to parents of CIP by "not just calling and saying, 'hi, I heard your husband or wife is in jail,' but 'hey, your student's struggling in this area, this is something we've talked about." Connecting with caregivers enabled PSCs to "talk about the importance of the connection between parent and school and family, and that usually helps the student too to see that you're both on the same page and want what's best for them" (Rachel). Anne asked caregivers to support the child's need to remain connected with an incarcerated parent. She worked with CIP who "wanted to have that connection, and so, by getting the permission of the person that they're staying with, and allowing them to, um, kind of give that child permission to still love the incarcerated person has been very helpful."

Finally, PSCs worked with caregivers to connect students with mental health services. Rebecca said she "called the caregiver, the grandma, she had custody, just to follow up on some of our resources." PSCs and other school personnel have worked to get mental health referral forms signed by the incarcerated parent when this parent has custody of the child. Teresa reported,

> It has been necessary sometimes um for us to go to jail to get a parents' signature on a form so we can make that therapy referral, or make another referral to another agency or get their signature on something. So that's another way that we serve them is we have to step outside the school.

Teresa said that the sheriff's department helped set up a visitation with the incarcerated parent when signatures were needed on paperwork. Richard echoed this need: "we can't let whatever family member they're staying with at the time sign off on paperwork for things like mental health services."

***Collaborating with school or agency staff.*** PSCs believed that collaborating was an important way they served CIP and all students. PSCs declared "when all the adults are working together, kids do better" (Noelle) and "we are not enough. One person is not enough" (Nicole). Richard said, "Whoever we have to bring in, um, in order to ensure that the student is successful, um, is what we will do."

PSCs identified a variety of stakeholders with whom they consulted and collaborated, including school social workers, child protective services workers, nurses, behavior coaches, administrators, teachers, athletic coaches, school resource officers, and other counselors. Some schools established regular meetings with support staff to discuss concerns about students and to problem solve. PSCs collaborated with school social workers when concerned about attendance, food, or financial assistance for families dealing with parental incarceration. Middle school counselors mentioned school resource officers as a positive resource. Teresa said,

> The school resources officers are a great resource in the way that ours is set up anyway. Most of the time our school resource officers are aware when things happen on weekends or in the evenings, so we collaborate with them to you know make sure that they'll come and let us know that this has happened, you might want to check on him today. Or they're real good at checking on him as well.

Richard reported school resource officers help provide contacts for PSCs to connect with incarcerated parents. Noelle connected CIP with the school resource officer when students asked legal questions about court or their parent's incarceration. Consulting and collaborating with PSCs in other schools can provide additional background information about CIP. Rachel said "it's often about a team effort, even going high and lower also within our community of counselors has been really helpful."

PSCs worked closely with teachers about academic or behavior concerns for students. Anne reported teachers at her school viewed her services as "helpful and supportive" and asked Anne to talk with students. Anne depended on teachers to look for warning signs of distress in children. She asked teachers to review student writing or social behaviors, and if they noted problems, she asked teachers to "please let me know. Give me copies of those, you know, letters or pictures that they're doing so that we can use those as kind of tools to help talk." Nancy asked teachers to "watch if this is, if there's something that the student needs." Andrea said she checked with the teacher of a student adjusting to parental incarceration at least twice a week.

PSCs conceptualized the need for secrecy and described ways this need impacted services for CIP. Sharing pertinent information with administrators and teachers may help them work differently with CIP. Rebecca described this collaboration with teachers:

> I think that letting teachers know about that, if they don't know, really can help them change the way that they approach their own situation of this student, gives them a little bit more patience and grace with the student, um, helps them understand a little bit better why they're, maybe not be turning in their homework, or why their test scores have gotten lower or have, gives them a little bit of perspective and, on what that student's going through. I think, for academics and social/emotional, communicating with the teachers and just letting them know like, hey, so-and-so is having a little, and maybe not give them all the details, but just having a really rough time, if you could just, if we all could just work together and collaborate, I think that that's really important.

Richard discussed collaborative efforts with administrators and said that "once we are able to collaborate with them and kind of give them some background on the situation, they can approach the student differently and in a way that is designed to help the student. Not to just be

punitive."

### Responding with the "Skills of the School Counselor" Summary

This section answered the second research question, *In what ways do PSCs work with CIP?* The mission and vision of school counseling in Redmond County Schools provided context for this work. The theme of *professional roles* emerged throughout document review, observation, and interviews with participants. PSCs responded to the needs of CIP using skills common in their professional roles and found within the ASCA National Model (2012). This section of the chapter described two categories of responsive services for CIP: direct student services and indirect student services. PSCs provided direct student services to CIP, including individual counseling, crisis response, and group counseling. PSCs used responsive intervention techniques to meet unique needs of CIP. PSCs described indirect student services for CIP, including referrals and additional support, working with caregivers and parents, and collaborating with school or agency staff.

## "It's Overwhelming Sometimes": Barriers in Working with CIP

The final research question for this study was *How do PSCs experience barriers in their work with CIP?* PSCs provided services to CIP while navigating school, family, community, and institutional systems. PSCs experienced barriers in their attempts to respond to the complex needs of CIP within these systems. Nicole reflected, "It's just challenging to meet their needs. It's just overwhelming sometimes." PSCs described the delicate navigation of responding to the needs of CIP while balancing professional responsibilities and working with stakeholders.

### Delicate Navigation

One of the last questions in the focus groups asked PSCs to describe challenges to working with CIP; however, PSCs mentioned challenges in their work with CIP throughout the

interviews. PSCs connected challenges to the needs of CIP and to professional roles. The theme of *delicate navigation* helps describe the balancing of professional responsibilities and the needs of CIP. PSCs described barriers navigating ethical and legal issues, working with stakeholders, and managing professional limitations.

**Ethical and legal issues.** Ethical behaviors for PSCs include protecting client confidentiality and information and providing competent treatment (ASCA, 2016). PSCs delicately navigated ethical or legal issues related to privacy and confidentiality, custody concerns, and lack of training.

***Privacy and confidentiality.*** I described PSCs' conceptualizations of secrecy and experiences navigating privacy when collaborating with stakeholders under the preceding research questions for the study. Here I describe ways this concern created barriers for services. A concern for protecting the privacy of CIP emerged in all focus groups and interviews with participants. At times, "it may only be the counselor that has that background on the student" (Richard), and PSCs described asking permission from students or parents before disclosing parental incarceration to others. In the elementary setting, Anne reported she asked "permission from the parents to kind of share this with the teachers so that they are aware of what's going on." Middle school counselors described asking students for permission to disclose parental incarceration. For example, Noelle also asked students for permission to disclose parental incarceration to teachers:

> Do you want to tell them? Do you want us to tell them together? What would you like for me to say to them? And sometimes I'll even like, if they're like, well I want you to tell them, I'll even draft an email and let them read it, like is this okay with you? Um, because it's their information. Um, I don't think I've ever told something like that without the kid's

permission.

Some PSCs withheld information from other stakeholders when they did not have permission to share about parental incarceration. Nicole mentioned asking for additional support for CIP "without sharing that specific information as to why," and Rebecca informed teachers "so-and-so is having a little, and maybe not give them all the details, but just having a really rough time." Nancy provided an example of an instance when she did not disclose parental incarceration with an administrator because "I just didn't see it really as relevant, and I didn't, uh - I didn't talk to him about it first as far as the confidentiality piece."

PSCs had to assess whether students were comfortable with sharing this information with other school staff. At times, PSCs encountered resistance to sharing private information with others. Richard said,

> I think the thing that - that makes it - that I find to be most important though is to make sure that the student is okay with us sharing that information with other people. A lot of um times they may not want their teachers to know. So we have to respect that student's privacy, um and if teachers find out things on their own, that's different. But we want to make sure that the student is comfortable with whoever we're sharing that information with.

Steven found "there's some folks that are very receptive and want that, and there's some folks that want you to back the heck out." Gretchen noted "some students, they don't want to talk about it at all."

PSCs in Redmond County Schools seemed to value group counseling, but they described confidentiality barriers that prevented utilizing targeted group counseling for CIP. Natalie reported not offering group counseling because sometimes CIP "don't feel real comfortable

sharing a lot of the details in a group even if the other kid's parent, and the other kids' parents are incarcerated, too, they just, they just seem- that just seems so personal." Rebecca expressed concern about group counseling for CIP because of "the whole confidentiality and trust thing. It's so personal." Noelle agreed "we don't want to create more drama . . . um, with sharing somebody's personal information, because that could really be disruptive and embarrassing in a lot of ways." Nicole did not feel comfortable targeting a group for CIP: "they have some embarrassment about it and it is a very private thing, so I haven't - even though I easily could - I haven't felt comfortable pulling a group with that identifying information together."

***Custody concerns.*** PSCs identified custody as a barrier when working with CIP. They referenced challenges obtaining signatures from incarcerated parents or determining who is legally responsible for CIP. As noted previously, PSCs at one middle school described visitations at a jail to obtain signatures from incarcerated parents; however, Richard reflected that this process was "difficult and time consuming to try to get in contact with that parent." The challenge occurred because "the parent that's locked up is not thinking about that at the forefront of their mind, but they do have a child in school that's still struggling that needs their signature on things to advocate for them" (Richard). Teresa agreed that the "contact piece. Um finding that legal guardian" was a barrier when working with CIP. Noelle stated that custody challenges were difficult to navigate without legal documents. Noelle described instances when

> we encounter documents or no documents in a kid's folder, and you know, who can make decisions for this child? Sometimes that, there's not like a legal document for us to figure out, um, the residence and like, we want to make a school-based therapy referral form, you can even sign this.

Rebecca echoed this frustration with "what does temporary custody mean? This was signed three

years ago."

***Lack of training.*** A lack of awareness and understanding of the needs of CIP created barriers to services. Participants varied in the degree to which they participated in professional development activities specific to CIP. About half attended a conference session or district workshop ($n$ = 8); others had completed a lecture or targeted discussion during graduate counseling training ($n$ = 5) or engaged in self-directed study through reading articles or books ($n$ = 5). Only two participants reported they had no training related to CIP. Table 4.3 provides participant responses to this question on the participant information form.

Approximately five months before my first focus group in Redmond County, PSCs in the school district had an opportunity to hear a guest speaker from a statewide non-profit program dedicated to advocating for CIP. Irene, the Director of Counseling Services, heard the guest speaker present information at another venue, and she believed all PSCs in the district needed to know more about CIP. She said,

> I was really glad that I was able to attend that 'cause that's not something, um, that I think we had ever really had any kind of professional development or anything about in this district . . . So that was, I felt like, something important to, to bring out.

Several participants referenced this workshop during focus groups and interviews. Teresa saved the handouts from this workshop and shared them with me after a focus group. Handouts included the Bill of Rights for CIP (SCFIPP, 2005), a tip sheet for teachers about supporting CIP, and an article and tip sheet for creating safe spaces at schools for CIP. Participants' recall of the information from this workshop about the prevalence of parental incarceration varied.

The workshop seemed to help increase awareness about the needs of CIP. Irene said that hearing about the numbers of CIP led her to "know that there were probably a lot more students

*Table 4.3: Professional Development Activities*

| **Name** | **Professional Development Activity Specific to CIP** |
|---|---|
| Irene | conference session/district workshop |
| Vera | conference session/district workshop; self-directed study |
| Nicole | none |
| Rachel | self-directed study |
| Noelle | conference session/district workshop |
| Rebecca | lecture or targeted discussion during my graduate counseling training; conference session/district workshop |
| Richard | self-directed study |
| Teresa | conference session/district workshop |
| Gretchen | lecture or targeted discussion during my graduate counseling training |
| Nancy | lecture or targeted discussion during my graduate counseling training |
| Anne | lecture or targeted discussion during my graduate counseling training; conference session/district workshop; self-directed study |
| Steven | lecture or targeted discussion during my graduate counseling training |
| Isabelle | conference session/district workshop |
| Andrea | conference session/district workshop; self-directed study |
| Natalie | none |

in the school I've worked at that, um, you know, I just wasn't aware, you know, of what was, what's happening with them." For Vera, the workshop gave her a framework to consider the needs of CIP. She reflected that this workshop was first opportunity to learn about CIP, and although she worked with CIP in the past, "I never really had anything structural wise about incarcerated parents to hang it on." Attending the workshop this school year and working with the student who disclosed parental incarceration in a scholarship essay was "kind of all at the right time" (Vera).

Even with this workshop offered in the district, PSCs identified the need for additional training. Anne said, "I think more training on that needs to be around because I don't think people realize, um, it's not that big of an abnormality." Vera also reflected "it's not something that we've addressed. it's a population that I think goes unserved, because we don't know what we don't know." Teresa mentioned the workshop was "helpful to know there was someone out there looking at it, I didn't come away feeling like I had a ton of resources to help the student." She also stated "I feel like there's something else that we need to be doing . . . I feel like I'm missing some resources I guess um that might be out there." Vera thought "there are probably some things we could all learn as school counselors to better address these needs."

One-third of participants ($n$ = 5) participated in a lecture or targeted discussion in graduate school about CIP; however, some PSCs mentioned feeling unprepared after graduate school for working with CIP. Gretchen wanted more training since she was a new PSC with two months of experience at the time of the interview. "Since I'm such a new counselor, sometimes I just don't how to approach situations. And I've never worked in internship I've never worked with incarcerated students, so having a real job, this is the first time I've actually gotten to interact with them" (Gretchen). In the same focus group, Richard empathized "it wasn't that long

ago where I felt the same way where I was like, I have no clue what to say or do with this student. I was never prepared for this." When reflecting on preparedness to work with CIP, Irene thought "it's not something that, um, is part of our traditional training as school counselors."

Irene suggested PSCs need more cultural awareness to be prepared to meet the needs of CIP. She thought graduate training effectively prepared PSCs to understand professional roles, but she believed some PSCs needed more exposure to diverse situations. She questioned, "how can you prepare a young person for what it's going to be like for them to have a family member who's away . . . if you haven't seen it or don't have any, uh, any experience with it?" These concerns were validated by PSCs who described learning about the prison system while counseling CIP. Nicole, a middle school counselor with five years of experience, said,

> I may be a little sheltered growing up, and so I specifically remember my first year having a conversation about the difference between jail and prison. And I was like "there is no difference." And they were like, "yes, there is a difference!" And a sixth grader taught me that, you know? And so my eyes have been opened a lot. They knew so much, a lot of times more than I wish they knew.

Irene, the Director of Counseling Services, was mentoring a middle school student with an incarcerated father at the time of the interview, and she said, "I'm learning a lot about what, from what she knows. Because I, I haven't really experienced that. I haven't you know, even been to a jail or anything like that." These examples highlighted the need for additional preparation and training.

**Issues with stakeholders.** PSCs in Redmond County Schools navigated challenges with other stakeholders that affected their services for CIP. These other stakeholders included parents, guardians, and educators. Three patterns in the data described these issues: family systems

barriers, uninformed, and educator perceptions.

***Family systems barriers.*** PSCs navigated barriers with parenting styles and secrecy when working with families of CIP. PSCs expressed frustrations when parents or caregivers resisted to working together or did not follow through. Nicole said, "A lot of times the present caregiver doesn't follow through with what would be helpful, and that's frustrating because our hands are tied." Rebecca attempted to connect with a custodial grandmother who "got defensive, like we were maybe prying into her family business, and it wasn't our intention at all, and we just all wanted to help." Natalie reached out to a mother when a student was having behavior difficulties at school, but "the mother would get defensive, to think we were picking on him, or like, give him a break, you know like you know I'm a single mom, I'm struggling, um, his dad's in prison."

PSCs also encountered challenges when working with parents and caregivers with different expectations or boundaries for student behavior. Isabelle identified a challenge to working with CIP as the parents' "lack of education. I mean, you know, 'I was like that when I was there age,' … it's like 'this is just a kid being a kid, I did that when I was there age and look at me now.'" She said this was a "general, any kid, not incarcerated parents" challenge in her work as a PSC. Noelle described challenges when "the caregiver, um, has different boundaries than the parent did, and um, or maybe there's um like appeasing or, 'aw, you poor thing' kind of, approach to parenting" that might occur if "the caretaker feels guilty about it or they're, you know, feeling sorry for the kid."

Another barrier with family systems was the secrecy of parental incarceration. PSCs in elementary school settings described experiences with families withholding information from CIP. Isabelle provided an example of knowing a father was in prison when the student believed

the father was in another state and coming to visit him on the weekend. Isabelle reflected this was "very difficult" to have this knowledge. Anne also described the difficulty of navigating family systems that are "covering for the person who's in jail" while attempting to serve CIP:

> It can be kind of uncomfortable because the fact is they're in there for such and such a reason but they're telling the child, "you know, he's on vacation," or - I think with the younger kids, and they're not getting accurate information, it kind of ties my hands in some ways. I've been very surprised at how often information is not forthcoming. I mean they don't need to get into the nitty gritty of everything, but, you know - daddy is not on vacation, you know.

Anne tried to respect family boundaries and worked with CIP on "behavioral issues and coping skills." However, she believed "the shame of the extended family and then trying to protect the child, but it's kind of a backfiring situation."

***Uninformed.*** There are no systematic ways of keeping track of CIP in Redmond County Schools, and PSCs identified being uninformed about parental incarceration as a barrier in their work. Teresa started a list of CIP this school year to keep track of this group of students. However, Vera reflected "there's nothing on any form that says, is your parent incarcerated, so that we know how to treat it."

Several PSCs expressed the desire for a better system of identifying CIP in order to provide services. Irene said, "I do wish there was a better way to know, you know? But, um, I don't know what that would be." She suggested putting an alert in the school data system, and she said, "I wish there was a way that we just had the information because I think we could do more to help support those." Nancy said, "I feel like there's probably a lot out there that I'm not doing anything for because I don't even know." Teresa also wished for "better communication or

some way of us actually knowing about kids so that we could - instead of being reactive, if we knew about them ahead of time there may be some supports we could put in place."

Although PSCs provided multiple examples of collaborating with teachers to support CIP, a lack of shared information presented barriers to services. Two elementary school counselors in one focus group shared examples of teachers not informing them about parental incarceration. Andrea shared an example of finding out "later on some of my kids that were having problems, their parents, one of their parents was incarcerated. You know, and the teacher, then, that child should have been referred a long time ago." Natalie said that "sometimes I'm the last one to know . . . The administration may know, where the secretary knows it all, or the teacher knows, and then, so many days or months down the road there's a problem, like, oh by the way."

Participants in one focus group discussed two potential reasons teachers did not refer CIP: (1) teachers did not view counseling as necessary or helpful for CIP, or (2) teachers did not recognize parental incarceration as an important issue. When teachers did not refer CIP to Natalie, she said she felt "devalued. I mean, it's like, well, what would she do about it anyway…It seems like a lot of people know who can't really do anything. As opposed to maybe I could make a difference or help." Noelle suggested that teachers might not fully understand how PSCs could help CIP: "what do you think my role is as a school counselor, you know? Um do they understand the skill set we have?" Andrea thought some teachers did not make referrals because "the teacher didn't think that that was that important." Andrea expressed these teachers "just want the schoolwork done and want them to sit still." Noelle reflected in these instances, teachers "don't get that it's a risk factor."

Some PSCs described a need for additional empathy or training for teachers and staff to

address information and awareness barriers. Richard wanted school-wide training about CIP:

> I would like to see some form of professional development offered for all staff on um dealing with students with incarcerated parents. Um and because I just - it's not often, but I have seen some cases where I would consider some adults to be a bit insensitive to some of the students' situations. And I think if they had a better understanding of what that's like and how that impacts the student, then maybe they would have a better approach to those students in that situation.

Noelle believed PSCs should have a role in advocacy and training for staff about the needs of CIP: "part of our role as a school counselor is, is you know, diversity and helping our staff be aware of if they're falling into those kinds of stereotypes." One way PSCs could work with other educators to support CIP was by "helping our staffs understand what risk and resiliency looks like" (Noelle).

***Educator perceptions.*** I asked PSCs in individual interviews about attitudes of educators or school staff about CIP. PSCs reported teachers and educators generally supported CIP. Anne reported her staff was "very, very supportive of the child and tries not to project the parent's issues onto that child." Nancy observed "good attitudes as far as they're supportive. Usually there's um, uh, I mean, they feel bad for the student just knowing, you know, that - that's, that the child is suffering because of that too," and she believed her staff felt "empathy for the child, you know, when that - that's a hard situation for them." Nancy said, "if there's any attitude of, um, judgment or anything like that, they don't show that in front of me." Vera noted an "attitude of concern in how can we, you know, help those students whose - what can't help that they have a, you know, a incarcerated parent." Teachers sharing information about parental incarceration with PSCs demonstrated their care and concern for students: "if they come to me with the

information, it means they- they care about it" (Vera). Vera reported, "If there's a stigma, they - it, I don't hear it."

PSCs may experience challenges when educators have negative perceptions about parental incarceration. When describing the need for professional advocacy, Natalie reported "some school staff in, and they might look down on that child." Although Anne focused on the supportive attitudes of her staff, she gave examples of negative educator perceptions and responses to parental incarceration. She reported these perceptions "depends on the child and the family. You know, it's more of, 'ugh, he got arrested again' or 'I cannot believe that they still - why he even got out in the first place.' Or complete shock of the situation." She recalled walking into staff meetings and hearing conversations about parental incarceration reported in the news. Anne reported,

> I've spoken up to say, you know, 'we have to remember this is our student, and we have to be careful of that when we're talking about things.' So, I've kind of tried to, to help with limit setting with, with teachers to an extent. Um, sometimes, they just- sometimes it needs to be discussed so that the rumors will die down too. Um, I think it's more talked about when it's a rarity than when it's somebody who's chronic.

These educator responses connected to experiences with stigma described previously in this chapter.

**Managing professional limitations.** PSCs experienced professional limitations that created barriers to responding to the needs of CIP. Professional limitations included the inability to meet all of the needs of CIP and difficulty navigating family loyalty and encouraging different choices for CIP. Two patterns describe barriers resulting from managing professional limitations: complexity of needs and navigating family tension.

***Complexity of needs.*** Some PSCs described professional limitations from their inability to meet all of the complex needs of CIP. Richard reflected on his professional limitations:

> as a counselor, I may not be able to provide them what they need. Um and that's hard when a student comes into your office, they cry, they get angry, they tell you everything that's going on, and then at the end of it all you can say is 'I know it's difficult but you have to keep trying to make it through every day.' Um and that's really all that you can give them is just support because I can't go and get their parent out of prison, and I can't go and hire them a lawyer and I can't go back in time and make it so that their parent didn't commit a crime. Um and that's what they want, but those things aren't feasible. Um so it's difficult.

Other PSCs gave examples of professional limitations to their work: "I feel like I'm beating my head on the wall with that particular situation" (Isabelle) and "I'm not sure what else I could do" (Nancy). Vera reflected on her experiences with a student after the father was released from prison and questioned if her role could have been different: "how do I help this student who's afraid of the father begin to have a relationship, sort of reentry kind of stuff. The stuff you do with military families … How do you un- uh, reconcile?" Steven described his desire to "fix it" for CIP, but he recognized this sometimes meant "stepping back and letting things, other resources, and not just get your hands on."

***Navigating family tension.*** Earlier in the chapter I described the loss experience for CIP from the tension of family versus child. PSCs built on their conceptualization of the needs of CIP to navigate family tensions. PSCs experienced professional challenges as they attempted to respect family loyalty but promote different outcomes for students. Nicole provided an example of working with a student whose father and older brothers were in and out of jail and her efforts

to “protect them as people and respect them, but also in a way be like ‘you want to be better than them.’” She said,

> Students could be really protective over them and so if I’m saying anything that could be interpreted as negative towards them, that’s going to build up a wall. Um, but I want students to know that they can do better, so it’s just, I have to stop and think about how I’m wording it, how are they going to interpret this, what’s the best way to just push them to stay out of jail but also respect their parents.

Even in her efforts to focus on the student and positive behaviors and goal setting to avoid “a path of negatives,” Nicole had the student’s “relationship with the people that they love come up and just kind of a fine line.” Noelle’s conversations with students with an addiction history were also an effort to “plant the seed because it's such a powerful choice, if they're gonna start down that road or not.”

Navigating family tensions was difficult when PSCs had additional knowledge or insight into the family situation or expected outcomes. Richard reflected on the difficulty of working with CIP who are anticipating everything improving upon the parent’s release from prison: “you want kids to be optimistic about their future, but a lot of times they're almost optimistic in a way that may be problematic.” Nancy described efforts to navigate these tensions by reassuring students that “it's okay to care about somebody and love somebody and not agree with the choices that they make. People make mistakes, they make bad choices, um but they're still your parent.”

**“It’s Overwhelming Sometimes” Summary**

The theme of delicate navigation emerged to describe barriers to working with CIP. This section of the chapter described three categories of barriers to supporting CIP: ethical and legal

issues, working with stakeholders, and managing professional limitations. PSCs experienced ethical and legal issues when working with CIP, including concerns about maintaining privacy and confidentiality, custody concerns, and a need for additional professional development and training. PSCs experienced challenges when working with stakeholders, including difficulties with family systems, being uninformed about parental incarceration, and educator perceptions that conveyed stigma. Finally, PSCs faced the challenge of navigating professional limitations when overwhelmed by the complexity of student needs or encountering family tension.

## Chapter Summary

This chapter reported findings from my case study of the experiences of PSCs in Redmond County Schools with CIP. I began the chapter with a description of the context of the case, including my experiences with data collection in Redmond County and PSCs' awareness of CIP in the school district. I then described findings for the three research questions, with categories and patterns from the data to support findings. The first research question, *In what ways do PSCs conceptualize the needs of CIP?*, described the themes of observable impacts of parental incarceration and conceptualizations of loss experiences. The second research question, *In what ways do PSCs work with CIP?*, provided the context of school counseling in Redmond County Schools and used the theme of professional roles to describe ways PSCs provided delivery services to CIP. The final research question, *How do PSCs experience barriers in their work with CIP?,* included the theme of delicate navigation to describe the balancing of professional responsibilities with systemic barriers. In the following chapter, I discuss these findings and offer implications for PSCs and counselor educators.

# Chapter Five: Discussion and Implications

The purpose of this study was to provide an initial inquiry into the experiences of PSCs who work with CIP. Three research questions guided the study: (1) *In what ways do PSCs conceptualize the needs of CIP?*, (2) *In what ways do PSCs work with CIP?* and (3) *How do PSCs experience barriers in their work with CIP?* An instrumental case study method (Stake, 1995) was used to provide an in-depth exploration of this issue in a bounded system. Analyzing the experiences of PSCs in a single school district, Redmond County Schools, provided an opportunity to understand more about the issue of how PSCs work with CIP. In this chapter, I provide a critical review of the case study findings, address limitations, and suggest implications for PSCs and counselor educators. Finally, I outline recommendations for future research.

## Discussion

A discussion of case study begins with considerations of the context of the case. This case was bounded by place and time, so the sociopolitical climate in the Spring of 2017 when this study was conducted influenced the experiences of PSCs in Redmond County. Other contextual considerations included the culture, identity, and experiences of each participant. Professional contexts, such as school settings and expectations from building administrators, were also a component of the study and services described by PSCs. Some of these factors were not explicitly stated or explored in this study, but all provided the context for the case study.

Several elements of the context that influenced findings may be unique to Redmond County Schools. PSCs in Redmond County Schools had the opportunity for professional development on the needs of CIP approximately five months before I collected data. This training opportunity for PSCs was offered unbeknownst to me when I selected my case. It is possible and probable that PSCs in this case had increased knowledge about CIP because of this

training. Redmond County Schools also strongly utilizes and supports mental health referrals and school-based therapy. This mental health referral system may have increased the therapeutic support received by CIP in this school district. These contextual factors are considerations when interpreting the findings of this case described below.

**Conceptualizing the Needs of CIP**

The first research question, *In what ways do PSCs conceptualize the needs of CIP?*, is answered through PSCs' descriptions of the observable impacts of parental incarceration and conceptualization of loss experiences. PSCs identified loss experiences for CIP, including loss of stability, security, social relationships, normalcy, familiar settings, and innocence. PSCs also described emotional and behavioral responses observed in the school setting and factors that may explain differences in response to parental incarceration. These findings provide evidence that PSCs conceptualize parental incarceration as a loss occurring at home with social-emotional and educational repercussions at school. As discussed in the following paragraphs, PSCs' conceptualization of the needs of CIP was consistent with previous research.

The loss experiences of CIP described by PSCs provide support for ambiguous loss theory as a conceptual framework for the experiences of CIP (Bocknek et al., 2009; Johnson & Easterling, 2015). According to ambiguous loss theory (Boss, 2006), stress and trauma occur from living in the uncertainty of the loss event. PSCs in this study highlighted the uncertainty faced by CIP. They provided examples of students worrying about a parents' potential arrest or sentencing during the school-day (Nancy, Teresa) and having difficulty focusing on academics when dealing with parental incarceration (Irene, Richard, Steven). PSCs also described uncertainty for CIP with reentry expectations and relationships with incarcerated parents and caregivers. Family roles, relationships, and functions become confused in ambiguous losses

(Boss, 2006), and PSCs in this study described the tension of family versus child. This pattern related to Johnson and Easterling's (2015) finding that CIP navigated complex family relationships. Another element of ambiguous loss theory is the potential for psychological problems from feelings of hopelessness that lead to depression, guilt, and anxiety (Boss, 2004). PSCs in this study described emotional responses for CIP, including anxiety, sadness, depression, guilt, confusion, and anger. In all, PSCs' descriptions of loss and impact of parental incarceration are consistent with other conceptualizations of the experiences of CIP through the framework of ambiguous loss theory (Arditti, 2012b; Bocknek et al., 2009; Johnson & Easterling, 2015).

PSCs provided anecdotal evidence for findings from other research described in Chapter Two. Consistent with previous findings regarding the potential distress of prison visitation (Arditti & Savla, 2015; Poehlmann et al., 2010), Anne reported how a student demonstrated elevated behaviors around contact or visitation with an incarcerated parent. PSCs accounts of students' exposure to criminal activity and the cycle of parental incarceration were consistent with disruptions of recidivism and exposure to the criminal justice system documented in the literature (Dalliere & Wilson, 2010; Murphey & Cooper, 2015; Murray & Murray, 2010).

PSCs in this study described school problems for CIP, including poor academic performance, attendance, and behavior. These school problems align with Murphey and Cooper's (2015) report of the negative relationship between school well-being and parental incarceration. Just as previous researchers found that CIP experienced relational problems at school with peers and teachers (Allard & Greene, 2011; Krupat, 2007; Morgan et al., 2013; Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008), PSCs in this study reported CIP experienced shame or embarrassment about their parents' incarceration and withdrew from friendships and

extracurricular activities.

PSCs conceptualized the experience of parental incarceration as a stigmatized loss that was private for children and families. The secrecy of parental incarceration was a pattern in the interviews and focus groups, and PSCs described caregivers withholding information from CIP and CIP withholding information from school staff and peers. Previous studies found CIP may lack information about parental incarceration (Allard & Green, 2011; Krupat, 2007; Parke & Clarke-Stewart, 2004) or attempt to conceal information about parental incarceration to manage stigma (Luther, 2016). The need for privacy may impact services provided by PSCs and challenges experienced by PSCs described in the following sections. Although some CIP work to maintain secrecy, PSCs in the study conceptualized CIPs' need for support and validation from school staff. As Richard stated, "they do want someone to know even if they don't want to talk about it. But they do want someone at the school to be aware."

Although resiliency of CIP was a key finding in Nesmith and Ruhland's (2008) study, only one PSC in this study conceptualized the resiliency of CIP. This may be due to the nature of the work described by PSCs in interviews and focus groups. Most PSCs in the study focused on counseling and consultation services which are often provided to students with identified problems. However, Vera, a high school counselor, described college planning services for a student who already demonstrated academic success; this type of individual student planning is not offered in the elementary and middle school settings. There could be differences in coping behaviors for CIP at different developmental levels (Dallaire et al., 2010). Although only one PSC explicitly identified resiliency in CIP, other PSCs described ways students coped with parental incarceration. For example, PSCs reported CIP in Redmond County talked about their experiences with PSCs or mentors, enrolled in honors courses school, created plans for survival,

and continued to hope for a better future.

**PSCs Working with CIP**

PSCs in Redmond County provided school counseling services to CIP. Their reported services help answer the second research question: *In what ways do PSCs work with CIP?* PSCs in the study most frequently provided individual counseling, referrals, and consultation to respond to the needs of CIP. These services fit within the delivery component of the ASCA National Model (2012). Although Jones and Wainaina-Woźna (2013) found individual counseling was rarely offered for CIP, all PSCs in this study provided individual counseling to CIP in the previous seven months. PSCs described goals of individual counseling with CIP, such as processing emotional responses, validating loss experiences, teaching coping skills, facilitating goal setting, promoting academic success, and maintaining connections with incarcerated parents when appropriate. PSCs used interventions to respond to the needs of CIP, including bibliotherapy, psychoeducation about addiction, check-ins during the school day, and play therapy. Previous scholars suggested bibliotherapy and play therapy interventions for CIP (Hames & Pedreira, 2003; Petsch & Rochlen, 2009). Two interventions offered by PSCs, psychoeducation about addiction and check-ins, differed from previous recommendations in the literature.

PSCs served CIP in group counseling; however, these counseling groups were not targeted for CIP. PSCs served CIP in group counseling focused on other identified concerns, such as loss, friendship, and social skills. Previous scholars recommended therapeutic group counseling interventions for CIP who displayed negative behaviors at school or concerns regarding self-esteem (Lopez & Bhat, 2007; Lopez & Burt, 2013; Springer et al., 2000). However, PSCs in this study expressed concerns about privacy and confidentiality that prevented

them from offering group counseling for CIP. Their concerns raise questions about the optimal way to provide group counseling for CIP.

PSCs saw a natural fit between services they offered to CIP and their professional roles and responsibilities. PSCs emphasized their efforts to respond to the identified needs of all students and viewed CIP as one target group for their work. The ASCA National Model (2012) declared PSCs "use the skills of leadership, advocacy, and collaboration to promote systemic change" (p. xii-xiii). Efforts of PSCs in this study to collaborate with staff about the needs of CIP and encourage empathy in responses to student behavior were ways in which PSCs demonstrated leadership, advocacy, and collaboration skills. PSCs believed collaboration with other caregivers and school staff was vital for addressing the needs of CIP. The connection between the professional skills of PSCs and services offered to CIP is a new addition to the literature.

PSCs described differences in awareness and services for CIP at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Middle and high school counselors reported some difficulties learning about parental incarceration or responding to the needs of CIP without prior knowledge of students and families. Although previous scholars noted developmental differences for CIP (Dallaire et al., 2010), this study adds to the literature differences in delivery services received by CIP based on developmental differences. For example, high school counselors reported learning about parental incarceration when assisting with college financial aid or scholarship applications. Although CIP have low postsecondary attainment rates (Hagan & Foster, 2012), some high school counselors in Redmond County Schools provided postsecondary planning services for CIP. PSCs considered the developmental needs of CIP when providing these delivery services.

**Barriers in Work with CIP**

The challenges to supporting CIP described by PSCs help answer the third research question: *How do PSCs experience barriers in their work with children of incarcerated parents?* PSCs described a delicate navigation of professional roles and efforts to meet the needs of CIP. PSCs experienced challenges when addressing ethical and legal concerns, issues with stakeholders, and professional limitations. Some of the barriers described by PSCs with CIP are similar to those identified in other school counselor literature, including navigating ethical issues such as confidentiality, difficulty working with parents and guardians, and role confusion among school staff about PSCs (Dollarhide & Saginak, 2017). However, the experience of parental incarceration may add unique barriers for PSCs seeking to protect student privacy to circumvent stigma and respond to complex and overwhelming student needs.

PSCs in the study who received training reported an increased awareness of the needs of CIP and a framework to conceptualize the experiences of CIP; however, PSCs wanted more resources to respond to the needs of CIP and additional training for other staff. Barriers identified by PSCs connect to challenges of serving CIP in school settings found in the literature. In three previous studies, educators expressed difficulty identifying CIP within the school, a lack of understanding about how to appropriately respond to the needs of CIP, and a need for additional training for school officials about parental incarceration (Dallaire et al., 2010; McCrickard & Flynn, 2016; Morgan et al., 2013). Just as PSCs in this study navigated confidentiality with teachers and other staff members, McCrickard and Flynn (2016) described participants' struggles to balance confidentiality with helping teachers and school staff understand the needs of CIP.

PSCs in Redmond County Schools also described concerns about custody and the crisis response of assessing safety that were not identified in previous studies of educator perceptions

of CIP (Dallaire et al., 2010; McCrickard & Flynn, 2016; Morgan et al., 2013). PSCs described custody and safety concerns due to lack of communication with school officials about custody arrangements, difficulty contacting incarcerated parents or caregivers, and efforts by CIP to protect formerly incarcerated parents by withholding information about criminal activity. The responsibility of PSCs to ensure client welfare and safety adds these ethical and legal concerns to the list of challenges to working with CIP at school (ASCA, 2016).

PSCs in this study also described family systems barriers, such as navigating parenting styles and secrecy, encountered in their role as counselor. PSCs have an ethical responsibility to collaborate with parents or guardians and attempt to connect students with outside resources when appropriate (ASCA, 2016). PSCs attempting to follow these ethical behaviors expressed frustration when caregivers did not follow through with recommended services for CIP. Challenges working with caregivers of CIP were not highlighted in previous studies of educator perceptions and experiences (Dallaire et al., 2010; McCrickard & Flynn, 2016; Morgan et al., 2013). Altogether, PSCs encountered barriers navigating the individual needs of CIP in complex school, family, community, and institutional systems.

## Limitations

Limitations in single case study research include issues of generalizability, trustworthiness, and researcher subjectivity (Merriam, 1998). I attempted to minimize the limitations of trustworthiness and subjectivity through triangulation efforts as described in Chapter Three. I carefully recorded observations and reflections in my researcher journal, and I participated in a bracketing interview prior to data collection and a peer debriefing after coding. Despite these efforts, researcher bias may have influenced my analysis and findings.

The issue of generalizability is an inherent limitation of case study research (Merriam,

1998; Stake, 1995). I reported experiences of PSCs in Redmond County Schools, and as such, these findings are not reflective of experiences of PSCs elsewhere. Two contextual factors, the mental health referral program and professional development training for PSCs about CIP, are unique to Redmond County Schools and limit generalizability. In addition, the findings may not be fully representative of PSCs in Redmond County. All PSCs in Redmond County Schools had the opportunity to participate in the study; however, only 14 of 89 PSCs and the Director of Counseling Services self-selected to participate in interviews. The small sample size of participants, particularly the limited number of high school counselors, was a limitation for this study. Participants who self-selected to participate in the study may have more awareness, knowledge, and skills with CIP. Problems with participants' recall of information and the potential for social desirability bias are additional limitations of this study.

## Final Researcher Reflections

Researcher reflexivity is a best practice in qualitative research (Tracy, 2010). My former experiences as a PSC working with CIP led to my initial interest in the topic. I connected with experiences and feelings shared by PSCs in Redmond County Schools. For example, I felt uncertain and unprepared in the early years of my career about how to meet the needs of CIP for whom I was providing individual counseling. In this, I related to Gretchen and Richard when they discussed uncertainty as a new counselor encountering CIP. I also recall being deeply impacted by the stories of CIP in graduate school and throughout my years as a PSC. I learned from my students about what it was like to visit jails and prisons and heard stories from my students about their families and incarcerated parents. Because of these experiences, I connected to Nicole, Vera, and Irene's statements about learning from CIP.

Stake (1995) described a case researcher as teacher, advocate, evaluator, biographer, and

interpreter. As I engaged in these roles, I attempted to ensure that my interpretation of the data reflected the participants' experiences rather than my own throughout data collection and analysis. A bracketing interview with a peer prior to data collection, the researcher journal I maintained throughout the case study, and a meeting for peer debriefing for data analysis provided opportunities for me to reflect on my subjectivity. In the bracketing interview, I reflected on my privilege to be able to read about CIP and talk to CIP to learn about the experience rather than living with this adversity. I now have a stronger intellectual knowledge about the needs of CIP based on my scholarly interest on this topic than I had at the time I was serving CIP as an elementary school counselor. I believe CIP are a marginalized group in society, and I believe my awareness and knowledge of the needs of CIP gives me a responsibility to be an advocate for them. These factors motivated me throughout the dissertation process and are a part of my perspective as a researcher in this study.

## Implications

Although the findings from this study are not generalizable beyond Redmond County Schools, the nature of instrumental case study provides opportunities for naturalistic generalizations (Stake, 1995). The experiences of PSCs with CIP in Redmond County Schools highlight some of the concerns and needs of PSCs when working with CIP. As such, I offer implications for PSCs and counselor educators based on findings from the case study.

### PSCs

An estimated one in 14 students will experience parental incarceration before age 18 (Murphey & Cooper, 2015), and PSCs may already be serving CIP in their schools. PSCs may serve CIP either knowingly or unknowingly if parental incarceration is not disclosed. PSCs need an awareness of the needs of CIP to effectively offer services for this group of students and

should seek training on the needs of CIP. As reported by PSCs in this study, PSCs can learn about the needs of CIP through readings or participation in professional development opportunities. Suggested resources for professional development include those provided for professionals and advocates by SFCIPP (www.sfcipp.org) and the *Help Children of Incarcerated Parents* (Brown, 2016) webinar available for ASCA members.

PSCs can lead efforts to bring awareness about the needs of CIP to other educators. In a previous study of educators in England, Morgan et al. (2013) recommended that schools raise awareness and train staff about CIP, focus on individual needs of children, use available resources to support CIP, and support children's rights to contact and visitation with imprisoned parents through leniency towards absences. PSCs can use their leadership and advocacy skills to lead efforts to train staff, promote empathy for CIP, and offer support for the individual needs of CIP. PSCs can help staff conceptualize parental incarceration as a grief and loss issue and connect observable socio-emotional or academic impacts with loss experiences. PSCs may also help manage the stigma experienced by CIP when they hear assumptions and negative perceptions of CIP and incarcerated parents. PSCs could "help with limit setting" as Anne did and remind staff "this is our student, and we have to be careful of that when we're talking about things." PSCs can promote staff awareness and empathy only when they have awareness and understanding of these needs.

PSCs who offer individual and group counseling for CIP should consider the needs of students for short-term counseling or mental health therapy (ASCA, 2012). As seen in this study, the presenting problem for CIP may be relational or academic concerns rather than parental incarceration. PSCs should assess the readiness of CIP to acknowledge or discuss experiences. When offering mental health support for CIP at school, PSCs should consider the emotional

release students may have when discussing stress and trauma experiences and develop a plan to manage this in the school setting.

PSCs in this study were particularly concerned about confidentiality with group counseling interventions, and PSCs offering group counseling targeted to CIP should anticipate this challenge and seek to minimize the risks to confidentiality for CIP. PSCs may determine CIP need additional therapeutic support due to the complexity of needs and connection of parental incarceration to issues in family systems.

PSCs can utilize interprofessional collaboration and build partnerships with social workers, mental health counselors, families, teachers, administrators, nurses, and school resource officers as a way to provide wraparound services and support for CIP (Anderson-Butcher & Ashton, 2004). As seen in this study, school resource officers can be a valuable source of information about parental incarceration, and collaborating with school resource officers may encourage open communication with law enforcement about the needs of CIP. Collaborating with teachers and administrators can also provide additional opportunities to inform them about risk factors and encourage "patience and grace" (Rebecca) with academic and behavior problems. As PSCs collaborate with other service providers, they may promote counseling interventions as an appropriate responsive service for addressing the needs of CIP.

PSCs may also need to be creative when serving the needs of CIP and their families. As demonstrated by PSCs at one middle school in this case study, visiting incarcerated parents in jail or prison to obtain signatures on forms or complete paperwork may be necessary. In these instances, PSCs may encourage incarcerated parents to continue to be active in the educational experience of CIP as a way of supporting CIP. Other creative suggestions for PSCs include asking caregivers for permission to mail letters or pictures to incarcerated parents or arranging

phone calls or televisits with incarcerated parents. If students are participating in community initiatives, such as reading with parents during prison visits (Gardner, 2015), PSCs could recommend bibliotherapy resources to CIP and caregivers that can foster healthy dialogue about emotions and experiences for CIP. PSCs in this study reported wanting additional resources to support CIP, and PSCs can seek online resources that provide booklists and links to available resources such as the Sesame Street toolkit (Sesame Workshop, 2013).

**Counselor Educators**

The importance of training PSCs to understand and be culturally responsive to the needs of CIP emerged within the case study. The Director of Counseling Services in Redmond County Schools provided professional development to PSCs in the school district about CIP; however, this professional development opportunity may not be readily available to many PSCs. Therefore, an implication of this study is for counselor educators to help prepare PSCs to understand and respond to the needs of CIP.

Counselor educators are responsible for training and developing multiculturally competent counselors (American Counseling Association, 2014). To meet the needs of CIP, counselor educators can help prepare "culturally competent clinicians who are knowledgeable about the kinds of challenging life situations, personal barriers, and general hardships frequently experienced by children of offenders" (Johnson, 2012, p. 62). Counselor educators can help counselors-in-training understand the criminal justice system and needs of families and children connected to the system.

There are opportunities to highlight the adversity experienced by CIP across the counselor education curriculum. For example, discussing advocacy in the current sociopolitical climate may help counselors-in-training understand connections between deportation of

undocumented parents and the experiences of CIP. In a multicultural counseling course, instructors could assign readings from Michelle Alexander's (2010) *The New Jim Crow* or have students view Averick, Barish, and DuVernay's (2016) documentary *13th* before discussing repercussions of mass incarceration for children and families. Teaching counselors-in-training about ACEs (Anda et al., 2006; Felitti et al., 1998) in a human growth and development course could provide opportunities to discuss implications of parental incarceration. Counselor educators can include the needs of children and families when teaching about addiction as another way to bring awareness to the hardships faced by some CIP.

Practicum and internship experiences may provide initial opportunities for school counselors-in-training to work with CIP. Supervisors can help future PSCs develop the skills to respond to the grief and loss of having an incarcerated parent. Teaching supervisees about ambiguous loss theory (Boss, 2006) and current grief theories and models that encourage meaning making and bonds may help them address the needs of grieving CIP. Findings in this case study revealed experiences of or the potential for stigma for CIP at school. Supervisors can help develop self-awareness in supervisees by exploring potential biases about incarcerated parents and CIP to hopefully reduce stigmatizing attitudes. Counselor educators and supervisors should also be prepared to explore their own biases and assumptions about prisoners as a relevant component of cultural competency for preparing others to work with CIP.

**Future Research**

This case study provided an initial inquiry into the experiences of PSCs with CIP. Therefore, there are many possibilities for further research on the topic. Because this study focused on one school district in a Southeastern state, additional research is needed to understand the experiences of PSCs with CIP in other school districts across the nation. Both qualitative

studies and quantitative surveys of PSCs could help researchers begin to generalize findings about the experiences of PSCs with CIP. Further qualitative inquiry could explore the experiences of PSCs with CIP in other locations, including additional of high school counselor perspectives to address a limitation of this study. Findings from this study point to the need for additional training and contextual understanding among PSCs, and researchers can explore PSCs' cultural competency with CIP and evaluate the impact of targeted professional development and training. Including the perspective of CIP served by PSCs can help create a more robust understanding of the topic. Researchers should pay careful attention to the diversity of CIP and PSCs in these studies. These findings could help researchers develop guidelines for best practice with CIP.

The effectiveness of therapeutic interventions with CIP lacks empirical support. Group counseling and filial therapy with CIP were the only counseling interventions with limited empirical support found in my review of the literature (Harris & Landreth, 1997; Landreth & Lobaugh, 1998; Springer et al., 2000), and I found no empirical support for counseling services provided by PSCs to CIP. Researchers should evaluate the effectiveness of services provided to CIP by therapists and PSCs in elementary, middle, and high school settings. In particular, researchers may investigate changes in the socio-emotional and academic observable impacts for CIP receiving previously recommended multisystems models for counseling CIP of color (Graham & Harris, 2013) or play therapy interventions (Brown & Gibbons, 2016). Because PSCs in this study were hesitant to provide group counseling for CIP, additional research is needed to understand ways PSCs who provide this counseling service overcome privacy and confidentiality barriers. This research could add support for effective therapeutic practices with CIP.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I described contextual factors influencing the study findings and discussed findings for the three research questions guiding the study. Next, I provided a brief overview of limitations and my role as researcher in the study. I then described implications for PSCs and counselor educators, including additional training, considerations for mental health supports in the school, and creative interventions. Finally, I proposed several suggestions for future research on the topic of experiences of PSCs with CIP, such as studies with larger populations of PSCs and research on the effectiveness of therapeutic interventions with CIP.

Overall, this study was significant as the first study of PSCs' experiences with CIP. The perspective of PSCs in Redmond County Schools provided insight into ways PSCs conceptualize and serve the needs of CIP at school. This study supports existing literature recommending increased awareness and support for CIP in school settings (Dallaire et al., 2010; McCrickard & Flynn, 2016; Morgan et al., 2013) and the importance of PSCs as advocates for CIP (Petsch & Rochlen, 2009). The study raises questions regarding optimal ways of identifying CIP in schools, combatting educator and peer stigma, and providing school counseling services to CIP to address barriers to student success. The results of this study may increase awareness of the needs of CIP at school and promote responsive services by PSCs for this vulnerable group of students.

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# Appendices

**Appendix A**
LETTER OF SUPPORT

Date: November 21, 2016

To: University of Tennessee, Knoxville IRB Committee:

School counselors in [*district*] are dedicated to providing comprehensive school counseling programs that improve student achievement and enhance the academic, career and personal/social development of all students. School counselors provide leadership and advocacy to promote equity and access to opportunities and rigorous educational experiences for all students, including students experiencing parental incarceration.

Therefore, [*district*] supports Emily Brown's research efforts. We are willing to allow school counselors in our district to decide without coercion if they would like to participate in her dissertation research study, "Experiences of Professional School Counselors with Children of Incarcerated Parents."

Pending IRB approval, we will allow Emily to contact school counselors in the district. Emily can access school facilities to interview school counselors and collect demographic information from participants for this research study. We will also share requested information about district policies guiding professional school counseling services.

Sincerely,

[*Signature*]

Director of Counseling Services

## Appendix B

RECRUITMENT EMAIL

*Experiences of Professional School Counselors with Children of Incarcerated Parents*

Dear [*district*] Counselor:

You are invited to participate in a research study, *Experiences of Professional School Counselors with Children of Incarcerated Parents.* The purpose of this study is to learn about the experiences of school counselors who work with children and adolescents with incarcerated parents. School counselors employed by [*district*] and fully certified in [*state*] are eligible to participate.

If you choose to participate, I will invite you to a focus group with several other [*district*] counselors. A copy of the Informed Consent form with more information about the study is attached to this email. Some focus group participants may also be invited to participate in individual interviews at a later time.

If you would like to participate, please contact me by email or phone or by filling out this form: https://goo.gl/forms/UZmFHqYwgkxHT1SY2. You will receive a follow up notice within the next two weeks to schedule the focus group at a mutually agreed upon time and location.

If you have any questions at any time about the study or procedure, you may contact me at ebrown62@vols.utk.edu or (XXX) XXX-XXXX. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Casey Barrio Minton at cbarrio@utk.edu with concerns.

Thank you for your consideration.

Emily C. Brown
Doctoral Candidate, Counselor Education
University of Tennessee

**Appendix C**

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENTS

*Experiences of Professional School Counselors with Children of Incarcerated Parents*

**Introduction and Purpose**

Hello, my name is Emily Brown, and I am a doctoral candidate in Counselor Education at the University of Tennessee. You are invited to take part in a focus group interview concerning your experiences working with children and adolescents with incarcerated parents. The overall purpose of the research study is to explore experiences of school counselors serving children of incarcerated parents. This study is being conducted as a part of my dissertation for degree completion.

**Involvement in the Study**

If you agree to participate in this research study, I will conduct a 60 minute focus group with you and other school counselors from your school district at a mutually agreed upon time and location. The focus group will involve questions about your work with children of incarcerated parents, awareness of this population within your school, barriers to serving this population, and services offered to these students. You will also be asked to complete an information form. This form will gather background information including your name, school, experience as a school counselor, and types of services provided to children of incarcerated parents.

The focus group will be audio recorded, and I may take notes during the focus group in order to accurately record the information you provide. I will only use audio files for transcription purposes. I expect to conduct only one focus group interview with you; however, a follow-up conversation may be needed for further clarification. I may also ask you to verify the accuracy of the focus group transcript. If so, I will contact you by phone at a number that is most convenient to you within three to four months. Also, if you have any questions about the nature of the focus group, you are encouraged to ask at any time. If you feel uncomfortable at any time during the focus group, you may leave the focus group.

**Risks and Benefits**

Risks of participation include the potential for breach of confidentiality. This risk is particularly noted with focus groups with colleagues. Though I request confidentiality from focus group participants, I cannot guarantee this. I will maintain confidentiality by not sharing information with your employer or supervisor, other than de-identified information available in the final report from this study. Some questions about your experiences may lead to uncomfortable emotional responses. You may decline to answer any question, or you may leave the focus group at any time.

Although there are no direct benefits to you for participating in this interview, the information gathered could help to improve future services offered by school counselors to children of

incarcerated parents. Together, results of this study may help researchers understand how school counselors can best work with children of incarcerated parents.

**Confidentiality**

Focus group data generated for this study, including individual names and other identifiable information, will be given pseudonyms or will not be used. Data will be made available only to my transcriptionists, my dissertation committee, and me. De-identified data may be shared with this team using services provided by the University of Tennessee certified for the storage of personally identifiable information (e.g., Google Drive). Study materials will be maintained for a period of three years after the study has been completed and closed with the Institutional Review Board. No reference that could link your participation in the study will be made in oral or written reports.

**Contact Information**

If at any time you have questions about the study or procedures, or if you experience any problems related to the study, please contact me, Emily Brown, at ebrown62@vols.utk.edu or by phone (XXX) XXX-XXXX or my advisor, Dr. Casey Barrio Minton, at cbarrio@utk.edu. If you have questions or concerns about your treatment in this research or your rights as a research participant, please contact the University of Tennessee IRB Compliance Officer at utkirb@utk.edu or (865) 974-7697.

**Participation**

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you can decline to participate with no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your responses will not be included in the results of the study. After the data have been de-identified, I will no longer be able to withdraw your data.

---

**Consent**

I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| _____<br>Participant Name (printed) | _____<br>Participant Signature | _____ / _____ / _____<br>Date |
| _____<br>Researcher Name (printed) | _____<br>Researcher Signature | _____ / _____ / _____<br>Date |

*Experiences of Professional School Counselors with Children of Incarcerated Parents*

**Introduction and Purpose**

Hello, my name is Emily Brown, and I am a doctoral candidate in Counselor Education at the University of Tennessee. You are invited to take part in an interview concerning your experiences working with children and adolescents with incarcerated parents. The overall purpose of the research study is to explore experiences of school counselors serving children of incarcerated parents. This study is being conducted as a part of my dissertation for degree completion.

**Involvement in the Study**

If you agree to participate in this research study, I will conduct a 45 minute interview with at a mutually agreed upon time and location. The interview will involve questions about your work with children of incarcerated parents, awareness of this population within your school, barriers to serving this population, and services offered to these students.

With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded, and I may take notes during the interview in order to accurately record the information you provide. I will only use audio file for transcription purposes. I expect to conduct only one interview with you; however, a follow-up conversation may be needed for further clarification. I may also ask you to verify the accuracy of our interview transcript. If so, I will contact you by phone at a number that is most convenient to you within three to four months. Also, if you have any questions about the nature of the interview, you are encouraged to ask at any time. If you feel uncomfortable at any time during the interview, you can stop the interview, and I can turn off the recorder at your request.

**Risks and Benefits**

Risks of participation include the potential for breach of confidentiality. I will maintain confidentiality by not sharing information with your employer or supervisor, other than de-identified information available in the final report from this study. Some questions about your experiences may lead to uncomfortable emotional responses. You may decline to answer any question, or you may pause or stop the interview at any time.

Although there are no direct benefits to you for participating in this interview, the information gathered could help to improve future services offered by school counselors to children of incarcerated parents. Together, results of this study may help researchers understand how school counselors can best work with children of incarcerated parents.

**Confidentiality**

Interview data generated for this study, including individual names and other identifiable information, will be given pseudonyms or will not be used. Interview data will be made available only to my transcriptionists, my dissertation committee, and me. De-identified data may be shared with this team using services provided by the University of Tennessee certified for the storage of personally identifiable information (e.g., Google Drive). Study materials will be maintained for a period of three years after the study has been completed and closed with the Institutional Review Board. No reference that could link your participation in the study will be made in oral or written reports.

**Contact Information**

If at any time you have questions about the study or procedures, or if you experience any problems related to the study, please contact me, Emily Brown, at ebrown62@vols.utk.edu or by phone (XXX) XXX-XXXX or my advisor, Dr. Casey Barrio Minton, at cbarrio@utk.edu. If you have questions or concerns about your treatment in this research or your rights as a research participant, please contact the University of Tennessee IRB Compliance Officer at utkirb@utk.edu or (865) 974-7697.

**Participation**

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you can decline to participate with no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your interview will not be included in the results of the study and copies of your interview will be deleted. After the data have been de-identified, I will no longer be able to withdraw your data.

---

**Consent**

I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| _____<br>Participant Name (printed) | _____<br>Participant Signature | _____ / _____ / _____<br>Date |
| _____<br>Researcher Name (printed) | _____<br>Researcher Signature | _____ / _____ / _____<br>Date |

# Appendix D
INTERVIEW GUIDES

## Interview Guide – Focus Groups
*Experiences of Professional School Counselors with Children of Incarcerated Parents*

Introductory Script

*I appreciate you taking the time today to speak with me about your experiences. I prepared an informed consent form that explains the purpose of today's interview and gives additional information about the process. I would like to audio record our conversations today. For your information, only my dissertation committee, transcriptionists, and I will be privy to the recordings, which will be eventually destroyed after they are transcribed. You all have signed a copy of this informed consent. Are there any questions about this document or the study? Thank you for agreeing to participate. (Now can turn on recorder.)*

Introduction

You have been selected to speak with me today based on your professional role as a school counselor in this school district with some experience working with children of incarcerated parents. My research project focuses on exploring how school counselors serve children of incarcerated parents. My study does not aim to evaluate your professional experiences or beliefs but rather to learn more. I have planned this focus group to last no longer than one hour. During this time, I have several questions I would like to cover. While I am recording the interview, I may also take some notes of your responses. Before I begin with questions, I would like for you to take a few moments and complete a participant information sheet.

So as I begin to ask you questions about your experiences with children of incarcerated parents, I want to encourage you to share your perspective even if it differs from what others have said. There are no wrong answers to these questions. Don't feel like you have to respond to me all of the time. You may want to follow up on something someone else has said, to agree or disagree, or to give an example. You can respond to each other. My role is to ask questions, listen, and facilitate the conversation so everyone has a chance to share ideas. I also recognize you have professional relationships with the other school counselors in this room and district, but will remind you of the request for confidentiality in this group as stated on the informed consent. Let's get started.

Interview Questions

**Understanding Needs**

1. What are some ways you learn a student is or has experienced parental incarceration?
2. Describe the impact of parental incarceration on students you know.
3. In what ways do children of incarcerated parents experience loss?

**Experiences**

4. How do you serve children of incarcerated parents as a school counselor?
5. What is it like to work with children of incarcerated parents?
6. How do you collaborate with other stakeholders (e.g., teachers, administrators, social workers, school resource officers, parents/caregivers) in your work serving children of incarcerated parents?

**Challenges**

7. What challenges do you experience when providing services to children of incarcerated parents?
8. How does work with children of incarcerated parents fit within the larger role of school counselor?

**Closing**

9. Is there anything you would like to add to our conversation about working with children of incarcerated parents?

**Probes**:

1. Could you please tell me more about…
2. I'm not quite sure I understood …Could you tell me about that some more?
3. I'm not certain what you mean by… Could you give me some examples?
4. Could you tell me more about your thinking on that?
5. You mentioned….Could you tell me more about that? What stands out in your mind about that?
6. This is what I thought I heard…Did I understand you correctly?
7. So what I hear you saying is…
8. Can you give me an example of…
9. What makes you feel that way?
10. What are some of your reasons for liking it?
11. You just told me about…. I'd also like to know about….

Interview Guide – Individual Interview
*Experiences of Professional School Counselors with Children of Incarcerated Parents*

Introductory Script

*I appreciate you taking the time today to speak with me about your experiences. I prepared an informed consent form that explains the purpose of today's interview and gives additional information about the process. I would like to audio record our conversations today. For your information, only my dissertation committee, transcriptionists, and I will be privy to the recordings, which will be eventually destroyed after they are transcribed. This document includes information about my efforts to maintain confidentiality and protect you as a participant. Please review this document and let me know if you have any questions. You may sign if you feel comfortable doing so. Thank you for agreeing to participate. (Now can turn on recorder.)*

Introduction

Today's interview is a follow up to the school counselor focus group interviews about experiences with children of incarcerated parents. The purpose of today's interview is to provide a more detailed discussion about your experiences and work with this population. Some of these questions are ones asked during focus groups, but I hope that in this conversation you have more opportunity to provide information about your individual experiences. I hope to learn more about your perceptions and work with children of incarcerated parents. I have planned this interview to last about 45 minutes. During this time, I have several questions I would like to cover. While I am recording the interview, I may also take some notes of your responses.

Interview Questions

1. Describe the impact of parental incarceration on students you know.
2. What are some of the most prevalent needs of children of incarcerated parents?
3. Describe some of your experiences working with children of incarcerated parents.
4. Describe a time when your work as a school counselor helped a child dealing with parental incarceration.
5. What are some techniques you have used when providing individual or group counseling responsive to the needs of children of incarcerated parents?
6. How does your work with children of incarcerated parents fit within your larger role as a school counselor?
7. What attitudes do you notice of other educators and staff in your building about children of incarcerated parents?

8. Is there anything you would like to add to our conversation about working with children of incarcerated parents?

**Probes**:

1. Could you please tell me more about…
2. I'm not quite sure I understood …Could you tell me about that some more?
3. I'm not certain what you mean by… Could you give me some examples?
4. Could you tell me more about your thinking on that?
5. You mentioned….Could you tell me more about that? What stands out in your mind about that?
6. This is what I thought I heard…Did I understand you correctly?
7. So what I hear you saying is…
8. Can you give me an example of…
9. What makes you feel that way?
10. What are some of your reasons for liking it?
11. You just told me about…. I'd also like to know about….

**Appendix E**

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

*Experiences of Professional School Counselors with Children of Incarcerated Parents*

1. Name _____

2. School _____

3. Gender _____ 4. Race/Ethnicity _____

5. How many years have you been a school counselor (including this school year)? _____

6. How many years have you worked for [*district*]? _____

7. What are your professional credentials and degrees? _____

_____

8. What is your best estimate of the percentage of students at your school experiencing parental incarceration?

- Less than 10% of students
- Between 11 - 25% of students
- Between 25 – 49% of students
- More than 50% of students

9. Select all the services you provided to identified children of incarcerated parents **this** school year: (check all that apply)

- Individual counseling
- Group counseling
- Crisis counseling
- Academic or postsecondary planning
- Referrals for therapy or mental health services (including drug and alcohol treatment, behavioral health, mobile crisis)
- Referrals to other social services agencies (i.e., child protective services, truancy court)
- Consultation with other school staff, administrators, and teachers about the child's behavior
- Consultation with other school staff, administrators, and teachers about the child's academics
- Consultation with other school staff, administrators, and teachers about the child's social and emotional needs
- Consultation with caregivers of the child
- Participation in an IEP meeting or RTI meeting for the child
- Other (specify): _____

10. How often do you provide responsive direct or indirect school counseling services (other than classroom guidance) to children of incarcerated parents?
- A few times a year or less
- A few times every one or two months
- At least once a week
- Multiple times a week
- Multiple times a day

11. I have participated in the following professional development activities specific to children of incarcerated parents: (check all that apply)
- Lecture or targeted discussion during my graduate counseling training
- Conference session or district workshop
- Webinar
- Self-directed study through reading articles or books about children of incarcerated parents
- Other (specify): _____
- None

Please select the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following two statements.

12. I have training on the ASCA National Model.

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither Disagree nor Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|

13. I implement the ASCA National Model in my school counseling program.

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither Disagree nor Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|

14. I am interested in participating in a follow-up individual interview if needed.
- Yes
- Maybe
- No

## Vita

Emily C. Brown was born in Shelby, NC. She earned a dual Bachelor of Arts degree in English and Religion from Wake Forest University in 2004 and a Master of Arts in School Counseling from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte in 2008. Emily's professional background includes six years as an elementary school counselor in North Carolina and Tennessee and two years as a project manager for an outreach program for rural Appalachian youth. She is a member of various professional counseling organizations, including the American Counseling Association, American School Counselor Association, and Association for Counselor Education and Supervision, and she has presented at local, state, regional, and national conferences. During her doctoral studies, she received a number of awards from the University of Tennessee Counselor Education program, including Outstanding Research Award, Marianne Woodside Outstanding Role Model Award, Most Outstanding First Year Student, and the Upsilon Theta Chapter of Chi Sigma Iota Outstanding Doctoral Student Award. She also received an Outstanding Student Award from the Tennessee Licensed Professional Counselors Association and was recognized as an Emerging Leaders Fellow by the Southern Association for Counselor Education and Supervision. Emily will begin serving as Assistant Professor of School Counseling at the University of Missouri-St. Louis in August 2017.