National Symposium on Family Issues

Jennifer E. Glick
Valarie King
Susan M. McHale
Editors

Parent-Child Separation

Causes, Consequences, and Pathways to Resilience

Springer

National Symposium on Family Issues

Volume 1

Each year, the Population Research Institute and Social Science Research Institute at Penn State hold a two-day symposium that focuses on a key problem of relevance to family studies. The symposium, known as the *National Symposium on Family Issues*, brings together 200 or more scholars, practitioners, and policy experts to:

- Promote interdisciplinary dialogue to stimulate research on family issues.
- Advance scholarly excellence by inviting leaders in the field to present their work.
- Identify important issues that do not receive sufficient attention from researchers who study families.

The symposium organizers – Professors Susan McHale, Valarie King, and Jennifer E. Glick – work to connect family scholars from diverse fields, such as demography, sociology, human development, psychology, education, economics, anthropology, law, and history. The *National Symposium on Family Issues* is a landmark event in ongoing efforts to understand more thoroughly the challenges facing contemporary families.

At each annual symposium, nine or more leading scholars are convened to present and critique research on a focal topic and discuss implications for effective programs and policies for families. Books based on each symposium provide additional background and detail about current research and applications for evidence based policy and programs, allowing the research to reach a wider audience and impact the national conversation. Past volumes have received favorable reviews and are used as reference works by researchers, professors, students as well as clinicians and other professionals.

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The efforts of many went into planning the 2020 symposium and producing this volume. We thank our Internal Advisory Board, Professors Mayra Bamaca, Sarah Damaske, Greg Fosco, Patricia Miranda-Hartsuff, Nancy Luke, Doug Teti, Kevin Thomas, and Dawn Witherspoon, for their continued help in developing the foci of our annual symposium. Professors Dawn Witherspoon, Daniel Perkins, and Derek Kreager served as moderators of the three sessions of the 2020 symposium. We also thank the SSRI/PRI staff for their assistance, including Lidiya Kolonina for administrative support and Kristie Auman-Bauer for her help in publicizing the symposium. This year's successful transition to a virtual symposium, necessitated by the COVID pandemic, was skillfully orchestrated by Mark Hixon and Sarah Lemieux from the SSRI/PRI IT Core. Finally, the symposium and book would not have been possible without Carolyn Scott's organizational skills, commitment, and attention to the many details that go into developing an engaging conference and producing a scholarly volume.

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About the Book

There is a rich history of research on the impacts on children of living in a diversity of family forms. This includes research on children who, for a variety of reasons, do not live with one or both of their parents. The research on parent-child separations has been siloed, however, based largely on the reasons or institutional context of those separations. The result is that the scholarship on separation due to parental incarceration, for example, has rarely if ever been considered alongside the work on families impacted by military deployment or forced separation of migrant parents from their children. Although the circumstances, including stressors experienced and resources available for families, may vary across these contexts, potential similarities in children's separation experiences and their implications for development and adjustment in both the short and long terms have not been a focus of scholarly or practical consideration.

The 2020 National Symposium on Family Issues gathered an interdisciplinary group of researchers to address how children's separation from their parents may shape their development and adjustment—across childhood and into adulthood. These scholars addressed three very different institutional contexts for these separations: parental migration and deportation, parental incarceration, and parental military deployment. Their work combines quantitative analyses and in-depth qualitative research to uncover the ways the context of parent-child separation shapes children's well-being and the factors that may engender vulnerability and/or promote resilience to separation-based stressors and challenges. What emerges is a complex picture of the dimensions and implications of parent-child separation and the need for supportive structures and interventions that can bolster youth well-being in childhood and beyond.

The first section focuses on the separation of parents and children due to sequential migration—when parents migrate without their children who may or may not join them later—or deportation—when parents are forced to return to their country of origin while leaving some of their children behind. There are long-lasting impacts of migration-induced separation, ranging from precarious economic and housing security to poor psychological well-being and educational achievement. The chapters in this section paint a portrait of sacrifice within oppressive contexts as families work for physical safety and economic security in a new country. Parents make these sacrifices despite their own sadness as well as the trauma experienced by children, the effects of which may persist after family reunification and extend into adulthood. But these scholars also present stories of family resilience and tools for practitioners and policy makers seeking to develop culturally responsive interventions and supportive environments for children of migrants.

The second section addresses another type of involuntary parental separation—parental incarceration. Children of incarcerated parents may experience trauma similar to that experienced by children of migrants. The chapters in this section provide updates to the research literature, present new findings from a mix of qualitative and quantitative data and analyses, and identify directions for research. For example, although incarceration is more common among men than women, there has been less research on father-child relationships in the context of incarceration. The limited research, including new findings described by the authors in this section, suggests that children's contact with incarcerated fathers fosters resilience—yet the barriers to maintaining contact with incarcerated fathers are considerable. The chapters in this section point to ways in which family members and social structures can promote continued contact of children and their incarcerated parents—approaches that are vital to reducing the trauma of separation in both parents and children, maintaining strong relationships, and fostering resiliency.

Chapters in the third section explore the case of parent-child separation due to military deployment. In contrast to the other contexts of parent-child separation that may involve stigma, be involuntary or less voluntary, and stem from challenges beyond families' control, military families may see their separation in positive and patriotic terms: parents and children may view separation as honorable and as a duty. This framing may reduce trauma and help children and their families better cope with separation. Yet, the open-ended nature of these separations, risks incurred by deployed parents, and stresses on the remaining residential parent or guardians mean that children of military families may express similar fears and concerns as those with deported or incarcerated parents. Importantly, many military families are embedded in institutional contexts that provide social and instrumental supports that can promote child and family resilience. Lessons learned from the study of institutional supports of children with deployed parents may, thus, inform programs and policies for youth experiencing other forms of parent-child separation. Research on military families, however, suggests the need for additional supports that reduce parental stress and promote parental involvement.

The 2020 National Symposium on Family Issues was a unique opportunity to delve deeply into the circumstances and dynamics that give rise to both vulnerability and resiliency of parents and children who are facing separation—across a range of contexts. The research presented in the chapters that make up this volume highlights both family strengths and challenges of parent-child separations posed by institutional settings. The authors also offer insights for practitioners and policy makers seeking to help families move past separation trauma and challenge—toward fostering strong parent-child bonds and ultimately child and family resilience.

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Contents

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Part I
Parental Migration and Deportation

Chapter 1
Safe-Zone Schools and Children with Undocumented Parents

Catalina Amuedo-Dorantes, José R. Bucheli, and Ana P. Martinez-Donate

Over 3.6 million immigrants were deported from the United States between 2008 and 2018 (U.S. ICE, 2015, 2018), and an estimated 272,000 parents of American children were removed between 2010 and 2013 alone (American Immigration Council, 2012; Cantor, 2014). Children of deported immigrants are the unintended victims of these policies. Approximately 5.1 million children under the age of 18 live in households with at least one unauthorized immigrant parent. Most of these children—over four million—are US citizens (Capps et al., 2016).

Parental deportation can have profound and long-lasting consequences for children. Qualitative research has described the increased threat of family fragmentation, economic hardship, food insecurity, and housing instability endured by children (Brabeck & Xu, 2010; Chaudry et al., 2010; Dreby, 2012; Wessler, 2011). These risk factors likely explain the adverse effects of immigration enforcement on the educational outcomes of children left behind (Amuedo-Dorantes & Lopez, 2015, 2017). To address these disadvantages, many schools and school districts across the country are implementing sanctuary or "safe-zone" policies to support the well-being and academic progression of children in migrant households. Although there is no standard model, safe-zone schools commonly limit their cooperation with immigration authorities, restrict agents' access to campuses, and provide resources for students and their immigrant families.

We examine how safe-zone policies affect the educational outcomes of high-school-age adolescents in mixed-status households (i.e., those whose members have

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different immigration or citizenship statuses), focusing on their protective role among children affected by or at risk of parental deportation. To that end, we use preliminary data from a binational survey that collects detailed information on children from mixed-status households who have experienced, or are at risk for, parental deportation. A sample of 61 deported Mexican parents was recruited from deportation stations along the US-Mexican border. We completed phone interviews with their US-based citizen children and an adult caregiver. In addition, data was gathered from a sample of 51 US-based comparison families with a Mexican parent at risk for, but with no history of, deportation. Because the survey has information on the schools attended by the children, we merged data on whether the school district was in a safe zone during the time period to which the measured academic outcomes, including school attendance, grades, and behavior, refer. While there are two survey waves, this preliminary analysis uses data from only the first wave.

Using a quasi-natural experimental approach, we exploit the geographic variation in the distribution of safe-zone policies across the country in order to gauge the protective role of safe zones on the academic advancement of children, particularly in light of the intensification of interior immigration enforcement in the county where they reside. Finally, we discuss future extensions to address endogeneity concerns stemming from unobserved individual-level heterogeneity, as well as concerns regarding the potentially nonrandom residential location of families in specific school districts.

To our knowledge, the effectiveness of safe-zone school policies in supporting students living in mixed-status families amid intensified immigration enforcement has not yet been assessed. With this study, we contribute to an emerging literature on policy responses to the unintended consequences of immigration enforcement. Evaluating policies that potentially mitigate the adverse impact of immigration enforcement measures on different groups, including US citizens, is particularly crucial given its continued intensification and the long-term consequences on children's development and transition into adulthood.

Parental Deportation and Child Educational Outcomes

The intensification of immigration enforcement at the US-Mexico border and in the country's interior, along with the accompanying detention and deportation of migrants, has drawn considerable research attention to the impact of these measures on child development. An area of great concern has been the effect of intensified enforcement on children's school and educational performance. The literature on the topic has consistently documented adverse impacts. Some studies have focused on the activation of individual policies, while others take a more comprehensive view of different immigration enforcement initiatives. Either way, there is agreement that intensified enforcement affects children's educational outcomes, including among the US-born who reside in mixed-status households.

For instance, one of the outcomes frequently examined is school attendance. A recent study used a national county-year panel dataset for the 2000–2011 period to explore whether the deputation of US immigration enforcement to local law enforcement agencies had an impact on county-level school enrollment rates (Dee & Murphy, 2020). The analysis shows that counties that entered into agreements with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) under the 287(g) program experienced a 10% reduction in Hispanic student enrollment within 2 years of the activation of the agreement. This effect is attributed to the displacement of approximately 300,000 Hispanic students, including US citizens with undocumented parents. Similar effects have been documented following the adoption of restrictive immigration legislation by individual states. For example, the enactment of both the Legal Arizona Workers Act in 2007 and SB1070 in 2010 increased Hispanic students' school attrition rates, especially among low-performing pupils (Pivovarova & Vagi, 2020).

The effect of changes in enforcement on grade repetition and the probability of dropping out of school among Hispanic children were estimated using a composite index that captures the activation of several immigration enforcement policies (Amuedo-Dorantes & Lopez, 2017). The results reveal that even relatively low levels of immigration enforcement can increase children's likelihood of dropping out of school by 12%, with an even stronger effect among adolescents. These findings are congruent with results showing that a higher number of deportations is associated with a higher level of absenteeism and a wider math achievement gap between white and Latino students (Kirksey et al., 2020).

Negative educational effects from immigration enforcement policies have also been documented in the case of standardized testing performance among Hispanic students. Secure Communities is an information-sharing program used in the apprehension and deportation of unauthorized immigrants that was started in 2008 and progressively rolled out nationwide. Under Secure Communities, local law enforcement agencies submit information from arrests to an integrated database with Immigration Customs Enforcement, allowing for the identification of the immigration status and any criminal activity by the arrestee. Activation of Secure Communities between 2008 and 2013 as a policy change was associated with a drop in the average achievement of Hispanic students in English language arts. The strongest effects were registered in counties with high levels of cooperation between local law enforcement agencies and ICE (Bellows, 2019).

In addition to the abovementioned academic outcomes, related research on the mental health effects of immigration enforcement identifies child-parent separation, perceived discrimination, household instability, and associated risks as major sources of psychological and emotional trauma among children.[1] In a study on

[1] Although the focus of our study is the impact of immigration policies on children, extant literature documents similar negative mental health effects among adults. See, for example, Bojorquez et al. (2015); Cavazos-Rehg et al. (2007); Lopez et al. (2017); and Wang & Kaushal (2019).

mixed-status Latino families with US-citizen children, a higher prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms was found in children of deported parents when compared to children of legal permanent residents (LPRs) or children of undocumented parents with no previous contact with immigration authorities (Rojas-Flores et al., 2017). Some of these symptoms included anxiety, depression, anger/aggression, intrusion, avoidance, arousal, and dissociation—all of which can interfere with students' ability to focus and learn.

In a similar vein, US-citizen and foreign-born children separated from their deported parents have exhibited higher levels of internalizing (e.g., anxiety and depression) and externalizing problems (e.g., aggression; Allen et al., 2015). Unfortunately, these mental health issues are not only recorded when a child is separated from their parents. US-citizen children who joined their deported parents in Mexico were also more likely to report emotional problems than children of undocumented parents who had no experience with immigration authorities (Zayas et al., 2015).

Furthermore, there is evidence of the negative effects of immigration enforcement manifesting under the perceived increased risk of deportation. Data from a survey of 132 Latino immigrants demonstrated that increased parental legal vulnerability to deportation has a negative effect on the quality of the parent-child relationship, the prevalence of children's negative emotions, and the ability of parents to support their children financially (Brabeck & Xu, 2010). More recently, data from Texas—a state that requires police cooperation with ICE—and Rhode Island, which prohibits cooperation with immigration authorities, revealed that the fear of immigration enforcement is a strong predictor of physical manifestations of anxiety among Latino adolescents, even when controlling for perceived discrimination, trauma, economic hardship, and demographic characteristics (Cardoso et al., 2021). Overall, the negative impacts on the mental health and stability of immigrant-origin families suggest that exposure to higher levels of immigration enforcement may affect children's focus, ability to concentrate and learn, and in turn their educational outcomes.

In sum, existing research provides conclusive evidence that immigration enforcement has adverse effects on the educational outcomes of both US-citizen and foreign-born children. At the same time, there is suggestive evidence of the important role of local policies in either easing or exacerbating those impacts, although scant attention has been paid to such policies. In this study, we examine one such policy—namely, safe-zone policies—and the role they play in mitigating the impact of intensified immigration enforcement on the education of US-born students from mixed-status families threatened by or enduring parental deportation.

Safe-Zone Schools

The first jurisdiction in the United States to be declared a sanctuary city and thereby create a safe zone was the city of San Francisco.[2] It passed a "City of Refuge" resolution in 1985 and subsequently in 1989 an ordinance, which prohibited using public resources to assist immigration authorities and collecting or sharing information on individuals' immigration status (Bauder, 2017). Since then, dozens of cities, counties, and states across the country have adopted sanctuary resolutions and policies aimed at protecting their immigrant residents.

The movement to declare schools and other academic institutions as safe zones gained strength in the months leading to the 2016 presidential election, when the situation of millions of undocumented immigrants became a central topic in the campaign. At the time, candidate Donald Trump's platform defended the adoption of more aggressive immigration enforcement policies, including the termination of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Program and the mass deportation of undocumented immigrants (Preston & Medina, 2016; Shoichet & Ansari, 2016). That same year, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) became one of the first public school districts to declare its campuses as "safe zones and resource centers for students and families threatened by immigration enforcement" (Los Angeles City Board of Education, 2016).

Although the LAUSD safe-zone resolution established resource centers for immigrant students and their families, delineated a process to respond to ICE requests, and required the superintendent to ensure proper training for staff and teachers, there is no safe-zone model that has been adopted uniformly. Some schools explicitly prohibit cooperation with immigration authorities and have established procedures for situations in which a student's caregiver is detained or deported. Other districts have adopted less specific and protective resolutions, avoiding the use of terms like "safe zone" or "sanctuary" to circumvent threats made by the Trump administration to withhold federal funds from sanctuary jurisdictions.

In general, safe-zone resolutions are aimed at protecting students regardless of their immigration status and usually motivated by the Supreme Court ruling in Plyler v. Doe (1982), which established that public schools cannot constitutionally deny students access to education based on their immigration status (Brennan & Supreme Court of the United States, 1981). In principle, this ruling now protects the approximately 3.9 million K-12 students in public and private schools throughout the country who are children of unauthorized immigrants (Passel & Cohn, 2016). According to the California Department of Education, there were 119 safe-zone school districts and county offices of education in the state as of 2019 (California Department of Education, 2021). The exact number of students under the protection of safe-zone policies throughout the country is, however, unknown due to the lack of a national database keeping track of these schools.

[2] Sanctuary policies usually refer to measures enacted at the city, local, or state levels and safe zone refers to school district policies.

There are several potential mechanisms through which safe-zone initiatives might affect students' educational outcomes. First, safe zones explicitly prohibit discrimination with regard to academic, extracurricular, and free-lunch programs based on immigration status or race. These basic assurances support an inclusive and welcoming environment for all students. Second, safe-zone policies provide a physical space in which students and their families have a lower risk of interacting with immigration authorities, regardless of their legal status. This reduces the psycho-emotional burden of potentially traumatic events on children, and allows them to learn in a safer environment. Third, safe-zone policies often allocate funds for the creation of information centers that facilitate students' access to financial, legal, and academic resources. Lastly, sanctuary resolutions may call for the training of school staff in the implementation of policies that advance students' academic opportunities. For example, the San Francisco Unified School District directed resources to programs that would allow counselors and teachers "to answer undocumented student questions regarding their rights to college access, financial assistance for college, working and career" (San Francisco Board of Education, 2017).

Overall, for some students, safe-zone policies might constitute the determining factor between being able to attend school and having to stay home to safeguard the family. Yet, to the best of our knowledge, no study has examined the effectiveness of safe-zone policies in protecting students who are exposed to immigration enforcement. Our aim is to address this void in the literature by investigating how the adoption of safe-zone policies has affected the educational outcomes of students from mixed-status families threatened by, or enduring, parental deportation.

Data

To achieve our aim, we combined three sources of data. The main data comes from the *Between the Lines* (BTL) study—a binational survey that collects detailed qualitative and quantitative information on children from mixed-status households who have experienced, or are at risk for, parental deportation. We then merged gathered data on both interior immigration enforcement policies in place at the county level as well as on safe-zone policies to which the children are exposed in their school districts. In what follows, we describe the three data sources.

Between the Lines (BTL) Survey

The BTL study is a 2-year pilot, ambidirectional longitudinal study of families subjected to parental deportation with survey data pertaining to three different time points: t_0: a year prior to parental deportation (collected retrospectively); t_1: the time of deportation; and t_2: 6 months after deportation. In this preliminary study, we make

use of data collected in t_1.[3] The study also includes an external comparison cohort of families at risk for, but never subjected to, parental deportation. The project is a collaboration between researchers at Drexel University and the Mexico Section of the US-Mexico Border Health Commission, with funding from the National Institute on Child Health and Human Development, which is part of the National Institutes of Health (Grant R21 HD085157–01, Principal Investigator: Ana P. Martinez-Donate).

Study Design: When forcedly removed from the United States, Mexican immigrants are returned through deportation stations run by the Mexican Government in the country's northern border. These stations provide a unique opportunity to sample this hard-to-reach population and, through them, their families left behind in the United States. Based on this idea, BTL recruited a sample of 50 deported Mexican parents at three deportation stations located on the Mexican border towns of Tijuana, Nogales, and Matamoros. At the time of deportation, index parents (i.e., deported parents) served as "recruitment brokers," facilitating the connection of the research team with one of their US-citizen children and a primary adult caregiver in the United States (i.e., separated families). (Note that a caregiver may or may not have been a parent.) A sample of 50 US-based comparison families who included a Mexican parent at risk for, but with no history of, deportation was also recruited through referrals from exposed families, community-based organizations, and Latina "promotoras" (i.e., well-trusted community members to whom others turn for advice or help, often engaged in formal or informal health promotion activities; Fig. 1.1). Figure 1.5 in the Appendix shows the geographical distribution of all children in our sample.

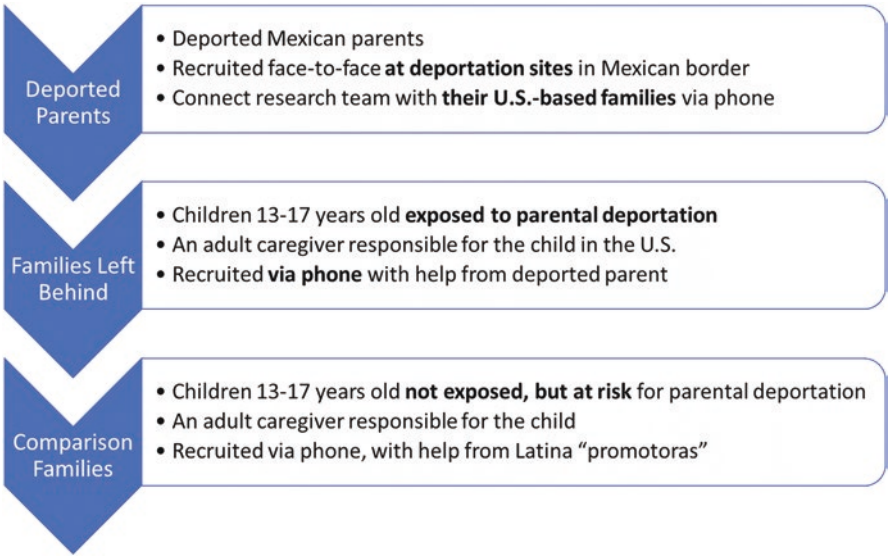

Fig. 1.1 Recruitment overview

[3] The data collected in t_0 refers exclusively to children with a deported parent. At the time this analysis was conducted, the second wave of interviews was being finalized.

Deported parents completed two surveys: a face-to-face survey at the time of deportation and a 6-month follow-up phone survey. Children and primary caregivers in separated families were surveyed by phone twice: within 1 month from the index parent's deportation and 6 months after the baseline survey. Non-separated comparison families were also surveyed by phone twice, upon recruitment and 6 months later. A subsample of children (N = 10 from each arm of the study) and their caregivers ($N = 10$ from each arm of the study) was purposely selected to complete a qualitative in-depth interview after the 6-month follow-up. These families were selected based on key demographic, community, and geographic factors. All participants received a monthly check-in call in the period between the baseline and the follow-up survey.

Eligibility Criteria: Eligibility criteria for index (deported) parents included being 18 years of age or older, having been born outside of the United States and having Mexican citizenship, being fluent in Spanish, living in the United States prior to being deported, returning to Mexico from the United States via deportation, having spent no more than a year in a detention setting prior to the most recent deportation, being the biological or adoptive parent of at least one US-citizen child aged 13–17 years still living in the United States, and having legal custody of that child at the time of deportation.

Eligible separated children had to be 13–17 years old, US-born or naturalized US citizens, fluent in English or Spanish, a biological or adoptive child of an eligible deported parent, living in the United States at the time of parental deportation, and able to complete a survey by phone. If more than one child in the household met these criteria, one was randomly chosen to participate in the study.

Children in comparison families also had to be 13–17 years old, US-born or naturalized US citizens, fluent in English or Spanish, living in the United States at the time of recruitment into the study, and able to complete a phone survey. Importantly, they needed to have a Mexican immigrant parent who was not a naturalized US citizen or green card holder (i.e., a proxy for deportability) and had no history of parental deportation at the time of enrollment.

Eligibility criteria for caregivers in separated and comparison families included being 18 years or older, being fluent in Spanish or English, being a primary caregiver for an eligible separated or comparison child, and living with the child at the time of enrollment.

Recruitment and Data Collection, Index Parents: Sampling times (i.e., 8-h survey shifts) were randomly selected for the recruitment period in each of the three deportation stations. During each selected shift, deported immigrants cleared for departure at the deportation stations were consecutively approached by a trained project staff, screened for eligibility, and consented to participate in the study. If two parents were traveling together, one was randomly selected to serve as index parent.

First Contact with Separated Families: At the time of recruitment, eligible index parents provided contact information for the target child's primary caregiver in the United States, gave permission for the research team to interview the target child, and assisted the research team's first attempt to contact their family by phone. After the introduction, the research staff informed the caregiver about the study,

confirmed eligibility and contact information for the caregiver and child within the household, and obtained best times to contact the family to inform them about and discuss possible interest in the study.

Recruitment of Separated Families: Within 5 days of the first contact by phone, separated families were emailed a recruitment packet containing a letter with information about the study, a consent form, and a $5 e-gift card pre-incentive. A bilingual study team member contacted the caregiver by phone within 2 weeks of the index parent recruitment, explained the study, obtained informed verbal consent from the caregiver and assent from the child, and completed or scheduled the baseline phone surveys with the caregiver and child.

Eligibility and Response Rate Among Separated Families: Between February 2019 and March 2020, a total of 1233 migrants were approached at the three deportation stations in Tijuana, Nogales, and Matamoros, and 81% of them could be screened for eligibility. Of those screened, 17% were identified as eligible parents of US-citizen children 13–17 years old, and among them, 69% consented to be in the study and provided contact information for their families in the United States. After following up with their families in the United States, confirming their eligibility, and inviting them to participate in the survey, 61 families were successfully enrolled into the study, yielding a cooperation rate of 52% and an overall response rate of 37%. These families included 46 triads (index parent, caregiver, and child), 2 caregiver/child pairs, 12 index parent/caregiver pairs, and 1 index parent/child pair.

Recruitment of Comparison Families: To recruit comparison families with similar characteristics, enrolled separated families, 73 Latino-serving community-based organizations, and 4 Latina promotoras throughout the United States were asked to refer families according to eligibility criteria. Each referring source gave potentially eligible families an information sheet (provided by research staff) and asked their permission for the research team to contact them. Eligible families could also be instructed to contact the research staff directly if they preferred. Referred families were screened for eligibility criteria. When an eligible family agreed to participate in the study, the referring family or promotora received a $100 e-gift card.

Eligibility Among Comparison Families: Of the 93 referrals for comparison families, 67% could be contacted and were determined to have an eligible caregiver and child. Among these, 51 families consented to participate in the survey for a response rate of 85%. These included 51 caregiver/child pairs (Fig. 1.2).

Participant Incentives and Retention: Index parents were offered a prepaid cell phone with $50 credit and a phone charger as an incentive for completing the face-to-face baseline survey and assisting with recruitment of their families in the United States. Those not interested in the cell phone were offered a $50 incentive via an ATM code texted to their cell phones. Index parents received an additional $10 phone credit or $10 ATM code for each successful monthly "check-in" phone call. Index parents collected an additional $50 phone credit (or equivalent ATM code) after completing the 6-month follow-up phone survey. Separated and comparison families in the United States received $50 e-gift cards for completing the baseline phone surveys and $50 for the 6-month follow-up surveys. If applicable, families also received $75 for the qualitative interviews. A list of contacts, monthly

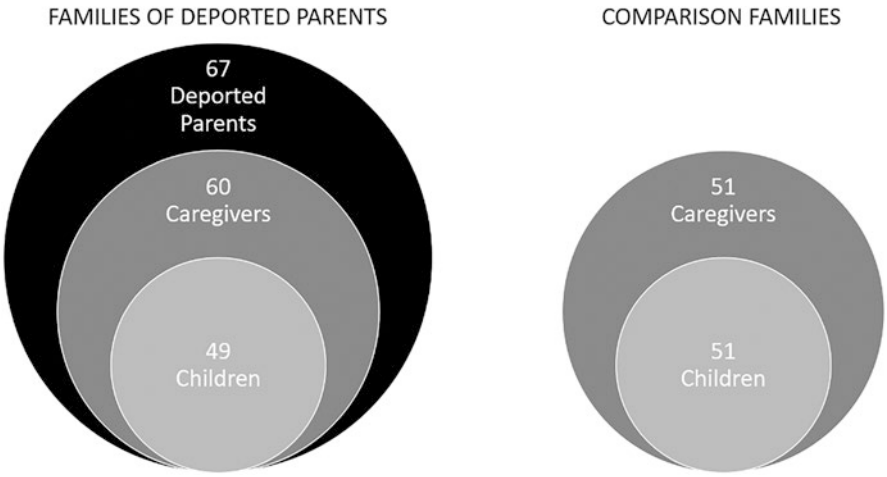

Fig. 1.2 Recruitment summary

"check-in" phone calls, and emailed incentives ($10 e-gift cards in months 2, 3, 4, and 5 after the first survey) were used to retain families. A $5 e-gift card was emailed to families that notified the research team of a change in address or phone number. Retention rates at 6-month follow-up were 40% for index parents, 63% for separated caregivers, 65% for separated children, and 88% for both caregivers and children in comparison families.

Measures: Between the Lines: Surveys were administered in person or by phone for index parents and by phone for all other study participants. Trained interviewers were assisted by iPads furnished with the Qualtrics® Offline application. Baseline surveys collected retrospective data on the children's health, health behavior, household, academics, and socio-ecological health determinants from a year before enrollment in the study (t_0) as well as at the time of the survey (t_1). For separated families, t_1 coincided with the time of parental deportation. The surveys included the name of the school to which the participating child was attending a year before enrollment in the study and at the time of the survey. Follow-up surveys reassessed these factors 6 months after the baseline survey (t_2). Administration of the surveys took approximately 45 min (Fig. 1.3). The preliminary findings reported in this chapter are based on analyses with data from t_1 only. In future analyses, we will add data from the caregivers' survey and additional time points.

Baseline and follow-up survey questions were based on previous surveys of deported immigrants and instruments used in studies with large samples of Latino adults and adolescents. For adults, survey questions were adapted from the U.S. Census American Housing Survey (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021), USDA Household Food Security Survey (USDA, 2020b), Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study (CDC, 2020a), Migrant Project (Martinez-Donate et al., 2015),

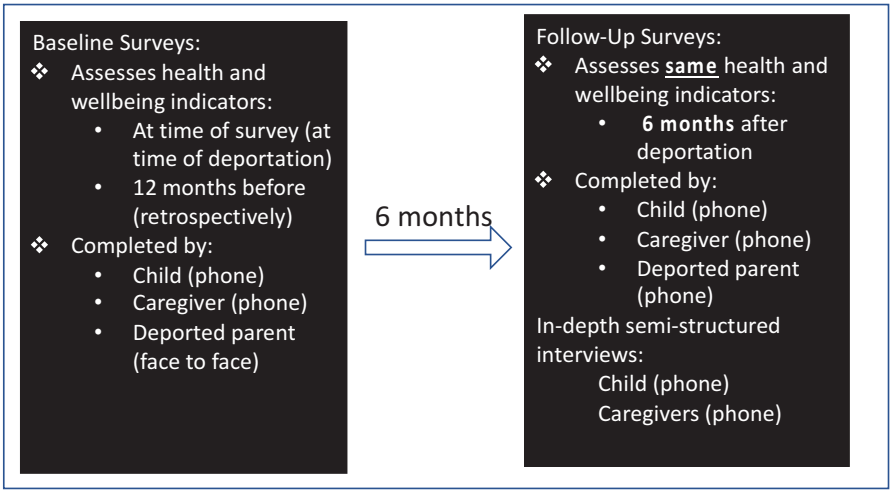

Fig. 1.3 Data collection overview

Collective Efficacy and Informal Social Control Scales (Sampson et al., 1997), Children of Immigrant Longitudinal Study (Portes & Rumbaut, 2012), Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ, 2012), and the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health; Harris, 2009). For children, measures were adapted from the Add Health Study, the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study, the Children of Immigrant Longitudinal Study (Portes & Rumbaut, 2012), the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (CDC, 2020b), the 2016 CPS Food Security Supplement (USDA, 2020a), and the Self-Description Questionnaire's Relationships Subscales (Marsh, 1994). For more details on the domains and measures included in this study, see Table 1.3 in the Appendix.

Data on Safe-Zone School Policies

We collected information on safe-zone policies by first identifying the school districts in which our survey participants reported to have attended school in the most recent academic year. We then examined each school district's board of education resolutions archives to identify whether they had instituted safe-zone policies. For this study, we classified a school as a "safe zone" if its governing board of education has approved and adopted resolutions that explicitly protect immigrant-origin students. These resolutions range from general statements of support to detailed policies that prohibit ICE activities in school facilities, ban the sharing of information with immigration authorities, prevent the collection of students' information that

may be used to determine their legal status, and/or allocate resources to staff training initiatives and counseling services. Our final sample included 43 children attending school in 21 safe-zone school districts and 52 children attending school in a district without a safe-zone policy in place.

Data on Immigration Enforcement

Since the early 2000s, and in the absence of a comprehensive federal immigration reform, individual agencies, states, and local jurisdictions have been implementing their own policies aimed at curbing undocumented immigration. Examining the role of safe zones on children's educational outcomes cannot be done in a vacuum. It is crucial to consider the interior immigration enforcement environment to which they are exposed on a daily basis. To that end, we gathered data on various interior immigration measures in place during the time of the survey—namely, 287(g) agreements between counties/states with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Secure Communities, employment verification (E-Verify) mandates, and omnibus immigration laws. Data on jurisdictions with active 287(g) agreements between ICE and local law enforcement agencies came from ICE's website (U.S. ICE, 2020). Data on the activation of Secure Communities came from a memorandum issued by Secretary of Homeland Security John Kelly (U.S. DHS, 2017), which ordered the restoration of the Secure Communities Program across the country. Finally, data on state-level omnibus immigration laws and employment verification mandates was gathered from the National Conference of State Legislatures website (Morse, 2019).

To capture the local immigration enforcement climate, we constructed a composite index of the abovementioned immigration policies at the county level. The index, which ranges from 0 (no policies in place) to 4 (all policies), provides a way to proxy for an overall tougher anti-immigration climate generated by the enactment of multiple interconnected policies. In fact, safe-zone resolutions adopted by school districts rarely identify individual measures to motivate the implementation of sanctuary initiatives. Instead, they usually refer to the general climate in which their students and families live.

We matched the immigration enforcement index to our individual respondents using the county where their schools are located. In the following section, we present descriptive statistics for these and other variables included in our model.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1.1 provides descriptive statistics for the whole sample at the time of the survey (t_1), by the level of interior immigration enforcement to which families are exposed in their county of residence, and by safe-zone status of the schools that children in our sample attend. At the top of the table, we have the educational

Table 1.1 Descriptive statistics of children in sample

	Pooled sample	Immigration enforcement		School in safe-zone district	
		Low	High	No	Yes
Outcomes					
Ever repeated or held back a grade	0.090	0.096	0.063	0.096	0.070
	(0.288)	(0.297)	(0.250)	(0.298)	(0.258)
Mostly As and Bs in school	0.730	0.735	0.688	0.769	0.674
	(0.446)	(0.444)	(0.479)	(0.425)	(0.474)
Trouble getting along with teachers	0.250	0.253	0.250	0.269	0.256
	(0.435)	(0.437)	(0.447)	(0.448)	(0.441)
Trouble paying attention in school	0.680	0.663	0.750	0.750	0.628
	(0.469)	(0.476)	(0.447)	(0.437)	(0.489)
Trouble doing homework	0.640	0.639	0.688	0.654	0.674
	(0.482)	(0.483)	(0.479)	(0.480)	(0.474)
Caregiver attends parent-teacher conference	0.818	0.805	0.875	0.784	0.860
	(0.388)	(0.399)	(0.342)	(0.415)	(0.351)
Child thinks teaching is good at school	0.870	0.867	0.875	0.904	0.814
	(0.338)	(0.341)	(0.342)	(0.298)	(0.394)
Key regressors					
School district with a safe-zone policy	0.453	0.532	0.063	0.000	1.000
	(0.500)	(0.502)	(0.250)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Immigration enforcement score	1.293	1.000	2.813	1.519	1.047
	(0.689)	(0.000)	(0.403)	(0.852)	(0.305)
Controls					
Age	14.910	14.867	15.000	14.885	14.814
	(1.505)	(1.560)	(1.155)	(1.437)	(1.547)
Female	0.540	0.530	0.625	0.654	0.419
	(0.501)	(0.502)	(0.500)	(0.480)	(0.499)
Child has at least one older sibling	0.460	0.458	0.500	0.462	0.465
	(0.501)	(0.501)	(0.516)	(0.503)	(0.505)
Cities child has lived since age 6	1.460	1.530	1.125	1.442	1.419
	(0.904)	(0.967)	(0.342)	(0.826)	(0.879)
Deported parent	0.490	0.506	0.438	0.538	0.465
	(0.502)	(0.503)	(0.512)	(0.503)	(0.505)
Caregiver finished high school	0.394	0.366	0.500	0.451	0.326
	(0.491)	(0.485)	(0.516)	(0.503)	(0.474)
Caregiver currently employed	0.616	0.646	0.500	0.608	0.651
	(0.489)	(0.481)	(0.516)	(0.493)	(0.482)
Observations	100	83	16	52	43

Note: Sample means, standard deviations in parentheses

outcomes being examined, which are constructed as dichotomous variables. For some outcomes, the statistics are intuitive. For instance, the share of children getting mostly As and Bs in school is higher in counties with lesser interior immigration enforcement, and the share of youth reporting having trouble paying attention in school or completing their homework is lower in those localities. However, we also observed a slightly lower share of children ever repeating a grade in counties with more interior immigration enforcement than in counties with less, and caregivers appeared more likely to attend parent-teacher conferences in those locations than in counties with less interior immigration enforcement. Other educational outcomes, such as the share of children reporting having trouble with the teachers, or the share thinking positively about teaching in the school, are not so distinct across high vs. low interior immigration enforcement localities.

A similar picture emerges if we distinguish according to whether the children attend schools in districts with a safe zone in place or not. Figure 1.4 depicts graphically mean differences for the various educational outcomes being examined for youth attending schools with and without a safe zone. The share of children ever repeating a grade, reporting having trouble with teachers, or having trouble paying

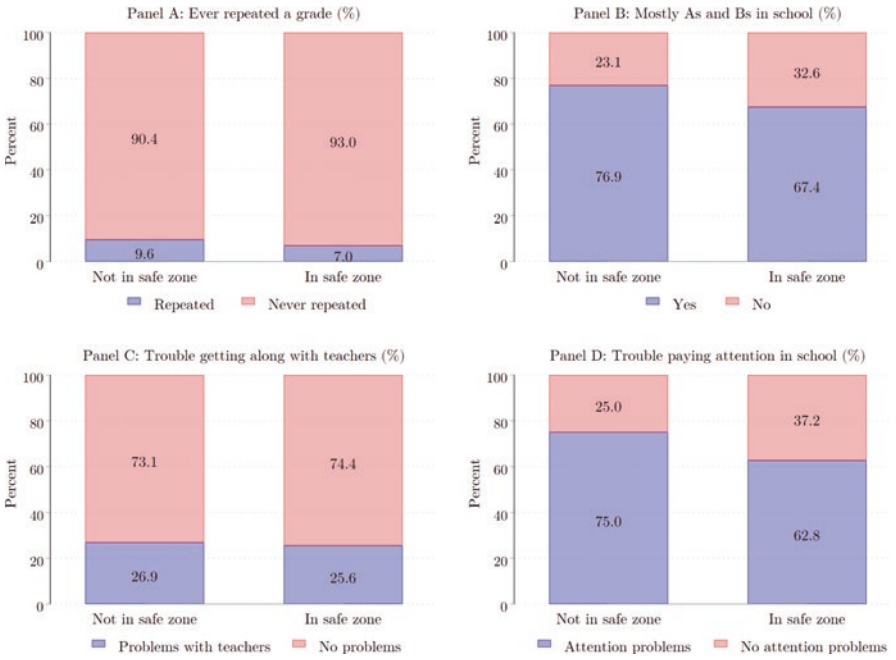

Fig. 1.4 *Children's educational outcomes by exposure to safe-zone policies.* **Panel a**: Ever repeated a grade (%). **Panel b**: Mostly As and Bs in school (%). **Panel c**: Trouble getting along with teachers (%). **Panel d**: Trouble paying attention in school (%). **Panel e**: Trouble doing homework (%). **Panel f**: Caregiver attends parent-teacher conferences (%). **Panel g**: Child thinks teaching is good at school (%)

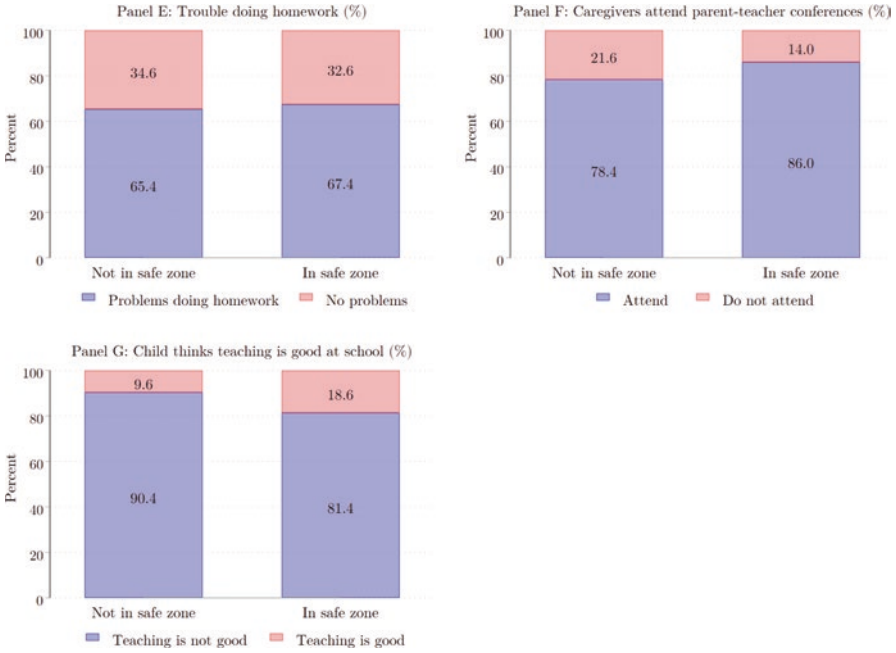

Fig. 1.4 (continued)

attention in school is smaller when youth are exposed to a safe zone than when they attend a school not in a safe zone. Sometimes the difference was small, as was the case in the share of youth reporting having trouble with teachers. However, in other cases, those differences are non-negligible, as in the case of ever repeating a grade (7% vs. 10%) or having trouble paying attention at school (63% vs. 75%). Furthermore, not only youth, but also their caregivers, seemed to be reacting to the presence of a safer environment. A higher share of caregivers reported attending parent-teacher conference meetings at schools in a safe-zone area (86% vs. 79%). However, there are also some seeming inconsistencies. For instance, the share of children receiving mostly As and Bs or thinking that teaching is good at schools with safe zones is smaller relative to the shares in districts without a safe zone (67% vs. 77%, and 81% vs. 90%); plus, the share of children reporting having trouble with homework is slightly larger in schools with a safe zone (67% vs. 65%). Nonetheless, some of these contradictions dissipate as we account for other child and household traits.

Table 1.1 also displays basic descriptive statistics for our two key regressors—safe-zone policies and immigration enforcement. Close to half (45%) of the children in the sample attend a school in a district with a safe zone in place. Not surprisingly, those safe zones appear to be primarily located in counties with a lower level of interior immigration enforcement. Correspondingly, children attending schools in districts with a safe zone are exposed to a lower level of enforcement. Therefore, it is important to account for the exposure to interior immigration

enforcement when gauging the effectiveness of safe zones in helping children in families with a deported parent or at risk of having a deported parent. In addition, most of the children in the sample (83 children) reside in counties with one interior immigration enforcement initiative in place—namely, Secure Communities. Nevertheless, 16% of participants reside in counties with interior immigration enforcement indexes equal to 2 or 3—that is, counties with "high" enforcement.

Finally, Table 1.1 reports the descriptive statistics for basic demographic controls (i.e., age, gender, and whether the child has an older sibling), the number of cities where the child has lived since age 6, and a dummy variable indicative of whether the child has been separated from one of their parents due to deportation. In addition, we include information on whether the main caregiver has finished high school and is currently employed. Because of the survey design, the average age of children in our sample is close to 15. Focusing on the distinctions between children attending schools in safe zones and those attending other schools, we find some interesting differences. For example, a larger share of boys is exposed to safe zones than is the share of girls, and the prevalence of parental deportation seems somewhat lower in those areas (47% of children with a safe zone have a deported parent, vs. 54% of children attending schools without a safe zone). Finally, children attending schools in safe zones seem to have lesser educated caregivers. In what follows, we account for these differences, as well as for the presence of interior immigration enforcement, when gauging the impact of safe zones on children's educational outcomes.

Methods

Our aim is to learn about the impact of safe-zone policies on the educational performance of children of mixed-status families who, despite being US born, are inevitably impacted by the economic and psychological pressures imposed by the escalation of interior immigration enforcement on their families and households. To this end, we estimate the following benchmark model specification:

$$Y_{idm} = \alpha + \beta_1 SZ_{\mathrm{dm}} + \beta_2 IE_{\mathrm{cm}} + \beta_3 SZ_{\mathrm{dm}} * IE_{\mathrm{cm}} + \gamma' X_{im} + \delta_{\mathrm{s}} + \delta_{\mathrm{m}} + \varepsilon_{idm} \quad (1.1)$$

where the dependent variable (Y_{idm}) captures various educational performance indicators of child i attending school in district d when interviewed in month m. Education performance indicators include whether they ever repeated a grade, are getting mostly As and Bs in their courses, are having trouble getting along with their teachers, have difficulty paying attention in school, have trouble with homework, and think the teaching is good at their school.

Because the impact of school districts' safe zones on the abovementioned educational outcomes might significantly differ across counties, we account not only for the child's exposure to a safe zone (SZ_{dm}) based on his/her school district, but also for his/her household's exposure to interior immigration enforcement (IE_{cm}) based on their county of residence and an interaction term of the two policies. In that

manner, we can gauge the effect of safe zones on children depending on the level of interior immigration enforcement in their county. In the absence of interior immigration enforcement (i.e., $IE_{cm} = 0$), the impact of the safe zone would be given by β_1. Otherwise, in the presence of some interior immigration enforcement (i.e., $IE_{cm} > 0$), the effectiveness of safe zones would be captured by $(\beta_1 + \beta_3 * \bar{\mu}_{IE})$, where $\bar{\mu}_{IE}$ is the average intensity of interior immigration enforcement.

Similarly, we can also compare the impact of a given level of interior immigration enforcement on children's education performance based on whether they attend a safe-zone school district. In the absence of a safe zone (i.e., $SZ_{dm} = 0$), the impact of interior immigration enforcement on the measured educational outcomes would be given by β_2. In contrast, for children attending schools in districts with a safe zone (i.e., $SZ_{dm} = 1$) the impact of interior immigration enforcement would be captured by $(\beta_2 + \beta_3)$.

In addition, we account for some basic child traits included in the vector X_{im}, such as age, gender, whether they have older siblings who can potentially help with school, the number of cities they have resided in since age 6 to address difficulties in adjusting to school, and an indicator of whether the child has suffered separation from a parent due to deportation. The vector X_{im} also includes information on the household's caregiver, such as whether they completed high school and are employed. To conclude, the model includes month fixed effects (δ_m) to address any variations in immigration policies during the interview months—all of them conducted in 2019. We also include state fixed effects (δ_s) to control for regional time-invariant characteristics. We cannot include school district or county fixed effects owing to the small size of our sample.

Equation (1.1) is estimated using ordinary least squares, which is a somewhat more flexible specification. Sample size issues prevent us from using school district- or county-level clusters. Hence, standard errors are clustered at the state level.

Do Safe Zones Protect the Academic Advancement of Children?

Our primary goal is to assess the protective impact of safe zones on the educational performance of children from mixed-status households. To that end, we estimate the model in Eq. (1.1). Table 1.2 displays our preliminary findings for various school-related outcomes. Focusing on the impact of safe zones, and given that all children reside in counties with some level of interior immigration enforcement in place (Secure Communities covered the entire country by the end of 2014), we compute and display at the bottom of the table the marginal effect of adopting a safe-zone policy at the average level of enforcement in our sample.[4] Note that since our outcomes are all dichotomous and we are estimating the models by OLS, these

[4] This is given by $\partial Y / \partial SZ = \beta_1 + \beta_3 * \bar{\mu}_{IE}$, where: $\bar{\mu}_{IE} \approx 1$.

marginal effects are in percentage-point terms. To get a better sense of how large of an impact they represent, it is helpful to divide them by the sample mean of the respective outcome of interest. For example, the reported incidence of ever repeating a grade is roughly two times smaller for children in school districts with a safe zone when compared to children in school districts without a safe zone. Similarly, safe zones are associated with approximately a 17% increase in children receiving mostly As and Bs, reduce the probability of having trouble paying attention in school by 31%, and raise the perception of teaching being "good" at school by 7%. Finally, safe zones also seem to significantly increase caregivers' attendance at parent-teacher conferences by 20%. In sum, safe zones seem to have significant and non-negligible impacts on the school performance of children, as well as on the engagement of caregivers.

One might, however, ask if safe zones can offset the potential negative impact of other ongoing policies, such as interior immigration enforcement. To address this question, we can compute and compare the marginal effect of the average level of interior immigration enforcement (i.e., $\bar{\mu}_{IE} \approx 1$ in our sample) in the presence of a safe zone to its marginal effect when there is no safe zone in place.[5] For instance, children in school districts without a safe zone and a level of interior immigration enforcement of 1—as in the case of having only Secure Communities in place—are five times more likely to report ever repeating a grade than children who are not exposed to any interior immigration enforcement. However, for children in school districts with a safe zone in place, that likelihood drops to 2.3 times. Even though the adoption of a safe-zone policy cannot completely reverse or undo the negative impact of interior immigration enforcement, it can significantly cut the impact of enforcement—in this case, by half.

We repeat the same exercise for the remaining educational outcomes for which interior immigration enforcement appears to have a statistically significant impact in the absence of safe zones. For example, the average level of interior immigration enforcement is associated with a 65% higher probability of having trouble paying attention in school and a twofold increase in reporting having trouble with homework.[6] The average level of interior immigration enforcement is associated with a 17% lower likelihood of thinking that teaching is "good" at school, and a 60% lower probability of caregivers attending parent-teacher conferences. However, when the school district has a safe-zone policy in place, these associations change for better, not worse. Instead of a 65% higher likelihood of having trouble paying attention at school, children are 14% *less* likely to report having this problem. Similarly, even though they still report having trouble with homework, this difficulty rises by a factor of 1.4 (as opposed to 2). Children also think more positively about their schools. Instead of being 17% less likely to think that teaching is "good" at their school, they are 10% less likely to report thinking this way. Finally, caregivers' engagement also

[5] For simplicity, these predicted values ignore the remaining regressors, as well as the constant, since they would be common to the two groups of children being compared.

[6] Computed as [marginal effect of safe-zone policy at the average level of IE, i.e., $(\beta_1 + \beta_3 * 1)$/ DV mean].

Table 1.2 The impact of exposure to safe-zone policies on children's educational outcomes

	Ever repeated a grade	Mostly As and Bs in school	Trouble getting along with teachers	Trouble paying attention in school	Trouble doing homework	Caregiver attends parent-teacher conference	Child thinks teaching is good at school
School district safe-zone policy (β_1)	−0.279***	0.607***	0.367	−0.528***	−0.415	0.157*	0.638***
	(0.057)	(0.091)	(0.308)	(0.137)	(0.243)	(0.077)	(0.107)
Immigration enforcement (β_2)	0.447***	−0.503	0.251	0.445**	0.976***	−0.488***	−0.150*
	(0.076)	(0.306)	(0.183)	(0.196)	(0.233)	(0.111)	(0.073)
IE × school dist. safe-zone policy (β_3)	0.074	−0.481***	−0.335*	0.318***	0.321*	0.004	−0.575***
	(0.043)	(0.089)	(0.160)	(0.077)	(0.159)	(0.047)	(0.056)
Age	0.014	0.039	−0.048	−0.036	−0.014	−0.062*	0.024
	(0.018)	(0.030)	(0.049)	(0.030)	(0.025)	(0.029)	(0.015)
Female	−0.148**	0.246**	0.017	−0.058	0.166	0.063	−0.162
	(0.066)	(0.104)	(0.138)	(0.113)	(0.125)	(0.100)	(0.103)
Older siblings	0.000	−0.105**	−0.023	−0.146*	−0.217***	−0.099	0.102***
	(0.031)	(0.045)	(0.109)	(0.072)	(0.051)	(0.071)	(0.034)
Cities lived in since age 6	0.057	0.070	0.071	0.128	−0.039	−0.057	0.014
	(0.044)	(0.088)	(0.065)	(0.102)	(0.073)	(0.083)	(0.021)
Deported parent	−0.137*	−0.313***	0.010	−0.063	0.178	0.177	−0.034
	(0.075)	(0.077)	(0.208)	(0.312)	(0.149)	(0.110)	(0.075)
Caregiver completed high school	−0.160*	−0.020	−0.042	−0.018	−0.142	0.160**	0.065
	(0.083)	(0.097)	(0.093)	(0.086)	(0.082)	(0.073)	(0.101)
Caregiver employed	0.061	−0.010	−0.141	0.086	−0.015	0.072	0.155*
	(0.058)	(0.088)	(0.084)	(0.086)	(0.119)	(0.084)	(0.087)
Survey month FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
State FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

(continued)

Table 1.2 (continued)

	Ever repeated a grade	Mostly As and Bs in school	Trouble getting along with teachers	Trouble paying attention in school	Trouble doing homework	Caregiver attends parent-teacher conference	Child thinks teaching is good at school
Marginal effect of safe-zone policy when $\propto_{IE}=1$, i.e., $\beta_1+\beta_3$	−0.205***	0.126***	0.032	−0.211***	−0.094	0.161**	0.063***
Dependent variable means	0.09	0.73	0.25	0.68	0.64	0.82	0.87
Observations	94	94	94	94	94	94	94
R-squared	0.395	0.410	0.305	0.277	0.376	0.461	0.502

Note: All models include a constant term. Standard errors clustered at state level in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

improves under safe zones, despite the presence of interior immigration enforcement. While they are still reticent to attend parent-teacher conferences, this incidence drops by 40%, as opposed to 60%. Overall, while safe zones cannot fully offset the negative impact of interior immigration enforcement, they do help counteract it to a meaningful extent.

To conclude, it is also worth noting that the remaining results in Table 1.2 also reveal other interesting findings that largely confirm prior results in the education literature. For instance, caregivers are less likely to attend parent-teacher conferences of older children. Girls are less likely to ever repeat a grade and more likely to earn mostly As and Bs than are boys. Having older siblings also has some interesting impacts. Youth with older siblings are 14% less likely to report getting mostly As and Bs, 21% less likely to have trouble paying attention in school, but 34% less likely to report having trouble doing homework. They are also 12% more likely to think that teaching is "good" at the school than their counterparts without older siblings. Interestingly, children with a deported parent are marginally less likely to report ever repeating a grade, but 43% less likely to report earning mostly As and Bs at school.

Caregiver traits also matter for some of the outcomes. For instance, children whose caregiver has completed high school are almost twice less likely to report ever repeating a grade, and caregivers are 20% more likely to attend parent-teacher conferences. Finally, children with an employed caregiver seem to have a better perception of school. They are 2.5 times more likely to think positively about the quality of teaching at school.

In summary, the preliminary findings in Table 1.2 suggest that safe zones can have a statistically significant and non-negligible impact on the school performance of US-born children residing in mixed-status households.

Summary, Future Work, and Preliminary Conclusions

Our main goal with this study is to make use of a new and innovative survey to understand the effectiveness of safe-zone school districts in improving the educational outcomes of children from mixed-status households who have either endured the deportation of a parent or are at a similar risk. For the past 20 years, the United States has witnessed an unprecedented increase of interior immigration enforcement—an expansion that has been accompanied by a dramatic growth in deportations and family separations. We seek to understand how the adoption of protective policies, such as safe-zone school districts, can help American youth residing in mixed-status households exposed to the increased threat of deportation.

To that end, we used preliminary survey data collected on a sample of approximately 100 US-born children who reside in mixed-status households. Some have experienced the deportation of a parent, and others have not. We merged data on safe-zone policies in their school district, as well as on interior immigration policies to which they are exposed. We then examined the impact of safe zones on the educational performance of these youth. Preliminary evidence suggests that safe-zone policies play a non-negligible role in improving these children's educational performance, even if the policies do not fully offset the very negative impact of interior immigration enforcement.

In sum, safe-zone policies appear to be highly beneficial. In future work, we will incorporate additional survey data from a second wave, which will enable us to address endogeneity concerns stemming from individual unobserved heterogeneity. In addition, we will dig further into the mechanisms in order to disentangle the extent to which these effects are driven by a somewhat endogenous welcoming environment to immigrants and their families, or by the outreach and protection offered by schools. If confirmed by future analyses with additional observations and more controls on potential endogeneity biases, evidence on the effectiveness of safe zones may be instrumental and encourage more widespread adoption of these policies throughout the United States, especially if current ramped-up interior immigration enforcement efforts continue in the future. For now, we can conclude that preliminary findings warrant further consideration of safe-zone policies by school districts given the low cost and yet positive impacts on children's learning and educational outcomes.

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Appendix

Table 1.3 Children survey: domains, measures, instrument sources, and sample items

Domain	Measures	Instrument source(s)[a]	Sample questions
Demographics	Age Gender Race/ethnicity	Add Health CILS	• How old are you? • What are you? • What is your race? • Do you identify as Latino or Hispanic?
Behavioral problems	Use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs	YRBSS Add Health CILS	• During the past 30 days, on how many days did you smoke cigarettes? • During the past 30 days, on how many days did you have at least one drink of alcohol?
Academics	Academic performance	Add Health YBRSS	• Have you ever repeated a grade or been held back a grade?
	School behavior		• During the most recent academic year, how often have you had trouble paying attention in school?
	School quality	Add Health CILS	• How much do you agree with each of the following statements about your school and teachers? The teaching is good in your school
Residential history and migration	Mobility	BTL	• In how many different cities or towns have you lived? • Have you moved residences during the last 6 months? Please consider any moves within the same or to a different city

[a]Studies from which survey questions/scales were adopted or adapted: *Add Health:* The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health, www.cpc.unc.edu/projects/addhealth (Principal Investigators: Mullan/Haar, NIA, R01AG042794). *CILS:* Children of Immigrant Longitudinal Study, http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/DSDR/studies/20520#bibcite (Principal Investigators: Portes/Rumbaut, Russell Sage Foundation, Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Spencer Foundation, National Science Foundation). *BTL:* Between the Lines Study: Health & Wellbeing of Children of Deported Immigrants. Drexel University, https://entrelineas-drexel.weebly.com (Principal Investigator: Martinez-Donate, NICHD, R21 HD085157–01). *YBRSS:* Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/index.htm

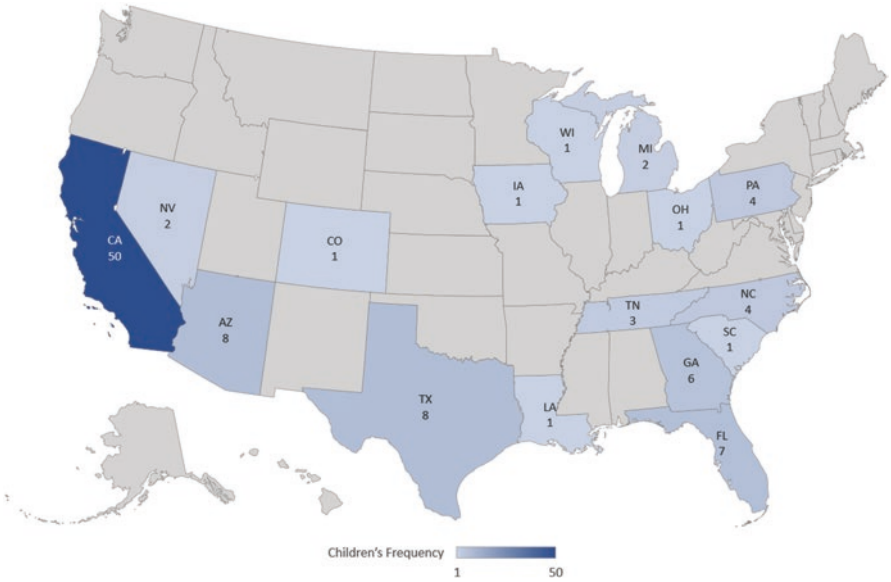

Fig. 1.5 Geographic distribution of the sample. Note: Observations indicate individual study participants. Elaborated by authors based on participants' current school attendance in the United States. Overall $N = 100$

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Chapter 2
Trauma, Loss, and Empowerment: Impacts of Immigration Enforcement

Joanna Dreby

> I remember when my dad went to jail, we went to stay at my mom's friend's house … And … I remember like, like talking to my older brother like, "How are we gonna tell to our younger brothers?" Like … And then I think we just told them something like, "Oh, he's not gonna come back right now, like he has to do something." But … Uhm … I don't really remember at all, like after that. Cause we never really talked about it.

Penny, 19 years old, told me pieces of her childhood memories such as this one, at times nervously, through a FaceTime call. It was early June 2020, about 6 weeks into the COVID pandemic lockdown. Penny, like many of us, was home; her summer plans were on hold. We had never met; I knew nothing of her except what she told me during our 2-h call and the little gathered from what I saw in the background: the drop ceiling in the room she called from and the batik print hanging on a faux wood paneled wall. Up until this point, the virtual interview format seemed a major drawback to the research study; I hoped to build sufficient trust so that young adults (aged 18–30 years raised in the United States by immigrant parents) might share with me stories of immigration enforcement, stories many felt were just too private to discuss. How does one do this in a virtual interview? Penny changed my judgment about the impersonal nature of virtual interviews. She was eager to share. The interview felt like a dance with the conversation moving deep and then coming up into a light banter, a back and forth of us both trying to keep things comfortable—or comfortable enough. It was highly intimate. Penny did not seem to have processed much about her father's arrest before we spoke. I sensed areas of possible discomfort or emotional triggers which I actively avoided, this not being a therapeutic intervention. Penny, I realized after we ended the call, would not have agreed to meet me in person had I traveled the 2 h to the midsized city in western New York where she lived. The video call provided a safe space for her to tell the story of her

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father's deportation, the havoc it caused during her childhood, the ways it undermined her relationships with her mother and brother, and the silence surrounding the deportation that she carried with her.

Penny, like 26 of the 48 US citizens raised in Latin American or Caribbean immigrant households who I have interviewed, had a parent targeted for immigration violations while a minor. In Penny's case, the incident resulted in a deportation, but for others it might have been an arrest or a detention. For the other 22 young adults I spoke with, enforcement affected those outside of the household, targeting extended family members or members of their community, broadly defined. Literature shows that immigration raids and deportations have direct and indirect consequences for young children and that legal status shapes child development (see Dreby, 2015a, b; Yoshikawa et al., 2017). Additionally, adverse experiences in childhood can leave an imprint on the health and well-being later in life (Van der Kolk, 2015). One can easily imagine that immigration enforcement experiences in families have long-standing impacts. How do the children of immigrants make sense of enforcement over time, years after the event? To what extent does an enforcement experience during childhood stick with children of immigrants as they age into adulthood? And, if the experiences do stick, what is it about enforcement that leads to long-standing impacts?

Using a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis, this chapter focuses on how the US-citizen children of immigrants—over time—come to understand their experiences with enforcement in three distinct ways: as sources of trauma, as a cause of loss, and as a basis for empowerment. After reviewing some of the foundational research on enforcement and childhood trauma, I outline the multilayered research approach focusing on young adults raised in the state of New York or the New York metropolitan area. I then share details from the stories of those who like Penny bravely broke the code of silence in their families and communities to share their experiences. I highlight features of enforcement that may lead young adults to understand the experience as a cause of hardship, a source of significant loss, or a basis for personal development by drawing heavily on young adults' verbatim accounts; they explain their experiences more eloquently with greater reflection, grace, and realism than I can in the retelling. The goal is not to prove that outcomes later in life are caused by childhood exposure to enforcement. Instead, stories shed light on the features of enforcement that create greater hardship over time, as well as the types of support that may mitigate negative effects. Accounts also indicate that enforcement is a significant social problem that children of immigrants often suffer with in silence, even as adults.

The Children of Immigration Enforcement

Over the past 30 years, two patterns related to immigration in the United States have coincided. First, there has been a significant growth in the percent of the population of children with foreign-born parents, a population now aging into adulthood. By

2014, nearly one in four US children lived in immigrant-origin households, twice as many as in 1990; of these children, 88% were US citizens (Woods & Hanson, 2016). Second, US immigration policy shifted from having a primary focus on integration to a greater emphasis on enforcement. The Immigration Control and Reform Act of 1986 provided a pathway for legalization for those in the country without legal status, but then shifted, increasing penalties for unlawful status and reducing pathways for legalization. In 1996, the Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act, for example, broadened public charge guidelines, tying income requirements to immigration eligibility. Similarly, the Act implemented bars to readmission, making it more difficult for undocumented individuals to regularize their status, resulting in a growth in mixed-status families (Fix & Zimmerman, 2006). Post-9/11, immigration agencies reorganized; financing of border patrol increased and their reach expanded to the interior of the country. Since 2007, the US Government has been formally removing or detaining more than 300,000 people every year, more than double the number of people in 2001 (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2016). Taken together, these two patterns mean that enforcement efforts potentially affect an ever-growing percentage of the US population: the children of immigrants. Estimates suggest, for example, that 500,000 US-citizen children experienced the apprehension, detention, and deportation of at least one parent between 2011 and 2013 (Capps et al., 2015).

At the same time as enforcement actions increased and peaked in 2013, I had been interviewing families and children growing up in Mexican immigrant households in New Jersey and Ohio (Dreby, 2015b). The research was not undertaken to explore immigration policy, but in interview after interview, children 5–15 years old spoke of fears related to immigration status. One 6-year-old living in New Jersey, for example, said that she worried about her parents being immigrants, "because if I am here and my mom goes to Mexico, I am going to be sad because I would miss her." A 10-year-old born and raised in Ohio explained that she expected that her family might have to move to Mexico because the police "are looking for people that don't have papers to be here" (Dreby, 2015b). The children I interviewed and spent time with inside their homes and schools seemed uniquely cognizant of the threat of immigration policies to alter their lives, though they had little understanding of immigration law. In fact, of the 110 children interviewed—a sample aiming to include children living in families with a range of legal statuses—one-third in Ohio and one-quarter in New Jersey had had a parent arrested, detained, or deported.

Given the extent to which enforcement and specifically fears about these policies shaped children's daily lives, I conceptualized the burden of enforcement policies on young children with "a deportation pyramid," likened to the injury pyramid used in public health (Dreby, 2012). From this perspective, the most devastating impact of enforcement is family dissolution at the top of the pyramid. Yet, impacts that are much more frequent, including emotional and economic insecurity, stigma related to immigration, and fears about immigration as expressed in the interviews, affect a much wider swath of the population including US citizens and legal migrants. In essence, the fact of an enforcement action potentially altered children's lives, but the *threat* of a possible deportation—termed "deportability" (De Genova,

2002)—affects a much larger number of the population than we might expect, including US citizens and even the children of legal migrants.

Other research also shows the concrete and immediate ways enforcement directly and indirectly harms children. Outcomes related to either enforcement or fears of enforcement include changes to family composition and living arrangements (Amuedo-Durantes & Arenas-Arroyo, 2019; Landale et al., 2011), social service utilization (Vargas, 2015; Vargas & Pirog, 2016; Xu & Brabeck, 2012), educational attainment (Amuedo-Dorantes & Lopez, 2015; Brabeck & Xu, 2010; Macías & Collet, 2016; Mass et al., 2016), and parent-child relationships (Abrego, 2016; Berger Cardoso et al., 2018; Brabeck & Xu, 2010; Castañeda, 2019; Dreby, 2015a; Enriquez, 2015; Lopez et al., 2018). As for well-being, enforcement actions substantially impact young children's socio-emotional well-being; children of deportees display increases in internalizing and externalizing behaviors (Allen et al., 2015; Brabeck & Sibley, 2016; Brabeck & Xu, 2010), anxiety and depression (Gulbas et al., 2016; Zayas et al., 2015), and difficulties related to belonging (Dreby, 2015b; Zayas & Gulbas, 2017). Sufficient evidence of immigration-related trauma due to family separations exists (Allen et al., 2015; Delva et al., 2013; Lovato, 2019; Rojas-Flores et al., 2017) such that both the American Psychological Association and the American Medical Association released statements in 2018 opposing the new administration's policies of separating parents and children at the border.

Adverse Childhood Experiences: Longitudinal Perspectives

Despite extensive evidence that immigration enforcement has immediate impacts on children, their families, and their communities, no studies to date have explored the lasting impacts of enforcement on US citizens as they transition into adulthood. In the fields of social welfare, psychology, public health, and child development, scholars have established a temporal relationship between adverse childhood experiences—or ACEs—and health and well-being later in life (Foege, 1998; Larkin et al., 2012; Poole et al., 2017; Whitfield, 1998). This framework proposes that adverse experiences during childhood may result in heightened levels of toxic stress that, when they accumulate, take a toll, leading to a wide range of poor outcomes in physical, behavioral, and emotional health in adulthood (Anda et al., 2008; Chapman et al., 2004; Felitti, 2009; Franke, 2014; Metzler et al., 2017; Van der Kolk, 2015). The prevalence of ACEs among Hispanic children is shown to be lower for those in immigrant families than for those in nonimmigrant families (Caballero et al., 2017). Yet, questionnaires do not measure stressors related to immigration enforcement (Flores & Salazar, 2017). Current scholarship does not include enforcement as an adverse experience with potential impacts over the life course.

Indeed, enforcement likely differs from other forms of childhood adverse experiences for which parents and family members are most often viewed as directly or indirectly culpable. Of current ACE categories, five relate to parental abuse or neglect and five to dysfunctional parents or family contexts. Even when children

experience violence indirectly through neglect or parental incarceration, which are of course highly correlated with poverty, children may view parents as ultimately responsible (Turner et al., 2019). Enforcement is distinctly different; families and children most often view parental migration as a sacrifice undertaken on behalf of children or future children. Migrating without a legal status, then, is a collateral consequence of parents' efforts to improve their children's standard of living. Over time, children exposed to enforcement may be much less likely to blame parents than those experiencing other types of adverse childhood experiences.

Theories of trauma and resiliency provide a useful framework for understanding how adult children of immigrants may make sense of enforcement. According to these theories, factors related to the frequency and duration of an adverse event will influence the likelihood of traumatic outcomes (Agaibi & Wilson, 2005; Masten, 2001; Ungar, 2013; Van der Kolk, 2015). In addition, exposure to traumatic experiences in childhood can have a long reach. Research looking at refugee populations, for example, finds that pre-migratory events such as war, natural disasters, and physical violence shape psychological well-being (Goodman et al., 2017; Mollica et al., 2001; Porche et al., 2011; Sleijpen et al., 2019; Steel et al., 2002). Among Cambodians who had lived in the United States for more than two decades, those who experienced severe trauma due to the war continued to suffer from depression and PTSD (Marshall et al., 2005). More recently, features of the migratory journey of undocumented immigrant women from Central America and Mexico qualified as a source of potential trauma prior to arrival (Goodman et al., 2017). Similar to adverse childhood experiences, events external to the family may have lasting impacts and be sources of trauma among migrant populations.

Of course, not all individuals react to adverse experiences in the same ways. Scholars define resilience as the ability of an individual to face adversity and avoid negative outcomes (Masten, 2001). Rather than an intrinsic ability or genetic predisposition to shield against adversity, resiliency is a response that develops out of an individual's relationships in the social contexts in which they live, primarily within their families and in their communities (Masten, 2001; Rutter, 1987; Ungar, 2013). As such, social support systems can help individuals develop resiliency (Agaibi & Wilson, 2005; Rutter, 1987; Ungar et al., 2013). High levels of peer support may moderate the effects of complex early trauma on mental health of at-risk youth (Yearwood et al., 2019). Family support can play a critical role in youths' successful adaptation after traumatic events (Kliewer et al., 2006). Additionally, among children in immigrant families, mentorship outside of family units may lead to "exceptional mobility" (Smith, 2008). Social support can be an important resource for the children of immigrants in making sense of adverse childhood experiences, particularly those related to enforcement.

In summary, a preponderance of evidence suggests that immigration policies have negative impacts on young children and that adverse childhood experiences often have long-standing, traumatic impacts over the life course. However, no research to date has explored enforcement as a possible cause of traumatic impacts that extend over time and into adulthood. In essence, we need to add a temporal component to the deportation pyramid and conceptualize the burden of enforcement on children as they age into adulthood.

Research Design

This chapter draws on interviews collected from a larger study currently in progress on the impact of immigration policy on the children of immigrants. The larger study aims to capture how young adults understand the impact of immigration policies on their lives; how enforcement specifically affects relationship quality, socio-emotional well-being, and career and educational trajectories; and how social support may help young adults avoid lasting impacts related to enforcement-related immigration policies. The study uses a narrative interview approach coupled with a questionnaire that includes quantitative scales to measure socio-emotional well-being and social support. Thus far, 58 young adults whose parent(s) emigrated from various countries have participated by sharing their stories, but here I analyze the 48 narratives of young adults whose parents emigrated from Latin America or the Caribbean. The project involves a team of researchers at the University at Albany, and has thus far included four graduate students and nine undergraduates in recruitment efforts and in preliminary analysis procedures.

In terms of sampling, we sought US-citizen participants in order to explore the effects of having experienced enforcement indirectly rather than risks related to one's own legal status (on experiences of unauthorized youth, see Abrego, 2011, 2018; Gonzales, 2016; Gonzales & Chavez, 2012; Patler, 2018). The aim was to include variation in the sample on two axes. First, given research on local variations in the policing of immigrants (see Armenta, 2016, 2017; Garcia, 2019; Schmalzbauer, 2014), the study looks at how local ecological contexts may matter by including those who grew up in various communities in the New York City metropolitan area, upstate New York, and western New York. Second, the study includes individuals with different levels of exposure to enforcement. This includes those whose contact with enforcement came vis-à-vis a parent who was deported after incarceration, removed, detained, arrested, or directly threatened for immigration violations. In a separate paper, we define and conceptualize children's experiences based on varying types of immigration enforcement episodes (see Dreby & Macias, 2021). Also included were young adults whose parents did not experience enforcement directly, but who knew of members of their extended families or members in their communities, broadly defined, who had been targeted.

As for data collection, I alone conducted all interviews: 17 interviews were conducted in person and 41 were conducted electronically via either Zoom, WhatsApp, or FaceTime. Prior to the meetings, I communicated directly with potential participants via email or text; all received the informed consent form via email in advance along with a list of possible topics to cover should they choose to share their stories. This process was intended to be generative, allowing participants some time to reflect on their experiences; in the interview, I invited participants to begin where they wanted and to tell their stories however they felt comfortable. Conversations ranged in length from a minimum of 1–5 h; the majority of interviews lasted between 1 ½ and 2 h. Although conversations were unstructured, I did direct some questions so as to cover particular topics including experiences in elementary, middle, and

high school; college and work pathways and mentorship; transnational ties; relationships with parents; own experiences as compared to those of siblings; chores and responsibilities at home; dating and peer relationships; and reflections on politics and current events. Given that most interviews took place during 2020, I asked how participants and their families fared under COVID, as well as specific reflections on race and ethnic identity as brought up by Black Lives Matter protests, and about their feelings about the 2020 presidential election. At the end of our conversations, I invited participants to complete the questionnaire, which included commonly used measures of social support, depression, and anxiety as well as questions about enforcement episodes and transnational connections.

Analysis here draws solely on the stories of 48 second-generation young adults, 18–30 years old, who had a parent who had emigrated from Latin America or the Caribbean, all of whom were minors at the time of the nationwide increases in immigration enforcement measures, during the mid-2000s. The process began with open coding methods of transcribed tape-recorded interviews to identify the ways young adults made sense of enforcement, as well as how they told their stories about enforcement (see Riessman, 1993). I then introduced these themes for group discussion in research team meetings with undergraduate and graduate students, nearly all of whom consider themselves members of immigrant or transnational families. This approach proved useful for bringing multiple perspectives to bear on the interpretation of the data. Research team reflections also helped avoid making assumptions from the data and to make data collection iterative, as I directed questioning in future interviews around issues brought up in team discussions. Additionally, I reviewed participants' questionnaire responses to avoid any obvious misinterpretation of comments shared in interviews. For example, a participant who described themselves as very lonely as a child, but then rated their family as high on supporting one another, giving each other plenty of attention, and talking openly and listening to one another in the questionnaire, was not considered to be lacking social support. Due to privacy issues, I do not include information from questionnaires here; however, this data brings some confidence to the interpretations of the qualitative narratives discussed below.

Overall, I found that participants exposed to enforcement targeting parents ($N = 26$) ascribed greater significance to these experiences as compared to those whose extended family or community members had been targeted ($N = 22$). Participants whose parents were targeted told their stories of enforcement in remarkably different ways. Those who spoke about extended family or community members, for example, introduced immigration experiences as an aside or an afterthought, something distant or disconnected from other childhood experiences. In contrast, for those whose parents had been targeted, either stories began with details of a day or event as an entry point to discussion of an emotionally conflicting experience or enforcement was the climax of a story, divulged like a secret that the participant learned about later in life, or in a moment of discovery. I now turn to these stories, focusing on those closest in proximity to enforcement, vis-à-vis parents, and draw from those whose extended families or community members were targeted for context.

Impacts: Trauma, Loss, Empowerment

Themes related to trauma, loss, and empowerment emerged most significantly in young adults' accounts of enforcement. First, some young adults spoke quite specifically of enforcement as being a source of trauma. They talked about deep impacts on their lives, made direct connections between enforcement and other difficulties they faced, and defined themselves as having strong emotional responses they attributed to enforcement. Notably, they did not always use the word trauma to categorize the experience, although some did, particularly if they had been in professional counseling. To give an example, one young woman told me that she felt out of control, began smoking marijuana in school, was suspended, and had to change schools after her father's incarceration. Another spoke about pressures at home to be intertwined with her parents' ongoing immigration case.

> [In college] I also chose to drink a lot and like smoke weed a lot because it was just, there was a lot going on. Um, so I remember one day my dad had to go, they were picking me up to go to court and I had like spent the whole night drinking and hanging out with this guy.

The stories provide evidence of profound impact (e.g., smoking pot, school suspension, heavy drinking) attributed to enforcement (e.g., incarceration, court trip) and the resulting emotional responses (e.g., feeling out of control that "there was a lot going on"). Of course, the interview is <u>not</u> a clinical assessment; rather, it draws inductively from young adults' subjective sensemaking of their experiences.

Second, some young adults spoke about enforcement as being impactful not because they connected it to strong emotional response, but because they attributed missing something or someone as a result. In short, they spoke of enforcement as prompting loss. One might argue that the experiences of loss as described here may signal a traumatic response. However, I consider narratives of loss as distinct because this type of sensemaking detaches trauma from the event. In fact, some young people ostensibly avoided framing their experiences as traumatic. For example, one undergraduate team member who had a family experience with enforcement commented while assessing a transcript, "Some of these things happened to me," but she then added, "But I do not necessarily think about it or define it as trauma. It's just my life." Of course, narratives of loss frame enforcement as impactful and a possible source of trauma, but they may also function to protect young adults from experiencing trauma, helping to develop resiliency, as I will explain.

Third, some young adults spoke of enforcement experiences as being uniquely motivating, drawing on narratives of empowerment to describe the ways that they have either overcome difficulties or matured due to their families' experiences. Because such narratives most often acknowledge trauma and/or loss alongside perseverance, unlike narratives of loss, they do not suggest resiliency. Resiliency proposes that certain protective factors buffer children from experiencing trauma from an adverse experience. In contrast, the concept of empowerment acknowledges negative effects but turns them into a catalyst for personal development. Empowerment better captures how young adults talked about enforcement: of becoming stronger individuals *because* of their experiences. Over time, some young

adults may come to understand their childhood experiences in a way that acknowledges injustice but avoids victimization and frames the experience as one of growth.

Note that narratives of trauma, loss, and empowerment are not mutually exclusive; a few individuals brought in multiple narratives in recounting their experiences. Exploring each narrative theme separately helps identify characteristics of enforcement that result in greater hardship over time as well as types of support from family, peers, and formal mentorship that mitigate possible negative impacts by supporting resiliency and empowerment.

On Trauma

Twelve of the 26 young adults who had been exposed to enforcement targeting their parents spoke of their experiences as having been traumatic or attributed relationship difficulties with family members or in school as being caused by enforcement. What distinguishes an experience of enforcement as traumatic?

First, the parental relationship matters. To explain, consider the 13 participants who had a parent whom ICE deported or removed from the United States: Five described the event as particularly traumatic, while three did not describe the deportation as traumatic. The remaining five identified other enforcement experiences (e.g., arrest or the threat of arrest or deportation) as being more traumatic because those either were more disruptive or involved them in their parent's immigration case, as I will explain. For those who did not speak of trauma, their mothers and fathers were estranged at the time of their fathers' deportations. Olivia, for example, introduced herself saying that she was someone not really affected by enforcement because "It wasn't until college that I had found that he got deported." Her parents divorced when she was 5 and she stopped seeing her father on weekends in the fifth grade. She did not know it was due to his deportation until much later. Krystal introduced herself as being the daughter of a deportee, but explained that in actuality she knew little about her biological father because he was deported when she was an infant and her parents had never married. Although both Olivia and Krystal explicitly stated that they did not feel emotionally impacted by the deportation, they also acknowledged that they likely would have had a different type of relationship with their father had it not happened, thus indicating the acknowledgment of loss, but not hardship, related to enforcement.

In contrast, those who spoke of the traumatic aftermath of enforcement explained that the incidents undermined their relationships with their biological parents due to a miscarriage of justice. For example, Nancy told the story of her father who had received two DUI tickets in the past, one in 1994 before Nancy was born and one in 2001 when she was just 6 years old. The tickets triggered an early morning raid in 2013 when Nancy was 17, a date she recalled with extremely vivid detail.

> Like I'm half asleep and I'm like, "Can I help you?" And they're like, "Oh, we're, we're looking for Roberto Rodriguez." And then I said, "Like, why? Who? Why are you here? Why are you looking for my dad?" They're like, "Oh, we have, um, we have a warrant for

> his arrest." And so, I'm like, "I'm sorry, who are you again?" And then they finally told me they were ICE. But there were like six agents at my door. And then we didn't realize it 'til like after, there were like three SUV vans outside of the, the apartment. .. Like all blacked out SUVs and um, outside, there were like another six, I say this like, it was insane. Like it was so dramatic and why?

For 5 years following this event, Nancy spearheaded a legal fight against the deportation order with the help of local politicians, successfully at first, and her father was released from detention. The case was then relegated to immigration court. Two years later and under the duress of health issues and a second period of detention, Nancy helped arrange for his flight to Mexico under a voluntary departure so he could apply for readmission. Unfortunately, Nancy's father died of health complications after moving to a rural area of Puebla where he could not receive proper care for his heart condition. Nancy told the story highlighting the injustice of the blacked-out SUVs arriving to her apartment in an early morning raid that dramatically changed her life and all of her family relationships, and ultimately killed her father.

Natalie also spoke about trauma related to her father's deportation to the Dominican Republic, starting with an arrest due to mistaken identity when she was 6 years old:

> I remember us living in a house, and then my mom received a phone call and so my dad wasn't in the house. Like she immediately fell to the floor and she just started crying, and my brother, me and my brother, I think he was four at the time, yeah, four at the time and I was six, and … Like I was confused but all I remember her saying is, "Oh, wake up Damien" which is my brother. "Wake him up, and let's go to. We need to go to [the] precinct. We need to go." And I'm like, "Okay, whatever." I mean, I'm like panicking because my mom was crying, but I don't know what's going on at this specific moment.

After his arrest, incarceration, and deportation, Natalie's father spiraled downward. "I would say he had like psychological issues. Like he was, I don't know, he would have breakdowns." Natalie's father had moved to New York City when he was 15 years old and graduated from high school in Washington Heights. Therefore, he could not figure out how to make a life for himself in Santo Domingo (see Brotherton & Barrios, 2011). Although her parents eventually divorced, Natalie remained in touch with her father and felt emotionally close to him. She felt that his unjust removal from the United States was a source of trauma, one that she could not really talk with her mother about, one that caused her to become emotionally cold. "Like I was very literally like a cell, not open. I was very … some may say a little like heartless. Not heartless, that's extreme, and I was just … Like I wouldn't show emotions at all." Of her relationship with her best friend, she explained, "As a fifteen-year-old … I would never talk to her about anything, like literally anything." As in Nancy's case, Natalie's story ended in tragedy furthering her experience of trauma; Natalie's father had died of a heart attack a year prior when she was 18.

Even in less tragic cases and ones in which separations are short-lived, young adults may define their parents' enforcement experiences as traumatic as they age into adulthood and reflect on current challenges. Mariana, for example, told me that to this day she still uncontrollably shakes and cries when she sees officers in uniform, a reaction she attributes to a ride in a police car to the immigration office after

being picked up in a traffic stop with her mother and stepfather when she was in third grade:

> I saw them like, fingerprinting my mom. I saw them fingerprinting my dad. We were there for a really long time. I remember crying because I was just annoyed and bored and like I wasn't sure what was going on. I didn't know what was happening.

Mariana was not separated from her parents for long after the incident but described symptoms of PTSD from the interactions she observed at the Rochester immigration office and the disrespectful treatment of her parents she witnessed.

Young adults exposed to enforcement that targeted other members of their households, even if they felt that incidents were unjust, did not define them as traumatic to the same extent. Brittany, for example, lived with an uncle, aunt, and three cousins, along with her parents while growing up. Of her uncle's detention and yearlong absence, she explained, "It affected us all," but went on to describe the impact on her cousins and the feeling that they needed support, rather than her own feelings of sadness. In fact, she spoke more of trauma related to fears about her husband's current undocumented status, even though he had never been arrested, than to her uncle's absence when she was a teenager. Similarly, 19-year-old Karla spoke of her father's deportation to the Dominican Republic when she was an infant as having a deeper impact than that of her uncle's deportation to Ecuador whom she lived with while growing up. As a child, she lived with her mother, an uncle, aunt, and two cousins because her mother had to raise her alone after her father's deportation. When she was in elementary school, ICE officials arrested Karla's uncle while posing as plainclothes detectives to trick the family into revealing where he worked. Karla remarked that her uncle's removal was difficult but actively talked about the impact on her cousin rather than her own feelings about that disruption. About her father, though, she spoke deeply of mixed emotions about his efforts to remain in touch.

Secondly, for those who experienced enforcement as a source of trauma, enforcement introduced significant changes to their daily lives as children. Katie, for example, lost her father to incarceration and deportation when she was less than a year old, although she knew her father well from visiting him in the Dominican Republic until she was in middle school. For Katie, the removal was highly traumatic because her mother experienced a high level of insecurity in the aftermath and was not able to get back on her feet, a disruption that lasted well into Katie's adulthood. Katie's mother moved multiple times, first to Brooklyn and then to Hoboken, in the years right after her father's arrest. "I still remember like us moving around a lot, getting evicted from like houses and stuff." Katie recalled the bright red stamp on an eviction notice taped to one apartment door, the last she lived in with her mother before moving in with her grandmother. In subsequent years, her mother had multiple violent boyfriends and Katie moved in with an aunt and uncle. Yet, she remained in touch with her father, and once she turned 18 and began working full time, she began supporting him economically with remittances from her job as a day care worker. She explained her current feelings about her father saying,

> My dad [and I] have had like three big fights on the phone. Then one day I just exploded. I was like, "Oh my goodness. If you hadn't been deported none of this would've happened." Like yeah and obviously, he felt so bad. And then of course, I felt even worse for even mentioning or saying stuff like that. And then it had been 11 years since I've seen him …

The deportation of Katie's father spiraled her mother into a situation in which Katie seems to have lacked proper care. Although Katie retained a relationship with her father, she felt frustrated and confused about her feelings of anger, resentment, and love.

Penny, introduced in the opening vignette, had an eerily similar story, although she grew up in a small city in the western part of the state instead of New York City. She recalled living with her father as a time of witnessing violence against her mother. He was arrested when she was 9 years old, subsequently incarcerated, and then deported. Although the removal might have improved Penny's home life, it had the opposite effect; her mother struggled economically, moving often. Penny got in trouble in school, and she moved in with an aunt and uncle for greater stability. Although she later moved back in with her mother and continued to have some troubles in high school, Penny earned good grades and a scholarship to a private college. Like Katie, she felt conflicted about her father. Although not emotionally close, she was close enough to visit him in Mexico where she found him to be different, having learned to "channel his anger" while he was in jail. Penny, also like Katie, emphasized that the disruptions to her life arose from the destabilizing effect enforcement had on her mother.

A third type of experience common to narratives that attributed trauma to enforcement is the extent to which young adults became involved in their parents' immigration cases. Nancy, introduced earlier, advocated for her father on and off for 5 years after the original early morning raid in the family home. Mariana, described earlier as being terrified of men in uniform after being taken to the immigration office along with her parents when she was in third grade, became highly involved in her parents' legal case fighting a second deportation order when she was a teenager. "They're still both going through immigration. Like my dad's case has been dragging on until now. My mom's case just actually started getting pushed forward." For her entire childhood, Mariana witnessed interactions with ICE officials, translated at meetings with lawyers, attended court hearings with her parents, and even advocated for herself in school.

> Every year I had to go downstairs to the lunch lady and explained to them, "My parents don't have a social security number. They don't have money. I don't know how to do this. I need help filling this out." I had to. Like every single year I had to do that for the school. And I was like 7.

By age 25, Mariana knew so much of the detail of her parents' cases that she evaluated a shift in practice, commenting, "Yeah, so with immigration court, like as I've been going through it and like as I've been talking to the lawyer and everything, that he was like, so what happens is immigration isn't black and white anymore." From her ongoing involvement, Mariana understood the work of immigration attorneys to

no longer be about assisting with the filing of paperwork, but rather to be similar to the work of a defense attorney making a case for a client.

Raquel, born just outside New York City in 2000, also became involved in her mother's immigration petition. In 2009, she moved to Guatemala with her mother. Five years later, when the town where they lived in Guatemala became too dangerous due to gang violence, they returned to the United States where her father had moved to upstate New York. In 2014, Raquel flew into New York's JFK airport, but her mother was picked up in California and placed in a detention center when she tried to cross the border.

> [She was there] in San Diego, because she was there for an extra two days because she got sick. *Y no le daban las pastillas, tenía pastillas*. [They didn't give her pills, she had pills]. She has arthritis still, so *le daba ese dolor y no le querían dar pastillas.* [she had that pain and they didn't want to give her pills]. So, they ended up taking her to the hospital, which extended the stay two more days ... I didn't know anything about her. She was contacting my dad, so all my dad told me was that she was in San Diego, and that's all he knew about her. She, like, my dad didn't even know she went to the hospital.

Fortunately, Raquel's mother passed the credible fear interview and was deemed eligible to apply for political asylum, and they reunited within a week. Despite the relatively short period of separation, Raquel felt angry—like others—about the injustice of her mother's detention and about the process of applying for political asylum. When we met in 2019, Raquel explained:

> Her last court was last August. And they … they basically said she had 30 days to appeal. If not she would be deported. I went to that court with her, that last court, and I just walked out of there crying. Bawling my eyes out. It was like, 'this is so unjust'.

For 4 years, Raquel had been to all of her mother's court dates and accompanied her on all the visits to the lawyers' office, contributing to her growing sense of injustice.

Nina, in contrast, grew up in a small city about an hour from Raquel's rural home. Nina often translated for her parents while working in the family store; however, she did not feel any impact from her father's arrest and immigration case precisely because her parents did not involve her in the case. She knew that immigration officials detained her father after a traffic stop when she was 3 years old and that he was in a detention center for a few days in Buffalo. This was in 2000, and he was released to the family; all she knew about it was that every few years he had to appear in court with a lawyer. "So, I don't know if I'm that affected because I was still so young that I don't think that any of what happened really resonated with me."

Involvement in immigration cases is not the only way young adults feel drawn into the aftermath of enforcement. Three young adults spoke of ongoing domestic violence in their families in which they felt they had to both advocate for their mothers and call the police while avoiding a situation of reporting their undocumented fathers to Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE). The threat of immigration involvement in domestic violence situations caused very high levels of stress—situations young adults felt they could not easily navigate. Family-based violence is always complex, but ICE involvement ramped up the stakes to an unbearable level; all three had sought mental health services and medication due to these situations.

Notably, two of the three reported that their abusive fathers had been deported but returned to New York; they described ICE involvement as escalating the cycle of family violence. In both cases, their mothers felt guilty about the deportation, whereas their fathers felt betrayed by the involvement of law enforcement. Upon reunification, the violence grew worse, and they felt drawn into working to protect their mothers from ongoing violence. In effect, the deportation further involved them and exacerbating the trauma they attributed to enforcement.

On Loss

Kyle: Like after that I don't remember.

Joanna: You don't remember the whole year?

Kyle: Like the whole year, I don't know what happened –

Joanna: Really?

Kyle: Yeah, I just blacked out.

Kyle was 5 years old at the time ICE arrested his father in the small rural community where he lived his whole life in upstate New York. As far as he knows, the arrest was related to a traffic incident, something that would not have led to any jail time or family separation had his father not been undocumented. Kyle related specific details about his memories of the day—of what the officers looked like who came to the door of the house and of sitting and crying on the concrete curb outside the house after they took his father away. However, Kyle remembers nothing about the year he lived without his father after the event. The loss was not only of his father's physical presence, but also of all his memories of an entire year of his life—the year he was in first grade—memories that only restarted after his father returned from Guatemala.

Kyle's description of loss of his father and his memories is especially poignant, but he is not alone in reporting such voids. Eight of the 26 participants whose parents had been targeted described acute memory losses related to enforcement incidents they witnessed as minors. David, for example, spoke of an incident when he was in the sixth grade when ICE came to their house on the farm where his parents worked.

> I remember one instance where immigration was really big. One day before I was supposed to go to school, um they came and knock on the door, and I didn't really know who it was. I just thought it was my parents' friends. I didn't open the door because I was like going to take a shower to get ready for school ... Yeah, it was in the morning and I was the first one awake.

Similar to Kyle, David recounted a number of details about the incident which seemed burned into his memory, but the story ended with him saying, "I didn't go to school that day. Oh wait, yes I did. I just didn't like do anything in school I was just–I don't remember much of what happened afterwards that day." Once again, the story ends in loss, but in this case, of his memories and not his father; ICE did not

arrest David's father as members of the community came to bear witness, and the farm owner arrived and insisted that the officers leave, as they had no warrant.

From a psychological perspective, we might interpret the recollection of acute details alongside memory loss as evidence of a traumatic response to enforcement. I am cautious of this assumption, as at times the loss of memory may function to protect children from trauma. Kyle did not talk of any conflicting emotions or difficult reactions to his father's deportation. He simply did not remember anything about the year following the event. Similarly, 22-year-old Liliana reflected that she had completely forgotten that her father had been separated from the family for nearly a year when she was younger. Liliana's father had returned to Mexico to visit her sick grandmother; upon his return to the United States, he was detained and could not reunite with the family for an entire year. Liliana explained she had not remembered, "It was literally until I was doing a presentation on immigration policies under Trump administration, sophomore year, [in college] that it literally all came back to me right then and there." Despite the suppressed memories, Liliana did not define the event as traumatic. Quite the opposite. Liliana started our conversation explaining that she did not grow up feeling worried about her parents' legal status. She knew that they were undocumented but never thought much about it. By the time she was 15, her mother was legalized and by 18, her father achieved a legal permanent residency status. Her father's yearlong absence affected the family, but Liliana did not consider the event to have had any major impact on her childhood since she had literally forgotten that it had happened. Memory gaps, then, signal the association of loss with enforcement separate from trauma.

In some cases, stories of loss arising from enforcement specifically signal the physical loss of a parent or time with a parent due to deportation or detention. These can be short-term periods of family separation, which seem to affect young adults, such as Raquel, only when they get deeply involved in the aftermath of immigration case. Alternatively, there can be more long-term losses when a parent is deported and cannot return. As mentioned in the previous section, even those who said that their fathers' deportations had no impact on their lives due to parental divorce—such as with Olivia and Krystal—alluded to a sense of loss of the possibility of a stronger relationship with the noncustodial parent.

In other cases, the loss is of something perhaps more precious than a parent's presence: one's memories. Notably, all participants reported variations in the degree to which they recalled details of their childhoods; some had better memories than did others. Yet, no one reported similar acute details followed by sudden black holes in memories related to other types of events that led to loss in childhood. As an example, Maritza, who grew up in Jamaica Queens, NY, lost her childhood home to a fire. Similar to participants who witnessed parents' interactions with immigration officials, she recalled in detail the devastation of the day saying, "I remember going back to the apartment and it looking like a war zone." Maritza, however, said of the aftermath, "I remember <u>everything</u>," of how they moved in with different family members for a number of months until her parents bought a house on Long Island. In another example, Cynthia "lost" her father after his incarceration. She confirmed that she knew all the details of his arrest, although preferred not to talk about them

except to say that because he was a naturalized citizen, he did not face immigration consequences. When we spoke, she had not talked to her father in the 15 years since his arrest, even after he completed a 7-year jail sentence. In both cases, the loss of a father or the family home did not result in the unique type of acute memories followed by profound gaps in memory reported by young adults whose parents experienced enforcement.

Significantly, to experience the acute loss of childhood memories as described in the interviews necessitates a family culture that does not openly discuss enforcement. Liliana, for example, described her family culture saying, "As I think about it, my parents never implicated their fear of deportation on us. They never talked to us about [it]." It seems likely that Liliana might have remembered the year she lost her father before she studied immigration in a college course if her family talked about what happened more openly. In fact, many of the participants shared that their families rarely spoke openly about enforcement, such as Penny, quoted in the opening of the chapter as saying, "'Cause we never really talked about it." Family silence is likely intended to reduce trauma and shield children from knowledge of changes in their daily lives that are attributable to enforcement. It does not always work as a strategy to protect children; in Penny's case, the family code of silence contributed to her sense of confusion and trauma. Yet, for others, silence can result in memory losses that protect children from negative outcomes and can possibly be a protective mechanism for developing resiliency in light of negative outcomes from enforcement. In either case, a family code of silence about enforcement can exacerbate the sense of loss, particularly over time as young adults attempt to make sense of their experiences.

On Empowerment

Over time, young adults feel the long-term impacts of enforcement when they understand such experiences to generate loss and trauma in their lives. Yet, as suggested by theories of childhood trauma, not all individuals react to events in the same way. The concept of resiliency assumes some sort of baseline to which a young adult returns. The narratives of enforcement do not suggest a return to normalcy. Rather, seven young adults told stories of enforcement as being uniquely empowering. In other words, they resisted framing enforcement as being wholly negative. To explain, I return to the experiences of Nancy and Natalie, previously introduced. Both Nancy and Natalie spoke of ways that enforcement experiences had, over time, led to a deepening of their interpersonal relationships and been a motivating source for the acquisition of skills and their pursuit of college and career goals. Their stories suggest that young adults make sense of enforcement in ways that highlight the ability to overcome adversity when they have success in leveraging either formal or informal social support.

Prior to the early morning raid that targeted Nancy's father when she was 17, Nancy was often in conflict with her father. Her father owned a pizzeria in the small

city where they lived along the Hudson River. She felt that he was too controlling, particularly when compared to how he treated her brother who was 4 years older.

> I didn't have the best relationship with my dad, you know when I was younger. Um, very controlling, very overprotective, very jealous ... So, I couldn't even like go to the store without them thinking, I was going to meet up with someone.

Nancy started to participate in a youth group when she was 14, which involved weekly meetings. "Like right before I would leave for these Friday meetings, I would tell him, 'I don't care if you get mad, I'm going to go regardless.' And I remember leaving the house crying. He would be mad at me." Nancy became so involved that they did overnight advocacy trips to the capital, Albany. "And my dad again was like, 'You're going to, you're going to go again? Like what are you going to do over there?'... So, my dad had just had so many dumb ideas." Nancy attributed his objections to his gendered worldview from having grown up in rural Mexico.

Yet, after her father's arrest, Nancy went into action. She called on her networks from the youth advocacy work; she mobilized. With the help of local politicians, she arranged for his release. Facing an ongoing legal battle, she called on the media to cover the case and get public attention to her father's plight. Nancy initially negotiated for her father's release pending a court decision. Then 2 years later, when he was again detained and scheduled to be deported, she got him out of the detention center. He signed a voluntary departure agreement giving him time to pack and get things in order rather than be deported. Nancy ended up flying with her father back to Mexico. Although his health deteriorated, she felt that overall, it was a story of victory. She recalled his second release saying, "My dad's crying. And it's like, he was like, 'I knew you were going to get me out. Like you did it twice.'"

Not only did Nancy feel that she fought the system and won, but also the experience repaired her relationship with her father. She explained:

> Eventually, my dad, he was very apologetic ... He's like, "I never knew the type of work that you were doing and I didn't bother to ask you. And I'm really sorry. I really do think you have the potential to do something great and I just saw it and you know, you're doing critical things, don't stop." And he's like, "One of the reasons why, you know, I came here, it was for you guys have a better life and I'm not going to get in the way of that."

Over time, for Nancy, experiences with enforcement became the catalyst for reconciliation between father and daughter and for a deepening of their relationship. In addition, Nancy's advocacy led her on a path to paid employment and into a series of jobs for local politicians. At age 24, she had put college coursework on hold due to ongoing political organizing opportunities.

Natalie, too, felt uniquely motivated on a career path due to her father's deportation. In his case, he was mistaken for another family member, but took the blame and pleaded guilty for a reduced sentence. This left him with a criminal conviction, preventing any return to the United States. Natalie began our conversation by explaining how her father's deportation impacted her college trajectory.

> I was thinking [of] being like an immigration lawyer or like … I don't even know how to say it. Like my passion grew stronger towards like law enforcement. My drive just went to be in law enforcement. And … this is what I'm still kind of interested in, like not as much

> anymore, but I'm still interested in like immigration and mass incarceration, which I guess it derives from like what happened ... And I was like, although I wasn't involved. 'cause they wouldn't tell me anything because I was too young. But from an outside perspective, I was very like always interested like, "Oh, I could always help my dad. I wanna do this so I can help my dad."

Natalie, however, found that she could not fight the system for her father, which ultimately became a problem in their relationship.

> When I was talking to him, the only thing that mattered to him was like, "Oh have you figured out like, has your mom told you anything about like immigration or a lawyer or anybody else she talked to …?" And I'm like, "No, like … Can we just have a conversation?" Like, you know? And I couldn't really do anything because I was, like I wasn't 18, or like I wasn't an adult to find like a lawyer or somebody like for me to be his representative or something. And, yeah, it was just like … We didn't really have a relationship, like after that, because that was literally all he would speak about, like, "I would like to go there. Have you spoken to anybody? Have you done research?"

Not only did the experience lead to a breakdown in Natalie's relationship with her father, but it also caused rifts with other family members. For one, she felt that her father's relatives in the Dominican Republic did not help take care of him as his mental health issues escalated in the years following deportation. Natalie felt that her older half-sister aggravated the situation, contributing to her father's obsession to return by telling him she was working on bringing him back, feeding him false hope. After her father's deportation and his decline, her parents divorced. Natalie believed that her mother's attitude was, "I'm sorry but that's not my problem anymore." Although Natalie and her mother are not emotionally close, Natalie said that her family supports each other, and can laugh together; they do not, however, talk about serious matters. Natalie explained:

> My mom never spoke to me about it. I literally had nobody. I grew up very angry [laughs]. Like I was a very angry child, and I think it has to do ... with this, because I always felt like somebody was going to leave. So, I never really understood my dad's situation for a long time … Before I understood what really happened, I thought he just like left, like he did something bad to like get rid of us basically. So, I always felt like … I'm not even able to like be friends, like I'm not gonna be able to take nobody serious, work on friendships because regardless, they're going to leave. And … I'm not going to get my feelings involved. Like I'm not going to be this type of person who gets in her feelings. And I lost a lot of friends cause of that.

Natalie explained that, in some ways, she associates her family situation and the trauma around enforcement with her personality and struggles to relate to others.

Natalie's narrative, however, is optimistic and is one of working through these difficulties. At the age of 19, when we spoke, her reflections demonstrated a high level of maturity. She attributed much of her personal growth to a relationship with her best friend.

> This is when I decided to tell her, when she told me something about her dad. She told me that her dad was going through immigration issues as well ... and that's when I actually ended up opening up myself to her. She was like, "I didn't know this. Like why didn't you tell me?" I was just like, "I just didn't think that you'd care." … Like she basically, like, she made me feel comfortable enough for me to just open up and like to this day I don't regret

> it because she's like, been there, like since everything. And she's actually like the only person, not the only person, but one of the few people that I actually, would just … talk to her and I wouldn't feel like she doesn't care, like she's judging me in any way. But for a long time, I felt like people didn't care. And that, I never needed, I didn't need to open up about anything 'cause I would always like resolve the issues myself. Yeah, like, I didn't need anybody to comfort me or to make me feel like they're there for me … I, even to this day, I don't, like when people feel bad for me … Yeah, she didn't make feel like … Like she didn't feel pity for me. She was just there! And after that happened, I kind of became more open. Or more willing to like, just let my guard down for like a second. You know? Like there's actually people who care; let me chill; let me not believe that like everyone's … And I don't even know where this came from, 'cause I never felt like I couldn't talk to my mom or my grandma. I just felt like it was easier not to do it. I didn't, like I didn't need to explain myself. I didn't have to get into an emotional session, like … It was none of that. But after I expressed myself to her, it was just different. Like I was just like, I became friends with … Like, I feel like I really grew from that, because like … I'm able to speak about it now like nothing.

While for Nancy, relationship growth came out of the successful leveraging of formal social support systems and skills forged through her youth group activism, relationship growth for Natalie was more individual and informal. Natalie developed skills on her own; she decided to trust the right person and she understood the emotional connections between her discomfort with feelings and her relationship with her father. Doing this, she was able to move on.

Natalie left home in Washington Heights to attend college at a state school a few hours away from New York City, where she became highly involved in two campus-based organizations, so much so that she decided to run for a leadership role in the upcoming academic year. When her father died during the spring of her first year of college, a year before we met, Natalie knew what support she wanted from the university (getting extensions for courses) and what support she did not want (counseling). By the end of our conversation, I felt impressed at how much Natalie had shared. "You seem kind of open, I mean. I mean … You don't seem closed off," I commented, to which she explained another mechanism she used to feel empowered.

> That's the thing. I started off like writing about it. So, I used that experience to write my personal statement[1] … After I told my friend, she was like, "You know what? I think you should use this for your personal statement ... [you can] talk to like the college admissions and tell them why you grew from this." And I wrote about it and it was like, I felt better; Like I'm writing; I'm telling them my story. … So, they're not judging me based on my story. They're just getting to know a different part of me. And yeah, I was just able to like express myself 'cause of that.

As Natalie and Nancy's experiences suggest, there is no one formula for turning trauma and loss related to enforcement into empowerment. Nancy drew on formal resources and skills developed outside of the family, while Natalie chose a pathway of internal growth, reaching out to a peer, writing, and reflecting on her experiences. Both formal and informal social support—from within families and from those outside of them—may be important resources that young adults leverage in

[1] An essay sometimes required for a college application explaining who the applicant is and why they should be admitted.

overcoming the adversity related to enforcement. Notably, especially given others' descriptions of ongoing involvement, it is likely not a coincidence that for both Natalie and Nancy, the story of enforcement had a finite end with the tragic deaths of their fathers. Death marked the end of a period of mixed emotions and of their involvement in the aftermath of enforcement. Such a conclusion surely matters for young adults to be able to define the experience as deepening relationships and being a source of motivation. Of course, an end does not need to be one of death; success in an immigration case, for example, could provide young adults with a similar sense of closure.

Discussion and Conclusion

Over time, enforcement accrues meaning for young adult children of immigrants in three different ways. First, young adults view enforcement as having a traumatic impact on their lives when they became involved in the aftermath of enforcement, when their daily lives were deeply disrupted by enforcement, and when they define enforcement as unjustly targeting a biological parent. Second, enforcement accrues meaning over time as being the catalyst of loss of a parent or time with a parent, or of childhood memories. Family silence about the enforcement contributes to this sense of loss. However at times, silence may protect young people by helping them avoid negative outcomes and be resilient to adverse experiences. Third, informal and formal social support can help young adults frame their experiences as uniquely motivating in career or educational trajectories and come to view their experiences as empowering in terms of deepening relationships with others. Young adults who feel empowered by their experiences, however, likely have reached a point of closure. Trauma, loss, and empowerment constitute the long-term burden of enforcement policies over time.

The accounts analyzed here are subjective; analysis focuses on the meaning attributed to enforcement over time from young adults' retrospective accounts. A qualitative approach is limited in that a causal relationship between enforcement and trauma cannot be established. Yet, young adults' stories of enforcement reveal that the immigration regulatory system has long-term consequences for US citizens not targeted by such polices. Most current literature focuses on immediate or short-term impacts of enforcement on children or examines how undocumented young adults transition to adulthood given their own precarious legal statuses. The stories here clearly show that, over time, policies emphasizing enforcement are a social problem that significantly affects US citizens in long-lasting ways.

In fact, some young adults reported symptoms suggestive of significant psychological trauma associated with enforcement, such as Mariana's uncontrollable crying in any interaction with the police, reminiscent of the long-standing embodied health impacts of childhood adverse experiences or childhood trauma (Van der Kolk, 2015). They may need mental health counseling or other support that specifically recognizes the relationship between enforcement and trauma. Nadia, for

example, attributed her current stability to well-timed professional interventions. Following a domestic violence incident with Nadia's mother, ICE deported Nadia's father. However, he later returned to harass the family, prompting Nadia's suicide attempt in high school. Nadia successfully received intervention from school-based social workers and medication for her anxiety, and by age 20 was on her way to earning a college degree. She felt that access to mental health services saved her life. Those exposed to enforcement that targeted parents, and whose families are further destabilized by enforcement, may be especially in need of formal support services. Moreover, adequate support in the form of services related to domestic violence, translation, or legal assistance can prevent children from becoming overly involved in the aftermath of enforcement.

Yet, trauma is not the only outcome. Feelings of loss are consequential, even if they do not rise to the same level of impacts as experiences of trauma. Counseling professionals, friends, and family members can understand loss related to enforcement as unique. They can help those affected gain control by sharing the experiences which can feel like a shameful secret, particularly when family culture discourages talking openly about enforcement in order to shield children. Although a family code of silence may protect children initially, as young adults, acknowledgment of the experience as a loss attributed to immigration policy can be crucial. For some, acknowledgment of loss is an essential step in moving from an experience of trauma towards one of empowerment. As Natalie explained, initially she did not understand the cause of the loss she experienced: "Before I understood what really happened, I thought he just like left, like he did something bad to like get rid of us." Natalie advanced to feeling empowered at the time she entered college because she linked her reaction of emotional shutdown to deportation, understood her father's inability to reconstruct his life post-deportation as connected to the injustice of the situation, and shared her story with a friend and in a journal.

Finally, young adults' stories suggest the possibility of growth and empowerment. They can leverage social support to acknowledge trauma and loss and then draw on those experiences as sources of motivation. Critically, enforcement cases must resolve before young adults can move on, and the current practice of ongoing unresolved cases likely prevents young adults from gaining a sense of control over the experience. Indeed, the few focal young adults who spoke of inconsequential experiences of enforcement all commented that their parents' issues had been resolved *while they were children* (e.g., Nina, whose father's detention occurred in the early 2000s). At that time, immigration policies were often less punitive and were resolved more quickly than in 2020 if US-citizen children were involved. Similarly, Briana explained that ICE detained her mother during a summer when she was in elementary school and visiting her maternal grandmother in Venezuela; she only heard about it much later. Her mother's husband, a US citizen, negotiated for her release; he also identified an immigration attorney who was able to resolve the issue within the year due to her mother's eligibility for relief through marriage. Briana felt unaffected, and the experience is instructive. To avoid negative impacts on the family members who are US citizens, policies should be implemented in ways such that quick resolutions are possible and that family separation and

ongoing disruption to children's lives are avoided. Short of this, immigration policies likely will have severe impacts on an increasingly larger percentage of the US population.

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Chapter 3
Migrant Mothers' and Youths' Experiences of Separation and Reunification

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Sociopolitical and Sociohistorical Contexts for Migration

From 2017 to 2019, there was a 55% increase in the migration of youth[1] from Central America to the US-Mexico border (U.S. Customs & Border Protection, 2017, 2018, 2019). While the number of unaccompanied minors—children and youth who migrate to the USA without a parent—decreased some in 2020, there was a 64% increase from January 2020 to January 2021 (U.S. Customs & Border Protection, 2021). The recent increases in Central American migration are attributed to increasing violence and unrest in the region. Indeed, the years shortly before the large wave of migrants in 2015 and 2016 included disturbing milestones in Central America including the highest homicide rate globally in Honduras in 2011 and the end of a truce between major gang powers in El Salvador in 2013 (Hiskey et al., 2016). In addition to swift growth in migration from Central America, the southwestern US border continues to also see large numbers of Mexican individual adults, families, and unaccompanied minors migrating (U.S. Customs & Border Protection, 2021). Fleeing from violence is a commonly cited reason for both Central American and Mexican migration among families and youth, and traumatic experiences are common among migrants (Hiskey et al., 2016; Venta & Mercado, 2019).

[1] We use the terms "youth" and "child" interchangeably to refer to the participants in our study. We generally use "youth" when referring to the participants and "child" when referring to the mother's relationship to the participants (e.g., "mothers described their child as ...").

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For decades, migration from Mexico and Central America to the USA has resulted in family separations, wherein parents migrate in search of better opportunities by themselves and leave children under the care of a relative. While substitute caregivers often have close ties to the children (e.g., mothers in the case of father migration; grandparents in the case of both parents migrating), this is not always the case. Substitute caregiving as well as communication between children and parents who migrated can have significant effects on the parent-child relationship (Venta et al., 2021). When children migrate to reunify with a parent in the USA, the reunification may be tentative and, even if the reunification is stable, the separation may be associated with significant mental health symptoms for years thereafter (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011). Indeed, clinically significant symptoms of post-traumatic stress are prevalent in both parent and youth migrant samples from Central America and Mexico (Mercado et al., 2019). Challenges with reunification happen despite families' attempts to adapt to and manage separation, including explaining the rationale (e.g., a sacrifice for the well-being of the family), and using technology to communicate across borders (Bacigalupe & Parker, 2015).

The consequences of family separation due to migration are complicated by the reality that many Mexican and Central American migrants do not have legal status in the USA. Regional gang and cartel violence in Central America are not recognized by current immigration policies as representing persecution or warfare, and families, adults, and children being targeted for gang recruitment or sexual exploitation are often not granted refugee or asylum relief from deportation in the USA. While their subsequent lack of legal documentation status is a general stressor (Potochnick & Perreira, 2010), it also uniquely affects families. Specifically, Mexican and Central American families are not often able to migrate to the USA as a family unit due to the absence of legal and social protections that make migration of refugees from other nations possible (Fazel et al., 2012). Furthermore, families are affected by the fact that individuals living in the USA without legal status run serious risks of apprehension and deportation each time they enter and exit the USA, meaning that they are unable to visit family outside of the USA.

Migration-Related Family Separation, Attachment, and Psychological Outcomes

The primacy of parent-child bonds has long been an important variable in psychological theories of how children develop. Based on interactions with our caregivers, we form internal mental representations about the reliability, stability, and reactivity of caregivers and more generally of others (Bowlby, 1982). These internal representations—or working models—influence our behavior throughout our lives, particularly in social situations and times of stress, frustration, or loss. Although established early in development, subsequent experiences, such as trauma, loss, and separation, can shift these internal working models and can lead to internal representations of others as unreliable and uncaring (Bowlby, 1982). Disrupted attachments can affect an individual psychologically, including their capacity to enter relationships with

others. Empirical research has demonstrated that separation from a parent (due to divorce, migration, or incarceration) has detrimental effects on the mental health and well-being of children (Amato & Cheadle, 2005; Graham & Jordan, 2011; Huurre et al., 2006; Johnson & Easterling, 2012). In the Mexican and Central American contexts specifically, family separation has been identified as a risk factor for psychopathology in recently immigrated youth in a small number of qualitative and quantitative studies (e.g., Berger Cardoso, 2018; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011).

Recently, research with Mexican and Central American families and youth has demonstrated that parent-child bonds predict psychological well-being. Indeed, among Central American youth, parent-child attachments that are characterized as secure (i.e., higher in communication and trust, lower in alienation) are associated with reduced psychopathology and increased resilience—characteristics that allow children to cope with adversities through adaptive means (Venta, et al., 2019a). Likewise, in a prospective study of Central American youth, secure parent-child attachments facilitated acculturation in the USA post-migration, allowing children to better adjust to the post-migration environment and mitigating, to some extent, the adjustment difficulties predicted by previous trauma exposure (Venta, 2020). Among a small sample of Central American high school students, having previously experienced migration-related separation from a primary caregiver was the norm (62.1%) and separation from mothers was linked to lower maternal attachment security (Venta, et al., 2019b). Though most respondents (85.2%) indicated that their caregiver did the right thing by migrating, were able to find meaning in their parents' sacrifice (e.g., realizing that they were afforded better opportunities due to migration), and reported positive emotions such as gratitude, reunification was still challenging due to lack of trust in the parent and grief associated with losing the parent earlier in life (Venta, et al., 2019b). A second relevant study collected data from a large sample of Latin American (primarily Mexican) college students to examine how their experiences of being left behind by migrating parents might relate to subsequent attachment disruption in young adulthood (Venta et al., 2021). That study documented small effects of maternal separation on subsequent attachment security in young adulthood with, surprisingly, larger effects of father separation on subsequent attachment. The effects of paternal migration were mitigated when respondents indicated that they were older at the time of paternal migration and when they reported having greater contact with fathers (via phone, video call, etc.) post-migration. These two early studies suggest that attachment disruption is likely a significant consequence of migration-related family separation and a significant risk factor for psychopathology and acculturative difficulties in Mexican and Central American youth. This emerging research base also suggests that interventions must be developed to address the attachment disruption faced by Mexican and Central American families residing in the USA, a group that has rapidly grown during the last decade.

The ways in which migration separation can affect parent-child attachment, which in turn affects parent-child interactions post-reunification, have also been demonstrated in qualitative research. The family separation and reunification experiences among 30 unaccompanied immigrant children were examined (Barros Lane et al., in press) by drawing on two conceptual frameworks: attachment theory

(Bowlby, 1982) and family systems (Falicov, 2013; Walsh, 2016). Years of separation eroded trust, attunement, reciprocal communication, and familiarity, all of which contributed to strained interactions post-reunification. Parent-child distance was reinforced when after reunification parents had to work long hours and were not physically present with youth. Additionally, the loss of both attachment figures in the country of origin, combined with loss of idealized expectations about the parent and life in the USA, contributed to youths' feelings of loneliness and loss. Separations also challenged family norms and processes which were embedded within cultural expectations of children as *bien educado/a* and parents as deserving *respeto*. These tensions were exacerbated in families where youth were adjusting to stepparents and siblings they did not know (Barros Lane et al., in press). Thus, one consequence of sociohistorical and sociopolitical inequities that force separations among Central American families is potential harm to parent-child attachment, which can last even after youth are reunified with parents, when many continue to experience attachment-related distress and behavioral disturbances (Barros Lane et al., in press).

Parent-Child Reunification Study

Stressful reunifications between Mexican and Central American mothers and youth, exacerbated by acculturative stress, prior trauma exposure, and marginalization, create vulnerability for mental health problems. Parents have the potential to mitigate these problems through responsive caregiving during the reunification phase. Yet, there are currently no evidence-based interventions that target the parent-child relationship during the reunification process for migrant families. To address this gap, our team is evaluating the feasibility and acceptability of the Mediational Intervention for Sensitizing Caregivers (MISC) with families that have been separated by migration and subsequently reunified. MISC is a semi-structured evidence-based intervention that trains caregivers in the "literacy of interaction" to re-establish attachment and relationship quality, which in turn facilitates optimal cognitive and socio-emotional development in children (Boivin et al., 2013a, 2013b; Klein, 2001; Klein et al., 1987).

The feasibility and acceptability pilot study was guided by Wingood and DiClemente's ADAPT-ITT model (Wingood & Diclemente, 2008). The ADAPT-ITT model is a framework for cultural adaptation and has been used widely in HIV/AIDS research. ADAPT-ITT consists of eight phases: assessment, decision, administration, production, topical experts, integration, training, and testing (Wingood & DiClemente, 2008). This chapter presents data collected as part of Phase 1: Assessment. As part of the assessment phase, we conducted 16 semi-structured qualitative interviews with Central American and Mexican immigrant youth and their mothers (n = 16 mothers and 16 adolescents). The goal of these dyadic interviews was to better understand the factors that challenge parent-child reunification and strategies that families have used to try and resolve these challenges. We next describe the methods and data analysis procedures implemented in Phase 1.

Methods

Procedures

We were guided by an interpretive phenomenology perspective (Lopez & Willis, 2004), with the goal of gaining knowledge about the "lifeworld" or experiences of families that undergo migration-related separations (p. 729). In 2019, the research team formed a community advisory board (CAB) to oversee the adaptation of MISC for mothers and children separated by migration. Seventeen key stakeholders from nonprofit mental health agencies, advocacy groups, and school districts that work with Latinx immigrants and children were identified and invited to be on the CAB. The CAB members assisted with all phases of the adaptation, including identifying participants for the assessment phase. Mothers and youth were eligible to participate if they (a) immigrated to the USA from any Spanish-speaking country in Latin America except Puerto Rico, (b) were separated from their child by migration for any length of time, and (c) spoke Spanish or English. Recruitment targeted youth aged 10–18 years but oversampled youth in middle adolescence. CAB members identified research participants, and the research staff followed up with a phone call to inquire about interest and eligibility. Once mothers provided consent and parental permission, and youth provided assent, interviews were conducted face to face at locations convenient to the participant. All but four youth interviews were conducted in Spanish. Interviews lasted, on average, approximately 60 min.

Semi-structured Interview Guide

Semi-structured interviews (one for mothers and one for youth) were conducted to gain knowledge and understanding about the factors that challenge parent-child reunification and strategies that families use to resolve these challenges. The interview guide for mothers was organized into the following sections: demographic profile (e.g., country of origin, age, year arrived to the USA), mother-child separation (e.g., how long, how many times, preparation for separation, communication after separation), alternative caregivers (e.g., who took care of the youth, who chose the caregiver, quality of the caregiver relationship), parent-youth reunification (e.g., describe the reunification, challenges, changes in the relationship), changes in family structure (e.g., presence of siblings, stepparents), and quality of the mother-child interaction post-reunification (e.g., how stressful has the reunification been for you, accessed programs and resources). Similar questions were asked of youth, but there were also questions that probed about separation from the biological father, the youth's memory of the separation (e.g., were they told, did they get to say goodbye), and the challenges with integrating into their US family.

Participants

Among the 16 families, 7 were from Honduras, 4 from El Salvador, 2 from Guatemala, and 3 from Mexico. Most mothers were currently married either to their children's biological fathers (n = 5, 33.3%) or to a new partner (n = 7, 43.8%). Mother's age ranged from 26 to 53 years. Mothers' ages at the time of migration ranged from 20 to 31 years. Most mothers (n = 12, 74%) completed their migration journey on their first attempt and had 1–2 children at the time of their migration (n = 13, 81.3%). The average years lived in the USA was six. Just over half of youth reported living with their maternal grandparents while separated from their mothers (n = 9, 56.3%), and most of the youth were separated only one time from their mothers (n = 13, 81.3%). The length of mother-child separations ranged from less than 1 year to 10 years, with the average length being 5 years. The average age of the youth at the time of separation was approximately 4 years old (range: infancy–10 years). (See Table 3.1 for more descriptive information about parent-child separations.) Just over half of the youth participants were female (n = 9, 56.3%). Youth ranged in age from 10 to 18 years. The average age at migration for youth was 8 years. Similarly, the average amount of time spent in the USA was just over 4 years.

Coding and Analyses

Interviews were transcribed in Spanish and later checked by two bilingual research assistants. Transcripts were uploaded into the Dedoose software, a cloud-based program that facilitates qualitative data analysis. Data coding was conducted in Spanish by a team of seven bilingual researchers. We engaged in a collaborative, multiphase, and iterative coding process that involved individual coding, team coding, inter-coder reliability checks, memo writing, and analytic group check-ins (Miles et al., 2014). In Phase 1, all team members individually read through the transcripts and engaged in writing memos and code generation. We then met and shared our preliminary codes and memos. Next, we created one set of codes and assigned each of the codes a definition (see Table 3.2 for codes and definitions). Following this step, we created a codebook that included the collective definitions of the codes and sample quotations. We used this codebook to collectively code one randomly selected mother-youth interview dyad, and then met to revise our initial coding scheme to more accurately reflect the data.

In Phase 2, we collectively coded a randomly selected portion of one parent and one youth interview and then calculated Krippendorff's alpha to establish inter-coder reliability. Krippendorff's alpha for mother participants (α = 0.91) and youth participants (α = 0.84) was good. Once we had established acceptable inter-coder reliability, in Phase 3 we divided the 16 mother-youth dyadic interviews among the seven team members and individually coded the dyadic interviews. Next, we created memos reflecting on the convergence and divergence between the mothers' and

Table 3.1 Separation demographics

Variables	*N*	%	Mean *SD*	Range
Family who migrated first				
Mom	8	50.0		
Dad	5	31.3		
Both parents	3	18.8		
Dad's presence at the time of migration				
Not present	5	31.3		
Present	11	68.8		
Ability to visit child while separated				
No	13	81.3		
Yes	3	18.8		
Alternative caregivers				
Maternal grandparent(s)	9	56.3		
Maternal aunt	2	12.5		
Biological father	2	12.5		
Other	3	18.8		
Number of children remained in home country				
1–2 children	14	87.6		
3 or more children	2	12.6		
Number of times separated				
1	13	81.3		
2	3	18.3		
Length of parent-child separation[a]			5.06 2.89	10
0–3 years	5	31.3		
4–6 years	7	43.7		
7+ years	4	25.0		
Youth's age at separation[b]			3.94 3.02	10
0–3 years	8	50		
4–6 years	5	31.4		
7–10 years	3	18.9		

[a]For mothers and youth with more than one separation, the longest separation was recorded
[b]For mothers and youth with more than one separation, the age of the child at the beginning of the longest separation was recorded

youths' accounts. We resolved questions that emerged during this process through analytic check-ins. In Phase 4, we reviewed and summarized the data for each code, and identified sub-themes that emerged within each code. Finally, in Phase 5, we looked within and across codes to generate the preliminary themes that are presented below.

In the subsequent presentation of our findings, we review the disruptions and complications of separation and reunification among participating mothers and youth, and the ways in which mothers and youth demonstrate resiliency and connect to internal and external supports and resources to cope with these challenges.

Table 3.2 Code definitions

Code[a]	Definition
Preparation for separation	Any instance when mom or youth discusses preparing to be separated, including but not limited to what was said, reasons, length of separation, who would take care of child, what child understood, advanced notice, *la despedida*
Alternative caregiving of the child during separation	Any instance when mom or youth discusses child's caregiving experiences during separation, including but not limited to why was caregiver chosen, relationship, how youth was treated, instances of maltreatment, number of caregivers, other people in the home, conditions in the home, communication with youth about parents who migrated
Experiences during separation	Any instance where mom or youth discusses experiences of the separation including but not limited to psychological effects, coping (internal ways of managing stress associated with separations, ecological ways of coping), and school and work experiences of youth
Communication during separation	Any instance where mom or youth discusses communication with each other during the separation, including but not limited to type of communication (phone calls, video calls, pictures, letters, travel, remittances), when communication occurred (how often, what prompted communication, willingness to communicate), psychological reactions to communication, ability to communicate, ability to send remittances
Youth's experiences of abuse or trauma	Any instance when mom or youth discusses the child's experiences of abuse or trauma, including but not limited to pre-migration, during separation, post-reunification trauma/abuse
Reunification preparation	Any instance when mom or youth discusses preparation for reunification between mom and child, including but not limited to how did they learn about impending reunification, what were the expectations, who made the decision, why was decision made to bring the child to the USA, reactions to learning about impending reunification, feelings about child leaving people and places (familiarity)
Youth's experiences with migration	Any instance when mom or youth discusses child's migration journey and experiences up until they reach the USA
Legal interactions with immigration enforcement	Any instance when mom or child discusses legal interactions with immigration enforcement, including but not limited to asylum cases, deportation, ORR shelter, separation at the border
Youth grief and loss related to home country	Any instance in which mom or youth discusses child missing his/her country of origin, including but not limited to friends, family, school, language, neighborhood, food, etc.
Mom's psychological state after reunification	Any instance when mom or youth discusses mom's psychological state post-reunification, including how past separations affect her now and parenting stress
Mother-child relationship post-reunification	Any instance when mom or youth discusses their relationship after reunification, including but not limited to attunement, deference to roles, quality of relationship (*confianza, respeto*), and efforts to rebuild the relationship
Integration into new family structure	Any instance when mom or youth discusses the integration of the child into the new family structure, including but not limited to stepparents, new siblings, acculturative differences among family members

(continued)

Table 3.2 (continued)

Code[a]	Definition
Integration into the community	Any instance when mom or youth discusses integration into the community following reunification, including but not limited to school, peers, extracurricular activities, work, expectations, realities, and acculturative stress experiences
La reunión	Any instance when mom or youth discusses the experience of seeing each other again after a period of separation
Current feelings about decision to separate and migrate	Any instance in which mom or youth discusses current feelings or thoughts about mom's past decision to separate in the context of migration, including how that has shifted over time
Experiences with or opinions about psychosocial supports	Any instance in which mom or youth discusses ideas about what would be helpful, including but not limited to experiences with programs or services, both positive and negative experiences

[a]For each code, youth accounts and mother accounts were coded separately

Results: Disruption During Separation

Maternal Mental Health and Self-Blame

Unsurprisingly, mothers described sadness, grief, and guilt for separating from their child. The multiple uncertainties surrounding the separation (e.g., how long they would be separated, the child's well-being in the country of origin, sometimes precarious childcare situations with alternative caregivers, the mother's legal status within the USA) created anxiety and its associated symptoms, including disturbances in sleep and appetite. "'When am I going to see them again?' 'What are they doing?' I remember that six months after arriving, I didn't sleep or eat, day or night. It was terrible. I would sleep without realizing that I was asleep" (14A). The actual "*despedida*," or farewell, was described as the most difficult experience of mother's lives, leading some mothers to depart while children were asleep to avoid having to say goodbye:

> I didn't have the courage to see her, to turn around. When I started to walk, I didn't have the courage; I just hugged her. I told her I loved her a lot and promised her that I was going to … that she was going to be here someday with me and that I was going to buy her the prettiest doll that I could find (11A).

In addition to primary emotions, such as sadness, mothers also internalized blame for having left their children which resulted in secondary emotions of guilt and self-loathing:

> I wouldn't stop crying, and I would tell her how much I loved her and everything. But it was painful for me to live without my daughter and think that I had been partially to blame … because to me, it was my fault (6A).

Mothers' decisions to migrate clearly occurred within contexts of systems of oppression and historical and ongoing inequity. Yet, despite these contextual systems influencing individual decisions, many assumed responsibility for the

decision. This reflects one way in which systems of oppression operate: they shift responsibility and pathology to individuals rather than revealing the structural and political conditions that force individuals into untenable decisions. For one mother, the pain of separation, coupled with the guilt and self-recrimination for having migrated without her child, led to a debilitating depression and suicidal ideation:

> Well, there was a time that I told my partner that I wanted to die too … I've felt like that I've wanted at times to commit suicide. You understand? And well if something happens like that, I think it's my fault and why do I want to live and things like that (6A).

Such self-blame is also reflective of responses to traumatic events, and again reveals how the meaning ascribed to these events (e.g., that the individual "caused it," or somehow could have prevented it from happening) leads to secondary emotions of anger, guilt, and shame.

Youth Mental Health

Youths' recollections of the period of separation were largely influenced by their age at the time of their mother's migration. Those who were very young had little memories of the period of separation. Youth who were old enough to recall what happened tended to remember the *despedida* in detail, suggesting a "flashbulb" memory, one that was vividly encoded because of the emotionally intense context of the event. Youth with clear memories of the period of separation describe deep sadness and grief, as well as anxiety and fear that they would never be reunited. They had to navigate the challenges of growing up, for example, first menstruation, without their parent's guidance. They compared themselves with peers who had mothers present and felt unimportant and alone: "I feel like I felt bad because I saw how my classmates from school would bring their moms and would show them their grades and I never brought anyone" (14B). In addition to sadness and anxiety, they described symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), for example, intrusive thoughts that their mother was unsafe in the USA, frequent nightmares, effortful avoidance of thinking/feeling/remembering the separation, and negative beliefs about themselves, others, and the world. "I felt like my world had been destroyed, really" (9B). These negative beliefs also reflect how the separation impacted their internal working models, or fundamental assumptions about themselves, others, and the world.

Previous Separations from Fathers

Most participating youth had been separated from their biological fathers in the context of separation/divorce or paternal migration prior to their mother's migration. Responsibility for communication after father's migration was often placed on

the youth, rather than the father taking responsibility for maintaining the relationship, reflecting some erosion of culturally bound parent-child hierarchies: "'Why haven't you called me?' And I say something like, 'You can call me too. You have a phone too, Dad. It's not just me.' And he'll be like, 'Oh! You're so *malcriada*'" (6B). Additionally, several mothers recounted histories of domestic violence and family dysfunction prior to paternal separation: "He insults you. My God– he busted my head open. I went to report it but the law doesn't do anything there" (3A). Youth had similar recollections:

> Well, I don't remember much about him but the memories that I do have aren't very good. Because I remember that he would come to the house all drunk, wasted, and he would hit my mom. He just came when he felt like it (15B).

Mothers also reported challenges with fathers not providing money for basic needs: "Well, sometimes I would tell him, 'Look, I need this …' but he would say no; that's it, no. And well, now I am like that, when they tell me 'no,' I don't bother with it anymore" (12A). In many cases mothers were left to support their children alone which led to the need for migration. While some youth had fond memories of their fathers, most participants recalled the lack of paternal presence:

> Well, he wasn't paying attention. He went to work and everything but when I would get sick, I mean, he didn't stay with me ... I would just see him; we'd talk for a little bit but he was never that responsible (12B).

Separations from fathers and experiences of maltreatment likely impacted subsequent separations from mothers.

Coping During Separation

Finding Meaning in Sacrifice

Despite the psychological toll that separation took on mothers, connection to internal and external resources helped to prevent many mothers from experiencing depression and hopelessness. One way in which mothers attempted to mitigate the negative consequences of migration-related separation was by preparing the youth for the eventual separation. Mothers tried to decrease the unpredictability of the event in part by providing a rationale for the separation (e.g., extreme poverty, lack of work/educational opportunities, and concerns for safety in the country of origin). "Because I told him that I was going to come here and he asked me why. And I said, to work to help him with food and to get a small house because we didn't have one" (1A). These explanations were intended to prevent youth from interpreting the meaning of the separation as a personal rejection, particularly since younger children are especially vulnerable to personalizing external events (e.g., assuming they somehow "caused" an event when clearly they did not). Some mothers explained their rationale to alternative caregivers, who helped to reinforce this messaging with

children during the separation. At the same time, some mothers experienced communication barriers, such as the developmental stage of the child (e.g., belief that the child was "too young" to understand) and their own capacity to fully accept the impending separation (possibly a form of avoidance), that impeded their ability to prepare for the separation.

Similarly, most youth could articulate the reasons that precipitated the mother's migration. "The main reasons were because my grandparents were murdered, both of them individually at different dates and we were being chased and stuff" (11B). Even if it was an intellectualized response, this was protective in that it gave youth a way of externalizing the reason for migration and an internal representation of their mother as prioritizing their well-being, and themselves as deserving of such care.

Connecting to Faith and Supportive Others; Distraction and Activity

Mothers and youth cited a belief in "God's plan" as a means of coping with the uncertainty of separation. Sensing the limits of their personal power to reunify with their children under conditions of safety they asked for God's help:

> I felt like I wasn't going to see her again. But if I stayed, they would have already killed me. So, I said, I asked God, if nothing else that he give me the opportunity to bring her here to be together again (11A).

Similarly, youth described church as an escape from painful emotions and memories: "I had fun times in church. That's why church was my escape and school, too. To take a break from everything and just have fun" (6B).

Some mothers had partners who helped them to recognize when they were in "emotion mind" and to approach the situation with a "cool mind" (i.e., a reasonable mind):

> Well, he told me, "Let's think with cool minds." He told me, "Right now you are agitated. Calm down, relax and we will talk". He told me, "We will have a conversation. We'll find a way to converse like civilized people." He told me, "But not how you are right now. Right now, you are upset." (15A).

Supportive others were helpful in suggesting ways to calm mothers' physiological arousal so that they could view the situation realistically. In that way mothers would be able to problem-solve, rather than reacting from "survival brain" regions (i.e., the limbic system) which circumvent higher order thinking skills. Youth who had positive relationships with alternative caregivers were able to create a sense of belonging and new attachments to stable caregivers. Siblings also played important roles, providing companionship and shared understanding of the experience of separation.

Mothers described coping by working, which allowed them to send money and gifts, support education, secure housing, and contribute to their children's future.

Again, the ability to translate the pain and trauma of separation into meaning and purpose was likely instrumental in their ability to cope with the separation. Work and caretaking roles in the USA also provided an important distraction that helped them avoid feeling overwhelmed by the pain of being separated from their children. For youth, daily activities and routines, such as school, visiting a certain *tienda* (store) each day, and playing soccer, helped them establish a sense of normalcy and predictability.

Coping Through Emotional Avoidance

Youth also described managing their own emotional reactions to protect their mothers:

> When I said goodbye, one day before she told me, "You don't have to cry." She told me, ah, she told me, "You do not have to cry because if I'm leaving, it is in search of a better future. Here we barely have anything, and I don't want you to cry because I need to leave to make things better for you." So I promised her that I wasn't going to cry and the next day, when it was time for her to leave and she left, I made her the promise that I wasn't going to cry and I didn't cry (15B).

While this may have been adaptive in the short term, as it allowed youth and mother to compartmentalize and psychologically distance themselves from pain and fear, repressing emotions may also have contributed to longer term psychological challenges: "They knew what I was going through, but I, like, try not to show too much emotion while in front of people because I know that puts them in a good spot. So, I always kept it to myself" (6B). Repressing emotions may also have had consequences for emotional attunement and communication between mothers and youth following reunification.

Alternative Caregiving During Separation: Sources of Protection and Risk

Protective Caregivers

Mothers in this study came from small close-knit communities where extended families lived in the same or close-by households. This proved to be a protective structure for mothers and children separated by borders, as the definition of "family" and "caregiver" is broader than in the dominant culture in the US context. In many cases, mothers and youth were already living with extended family members. For these families, choosing an alternative caregiver during the mother's absence was straightforward, as that individual was already involved in caring for the child. Moreover, because of this collective caregiving arrangement, many mothers already

had observed and trusted the parenting capacity of their own parents, siblings, or other family members:

> We are seven siblings. So think of it that my mom, she has almost the same story as I do. I left them with her but we are always vigilant of our children. And because of that I knew that they weren't going to live with a better person than with my grandma (9A).

Despite this, and their efforts to remain part of the family through remittances and communication, many mothers understood that there is no substitute for one's own mother and felt sadness and guilt for not being able to physically play that role daily. Even when mothers were able to leave their children with trusted family members, they were distressed by differences in parenting styles. Some mothers felt that their children were spoiled by permissive caregivers, while others felt that the discipline was far stricter than they would have used. Still the ability to feel confident that their children were well taken care of by a trusted family member (which most often was the mother's own mother) decreased mothers' anxiety, guilt, and grief. "So, I don't feel sad at the same time for having left her because I left her in good hands" (4A). The cost, however, was the observation that some youth formed stronger bonds with the alternative caregiver: "Actually, they call her 'mom' too. And now that I see them here, with her here, I can see that … that connection between them. They have more of a connection with her than with me" (10A).

Most youth recounted that they were well taken care of and described not only having their needs met but engaging in fun activities, such as going to a carnival or getting ice cream. Some even felt that they were treated better than other children in the home:

> She took me often to the mall. Whenever we went to the ice cream shop, she instead of … she used to buy the other cousins those little baby two cones. Well, I got a whole vanilla split on my side (11B).

The youth who reported positive relationships with their caregiver(s) developed strong attachments, as evidenced by referring to them as "mom," and missing them when they later migrated to the USA. One youth described how photos given by his grandmother are used as soothing and grounding objects when he gets upset in the USA; these transitional objects ease the pain of separation from these loved caregivers and reflect the depth of the attachment bond:

> Because before I came, she told me. "When you go there …", I have photos of her from my grandma. She gave them to me and she … gave me a necklace but they took it away and they wouldn't give it back to me in immigration ... I had something and when I … when I felt bad, I would just look at that and I would feel better … I had something (9B).

Alternative Caregivers as Sources of Risk

A smaller number of mothers ($N = 4$, 25%) did not have a trusted family member to care for their children. They reported that due to a variety of circumstances, including the death of a parent or trusted caregiver, their children had to live with less

known relatives or unrelated individuals. In these cases, mothers were more likely to report experiences of maltreatment, abuse, and neglect:

> Then my dad passed away. They stayed–I found a young woman to take care of him, do their wash, cook for them, and she mistreated him. And then I moved them to another young woman … I found another woman and that woman too … she drank. And I would send money, but the kids would be all dirty (3A).

Most commonly, mothers described how their children were treated differently from the biological children in the household. Some were exploited for labor and expected to contribute to the household income. Children were burdened with overwhelming and taxing chores and denied food if they failed to complete them. In all, seven youth (44%) experienced some form of abuse from alternative caregivers; this included experiences of emotional abuse in the form of insults, threats, and humiliations; physical abuse; and sexual abuse from family members. "My oldest daughter, my sister's husband tried to abuse her. And my sister mistreated them too; she would keep food away from them; she would make them feel badly in front of people" (15A). Situations of maltreatment led some mothers to have to seek new caregiving arrangements for their children; one mother moved her children from Honduras to Guatemala to live with her new spouse's mother. When mothers understood the alternative caregiving situations for their children to be unsupportive, neglectful, or dangerous, their own anxiety, sadness, self-blame, and guilt intensified.

Some youth described alternative caretakers as gatekeepers for information about their mother, and as such held power. A few youths described being given misinformation about their mother, which led them to further resent and reject their mother:

> Well, my stepfather's mother put a lot of ideas in our heads. She told us that my mom does … that my mom had to prostitute herself to pay for our food and she came and she made us actually believe those things. They put a lot of ideas into my head (15B).

Several youths described how they were required to financially contribute to the household (e.g., by selling in the street) and threatened that if they did not meet their quota, they would be denied food or beaten. They also were threatened not to share this information with their mother in the USA. A small number of youth reported experiences of sexual abuse perpetrated by adult male family members or friends of the family. As noted, largely due to maltreatment, many youths had to change homes and caregivers. In the absence of stable nurturing adults to take care of them during the separation, some youth assumed adultlike roles, for example, caring for or protecting siblings or working outside the home:

> The poverty, every time there was more and more danger and also … I lived with a person–I lived with a person that wasn't stable and she, and my mom would send her money but she would take the money and would go. So, she would send me to work (3B).

Despite their resilience, these youth often experienced a worse prognosis because they experienced traumatic and stressful events without the presence of a stable, nurturing caregiver to buffer the effects of these events.

Communication During Separation: Protective and Complicated

Communication to Protect the Relationship

Communication during the period of separation was a way in which mothers and youth maintained their relationship. Most mothers reported communicating with their children daily, often multiple times per day. The primary mechanism of communication was videoconferencing (e.g., Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp) via a phone. In particular, the ability to see each other through video was helpful in maintaining a connection:

> And they didn't suffer from the absence of love, as one would say, of not hearing from them every day. We were always in communication. But that will never be surpassed because I am one who believes that the love of mom and dad, for all the love that others might give, well no. It is never the same (15A).

Communication gave mothers an opportunity to address youths' complicated questions such as "When will I be with you again?" by reiterating the reasons for migration. Mothers did their best to "mother" over the phone or videoconferencing. They instructed youth how to behave and how to protect themselves; told them to take their medication; tried to monitor whether they were going to school; and gave advice passed on from their own mothers:

> I told her, "I don't want you out on the street at night. Don't run errands for anyone. Please, I'm asking you. If men are at the house, don't go near them. If they go into the living room, into the kitchen, you go outside where people can see you." That was always my headache, to have to remind them of that (15A).

Youth and mothers managed difficult conversations about sensitive topics (e.g., mother's new pregnancy, revelations about mother's abuse history, child's first menstruation) over distance. Thus, despite its limitations, communication through videoconferencing allowed mothers to maintain a daily presence, give advice and parent, communicate their love and reiterate the reasons for the separation, provide emotional support, and even touch on sensitive topics.

Like their mothers, many youths described the importance of constant communication with mothers: hearing her voice, knowing that she still loved them, and understanding that she intended to see them again. Youth often focused on remittances, gifts, or necessities sent, and viewed these as proof of their mom's love and commitment to care for them. "She always thought about me because she'd send me like food and stuff, and like, she always takes care of me" (4B). Again, this reinforced internal representation of mothers as caring and of themselves as worthy.

Complications to Communication

Attempts to communicate were complicated by several factors. First, some families initially lacked the technology required for frequent communication. Families that had access to Wi-Fi and smartphones were better able to remain in regular communication. Second, as noted, alternative caregivers in the country of origin acted as gatekeepers. They often had the power to decide when youth could and could not communicate with parents. For example, one mother stated, "Now they tell me 'Mom, we didn't tell you anything because they took away our phones'" (15A). Sometimes caregivers gave children misinformation about the parent, which increased the child's resentment or anger toward the parent and led them to reject the parent. Other caregivers simply refused to provide the devices needed for communication. Sometimes parents did not realize that this was happening until much later, meaning that they assumed the child would not speak with them when in fact the child was unable. Third, some children refused to speak with mothers out of their own volition:

> He didn't, he didn't want to talk to me. I would talk to all of them. I would say, "Pass the phone to (name of the child)." He didn't want to talk to me. Since he was so young, he didn't want to talk to me, but I would always say, "send me photos of him" (3A).

This may have been an indirect way in which children expressed their anger or resentment. It may also have been a way to exert some control and power over a situation in which youth had little (i.e., they did not make the decision for mom to leave; they could not make her come back; many could not decide to travel to the USA to be with her on their own). Lastly, the mother's work schedule sometimes interfered with their time available to communicate with children. Despite these barriers, communication between mothers and children was generally protective in maintaining the bond across borders.

When mothers and children did communicate, it was sometimes strained. The youth were sometimes distant, perhaps an indirect communication of resentment or a reflection of feeling distant from their mother. Sometimes youth expressed their ambivalence—they both wanted to be with mom and they resented her and felt safer with the alternative caregiver:

> I didn't give up. I always told him, "Here I am". "No, you're not here!" "Yes, I am far but I'm with you." He would say, "It's because I want to sleep with you." He would say, "Not with my grandma" and I would ask, "But why?" and he would say that he loved his grandma very much, but he wanted his mom, and like that (7A).

Sometimes youth disclosed abuse and maltreatment happening to them in the country of origin by alternative caregivers. Mothers were left with this difficult knowledge and a sense of powerlessness regarding how to resolve it, perhaps thereby reinforcing youths' understanding that they were without protection:

> I always cried because every time I spoke to them, "Let's go. Take us. Take us on the train, Mommy. Take us." And that broke my heart. I would say, "What's happening? What is happening?" They would tell me, "Nothing." I don't know if my sister was there. They said,

> "No, it's because my aunt hits us. My aunt scolds us. She doesn't call us by our names. She says bad words to us, and I don't want to be here anymore, Mommy. I don't want to be here anymore" (3A).

Some youth focused their communication on gifts and remittances, which was difficult for the mothers who yearned for more personal topics.

Youth participants discounted the importance of communication, stating that they stopped viewing their mother as "Mom." They recognized the vast divide between them, not only physical, but also between the material realities of their everyday lives in the USA versus the country of origin. These physical and cultural divides contributed to emotional distance. "I went so far as to tell her she wasn't my mom; I would say I wasn't used to her because this is—it's like a different world here" (3B). Some youth actively avoided talking to their mother. For example, they lied that they did not have a phone to get out of talking. Others felt ambivalent about her, and they themselves seemed confused about their reluctance to talk with her. (Again, perhaps this was a way of indirectly expressing their feelings and of trying to exert control/power.):

> Because we wouldn't talk before, even though I had a phone and she had a phone, we didn't talk. And it was largely my fault because first I would say I didn't have a phone as an excuse and that's why I couldn't talk to them. And then they sent me a phone and I don't know why. I don't know what happened (15B).

Other youth could articulate how their psychological reactions to the separation complicated communication with their mothers:

> Also, since I was always so angry and depressed all the time, the calls wouldn't be the best calls. I wish I would've been nicer to my mom because I knew it wasn't her fault ... I always kind of took out my anger on her even though I didn't mean to (6B).

Similar to mothers, youth described how access to technology and alternative caregivers acting as gatekeepers hindered communication. "Only when we were able to, because since we were with some aunts, they took the phone away from us and wouldn't let us talk to her" (15B). Some youth seemed to be resentful of their mother's efforts to mother them from a distance. The emotional disconnection made it hard to take mother's advice and follow their suggestions, particularly when youth did not view them as the primary "mom." Many youth focused communications on wanting to know why they were left and when mothers will return, questions that were difficult for mothers to answer. "'Why did you leave me?' and then she would like explain it over and over again" (11B). At the same time, youth worried about their moms and their safety, even at very young ages:

> I was five; the very day of my birthday, she called me in Honduras. "Happy birthday", she said, and I asked her, "Where are you? Tell me." "I'm already here in the U.S." "Okay, that's good." I told her, "Be careful." (9B).

Thus, communication with mothers was on one level essential and on another level dismissed by youth, perhaps in a way that was self-protective. It may be that youth who had stronger bonds with caretakers in their country of origin became less attached to their own mothers, leading to more disconnected communication,

whereas youth who had neglectful or abusive caretakers relied more on their mothers to maintain a caretaking role.

Making Plans to Reunify

Most mothers decided to have their children migrate to the USA because of threats to safety and experiences of violence in the country of origin:

> So, she was scared that something would happen to him. He was scared of them. Yeah, he was scared of them. Then when they realized that we were here [in the USA], they started wanting to extort his grandma on his dad's side. Then she was afraid and said it was better for him to come here (7A).

This is unsurprising, as participants in this study come from countries considered to be among the most dangerous in the world due to gang and drug-related violence and government corruption and neglect that provides little safety for victims but immunity for perpetrators (Hiskey et al., 2016). Thus, for many families, reunification in the USA was chosen when it was deemed unsafe for the child to stay in the country of origin. Children migrated alone or with the help of a family member or a paid coyote (a smuggler who brings children to the border). While typically the parent or alternative caregiver made the decision to have the youth migrate to the USA, sometimes it was the youth themselves who made the decision. Upon learning that they were to migrate to the USA, mothers described youth as having different reactions. For those who were very attached to the alternative caregiver, migration was resisted. "We talked to him, but at first, he said no, that he didn't want to come. Yeah, because since he was raised by my parents, he felt like he was going to leave them" (7A). The period of the youths' migration was an incredibly stressful and anxiety-provoking time for the mothers, as they anxiously awaited news of their children's safety:

> Look, I cried at my job. I got home, I cried. I didn't sleep. It was 1:00 AM and the pain in my head, my neck would start again. And desperation, anguish. My chest hurt so much I felt like I couldn't even breathe. I felt like I was suffocating. "My God, what's happened with my girls? Lord, did they come and drown in the river?" (15A).

Like mothers, youth cited poverty and violence as the primary motivation for their migration to the USA. However, unlike the mothers, they also cited abuse perpetrated by alternative caregivers as a factor motivating migration. Youth emphasized the active role that they played in agreeing to migrate for reunification. One youth described how she and her sister secretly saved up the remittance money their mother sent them and pretended to be going on vacation to another country in Central America, when in fact they were paying to be smuggled to the USA to reunify with their mother. Youth generally described their anticipation and excitement to reunify with their mothers and come to the USA, and they had illusions of what life would be like once they arrived; "I had hopes of getting along with her and of doing all the things we're doing now and getting along" (12B).

Separation During Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) Detention

Once they reached the USA, youth were detained and then placed in ORR detention, which represented another period of separation and uncertainty regarding reunification. Mothers discussed feeling powerless and hopeless knowing their children were in the USA, but they were unable to be with them. In some cases, mothers were not able to talk with their children while they were in ORR custody. One mother described, "Not until the 4th of July did migration call me. They told me that they had my daughter. I just gave thanks to God because I didn't know anything about her" (8A). Mothers had no power or understanding about when their children might be released from ORR custody. In some cases, children were released after a few weeks, while one mother recounted her son being detained for 3 months by ORR: "He was detained in a shelter for kids for three months and that was really stressful for him" (1A). Youth described horrible conditions at the border including cold rooms and harsh treatment. "I behaved well there because I knew it was really bad. They would wake us up early. I always liked to wake up early because they would throw really ice-cold water on anyone who doesn't wake up" (9B). After several days, most youth were transferred to ORR shelters. Youth described how difficult it was to be separated from family after their arduous journey to the USA. The separation lasted from a few weeks to a year without knowledge of a release date. One youth described her long detention and subsequent inability to live with her mother upon her release from ORR custody:

> They sent me to an immigration school and I was there for about a year, And then my aunt took me in as adopted and then I went to [another city] to live with her for 2 or 3 years. And then now the last lawyer told me that I could live with my mom now (8B).

Once children were released, there were legal expectations that children attend school, follow up with an immigration attorney, and attend court proceedings. Many mothers described the challenges associated with understanding the legal process, the lack of resources to pay for a trusted attorney, and general inconsistencies in immigration court:

> It's been five years and they are still in the process. They're still going to court and I didn't have any more money for a lawyer, and I had to be their lawyer myself. I had to go and tell the judge, "Well, I represent them" and being constantly in that situation (14A).

The battles with the legal system for many families affected the entire family. While some families were fortunate enough to be in the process of obtaining legal authorization, they were still required to leave the country. "When I went back to Mexico, I had an appointment in Ciudad Juarez. They left me there for two years. It was maddening because time would just go by and there was never a response" (2A). Families who were unable to get through immigration courts successfully were deported, further fracturing the family unit. One mother described the day she learned her husband would be deported:

> That day he had an appointment, with [Im]migration. He was doing things the right way and he told me, "Be right back." When I was done, I was waiting, and he called me and said that they had given him a deportation order. Yeah, I felt like I was going to die (5A).

Another youth was migrating north to be reunited at the same time his father was being deported back to Mexico:

> When I was on my way here, immigration caught him and lied to him so that he would sign some paperwork to get me out. But my dad doesn't know how to read. So he just signed them, and they put him in jail and sent him to Mexico (8B).

Thus, the U.S. legal system functioned to create actual and threatened separations that compounded the migration-related separations from mothers.

Complicated Mother-Child Reunifications

Parenting Stress

Reunification was described by mothers as *una moneda de dos caras* (a double-sided coin). On the one hand, mothers expressed relief and joy in being able to reunify with their child. They no longer had to worry about whether children had food, were safe, and attended school. Yet, reunification was also a new source of stress. Some of this stress was pragmatic and logistical:

> When she came, as a single mother I had to think about her food, the babysitter, her clothes, her shoes, school, picking her up, dropping her off. But the sacrifice is that … at the end of the day when I see her smile or by just seeing her face, I say it doesn't matter (11A).

Other stress was related to feeling overwhelmed because mothers did not know how to interact with their child. Mothers experienced their children like strangers and struggled to manage their adolescents' resentment about being left behind in the country of origin:

> Yes, really difficult because I, I would cry. I would kneel and cry and ask God to give me strength so that I could know how to talk to him, how to explain things to him. Like, how to make him understand because there was that blame of his, like that (7A).

Perceived rejection by the youth contributed to mothers' anxiety, guilt, and sadness: "Believe me that it was really stressful because I didn't know what to do. I felt frustrated… because I couldn't … find the way in because I didn't know how to please her" (6A). Mothers questioned their decisions to separate from their children and felt guilty for bringing the youth to a new country and turning their world upside down. They further took blame for youths' behavioral and emotional problems post-reunification:

> I thought that once he was with me, everything was going to be okay. Like happier, to live the time that was lost; Make up for lost time; But it's not like that. It's not like that. We didn't get along well (3A).

Youth admitted that financial stress and long work schedules often interfered with spending time with their mothers: “It’s like, we don’t really see each other. She spends her time at work and I’m at school” (10B). Youth also described how they and their mothers faced normative developmental conflicts, such as the expectation that youth clean their rooms, do their homework, and follow rules about technology and time spent with friends: “Well, like sometimes she tells me to put my phone away and I don’t put it away” (8B).

Disrupted Trust

The joy of reunification was tinged with grief that the actual child was different from the remembered child, requiring that mothers get to know their children again: “But unfortunately, he’s not the boy I left anymore. Because he was a quiet child, humble even … and now, I wasn’t expecting his reactions, his behavior … I wish I could turn back time but it’s not possible” (9A). Many mothers described rebellious behavior from their children and often attributed these behaviors to the separation and lack of trust and attachment. This was often communicated via resentment and emotional distance from their children:

> No, we don’t understand each other … We’re not compatible … He has that separation in his mind that … There’s a wall up. Maybe he asks himself, “Why did she leave me?” … I think maybe that created … a barrier … for us to be close (3A).

Mothers perceived youths’mistrust and resentment as rebellion. One described trying to reach out to her daughter with little reciprocity:

> No matter what I do for her, she doesn’t take it into account … I talk to her and I tell her, “Daughter, what’s wrong?” … She just … She laughs and sometimes … she gets mad … she acts like she’s upset, and she goes to her room, throwing things (10A).

Similarly, because separation occurred during key periods of development, many of the youth indicated that developing trust was a major source of stress during reunification.

> It wasn’t that I didn’t call her Mom, but I just didn’t have that trust between mother and son. I felt that my aunt understood me better than my mom, so I wanted to—I wanted to go back to Honduras and everything (3B).

Some of these feelings were associated with not having spent time together. One youth explained:

> Yes, and she doesn’t know much about what I like and I don’t know much about what she likes. She also says that … sometimes she’s afraid to ask me things because she doesn’t know how I’ll respond. Still, sometimes we can’t speak freely because there’s still that–it’s not like distrust, but it’s like I can’t really open up and talk to her that much (14B).

Past separations made it more difficult for youth to see their mothers as having authority to influence their decisions. “She doesn’t like for me to go out with my

friends and I'm like … yeah, she can control me but … there's like limits" (3B). Thus, culturally bound familial roles were often subverted.

Prior Trauma Complicates Reunification

Some mothers also reported significant stress in dealing with their children's prior experiences of trauma and abuse:

> It has cost us a lot because it's hard to deal with someone who has been through those things. But we've carried on with it, and now, thanks to God. It was quite the process to get her so she wouldn't use drugs (14A).

One mother recounted what her daughter said to her about the family violence she witnessed between her parents, for which she blamed her mother:

> "You all have hurt my feelings. You all have done this to me." And well that hurts me. I tell her, "My love, we didn't do it intentionally." Maybe I let him abuse me for a long time, and I didn't do anything … In the end, I made the decision, and I wasn't aware that it also affected my daughter (6A).

Mothers witnessed their children trying to heal from experiences of complex trauma, meaning repeated traumatic experiences endured within the context of close interpersonal relationships:

> "The hard part … is when they begin to remember the bad things they went through. I don't like that. Yesterday she was crying, remembering the bad things my mother-in-law did to her and she tells me she feels … that she feels hatred, they [her memories] tear at her heart when she remembers those bad things and she begins to cry. That's very hard for me" (15A).

These experiences led some youth to experience pervasive feelings of anger, emptiness, and depression:

> She would lock herself up in her room and didn't want to come out. She wanted to be in her own world, locked up, and I didn't know what to do anymore as much as we tried. I would buy her things. She had it all. I would go to the stores. I tried to give her the best, but no, she didn't want it (14A).

Past ways of expressing caring—through money and gifts—no longer sufficed after reunification.

Youths' Grieving and Loss

Youth experienced grief in two areas: the family left behind and the loss of freedom and lifestyle. While these youth regained physical closeness with their mothers, they left behind close family relationships and their way of life. There was a sense of inner conflict: happiness over the reunification and grief over everything that was lost. As one male participant stated, "I … I still say that my heart is destroyed for

my brother. My heart will be okay when it's my brother, me, and my mom" (9B). There was a longing for the family members left behind—siblings, grandparents, and extended family: "Because I wanted to be here but with all my family. My cousins, my aunts and uncles, everyone, everyone, my daddy; But no, it wasn't like that" (5B). Youth also described missing the freedom and other aspects of life in their country of origin. In contrast to their country of origin, the U.S. city they lived in restricted their freedoms and they could no longer enjoy things such as the food and open spaces that characterized their previous home:

> Yeah, but like I told you, in the back of your house you've got a garden … you know what I'm saying? And everything is natural. Instead, here, like "Oh, I need to go to the store to get something" And everything is canned and has chemicals and there it's not like that (3B).

Resiliency Post-reunification

Rebuilding the Relationship

Mothers expressed gratitude, happiness, and a general sense of relief at being able to be with their children:

> The best thing that could have happened to me was when I saw her get off the plane … I hugged her and told her, "Now we're together, baby." I will never forget that. It stayed with me. She said to me, "Mommy, we're in the United States now" … But perhaps the most beautiful thing about the reunification was to know that we're in a country that is protecting us from death that we experienced over there; from the persecution we lived through (11A).

Some mothers reported that their children had adapted to the USA with ease: "He's reacted well. He's gotten along well. He's behaved very well" (1A). Mothers discussed ways that they tried to rebuild the relationship with their child, beginning with trust: "Yes, well I'll tell you. I'm beginning to get to know her again and well, we're getting there. She's starting to trust me, because she basically put all her trust in my sister over there" (12A). Mothers made efforts to spend time together (e.g., going out shopping, out to eat), show affection to their children, engage them about their feelings, and communicate about their day:

> So, I get along well with my son. We go out and spend a lot of time together … whether it's shopping, to eat … And when I'm off work, I take him to school or take him out half an hour early to spend time with him (9A)

Most youth demonstrated significant interpersonal resiliency and ability to reestablish trust and communication with mothers. Spending time together helped to repair attachment ruptures. For example, one youth stated, "I'd say just spending time with her, like being close to her ... I really like, take that seriously, you know, like that's the most important thing ... being able to be by the side instead of being apart from her" (16B).

Integration into New Families and Communities

Blended Families

In addition to navigating complicated reunifications with their mothers, many youths were joining stepparents and new siblings. Mothers communicated with children about their new relationships, and some described their new partners as taking an active role in communicating with the youth, even from a distance: "Since they were in Honduras, I always tell my children what's going on with me. So, since we were over there in Honduras, he talked with them" (9A). Despite these attempts, mothers described that their children remained guarded and unsure of how to relate with their new stepfather:

> Well, I think that she wishes I wasn't currently married. My current husband travels for work, and I feel like their behavior is better when he's not there. But it's something that I can't change because my husband, he's the one who helps me. And I can't make that choice just because they don't like him. I have to have patience with them and show them how to get along (10A).

Mothers also had the responsibility of helping their children form bonds with their siblings following reunification. Many mothers had children while attempting to bring their older children to the USA from their countries of origin. News of new siblings was generally met with excitement and anticipation: "No, he got really happy and there's when he began to say he wanted to come here to be with his brother" (7A). At the same time, feelings of resentment about being left behind led to jealousy of younger US-born children. One mother reflected on the day-to-day challenges she experienced following reunification, which led to a sense of guilt that she was unable to be present for her older child when he was the same age as his new sibling:

> I buy a toy for [name of child born in the U.S.]. He starts, "Only for [name of child born in the U.S.]!" And he fights with him. [Name of child born in the U.S.] passes by and he pulls him. He hits him. He trips him. But I try. I tell him, "Come here, my love. Come let me rub your head." "Ugh, I'm too old. Don't touch me." But I would like to have some time with him. I think it's jealousy. Maybe he says, "My mom gives this one more love, and she didn't give me love." But I wasn't there when he was that age (3A).

Some youth expressed mixed feelings about their stepfathers but generally grew to respect them and their positions in the family. "I felt good because my dad was a bad father, and I love him like a father. He treats us well" (9B). Similar mixed feelings existed in youths' reports about their new siblings. While youth generally indicated feeling "happy" about having new siblings, their behaviors sometimes indicated otherwise: "We [my mom and I] don't really argue; only when I fight with my siblings" (10B). Other youth appeared to have greater insight into their feelings about their new siblings and why these feelings had arisen for them. One youth expressed sadness that her new siblings had the opportunity to be with her mother and father when she did not: "I felt bad because they are having more kids and they left us behind. It wasn't like jealousy, but it was that he could be with them and I couldn't" (14B).

Separated mothers who lived in the same communities as the biological father of the child navigated complicated custody and caregiving arrangements, with consequences for the child: "He wants to go to school where I'm at, where I live. But, well since his dad doesn't let him ... the last time that I tried to, his dad told me 'no'" (7A). Relationships with ex-partners were particularly strained when fathers had spoken poorly to the youth about their mother, as in the case of one youth whose father told them: "Your mother has another family" (7A). Youth whose fathers migrated when they were young, and who were not getting to know them again, faced the possibility of another separation because of the father's and their own legal vulnerability. One participant struggled to make sense of her father's deportation after she came to the USA:

> They deported my dad, but my dad wasn't doing anything. Just for that they deported him. I don't know anymore. Just that they were some bad police because we wanted to talk to him, give him a hug, say goodbye, and they wouldn't let us (5B).

Integration into the Community

In addition to family adaptation, mothers focused on their youth's adaptation into the broader community. Most mothers described their youth's experience as a positive adaptation to the school environment. However, some mothers described challenges with youth's behavior, language acquisition, and homework:

> A whole week will go by that they don't call me. But sometimes from that week to the next week, he'll be suspended for 2–3 days because he misbehaved, that he was talking too much or out of his seat. The schools aren't like in our country. You know, you can talk and the teacher doesn't care (9A).

Other mothers brought up concerns about bullying:

> Because they bully her because she doesn't speak English and because she's, well she's little … She has a little mustache and even people from my own country will mistreat her. A girl treated her badly; she was rude to her. She offered her drugs and since my girl didn't want any, she beat her up (15A).

Youth felt taxed by learning the norms of not only a new family, but also a new school system: "School stress. Homework … I have to help my brothers with their homework. And sometimes I'm stressed because I'm thinking I have to study for my test and when I get home, it's really late to do that" (4B). Participants who had acculturated to the US-based notion that education is the key to future success described stress about the future: "Just I worry about the things that I got going on in my life. School and studying or then getting ready in the future for college. Just these things that, you know, stresses you out. It's life, you know" (16B). Language acquisition created challenges: "Because my grades are dropping and it's very difficult for me to pull them up because I don't know English" (10B).

Another challenge for mothers and youth was feeling *encerrado* or forced to stay inside. Because of violence in U.S. neighborhoods, and fear that youth would get in

trouble, many mothers prohibited them from playing outside like they did in their country of origin: "Because over there you're used to freedom and here one has to get used to being locked inside" (3B). Like their mothers, youth also described a lack of freedom here in the USA:

> I feel somewhat normal because every time I go to the park, we run a lot. My whole body hurts because there in Honduras we would run a lot. Yeah, we wouldn't stop running and here we can't go out much (10B).

When they were able to participate, youth described extracurricular activities and hobbies as important to their well-being:

> And when I got to do track and skateboarding, it's like a new thing, and it opened me up a lot ... Without it, I felt like I would watch a lot of TV, and I was drifting away. I felt like I was wasting my life just watching TV and track just gave me that little spark. I was like, "Oh! I got something to do!" (6B).

Preliminary Impressions and Next Steps

Based on our preliminary (and ongoing) analyses of the data summarized here, we next discuss five initial impressions. First, while parents' decisions to migrate without their children are generally motivated by oppressive sociopolitical realities, our current and previous work (Barros Lane et al., in press; Berger Cardoso, 2018; Venta, et al., 2019b) and that of other scholars (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011) demonstrates that there are consequences for attachment bonds between parents and children, which in turn impacts individual psychological well-being. In addition to considering traumatic events (such as maltreatment), researchers and practitioners should consider the relational trauma that can result from multiple separations and that leads to internal representations of others as unreliable, the world as unsafe, and one's self as damaged, unworthy, or without personal power. Interventions must go beyond treating PTSD symptoms and move toward rebuilding relational attachment, safety, and trust. Second, beyond the migration-related separation, youth in our study experienced separations in the context of parents dying, separating, or divorcing; detention in ORR; separations from caregivers in the country of origin; and deportation or threatened deportation. Beyond these large, obviously impactful separations, there were multiple smaller separations such as going to a new school, mom leaving for work, and shared custody arrangements. Rather than thinking about separations as discrete events, we should theorize the cumulative and intersecting nature of these separations (e.g., how threats of a parent's deportation are experienced differently by a youth who has already been separated via migration, or how leaving mom to go to school is experienced by a youth whose father left at a young age and whose mother migrated thereafter). Third, within oppressive contexts, parents and youth demonstrate both coping and adaptation, as well as resistance and agency. We can approach separations and reunifications dialectically—that is, explore the ways in which they negatively impact mothers and youth and the

mother-youth relationship while also recognizing how mothers and youth individually and collectively adapt, cope, and enact agency within oppressive contexts. Our data demonstrate ways in which parents and youth cope with the stress of migration, separation, and reunification. Interventions should be rooted in building coping skills and relational resilience within families, as well as in reconnecting, grieving losses, and finding meaning in their pain and sacrifice (Herman, 1992).

Fourth, it is well established that relationships exist within cultural contexts, and the culturally embedded expectations, roles, and norms become disrupted through separations and reunifications. Interventions can help families reestablish culturally situated norms, processes, structures, and expectations, and thereby rebuild respect (*repeto*) and trust (*confianza*). Interventions can also aim to increase empathy between family members and provide space for equally valid, if also contradictory, narratives (i.e., "When you left me, it hurt. And I understand you chose this out of love"). We propose that Mediational Intervention for Sensitizing Caregivers (MISC) could provide mothers with the skills needed to sensitize their caregiving to the needs of youth which could reduce relational trauma and improve the mother-child relationship. The research team has shared the findings from the dyad interviews with members of our CAB, and we are exploring how the MISC intervention could address relational trauma in the context of migration. Finally, guided by Wingood and DiClemente's (2008) ADAPT-ITT framework, the next steps of adapting MISC for the migration context include adapting components of the intervention and implementing a "theater testing" which will provide feedback about the intervention from stakeholders. In theater testing (Phase 3), we deliver key components of MISC and elicit reactions from mothers and youth about the relevance of the intervention. We also solicit feedback from mental health professionals about the feasibility and acceptability of MISC within their organizational structure. After theater testing, we intend to draft a version of MISC (Phase 4), get feedback about the production and integration of the adapted MISC from topical experts (Phase 5), integrate the feedback into the content of the MISC intervention (Phase 6), train mental health providers in MISC (Phase 7), and test the effectiveness of the intervention (Phase 8).

Conclusion

Historical and ongoing inequity and oppression result in multiple actual and threatened separations between Central American and Mexican immigrant youth and mothers, with consequences for individual and relational well-being. In addition to the resiliency and agency demonstrated by youth and mothers, attachment-based interventions such as MISC may help to repair ruptured attachments by restoring culturally situated norms, processes, and expectations; providing space for mourning and meaning-making; and increasing affective sensitivity and responsivity, safety and predictability, communication skills, and empathy and understanding between immigrant mothers and children.

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Part II
Parental Incarceration

Chapter 4
Parental Incarceration and Young Children's Development: Pathways to Resilience

Julie Poehlmann-Tynan

Children in the United States are more likely to experience parental incarceration than children in any other country in the world with significant increases occurring during the past 30 years because of US policies related to mass incarceration (Sykes & Pettit, 2019). Most people incarcerated in the United States are parents of minor children, and many of them lived with their children prior to incarceration or supported them in numerous ways even if they did not share a household (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008; Murphey & Cooper, 2015; Shanahan & Agudelo, 2012). The majority of affected children have incarcerated fathers, although the number of children with incarcerated mothers continues to grow (Kajstura, 2019). Though much of the earlier literature focused on children with parents in prison (e.g., Wakefield & Wildeman, 2013)—state and federal corrections facilities that hold those convicted of felonies with sentences of more than a year—most incarceration in the United States occurs in jails. Jails are locally run corrections facilities that hold those detained, those awaiting trial or sentencing, and those serving shorter term sentences for misdemeanor crimes (Zeng, 2020). There are more than 10.5 million admissions to jails per year, with 15–20% of those in jails being women (Zeng, 2020). Parental jail and prison incarceration are consequential for children (e.g., Turney & Conner, 2019). Moreover, incarceration in jails and prisons is unequally distributed in the US population, with disproportionately high representation of Black, Latinx, Native American, and economically disadvantaged individuals because of systemic discrimination at every level of the criminal justice system in the United States (Davis, 2017; Western & Wildeman, 2009).

A growing body of literature has documented risks to the development of children with incarcerated parents, with consistent findings regarding the negative implications of ever experiencing paternal incarceration on children's behavioral,

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educational, and health outcomes (for a review see Poehlmann-Tynan & Turney, 2021). However, implications of maternal incarceration are more mixed. This occurs, in part, because children with incarcerated mothers experience more risk factors than children with incarcerated fathers, on average (Dallaire, 2007; Siegel, 2011), making it difficult to disentangle the effects of incarceration from other potent risks. For example, following their mother's incarceration, children are likely to live with non-parental caregivers, including grandparents and foster parents, whereas children with incarcerated fathers most often live with their mothers (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008). Indeed, children with incarcerated mothers are five times more likely to be placed in foster care compared to children with incarcerated fathers (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008). It should also be noted that there are a minority of children with incarcerated parents who experience relief or more positive development following a parent's incarceration, typically when the parent was abusive or had severe substance-abuse problems (Wakefield & Powell, 2016).

Several studies have documented age-graded effects, with parental incarceration occurring early in children's lives having more detrimental implications for children's subsequent development than when parental incarceration occurs later in the child's life (e.g., Johnson, 2009; Kjellstrand & Eddy, 2011; Young et al., 2020; see Poehlmann-Tynan & Turney, 2021, for a review). Studies also show that the negative consequences of parental incarceration tend to magnify as children grow older, suggesting developmental cascades of risk (Poehlmann-Tynan & Turney, 2021). Given these findings, it is imperative to study very young children affected by parental incarceration and follow them throughout their childhood and adolescence, including examination of possible mechanisms of effect. In addition, given high rates of recidivism, it is important to recognize that parental incarceration is typically not an event but rather a series of events and processes. Thus, it is critical to document how children adjust to an incarcerated parent going in and out of the home (Arditti, 2016).

Common co-occurring general risk factors in families affected by parental incarceration include poverty and material hardship, residential instability, adult mental illness, substance abuse, accumulation of adverse childhood experiences, relationship dissolution, intergenerational trauma, racism, and child protective involvement (Wildeman, 2020). Common incarceration-related risks include witnessing the parent's crime or arrest, stress and problems related to visits in corrections facilities, and others outlined below (Poehlmann-Tynan & Turney, 2021). Risks can occur within individuals, families, neighborhoods, communities, and society in general, as can protective factors (Poehlmann-Tynan & Eddy, 2019). Despite exposure to numerous risks and adverse childhood experiences, on average, there is much heterogeneity in children's development in the context of parental incarceration, which is explored in the chapters to follow.

Although mechanisms linking parental incarceration with children's development are understudied, emerging scholarship has identified a range of proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994) as important, including quality of the home environment, caregiver stress and mental health, quality of parent-child relationships, children's contact with their incarcerated parents, and residential stability

or instability (see Poehlmann-Tynan & Turney, 2021, supplementary materials). More distal factors appear to become more consequential for children's development in the context of parental incarceration as they grow older, including peer relationships, extrafamilial support systems, neighborhood settings, and educational opportunities, as well as parental participation in interventions (Eddy & Poehlmann-Tynan, 2019; Wildeman et al., 2018). Stress processes related to parental incarceration are also potential mechanisms of effect for children, and they should be studied more in the future (Muentner et al., 2021; Turney, 2014).

In this chapter, I discuss findings that provide insight into risk and resilience processes for young children with incarcerated parents. The evidence comes from four mixed method studies that I have conducted with my colleagues and students in the past decade focusing on children with incarcerated parents. The studies use within-group designs that highlight heterogeneity in children's adaptation and well-being in the context of parental incarceration, as variability seems to be the rule rather than the exception in affected families (Turney, 2017; Turney & Wildeman, 2015). Many children find ways to adapt, grow, and shine despite the hardships that typically accompany parental incarceration.

Using a variety of data collection methods, from interviews and surveys, to recorded observations at home, to observations at corrections facilities and summer camp, my team and I have attempted to document the risk and protective factors that young children experience when a parent is in jail or prison. Use of a combination of diverse methods and multiple respondents is uncommon in large longitudinal surveys of population-based samples, especially regarding experiences that are directly related to parental incarceration, and that is why I typically have chosen to collect new data instead of only conducting secondary data analysis. The children and families with whom I have worked over the past decade have taught me much, and I discuss key lessons in this chapter.

First, I present basic methodological information about each of the studies, although detailed descriptions can be found in my published papers. Second, I present findings regarding the incarceration-related risk of witnessing a parent's arrest, followed by exploration of protective factors for young children during parental incarceration. Next, I discuss limitations of the studies and directions for future research. Finally, I make recommendations for policy and practice.

Risk and Resilience in Young Children with Incarcerated Parents

In each of the studies I discuss, the samples of incarcerated parents consist of either resident or nonresident parents who were involved in their children's lives prior to incarceration and wanted to continue that involvement. The incarcerated parent had not committed a crime against the child. I refer to the person caring for the child at home as the child's *at-home caregiver* or *caregiver*. The studies are presented in chronological order of when they were initiated and funded.

Young Children with Jailed Parents Study

The Young Children with Jailed Parents study (Milavetz et al., 2021; Muentner et al., 2019; Muentner et al., 2021; Poehlmann-Tynan et al., 2017) was initiated to collect data on variables that were missing from other studies focusing on children with incarcerated parents but potentially related to risk and resilience processes. First, we collected detailed data about the parent's incarceration and criminal justice history. Second, we collected data about numerous incarceration-related events that young children experience. Third, we collected rich child development and family process data. We chose to focus on children in the 2- to 6-year-old age range for four reasons: (1) it is a common age to have an incarcerated parent (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008; Murphey & Cooper, 2015); (2) parent-child relationships and separation are particularly important at this age (Burnson & Weymouth, 2019); (3) parental incarceration that occurs early in a child's life appears to have more detrimental consequences than incarcerations that occur later (Poehlmann-Tynan & Turney, 2021; Young et al., 2020); and (4) young children with incarcerated parents tend to have more adverse childhood experiences than older children with incarcerated parents (Turney, 2018). We focused on children with jailed parents because, as was discussed earlier in this volume, most US incarceration occurs in jails (Zeng, 2020) with important consequences for children (Turney & Conner, 2019).

Participants in this study included 165 parents incarcerated in jails in three midwestern counties and 86 caregiver-child dyads. Of the 165 jailed parents who participated in the study, 140 (84.8%) identified as men and 25 (15.2%) identified as women. Incarcerated parents ranged in age from 18 to 49 years, with a mean of 29 (SD = 5.83). The most commonly reported level of education for jailed parents was high school graduation or the equivalent (n = 60, 36.4%), with some parents (n = 3, 1.8%) reporting less than a seventh-grade education and others (n = 3, 1.8%) college graduation. More than half of the parents (56.4%, n = 93) were employed prior to the current incarceration and 44.8% (n = 74) received public assistance, with family income averaging just over $15,000 (SD = $18,533). Jailed parents were incarcerated for drug-related charges (15%), probation violations (21%), battery/violence (13%), nonpayment of child support (15%), domestic dispute/domestic violence (17%), DUI or DWI (11%), and other crimes (e.g., theft, property damage; 8%). 44.8% of jailed parents identified themselves as Black, 33.3% as White, 7.3% as Latino, and 14.6% as multiple or other races. Their children ranged in age from 2 to 6 years, with a mean of 4 years. For our child-related analyses, 258 individuals nested in 86 families participated. For each of the families, we conducted home visits that included interviews and observations, conducted interviews with incarcerated parents in the jail, and looked up recidivism data 1 year later. For a subset of families, we observed at least one of the child's visits in the corrections facility, and we collected children's hair and analyzed it for cortisol and cortisone concentrations.

Sesame Street Intervention Study

The Sesame Street Intervention Study involved testing the efficacy of Sesame Workshop's Emmy-nominated *Little Children, Big Challenges: Incarceration* materials using a randomized controlled design (Poehlmann-Tynan et al., 2021a; Shlafer et al., 2020). I served as an advisor to Sesame Workshop and helped develop the materials along with a small group of advocates and professionals. The materials were launched in 2013, including the introduction of Alex the Muppet, the first Muppet to have an incarcerated father. The materials were designed to support resilience in children affected by parental incarceration and included recommendations for staying in contact and for how to talk with young children about the parent's incarceration.

We enrolled parents incarcerated in four jails in two midwestern states. The full sample included 284 jailed parents of 3- to 8-year-old children, with 86 (30%) child-caregiver dyads enrolled, including 15 children with jailed mothers and 71 children with jailed fathers. For our child-related analyses, 258 individuals participated, nested within 86 triads of children (aged 3–8 years, $M = 5.5$, $SD = 1.8$), their at-home caregivers, and their jailed parents. Jailed parents were eligible for participation in the study if they met the following inclusion criteria: (1) were at least 18 years old; (2) had a child 3–8 years of age who lived with kin near one of the four study sites; (3) retained legal rights to the child; (4) had not committed a crime against the child; (5) cared for or lived with the child at least part of the time prior to incarceration; (6) did not anticipate being released into the community for at least 1 week; (7) anticipated receiving a visit from the child; and (8) could understand and read English. Materials were also available in Spanish, but we could only include English-speaking families in this study because of the assessments used. Only one child per family participated in the study. We focused on the 3- to 8-year-old age range because that was the recommended age for the Sesame Workshop materials. For each of the families, we conducted a caregiver and jailed parent interview, child-focused assessments in the jail, observation of the child's visit in the jail, and follow-up interviews with the caregivers 2 and 4 weeks later.

Child-Friendly Visit Program Evaluation

My team was asked to evaluate a unique program in Wisconsin for children with imprisoned mothers (Grendziak et al., 2019). Children attended a free week-long trauma-informed camp that offered typical child-oriented camp activities and also offered two extended child-friendly visits with their incarcerated mothers at the state prison. The camp was available for children aged 7–14 years. Four graduate students and I served as participant observers at the camp for a week. We participated in camp activities along with the children, and we accompanied them on the visits with their mothers to conduct observations. Thus, embedded in the camp, we

took extensive notes and rated children on behavior and emotion checklists each day. We also conducted follow-up phone calls to interview children and their caregivers several months after the camp ended. Children, camp counselors, and caregivers completed surveys as well. Our nonprofit partner collected survey data on the incarcerated mothers and, with IRB approval, shared the data with us. Thirty-seven children participated in the camp.

Enhanced Visits in Jail Study

The Enhanced Visits in Jail study is an ongoing interdisciplinary team effort with experts from social work, sociology, psychology, child development, family science, design studies, and economics involved in the project (Charles et al., 2021; Kerr et al., 2021). The study involves designing and testing a new intervention, first in a feasibility study and then in an efficacy study with a quasi-experimental design. The goal of the study is to create more equal conditions for positive parent-child interactions. Although we began the study prior to the coronavirus pandemic, remote video visits are generally the only type of visits allowed during the pandemic (CDC, 2020; Dallaire et al., 2021). Moreover, in-home video visits have advantages for young children and are generally more developmentally appropriate than phone calls (Skora Horgan & Poehlmann-Tynan, 2020). Yet video visits usually cost at least $0.25 per minute, making it challenging for economically disadvantaged families to afford. In addition, not all families have internet connections or smart devices which are necessary for in-home video visiting. We have argued that offering in-person or video visits is better when supports are available, either through parenting classes or visit coaching, so that incarcerated parents and at-home caregivers can focus on the child's perspective and the potential benefits of positive parent-child contact for children, even if parent-caregiver conflict is present.

Given these factors, the study offers free remote video visits, tablets to families, internet connections to families as needed, and visit coaching to incarcerated parents and caregivers. As of summer 2020, 136 individuals nested within 41 families participated in the project. Each of the families participated in caregiver and jailed parent interviews, home visits, observed remote video visits, collection of children's hair samples, and links to administrative data. Follow-up interviews are conducted at 3 months and 1 year after the intervention, and parental institutional infractions and recidivism are tracked.

Using data from these four studies, I present findings regarding incarceration-related risk and protective factors that can shape children's developmental pathways when they experience parental incarceration.

Incarceration-Related Risk Factors

Many, if not most, children with incarcerated parents experience a host of general risk factors, as mentioned earlier in this volume. Although these risks may be present prior to the parent's incarceration, the incarceration may exacerbate such issues in vulnerable families or create new problems (Wakefield & Wildeman, 2013). Additional risk factors stem directly from the parent's criminal justice involvement and incarceration, such as witnessing parental arrest (Dallaire & Wilson, 2010). Children's experiences of incarceration-related risks are rarely captured in the criminology or sociology literatures because they are usually not assessed in large longitudinal datasets with population-based samples, which serve as the sources of much of what we know about children with incarcerated parents (Poehlmann-Tynan & Turney, 2021). Incarceration-related risks include witnessing the parent's crime or arrest, how families talk to children about the parent's incarceration and family secrecy about it, stress and problems associated with visiting in corrections, stigma that often accompanies incarceration, incarcerated parent-caregiver conflicts about coparenting that occur because of the incarceration, and experiencing one or more separations and reunions with the incarcerated parent (often because of parental recidivism), which can create instability in the family (Poehlmann-Tynan et al., 2018; Poehlmann-Tynan et al., 2021a). In this chapter, I focus on the incarceration-related risk of witnessing the parent's arrest. Witnessing parental arrest is particularly relevant during a time of scrutiny regarding how police use force, especially toward Black individuals and other people of color who are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system because of institutional racism (Davis, 2017).

Previous studies have documented links between witnessing parental arrest and trauma symptoms, behavior problems, and vocabulary development in school-age children (Dallaire & Wilson, 2010; Phillips & Zhao, 2010). Prior reports have not focused on young children. Other reports indicate that children recall details of witnessing their parent's arrest even years later, including seeing handcuffs put on the parents, seeing police threaten the use of firearms, and watching their parents leave with no one to support them. Furthermore, these children exhibit long-term emotional, social, and physical health consequences, on average (Puddefoot & Foster, 2007; Roberts et al., 2014). Although child-sensitive arrest protocols have been developed and disseminated by the U.S. Department of Justice, law enforcement agencies have been slow to implement the protocols (International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2014). In the two studies reviewed below, we focused on data collection in counties that had not implemented such protocols. In addition, to help fill gaps in the literature, we focused on potential moderators and mediators of the relation between witnessing parental arrest and young children's developmental, behavioral, and physiological outcomes.

Witnessing Parental Arrest: Impact on Children's Development

In the Sesame Street Intervention study, we used pre-randomization data to examine associations between witnessing the parent's arrest and young children's health and development (Poehlmann-Tynan et al., 2021b). We tested a moderated mediation model that examined whether the association between witnessing the arrest and child outcomes was moderated by their ongoing emotional symptoms or mediated by children's emotional reactions to the parent leaving for jail. The findings indicated that witnessing the parent's arrest was associated with missed milestones in children's development, especially in the area of early academics (i.e., early literacy and numeracy skills), as well as less than optimal health. In addition, when children's ongoing emotional symptoms were higher, there were also associations between witnessing the parent's arrest and more intense emotional reactions to the parent leaving for jail, although children's emotional reactions to the parent leaving for jail did not function as a mediator in the study.

The findings did not change even after controlling for witnessing the parent's crime, another incarceration-related event that is associated with less than optimal child development (Dallaire & Wilson, 2010). Although we were not able to directly assess stress processes in this study, the findings suggest that stress related to witnessing the parent's arrest prior to parental incarceration—on its own or in combination with existing emotional vulnerabilities—has negative short-term implications for young children's health and development (Poehlmann-Tynan et al., 2021b) in addition to the long-term implications studied in older children. It should be noted that most of the young children were described as reacting to witnessing the arrest with intense distress, which may be one indication of the level of stress experienced. It is also important to document physiological stress, and hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis activation in particular, in relation to incarceration-specific risks, which we did in another study.

Witnessing Parental Arrest and Stress

In the Young Children with Jailed Parents study, we measured the stress hormones cortisol and cortisone in young children's hair within a few months following the parent's arrest and incarceration. When the body experiences stress, the neuroendocrine system releases the glucocorticoid hormone cortisol and the cortisol metabolite, cortisone. They are indicators of HPA axis activity and play a significant part in stress-related health outcomes. Immediate physiological stress reactions reflect normative adaptation to stressors, long-term physiological stress reactions, and changes under conditions of toxic stress, and are linked to increased risk for mental health problems and physical health challenges (McEwen, 2012). Toxic stress—strong or prolonged activation of the body's system that regulates stress—can be set in motion by chronic, uncontrollable, and unsupported negative life events, such as witnessing

the arrest of a parent. It can have adverse impacts on the structure of the developing brain, especially when toxic stress occurs during early childhood, subsequently dysregulating brain circuits and stress response systems (McEwen, 2012). The HPA axis can respond to toxic stress by producing too much cortisol (hypercortisolism) or too little cortisol (hypocortisolism or blunting) because of changes in the negative feedback system. We collected hair from children because it represents cumulative stress hormones across time rather than a point-in-time estimate, which can be obtained from saliva, blood, or urine (McEwen, 2012).

We also collected data on children's behavior problems and behavioral symptoms of stress, incarceration-related risks such as witnessing the parent's arrest or crime, and other negative life events such as witnessing domestic violence at home. We conducted an analysis examining the relation between witnessing the parent's arrest and children's hair cortisol and cortisone concentrations, as moderated by their behavioral stress symptoms (Muentner et al., 2021). Witnessing the parent's arrest was associated with elevated stress hormones, as was the experience of having higher behavioral stress symptoms even before witnessing the arrest.

However, there was a concerning interaction effect: when children experienced both risks—existing high behavioral stress symptoms and witnessing the parent's arrest—their cortisol and cortisone concentrations were *lower*. This pattern suggests a blunting effect, which is associated with trauma exposure and post-traumatic stress disorder (Yehuda, 2001) and has also been found in studies when children experience both chronic and acute stressors (e.g., Jaffee et al., 2015). Blunting means that children's HPA axis is so dysregulated that their bodies are no longer reacting to stressors in a normal way (Ouellet-Morin et al., 2011). Such processes can have long-term effects on the child's development (Shonkoff et al., 2012), which may help explain some of the long-lasting—and even increasing—effects of parental incarceration as children grow older, as well as age-graded findings showing particularly detrimental consequences of parental incarceration experienced early in life, as documented in other studies (Poehlmann-Tynan & Turney, 2021). It should be noted that our findings remained significant even after controlling for other trauma exposures such as witnessing domestic violence in the home and witnessing the parent's crime, so the findings did not result from general trauma exposure. In addition, the finding remained significant regardless of reports of the child's expressed distress at the time of witnessing the parent's arrest (Muentner et al., 2021). Even children who did not appear visibly distressed at the time of witnessing the parent's arrest were nevertheless physiologically stressed.

Thus far, this is the only study in the literature to assess physiological stress in young children with incarcerated parents, although stress proliferation has been theorized as a link between parental incarceration and children's health (Turney, 2014), educational outcomes (Haskins, 2016), and other child and family outcomes (Arditti, 2016). Despite the stressors associated with having an incarcerated parent, protective factors help many children experience pathways to resilience.

Incarceration-Related Protective Factors and Pathways to Resilience

While there are risks directly associated with the parent's incarceration, several protective factors are unique to children with incarcerated parents. In this chapter, I focus on attachment to the child's at-home caregiver (who may or may not be a parent) and parent-child visits during the incarceration period as particularly potent protective factors.

Attachment to At-Home Caregivers

Numerous studies have found that family environments and parenting during parental incarceration moderate or mediate the link between parental incarceration and child well-being (e.g., Antle et al., 2020; Kjellstrand & Eddy, 2011). For example, in the 2013 Minnesota Student Survey, children in grades 8–11 with incarcerated parents showed elevated risk for mental health concerns, although strong parent-child relationships protected them (Davis & Shlafer, 2017). However, few studies have assessed young children's attachments to their caregivers during parental incarceration (Poehlmann-Tynan & Dallaire, 2021).

In the Young Children with Jailed Parents study, we assessed children's attachments to their at-home caregivers using the Attachment Q-sort; we also assessed home environments with observational measures and videorecorded caregiver-child interactions. Both caregivers and incarcerated parents reported on children's behaviors, and when possible, teachers or childcare providers also completed behavior reports. Our findings indicated that more secure child-caregiver attachment related to positive parent-child interactions, more supportive and academically stimulating home environments, less physiological stress in children, and fewer child behavior problems (Poehlmann-Tynan et al., 2017; Weymouth, 2016). In an analysis of these data focusing on resilience, Burnson (2016) identified groups of children with incarcerated parents who were doing well despite experiencing multiple risks, including showing more social competence and low levels of behavioral issues. Children in the resilient group had high effortful control, experienced less negative observed caregiving behaviors, and had caregivers who reported low parenting stress. Moreover, positive observed caregiving behaviors buffered the relation between children's stressful life events and their internalizing behavior problems. In addition, when child-caregiver relationships were secure, children were more likely to behave positively during a parent-child visit in a corrections facility (Poehlmann-Tynan et al., 2017). Such visits, when experienced positively, can facilitate resilience in children affected by parental incarceration.

Parent-Child Visits During Incarceration

My team has observed parent-child visits in jails and prisons, including in-person contact and child-friendly visits; in-person noncontact visits that occur behind plexiglass and through video monitors; and remote (in-home) video visits (Grendziak et al., 2019; Kerr et al., 2021; Poehlmann-Tynan et al., 2015; Pritzl et al., 2021). All four of the studies reviewed in this chapter included observational assessments of children's visits with their incarcerated parents, and three of the studies involved interventions designed to improve parent-child visit quality.

Children's visits in corrections have been controversial, with some scholars arguing that visits can be traumatic and a cause of secondary prisonization experiences for children—that is, when visitors are treated as if they are also incarcerated (Beckmeyer & Arditti, 2014). Other scholars have characterized children's visits as mostly negative based on caregivers' reports (Tasca, 2016), which is not surprising considering that caregivers report that children's visits to prison or jail are stressful for them. Caregivers bear the brunt of the costs associated with visiting, including monetary costs and time, and few of the benefits (Christian et al., 2006). In contrast, others have argued that visits are important for the development and maintenance of parent-child relationships, which can lead to more positive connections following reentry and to less parental recidivism and better reintegration with the family (e.g., McKay et al., 2018; Thomas et al., 2021; Visher, 2013). These issues are what lead to identification of the "visit paradox" (Arditti, 2012), in that children's visits can be opportunities to connect with their incarcerated parents and build relationships but they can also be fraught with stress and negative emotions.

Studies have found that visits that occur behind plexiglass, which are the most common type of visit offered in jails (prior to the coronavirus pandemic), are particularly stressful for young children (Poehlmann-Tynan et al., 2015). Video visits are the most common form of parent-child visits in both jails and prisons during the coronavirus pandemic (Dallaire et al., 2021). Child-friendly visits, as described below, are considered the most desirable type of visit with positive implications for the well-being of children and their incarcerated parents (Poehlmann et al., 2010; Poehlmann-Tynan & Pritzl, 2019).

In the Young Children with Jailed Parents study, we found that when children visited their parents in facilities that offered a choice between plexiglass and video visits, more visits related to fewer behavior problems (Pritzl et al., 2021). In contrast, in the facility that offered plexiglass visits almost exclusively, more frequent visits related to more behavior problems. Factors controlled by the corrections facility, including wait time, length of visit, and privacy during visits, related to children's behavior during the visit as well. We also found that more parent-child contact (including visits and phone calls) during jail incarceration related to less recidivism for Black fathers, which is a key factor in reintegration into the family and community following release (Thomas et al., 2021). Caregivers often functioned as gatekeepers of children's contact with their incarcerated parents, with more positive father-caregiver relationships associated with higher levels of

contact. However, other supportive family members such as grandparents sometimes facilitated contact when caregivers could not or would not. For fathers who did not want their children to visit, out of a sense of protecting them from contact with the criminal justice system, phone calls were initiated instead (Thomas et al., 2021).

In the Sesame Street Intervention Study, we provided the Sesame Workshop educational materials to children and parents who were visiting a jailed parent as part of a randomized controlled design (Poehlmann-Tynan et al., 2021a). We found that children who received the materials were more likely to have a positive visit with their incarcerated father, especially when their fathers and mothers had talked to the child about the parent's incarceration in a simply honest, developmentally appropriate way before arriving at the jail (Poehlmann-Tynan et al., 2021a). In addition, the materials helped children's caregivers facilitate coping in children with incarcerated parents, especially regarding how to talk with children about the parent's incarceration.

In our Child-Friendly Visits Evaluation Study, which was part of a summer camp for children with incarcerated mothers, we observed and documented best practices for children visiting within corrections environments (Grendziak et al., 2019), including having just the children and incarcerated parents present (i.e., no caregivers present), with trained supportive staff in plain clothes or volunteers supervising; ample opportunities for parent-child contact such as hugging, hand-holding, and lap sitting; freedom of movement within the space allocated for the visit; activities that are engaging and developmentally appropriate for children; having snacks or meals together; taking parent-child photos for both the child and parent to keep; downtime for chatting or playing games; modified security procedures to decrease stress in children such as no pat downs or shoe removal; and supportive routines for welcoming children and saying goodbye. We also examined change in children's behaviors across the two visits and whether or not the visits were associated with children's self-regulation during the camp.

We found that the first child-friendly visit that occurred during the camp was associated with a rise in emotional lability when children returned to camp, especially for girls, but that this decreased to initial levels by the end of the camp (Fig. 4.1). At the second child-friendly visit that occurred during the camp, the children were rated as showing a decrease in confusion and a decrease in distress when saying goodbye to their mothers (Engbretson et al., 2021). The visits were perceived by children and their caregivers as the best part of the camp, and mothers were very pleased with how the visits went as well.

I am also working with an interdisciplinary team to design and implement a jail-based intervention involving in-home video visits supported by visit coaching (Charles et al., 2021; Kerr et al., 2021). Remote video parent-child visiting has numerous advantages, especially for young children, and it is the only type of visits allowed in corrections facilities during the coronavirus pandemic (Dallaire et al., 2021; Skora Horgan & Poehlmann-Tynan, 2020). The intervention that we designed

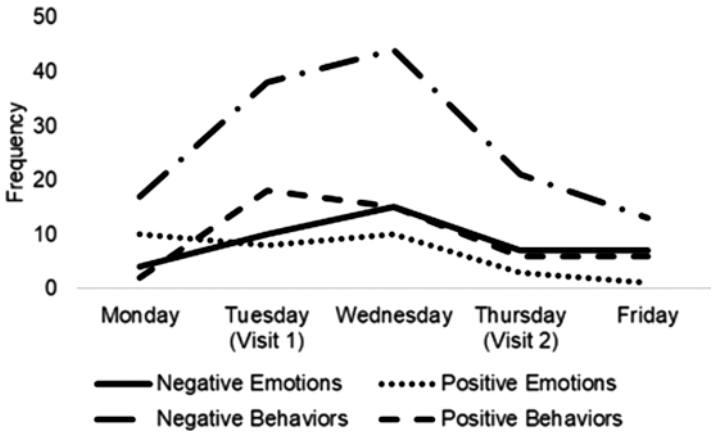

Fig. 4.1 Positive and negative emotions and behaviors during camp

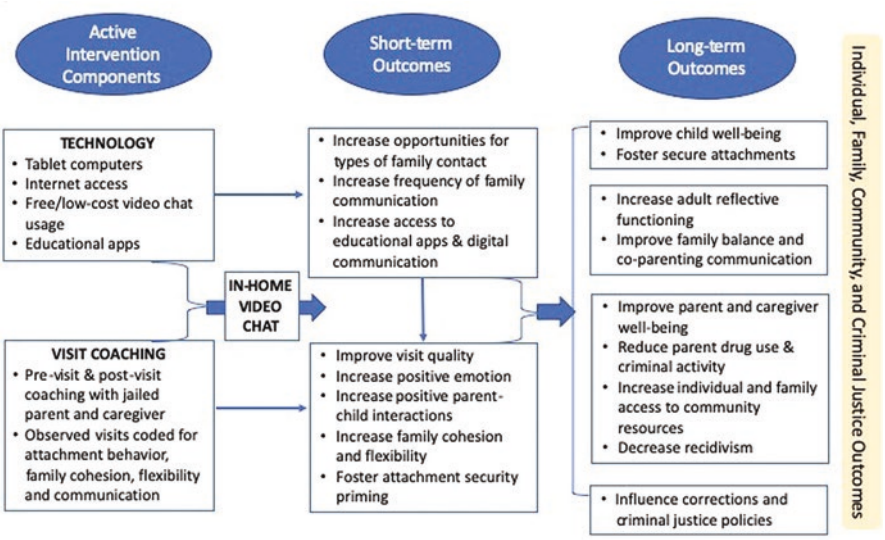

Fig. 4.2 Enhanced visits model

involves three primary components: (1) providing technology to families, including a tablet and 3 months of internet service if needed so that families have the means to implement in-home video visiting; (2) paying for free daily video visits, lasting 30–45 min, for children aged 3–12 years to connect with their incarcerated parents for 1 month; and (3) offering visit coaching with incarcerated parents and caregivers (Fig. 4.2).

Visit coaching involves guiding the parents and caregivers through a relational savoring protocol, an attachment-based intervention designed to help adults focus on the positive attachment-related memories in their relationships with children and to increase parental reflective functioning (Kerr et al., 2021). Our 3-month follow-up data have shown that most incarcerated parents, caregivers, and children like the in-home video visits even more than in-person visits in the jail, especially because jail visits are typically conducted behind glass. The adults also appreciate the tangible assistance (i.e., tablets, internet, paying for visits), although the quality of some of the video connections is sometimes unstable. The main problem that we have encountered regarding implementation of the intervention is that about half of children's caregivers do not want to participate because of conflicted relationships with the incarcerated parent (Charles et al., 2021). We now have procedures in place to remotely collect data for the project during the pandemic including interviews, surveys, and administrative data collection so that we can examine recidivism and well-being outcomes over time.

Limitations and Recommendations

Although this series of studies has generated some useful data, there are limitations as well. The samples are not population based, limiting generalizability. The samples are relatively small, limiting not only generalizability but also power to detect small effects. The studies are short-term longitudinal studies with no follow-up past 1 year thus far. Although the studies are unique because we collect mixed-method data from multiple family members, we have not routinely linked with children's school or child protective records. In addition, the coronavirus pandemic interrupted the most recent study, although it made the need for video visits more pressing, as visits to corrections facilities were suspended across the United States for a significant length of time based on CDC recommendations to protect the health of incarcerated individuals (CDC, 2020).

Given the findings of these studies, as well as what we have already learned from large longitudinal studies with population-based samples, it will be important for future research to combine several methodological approaches in the study of children with incarcerated parents. Future population-based studies need to collect detailed information about the parent's incarceration and the incarceration risks that children experience using multiple informants and methods. Such studies also need to collect detailed rich information about children's home environments, parent-child relationships, and other protective factors, as well as both positive and negative child outcome variables across a wide range of developmental domains. Links to administrative data to track parental incarceration and recidivism are important as well, because there are few studies focusing on children during the parental reentry period.

Implications for Evidence-Based Policies and Programs

Based on this body of research, we recommend a number of changes to criminal justice policies and procedures during parental arrest, visiting in corrections, and family-focused programs in corrections facilities and during reentry.

Criminal Justice Policies for Parental Arrest

There are a number of models promoted by the federal government, the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), and social work organizations designed to protect children during parental arrest, including *Safeguarding Children During Parental Arrest* and *First, Do No Harm*. We recommend that law enforcement agencies implement these models and train their law enforcement officers in best practices for safeguarding children (IACP, 2014; Lang et al., 2013; Thurau, 2015). The models can be locally customized, but the key tenet remains the same: protecting children from trauma based on seeing their parents being arrested. Research has found that when children witness the arrest of a parent, it is traumatic and relates to both short-term and long-term problematic outcomes for children. Thus, law enforcement agencies must implement a number of safeguarding procedures, including (a) assessing whether or not a child is present; (b) adapting the timing and methods of the arrest based on the child's presence; (c) delaying the arrest; (d) removing the parent from sight; (e) refraining from the use of force; (f) allowing the parent to speak with the child prior to detainment; and (g) including the parent in placement decisions in order to reduce children's traumatic responses (IACP, 2014). Recent incidents, such as the 2020 police shooting of Jacob Blake in Kenosha, Wisconsin, with his three young sons watching from the car, and the 2016 fatal police shooting of Philando Castille while being pulled over for a minor traffic violation, with his 4-year-old stepdaughter witnessing his murder from the back seat of the car, emphasize the importance of such protocols for ensuring child safety and trauma prevention.

Prevention scientists and practitioners agree that law enforcement agencies are in unique positions to limit stress-induced harm for children, as explicated in the Department of Justice's publication *First, Do No Harm* (Thurau, 2015) and *REACT* (Lang et al., 2013). Recommendations include modifying arrest procedures, adopting protocols to account for the care of children after the arrest, collaborating with professionals for follow-up services, and using stress reduction techniques with children such as offering them a soft animal, blanket, or parental item of clothing to comfort the child, and speaking calmly to the child while at their eye level (Lang et al., 2013; Thurau, 2015). Using such protocols is particularly important for local law enforcement agencies such as county sheriff's departments and city police forces, as most arrests and incarcerations occur locally (Sawyer & Wagner, 2020).

Criminal Justice Policy for Parent-Child Visits

A number of modifications can be made to better support children during visits to parents in corrections facilities, including offering child-friendly visits whenever possible; limiting wait time; offering as much privacy as possible so that children are not exposed to other visits; and keeping interactions between corrections staff and families positive. It is also important to recognize the stress that occurs for children during plexiglass visits and limit this type of visit when possible. Offering free or low-cost remote video visits is one way to support families with children, especially during the coronavirus pandemic (Dallaire et al., 2021). As one television commercial stated during the pandemic: "If you can't be there, feel there." Offering free or low-cost telephone calls is important for families with older children. Corrections facilities can also offer families free access to Sesame Workshop's *Little Children, Big Challenges: Incarceration* online materials.

Family-Focused Programs in Corrections Facilities and During Reentry

Offering parenting programs that are gender-responsive and trauma-informed within corrections facilities can be particularly helpful for parents and families. These programs are typically offered as part of a range of services designed to be included in the rehabilitation process of incarcerated individuals.

It would be particularly useful to include children's caregivers in such interventions or even offer caregiver-focused interventions in the community. The importance of young children's caregivers and supportive, responsive caregiver-child relationships during parental incarceration cannot be overemphasized. Caregivers are also the ones who regulate children's contact with incarcerated parents during and even after incarceration (Tasca, 2016; Visher, 2013).

Helping the incarcerated parent to positively engage with their family is also essential, as family support is a key factor related to post-release success. Incarcerated individuals often rely on close family members, especially their mothers, sisters, and other female relatives, to provide housing, connections related to employment, and instrumental and emotional support during the reentry period. Children's grandparents and other family members can also help facilitate contact between incarcerated or formerly incarcerated individuals and their children, especially when children's caregivers are not particularly cooperative (Thomas et al., 2021).

Conclusion

In sum, incarceration of parents can be stressful for young children, especially when children have witnessed their parent's arrest, but several protective processes can facilitate resilience. In particular, at-home caregivers can support children through positive interactions and secure attachment relationships, and child-friendly visits between children and their incarcerated parents can strengthen family connections. In addition, society can help prevent trauma in young children with incarcerated parents by requiring law enforcement personnel to use child-sensitive protocols when arresting parents, and corrections facilities can foster reentry success and resilience through family-based programming. Although young children with incarcerated parents typically experience numerous risk factors, there are many paths to resilience when adults treat children with sensitivity, compassion, kindness, love, and protection—both within the family and outside of the family.

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Chapter 5
Paternal Incarceration: Resilience in Father-Child Relationships

Kristin Turney and Estéfani Marín

Incarceration rates in the United States, though recently stabilized, increased rapidly over the past half century. Today, more than two million individuals are incarcerated in state and federal prisons across the United States (Carson, 2020). This number excludes the more than 12 million individuals incarcerated in local jails annually (Sawyer & Wagner, 2020). It also excludes individuals recently released back to their families and communities, many of whom remain on supervision via probation or parole (Kaeble, 2018). Incarceration is a life-course experience concentrated among the most vulnerable, including people of color, those living in poverty, and those residing in economically distressed neighborhoods (Wakefield & Uggen, 2010).

The rapid increase in incarceration in the United States means that an increasing number of children experience parental incarceration, particularly paternal incarceration, given the concentration of incarceration among men. Recent data, based on a nationally representative sample of US adults, show that about one-sixth (16%) of individuals experience paternal incarceration (Enns et al., 2019). The prevalence of paternal incarceration is even higher among vulnerable groups. For example, among children born in urban areas to mostly unmarried parents around the turn of the twenty-first century, more than one-third (35%) experience paternal incarceration by age 15 (Turney & Haskins, 2019). Furthermore, even among this relatively vulnerable population, paternal incarceration is unequally distributed, being more common among Black urban children than among White urban children (Turney & Haskins, 2019).

The sizable number of children with fathers confined in jail or prison, in conjunction with the concentration of this experience among already vulnerable children, has generated research on the intergenerational consequences of paternal

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incarceration. Family systems theory, which highlights the interdependency of family members, suggests that paternal incarceration may disrupt the roles and functions of the entire family unit, thereby impairing the well-being of children (Minuchin, 1974). Such disruptions may occur directly, via the father's removal from the household, or indirectly via a number of pathways (e.g., changes to the parental relationship stemming from incarceration). Indeed, research documents mostly deleterious consequences of paternal incarceration for children's behavioral, educational, and health outcomes (for reviews, see Eddy, & Poehlmann-Tynan, 2019; Foster & Hagan, 2015; Poehlmann-Tynan & Turney, 2020; Turney & Goodsell, 2018; Turney & Haskins, 2019; Wildeman et al., 2018).

Despite this growing consensus that paternal incarceration is a family stressor with deleterious intergenerational consequences, little is known about how paternal incarceration systematically affects relationship quality between fathers and their children. Conceptually, the link between paternal incarceration and father-child relationships could take several forms. Paternal incarceration may weaken relationships between fathers and children, as the nature of confinement makes maintaining relationships difficult and creates new challenges to navigate. Alternatively, given that incarcerated fathers may be relatively disconnected from children prior to their incarceration (compared to fathers who do not experience incarceration), paternal incarceration may be relatively inconsequential for father-child relationships. Yet another possibility is that the association between paternal incarceration and father-child relationships is heterogeneous, with paternal incarceration weakening some relationships, strengthening other relationships, and being inconsequential for other relationships.

In this chapter, we examine the association between paternal incarceration and father-child relationships, as well as variation in this association, with a mixed-methods approach. First, we use data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, a longitudinal study of children born in urban areas to mostly unmarried parents, to examine differences in father-child relationships between children who do and do not experience paternal incarceration. We focus on three aspects of father-child relationships, all ascertained by children at age 15: communication with father, time spent with father, and engagement with father. We also examine variation in the association between paternal incarceration and father-child relationships (by gender, race/ethnicity, father's residential status, and father's prior incarceration). Second, to better understand the processes linking paternal incarceration to father-child relationships, and to elucidate resilience patterns, we analyze in-depth interview data from children aged 8–17 years. These data come from the Jail & Family Life Study, a longitudinal qualitative examination of incarcerated fathers and their family members (Turney, 2020). This mixed-methods approach documents the complicated ways that paternal incarceration structures father-child relationships.

Background

Importance of Father-Child Relationships

Father-child relationship quality is consequential for children's well-being. Children reporting high-quality relationships with their fathers, compared to their counterparts, fare better along a number of behavioral, educational, and health outcomes (Hawkins et al., 2007; King, 1994). Relatedly, high-quality father-child relationships may buffer the deleterious consequences of paternal incarceration; that is, children who maintain positive relationships with their fathers during and after his incarceration may experience resiliency to challenges stemming from incarceration. Positive relationships can provide support and security that protect children from the trauma, stigma, and strain associated with this form of father absence (Foster & Hagan, 2015).

Additionally, father-child relationships are important for parental well-being. They have positive consequences for fathers themselves. For example, father engagement is associated with higher levels of life satisfaction, more socializing, and more community involvement (Eggebeen & Knoester, 2001; Knoester et al., 2007). Among currently and formerly incarcerated fathers, positive father-child relationships can protect against recidivism, as family relationships are critical for desistance from criminal activity (Sampson & Laub, 1995). Relationships with children can give fathers motivation to leave behind criminal activity (Forrest, 2014). Furthermore, high-quality father-child relationships may have spillover consequences for the well-being of children's mothers, as mothers often report wanting connection between children and their fathers and this connection may ease coparenting tensions (Jia & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2011; Sobolewski & King, 2005; Waller, 2012).

A Family Systems Perspective on Paternal Incarceration

Family systems theory suggests that paternal incarceration may be associated with distinctive patterns of father-child relationships (Minuchin, 1974). Paternal incarceration creates disruptions to the roles and functions in the family system, which can affect the father-child relationship. Though little research has examined father-child relationships stemming from paternal incarceration, there is ample evidence that paternal incarceration is a broader family stressor (Arditti, 2018; Turney, 2014a). The well-being of those incarcerated, their current and former romantic partners, and their children is impaired. Children who experience paternal incarceration, compared to those who do not, have more behavioral problems, including internalizing problems, externalizing problems, and delinquency (Geller et al., 2012; Turney, 2017); more challenges to their educational achievement and

attainment (Foster & Hagan, 2007; Haskins, 2014); and more physical health impairments such as asthma and migraines (Lee et al., 2013; Turney, 2014b).

Paternal Incarceration and Bonds Between Fathers and Children

Family systems theory, in conjunction with research documenting mostly deleterious intergenerational consequences of paternal incarceration, suggests that paternal incarceration weakens bonds between fathers and their children. Research on other forms of family instability—such as divorce, which also involves the removal of a father from the home—provides some guidance about how paternal incarceration could weaken father-child bonds (Amato et al., 2016; King et al., 2015; King et al., 2018).

There may be a direct relationship between paternal incarceration and weakened father-child relationships. Incarceration necessarily involves the removal of fathers, many of whom were living with their children prior to incarceration, from households. Jail or prison confinement means that fathers have less opportunity for interactions with their children, potentially reducing the quality of the relationship. Jail or prison confinement also makes interactions—via phone calls, visits, and other forms of communication such as letter writing—more challenging. Phone calls in prison are expensive. Visits, especially when fathers are confined in jail facilities, are short in duration and often do not involve physical contact (Turney & Conner, 2019). Taken together, there are a number of constraints that families face in maintaining relationships when one member is incarcerated.

Additionally, the relationship between paternal incarceration and weakened father-child relationships may stem from a number of indirect pathways including strained parental relationships (Comfort, 2008; Turney, 2015a, 2015b; Western, 2006; Widdowson et al., 2020), economic difficulties (Lyons & Pettit, 2011; Pager, 2003; Western, 2018), and mental health problems stemming from incarceration (Schnittker et al., 2012; Turney et al., 2012; Wildeman et al., 2012).

Alternative Possibilities

Though there are good reasons to expect that paternal incarceration impairs father-child relationships, at least two alternatives exist. The first is that there is no association between paternal incarceration and father-child relationships after accounting for factors associated with paternal incarceration. Incarceration is not a random event; instead, vulnerable individuals including people of color and the poor are most commonly affected. Incarceration is also concentrated among those who use substances, engage in criminal activity, and have a history of incarceration (Johnson

& Easterling, 2012; Kirk & Wakefield, 2018). Therefore, children experiencing paternal incarceration often suffer challenges in relationships with their fathers regardless of his confinement.

A second alterative is that responses to paternal incarceration, with respect to father-child relationships, are heterogeneous, with some experiencing impairments in their relationships and others experiencing null or positive changes. Children may experience resilience in the face of paternal incarceration. For one, children enduring multiple bouts of paternal incarceration may become accustomed to the absence and the corresponding challenges, and therefore may not experience strained relationships. Another possibility is that fathers and children have contact during the incarceration stint (via visits, phone calls, or other opportunities such as letter writing), which allows bonds between children and fathers to flourish. Paternal incarceration may strengthen connections between children and other family members (such as caregivers and siblings) and, given the interdependency of familial relationships, these strengthened relationships may improve the father-child bond.

Methods

Our mixed-methods approach to understanding the repercussions of paternal incarceration for father-child relationship quality relies on two data sources. Survey data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study was used to document differences in father-child relationships between children who do and do not experience paternal incarceration. After documenting these broad patterns, data from the Jail & Family Life Study, which includes in-depth interviews with children of incarcerated fathers, was used to understand the processes linking paternal incarceration and father-child relationships, focusing on resilience processes.

Quantitative Analyses

Data: The Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study is a longitudinal survey of children born to mostly unmarried parents in urban areas around the turn of the twenty-first century (Reichman et al., 2001). Parents were interviewed shortly after their child was born and then an additional five times over a 15-year period (when the children were about 1, 3, 5, 9, and 15 years old). Children were also interviewed at ages 9 and 15. The data provide a unique opportunity to understand the intergenerational consequences of paternal incarceration (e.g., Geller et al., 2012; Haskins, 2014, 2015, 2016; Turney, 2015c, 2017; Turney & Goldberg, 2019; Wildeman, 2010). Data were collected during the peak of the prison boom and include information about paternal incarceration at each wave. Given that the sample includes mostly unmarried parents in urban areas, a relatively large number of children

experienced paternal incarceration, making it possible to compare children who do and do not experience this stressor.

Key Variables: We measured father-child relationships with three variables, all ascertained at the 15-year survey. First, communication with father was measured by the child's response to the question: "How well do you and your dad share ideas or talk about things that really matter?" (1 = *not very well*, 2 = *fairly well*, 3 = *quite well*, 4 = *extremely well*). Second, time with father was measured by the child's response to the question: "In the past month, how often has your dad spent one or more hours a day with you?" (1 = *not at all*, 2 = *once or twice*, 3 = *a few times this past month*, 4 = *a few times a week*, 5 = *every day or nearly every day*). Third, engagement with father was measured by averaging the child's responses to the frequency of the following activities with the father in the past month: (a) talk with you about current events, like things going on in the news; (b) talk with you about your day; (c) help you with homework or school assignments; and (d) do activities with you such as play sports or video games, or household chores such as doing dishes or preparing food (1 = *never*, 2 = *sometimes*, 3 = *often*; $\alpha = 0.95$). The relationship questions were not asked of children who had not seen or communicated with their fathers and, accordingly, we coded these observations as 1 (and conducted supplemental analyses that instead removed them from the analytic sample).

The primary explanatory variable, paternal incarceration, is a binary measure indicating that the child's primary caregiver reported that the father was incarcerated in jail or prison between the 9- and 15-year surveys.

The multivariate analyses included characteristics of mothers, fathers, and children that are associated with both paternal incarceration and father-child relationships. The demographic variables, such as race/ethnicity and immigrant status, were measured at baseline. Other variables that change over time, such as parents' relationship status or material hardship, were measured at the 9-year survey (and therefore prior to paternal incarceration). See Table 5.1 for descriptive statistics of all variables included in the analyses.

Analytic Plan: The analytic plan proceeded in three stages. First, we compared means of the three indicators of father-child relationships between children who did and did not experience paternal incarceration, testing for statistically significant differences across groups. Second, we used ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models to estimate the association between paternal incarceration and father-child relationships. Supplemental analyses used ordered logistic regression, given that the dependent variables are count variables, but we used OLS regression for ease of interpretation (as the findings are consistent across both strategies). We present three models: one without control variables, one with control variables (all measured prior to paternal incarceration), and one with control variables that is restricted to children who saw their father in the past year. Note that this final model is not necessarily the most rigorous model, as contact with fathers at the 15-year survey may be endogenous to incarceration. Third, we estimated the association between paternal incarceration and father-child relationships for four sets of subgroups: gender, race/ethnicity, father's residential status (measured at the 9-year survey), and father's prior incarceration (measured at the 9-year survey). We compare differences across groups (Paternoster et al., 1998).

Table 5.1 Descriptive statistics: Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study

	% or mean	(S.D.)
Key variables		
Communication with father (y15)	2.248	(1.198)
Time with father (y15)	2.700	(1.702)
Engagement with father (y15)	1.408	(1.080)
Father incarcerated (y15)	16.4%	
Control variables		
Mother race/ethnicity (b)		
WhiteWhites (non-Hispanic)	21.8%	
Black (non-Hispanic)	50.1%	
Hispanic	24.7%	
Other race (non-Hispanic)	3.5%	
Mother foreign-born (b)	13.3%	
Father foreign-born (b)	14.5%	
Mother age (y1)	26.371	(6.001)
Father age (y1)	28.922	(7.224)
Mother lived with both parents at age 15 (b)	41.9%	
Father lived with both parents at age 15 (b)	44.0%	
Mother and father relationship status (y9)		
Married	29.6%	
Cohabiting	9.0%	
Nonresidential romantic	2.1%	
Separated	59.3%	
Mother repartnered (y9)	34.4%	
Father repartnered (y9)	5.6%	
Mother relationship quality (y9)	2.767	(1.472)
Father relationship quality (y9)	3.087	(1.426)
Mother number of children (y9)	2.646	(1.329)
Father number of children (y9)	1.058	(0.990)
Mother lives with her mother (y9)	10.1%	
Father lives with his mother (y9)	10.4%	
Mother parenting stress (y9)	2.033	(0.681)
Father parenting stress (y9)	1.917	(0.688)
Mother engagement (y9)	2.716	(0.595)
Father engagement (y9)	1.511	(1.180)
Mother shared responsibility in parenting (y9)	2.253	(1.195)
Mother cooperation in parenting (y9)	2.848	(1.190)
Father cooperation in parenting (y9)	3.268	(0.890)
Mother education (y9)		
Less than high school	22.0%	
High school diploma or GED	18.9%	
More than high school	59.1%	

(continued)

Table 5.1 (continued)

	% or mean	(S.D.)
Father education (y9)		
Less than high school	25.3%	
High school diploma or GED	30.0%	
More than high school	44.8%	
Mother employed (y9)	61.8%	
Father employed (y9)	70.0%	
Mother income-to-poverty ratio (y9)	2.025	(2.323)
Father income-to-poverty ratio (y9)	2.556	(2.844)
Mother material hardship (y9)	1.529	(1.870)
Father material hardship (y9)	1.461	(1.964)
Mother neighborhood disadvantage (y9)	0.025	(3.102)
Father neighborhood disadvantage (y9)	0.290	(3.096)
Mother depression (y9)	17.8%	
Father depression (y9)	16.1%	
Mother overall health (y9)	3.545	(1.043)
Father overall health (y9)	3.690	(1.030)
Mother perceived support (y9)	4.102	(1.783)
Father perceived support (y9)	4.202	(1.817)
Mother drug use (y9)	6.6%	
Father drug use (y9)	13.3%	
Mother heavy drinking (y9)	8.8%	
Father heavy drinking (y9)	26.8%	
Mother domestic violence (y1, y3, y5, y9)	15.3%	
Father domestic violence (y1, y3, y5, y9)	20.7%	
Mother cognitive skills (y3)	6.795	(2.658)
Father cognitive skills (y3)	6.503	(2.720)
Mother impulsivity (y5)	1.525	(0.481)
Father impulsivity (y1)	2.016	(0.668)
Mother previously incarcerated (y1, y3, y5, y9)	9.4%	
Father previously incarcerated (y1, y3, y5, y9)	49.8%	
Child is boy	51.6%	
Child low birth weight	9.1%	
Child temperament	3.406	0.768
N	3431	

Note: b = measured at baseline survey; y1 = measured at 1-year survey; y3 = measured at 3-year survey; y5 = measured at 5-year survey; y9 = measured at 9-year survey; y15 = measured at 15-year survey. *Source*: Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study

Qualitative Analyses

Data: The interview data come from the Jail & Family Life Study, a longitudinal qualitative examination of 123 incarcerated fathers and their family members. Fathers were recruited for study participation across three Southern California jails between 2015 and 2016 (see Turney, 2020, for more information about the study design). Fathers were eligible to participate if they were at least 18 years old and had at least one child. During the fathers' interviews, we asked them to provide contact information for their children's caregivers and their own mothers. With permission from children and their caregivers, we interviewed children who were aged 8–17 (Turney et al., 2017).

We conducted 38 baseline interviews with children (most of these conducted while fathers were in jail) and 30 follow-up interviews with children (most of these conducted when fathers had been released from jail or, less commonly, sentenced to prison). Baseline interviews occurred between August 2015 and October 2017, and follow-up interviews occurred between January 2016 and August 2017. Given the developmental heterogeneity among children, we had different interview protocols for children aged 8–12 years and children aged 13–17 years. Interviews with younger children, those aged 8–12, were designed to last between 20 and 30 min. Interviews with older children, those aged 13–17, were designed to last between 30 and 60 min. The interview guide comprised the following five modules: (1) warm-up, (2) family life, (3) peers, (4) school, and (5) future. For example, in the "family life" module, we asked the following question: "Sometimes when dads go to jail, there are big changes for the rest of the family. Sometimes there aren't too many changes at all. What about for you?" We also asked questions about their feelings related to the incarceration and about contact with their father during incarceration and after release. We asked similar developmentally appropriate questions to all children, though we varied the question wording and timing to make the interview flow like a conversation. The average baseline interview lasted 48 min, and the average follow-up interview lasted 49 min. Children were paid $10 for each interview. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Analyses: The coding occurred in three stages. First, a research team of trained graduate students conducted deductive coding of the interviews. These initial codes were primarily derived from topics covered in the interview guide. For example, we coded for broad themes such as "effects on child," "effects on focal father," and "effects on mother." Second, the research team conducted inductive coding within some of the larger deductive codes. These codes, instead of being derived from the interview guide, were generated inductively as the research team read through the transcripts in an iterative fashion. For example, we read through "effects on child" and developed codes for emergent themes including "relationship with child" and "child stigma." The research team worked together to ensure reliability during these first two stages of coding. Third, we further analyzed emergent patterns from the inductively generated themes, again working together to ensure reliability.

Table 5.2 Descriptive statistics, Jail & Family Life Study

Variable	Mean or %
Child gender	
Girls	66%
Boys	34%
Age	12
Child race/ethnicity	
Latino/a	68%
White	13%
Asian/Pacific Islander	8%
Multiracial	11%
Child primary caregiver	
Mother	71%
Grandparent	18%
Father	8%
Other	3%
Residential status with father before incarceration	
Residential	8%
Nonresidential	92%
N	38

Sample Description: Table 5.2 presents descriptive information for the qualitative sample of children. Girls comprise about two-thirds (66%) of the sample. More than three-fourths (78%) of the children identified as Latino/a. Nearly all (92%) children were living apart from their father before his incarceration and, at the time of the interview, about two-thirds (71%) of children's primary caregivers were their mothers.

Results: Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study

Father-Child Relationships by Paternal Incarceration

Table 5.3 presents means of the three indicators of father-child relationships—communication with father, time with father, and engagement with father—for two groups of children: those who endured paternal incarceration between the 9- and 15-year surveys and those who did not endure paternal incarceration between the 9- and 15-year surveys. There are striking differences in father-child relationships by paternal incarceration. Children who experienced paternal incarceration, compared to those who did not, reported less communication with fathers (1.995 compared to 2.298, $p < 0.001$), less time with fathers (1.993 compared to 2.893, $p < 0.001$), and less engagement with fathers (1.093 compared to 1.470, $p < 0.001$).

Table 5.3 Means of father-child relationship by paternal incarceration

	Father recently incarcerated		Father not recently incarcerated		
Outcome variable	Mean	(S.D.)	Mean	(S.D.)	
Communication with father	1.995	(1.146)	2.298	(1.201)	***
Time with father	1.993	(1.452)	2.839	(1.714)	***
Engagement with father	1.093	(0.975)	1.470	(1.089)	***
N	562		2869		

Note: Asterisks indicate statistically significant differences between groups. ***$p < 0.001$. *Source*: Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study

Given the vast differences between families who do and do not experience paternal incarceration, it is important to consider whether these differences render the association between paternal incarceration and father-child relationships spurious. We examine this in Table 5.4. Model 1 presents the unadjusted association, which documents results consistent with the differences in means presented in Table 5.3. Paternal incarceration is associated with less communication ($b = -0.302$, $p < 0.001$), less time ($b = -0.846$, $p < 0.001$), and less engagement ($b = -0.377$, $p < 0.001$) with fathers. In Model 2, which adjusts for all control variables, the magnitude of the associations decrease (by 88% for communication, 73% for time, and 95% for engagement). This model shows that paternal incarceration is negatively associated with time ($b = -0.227$, $p < 0.01$) but is not associated with communication ($b = 0.035$, *n.s.*) or engagement ($b = -0.018$, *n.s.*) with fathers. In Model 3, which adjusts for all control variables and restricts the sample to children who have seen their father in the past year, paternal incarceration is associated with less communication ($b = -0.147$, $p < 0.05$), less time ($b = -0.501$, $p < 0.001$), and less engagement ($b = -0.245$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, conditional on children having some contact with their fathers, incarceration weakens the father-child relationship.

Table 5.5 examines heterogeneity in the association between paternal incarceration and father-child relationships. Four key findings emerge. First, the magnitude of the association between paternal incarceration and father-child relationships (including communication, time, and engagement) is similar for boys and girls. Second, the magnitude of the association between paternal incarceration and father-child relationships is larger for Whites than for Blacks or Hispanics, but these differences are not statistically significant. Third, the deleterious repercussions of paternal incarceration for father-child relationships are concentrated among children living with their fathers prior to his incarceration (with the groups being significantly different for estimates of time). Fourth, the deleterious repercussions of paternal incarceration for father-child relationships are concentrated among children of fathers not previously incarcerated (with the groups again being significantly different for estimates of time).

Table 5.4 Regression models estimating father-child relationships as a function of paternal incarceration

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	Unadjusted			Adjusted			Restricted to those with contact in past year		
Outcome variable	*b*	(S.E.)		*b*	(S.E.)		*b*	(S.E.)	
Communication with father	−0.302	(0.055)	***	0.035	(0.055)		−0.147	(0.067)	*
Time with father	−0.846	(0.077)	***	−0.227	(0.072)	**	−0.501	(0.086)	***
Engagement with father	−0.377	(0.049)	***	−0.018	(0.047)		−0.245	(0.045)	***
N	3431			3431			2364		

Note: Each row represents a different dependent variable. Model 1 presents the unadjusted association. Model 2 adjusts for all control variables in Table 5.1. Model 3 adjusts for all control variables in Table 5.1 and restricts the sample to children who had any contact with their father in the past year. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 001$. *Source*: Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study

Table 5.5 Regression models estimating father-child relationships as a function of paternal incarceration, considering heterogeneity

	Communication		Time			Engagement		
	b	(S.E.)	*b*	(S.E.)		*b*	(S.E.)	
Boys (*n* = 1771)	0.076	(0.079)	−0.215	(0.102)	*	−0.026	(0.067)	
Girls (*n* = 1660)	−0.003	(0.079)	−0.201	(0.104)	^	0.004	(0.067)	
Whites (*n* = 745)	−0.156	(0.140)	−0.452	(0.186)	*	−0.070	(0.116)	
Blacks (*n* = 1714)	0.107	(0.077)	−0.123	(0.098)		0.024	(0.066)	
Hispanics (*n* = 844)	0.026	(0.121)	−0.268	(0.160)	^	−0.048	(0.104)	
Residential (*n* = 1204)	−0.149	(0.122)	−0.610	(0.165)	***	−0.032	(0.093)	**
Nonresidential (*n* = 1858)	0.059	(0.064)	−0.176	(0.080)	*	0.003	(0.056)	
Prior incarceration (*n* = 1707)	0.053	(0.062)	−0.191	(0.081)		0.002	(0.054)	
No prior incarceration (*n* = 1724)	−0.063	(0.150)	−0.558	(0.195)	**	−0.140	(0.123)	

Note: All models adjust for all control variables in Table 5.1. ^ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. *Source*: Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study

Results: Jail & Family Life Study

Children interviewed in the Jail & Family Life Study commonly described their father's incarceration as a turning point in their lives that created instability. Children overwhelmingly reported being concerned about the well-being of their incarcerated fathers. They also overwhelmingly reported contending with the consequences of their father's absence. With respect to relationship quality, we find that children fall into one of the three following groups: fractured relationships (comprising 45% of the sample), those relationships that were weakened by paternal incarceration and remained that way; unchanged relationships (16%), those relationships that were impervious to paternal incarceration, often because they were distant before incarceration; and reestablished relationships (39%), those relationships that were

fractured by paternal incarceration but were actively being rebuilt. We describe characteristics of these three groups.

Fractured Relationships: "Missing a Part of Us"

Nearly half (45%) of the children reported that the disruption stemming from paternal incarceration generated fractured relationships with their fathers. These children identified two primary ways that father-child relationships became fractured. First, children reported challenges to contact with their father, with some challenges stemming from the nature of confinement and other challenges exacerbated by the fathers themselves or by other family members in gatekeeping roles. Second, children reported distress in their inability to initiate contact with their fathers, which created a power imbalance that made fostering and maintaining relationships difficult.

Constraints of Contact with Incarcerated Fathers: First, children described how the nature of incarceration creates a challenging context for maintaining relationships. Children reported having contact with their incarcerated fathers in three primary ways: by visiting their fathers in jail; by talking with their fathers on the telephone; and by sending and receiving letters, drawings, and other artwork via the mail. All three types of contact were characterized by challenges.

Many children in this group (and in the reestablished relationships group) reported visiting their fathers in jail. In two of the three facilities where we recruited fathers, this visitation occurred through a plexiglass barrier (with the father on one side of the plexiglass and his family on the other side, taking turns communicating with the father via one telephone). In the third facility, visits occurred at a cafeteria-style table, without plexiglass and without a telephone, but strict visitation rules ensured that fathers and family members could not initiate physical contact. Visits across all three facilities lasted a maximum of 30 min. The constraints of incarceration contact—including the travel time associated with getting to the jail, the impersonal nature of the visitation space, and the inability for physical contact—hindered the development of positive father-child relationships, fracturing father-child relationships over time.

Children in this group also commonly spoke about challenges associated with visiting their fathers in jail. Philip, a 9-year-old Latino, described visiting his father as "kinda fun, because I didn't see him in a long time." Philip also said, though, "… but it was, like, kinda far drive. And then, there was sometimes always traffic so, I didn't really like going there all the time, but sometimes I would go." Philip expressed happiness in seeing his father, after a long period without contact, but also noted sadness stemming from his father's incarceration. These mixed emotions were common among children in this group. Many children reported feeling sad from being unable to touch or hug fathers during visitation. For example, Bella, a White 17-year-old, observed that visitations took a toll on her entire family, including herself and her father, and attributed much of this toll to the plexiglass

separating them during visits. Similarly, Eduardo, a 16-year-old Latino, described his younger brother as feeling sad when he visited his father due to the lack of physical contact. Eduardo said, "He knows where he is but not being able to hug him and tell like oh, I love you dad or something like that …."

Children reported challenges associated with maintaining other forms of contact, including letters and telephone calls. Some father-child dyads maintained contact only through letter writing. The absence of connection through talking and listening profoundly shaped the nature of their relationships. Children described the distant nature of this form of communication. Melinda, a 16-year-old Latina who kept in contact with her jailed father via letters only, described how limiting this was. She said, "… last time he was in jail he gave us a card like telling us forgive me. Telling us forgive me and hope you come and visit me and we read it and he's like… Yeah and I think I accidently threw the card away." She continued, after the interviewer asked her how receiving the letter made her feel: "Sad and a little weird. Cuz it's like a stranger giving me cards you know like cuz I don't really know him." This remark illustrates the impersonal nature of letter writing and underscores the importance of talking and listening in fostering strong father-child relationships.

Power Imbalance Associated with Contact: The fractured relationships between children and fathers were also characterized by a lack of accessibility, as incarcerated fathers were not readily available for contact. Children could not call fathers when they had a problem or needed advice; instead, they had to wait for fathers to initiate a phone call from jail. Children could not visit their fathers without a parent or guardian. And though children could contact fathers via letter writing, this form of communication was delayed. Taken together, the lack of accessibility shows the little agency children had in maintaining contact with their incarcerated fathers. Fathers were responsible for initiating phone calls with their children, and other parents or guardians were responsible for initiating visitation. Bella reflected on the challenges associated with maintaining contact with her father: "I feel like it was harder when he would call because I couldn't see him. It was just over the phone. And I couldn't call him when I needed something. It was just when he could call … It sucked because he couldn't be there for me like everything that I was going through." This inability of children to initiate contact with fathers further fractured father-child relationships.

This power imbalance, particularly how fathers dictated the timing and frequency of phone communication with their children, means that fathers wield substantial power in determining the strength of father-child relationships. Children who did not have frequent phone contact with their fathers talked about how this limited their relationships. Nicole, a White 16-year-old, said: "[He] never calls me. He sometimes calls my grandma's house. Just asks for money to put on his books you know. But that's it, he doesn't call." Nicole had contact with her father via jail visitation, but also expressed challenges with this form of communication. She described a recent visit with her father as being maddening, as her father spent most of the visit talking to her aunt and ignoring her. Consequently, Nicole hesitated to initiate contact with her father via letter writing when he asked. In this case, the lack of effort from Nicole's father, combined with her inability to initiate contact, resulted in a fractured relationship.

Unchanged Relationships: "It Didn't Have an Effect on Me"

A relatively small percentage (16%) of children in the sample reported that relationships with their fathers were impervious to paternal incarceration. Those with unchanged relationships generally pointed to two reasons. First, these children commonly reported that their father was physically or emotionally absent prior to his incarceration. These dyads had weak or nonexistent relationships and, accordingly, the father-child relationship did not suffer from incarceration. Second, and relatedly, these children commonly reported that they had grown accustomed to their father being incarcerated.

Father's Absence Prior to Incarceration: Many children with unchanged relationships said that this stemmed from a weak or nonexistent relationship with their father prior to his incarceration. The absence of their father was normalized, and they were able to weather a bout of incarceration without much difficulty. A preexisting weak relationship was the case for Mimi, a 13-year-old Latina, who said the following when asked about her father's incarceration: "I don't really think about it because he's never really been there." Similarly, Junior, a 15-year-old who identified as Black and Latino, reported that his father's incarceration was inconsequential. "I don't really like pay much attention to him. It doesn't bother me," he said. Junior also said that he rarely thought about his father, stating that the incarceration did not represent a real or noticeable absence for him. The limited bond between Junior and his father prior to incarceration resulted in minimal changes to their relationship. For children like Mimi and Junior, paternal incarceration was a continued pattern of father-absence to which they had grown accustomed.

Growing Accustomed to Father's Incarceration: Relatedly, many children with unchanged relationships with their fathers reported that this stemmed from growing accustomed to their father spending time in jail or prison. Samantha, a 13-year-old Latina, offered insight by describing the reconnection with her father after his release: "It didn't have an effect on me since I knew how it feels." Samantha referenced her father's habitual incarceration as a reason for this unchanged relationship. Sean, a 16-year-old Latino, is another example of a child with an unchanged relationship with his father due to his churning in and out of jail. When the interviewer asked Sean's feelings about the most recent incarceration, he reported: "I mean, it's still the same story. I never needed him then and I don't need him now." These children described how they grew familiar with and unbothered by the repercussions of having an incarcerated father.

Reestablishing Relationships: "We're All Happy Now"

Finally, about two-fifths (39%) of children in the sample reported reestablished relationships, relationships that were initially characterized by fractures but were being rebuilt. First, these children commonly said that father-child relationships were

splintered, similar to children in the fractured relationships group, reporting that their father's incarceration caused him to miss important events in their lives. Second, these children highlighted how frequent contact with their incarcerated fathers ameliorated the deleterious consequences and fostered the reestablishing of relationships. Third, and relatedly, frequent contact after release promoted the reestablishing of relationships.

Missing Milestones: Similar to children in the fractured relationships group, those in the reestablished relationships group spoke about fractured relationships between themselves and their fathers. Their father's incarceration reduced the quantity and quality of their contact. Incarcerated fathers could no longer be present in their everyday activities. Children felt sad that they could no longer spend quality time with fathers while he was incarcerated, and this sadness became more prominent during life events such as birthdays, graduations, and holidays. Given that the ability to create memories is a powerful tool for forging relationships, the absence of fathers during these events impaired the development of strong father-child relationships.

Several children provided exemplars of how missed milestones weakened relationships with their fathers. Cupcake, an 8-year-old Latina, reported feeling sad when her incarcerated father missed her last birthday. She described wishing how her father were present on this day that was spent celebrating with family. Alexis, a 16-year-old who identified as Latina and White, reported that the absence of her father during incarceration produced an ache in her life:

> It was a big impact because we're not used to my dad being in jail. And, now that we're older I think that it sucks even more because, like, our eighth grade graduation, our promotion. Just, like, school field trips, we're so used to, like, my dad or mom going. You know. And our mom went still, but it's just we would ask our dad too. So, we felt bad because we're kind of leaving him out. So, that's just how it had to go, you know. But, I mean, it had an impact. But I wasn't depressed, or, like, eating food. Just, missing a part of us. We got to talk to him whenever we wanted. We got to see him whenever we wanted. We didn't have to wait until the weekend, or wait 'til, like, he got the phone privilege to call us. You know, we weren't used to all of that until now.

The carceral state produced circumstances where father's participation in life events was not a possibility. Hence, simple contact such as phone calls became a privilege for children such as Alexis.

Reestablishing Relationships Through Contact: Children in the reestablished relationships group, similar to children in the fractured relationships group, experienced challenges in maintaining contact with their incarcerated fathers. Children in the reestablished relationships group were different from these other children because they described how father-child contact facilitated the reestablishment of their relationships with their fathers. Children reported positive feelings when visiting their father, when receiving phone calls from him, or when writing or receiving letters. These children often expressed relief that they were able to maintain at least some contact with their father during incarceration.

Father-child contact during incarceration buffered some of the negative consequences for the father-child relationship. Maintaining contact with incarcerated

fathers was a source of resilience for children in this group, giving them strength to weather this difficult event. Nicole, a White 13-year-old, offered insight into this resiliency. When asked how she felt when her father contacted her, she said, "It made it easier. His life, it wasn't the same seeing him. And- but to hear that he wasn't getting into trouble and he was trying to get better, and go to all these meetings to help him cuz he's here."

Alexis reported that contact with her father during his incarceration helped mitigate the negative emotions she experienced resulting from his incarceration, which in turn strengthened their relationship. When asked about her feelings stemming from her father's incarceration, she said, "I wouldn't say disappointed, but I was just, like, angry, confused, mad, sad. I think it was just, like, all the above. But, once I seen him or if I got his letter, if I talked to him, then I was happy again." Similarly, Catalina, a 14-year-old Latina, expressed that receiving letters from her father made her happy: "I did cry at first because I kind of missed him. I was really happy he sent like … for … when he was in jail they gave him Christmas or like Valentines. But he would send us letters, cards and he would say that hopefully we get back together. But I don't know. I was really happy that he at least sent us these cards." Though Catalina reported missing her father, her reflections underscore the importance of father-child contact in reestablishing relationships. Catalina's happiness when receiving letters from her father suggests that contact can strengthen father-child relationships.

Reestablishing Relationships upon Release: Finally, among this group of children, father-child relationships were further reestablished after release from jail. Without the confinements of incarceration, children in this group spent more time with their fathers. Children and fathers could now partake in activities that had not been allowed during incarceration. Children commonly expressed happiness about having their fathers physically back in their lives and excitement about seeing their fathers daily. Upon release, father-child relationships were further reestablished as contact increased in frequency. Reestablishing relationships via contact offered children the opportunity to find comfort in unstable situations.

Nelly, a 14-year-old Latina, provided an illustrative example of how father-child relationships were reestablished after release. When asked what it was like to see her father upon release, Nelly said the following: "When I seen him walk up, I was happy cuz I actually seen him. So it was a relief. We finally—next time we meet we could go have fun at the park or something like that. It's actually better." She goes on to say, "We're all happy now … Everybody's happy. There's no sadness." Nelly maintained some level of contact with her father during incarceration, underscoring the significance that incarceration contact has for the improvement of father-child relationships upon release. Nelly suggested that her relationship with her father had improved because now she could see her father and could enjoy leisure activities with him. Given the constraints of father-child contact during incarceration, release gives families an opportunity to bolster relationships that were previously challenged.

Discussion

High incarceration rates in the United States mean that a large number of children experience paternal incarceration (Enns et al., 2019; Turney & Haskins, 2019). Despite mounting evidence that paternal incarceration has deleterious consequences for children's well-being (for reviews, see Eddy, & Poehlmann-Tynan, 2019; Foster & Hagan, 2015; Poehlmann-Tynan & Turney, 2020; Turney & Goodsell, 2018; Turney & Haskins, 2019; Wildeman et al., 2018), as well as deleterious consequences for the quality of relationships that men have with other family members including romantic partners and parents (Turney, 2015a, 2015b; Western, 2018), little research systematically considers how paternal incarceration shapes the bonds between fathers and their children. In this chapter, we used a mixed-methods approach to understanding father-child relationships in the wake of paternal incarceration. Understanding father-child relationships is important, as high-quality relationships can improve child well-being and reduce recidivism among men (King, 1994; Sampson & Laub, 1995).

Survey data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, a population-based sample of children born to mostly unmarried parents, was used to document the association between paternal incarceration and father-child relationships (measured by communication, time, and engagement). Paternal incarceration, on average, has negative repercussions for the time that children spend with their fathers but the repercussions for communication and engagement stem from selection factors. Considering *average* associations masks considerable heterogeneity, as the consequences of paternal incarceration were concentrated among children living with their fathers prior to his incarceration and among children whose fathers were incarcerated for the first time.

In-depth interview data from the Jail & Family Life Study was used to document the processes through which paternal incarceration affects father-child relationships. These data also provided evidence of substantial heterogeneity in the consequences of paternal incarceration, with incarceration fracturing relationships between some fathers and children; incarceration neither strengthening nor weakening relationships between some dyads; and incarceration enabling a rebuilding of relationships between some dyads. Contact with fathers, particularly during incarceration, is a critical way to foster resilience between fathers and children. Children reporting frequent and affirmative contact with their fathers often describe a strengthening of relationships and, alternatively, children reporting challenges to contact often describe a weakening of relationships. Contact—via visitation, telephone calls, and letter writing—can facilitate connections between children and their fathers.

These findings, particularly those that show how children's contact with their fathers during incarceration can foster resilience in their relationships, have implications for policies and practices. First, reducing barriers to telephone contact is critical. Telephone contact can be made more accessible by reducing the economic costs of these calls, as children report awareness of this expense (and many families

cannot afford the calls, either at all or as frequently as they would like). Allowing children to initiate telephone calls can make contact more accessible. Children repeatedly described frustration and sadness in being unable to call their fathers when they wanted or needed such contact; enabling two-way communication could strengthen father-child relationships. Second, reducing barriers to visitation is critical. Barriers include logistical aspects such as long wait times and short visit times. Lack of physical contact permitted between the incarcerated and their family members is an additional barrier. Children repeatedly expressed wanting to touch, hug, and kiss their fathers; allowing for physical contact could bolster father-child relationships. Third, reducing barriers to written communication is critical. Many children report enjoying this form of communication, but the time between sending and receiving a letter is often lengthy, impeding the maintenance of relationships. Streamlining this process—so that fathers and their children can more quickly receive letters—could improve relationships. Relatedly, allowing for other types of contact—such as email, which can be instantly received—could also improve relationships.

These findings also have implications for future research on resilience among children of incarcerated fathers. First, future research should examine how paternal incarceration shapes children's relationships with other family members, including their mothers, social fathers, and siblings. A family systems perspective suggests that paternal incarceration has repercussions for the entire family unit and these relationships may foster resilience in a number of ways (Minuchin, 1974). Second, future research should consider the extent to which supportive father-child relationships can buffer the deleterious consequences of paternal incarceration for children's well-being. We found that contact with incarcerated fathers—via visitation, telephone calls, and letter writing—can foster resilience in the father-child relationship. But supportive and high-quality father-child relationships may also promote resiliency, and future research should consider this possibility. Third, future research should consider how the timing of paternal incarceration shapes father-child relationships over the life course. Paternal incarceration in early childhood may be most consequential to father-child relationships in adolescence, as early childhood experiences are critical and can set in motion a cascade of stressors. Alternatively, more proximal exposure to paternal incarceration, such as during adolescence, might be most consequential for father-child relationships. Adjudicating between these possibilities is another important direction for future research.

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Chapter 6
Parental Incarceration and Other Family-Based Risks

Jennifer Copp, Peggy Giordano, Wendy Manning, and Monica Longmore

Children experience parental absence for short or long spells through many avenues, including parental separation or divorce, parental death, military deployment, as well as parental incarceration. While there may be some commonalities in children's experiences of parental absence, the circumstances are quite unique and likely have distinct implications for child well-being. Importantly, recent empirical evidence has indicated that there are a multitude of harmful effects of parental incarceration on the next generation, both among young children and across youths' transition to adulthood (e.g., Dallaire et al., 2010; Foster & Hagan, 2009; Geller et al., 2012; Haskins, 2016; Turney & Lanuza, 2017; Wildeman, 2010). At the same time, family scholars and criminologists (e.g., Giordano et al., 2019; Arditti, 2012; Poehlmann-Tynan & Arditti, 2018; Turney & Goodsell, 2018) have noted that children experiencing parental incarceration confront numerous additional adversities, including a broad range of family risks (e.g., parent substance use, mental health issues, economic strain, residential moves, and familial instability). Thus, a key challenge within the incarceration effects tradition has been to disentangle the effect of parental incarceration from these other problematic parental behaviors and family dynamics. It is important to note that most studies of parental incarceration have included controls for several adversities or have employed methodological techniques to isolate the effect of incarceration while accounting for these coexisting sources of disadvantage (Copp et al., 2018). An unintended consequence of both of these strategies is that the emphasis tends to be nearly exclusively on parental incarceration. As such, these approaches render other important aspects of youths' social orbits somewhat out of focus.

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Our own view is that these out-of-focus elements should be foregrounded, both theoretically and empirically, in studies investigating the mechanisms underlying observed parental incarceration effects (Giordano et al., 2019). It is nearly impossible to pinpoint the true effect of parental incarceration on children's well-being because it is linked inextricably to family circumstances, including parents' engagement in problem behaviors (e.g., engaging in criminal activity and using illicit substances), as well as the marginalizing effects of justice system contact experienced by families that often extend long after the period of parental absence (see, e.g., Comfort, 2007; Foster & Hagan, 2015; Haskins & Jacobsen, 2017; Uggen & McElrath, 2014; Visher et al., 2011). As we have recently elaborated elsewhere, the ongoing conditions of family life generally last longer and may be more immersive than a particular episode of parental incarceration (Giordano et al., 2019). In addition, these ongoing family conditions may shape the character of youths' social network affiliations with extended family and others outside the home (i.e., the "wider circle") and eventually channel their own developing relationships with peers and romantic partners. Thus, we argue, together, that the family and broader social environments that characterize the lives of youths exposed to parental incarceration contribute to patterns of intergenerational continuity in problem behavior and other social disadvantages.

We developed this view based largely on structured survey data and in-depth qualitative interviews from a large, longitudinal study of adolescents and their parents/guardians, the Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study (TARS). At the time, the TARS respondents had been interviewed on five separate occasions across a roughly 10-year period, in addition to a parent interview that was completed at baseline. Relative to other surveys that included information on parental incarceration, the TARS data included more extensive measures of the family climate and parental behaviors. Thus, we were able to assess empirically many of the pathways described in our theoretical discussion, including the interrelated nature of parental incarceration and other family-related risks. A sixth set of interviews was completed recently when the respondents averaged 32 years of age and included numerous questions about respondents' parenting attitudes and practices, as the majority are now parents. The TARS survey data now include information from the parent (G1), prospective reports of the focal respondents' (G2) behavior beginning from adolescence through the transition to adulthood, and most recently, reports of respondents' parenting strategies and child (G3) problem behavior and well-being indicators. We leverage the newly available data to accomplish two complementary goals. First, we further elaborate some of the theoretical connections forged in our prior work using prospective data collected over nearly a 20-year period. Second, we shift our focus from family deficits (and their connections to parents' criminal justice involvement) to examine sources of family strengths or resilience in the context of parental incarceration that may contribute to more positive outcomes for children.

Parental Incarceration and Other Family-Related Risks

Existing research in the parental incarceration tradition frequently has drawn on frameworks that invoke strain and labeling perspectives. These approaches have highlighted the economic hardships experienced by families exposed to parental incarceration (Geller et al., 2009; Geller & Franklin, 2014; Sugie, 2012), in addition to its heavy toll on family relationships (Braman, 2004; Comfort, 2008; Turney & Wildeman, 2013; Western & Wildeman, 2009). These studies also have provided conceptual linkages between parental incarceration and various forms of system avoidance and social withdrawal (i.e., "opting out") due to stigmatization/fear of stigmatization (Haskins & Jacobsen, 2017). Other work has focused more explicitly on the feelings of loss experienced by children with incarcerated parents, and implications of disruptions in parent-child attachment for healthy child development (e.g., Arditti, 2015; Bocknek et al., 2009; Shlafer & Poehlmann, 2010). Yet whether describing the nature of family relationships, feelings of loss, stigma, or economic marginality, there is little in prior research on the mechanisms underlying parental incarceration effects that appears distinctive to this particular event. Indeed, these basic processes would seem just as well placed in research examining family dynamics (e.g., parental substance abuse, parental offending, and other co-occurring disadvantages) and intergenerational trends.

From a criminological perspective, the positioning of family effects in the parental incarceration literature relative to other bodies of research on the causes of crime is striking. Criminological theorists have argued that inadequate parenting practices fail to provide the attachment bonds between parent and child that discourage delinquency (Hirschi, 1969) and that youths raised in problematic home environments may fail to develop "definitions" unfavorable to antisociality (Sutherland & Cressey, 1974). Additionally, they have stressed the importance of direct and indirect transmission processes, as parents serve as both direct behavioral models and indirect conduits of attitudes and techniques consistent with delinquent/antisocial behaviors (Giordano, 2010). Thus, across multiple lines of criminological theorizing, the family features centrally in explanations of children's well-being outcomes, including involvement in delinquent and criminal activity. Yet in the literature focused more squarely on parental incarceration, the family is often conceptualized primarily as a background characteristic and source of potential confounding, recognizing that family factors may be correlated with both the experience of parental incarceration and children's outcomes. However, it is our view that attempts to isolate the effect of parental incarceration are often misguided, as the arrest/detention event necessarily occurs in connection with parents' problem behaviors and related aspects of the family climate.[1]

Our life-course perspective on parental incarceration and the broader family climate has drawn heavily on social learning theory. As suggested above, the parental incarceration literature places most of the weight on the effects of the incarceration

[1] An exception would be in cases of the wrongfully accused.

event, including the attenuation of bonds associated with parental absence. Moreover, with few exceptions, traditional criminological research has tended to emphasize specific parenting deficiencies in lieu of providing a more nuanced window on life within families. Thus, whether the focus has been parental support/control, family disruption, or family socioeconomic considerations, existing work has attended to the contours of individual family circumstances rather than the content of life within families. Social learning processes can help fill in the conceptual gaps identified in these disparate literatures by re-centering the family and connecting the experience of parental incarceration to the broader (family) context within which it unfolds.

Based on our prior analysis of the TARS data (e.g., Giordano et al., 2019), we have outlined five mechanisms through which the broader family climate and related exposures to parental incarceration may influence children's behavioral problems and other indicators of well-being, such as school performance (see also Giordano, 2010). First, children may directly observe their parents' problem behaviors, including substance use, violence, and other forms of criminality. Second, children may develop understandings about behaviors (e.g., what is appropriate/inappropriate or justifiable under certain conditions, such as when violence may be acceptable) via their ongoing patterns of interaction and communication with parents. Third, communications and observations that give shape to children's own behavioral repertoires and worldviews may go beyond the "strictly criminal" to include certain noncriminal definitions that nevertheless elevate youth's risk (see also Giordano, 2020). Fourth, youths' broader family climate exposes them to a wider circle of family members, parents' friends, fictive kin, and other affiliations that may increase their exposure to criminogenic sources of influence. Fifth, the realities of youths' broader family climate may have a channeling effect on their own developing social networks with peers and romantic partners, potentially limiting access to more prosocial ties. Importantly, our emphasis on the family climate does not preclude the potential for reciprocal effects of parental incarceration on the family context, as the destabilizing consequences on household considerations (e.g., relationship quality, caregiving, parenting, and finances) are well documented (e.g., Geller et al., 2011; Schwartz-Soicher et al., 2011; Tasca et al., 2011). In addition to the more localized social processes described above, we emphasize here the marginalized long-term family contexts inhabited by youth exposed to parental incarceration, recognizing that the dynamics revealed within a given household have their own origin story (i.e., parents' problem behaviors connect back to their early family experiences, and so on), consistent with an intergenerational approach.

In what follows, we break down several of the pathways outlined above and examine them empirically using newly collected data from the Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study.

Our objective is to contribute to family scholars' understanding of the basic mechanisms underlying documented associations between parental incarceration and child well-being which, to date, is decidedly incomplete. Parental absence during the period of incarceration is a key stressor and has the potential to affect children in numerous ways. Yet a more comprehensive approach is needed to increase knowledge about the pathways linking parental incarceration to deleterious child

outcomes. Developing more complex portraits of family circumstances should also prove useful to the development of policies and programmatic responses to support children of incarcerated parents (and their families) during and after the period of incarceration.

Another important line of research is work exploring sources of resilience and stability for children: That is, how do some children appear to persevere despite their exposure to challenging life circumstances? Thus, the second portion of this investigation is focused on surveying family-based strengths and resilience processes. Identification of potentially malleable sources of family strengths is important for informing policies on how to best promote child well-being in the face of parental incarceration and other family circumstances and disadvantages.

Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study

Data

The TARS spans nearly 20 years and is a mixed-method longitudinal study that has focused on the lives of a large, diverse sample (n = 1321) of respondents interviewed first as adolescents and five additional times across the transition to adulthood. The sampling frame of the TARS encompassed 62 schools across seven school districts. The initial sample was drawn from the enrollment records of registered students in the 7th, 9th, and 11th grades in Lucas County, Ohio; however, school attendance was not a requirement for inclusion in the study. The stratified, random sample was devised by the National Opinion Research Center, and included over-samples of Black and Hispanic adolescents. The TARS data were collected in the years 2001, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2011, and 2019. At the time of the first interview (2001), the (G1) parents completed a questionnaire that included reports about their own alcohol and drug use, partying behavior, and parenting strategies, in addition to retrospective reports of their problem behavior as teens. The most recent wave (6; collected at about age 32) includes detailed information on (G2's) parenting strategies and reports of their children's well-being (G3). The exploratory analyses described below draw on all six waves of the TARS data, but tend to focus on the newly collected wave 6 data. The analyses we present in this chapter are limited to 603 parents and the child well-being measures focus on the parental reports related to their oldest child.

Measures

Parental Incarceration and Arrests: Our measure of *parental incarceration* (G2), based on a full retrospective history from the focal respondent, included questions to assess the timing, type, and duration of incarceration events. A similar set of

detailed questions are asked of other forms of criminal justice contact, including the number and type of *arrests* experienced by respondents as adults. These measures enable us to distinguish parents with no criminal justice involvement (no arrest or incarceration), only arrest, and parental incarceration.

Child Well-Being: We examined multiple indicators of child well-being based on parental reports elicited at the time of the sixth interview. *Flourishing* is measured using a four-item scale assessing respondent's degree of agreement with characterizations of their child, including (1) "X is affectionate and tender"; (2) "X bounces back quickly when things don't go his/her way"; (3) "X shows interest and curiosity in learning new things"; and (4) "X smiles and laughs a lot" ($\alpha = 0.75$; Lippman et al., 2011). We also included measures of children's internalizing and externalizing problem behaviors using standardized condensed scales based on 12 items from the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL; Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001). Our measure of *internalizing problem behaviors* was based on parents' responses to a roster of items following the prompt: "How often has each of these been true for [child] now or within the past two months?" Individual items included the following: (1) feels worthless or inferior; (2) is too fearful or anxious; (3) is self-conscious or easily embarrassed; (4) is unhappy, sad, or depressed; (5) worries; (6) is withdrawn, and does not get involved with others; (7) is not liked by other kids; and (8) does not get along with other kids ($\alpha = 0.82$). *Externalizing problem behaviors* followed the same prompt, and included the following: (1) argues a lot; (2) destroys things belonging to family or others; (3) is disobedient at home or school; (4) is stubborn, sullen, or irritable; (5) has temper tantrums or a hot temper; and (6) threatens people ($\alpha = 0.82$).

Family Climate: The family climate was examined using indicators of parent problem behaviors, parenting, social and material resources, network or wider circle, and multigenerational behaviors. Parent problem behaviors: *Crime* was measured using a seven-item variety score measure based on self-reported involvement in theft, property damage, assaultive behaviors, drug sales, burglary, and criminal trespassing in the past year ($\alpha = 0.75$; Elliott & Ageton, 1980). We assessed *substance use* using the following single item: "In the past year, how often have you used drugs to get high (not because you were sick)?" *Intimate partner violence* was measured using 22 items assessing physical victimization and perpetration of violence in the context of a current/most recent relationship ("Any" IPV = 1; $\alpha = 0.95$; Straus et al., 1996).

Parenting: We included multiple dimensions of parenting to further contextualize the content of life within families. *Centrality of parenting* is based on the frequency with which parents engaged in the following with their children: go on outings (e.g., park, library, zoo, family gatherings), read stories, and eat a meal together ($\alpha = 0.64$). We used a four-item version of *parental engagement* that included questions such as how often parents do the following: praise, hug, have an enjoyable time with their child, and spend time working on a project together ($\alpha = 0.87$). We also assessed the *perceived difficulty of parenting*, which included parents' assessments regarding the relative difficulty of caring for their child and whether the parent feels they have sacrificed more of their own life to meet the child's needs than anticipated ($\alpha = 0.71$).

A single-item measure was used to assess *parental regrets* based on parents' level of concern with the following: "not having any time for yourself because of [child]."

Household Social and Material Resources: We measured multiple aspects of household resources, including *parental employment* (unemployed, full-time, part-time), parental reports of material hardship, and parents' subjective perceptions of neighborhood disorder. *Material hardship* is based on six items gauging consumption-based household economic well-being. Parents were asked a roster of questions, including whether there was a time in the last 2 years that household members were unable to pay the full rent/mortgage, were evicted, or ran out of money for food. Our measure of subjective *neighborhood disorder* was taken from eight items assessing parents' perceptions of problems in the neighborhood, including unemployment, litter/trash, rundown buildings and yards, drug use/drug dealing in the open, and graffiti. *Family structure* was based on a question that determined the relationship of the oldest child's parents: married, cohabiting, dating, or not together.

The Network or Wider Circle: At the time of the sixth interview, respondents were asked a series of questions about the antisocial involvement of other family and friends in the household ("Thinking about your family and friends who live *with* you …") ($\alpha = 0.78$), in addition to other affiliates outside of the home ($\alpha = 0.87$). Antisociality and other behaviors of concern include drinking, drug use (including misuse of prescription medication), depression, mental illness, suicide, incarceration, and employment instability.

Multigenerational Crime, Drug Use, and Incarceration: At wave 1, the G1 parents completed a questionnaire that included reports about G1's alcohol and drug use, partying behaviors, and use of coercive discipline with the focal child (G2). The G1 respondents also answered questions about their own early problem behaviors, including whether they had been arrested as teens. G2 also answered retrospective questions about witnessing parents' IPV and the extent of family conflict in the home during their childhood/adolescence. Official records were compiled to track incarceration histories for G1 sample members, including incarcerations that occurred during the formative years of our (G2) focal respondents (i.e., prior to G2's 18th birthday).

The Family Climate

Parent Problem Behaviors

Summarizing, our own evaluation of the parental incarceration literature is that prior studies had inadequately accounted for the negative dynamics connected to parents' antisociality and problem behaviors. This oversight is due, in part, to data limitations. For example, some of the leading surveys used to estimate parental incarceration effects include few measures of parents' problem behaviors beyond indicators of domestic violence or substance abuse. Furthermore, the base rates

observed for these behaviors are strikingly low, particularly in light of surveys conducted among prisoners (Bronson et al., 2017). Yet researchers generally seem to subscribe to the idea that the behavioral differences between individuals with and without incarceration histories are relatively muted. For example, Wakefield and Powell (2016) note that "the vast majority of fathers … evidenced no glaring red [behavioral] flag" during the period directly preceding their incarceration. In their cluster analysis, roughly one-quarter of men who were incarcerated fell into the groups characterized by domestic violence (17%) and substance abuse (8%), relative to 29% who were categorized as "low risk."

We compared levels of parent's substance use and any involvement with intimate partner violence in the TARS data (Fig. 6.1), distinguishing parents without any criminal justice system experience (no arrests or incarceration), parents who had only been arrested as adults (no incarceration history), and those with incarceration experience. Our findings diverged considerably from those of Wakefield and Powell (2016). In particular, our analyses revealed that 33% of parents with a history of incarceration reported "using drugs to get high" within the past year, which is more than double the share who reported drug use among those with no criminal justice involvement ($p < 0.001$). Additionally, we found that roughly two-fifths of parents reported any violence in their current/most recent relationship as compared to less than one-quarter of those with no criminal justice contact ($p < 0.001$). We also found that roughly one-fifth of those with a history of incarceration reported both substance use and intimate partner violence (19.15%), suggesting that it may be more useful to conceptualize these dynamics in terms of interrelated sources of risk. Comparisons between those parents with a history of arrest (but who were not incarcerated) and the other two groups revealed that even those parents with relatively low-level criminal justice contact (arrest only) report greater involvement in these problem behaviors; however, the differences between parents who had experienced arrest and parents who had no criminal justice contact were slightly smaller in

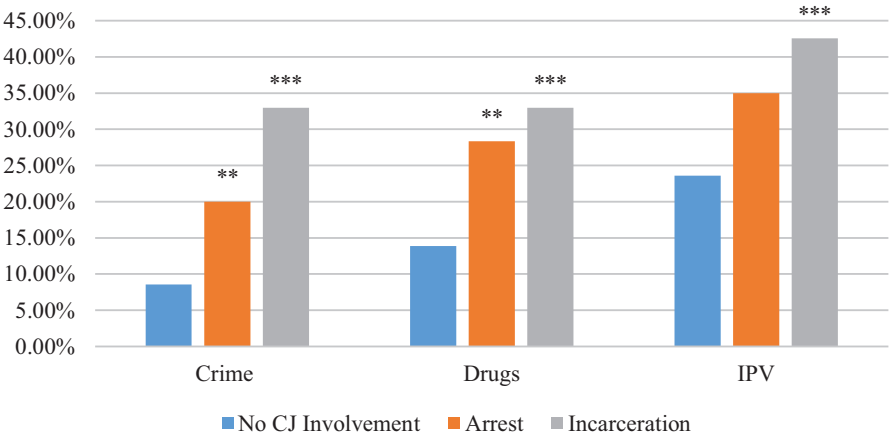

Fig. 6.1 Parent problem behaviors

magnitude than those described above ($p < 0.01$ and $p < 0.10$ for substance use and IPV, respectively).

Although parents' substance use and intimate partner violence are critical indicators of the underlying lifestyle often associated with incarceration, offending is of even greater import. Consistent with our social learning and life-course perspectives, we contend that parental involvement in crime/offending typically lasts longer than a particular episode of incarceration and provides a direct link to the child's own antisocial outcomes. Yet few survey data sets are able to account for this important element of the parental incarceration—child well-being link. We used single-point estimates of parental involvement in crime as the basis for comparisons among those with and without criminal justice system experience (no arrest or incarceration, parents who have experienced an arrest but have not been incarcerated, and those who were incarcerated). As expected, we found that nearly four times (33.0%) the share of parents with a history of incarceration self-reported criminal involvement at the time of the sixth interview, relative to parents with no criminal justice involvement (8.6%). In addition, over one and a half times the share of those with an incarceration history reported past year offending as compared to those parents with a history of arrest only (20.0%). Indeed, the magnitude of the observed differences between the incarceration and no-criminal-justice-involvement parent subgroups was greatest for crime relative to drugs and intimate partner violence.

Given the longitudinal nature of the TARS data, we were also able to compare these groups on their extent of problem behavior involvement over time (Fig. 6.2). Across the five waves, parents who would go on to accumulate a history of incarceration self-reported greater involvement in delinquency/crime than those with no criminal justice involvement. Although the arrest and incarceration subgroups reported similar levels of delinquent/criminal involvement over time, the trend lines began to diverge when respondents averaged 20 years of age (wave 4). Thus, as the majority of respondents evidenced declining levels of offending behaviors, consistent with observed trends in research on criminal desistance, those with a history of

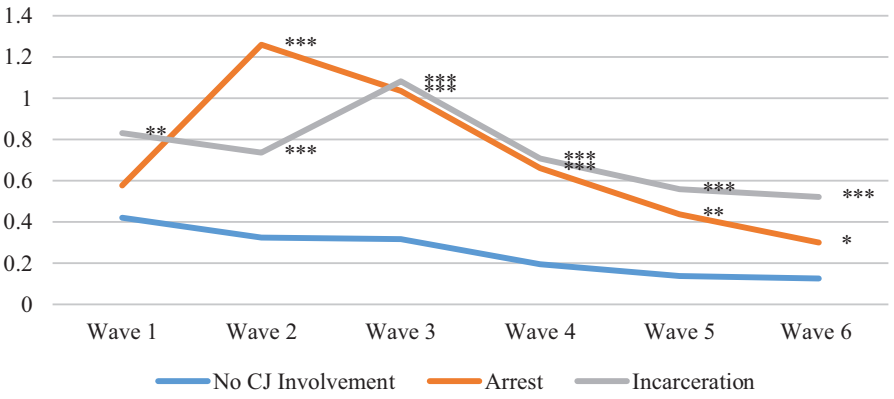

Fig. 6.2 Crime involvement over time

incarceration maintained their relatively high levels of offending well into adulthood. This longer lens on parent's criminal involvement is critical to highlight the high-rate, chronic offending of the incarceration subgroup. The chronicity may itself be linked to prior criminal justice involvement, including incarceration, given the barriers to reentry faced by returning prisoners. Nevertheless, these pre- and post-incarceration behavioral patterns require explicit attention, as the attendant costs of parental incarceration cannot be neatly separated from the behaviors underlying parents' heavy criminal justice involvement.

Taken together, parents with incarceration experience exhibit lifelong episodes of criminal involvement in contrast to parents with no criminal justice experience. In addition to heightened criminal behaviors, parents with incarceration experience more often have highly conflictual relationships and substance-use issues. While parental incarceration is associated with these problematic behavior profiles, criminal justice contact (arrest) is associated with similar levels of crime, substance use, and violent relationships. These findings indicate that it is important to not simply isolate incarceration experience but consider the broader repertoire of problematic behaviors.

As we have noted above, the lack of attention to parental behaviors in the incarceration effects literature is, in part, a data issue. Few studies have included adequate measures of parent's criminal activity, and the reported rates of parent's engagement in other problem behaviors are typically quite low. However, the lack of attention to parental behaviors goes beyond the purely empirical, as many researchers have referenced early criminological claims that parents attempt to shield children from their deviant ways (Hirschi, 1969). Our own work (Copp et al., 2020; Giordano, 2010; Giordano et al., 2019), and the work of other qualitative scholars (e.g., Johnson & Easterling, 2015b; Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008; Siegel, 2011) has largely refuted these theoretical claims, as children frequently report an acute awareness of their parents' problem behaviors and often forge their own connections between periods of parental substance use/offending and feelings of stress/instability. Thus, in addition to refining data collection strategies to ensure adequate measures of parents' behaviors, there is a need for further theoretical refinement to more fully integrate this behavioral component into the conceptual frameworks of research aimed at examining parental incarceration effects.

Parenting

Our discussion of the family climate began with parental behaviors for two key reasons. First, as outlined above, parental behaviors are directly related to youths' outcomes. Parents model negative behaviors that the children may eventually adopt, and moreover, exposure to such behaviors may telegraph a certain worldview or a set of attitudes about appropriate behavioral responses. Second, other key aspects of the family climate—including parenting and children's overall sense of safety/stability—vary markedly across periods of parental involvement in crime/substance

use relative to periods of desistance/abstinence. This focus on parenting fits well with our broader interest in social learning mechanisms, as parenting conveys an even wider set of communications and observations than afforded by an exclusive focus on parental behaviors.

Few studies have considered parenting differences in families with and without exposure to parental incarceration. A handful of studies examine differences in parental involvement, often linking the lower levels of involvement observed in households to the experience of parental incarceration (Turney & Wildeman, 2013). However, among those focused on the more specific parenting behaviors of individuals with and without a history of incarceration, factors such as parental supervision/monitoring and global indicators of relationship quality are among those most commonly assessed (see, e.g., Kjellstrand & Eddy, 2011; Murray & Farrington, 2005). Much of this work documents few differences in the parenting strategies employed within households with and without a history of parental incarceration. However, our review of the TARS data suggests important differences in specific parenting practices across these groups. For example, we compared respondents' reports of the centrality of parenting and their overall levels of engagement (see Fig. 6.3). Although parents with and without a history of incarceration reported taking their child on outings with similar frequency, these groups differed in their reports of reading stories and eating meals together such that those with a history of incarceration reported participation in these activities on a less frequent basis. Those with a history of incarceration similarly reported lower levels of engagement. In particular, they less frequently praised or hugged their child, less often spent an enjoyable time with their child, and less routinely spent time working on a project with their child.

These questions are similar to indicators of parental monitoring or involvement included in other work; however, we find that the greater specificity provided by

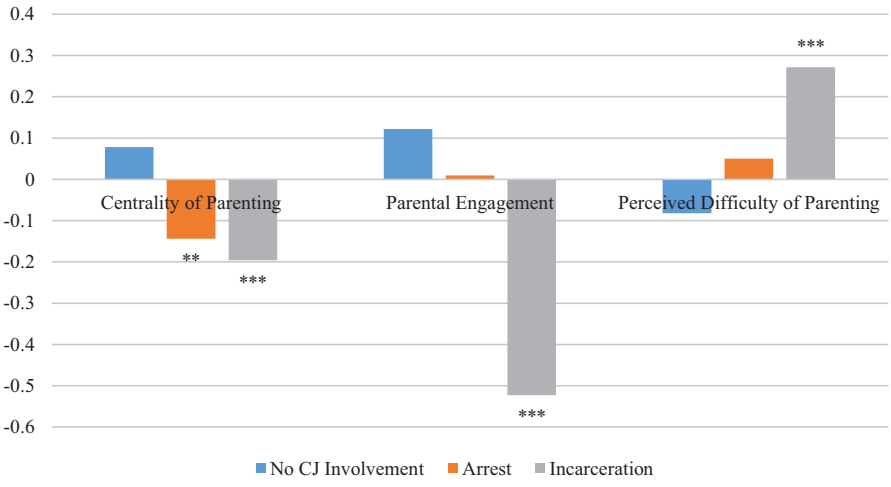

Fig. 6.3 Parenting

some of the questions included in our indices helps highlight more nuanced differences in the day-to-day parenting behaviors of those with and without a history of incarceration. Yet in addition to these parenting basics, we were interested in parents' perceived ability to navigate their role, including the extent to which they experienced stress and/or regrets associated with parenting. We found that parents with a history of incarceration found their child harder to care for, and also indicated that their child more often engaged in behaviors that they found bothersome. These differences likely reflect the child's own developing behavioral problems, which connect back to the parents' problem behaviors and other related elements of the broader family climate, and contribute to difficulties encountered in the parental role. These dynamics also give shape to parents' emotional responses, including the extent to which they experience parenting regrets. Indeed, we found that parents with a history of incarceration expressed feeling that they had given up more of their own lives to meet their child's needs than anticipated. They also expressed greater concern about not having time for themselves because of their child. The above displays nicely the interrelated nature of the family dynamics, as children exposed to parental incarceration may indeed exhibit more behavioral difficulties, which may complicate the parental role. However, the role of parenting may also involve more sacrifice than anticipated, which likely contributes to the extent of parental engagement and the nature of the parent-child relationship.

Thus, differences in parenting and parents' emotional responses are important components of the broader family climate, and key predictors of healthy child development. The above discussion suggests that although traditional parenting indicators of supervision/monitoring and involvement matter, it is also important to consider more detailed measures of specific parenting practices and parental attitudes that begin to give shape to our understanding of family life. In addition, it is critical that these family climate factors are considered alongside parental behaviors because, as we have argued, the dynamics involved in intergenerational transmission include the myriad ways in which parents directly and indirectly impart information, attitudes/worldviews, and behavioral repertoires about crime and noncrime behaviors that elevate the risk for children's problem behavior development. A simple approach to include these key family climate elements moving forward would be to model parenting practices/attitudes as mediators of the parental behavior–child outcome link. However, approaches that are able to simultaneously capture the reciprocally related nature of these effects hold more promise.

Household Social and Material Resources

Recent research in the incarceration effects tradition has begun to focus on the potential for heterogeneity in effects, fixing in on the conditions under which children appear to fare better or worse (e.g., Turanovic et al., 2012; Turney & Wildeman, 2015; Turney, 2017). This often involves assessing variation in children's environments. As elaborated above, our own approach would suggest that the primary focus

remain on family and social environments inhabited by youth. However, we also recognize that the potential for youth to push back against the press of intergenerational continuity is inhibited by often overwhelming structural constraints. Thus, attention to the social and economic disadvantages experienced by youth is critical to a comprehensive assessment of the full "package" of life within families (Giordano & Copp, 2015).

This aspect of our package notion has been more fully incorporated into prior incarceration effects research. Most studies have included controls for numerous sources of socioeconomic disadvantage, including parent's education and employment, in addition to family poverty and material hardship, in recognition of the extreme contexts of disadvantage often inhabited by families with a history of incarceration. Analysis of the TARS data similarly reflects the disadvantaged life circumstances described by parents who were previously incarcerated (see Table 6.1). For example, a smaller share of those with a history of incarceration reported full-time employment and a greater share reported being unemployed than their counterparts, including those with no prior criminal justice involvement and those who had experienced arrest (but not incarceration). Previously incarcerated parents also reported greater material hardship, and their subjective assessments of their neighborhood

Table 6.1 Household social and material resources

Variable	No CJ involvement	Arrest only	Incarceration
Employment			
Unemployed	20.42%	21.67%	34.04%
Part-time	14.58%	10.00%	13.83%
Full-time	64.35%	66.67%	51.06%
Material hardship	0.95	1.45	1.94
Subjective neighborhood disorder	1.42	2.20	3.23
Education			
Less than high school	4.40%	6.67%	18.09%
High school	23.38%	35.00%	35.11%
Some college	36.34%	38.33%	39.36%
College or more	35.88%	20.00%	7.45%
Family structure			
Two biological parents	61.95%	48.33%	25.81%
Split custody	8.82%	25.00%	20.43%
One biological parent	26.68%	18.33%	45.16%
Other family	2.55%	8.33%	8.60%
Relationship status (with other bioparent)			
Dating	3.55%	6.78%	6.59%
Cohabiting	7.35%	16.95%	9.89%
Married	54.74%	25.42%	15.38%
Not together	34.36%	40.85%	68.13%
Co-reside with focal child	94.21%	83.33%	69.15%

$^{\dagger}p < 0.10$; $^{*}p < 0.05$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{***}p < 0.001$
Source: Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study

environments identified more areas of concern (e.g., high unemployment, litter or trash, rundown buildings and yards, drug dealing, graffiti). Further reflecting the disadvantaged backgrounds of those with a history of incarceration, a smaller percentage of previously incarcerated respondents graduated from college, and a greater share reported not completing high school, than their peers.

The household configurations of those with a history of incarceration also differed from their peers; whereas the majority (54.74%) of parents with no criminal justice background were married to the other biological parent of the focal child, only 15.38% of parents with incarceration experience were married to their child's other biological parent. The modal relationship category for parents with a history of incarceration was "not together" (68.13%) and among parents with no prior criminal justice involvement 34.36% were not together. Parents with a history of incarceration were also less likely to reside with their focal child, as just over two-thirds (69.15%) of previously incarcerated parents resided with their child at the time of the interview as compared to nearly all (94.21%) parents with no prior criminal justice involvement.

Parents who have a history of incarceration confront more material and social constraints than parents without criminal justice experience. These constraints have implications for the stability and development of their children and are certainly part of the package of risk. These features are not only potentially confounding factors, but also part of the process through which parental incarceration contributes to child well-being.

The Network or Wider Circle

As detailed above, the lack of attention to parental behaviors is a particularly glaring omission from the parental incarceration literature. A related feature of family life for many youths with a history of parental incarceration is frequent and close contact with multiple family members and other network members who present an antisocial influence. A small number of studies have considered the potential for additional family members to have backgrounds that include incarceration (e.g., Farrington et al., 2009; Hagan & Palloni, 1990). However, the concentration of incarceration within families is often framed in terms of an additional stressor (Wildeman & Wakefield, 2014), and not as an additional source of criminogenic influence. Our more social view of these influence processes suggests that other family members and the parents' broader network of associates present opportunities for observations and communications that heighten the risk of children's problem behavior development. Analyses relying on the TARS sample are in line with these social learning processes and, accordingly, suggest that future work should consider behavioral influences that extend beyond the focal parent.

In the TARS, we asked about a series of problem behaviors relating to family and friends who do and do not reside in the household (asked separately). Relative to those with no criminal justice involvement, parents with a history of parental

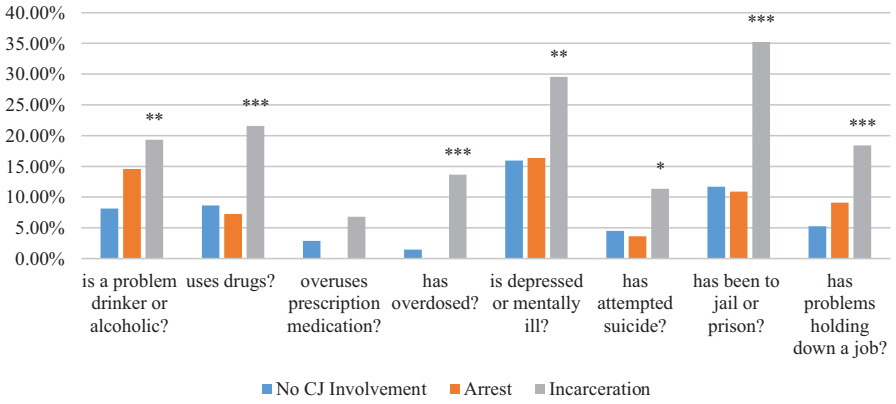

Fig. 6.4 Problem behaviors of residents (family and friends) within the household

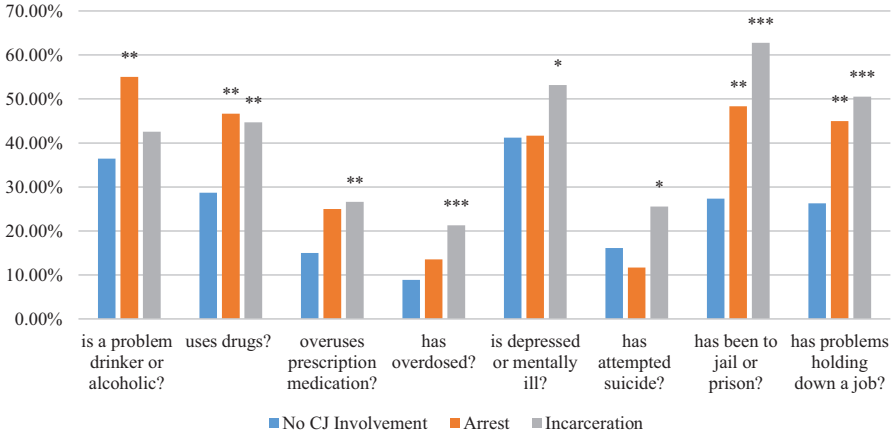

Fig. 6.5 Problem behaviors of family and friends outside the household

incarceration more frequently live in households with someone who (1) is a problem drinker or alcoholic ($p < 0.01$), (2) uses drugs ($p < 0.001$), (3) overuses prescription medication ($p < 0.10$), (4) has overdosed ($p < 0.001$), (5) is depressed or has other mental health problems ($p < 0.01$), (6) has attempted suicide ($p < 0.05$), (7) has been to jail or prison ($p < 0.001$), and (8) has problems holding down a job ($p < 0.001$; see Fig. 6.4).

Whereas individuals nearly universally reported greater problem behavior involvement among friends/family *outside* the home, the contrasts in the antisocial tendencies of these non-household affiliations were less stark. In particular, Fig. 6.5 shows that parents with a history of incarceration more commonly reported friends and family who use drugs ($p < 0.01$), overuse prescription medicine ($p < 0.01$), have

overdosed ($p < 0.001$), are depressed or have experienced other mental health problems ($p < 0.05$), have attempted suicide ($p < 0.05$), have been to jail or prison ($p < 0.001$), and have problems holding down a job ($p < 0.001$) than their counterparts with no criminal justice involvement. Thus, the most notable differences in the social networks of families with and without parental incarceration are among the behavioral, alcohol/substance use, and mental health problems of those residing in the household, and with whom children likely come into contact on a frequent—if not daily—basis.

Our inclusion of an additional comparison group (i.e., parents with a history of adult arrest, but who have not been incarcerated) is revealing in that parents who have been arrested fall right in the middle in terms of the behavioral profiles of their family members and other affiliates. The larger point is that differences between these groups of parents are not simply reflective of deeper enmeshment with the criminal justice system or greater socioeconomic marginalization. Rather, these family climates also vary in their family members' behavioral repertoires. Thus, conceptualizing incarceration as part of a larger package of risk factors that includes children's family experiences potentially provides greater theoretical specificity for studies on the mechanisms underlying parental incarceration, and provides more explicit guidance for programmatic efforts.

Multigenerational Family Contexts

Existing research on the effects of parental incarceration on child well-being has developed separately, for the most part, from the literature on the intergenerational transmission processes linking parents and their offspring's involvement in criminal and antisocial activity. This is largely due to different understandings of the causes of the deleterious outcomes exhibited by children of incarcerated parents. However, attention to intergenerational perspectives would help contextualize the socioeconomic realities and other related family-based risks that characterize the home lives of many households with backgrounds that include incarceration. For example, whereas parental incarceration effects researchers typically focus on children's exposure to a parent's incarceration and the conditions of socioeconomic disadvantage that surround it, the family dynamics themselves are not directly examined. Yet as we have demonstrated, families with and without incarceration histories differ significantly in their behavioral profiles, affiliations with other criminogenic influences, specific parenting practices, and levels of economic marginality—all of which are potential pathways to child behavioral problems. Thus, whereas our approach would connect child well-being to features of the broader family context (including parental incarceration), research in the parental incarceration effects tradition would draw a more direct causal link between parental incarceration, particularly separation effects, and children's outcomes.

One effective way to pit parental incarceration and intergenerational transmission effects against each other is to examine these family dynamics over a longer

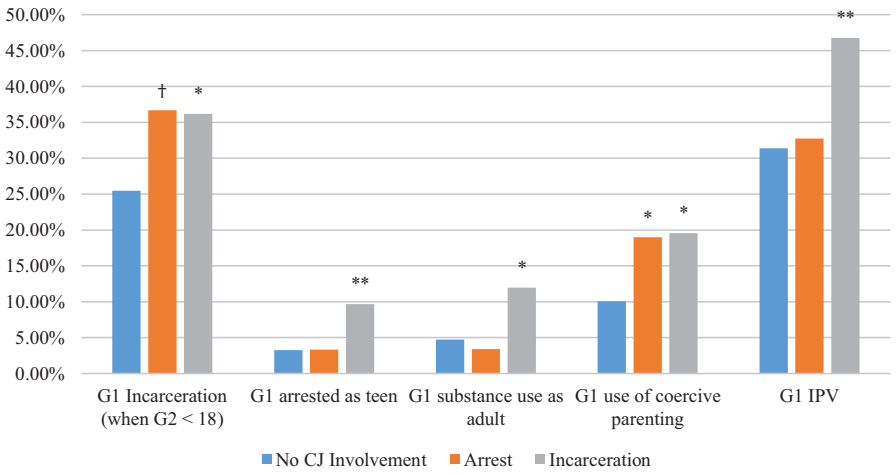

Fig. 6.6 Multigenerational family contexts

period. Drawing on longitudinal data from the TARS, we compared G1 reports of incarceration, problem behavior involvement, and broader family climate (see Fig. 6.6). As compared to respondents with no prior criminal justice contact, a larger share of those with a history of incarceration experienced the incarceration of a parent prior to age 18, based on official records ($p < 0.05$). In addition, based on G1 reports, a greater share of the parents of our focal respondents with a history of incarceration were arrested as teens ($p < 0.001$), used drugs to get high (based on past year reports, when G2 averaged 16 years old; $p < 0.05$), and relied on coercive parenting practices (e.g., threatened to physically hurt child or push/grab/slap/hit child; $p < 0.05$). Drawing on G2's retrospective reports, we also found that respondents with a history of incarceration more commonly witnessed their own parent's (G1) IPV ($p < 0.01$) than their peers who were not involved in the criminal justice system. These congruencies over time lend support to notions of intergenerational continuity over approaches that rely more narrowly on the effects of a single episode of incarceration. Although few data sets are able to account empirically for these intergenerational trends, the findings elaborated here provide additional support for a life-course lens on incarceration experiences, and underscore the need for a more explicit focus on the broader family context.

Family-Based Strengths and Resilience

Our perspective and supporting analyses document clearly the ways in which the family system is tested by the broader behavioral patterns underlying parents' justice system involvement and related family-based risks. Accordingly, in prior work on parental incarceration and resilience we have emphasized the importance of

directing attention to the child's experience outside of the family that may be associated with more favorable outcomes (e.g., school attachment/performance; Copp et al., in press). This is noticeably in contrast with the growing body of research on resilience in the context of parental incarceration, which is often framed around individual strengths exhibited by the child (Dallaire & Zeman, 2013; Johnson & Easterling, 2015a). A limitation of this individual focus is that children's exposure to parental incarceration may occur during developmental periods in which they have limited capacity to manage the risks associated with this particular form of adversity. Moreover, the extent to which children exposed to parental incarceration are able to exercise agency may be limited by structural constraints, as many are cut off from economic, social, and cultural forms of capital. In addition to the qualities of the child, children's environments feature centrally in the extent to which kids can "do well" despite adversity. Thus, consistent with the broader literature on resilience, which focuses heavily on the presence of family strengths (Doty et al., 2017; Masten, 2018; Walsh, 2002), we focus here on certain positive parenting dynamics, recognizing the potential for heterogeneity in the parenting practices exhibited by families with backgrounds that include incarceration.

We focus primarily on the parenting indices evaluated at the outset, including centrality of parenting, parental engagement, and perceived difficulty of parenting. However, we also assess other aspects of the family climate, including children's exposure to parents' problem behaviors and household social and material resources. Whereas the descriptive analyses reviewed up to this point serve to contextualize the home lives of children exposed to parental incarceration, the analyses to follow link those family contexts to children's outcomes.

Based on our descriptive results we move away from treating parental incarceration experience as a separate indicator and combine parental incarceration and parenting practices (Table 6.2). To provide a comprehensive assessment of parenting

Table 6.2 Parenting practices, parental incarceration, and child well-being[a]

Parenting practices and parental Incarceration (PI), combinations	Flourishing	Internalizing problem behaviors	Externalizing problem behaviors
High positive parenting practices, no PI (ref)			
High positive parenting practices, PI	−0.013	0.004	−0.152
Low positive parenting practices, no PI	−0.466***	0.625***	0.667***
Low positive parenting practices, PI	−0.568***	0.728*	0.293
Parental incarceration prior to focal child's birth	−0.253*	0.332	0.510
R^2	0.26	0.13	0.08

$^{\dagger}p < 0.10$; $*p < 0.05$; $**p < 0.01$; $***p < 0.001$.

Source: Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study

[a]Models also include controls for parent's problem behaviors (crime, substance use, IPV), parent-child co-residence, household resources (parental employment, material hardship, and subjective neighborhood disorder, education), and demographic background characteristics (parental age, gender, and race/ethnicity)

practices, we created an index that included centrality of parenting, parental engagement, and perceived difficulty of parenting (reverse coded; $\alpha = 0.77$). We distinguished parental incarceration before and after the birth of the child. Next, we classified respondents who scored above the mean on this index as evidencing "high" positive parenting strategies, relative to those who scored at or below the mean. Then, based on combinations of high/low positive parenting and parental incarceration (PI), we created five mutually exclusive groups: (1) high positive parenting practices, no PI; (2) high positive parenting practices, PI; (3) low positive parenting practices, no PI; (4) low positive parenting practices, PI; and (5) PI prior to the birth of the focal child. Consistent with our package notion, we found that parenting dynamics and experience of incarceration tend to be interrelated. Roughly two-thirds of parents who experienced incarceration (since the birth of their focal child) were classified in the "low positive parenting practices, PI" category, and a similar share of parents without a history of incarceration were categorized as "high positive parenting practices, no PI." Still, a sizeable minority (34.2%) of those who garnered incarceration experiences during their children's lifetimes also reported engaging in positive parenting practices.

We focus on understanding resiliency among children of incarcerated parents, and consider whether the subgroup evidencing positive parenting practices also reported greater child well-being. Not surprisingly, parents with incarceration histories who report positive parenting more often live with their focal child's biological parent (30.8% vs. 12.2%) and more often reside with their child (84.6% vs. 58.8%) than their peers in the low positive parenting, parental incarceration subgroup. In addition, they report higher levels of education, lower material hardship, and fewer neighborhood problems. Of particular note are the lower levels of crime, substance use, and IPV among parents with incarceration histories and positive parenting practices relative to their counterparts who exhibit less positive parenting practices. Thus, we find that a number of other family climate differences appear to coincide with the positive parenting practices that we have used to differentiate between families with a background that includes incarceration.

Results of multivariate analyses revealed that children of incarcerated parents raised in environments where they are exposed to above-average levels of positive parenting strategies generally fare better than their peers (those with a similar history of parental incarceration who were subject to less positive parenting strategies). Indeed, the outcomes of youth exposed to positive parenting practices were similar regardless of their exposure to parental incarceration. In contrast, those exposed to less positive parenting practices generally fared worse across the well-being indicators included in this investigation. These differences persisted net of controls for the family climate, suggesting that the range of positive parenting practices included here may be characterized as family strengths that help promote child well-being, despite exposure to incarceration and other adversities. Supplemental analyses compared the outcomes of youth in the low parenting subgroups and found no differences among those with and without exposure to parental incarceration. These findings suggest that the observed differences may be driven by the parenting and other family climate differences, and not the incarceration event.

Conclusion

A mounting body of evidence has documented the broad-ranging consequences of America's overreliance on incarceration (Travis et al., 2014). Recent empirical evidence from studies of the effects on children has identified deleterious consequences across multiple domains, including behavioral, psychological, and educational deficits. Researchers have commonly drawn on strain or stigma perspectives to explain the mechanisms underlying observed parental incarceration effects on youth. These approaches tend to narrow in on the incarceration event and the immediate (household, economic) realities attached to it. However, an unintended consequence of such approaches is that other important dynamics—including those that constitute the broader context within which incarceration unfolds—remain just out of view.

Our own approach requires taking a step back to bring these other family climate considerations into focus, and to situate the experience of parental incarceration within this broader context. We placed particular emphasis on the parents' problem behaviors given their intimate connection to incarceration and children's problem development. Additionally, we considered a range of parenting practices, recognizing that the ways in which parents interact and engage with their children transmit certain attitudes and worldviews that may heighten their risk profiles. Our social learning approach accords particular weight to parents in the process of acquiring definitions favorable or unfavorable to the violation of law; however, it also emphasizes that other family members, parents' associates, and others who constitute the wider circle are likely key sources of influence. Thus, we include attention to the behavioral repertoires of these wider network members to more fully capture youths' exposure to criminogenic influences. Finally, our longer life-course lens also permitted attention to multigenerational family contexts, revealing long-term patterns of marginalization, problem behavior involvement, and criminal justice contact.

Consistent with prior work, our findings revealed that youth raised in households with a history of incarceration often had very limited access to social and material resources. Their parents were more often unemployed, and less often engaged in full-time work, than their peers. Parents also tended to have lower levels of education, and more typically resided in neighborhoods with more physical signs of disorder (e.g., graffiti, rundown buildings, drug activity). In addition, they reported greater material hardship, including difficulties paying bills/rent, food shortages, evictions, and unmet medical needs. However, beyond the distinct socioeconomic realities of families with incarceration backgrounds, we noted important differences across a wide-ranging set of family experiences, including parental behaviors, specific parenting practices, and behavioral repertoires of other family members and associates with whom youth are likely to have frequent contact (i.e., the wider circle). We also identified long-term patterns of marginalization and criminal justice contact spanning across multiple generations.

The findings presented here build upon our prior theoretical discussion and related mixed-methods analyses on intergenerational transmission in the context of

parental incarceration (Giordano et al., 2019). Yet they move beyond our prior work in four key ways. First, the current analyses included more detailed assessments of parents' problem behaviors and permitted an examination of behavioral trajectories over time. Second, we considered a range of specific parenting practices and their connection to parental incarceration. Third, we empirically assessed our theorized pathway between the wider circle of family and other associates and parental incarceration by comparing the behavioral inventories of network members—including those within and outside of the household—across groups who had and had not experienced incarceration. Fourth, whereas our prior analyses examined associations between G1 incarceration and G2 (our focal respondents) outcomes, the current analyses focused on the incarceration of G2 sample members and G3 outcomes. This not only permitted more precise assessment of our theoretical mechanisms given the greater depth of information on the G2 sample members (interviewed on six different occasions across a period of nearly two decades), but also allowed for a multigenerational lens on transmission processes.

Our findings were in line with previous analyses demonstrating the interrelatedness of parental behaviors and incarceration. However, our results showed that parents with a history of incarceration self-reported greater involvement in crime. Furthermore, our longitudinal lens revealed that the criminal trajectories of parents with a history of incarceration reflected more serious and chronic offending than their counterparts across the full study period. Incarceration was also closely linked to drug use and violence in the home, as substance use and IPV were both more common occurrences in households that included a background of incarceration. Beyond the direct transmission processes implicit in these parental behavior–parental incarceration connections, our prior work theorized that ongoing interaction and communication between parents and their children provide opportunities for the indirect transmission of attitudes/beliefs/worldviews that further give shape to children's behavioral repertoires. In the current analyses, we examined specific parenting practices and found that parents with and without a history of incarceration differ in their approach to parenting and the emotions they attach to their parental role. In particular, parents with a history of incarceration less frequently engaged with their children, and reported spending an enjoyable time with their children less often. They also praised or hugged their children less regularly. At the same time, they reported encountering greater difficulties in their parental role and experienced greater parental regrets. These emotional responses undoubtedly connect to the child's developing behavioral problems, which itself is attributable in large part to features of the broader family context. These interrelated dynamics nicely convey the importance of attempting to capture fully the family climate to provide a thorough accounting of the factors associated with the outcomes observed among children of incarcerated parents.

Our focus on parents is consistent with the general aim of research on the mechanisms underlying parental incarceration effects on youth, which has focused on differences in parental characteristics (substance use, mental health problems) and socioeconomic circumstances to account for differences between children of incarcerated parents and their counterparts. Yet our more social view of transmission

processes naturally extended our gaze beyond the parent-child dyad to consider other sources of social influence. We developed a new measure in the TARS to assess these broader social networks. Focusing first on others within the household (not including the focal parent), we found striking differences in alcohol and substance use, mental health problems, criminal justice involvement, and employment instability in households with and without a history of parental incarceration. Notably, more than one-third of households comprised by focal respondents with a history of incarceration included an additional household member who had also been incarcerated. These differences persisted among family and friends outside of the home, as parents with a history of incarceration similarly reported greater problem alcohol and drug use, mental health problems, criminal justice involvement, and employment difficulties among their non-coresidential family and associates. These findings place in stark relief potential differences in children's exposure to various forms of risk, and suggest the need for future work that further explores the importance of this wider circle of influence on child well-being. Future attempts to fully realize the extent to which these wider network members comprise part of the package of reciprocally related risks that includes parental incarceration and other family-related disadvantages will have practical implications, as these are often the individuals who step in to provide care during periods of parental absence due to incarceration.

In developing our portrait of the broader family climate (Giordano et al., 2019), we did not focus solely on parents' reports of their current drug/alcohol use and other indications of behavioral problems. Instead, we looked to their early problem behaviors, and identified differences between parents with and without a history of incarceration that extended back to their teenage years. Implicit in these distinctive behavioral origins were the differing family circumstances within which parents' problem behaviors emerged. Whereas most research in the incarceration effects tradition conceptualizes the experience of parental incarceration—including the (economic/relational) strain associated with the incarceration event, the stigma that persists long after the incarceration period has ended, and the trauma that reverberates from the loss of a parent—as the impetus for children's adverse outcomes, our intergenerational approach recognizes that the family contexts in which incarceration unfolds are characterized by long-term patterns of marginalization. In the current analyses, we leveraged our multigenerational data to compare the incarceration histories and behavior profiles of the G1 parents of our focal respondents. We found considerable evidence of intergenerational continuity, as over one-third of sample parents who were incarcerated also had a parent who was incarcerated. This means that their children (G3) have not only a parent who was incarcerated, but also a grandparent who has spent some time in jail or prison. Further evidence of this problematic multigenerational family context is that parents with incarceration experience more often were exposed to their parents' substance use and violence in the home, including coercive parenting strategies and IPV, than their peers. These findings reflect a level of enmeshment in destabilizing environments that may influence children's outcomes well beyond the influence of parental incarceration. They also point to serious challenges in isolating the effect of parental incarceration, and

bolster calls to shift the focus theoretically and empirically from a particular incarceration event to the broader context of disadvantage and family-related risks within which incarceration unfolds.

The differences observed across these key areas, including parental behaviors and other related aspects of the family climate, suggest that children of incarcerated parents, on average, experience greater social and economic disadvantages than their peers. This does not preclude the potential for families to exhibit strengths or resilience in the context of parental incarceration. We focused particular attention on an index of positive parenting strategies as an indicator of family-based strengths, and compared youth exposed to high and low positive parenting practices, in addition to parental incarceration. The descriptive profile that emerged from our created categories (high positive parenting, no PI; high positive parenting, PI; low positive parenting, no PI; low positive parenting, PI; PI before the birth of focal child) reflected the clustering of high positive parenting and other family features generally associated with greater child well-being, including family structure, parental education, socioeconomic standing, and parents' reported (lack of) behavioral problems. Furthermore, our comparisons revealed that children exposed to parental incarceration fare better than their peers when they are also exposed to more positive parenting practices. In fact, the differences that we observed across the well-being indicators were on the basis of parenting practices, and not the experience of parental incarceration (e.g., those in the high positive parenting subgroups with and without parental incarceration fared similarly, as did those in the low positive parenting subgroups with and without parental incarceration).

These findings diverge from other research in the incarceration effects tradition, which has found that the negative effects of parental incarceration are more pronounced among those least likely to experience this event (see, e.g., Turney & Wildeman, 2015). A key difference between our analyses and this prior published work is that we were able to account for a wider range of family climate factors to demonstrate that when family circumstances do not include these other disadvantages that typically co-occur with the experience of parental incarceration (e.g., less exposure to parents' problem behaviors, positive parenting strategies, greater household material resources), children tend to fare *better*. Thus, attention to the family climate may be one potentially useful target for practitioners. Although parenting classes are a seemingly obvious programmatic implication from these findings, efforts to address individuals' underlying substance-abuse problems are of more immediate concern. Other important considerations include allocating resources to promote greater attention to children's placements (both during and following periods of parental incarceration) and efforts to curb the marginalizing effects of criminal justice involvement (e.g., employment and housing support). That these family strengths are a potential source of resiliency is an important finding; however, we note that most children of incarcerated parents experience less favorable social and economic circumstances than their peers, and that efforts to improve the family contexts of youth will likely need to include multipronged efforts; poor parenting practices are often connected to serious parental behavioral and/or mental health problems and very limited material resources. Thus, efforts to improve aspects of

parenting alone are almost certain to fail absent other measures to address problems with addiction and/or mental health, and access to food, medical care, and safe and affordable housing.

While this chapter provides new insights into parental incarceration and family functioning, there are a few limitations. The TARS sample is based on residents of a county in northwest Ohio and is not nationally representative. Based on Census data, the original sample and the current wave 6 sample are representative in terms of demographic indicators of their respective age groups at the time of data collection. Second, we do not present causal effects in our analysis of child well-being before and after parental incarceration. Although our analysis is associational, it does rely on a rich set of measures representing the lifestyle and problem behavior repertoires of respondents. Third, our analysis does not distinguish maternal and paternal incarceration experience, nor does it account for the incarceration of the non-focal parent. While this is important, these categories (maternal/paternal incarceration) are often not mutually exclusive—particularly in the case of maternal incarceration. For example, roughly 36% of the incarcerated parents in our sample were women, and the remaining 64% were men. However, nearly two-fifths of the incarcerated mothers in our sample also reported the incarceration of the focal child's father. We hope to explore these patterns in more detail in future work. Fourth, with little exception, our analyses did not account for the timing of parental absence due to incarceration. This is important, but these complex residential patterns are challenging to trace and measure. For example, only 50% of children of incarcerated parents were living with both parents at the time of birth. By the time of the most recent interview, this share was reduced to one-third. Our future work will consider a more careful analysis of parental residence at the time of birth and subsequent parental contact and residence. Finally, based on the cohort sample design, the samples are relatively young parents (average age 32.6) with young children (average age 8.7). Further analysis will include attention to age at parenthood and number of children in the household.

Prior research has shown that parental absence due to incarceration has deleterious effects on child well-being, and a negative impact on family stability and functioning. Yet findings from the most recent wave of the TARS underscore that a life-course perspective and attention to additional features of family context are important for developing a comprehensive portrait of the circumstances these children must navigate. Our focus here has parallels to the progress of research on effects of divorce on children, where parental absence is viewed as stressful, but features of family life prior to and after this "event" also figure heavily into our understanding of consequences for child well-being. As noted in our earlier work in this area (Giordano et al., 2019), discrete events have taken center stage in most life-course studies. These have the advantage of being concrete and timed, and thus relatively straightforward to measure. Nevertheless, it is important to consider these events in tandem with parents' longer term behavioral trajectories, those of others in the child's immediate orbit, as well as parenting practices and levels of engagement that together with specific stresses related to incarceration periods often pose a formidable bundle of interrelated risks.

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Part III
Parental Military Deployment

Chapter 7
Parental Deployment and Military Children: A Century of Research

Shelley MacDermid Wadsworth, Shawn Whiteman, Patricia Lester, Valerie Stander, and Sharon Christ

Media images of joyful children rushing to greet uniformed mothers and fathers returning from wartime deployments are heartwarming, but also raise questions about how children's lives are affected by such separations. Between 2001 and 2018, over two million children experienced a military parental separation (Wenger et al., 2018). This chapter focuses on the consequences of temporary parental separation for children in US military families, arguably the most high-profile element of military experience. Although beyond our scope, we recognize other important aspects of military life affecting children, such as frequent relocations, chronic parental work stress, and risk of parental injury or death (NASEM, 2019). Furthermore, other children around the world face threat of war-related injury or death themselves (MacDermid Wadsworth, 2010).

Among US military personnel, 38.6% have children aged 22 years or younger (n = 816,083; U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), 2020). Approximately 700,000 service member parents are married and 125,000 are divorced, annulled, widowed, or never married. Among their 1,650,464 children, the single largest group is age birth to 5 years (n = 624,042), followed by 6–11 years (n = 529,560), 12–18 years (389,729), and 19–22 years (n = 107,133). Because 25% of military personnel serve 3 years or less (Marrone, 2020), the number of children affected by deployments can grow rapidly. In recent decades, there has been considerable interest in how

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deployment impacts US military children, and we focus here on summarizing information on this topic.

We first place current knowledge into historical context by tracing the relationship between the military and families throughout the US history. We then review what was learned about parental separation during conflicts in the twentieth century, followed by what has been learned since 2001. Despite the accumulated evidence, significant questions remain, which are described in the next section, followed by the introduction of a new study designed to address some of these gaps in knowledge. Finally, we consider implications for prevention and intervention.

History of Military Family Programs and Policies

For much of America's history, military leaders considered family life irrelevant or antithetical to military service, especially in the enlisted ranks, even though many members had families who served alongside them. For example, *camp followers* who accompanied soldiers during the American Revolution and to frontier forts in the American west were compensated as military cooks, seamstresses, nurses, and sometimes soldiers (Albano, 1994).

Until 1942, regulations prohibited men with wives or children from enlisting during peacetime, although they could be drafted. Exceptions were made though, and greater latitude was given to officers (Albano, 1994). Financial support had been provided to widows and children of wounded or killed *veterans* since the 1600s (Aaronson, 1942), but financial support for families *during* military service began only in 1898 (Wickham, 1983). World War II was a turning point because heads of households were drafted, requiring provision of support for families left at home, a practice that then continued beyond the war (Albano, 1994).

Following the Korean War in the 1950s, it became clear that service members' family concerns reduced military retention (Little, 1971). At that time, 70% of service members were unmarried, but by 1960 spouses and children outnumbered service members in the military population (Albano, 1994). Spurred by this trend, a military family support infrastructure began to develop, beginning with Army Community Service centers in 1965. The other service branches followed suit 15 years later. Childcare programs also began to appear, beginning with informal preschool and family childcare arrangements but eventually becoming the largest employer-provided child development system in the USA (Kamarck, 2020).

US military conscription ended in 1973 during the Vietnam conflict. In the new all-volunteer force, personnel served longer and the number of those with families rose (Albano, 1994). Echoing general trends, both service members and families became more diverse, with increased labor force participation among military wives and rising divorce rates contributing to substantial increases in single-parent families (Albano, 1994). Regulations preventing service by married women and mothers ended in 1975. Subsequently, the proportion of female personnel rose from 2.5% in 1973 to 11% in 1991 (Norwood & Ursano, 1994), and the number of dual-military families increased as well.

In 1983, the Chief of Staff of the Army announced a philosophy and strategic plan regarding families for the first time:

> A partnership exists between the Army and Army Families. The Army's unique missions, concept of service and lifestyle of its members—all affect the nature of this partnership. Towards the goal of building a strong partnership, the Army remains committed to assuring adequate support to families in order to promote wellness; to develop a sense of community; and to strengthen the mutually reinforcing bonds between the Army and its families (Wickham, 1983, p. 3).

Other significant actions followed: In the 1980s, the Air Force conducted its first large-scale *Families in Blue* survey (Albano, 1994), and the Navy created a Family Research Center. The Army launched the annual Army Family Action Plan (Albano, 1994), and in 1986 the Office of the Secretary of Defense created an office of Family Policy (Brown, 1993).

The first Gulf War in 1990–1991, though brief with 100 h of ground combat (Figley, 1993), generated new lessons about war and family life. Subsequently, the pace of military operations continued its 20-year rise: In addition to significant peacekeeping in Bosnia, operations occurred in more than 20 other countries during the decade of 1990 (Congressional Research Service, 2020). Base closures and downsizing trimmed the force by 30%, expanding the role of the reserve component (i.e., the National Guard and the Reserves), and propelling more active-duty families to live away from military installations. Department of Defense (DoD) philosophy regarding families continued to evolve. In 2002 a new social compact was announced, which shifted family programs from being viewed as entitlements earned by service members to investments leading to the accomplishment of military missions, as indicated by a key word in the title (boldface added): "The New Social Compact: A **Reciprocal** Partnership between the Department of Defense, Service Members and their families" (Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy, 2002).

Over the past 300 years, features of each major conflict and evolving demographic trends provided a backdrop for changing stances in military policies and practices regarding families—from neglect to partnership, from informal to formal, and from ad hoc to planned (Albano, 1994). As the next section will show, after social scientists entered the scene in the twentieth century, their concerns and approaches also evolved with the times, the volume of research surging and then receding with each major conflict.

Parental Separation and Military Children: Research Prior to 2000

Studies of parental separation and the impact on children in military families first appeared during World War II, investigating *paternal deprivation* as a function of deployments, as well as the impact of exposures to bombings and evacuations in Britain. Multiple researchers wanted to understand why children's reactions were so

diverse and investigated psychological disruption among children as a function of the occurrence, duration, or frequency of separations from military family members. For example, outcomes among 49 adolescents (42 male) with siblings or fathers who had joined the military to serve in WWII and had been referred to a clinic or adjudicated as delinquent by a court were studied (Gardner & Spencer, 1944). No children were referred for psychological care in connection with the enlistment, but 12 displayed mild short-lived anxiety. Boys in the court-referred group, however, were much more likely to display new problems, more than half committing their first offense after the enlistment.

Researchers were also concerned about children's psychosexual development, exploring whether paternal deprivation interfered with sex identification processes and disrupted children's later cognitive development (Carlsmith, 1964). For example, standardized test scores for several hundred high school seniors and Harvard freshmen in 1963–1964 were compared on the basis of exposure to fathers' deployments between 1940 and 1945. Boys and girls who experienced earlier and/or longer separations tended to have lower math scores overall and in relation to verbal scores, a *feminized* pattern of aptitudes that prompted concerns about threats to boys' analytical abilities. Perhaps reflecting the times, Milton (1957) commented, "… this type of problem solving is not appropriate to the female sex-role" (p. 211).

In these early studies, research samples were usually small and associated with clinics, courts, or other institutions (e.g., Bach, 1946). Two notable exceptions were a study of 8000 schoolchildren in Bristol, England, which gathered reports from teachers distributed across the city of children's psychological and behavioral symptoms following air raids (Dunsdon, 1941), and a report on the status of 16,000 British children evacuated from bombing areas (Alcock, 1945). Taken together, these studies showed that direct exposure to air raids was associated with more severe psychological consequences for children than the parental separations caused by the evacuations.

The most widely cited study of this period, in contrast to earlier approaches, focused on the adjustment of families rather than children (Hill, 1949). This longitudinal study of 135 randomly selected Iowa families as they reunited following wartime deployments focused on stress processes in families as systems. A key recognition was that reintegration was challenging, and that diverse patterns of adjustment appeared to be linked to family adjustment during the separation. Families who *closed ranks* too much during separation had failed to leave sufficient space for fathers to reintegrate into the family (McCubbin & Dahl, 1976).

Although most studies focused on negative outcomes, multiple researchers commented on the resilience of military children. For example, Bodman (1941) commented, "The most striking finding of this survey is the extraordinary toughness of the child, and his flexibility in adapting to potentially threatening situations" (p. 488). The earlier expectation that deployment would constitute a family crisis was not borne out in many families (Hill, 1949).

Research next surged in association with the Vietnam conflict, a key feature of which was the large number of service members held as prisoners of war (POW) or missing in action (MIA); as of August 2020, more than 81,900 were still classified

MIA. Studies of father absences and children's psychopathology continued; few if any mothers were allowed to serve in the military at this time. For example, 1060 military children referred to a military clinic between 1967 and 1975 were studied by Grant (1988). Compared to those who received diagnoses, healthy children had fewer separations, although this was only a trend-level difference.

Influenced by rapidly changing roles of women in the larger society, theoretical approaches expanded to include social learning theory and role theory (McCubbin et al., 1975). Beyond simply paternal deprivation, researchers wondered whether the *deviance* of mothers' expanded roles in military families during separations would disrupt children's behavior and quantitative abilities, or enhance their emotional adjustment and verbal ability (e.g., Hillenbrand, 1976). For instance, in a study of 53 children before and after a deployment, the prediction was that they would do best when mothers scored high on androgyny (Nice, 1978). On average, children displayed significant improvements in 11 of 14 personality indicators, which, unexpectedly, were not related to mothers' levels of androgyny.

The diversity of children's reactions to fathers' deployments prompted more attention to the circumstances of separations. Multiple studies found that boys were more likely than girls to have difficulty. More specifically, boys with older sisters tended to display increased "aggression and dependency" (Hillenbrand, 1976), while firstborn boys gained quantitative ability. In addition to birth order and sex, separations earlier in life more negatively impacted cognitive, psychological, and socioemotional functioning. Another important circumstance was whether deployments were routine vs. catastrophic, such as those of POW or MIA families (Jensen et al., 1986). Many POW families found it very difficult to reintegrate following their reunion, and the persistent ambiguity they experienced affected children as much as 20 years later (Campbell & Demi, 2000).

Finally, mothers' responses to deployments emerged as perhaps the single most consistent predictor of children's outcomes. Separation interacted with maternal pathology to produce elevated problems in children, but only in families where children had experienced prior emotional disturbances (Pedersen, 1966). "As parents go, so go the children" was the prevailing notion during this period (Hunter & Hickman, 1981, p. 1).

Soon after the Vietnam War, the notion of a "military family syndrome" was proposed, and it launched more than a decade of debate (LaGrone, 1978). Based on clinic records for 792 military children, LaGrone concluded that behavior disorders were elevated relative to the civilian population, which he attributed to overly authoritarian military discipline that compromised service members' parenting, as well as frequent relocations and separations. Military family syndrome was vigorously countered by Jensen, an Army physician and later a leader at NIH, who pointed to multiple studies showing that military children fared as well or better than children in the civilian community (Jensen et al., 1991). For example, the first large-scale study of military youth (Orthner, 1987), which compared adolescent children of Air Force members with civilian youth attending the same schools, found "no consistent differences that would support the notion that military youth have more difficulties than their civilian peers during adolescence" (Leitzel & Zaler,

1999, p. 184). Jensen and others highlighted the benefits of military life for children, such as steady family income and free medical care (Jensen et al., 1986). In 1992, Werkman and Jensen formally debated the resolution, "Military family life is hazardous to the mental health of children" (Werkman & Jensen, 1992, p. 984). Then, as now, no consensus was reached. Then, as now, large-scale systematic comparisons between military and civilian children were rare, and none matched children on characteristics such as employment, income, or parental education which could introduce bias favoring military children.

During the 1980s, interest in father absence continued, and studies using community (vs. clinic-based) samples found that children recently exposed to paternal separation displayed higher levels of psychological symptoms and behavior problems (Hunter & Hickman, 1981; Jensen et al., 1989). Differences narrowed when mothers' own symptoms were controlled, but children's reports (a methodological innovation) of internalizing symptoms such as depression or anxiety remained correlated with father absence (Jensen et al., 1989). A theoretical innovation during the period was the publication by military clinicians of a model for the *Emotional Cycle of Deployment* based on the experiences of Navy wives (Logan, 1987).

The 1990s featured the first Gulf War (Operation Desert Storm), peacekeeping deployments in Bosnia, as well as numerous smaller operations (CRS, 2020). Although brief, the Gulf War had extensive impacts on families. A notable difference from prior conflicts was real-time media coverage that allowed families to watch live battles from their living rooms (Figley, 1993). This led to scholarly explorations of secondary traumatization of family members who experienced events only indirectly via media or accounts or reactions of service members (Figley, 1993). Family stress perspectives and attachment theory were now applied not just to parent-child relationships but also to relationships between adults throughout deployment (Cafferty et al., 1994; Vormbrock, 1993). Outcomes expanded to include greater attention to overall family functioning.

Methodologically, most studies were still retrospective and cross-sectional with notable exceptions (e.g., Kelley, 1994). Samples tended to be larger, community rather than clinic based, and some were selected using probability methods (e.g., Jensen et al., 1995). At least a few studies included multiple children per family and data about siblings (e.g., Rosen et al., 1993). A few studies used informants beyond parents such as teachers and children themselves (e.g., Jensen et al., 1995). This was particularly important for problems not easily observed by parents (e.g., internalizing problems), or problems that parents might unintentionally over- or underreport due to their own distress. Studies continued to find elevated levels of distress in some children and functional difficulties in some families associated with deployment, but generally at subclinical levels (Pierce et al., 1998; Rosen et al., 1993). A large probability sample of 6000 military adolescents revealed few meaningful differences in the prevalence of these problems compared with the general population (Leitzel & Zaler, 1999).

Research during this period also reflected changing demographics, giving attention to single-parent and dual-military families (i.e., both parents serving; Norwood & Ursano, 1994). For the first time, the impact of mothers' deployments was

studied, drawing attention to aspects of daily life especially relevant to women such as child care (Pierce et al., 1998). The first comparison of the consequences of mothers' and fathers' deployments for children's psychosocial functioning found no meaningful differences (Applewhite & Mays, 1996).

Despite the brevity of the Gulf War, post-deployment reunion and reintegration were identified as significant challenges for families, spurring refinement of conceptual models and family systems approaches. Mateczun, who was Principal Director for Clinical Services in the military health system, described return, readjustment, and reintegration as the "three Rs of family reunion" (Mateczun & Holmes, 1996). Later, a revised and refined version of the Emotional Cycle of Deployment model, based on families' experiences during the Bosnian conflict, extended Logan's earlier focus on wives to entire family systems (Pincus et al., 2001).

By the end of the twentieth century, what had been learned? From the earliest studies, it had become clear that children's and families' responses to military-induced separations were diverse. Distress among children was common, but clinically significant disorders much less so. The period of reintegration was unexpectedly challenging though. The consequences of separations were conditioned by multiple factors, including the nature and context of the deployments. Mothers' reactions to separations were key for children. Boys and younger children appeared to be more vulnerable, at least according to parents' reports. However ultimately, military children displayed substantial resilience.

Limitations of studies conducted to this point included heavy reliance on retrospective data, parents' reports (with some exceptions), and mostly convenience or clinical samples that lacked well-matched comparison groups. Despite frequent displays of resilience by children and families, most studies focused on assessing psychopathology and behavior problems. Little was known about the experiences of fathers, whether at home or deployed, or the experiences of mothers who served in the military, and their implications for children. Although systems approaches had become common, relatively few had gathered reports from multiple family members on multiple occasions or delved into daily life. Nothing at all was known about the experiences of family members beyond the nuclear family. Almost all studies focused only on active-duty families. Finally, although it had been recognized that separations varied in important ways, nuanced attention to the content of parental deployments and the implications for children remained limited (Jensen, 1999).

Parental Deployment and Military Children: Research Since 2000

Although research on the implications of military deployments for the individual service members and their families has been the focus of scholarly inquiry for decades, the past 20 years have seen an increased emphasis on how service members' deployments are related to the health and functioning of their non-deployed

partners/spouses and children (Cunitz et al., 2019). This emphasis is timely as it coincides with the longest ongoing military conflict (OIF/OND/OEF) in the history of the USA (Torreon & Plagakis, 2020). Given that recent military deployments have been more frequent and longer in duration than in the past (Tanielian & Jaycox, 2008), the need to understand the implications of parental military deployments for children is critical.

Though sometimes treated as singular static events, military deployments represent a series of transitions that military members and their families must traverse. For example, the deployment cycle begins with predeployment, a period when military members and their families are notified that the military member will deploy. Although studies of predeployment are limited, this period is described as a time of stress and preparation for families (DeVoe & Ross, 2012; Pincus et al., 2001). The deployment phase of the cycle, during which military members are away from their families, has been described as a stressful time in which at-home family members must adjust to separation from a spouse or parent, cope with their own feelings, and navigate changing roles and demands (DeVoe & Ross, 2012; Paley et al., 2013). This phase of the deployment cycle has been the focus of most research on military families, although most studies are limited to cross-sectional explorations and/or retrospective reports. Finally, the deployment cycle ends with reunion and reintegration, when military members return from their tour and reintegrate into their normal life. As is the case with predeployment, less research has focused on family processes and functioning during reintegration; however, some recent studies highlight substantial ambivalence for both service members and family members, as feelings of joy and relief are often accompanied by the increased stress of renegotiating family roles and routines (Faber et al., 2008; Huebner et al., 2007; O'Neal & Mancini, 2021). Because each phase of the deployment cycle has its own challenges for military families, it is imperative for both researchers and clinicians to consider the implications of discoveries from research on military deployments. Importantly, as we describe later, a few recent studies have taken advantage of longitudinal methodologies to explore how family processes evolve across the entire deployment cycle.

The military deployment of a parent offers youths opportunities for growth as well as challenges. For example, children may gain chances to take on additional household responsibilities that promote autonomy (Huebner et al., 2009). However, the impact of these responsibilities may vary based on youth age and readiness (Burton, 2007). As in other areas of inquiry, greater scholarly focus has been placed on the potential negative consequences of a parent's deployment for children's adjustment. For example, a cross-sectional study of preschool children from child development centers on Marine Corps installations produced evidence of increased symptoms of internalizing and externalizing disorders during parents' deployments, even after controlling for at-home parents' stress and parenting qualities (Chartrand et al., 2008). Similarly, children and adolescents exposed to longer deployments displayed elevated emotional difficulties (Chandra et al., 2010).

Studies of large representative samples from military populations further establish the impact of deployment on children. In the DoD-wide Millennium Cohort Family Study (Fairbank et al., 2018), although most children were functioning well

(based on parental report), at baseline, parental deployment with combat exposure was associated with reports of attention-deficit disorder/attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder and depression as diagnosed by a clinical provider. Also, children's odds of parent-reported depression were significantly higher in deployed groups than among families that had not experienced a deployment-related separation. The RAND Deployment Life Study followed families of deploying personnel from all service branches across the deployment cycle (Meadows et al., 2016). The study further confirmed the overall resilience of military families but found some elevated psychological symptoms among younger children during deployment and strained relationships with the deployed parent among teens after reintegration. Perhaps more interesting than these few elevated problems, however, was the protective finding that teens appeared to benefit significantly from interaction with other military peers during the deployment period. Findings like these have been largely corroborated by the results of two meta-analyses examining studies from the past two decades, confirming that parents' military deployments are linked with increased maladjustment among offspring, though the effects are generally small to moderate in size (Card et al., 2011; Cunitz et al., 2019).

Large-scale population-based studies of administrative records have generated more concerning findings, raising questions about selection effects in smaller studies. Results from studies investigating military medical records, for example, revealed that youth exposed to parents' deployments were diagnosed with internalizing and externalizing disorders at higher rates (Gorman et al., 2010) and were more likely to be treated with psychotropic medications (Larson et al., 2014) than those not exposed to parental deployment.

Recent studies utilizing probability and community-based samples, including several state-level youth health surveys, present a unique opportunity to study risk and resilience of youth experiencing parental separation due to military deployment (MacDermid Wadsworth et al., 2017). Several states conducted school-based surveys of large community samples of youth to monitor their health and risk behaviors (Reed et al., 2011; Sullivan et al., 2015). These studies were designed primarily to monitor the youth population over time using cross-sectional designs at regular intervals. The studies asked whether the youth have a parent in the military and/or experienced separation from their parent due to military deployment. While important details about the qualitative aspects of the separation as well as the timing and duration were not measured, the studies overcame several limitations present in existing studies of military-related parent separation. First, the samples were large and diverse, providing adequate samples of children exposed to separation as well as large comparison groups of youth without military parents or separation from parents due to deployment. Second, these studies included a rich array of health-related risk factors, particularly in the area of substance misuse, as well as protective factors in the family, peer, school, and community domains. Third, when combined over time and area, they provide important epidemiologic information about the consequences of parental separation due to both military deployment and, in some cases, incarceration, without the key limitations of earlier studies.

In these studies, parental military service and deployments were each associated with incremental behavioral risk factors. Based on comparative data across several of these surveys, youth exposed to parents' deployments were more likely to have engaged in substance use, carried a weapon to school, and experienced suicidal thoughts as compared to civilian children and military children not exposed to deployment (MacDermid Wadsworth et al., 2017). Among military children living in California whose parents had been deployed, reports of suicidal thoughts were 34% higher and reports of having carried a knife or gun to school were about double those of children whose parents had not been deployed and about 80% higher than civilian children at the same school (De Pedro et al., 2018; Gilreath et al., 2016).

The most recent Indiana Youth Survey ($n \approx 80{,}000$; Gassman et al., 2018) asked youth about both deployment and incarceration allowing researchers to compare the combined and separate effects of two unique types of parental separation. Preliminary evidence indicates that parental separation due to a military deployment and/or parental incarceration is negatively associated with a host of health and health behavior outcomes for children. While youth who experienced separation from a parent due to a military deployment (5.5%, $n = 4404$) had relatively small increments in risk relative to youth experiencing neither type of separation (70.7%, $n = 56{,}534$), those who were separated due to parental incarceration (20.7%, $n = 16{,}576$) had approximately double the risk compared to youth experiencing neither type of separation. About 3% of youth ($n = 2562$) had experienced both types of parental separation and these youth had the most elevated risk. For example, after controlling for child sex, age, race, ethnicity, and school, the probability of considering suicide increased from 0.13 to 0.33 for youth with no parental separation experience compared to those who experienced separation due to both deployment and incarceration (see Fig. 7.1a). Similarly, youth with no exposure to separation skipped an average of 0.34 school days in the past month, compared to 0.74 days for youth exposed to both types of separation (see Fig. 7.1b).

Given the established connections between parents' deployments and youth's mental health and adjustment, scholars in the past 20 years have increased their focus on the mechanisms that undergird these associations. Research investigating the associations between military deployments and children's mental health and well-being reveals both direct and indirect effects. For example, separation from a deployed parent may have direct effects on children's relationships and adjustment through disrupted attachment relationships with the deployed parent (Barker & Berry, 2009; Cozza & Lieberman, 2007). Importantly, children's insecure attachment behaviors are often linked with other problem behaviors including anxiety, difficult social relationships, and disrupted emotion regulation (Barker & Berry, 2009; Sroufe, 2005). Furthermore, following a parent's deployment, youth may experience feelings of uncertainty, confusion, and loss which may impede successful development (Huebner et al., 2007). Given knowledge of the dangers associated with a military deployment to active war zones, feelings of ambiguous loss may be especially likely among adolescents (Huebner et al., 2007).

Although the separation from a deployed parent may have direct effects on children's well-being and adjustment, systems-oriented work reveals that parents'

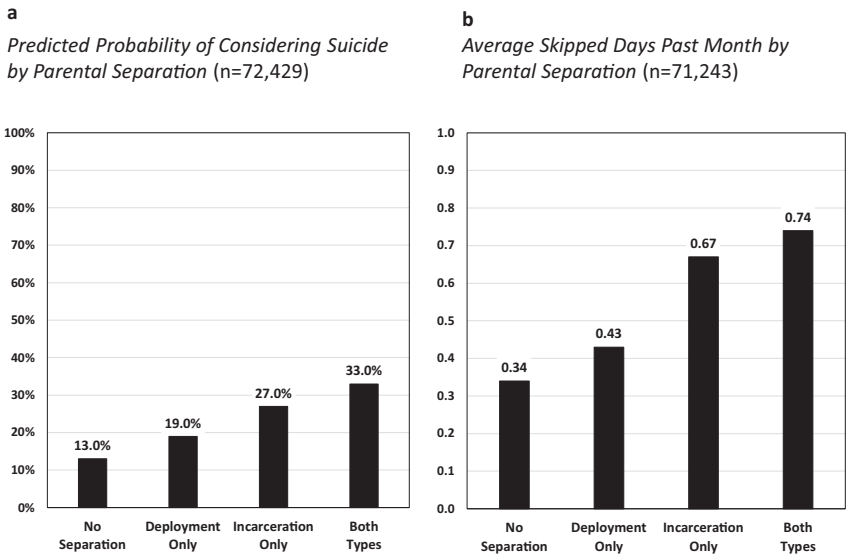


Fig. 7.1 Youth Outcomes and different types of Parental Separation. (**a**) Predicted probability of considering suicide by parental separation (n = 72,429). (**b**) Average skipped days past month by parental separation (n = 71,243)

military deployments are related to children's adjustment through the non-deployed parent's mental health and parenting. During deployment, at-home parents cope with their own feelings (e.g., worry or distress), navigate increased parenting demands and household responsibilities, and help their children adjust to the separation from the service member (DeVoe & Ross, 2012; Paley et al., 2013). At-home parents may experience increases in depression, anxiety, and sleep difficulties (Mansfield et al., 2010). The literature on mental health (in particular, depression) and parenting in nonmilitary samples highlights consistent links between depression and maladaptive parenting behaviors, including increased negative rearing and less frequent positive parenting behaviors (for a meta-analysis see Lovejoy et al., 2000).

Furthermore, these maladaptive parenting behaviors are often linked to adjustment difficulties in children. Young children of clinically depressed mothers, for example, are more likely to develop insecure attachments (Cicchetti et al., 1998) and demonstrate behavior problems (Embry & Dawson, 2002). School-aged children with depressed parents are more likely to show decreased school (Egeland et al., 1990) and social (Gross et al., 2008) competence. Consistent with this literature on civilian families, research with military families reveals that at-home parents' mental health during deployment is associated with child adjustment (Allen et al., 2010). Similarly, a study of Army spouses with a service member deployed discovered that at-home parents were at high risk for high-stress parenting, which in turn was related to increased psychosocial morbidity among their school-aged children (Flake et al., 2009).

In addition to higher stress, deployment of a spouse is linked to less sensitive parenting. During a separation, children look to their at-home parents for comfort, reassurance, and support (Paley et al., 2013). Parental responsiveness can dampen the adverse effects of an event on children (Rentz et al., 2007; Riggs & Riggs, 2011). Yet, results from a recent longitudinal study of National Guard families across the entire deployment cycle found that parental responsiveness on the part of the at-home parents declined over the course of deployment (O'Grady et al., 2018). At-home parents' responsiveness continued to decline during reintegration and in turn was linked with increased externalizing behaviors among children. Importantly, these linkages between parental responsiveness and youth's behaviors were found after controlling for changes in at-home parents' depressive symptoms. Given these connections, intervention programs focused on parenting efficacy and quality may be especially promising for promoting resilience among children in military families. Indeed, recent work with military parents revealed that parenting interventions strengthened both maternal and paternal self-efficacy, leading to positive gains in youth and parent adjustment (Gewirtz et al., 2016; Piehler et al., 2016).

The influence of deployment on parental stress and parenting style clearly has important implications for children's well-being, and one area of particular concern has been the risk for child maltreatment. In fact, deployment has been studied more than any other service-specific risk factor for child maltreatment in military populations (Hisle-Gorman et al., 2015; McCarroll et al., 2008; McCarthy et al., 2015; Rabenhorst et al., 2015; Taylor et al., 2016; Thomsen et al., 2014). There is some evidence that parental deployment increases the risk for child maltreatment. For example, in a study of military families from all branches of service living in Texas between 2000 and 2003, substantiated cases of child maltreatment increased 30% for each 1% increase in active-duty personnel departing for deployment (Rentz et al., 2007). Similarly, in a study of Army families with at least one prior substantiated case of child maltreatment, overall rates of maltreatment in families experiencing a deployment were 42% higher compared to periods of non-deployment, and rates of abuse specifically by female civilian spouses tripled during deployment (Gibbs et al., 2007).

As with many areas of study, however, not all analyses of deployment and child maltreatment have produced consistent results, and the influence of deployment on this outcome is likely complex. In particular, some evidence suggests that only certain types of child maltreatment or more severe cases increase during periods of war, and there may even be reductions in risk for certain types of maltreatment (Gibbs et al., 2007; McCarroll et al., 2008; McCarthy et al., 2015). For instance, a study of deploying Air Force personnel found increases in more severe child neglect and sexual abuse, but reductions in less severe forms of abuse, such as emotional abuse and mild neglect (Thomsen et al., 2014).

Mixed results regarding child maltreatment may be influenced by the fact that different subgroups of the military population may respond differently to the stress of deployment. For example, parent populations with more preexisting risk factors or fewer supports and resources may be more likely to exhibit increased risk for more severe perpetration, particularly in response to deployment-related stressors (McCarthy et al., 2015; Rabenhorst et al., 2015; Thomsen et al., 2014). Conversely,

more resilient subgroups may actually experience stress-related growth in response to deployment (Elder et al., 1989), and some have theorized that this may contribute to reductions in risk for less severe forms of maltreatment (Milner, 2015; Thomsen et al., 2014). Furthermore, the impact of deployment and the timing of greatest risk are likely different for the deploying versus at-home parent (Milner, 2015).

Although the military deployment of a spouse/partner is clearly linked to the mental health and parenting behaviors of at-home parents and, in turn, children's and youth's adjustment, parental deployments also shape other family subsystems. For example, in a recent study of 238 active-duty military families during the period of reintegration, interparental conflict was related to youth mental health and adjustment above and beyond the influence of parent-child relationships and youth's perception of the family climate (O'Neal & Mancini, 2021). Specifically, interparental conflict was positively related to youth's depressive symptoms and anxiety and negatively linked to youth's self-efficacy and personal well-being. These findings are consistent with the larger literature on interparental conflict and child adjustment among nonmilitary samples (for a meta-analysis see Rhoades, 2008).

Extending to other family subsystems, in a longitudinal study that followed National Guard families from predeployment through reintegration, youth's sibling relationships became less harmonious during the period when their parent was deployed; sibling relationship quality, however, returned to predeployment levels during reintegration (Whiteman et al., 2020). Importantly, changes in the sibling relationship were positively related to changes in children's adjustment (i.e., greater disharmony was associated with greater maladjustment) over time, above and beyond at-home parents' depressive symptoms and responsiveness. The finding suggests that the period in which their service member parent is deployed may be especially difficult as multiple family relationships may become strained. Although the associations between sibling disharmony and youth's adjustment difficulties point to sibling relationships as additional risk factors for youth's adjustment during these transition periods, the associations also suggest that sibling relationships can be leveraged as protective factors that promote resilience. Indeed, more positive sibling relationships were linked to fewer adjustment problems among youth. This finding, combined with other work suggesting that siblings often turn to each other to compensate for low levels of support from parents (Milevsky & Levitt, 2005; Noller, 2005), signals that sibling relationships are a logical target for family-based intervention efforts aimed at promoting resilience among youth.

In sum, largely consistent with early work on the implications of wartime deployments for families, research from the past 20 years has revealed that service members' repeated separations from their families are linked to stress and difficulty for at-home parents and children. Notably, this work advanced earlier understandings by implementing more prospective and longitudinal designs, using larger and sometimes probability-based samples, and attending to effect sizes. With the advantage of these advances, the results of two different meta-analyses revealed that associations between parental military deployments and children's adjustment are often small (Card et al., 2011; Cunitz et al., 2019). Further, recent research on the topic reinforces earlier findings of heterogeneity in at-home parents' and children's responses, suggesting multiple avenues for promoting resilience among this

population. Perhaps the greatest contribution of work from this period is the focus on the many mediating and moderating processes that connect parental deployments to youth's well-being. These include individual factors such as the at-home parents' mental health and parental efficacy, and the quality of all family relationships (e.g., interparental, parent-child, and sibling). As we discuss later, research and intervention programs focused on these various intervening pathways have the opportunity to promote resilience among military-connected youth.

Addressing Limitations of Existing Research

Despite decades of research on the effects of parent's recent deployments on children, significant limitations in study designs persist. First, there has been a predominant focus on current or recent deployments, leaving unanswered questions about longer term consequences on children's development and well-being. Related to this, uncontrolled heterogeneity in the timing of children's exposures and follow-up assessments makes it impossible to assess prolonged impacts, and limits the ability to explain heterogeneity in children's outcomes. Another constraint is that few studies to date have included data about military parents' experiences prior to deployment. This may lead researchers to blame deployments for parental characteristics that not only were preexisting, but may also have conditioned parents' reactions to deployment. A fourth constraint is that samples are predominated by children whose parents continue to serve, which, despite offering the advantage of probability sampling, can be biased toward *healthy warriors* who have repeatedly elected—and been medically cleared—to continue to serve and deploy. These samples therefore represent a select population of military service members. Although some work on moderation and mediation has been undertaken in recent decades, an additional limitation is that too little attention has been given to the mechanisms through which children's negative and positive outcomes occur, not to the contexts that potentiate them. Without determining the factors that facilitate outcomes or buffer risks, we are unable to develop programs to support children and families with respect to deployment separations. There continues to be heavy reliance on parent reports about children, which can be distorted by parents' own symptoms. Adolescents, in particular, can provide more valid assessments of their own well-being, especially when related to internalized problems.

A New Study: Operation Military Experience

In an effort to address some of the persistent limitations in the body of evidence regarding military children and parental deployments, the authors of this chapter have initiated the Operation Military Experience (ME) Study. The study will evaluate the long-term, direct and indirect pathways between early-life exposure to

parental deployments and later adjustment in adolescence, as well as the parental and family factors that influence these pathways.

Study Aims: The ME Study is motivated by the need to better understand the diversity in adaptation among military children who experienced parental separation due to military deployment early in life, when the foundations for many aspects of later functioning are laid and interactions with parents are especially important (Anda et al., 2006). These early experiences likely have implications for adjustment during adolescence, a critical developmental stage during which young people make decisions about substance use, risky behavior, and relationships with peers that are highly consequential for future development (Mansfield et al., 2010). The ME Study has three primary aims that include (1) evaluating the direct relationships between the timing, frequency, duration, and content of children's early (age <5 years) exposures to parental deployments and later adjustment during adolescence; (2) evaluating the role of parent's psychological health and family processes in mediating these relationships; and (3) evaluating the role of military parents' and children's vulnerability and support in moderating these relationships. We expect the specific characteristics of deployment to relate to adolescents' social, behavioral, and academic adjustment and hypothesize that parents' mental health, parenting efficacy, marital quality, and family functioning will mediate the associations between deployment and adolescent adjustment. We expect that both the direct and mediated pathways will be more negative in the presence of greater vulnerability and less formal and informal support. A conceptual model for the study is presented in Fig. 7.2.

Conceptual Model for the Operation Military Experience Study

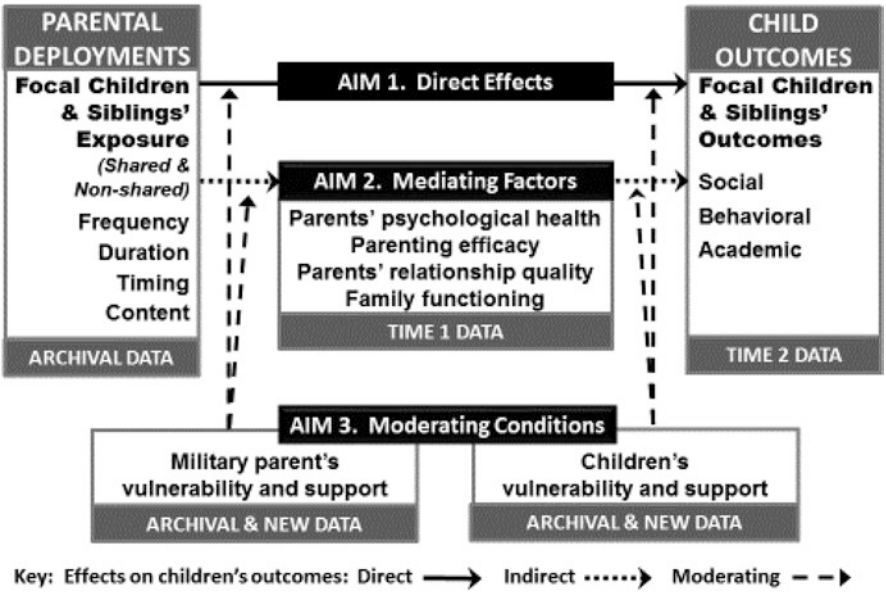


Fig. 7.2 Conceptual model for the Operation Military Experience Study

Parental wartime deployments are likely to have lasting consequences for children, particularly when they produce adverse experiences. This can include lengthy and repeated separations of young children and their military parents, service member's exposure to traumatic experiences during deployment, elevated mental health problems among parents (both service member and spouse), and increases in maltreatment of children during deployment. Therefore, it is important to study how these adversities relate long-term to adjustment and importantly to understand the parental and family factors that engender resilience. This study will expand knowledge about children's risk and resilience in families, particularly with respect to early adversities and their long-term outcomes. Findings from the study therefore have potential implications for schools, community organizations, and health-care providers.

Study Design: The ME Study will combine new longitudinal data gathered directly from parents and children with existing data on deployment and medical records from the DoD. The new data will be gathered on two occasions 12 months apart from two children and up to two parents in 513 randomly sampled families. Focal children will have experienced at least one parental deployment lasting at least 30 days prior to age 5. A sibling of the focal child will be included, and both the focal child and sibling will be aged 11–16 years at the launch of data collection. Data will be gathered via online surveys and telephone interviews.

Outcomes of the study will include indicators of children's social-emotional development, behavior, and academic performance. Social-emotional constructs to be measured include competence in several domains, anxiety, depression, peer relationships, post-traumatic growth, and sibling relationship qualities. Behavioral outcomes will include positive behavior (flourishing), prosocial and problem behaviors, risky behavior, and substance use. Academic engagement and school problems comprise the academic outcomes.

The ME study design is innovative and addresses several of the aforementioned constraints in research to date. A primary focus of the study is the assessment of long-term impacts by selecting participants with focal children aged 11–16 years who were first exposed to parental deployment prior to age 5. Another focus is to study family processes as mediators, and vulnerability and support as moderators, of children's positive and negative outcomes, formerly understudied aspects important for understanding the risk and resilience of children exposed to parental separation. The ME study will use a probability sample that includes both currently serving military members and former military members, thus including participants beyond the select sample of those who continue to serve. The ME study will also incorporate data from prior to deployment, including medical history and parents' exposure to adverse experiences, allowing for the disentanglement of preexisting circumstances from deployment effects, and the ability to examine heterogeneity in child outcomes related to the characteristics of deployment. The inclusion of a sibling of the focal child also helps disentangle effects by enhancing the ability to better understand child-specific characteristics and experiences in relation to deployment and family effects. Finally, the ME study will gather data directly from adolescents rather than relying solely on parent reports to assess adolescent outcomes.

Translating Research for Support and Intervention

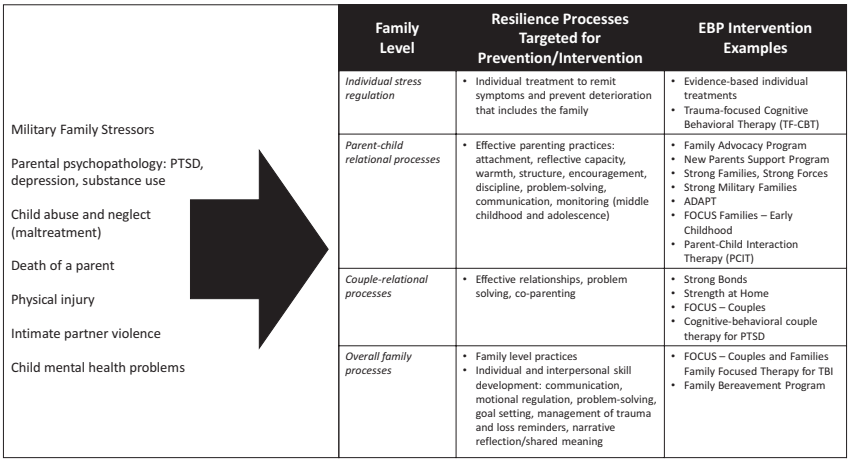
Despite limitations in existing evidence, support programs and services have worked for decades to mitigate negative impacts of deployments for military children. In this section, we consider implications of the studies reviewed in this chapter, as well as emerging research on military family support programs and interventions (NASEM, 2019). Risk and resilience processes identified through this growing body of research can be conceptualized at the individual, family, and community levels (Saltzman et al., 2011). Accumulated research on family systems shows that individual family members mutually impact one another. That is, if one parent is navigating mental health problems, the other parent and the children will likely be impacted by these difficulties (MacDermid Wadsworth et al., 2013). For example, service members who return with combat-related mental health and/or physical injuries such as PTSD and/or traumatic brain injury have been found to have increased likelihood of physically aggressive responses to stress, reduced affective responsiveness related to withdrawal or numbing, as well as impaired judgement related to cognitive limitations (Meisnere et al., 2014; NASEM, 2019 for review), all of which can disrupt family relationships. Negative interactions in couple relationships may spill over, creating family-level conflict and disrupting parent-child relationships (Cox et al., 2001). Parents distressed by spousal conflicts may be less emotionally attuned to their children, may be more withdrawn, or may engage in negative discipline practices. Children may perceive interparental conflict as a threat to their emotional security, physical safety, or integrity of family life (Davies & Cummings, 1998; Paley et al., 2013).

Fortunately, a continuum of evidence-based and tiered health promotion interventions has been developed in other contexts that can be integrated into a systematic approach for reducing risk factors among military children facing parental deployment. The fields of applied developmental science and prevention science can provide considerable guidance in developing a continuum of programs targeted toward the military community. Consistent with a large body of research in nonmilitary contexts, intervention evaluation and research findings with military children and families indicate that enhancing the individual functioning of parents and children, as well as the functioning within and across relationship dyads (e.g., improving communication within and across parent-child, sibling, and couple relationships and increasing positive parenting and co-parenting), has a cascading impact on the family as a whole (NASEM 2019). For example, family research in civilian populations has consistently demonstrated that couples' relationship quality, parenting, parent-child relationship quality, and other family processes (e.g., co-parenting, family conflict) influence a range of social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes over the life course (NRC & IOM, 2009b; Spoth et al., 2002, Teubert & Pinquart, 2010). Not surprisingly, family-centered interventions have generalized or so-called crossover effects benefiting not simply the intended target (e.g., couple relationship, child adjustment) but the entire family system (NRC & IOM, 2009a, 2009b; Siegenthaler et al., 2012; Prinz, 2016).

A range of evidence-based family-centered intervention programs have already been adapted for military-connected families facing deployments. Overall, research trials and longitudinal program evaluation on family-centered interventions adapted for military families have also demonstrated the crossover effect of these interventions not only on the targeted outcome, such as parenting/co-parenting or child adjustment, but also on the entire family system through reciprocal and cascading positive effects that may occur over time (NASEM, 2019).

Figure 7.3 provides an overview of the mechanisms of impact that military life stressors may have at different levels within the family, as well as examples of evidence-based programs (EBPs) that have been adapted to target identified individual, couple, parenting, and family-level processes. These include strength-based approaches that focus on enhancing couple, family, and parent-child relationships by fostering family resilience processes (e.g., emotion regulation, communication, problem-solving, and positive parenting). Many have been adapted and implemented within the continuum of services that has been identified as the Military Family Readiness System (NASEM, 2019).

One seminal example of an evidence-based preventive intervention adapted for military-connected families is Families OverComing Under Stress or FOCUS. This trauma-informed family-centered preventive intervention has been implemented for active-duty military families and veteran families in a range of community contexts (Beardslee et al., 2011; Lester, Klosinski, et al., 2016a). With a framework that emphasizes family strengths and resilience, the FOCUS intervention is designed for culturally diverse and single- or dual-parent/caregiver families who may be contending with a variety of transitions and challenges.



Family Level	Resilience Processes Targeted for Prevention/Intervention	EBP Intervention Examples
Individual stress regulation	• Individual treatment to remit symptoms and prevent deterioration that includes the family	• Evidence-based individual treatments • Trauma-focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT)
Parent-child relational processes	• Effective parenting practices: attachment, reflective capacity, warmth, structure, encouragement, discipline, problem-solving, communication, monitoring (middle childhood and adolescence)	• Family Advocacy Program • New Parents Support Program • Strong Families, Strong Forces • Strong Military Families • ADAPT • FOCUS Families – Early Childhood • Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)
Couple-relational processes	• Effective relationships, problem solving, co-parenting	• Strong Bonds • Strength at Home • FOCUS – Couples • Cognitive-behavioral couple therapy for PTSD
Overall family processes	• Family level practices • Individual and interpersonal skill development: communication, motional regulation, problem-solving, goal setting, management of trauma and loss reminders, narrative reflection/shared meaning	• FOCUS – Couples and Families Family Focused Therapy for TBI • Family Bereavement Program

Note: Compiled by the Committee on the Well-Being of Military Families (NASEM, 2019: used with permission

Fig. 7.3 *Effects of Military Family Stressors and EBP Intervention Examples*. *Note*: Adapted and reproduced with permission from "Strengthening the Military Family Readiness System for a Changing American Society," by National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2019, National Academies Press. https://doi.org/10.17226/25380

FOCUS was adapted from core components of the developers' evidence-based interventions already shown in randomized control trials with longitudinal follow-up to improve parent and child psychological health and enhance family functioning (Family Talk: Beardslee et al., 2003, 2007; Teens and Adults Learning to Communicate: Rotheram-Borus et al., 2004, 2006; Lester, Klosinski, et al., 2016a). The core intervention components of FOCUS were defined through expert consensus and customized for military families using community participatory methods. These core elements include (1) the FOCUS Family Resilience Check-Up: an evidence-based assessment and real-time personalized guidance to assist the provider and family in tailoring program content to their unique strengths and challenges; (2) context-specific psychoeducation, such as trauma- and resilience-informed education, positive parenting, and developmental guidance; (3) individual- and family-level skill development (e.g., emotional regulation, problem-solving, managing separation/trauma/loss reminders); and (4) development and sharing of individual- and family-level narrative communication timelines designed to make meaning of and increase the understanding of challenging family experiences (Lester, Klosinski, et al., 2016a; Beardslee et al., 2013). Delivered either in-person or through a home tele-health platform, FOCUS provides education and skills that support parenting/co-parenting; parent-child, sibling, and couples' relationships; and a shared understanding of past experiences. Research from longitudinal program evaluation indicates that FOCUS has a positive and sustained impact on parental depression, anxiety, and PTSD symptoms; on family adjustment (including communication, emotional relatedness); and on both parent- and child-reported child well-being outcomes, including decreased internalizing and externalizing symptoms, improved prosocial behaviors, reduced anxiety, and improved coping (Lester et al., 2013; Lester, Liang, et al., 2016b; Saltzman et al., 2016). Between 2008 and 2020, FOCUS services have been implemented at 34 military installations with consistently high levels of engagement, as well as high adherence by families within the multisession models.

Future Directions for Research and Support

Gaps exist in our understanding of the impact of deployment on military children and families. Studies that utilize administrative data sets as well as longitudinal data collection will assist in addressing some of the specific gaps. These data will help to guide the development and adaptation of specific interventions and to inform population-level public health approaches that more effectively promote well-being and resilience, as well as mitigate the potential negative impact of parental deployments on development and adjustment in military children.

These types of family-strengthening programs are critical to a public health approach to supporting well-being of children and families. Family-centered approaches offer an opportunity to promote resilience processes across the family system and help individuals and families as a whole. A systems-level approach and

ecological framework attend not only to the family system, but also to the social context where military children and families live, such as primary care and school settings. Developing a population-level continuum of support for deploying military families requires attention not only to the needs of active-duty families with access to installation-specific resources, but also to the needs of reserve component families who may be navigating deployment experiences within civilian communities that lack culturally responsive resources for military children.

In developing, implementing, and evaluating programs to improve military family well-being and prevent behavioral health problems, it is important to acknowledge that many of the challenges faced by military families are similar to those found in civilian communities. These challenges are amplified though by the limitations of existing research on military child and family resilience and well-being, as well as by a complex and dynamic landscape of military contexts, services, and policies. Military service, including during wartime, will always bring unanticipated challenges for families, requiring an adaptive approach to supporting child and family well-being and resilience. As identified in a recent Institute of Medicine report, the population mental health framework can inform the continuum of military family readiness services that would be responsive to the complex and emergent needs of military families (Fig. 7.4; NASEM, 2019).

A continuum of coordinated support is needed to build upon local (and heterogeneous) capacities, strengths, and resources. This continuum of support will function most effectively if designed to be adaptive, incorporating ongoing research findings as well as stakeholder expertise (e.g., DoD and local communities) in the selection, adaptation, adoption, and implementation of support services. Existing EBPs can be adapted using a community participatory approach that includes stakeholders in the

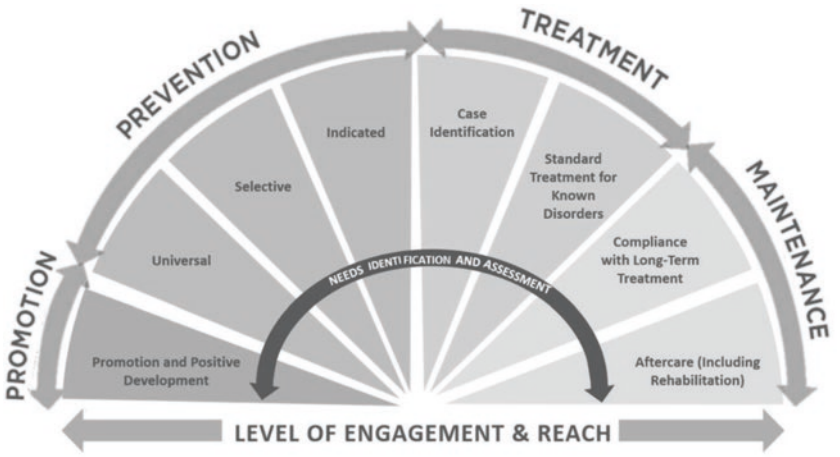


Fig. 7.4 *Population Mental Health Framework*. *Note*: Adapted and reproduced with permission from "Strengthening the Military Family Readiness System for a Changing American Society" by National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2019. National Academies Press. https://doi.org/10.17226/25380

identification, development, adaptation, and monitoring processes to meet the needs of military families for resilience and well-being through the military health care and community settings in which they could be delivered. Continuous monitoring can provide ongoing information about the impact of programs over time and identify emerging positive adaptations as well as emerging needs in military children and families. This approach to prevention and intervention program monitoring includes not only individual- and family-level measurement but feedback from program staff as well as military childcare providers and system leaders (Chambers & Norton, 2016; NASEM, 2019). A continuous learning infrastructure includes informatics, with real-time access to knowledge and digital capture of the service experience; partnerships of providers and data scientists with engaged and empowered families; and a leadership-instilled culture of continuous learning (Grossman et al., 2011; Smith et al., 2013; NASEM 2019).

This chapter has traced a long path from the earliest research about military children separated from their fathers by military deployments to recent investigations of military families. Some findings have consistently emerged as robust, including children's distress and resilience in relation to separation and importance of parents' responses to their children. It is clear that entire family systems are implicated in deployment experiences. For every outcome studied, it is more common for families and children to display resilience rather than vulnerability. It is also clear though that some portion of the population experiences clinically significant problems, which are more likely when deployments expose families to traumatic consequences. Recent research has traced specific pathways of influence as the effects of deployment travel through families. Despite all the knowledge gained, significant questions remain, some of which will be addressed by new research initiated by the authors of this chapter. Military systems have evolved from ignoring or excluding families to a more systematic and intentional configuration of formal supports. Increasingly, prevention and treatment are recognized as part of a full continuum of care. Thanks to prevention science, future evolution of the evidence base can be incorporated into a public health approach that links community members, evidence, and practice, and continuously learns and improves.

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Chapter 8
Children's Mental Health, Deployment, Parental Mental Health, and Family Dynamics: Findings from the Millennium Cohort Family Study

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The growing recognition of the toll that military service can have on the more than two million children (U.S. Department of Defense [DoD], 2015) of service members (SMs) has prompted researchers to explore different facets of military life (e.g., deployment, parental mental health) that may impact child and family functioning

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(Fairbank et al., 2018; Lester et al., 2010; Lincoln et al., 2008). Two recent national studies—the Millennium Cohort Family Study (Family Study; Briggs et al., 2020; Fairbank et al., 2018; Steenkamp et al., 2018) and the RAND Corporation Deployment Life Study (Tanielian et al., 2014)—have helped to broaden the focus of deployment health research beyond outcomes for SMs to include the mental health of military-involved spouses (SPs) and children. For instance, in the Family Study, over a third (35.9%) of military SPs screened positive for one or more psychiatric conditions (e.g., depression, 6.7%; post-traumatic stress disorder [PTSD], 9.2%; anxiety, 6.1%; alcohol misuse, 8.2%; Steenkamp et al., 2018). In the Deployment Life Study, multiple conditions, including anxiety (2.1%) and binge drinking (13.8%), were found among military SPs; 16% of SPs and 14% of SMs reported the need for mental health counseling services due to recent emotional problems (Tanielian et al., 2014).

With respect to children, the Family Study found that older youth in military families with combat-deployed parents were more likely to have received a diagnosis of attention-deficit disorder/attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADD/ADHD) than youth in families whose SM parents were not deployed (Fairbank et al., 2018). In addition, any parental military deployment (combat deployed or noncombat deployed) was associated with increased rates of depression among youth in military families (Fairbank et al., 2018). The RAND Deployment Life Study further documented moderate-to-high levels of emotional difficulties in 28% of the children in their sample (Tanielian et al., 2014). Taken together, these findings highlight the need to better understand and respond to the mental health needs of military SPs and children, particularly as they relate to unique military experiences such as deployment.

There is an extensive civilian literature on family systems and dynamics that suggests that children's mental health and behavior are interconnected with parental mental health and family functioning. Notable is the robust literature on maternal mental health (e.g., anxiety, depression) and links to child emotional and behavioral problems (e.g., Gao et al., 2007; Goelman et al., 2014; Koutra et al., 2013). Family Systems Theory describes how the components of a system individually, collectively, and dynamically interact, such that, for example, maternal depression may impact children's behavior by affecting parenting strategies, regulation and expression, or quality of the marital relationship. Far fewer studies have examined paternal mental health and its connection to child functioning, but similar patterns of paternal mental health and emotional and behavioral problems in children have been observed (e.g., Kvalevaag et al., 2013; Pettit et al., 2008). Additionally, evidence suggests that the risk for child mental health problems is further heightened when both parents have a mental health condition (Weitzman et al., 2011).

Similar findings have been documented for military and veteran populations; that is, children of parents with a mental illness are often found to be at high risk for behavioral and psychological difficulties themselves (e.g., Jordan et al., 1992; Lester et al., 2010). Further, the literature on family functioning suggests that the potential protective nature of adaptive family processes (e.g., cohesiveness, communication, support, and satisfaction) tends to be negatively correlated with child

behavioral problems (e.g., Wang & Zhou, 2015). The robustness of the connection between family functioning and child outcomes has not been firmly established, however, because there has not been consensus on the confluence of risk and protective factors.

The framework proposed by Palmer (2008) for military families may help researchers understand how to integrate findings on parental and family functioning from civilian populations while simultaneously considering how the military context may yield different child outcomes. Palmer's framework suggests that psychosocial outcomes associated with military life for children are impacted by parental stress and psychopathology. Thus, the impact of military-specific stressors, such as frequent moves, changes in schools and friends/peer groups, parental SM deployments, family reunion and reintegration, and other factors that promote and/or undermine resilience and well-being among military children, is strongly influenced by parental mental health (e.g., anxiety, depression) and functioning. For example, each reported family-related military stressor increased the odds of a child being diagnosed with depression or anxiety by 23%, while deployment- and injury-related stressors were also associated with an increased risk for a range of maladaptive child psychosocial outcomes (Briggs et al., 2020).

To date, relatively few studies have gone beyond deployment to explore the influence of parental and familial factors on child well-being in military families. Specifically, there is much to learn about whether parental mental health and family functioning convey risk for negative child outcomes in the context of military life and key differences between each parent's link with the child's adjustment. For example, is the heightened risk of child emotional and behavioral problems associated more with the mental health status of the SM or that of the SP who is often the primary caregiver? Is the risk of child mental health problems further amplified when both parents have a mental health condition? To what extent does family functioning influence outcomes over and above parental mental health?

To this end, the primary objectives of the analyses conducted for this chapter were to address the following three study questions:

1. To what extent do children's psychosocial functioning and mental health vary at the family level when the SM, SP, or both parents have a history of problematic mental health?
   - SP mental health was expected to be more influential than SM mental health on children's outcomes.
   - More problematic children's outcomes were expected when both parents have mental health difficulties.
2. What are the effects of deployment on children's outcomes, accounting for parental mental health and family functioning?
   - Type of deployment experienced was expected to have differential effects on children's outcomes.
3. Are there differences in children's psychosocial and mental health outcomes for military households with female SMs and male SPs?

Method

The Family Study (Crum-Cianflone et al., 2014) is a prospective cohort study designed to evaluate the interrelated health and well-being effects of military service on families, including the SM, SP, and children. The Family Study is a component of the Millennium Cohort Study, a longitudinal, prospective examination of long-term health outcomes among active-duty and National Guard/Reserve personnel and their families across US military branches (Ryan et al., 2007). To be eligible for the Family Study, SMs and their SPs had to be married at the time of enrollment (2011–2013) and service affiliated for 2–5 years. Female SMs were oversampled in the Millennium Cohort study to ensure that male SPs had adequate representation in the Family Study. To maximize response rates, the survey methods for the Family Study included both online and paper mail survey response options (Dillman et al., 2009; McMaster et al., 2017).

The study described herein uses survey data collected between 2014 and 2016, which were the first follow-up data collected and the most recent data available for analysis. Only married couples with at least one child 3–17 years of age were eligible for inclusion in the analyses. The data are structured with children nested within families ($n = 3849$ weighted) as the primary sampling unit for paired SM and SP dyads ($n = 2336$ weighted). Responses were weighted at the family level to account for the probability of original selection of the SM, as well as SM and SP nonresponse, using a combination of response propensity modeling and raking-ratio estimates to known population totals.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the Naval Health Research Center (NHRC) reviewed and approved the research protocol (NHRC.2015.0019) and provided ongoing oversight. Exemptions for secondary data analysis were approved by the Duke University Health System IRB (Pro00064951). More details about the Millennium Cohort and the Family Study methods are described elsewhere (Corry et al., 2017; Crum-Cianflone, 2013; Crum-Cianflone et al., 2014; Gray et al., 2002).

Millennium Cohort and Family Study Surveys

The SM survey assessed a variety of topics, including medical conditions, psychosocial well-being, substance use, and military-specific and occupational exposures. The military SP survey contained questions based on a conceptual model with four main domains: (1) SP physical health, (2) SP mental health and adjustment, (3) SP reports of their children's mental/physical health and functioning, and (4) family functioning and protective and vulnerability factors (Crum-Cianflone et al., 2014). The present study focused on the latter three domains and included the following specific variables to address the study aims and hypotheses:

Demographic Characteristics

Demographic variables included gender of the SP and SM, age, race/ethnicity, marital duration, number of children in the household, as well as age of the oldest child in the family. Administrative data were used to assess SM military branch (Army, Air Force, Marine Corps, Navy), component (active duty, Reserve/National Guard), pay grade (officer, enlisted), and deployment history. Deployment status was determined using a computed variable based on administrative records from the Contingency Tracking System documenting deployments in support of military operations (e.g., Operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom, and New Dawn) since September 11, 2001. Combat exposure during deployment was further determined based on SM self-reports on the DoD Post-Deployment Health Assessment (PDHA; Hoge et al., 2006; Milliken et al., 2007) screening and 18 items on the Millennium Cohort survey. A combat experience designation was assigned if the SM endorsed any of the 3 combat exposure items on the PDHA (i.e., encountering dead bodies or seeing people killed or wounded; engaging in direct combat and discharging weapon; and feeling in great danger of being killed) or any of the 18 items included on the Millennium Cohort survey (e.g., being attacked or ambushed; receiving small arms fire; having a member of unit be seriously injured or killed; personally witnessing a person's death due to war, disaster, or tragic event; witnessing instances of physical abuse; and seeing dead or decomposing bodies, maimed soldiers or civilians, or prisoners of war or refugees). SM deployment history was then categorized as lifetime history of no deployment, deployment without combat exposure, or deployment with combat exposure.

Parental Mental Health Indicators

SMs and military SPs responded to the Veterans RAND 36-Item Health Survey (VR-36; Kazis et al., 2004), wherein lower scores on the mental component summary (MCS) reflect worse mental health functioning and more functional impairment. Respondents were also asked to report whether they had ever received a mental health diagnosis by a clinical provider (i.e., depression, schizophrenia or psychosis, bipolar disorder, and/or PTSD). We combined the two mental health indicators into a *problematic mental health composite* (PMHC) for endorsement of either a history of mental health disorder(s) or a low MCS score for SMs ($M \leq 33.99$) and SPs ($M \leq 35.34$), which represents one standard deviation below the mean sample MCS score for SMs and SPs, respectively (LeardMann et al., 2009). We then categorized each family into one of the four mutually exclusive dyad groups to characterize parental mental health status: neither parent with a PMHC (NP), SM only with a PMHC, military SP only with a PMHC, and both parents with a PMHC (BP).

Global Indicator of Parental Social Functioning

Parental social functioning had a numeric range from 0 to 100 based on transformed scores of two questions in the VR-36: “During the past 4 weeks, to what extent has your physical health or emotional problems interfered with your normal social activities with family, friends, neighbors, or groups?” “During the past 4 weeks, how much of the time has your physical health or emotional problems interfered with your social activities (like visiting with friends, relatives)?” Higher scores represent better social functioning.

Family Satisfaction

The Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scale IV (FACES IV) assesses the cohesion and flexibility dimensions of the Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems (Olson, 2000). Family satisfaction is a sum score ranging from 10 to 50 based on SP ratings of the 10-item FACES-IV. Higher scores reflect greater satisfaction.

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

An adaptation of the parent report version of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 1997), a brief emotional and behavioral screening measure of children and adolescents aged 3 through 17 years, was administered to SPs. The present study included four of the five original subscales (conduct problems, emotional symptoms, hyperactivity/inattention, and peer problems) with 20 respective items rated dichotomously (yes/no). Values were computed for the subscales and a total SDQ score per the SDQ developer’s coding protocols (sdqscore.org). For family-level SDQ analyses, we selected the most severe child score for each scale as the outcome of interest.

Children’s Mental Health Conditions

Military SPs were asked about common mental health conditions and developmental concerns for their children based on the National Survey of Children’s Health (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2007) survey question: “Has a doctor or health professional ever told you that your child has (1) behavioral or conduct problems, (2) depression, (3) anxiety problems or other emotional problems, or (4) ADD/ADHD?” As required by the NHRC IRB to enhance protection of the identity and privacy of individual children in the family, SPs indicated if *any* child in the home had received these diagnoses. For analysis, endorsements of depression, anxiety, and other emotional problems were collapsed into one construct given the likelihood of co-occurrence.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics of frequencies and means were calculated for parent demographics, mental health, and family characteristics. Child SDQ means and diagnosis/disorder frequencies were compared across the four parental mental health dyads for PMHC. Unadjusted regressions for each outcome compared the marginal means of the NP, SM only, SP only, and BP dyad groups to determine if there were statistical differences. Adjustments for multiple tests were not applied given the hypothesis-driven study aims and preference to minimize type II errors (false negatives) that could result by imposing overly conservative thresholds for significance. Hierarchical regression models estimated unstandardized and standardized effects of PMHC dyads on child outcomes by introducing groups of variables in four stages: (1) demographic variables, (2) deployment and other military variables, (3) parental mental health dyad groupings, and (4) family dynamic variables. We also tested models with deployment after parental mental health to assess suppression effects. Then, moderation tests were run to evaluate interaction effects on PMHC dyads and gender of parent. Lastly, we conducted a sensitivity analysis by rerunning unstandardized and standardized hierarchical regression models among female SMs ($N = 368$). Analyses were conducted at the family level using SAS software, version 9.3, and Stata software, version 15.1 (StataCorp, 2017), survey commands. Statistically significant differences were defined a priori at $p < 0.05$ and relaxed to $p < 0.10$ for interaction tests.

Results

Parental Demographic and Mental Health Characteristics

The analytical sample consisted of 3849 observations comprising 2336 parental dyads of paired SMs and SPs. The descriptive statistics in Table 8.1 show sample demographics, family characteristics, and indicators of parental mental health. Percentages, means, and number of observations (n) are weighted at the family level. Military couples mainly consisted of male SMs married to female SPs (87%), with both approximately 32 years of age on average. SMs and SPs, respectively, were predominately non-Hispanic White, 66% and 69%; non-Hispanic Black, 17% and 11%; and Hispanic, 10% and 12%. Social functioning was high—in the top 25th percentile on a 100-point scale: $M = 76.1$ for SMs and $M = 82.2$ for SPs. Conversely, less than a quarter of SMs (22%) and SPs (21%) endorsed ever having had one or more mental health disorders or diagnoses. Overall, the average score for the MCS was similar for SMs and SPs at approximately $M = 47$ on a scale ranging from 3.5 to 71.8.

Table 8.1 Parental demographic and mental health characteristics

Characteristic	SM		SP	
Age, *M*, *SE*	32.1	0.19	31.8	0.20
Female, %, *n*	13.3	368	86.7	3481
Race/ethnicity, %, *n*				
White, non-Hispanic	66.4	3130	69.3	3083
Black, non-Hispanic	16.7	208	11.3	182
Hispanic	9.9	254	11.5	333
Other	7.0	257	7.9	234
Social functioning, *M*, *SE*	76.1	1.14	82.2	0.90
MCS score, *M*, *SE*	47.3	0.58	47.5	0.47
MHdx, %, *n*	21.9	552	21.1	703
PMHC, %, *n*	28.6	739	29.3	955

Note: *SM* service member, *SP* spouse; MCS, mental composite summary, *MHdx* mental health diagnosis, *PMHC* problematic mental health composite. To maximize generalizability, the table was based on the larger weighted analytic nested sample of 3849

Military and Family Characteristics

As shown in Table 8.2, all branches of military service were represented in the sample, and slightly over half were affiliated with the Army (56%). Most SMs (72%) were previously deployed, with more than half (58%) reporting combat exposures while deployed. Nearly three-quarters (74%) of parents had been married for more than 5 years, the majority of whom had two or more children (83%). The average age of the oldest child in each family was 8.4 years (SE = 0.18). Mean family satisfaction was slightly above average (M = 36.80, SE = 0.42), in the top 50th percentile for the scale.

Indicators of Children's Mental Health

Less than half (48.9%) of the families with data for both SMs and SPs on parental mental health indicators had a positive PMHC value for either a history of mental health diagnosis/disorder or a low MCS score. The child SDQ mean scores increased in rank order when NP had a PMHC, only the SM had a PMHC, only the SP had a PMHC, and BP had a PMHC. Figure 8.1 shows that the upward trend across the four PMHC dyads was consistent for SDQ conduct problems, emotional problems, hyperactivity, peer problems, and SDQ total scores. Likewise, unadjusted regression models of pairwise comparisons revealed that BP had statistically greater effects than NP on SDQ outcomes. However, we found no significant differences in effects between SMs and SPs for emotional problems, hyperactivity, and peer problems.

Figure 8.2 shows that child diagnosis percentages increased consistently in rank order from SM to SP, but not consecutively across all four dyad groups from NP to

Table 8.2 Military and family characteristics

SM branch	**%**	***n***
Army	56.2	1903
Navy	12.7	561
Marine Corps	12.4	272
Air Force	16.0	1024
Coast Guard	2.7	88
SM ever deployed	**%**	***n***
Not deployed	27.9	1068
Deployed without combat	14.1	498
Deployed with combat	58.0	2276
Marital duration	**%**	***n***
≥6 years	73.6	3184
<6 years	26.4	665
Family satisfaction, *M*, *SE*	36.8	0.42
Number of children	**%**	***n***
1	17.2	609
2	38.2	1513
3	25.2	971
4+	19.4	756
Age of oldest child, *M*, *SE*	8.4	0.18

Note: *SM* service member. To maximize generalizability, the table was based on the larger weighted analytic nested sample of 3849

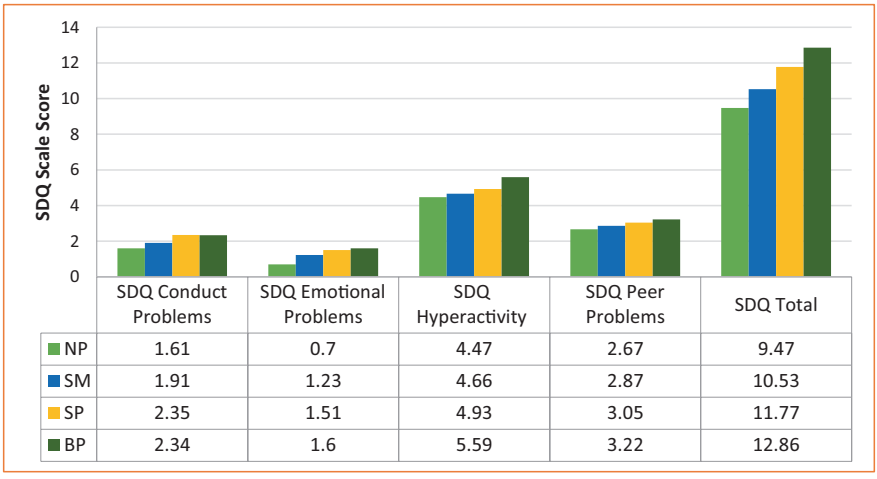

Fig. 8.1 Strengths and difficulties questionnaire mean scores by PMHC dyads. Note: *PMHC* problematic mental health composite dyads, *NP* neither parent, *SM* service member only, *SP* spouse only, *BP* both parents, *SDQ* strengths and difficulties questionnaire

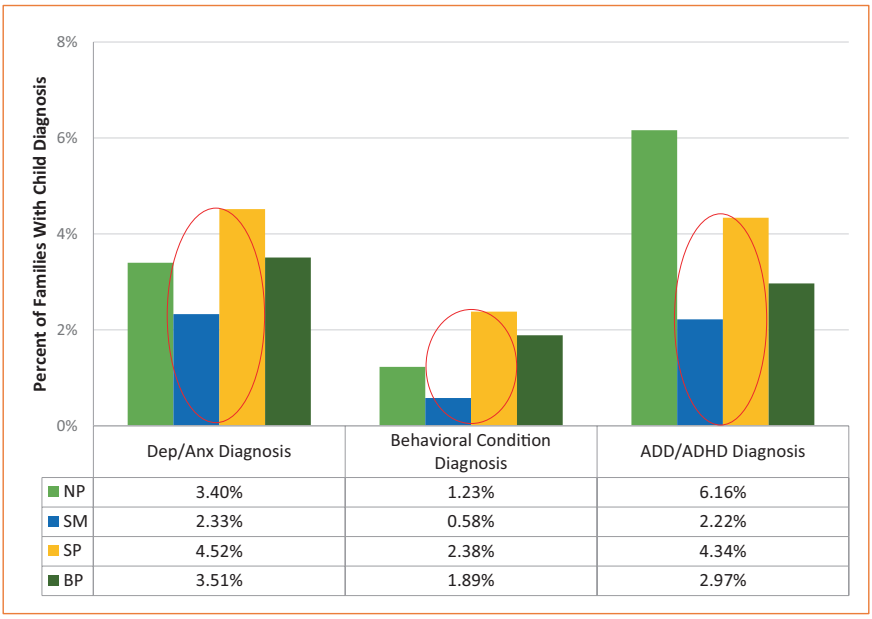

Fig. 8.2 Percentage of families with children with mental health disorders by PMHC dyads. Note*: Dep/Anx* depression/anxiety, *ADD/ADHD* attention-deficit disorder/attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, *PMHC* problematic mental health composite dyads, *NP* neither parent, *SM* service member only, *SP* spouse only, *BP* both parents

BP. Differences in help-seeking behaviors for clinical care may explain why NP was higher than expected and BP was lower than expected. Statistically, however, the odds of depression/anxiety and behavioral disorders were greater for BP than NP in unadjusted regressions with multinominal pairwise comparisons.

Table 8.3 shows significant associations between various factors (SP age, child age, years of marital duration, service branch, deployment, PMHC dyad, SM and SP social functioning, and family satisfaction) and children's mental health outcomes in the four stages of the hierarchical regression models. In Stage 1, oldest child age is noteworthy because it is a significant risk factor for all five SDQ subscales and all three disorders. In Stage 2, we observed increased odds for select child disorders for Marine Corps (behavioral disorders), Air Force (behavioral disorders and ADD/ADHD), and Coast Guard (depression/anxiety) SMs compared with Army SMs. Deployment without combat compared with no deployment history is also significant (behavioral disorders) when added before or after Stage 3. In Stage 3, SP dyads' PMHC increases SDQ conduct problems, SDQ emotional problems, SDQ total scores, and odds of depression/anxiety disorders more than NP dyads' PMHC. Also, BP dyads, compared with NP dyads, have a greater effect on SDQ emotional problems and SDQ total scores. Among the family dynamics variables in Stage 4, family satisfaction stands out as a protective factor against most of the negative outcomes assessed, including all five SDQ subscales and ADD/ADHD. In fact, family satisfaction is one of the most influential significant factors in the standardized hierarchical models; second only to SP-only PMHC dyads.

Table 8.3 SDQ and mental health outcomes in the four stages of the hierarchical regression models

	SDQ scales					Disorders		
Outcomes	Conduct	Emotional	Hyperactivity	Peer problems	SDQ total	Dep/Anx	Behavioral	ADD/ADHD
Weighted (*n*)	3307	3307	3307	3022	3022	3112	3098	3118
	Coef	Coef	Coef	Coef	Coef	Odds ratio	Odds ratio	Odds ratio
Stage 1								
SM age	**−0.04*** **	**−0.02***	**−0.03***	−0.01	**−0.08***	**1.06***	1.03	0.97
SM gender	−0.37	0.06	−0.39	−0.19	−0.90	1.29	1.02	1.40
Oldest child age	**0.05*** **	**0.06*** **	**0.06****	**0.03****	**0.21*** **	**1.17*** **	**1.20*** **	**1.30*** **
Newly married (<6 years)	−0.23*	−0.16	−0.09	0.13	−0.38	**2.32****	**1.16**	**2.79*** **
Stage 2								
Military								
Navy vs. Army	−0.01	−0.01	−0.08	−0.11	−0.16	1.18	0.96	0.70
Marine Corps vs. Army	0.01	−0.23	0.27	−0.17	−0.17	1.62	**5.47****	2.37
Air Force vs. Army	−0.11	0.07	0.31	0.03	0.22	1.74	**2.60***	**2.45***
Coast Guard vs. Army	−0.07	0.44	−0.13	0.11	−0.02	**7.11*** **	1.30	1.69
Deployed								
Noncombat vs. no	0.23	0.01	−0.04	0.15	0.27	2.32	**7.54*** **	1.20
Combat vs. no	0.10	0.03	0.0007	−0.04	0.02	1.62	1.85	0.56
Stage 3								
PMHC dyad								
SM vs. NP	0.01	0.26	−0.17	−0.17	−0.09	1.53	0.87	0.94
SP vs. NP	**0.49****	**0.64*** **	0.14	0.17	**1.42****	**2.93****	2.71	1.50
BP vs. NP	0.25	**0.42***	0.46	0.08	**1.53***	2.30	1.53	1.19
Stage 4								
SM social functioning	−0.002	**−0.005***	−0.005	**−0.005****	**−0.02***	**0.99***	**0.98****	0.99
SP social functioning	−0.003	−0.001	−0.001	−0.003	−0.01	**0.99*** **	**0.98****	0.99
Family satisfaction	**−0.03*** **	**−0.03*** **	**−0.05*** **	**−0.02*** **	**−0.12*** **	0.99	0.99	**0.97***

Note: *SDQ* strengths and difficulties questionnaire, *Dep/Anx* depression/anxiety, *ADD/ADHD* attention-deficit disorder/attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, *PMHC* problematic mental health composite dyads, *NP* neither parent, *SM* service member only, *SP* spouse only, *BP* both parents
Bolded values: *$p < 0.05$. **$p < 0.01$. ***$p < 0.001$

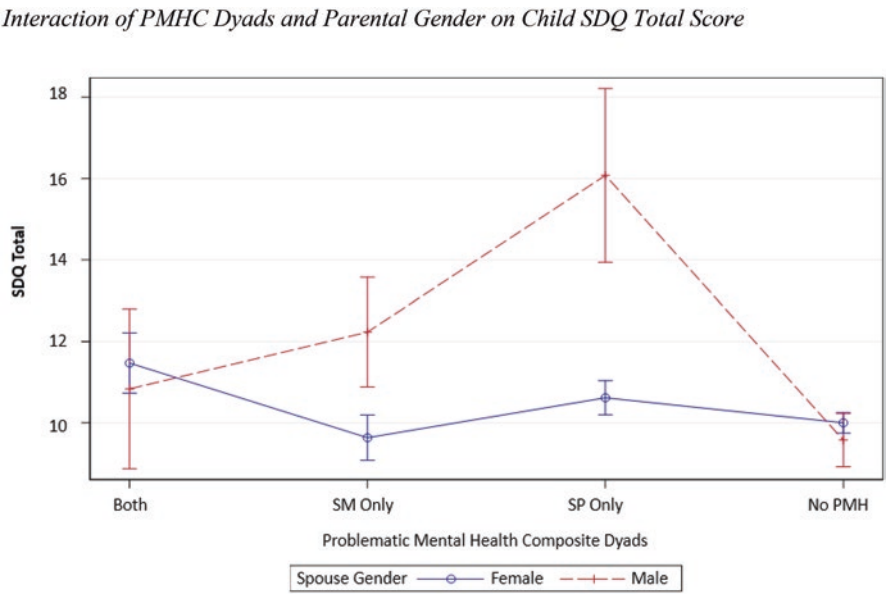

Fig. 8.3 Interaction of PMHC dyads and parental gender on child SDQ total score. Note: Confidence intervals are at 95%. *PMHC* problematic mental health composite, *SDQ* strengths and difficulties questionnaire, *SM* service member, *SP* spouse

The interactions of PMHC dyads by parental gender (Fig. 8.3) suggest that men pose an elevated risk for negative child outcomes compared with women, especially in their role as the caregiving SP if they are the one parent with the problematic mental health composite. Given the small cell sizes for SP-only PMHC dyad*male ($n = 51$) in the three-way interaction, a sensitivity analysis of the hierarchical regressions was run only in the subsample of SMs ($n = 368$) to ensure sufficient numbers to detect signals for gender differences. In support of the moderation test, there was a significant association between male SP-only PMHC dyad and SDQ conduct problems, SDQ emotional problems, SDQ peer problems, SDQ total score, and odds for depression/anxiety and behavioral disorders (See Table 8.4).

Discussion

Consistent with findings from earlier Family Study analyses (Briggs et al., 2020; Fairbank et al., 2018), most children were found to be functioning well, with an important but modest subset presenting with emotional and behavioral symptoms or a mental health diagnosis. Likewise, a minority of SM and SP parents reported mental health problems (~20%). Although different metrics were used, the rates of mental health problems endorsed by SMs and SPs in the Family Study cohort were comparable, on average, to those found in the RAND Deployment Life Study (Tanielian et al., 2014).

Table 8.4 Sensitivity analysis of the four-stage hierarchical regression model

	Subsample of female SMs							
	SDQ scales					Disorders		
	Conduct	Emotional	Hyperactivity	Peer problems	SDQ total	Dep/Anx	Behavioral	ADD/ADHD
Weighted observations (n)	**319**	**319**	**319**	**272**	**272**	**292**	**292**	**319**
Stage 1								
SP age	−0.07**	−0.04+	−0.00	−0.02	−0.08	1.10	1.02	0.99
SP gender	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Oldest child age	0.03	0.07*	−0.01	0.01	0.11	1.32**	1.39**	1.47***
Recently married (<6 years)	−0.23	−0.05	−0.12	0.20	−0.15	4.95*	2.93	1.36
Stage 2								
Military								
Navy vs. Army	0.50+	−0.39	0.28	−0.03	0.47	3.98	8.39	1.15
Marine Corps vs. Army	−0.94+	−0.78+	−1.45	−0.93*	−4.41***			38.66**
Air Force vs. Army	−0.04	−0.24	0.15	−0.11	−0.28	4.67	13.68+	5.37+
Coast Guard vs. Army	−0.37	0.33	−0.10	−0.23	−1.31	11.07+	0.23	7.25+
Deployed								
Noncombat vs. no	0.72*	0.09	0.28	0.54	1.18	2.61	6.98*	1.09
Combat vs. no	0.32	−0.01	0.24	0.20	0.68	0.32	0.06+	0.71
Stage 3								
PMHC dyad								
Female SM vs. NP	0.35	1.17+	0.72	−0.12	2.76+	0.19	0.01+	1.05
Male SP vs. NP	**1.97*** **	**1.40*** **	0.77	**1.69** **	**6.41*** **	**8.50***	**46.57*** **	3.89
BP vs. NP	**0.66***	0.42	0.74	**1.01** **	2.82+	6.35+	0.33	0.37
Stage 4								
SM social functioning	−0.005	0.004	−0.01	0.004	−0.01	0.97**	0.95+	0.98
SP social functioning	0.01+	0.01	0.004	0.005	0.03	1.03	1.03	0.96+
Family satisfaction	−0.05***	−0.02	−0.06***	−0.02	−0.16***	0.90+	0.78***	0.95

Note: *ADD/ADHD* attention-deficit disorder/attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, *BP* both parents, *Dep/Anx* depression/anxiety, *NP* neither parent, *PMHC* problematic mental health composite, *SDQ* strengths and difficulties questionnaire, *SM* service member, *SP* spouse

Bolded values: *$p < 0.05$. **$p < 0.01$. ***$p < 0.001$

The finding that children's SDQ means increased in rank order by PMHC scores from NP, SM, and SP to BP groupings for all SDQ factors is consistent with the broad scientific literature that delineates heightened risk for children associated with a range of parental mental health problems, including parental depression, serious mental illness, and PTSD (Gao et al., 2007; Goelman et al., 2014; Koutra et al., 2013; Monson et al., 2012; Van Loon et al., 2014). Interestingly, the strength of the association with child SDQ problems was consistently higher for SP than SM mental health and amplified further when BP had a mental health condition. Percentages of children's mental health diagnoses also increased in rank order from SMs to SPs, with SPs demonstrating the most consistent association with these outcomes. These findings underscore the crucial role of parental mental health on both parenting and children's mental health and psychosocial functioning, as emphasized in family systems theory and clinical practice (e.g., Swick & Williams, 2006), and they are consistent with literature on military and civilian families that have explored aspects of the links between parents' and children's mental health.

In our study, we found gender of the SM and SP to be a moderator for children's psychosocial functioning and mental health. Overall, fathers with a problematic mental health composite in the role of an SM or SP posed a higher risk than mothers for impacting children's psychosocial functioning and mental health. The adverse consequences were substantially increased for fathers in the role of SPs compared with SMs. A number of factors may contribute to this pattern, including fewer male SPs of female SMs in the military, social isolation of male SP parents from their male SP peers given their minority status among military-connected families, and assumptions and expectations regarding gender roles and challenges associated with perceptions of role reversal (e.g., stigma associated with seeking support). Future studies should consider examining parenting practices, support systems, and family dynamics, among other factors, that may contribute to female gender being a protective factor—and male SP role a potential risk factor—for military children's psychosocial functioning and mental health (see Segal, 1995; Segal & Lane, 2016; Tepe et al., 2016).

Thus, an unanticipated new finding was how the confluence of gender and role (SM or SP) as a significant moderator impacted children's psychosocial and mental health outcomes. Our findings suggest that when fathers served as the primary caregiver (male SP) and had problems with mental health, social, and/or family functioning, their children were more likely to have impairments in emotional and behavioral functioning and to have a mental health diagnosis. This finding underscores a need to learn more about psychosocial variables that may affect the relationship between male SP mental health and psychosocial mental health outcomes for children in military families. For example, findings from a recent study of male SMs (Zhang et al., 2020) suggest that paternal emotion regulation and coercive interactions with children increase the risk for child psychopathology. Similar studies on the association between male SP mental health and psychosocial functioning of children in the family are needed.

Male SPs may also perceive fewer opportunities for services and treatments within military mental health-care systems. To improve the psychosocial health of children in military families, future studies could attempt to better understand the experiences

of male SPs within military and civilian communities and the availability and accessibility of mental health resources, services, and care specifically designed to address the needs of male SPs and their children. The construct of resilience, for example, is valued and emphasized within military culture and is often viewed as a potential protective mechanism. For some male SPs with mental health treatment needs, however, an emphasis on resilience may also have the unintended consequence of fostering stigma that could act as a barrier to reaching out for support when needed. From a policy perspective, male SPs could be targeted as a group for prevention strategies. Families OverComing Under Stress (FOCUS) Resilience Training for military families (Lester et al., 2013) is one such family-based program that promotes resilience training as a prevention strategy (https://focusproject.org/). The program is described as a resilience-enhancement program for couples, families, and children that builds on strengths and teaches new skills, such as effective emotion regulation, communication strategies, problem-solving, goal setting, and management of trauma and stress reminders (Lester et al., 2011). It would be useful to learn more about male SP experiences with FOCUS as well as with other evidence-based programs for military parents, such as the After Deployment: Adaptive Parenting Tools (ADAPT) program described in this volume (Gewirtz & Simenec, Chap. 9).

A noteworthy finding was that parental mental health was generally not associated with deployment history in this analysis. Results did not suggest a mediating role for the sequential effects of deployment, given a lack of unadjusted association and minimal adjusted association. These findings could, in part, be due to how deployment was constructed in our analysis. Including a numerical measure of combat exposure (e.g., total months) instead of the lifetime categorical variable could have offered greater variability and thereby a more powerful predictor. However, the well-known *healthy warrior* effect may also mitigate some of the potentially negative implications of deployment. In this conception, SMs who are *healthier* or functioning better in their military roles are more likely to be deployed, while some of the nondeployed may have been ineligible because of a range of health or functional concerns. Further research would be warranted to investigate what contributing and contextual factors promote deployment as a positive experience for military families.

Both family satisfaction and parental social functioning served as robust protective factors, buffering children from negative outcomes even when parental mental health problems were present. In fact, family satisfaction was the strongest resilience factor associated with better child functioning. The malleability of family satisfaction suggests a target for intervention that could improve the function of those children experiencing mental health problems. For example, prevention programs that are geared toward strengthening family resiliency could, in turn, improve SM readiness (Lester et al., 2011) and provide the family with the skills necessary to act as a conduit to other positive sequelae, such as improved mental health functioning for both children and parents.

These findings highlight the complex array of factors that contribute to the mental health and well-being of children in military families. The observations herein raise additional questions about how these vulnerabilities and protective factors lead to differential outcomes for military-connected children. For example, does a parent

with greater social functioning also parent or interact with their child differently? Are caregivers with fewer mental health concerns more consistent in their parenting? Do they exhibit higher levels of parental attachment and warmth, or regulate their affect or communicate more effectively? Future studies should examine these potential pathways to better understand how we can more effectively support military families and mitigate the risks associated with parental mental health problems and poor family functioning.

The study presented in this chapter has several methodological limitations. This study was cross-sectional in nature and relied on a single respondent (i.e., the SP) to report on children's psychosocial functioning. Consequently, there is potential response bias from the SP because we were not able to examine the reliability of reports across respondents on child functioning (e.g., SMs, mental health professionals, teachers, child self-reports). Unlike symptomatology, children's psychiatric diagnoses were based on SP reports of a mental health provider's diagnosis rather than the actual medical records from the diagnosing provider. Psychosocial functioning and diagnoses were assessed on the family level, that is, across all children in the home rather than a randomly identified child. Symptom measurement also relied on an abbreviated and modified version of the SDQ that used dichotomous rather than Likert-type response options, which has not been validated relative to response options available in the full measure. Lastly, some cell sizes were relatively small, limiting power to detect differences. Although the findings are consistent with the literature on parental mental health and the heightened risk for child mental health diagnoses and difficulties, low base rates of child mental health impairments and diagnoses and modest effects restricted our ability to infer clinical significance and the extent to which findings may guide the development, selection, and application of mental health treatment or relevant services.

Despite these limitations, an important strength of the Family Study that differentiates it from much of the earlier research on the mental health of children in military families is that it is composed of a large, DoD-wide cohort that includes female and male SMs and SPs. Family Study respondents represent all branches and components of the US military. This study also improves on the design and methods of earlier military family research by recruiting a probability-based sample of junior military personnel SPs; thus, the findings will be applicable to a broad population of military families over time. This strategy will also allow researchers to better understand the etiology and progression of risk and protective factors over time. Continued exploration of the relationships between parental, family, and child well-being longitudinally will be an integral part of responding to calls for improving our understanding and addressing the needs of military families.

Conclusion

This study sought to explore how military parents' mental health and family functioning are associated with children's mental health conditions and impairments in psychosocial functioning. The results highlight the need to understand child

functioning in the context of SP functioning, especially when the SP is male because SPs are often the primary caregiver. Findings also highlight that SM mental health functioning is not inconsequential, given that better mental health and social functioning, especially among female SMs, were found to be associated with fewer child mental health problems. Moreover, the results also suggest that there may be added risk for children's mental health associated with having both the SP and the SM with one or more mental health conditions, underscoring the need to destigmatize and increase access to mental health services and interventions for the entire family, including the SM, SP, and children. Further still, programs, interventions, and support services that foster healthy parental social and family functioning and children's psychological growth and resilience are critical to minimizing the impact of mental health difficulties and conditions on all members of the military family.

Future prospective investigations focused on parental and child mental health would be beneficial, including an investigation of mechanisms that promote child and family well-being. Second, understanding other developmental and contextual factors that impact child and family mental health outcomes is key to a full understanding of who may be at particular risk. The findings of this study can inform military force readiness and strategies for its enhancement by mitigating risk factors and potentiating protective factors related to parenting, parental mental health, and child mental health, all of which can affect SM effectiveness. As well, the findings of this study are relevant to many military family support programs. Relevant information can be disseminated through educational materials, webinars, and newsletters, and used to support the development of new services, interventions, and policies to address some of the unmet needs of military families as reported in this research.

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Chapter 9
Strengthening Parenting in Deployed Military Families

Abigail H. Gewirtz and Tori S. Simenec

In the years since 9/11/2001, more than three million service members have deployed to the wars in the Middle East. Forty percent of these soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines are also parents. Service member health and well-being are inextricably linked to the well-being of the service member's family. A burgeoning body of military family research over the past 15 years rests on the foundations of more than 50 years of developmental and developmental psychopathology research demonstrating the importance of the family environment, and parenting in particular, for child well-being and resilience. Given that a disproportionate number of new recruits to the military are themselves *military brats*, paying attention to the well-being of this generation is important for both military families and the nation (Gewirtz et al. 2020a).

Unlike in prior wars, approximately 50% of all those deployed are or were members of the Military Reserve Component (i.e., National Guard or Reserve [NG/R] service members); these personnel are older and more likely to be partnered and parenting than typical active-duty service personnel (Defense Manpower Data Center 2015). In all, about half of the more than two million US children who have experienced the deployment to war of a parent are children of NG/R personnel living in civilian communities with few ties to other military families (Clever & Segal 2013). Community mental health resources often lack specialized military expertise, making it challenging for families to get appropriate help and support following deployment or injuries.

What makes wartime deployment uniquely stressful for families is twofold: an extended parent-child separation combined with concerns for the deployed parent's safety. Empirical studies on the impact of deployment on families has grown extensively over the past decade (see also Cozza & Lerner 2013; Institute of Medicine

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2013; NASEM 2019). Findings indicate, for example, that reintegration after deployment and the resulting impact on the family last far beyond the immediate reunion period to more than a year post-reintegration (Brickell et al., 2018; Creech et al. 2014). When a parent returns from deployment with visible or invisible wounds of war, the scars may last a lifetime.

This chapter, then, provides an overview of the extant research on the effects of wartime deployment on parenting and family and child well-being. We highlight what is known from cross-sectional, longitudinal, and prevention/intervention studies. Applying a family stress model and social interaction learning theory as conceptual bases, we review the evidence on how deployment affects parenting and child adjustment. Fortunately, parenting is malleable to intervention. Thus, the bulk of this chapter provides an overview and integration of randomized controlled trial/RCT data from a parenting prevention intervention (After Deployment, Adaptive Parenting Tools/ADAPT) targeting improved child adjustment for military families with school-aged children. Findings highlight the utility of randomized trials to examine mechanisms of change, as well as attributes (behavioral and physiological) that may affect or moderate benefits of a military parenting program. We conclude by pointing to some significant gaps in the research literature as well as future directions.

Impact of Deployment on Children and Families

Extended separations resulting from deployment have both direct and indirect influences on the psychosocial well-being of military children (Park 2011). Military parents influence their children directly through their parenting practices (Gewirtz et al. 2018b). Evidence suggests that there is a negative impact of deployment length on fathers' parenting practices, with longer deployments associated with poorer problem-solving, harsh discipline, positive involvement, encouragement and monitoring (Davis et al. 2015). Among military families, deployed father's negative emotion socialization is associated with greater negative emotionality and internalizing problems in children (He et al. 2015). Deployment-related post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms are associated with parenting challenges (Gewirtz et al. 2010; Giff et al. 2019; Laifer et al. 2019). These parenting challenges lead to problems in the child that are best understood through a developmental lens.

Children of parents who have deployed may be vulnerable to problems in childhood with attachment, acute stress reactions, adjustment, depression, and behavior, as well as problems in adolescence with substance use, behavior, and conduct (Barker & Berry 2009; Brickell et al. 2018; Gewirtz & Zamir 2014; Gilreath et al. 2013; Reed et al. 2011; Tupper et al. 2018). Extended separations can have negative effects on children's academic performance (Jensen et al. 1989). Some evidence suggests that longer deployments are associated with greater risk of these problems in children (Gewirtz & Zamir 2014; Mansfield et al. 2011). Research evidence also

points to differential effects of deployment on children depending on their age (Gewirtz & Zamir 2014).

Despite the risks that extended separations can introduce, military children often exhibit resilience (Jeffreys & Leitzel 2000). Having a relationship with a warm and effective caregiver is the most important factor in a child's life for protecting against risk and promoting resilience (Masten 2015). Strengthening the quality of parenting is of critical importance for improving children's well-being, and increased attention to improving resilience in military children and families is greatly needed (Park 2011).

Interventions aimed at improving the parent-child relationship in the general/civilian population demonstrate effects on child well-being as well as secondary outcomes of parent psychological well-being and marital quality (e.g., Bullard et al. 2010; Forgatch & DeGarmo 1999; Forgatch et al. 2009; Wolchik et al. 2002). This is important because deployment can also affect family systems by placing a strain on couple relationships and reducing relationship quality (e.g., Faber et al. 2008; Flake et al. 2009; Gewirtz et al. 2011; Warner et al. 2009).

Family Stress Models

Nearly 40 years of research on family stress models has demonstrated the impact of broad classes of stressful events on the functioning of families (e.g., Barnett 2008; Conger et al. 2002; Elder Jr et al. 1986). Notable examples include research on Midwestern farm families that highlighted the detrimental effects of poverty on parenting practices via impaired couple adjustment (e.g., Conger et al. 2002), as well as studies of the Great Depression. In the latter, for example, socioeconomic stress was associated with impaired parenting practices, increasing the risk for child maladjustment (Elder Jr et al. 1985). Research on stressors related to family violence and marital transitions (e.g., divorce, stepfamilies) has also demonstrated similar relationships; for example, observed parenting practices mediated the relationship between divorce-related sequelae and children's adjustment (Forgatch & DeGarmo 1999; Forgatch et al. 2009), while hostility in couple relationships predicted later child anger, mediated through coercive parenting (Rhoades et al. 2011). By hypothesizing that stressful family transitions (e.g., marital disruptions, poverty, violence) indirectly impair children's adjustment via negative impacts on parental distress, parenting impairments, and couple relationships, family stress models are mediation models. Family stress studies have, in addition, demonstrated how parental psychopathology, particularly maternal depression, impairs couple adjustment, parenting, and child adjustment (e.g., Downey & Coyne 1990; Gartstein & Fagot 2003). However, despite approximately 20 years of war in the Middle East, a dearth of longitudinal research has examined the impact of parental deployment to war on parenting and children's adjustment (see, e.g., Alfano et al. 2016; Gewirtz & Youssef 2016b; McFarlane 2009).

A Military Family Stress Model

The stress of a parent's deployment to war on the family, as noted above, likely stems from both the separation and the worries about the service member being in harm's way. Family stress is likely exacerbated when parents return with post-traumatic stress disorder/PTSD, traumatic brain injury, and depression, which nearly a fifth of service members suffer from (Tanielian et al. 2008). This is the reason so many families talk about life after deployment as a *new normal*. When families include a parent who deploys frequently (i.e., on a high operational tempo) such as personnel in Special Operations, or in dual-career military families in which both parents are deployed, the deployment cycle may be almost continuous.

Most military family research has examined adult functioning (military service member and spouse), and less often child adjustment, during and following deployment, typically using self-reports (Gewirtz & Youssef 2016a). Large-sample population representative family studies, in particular, have provided important information about parents (and sometimes children) during the wars of the twenty-first century (see, e.g., the RAND Deployment Life study, Meadows et al. 2016, and the Millennium Family Cohort Study, Crum-Cianflone et al. 2014. But almost no studies have provided longitudinal multiple-method and multiple-informant data on parenting and parent-child relationships following deployment to elucidate *how* deployment might function as a family stressor. Gathering information from multiple informants (e.g., mother, father, child, teacher) provides different perspectives on behavior; using several methods of assessment (e.g., behavioral observations, self-reports, physiological and genetic data) allows for a richer, multilevel understanding of family and child processes (e.g., Cicchetti & Blender 2004).

We found partial support for a military family stress model using multiple-informant and multi-method data from 336 families in which at least one parent had been deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan (Gewirtz et al. 2018a. Parenting practices (measured by observations) mediated the relationship between PTSD symptoms and child adjustment (measured by parent, child, and teacher reports) for mothers but not for fathers. Marital quality (measured by a latent factor including both observations and self-reports) also served as a mediator from greater PTSD symptoms to poorer child adjustment via impaired parenting. Fathers' greater PTSD symptoms—but not length or number of deployments—were directly associated with children's poorer adjustment. A recent replication of that original military family stress model study with another sample of 244 military families found full support for the model, with both mothers' and fathers' PTSD symptoms indirectly affecting child adjustment via poorer observed and reported couple adjustment and observed parenting practices (Cheng et al. 2020).

Social Interaction Learning Theory

While family stress models provide a broad conceptualization of the deployment context as a stressful environment that may increase the risk for children's emotional and behavioral problems (via impaired parenting), social interaction learning theory provides the details of *how* parenting and parent-child relationships may go awry in these circumstances. Patterson (1982, 2005), together with his colleagues at the Oregon Social Learning Center, showed how in stressful family contexts coercive parent-child interactions are associated with subsequent child antisocial (disruptive) behavior. The more frequent, intense, and longer these interactions (also known as conflict bouts) last, the more likely they are to increase the risk of negative maladaptive child behaviors including conduct problems, delinquency, substance use and abuse, depression, and school problems (Patterson 2016).

A parent training model, Parent Management Training-Oregon Model/GenerationPMTO, was developed by Patterson and colleagues beginning in the 1980s (Forgatch & Gewirtz 2017). This family of interventions (also known as the Oregon model of behavioral parent training; Dishion et al. 2016) has been rigorously tested in both efficacy and effectiveness trials and has been implemented widely in Northern Europe and in some US states (Forgatch & Gewirtz 2017; Forgatch et al. 2013). The Oregon group was most interested in preventing externalizing behaviors in youth. Overall, far less research has focused on preventing anxiety, an internalizing behavior, in youth. However, emerging research suggests that parents may play a key role in preventing internalizing problems in children, particularly anxiety (Morgan et al. 2017; Ginsburg et al. 2015). Recent randomized control trials have demonstrated success in improving children's anxiety symptoms through prevention and early intervention parenting programs (Morgan et al. 2017; Ginsburg et al. 2015).

One of the most salient stressors of the deployment context that children and their at-home parent experience is worry about the safety of the deployed parent. Research has documented greater than typical levels of anxiety and more referrals for mental health services among children and their at-home caregivers (Alfano et al. 2016; Mustillo et al. 2016). Moreover, after service members return home, post-traumatic stress and related symptoms (e.g., from traumatic brain injury) may disrupt parental emotion regulation skills, which may in turn damage effective parenting (Snyder et al. 2016; Laifer et al. 2019). Fortunately, evidence-based interventions demonstrate promising potential in strengthening parenting to buffer the negative effects of deployment on children and families.

We briefly review one example of an evidence-based intervention with RCT data targeting parenting in military families. There is a sizeable amount of prevention and intervention research with civilian families but remarkably few rigorously evaluated interventions for military children and families with data demonstrating longer term change, and/or change at multiple levels (e.g., biological, genetic, behavioral; NASEM 2019). Of note, among civilian families, far more evidence-based prevention interventions focus on improving caregiving and parenting

processes than those targeting children alone. This is likely due to the fact that programs aimed at improving children's resilience by strengthening parenting have also demonstrated crossover and cascading effects, improving parental and overall family well-being (e.g., Forehand et al. 2014; Gewirtz et al. 2016; Patterson et al. 2010; Sandler et al. 2011).

An adaptation of GenerationPMTO for military families—After Deployment, Adaptive Parenting Tools (ADAPT)—was developed and rigorously evaluated using a randomized controlled trial design. This process enabled the examination of family stress and social interaction learning (SIL) models as applied to military families, as well as a robust test of the PMTO preventive intervention model for this population. Conceptualizing deployment as the family stressor, we predicted that deployment-related stressors (length and numbers of deployments, combat PTSD symptoms) would impair parenting and that the ADAPT intervention would buffer parenting. Consistent with a SIL model, we hypothesized that improvements in parenting as a function of the intervention would in turn strengthen children's adjustment as well as parental adjustment. However, we made some key modifications to the GenPMTO program, specifically, by adding a new emphasis on effective emotional parenting or emotion socialization skills.

The remainder of this chapter describes first the study designs, processes, and implementation of the three large-scale ADAPT trials. Secondly, we describe outcomes of the initial ADAPT pragmatic randomized effectiveness trial. We highlight not only the outcomes of the trial but also data yielded regarding mechanisms underlying family and child psychosocial health and adjustment over time in the wake of parent(s)' deployment to war.

Testing ADAPT

After Deployment, Adaptive Parenting Tools (ADAPT) was originally developed and tested with funding from the National Institute of Drug Abuse (DA-030114) and the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development (HD-066896); funding for two subsequent ongoing studies (a comparative effectiveness study of multiple formats of the program and a sequential multiple assignment randomized trial/SMART of the ADAPT for active duty program) was provided by the Department of Defense (W81XWH-14-1-0143; W81XWH-16-1-0407). While the development and testing of the ADAPT program offered a special opportunity to test a SIL framework among military families, practically speaking, such a program was crucially needed.

Although theory-based military family programs tested with RCTs are available, they are few in number and target the couple relationship (Stanley et al. 2014) or new parents (e.g., DeVoe et al. 2017). ADAPT is the first empirically based parenting program for deployed military families with school-aged children tested in a randomized controlled trial (Gewirtz & Youssef 2016b). Developed and evaluated first for National Guard and Reserve (NG/R) families, ADAPT was later adapted for

active-duty families and is now available in multiple formats and intensities, including as a population-based, tiered program (DeGarmo & Gewirtz 2019; Gewirtz et al. 2020b).

The ADAPT studies have evaluated the effectiveness, formats, sequence, and dosages of the ADAPT program on parenting practices, and children's adjustment, as well as gathered data to understand parenting in the post-deployment environment. The original ADAPT effectiveness trial was the first longitudinal study to gather comprehensive (multiple method, multiple informant) data on NG/R parents and their school-aged children who had experienced deployment. From 2011 to 2016, 336 NG/R families were recruited into the ADAPT study and followed for 2 years. All families included at least one parent who had been deployed to the Middle East in service of OIF/OEF, or OND (US-led conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq) after September 11, 2001, and at least one child (in the parent's custody) between 4 and 13 years old at the time of study entry. Assessments were conducted at baseline, after which families were randomized to the ADAPT intervention or a services-as-usual condition, and at 6 months (posttest), 12 months, and 24 months post-baseline. Details of the sample and procedures may be found in Gewirtz et al. (2018b). During the same period (2012–2014) a small feasibility, acceptability, and efficacy trial of the three modules of the ADAPT online (self-directed) program was conducted with $N = 38$ military parents. The second large-scale ADAPT study was a comparative effectiveness study of three different formats of the parenting program: online/self-directed, telehealth, and in-person group. This study, completed in 2020, recruited 244 military families from Minnesota and Michigan with very similar inclusion criteria as the first study (i.e., deployed to the Middle East, with a 5–12-year-old at home, mostly NG/R). The third large-scale study, still ongoing, is a sequential multiple-assignment randomized trial/SMART conducted with more than 400 active-duty families living in four military installations across the USA (FT Bragg, NC; FT Campbell, KY; FT Belvoir & FT Myer, VA). This SMART examines for whom, in what format, and in what sequence the ADAPT program works best. Study families (with a prior deployment, and a 5–12-year-old at home; mostly Army) are first randomized to either the online format or a workshop-based program and then, based on a brief assessment of parenting (examined via a measure of parenting efficacy that has been shown to index observed parenting effectiveness), either stay the course or are re-randomized to a *booster* (three sessions of the in-person group format or three individual sessions).

Study Implementation: Challenges and Benefits

As with many RCTs, successful implementation of the ADAPT studies has required extensive outreach, communication, and collaboration with military leadership, families, and active-duty, National Guard, and reserve communities. For each study, the first year was spent in planning and outreach activities, learning about the communities from which we were recruiting, conducting focus groups to understand

families' needs, staffing up, and getting regulatory (IRB) approval from both our university and the Department of Defense. In outreach, we have used a combined top-down and bottom-up approach, reaching out to leadership and commanders, as well as to enlisted service members and partners/spouses. We learned early on that providing resources and services outside of the study parameters helped our military partners see us as a useful resource and not simply a team of researchers looking for subjects to study (and who would then leave the community). In each study, our goal has been to establish the program in the community such that ADAPT could be sustained far beyond the grant period.

In the first ADAPT study, for example, we were asked to attend all Yellow Ribbon mandatory deployment preparation and reintegration events to answer families' questions about how they might help their children navigate the deployment and reintegration process. In our ongoing study, ADAPT for Active-Duty, our research team is active on social media, posting information about events and general resources for families, not simply ADAPT. During the COVID-19 pandemic, when face-to-face interaction had to stop, our sites remained active on social media and contacted families regularly to see how they were doing and keep them apprised of study developments, and provided newsletters and videos with *pandemic parenting* tips.

Getting initial buy-in for the program required us to explain in clear and simple terms what the study entails and its potential benefits to participants and the military. Opposition is often simply a function of research fatigue; leadership and families talked of being asked to participate in research studies from which they received no benefit and following which they received no information about results. We have always committed to providing study data in the form of newsletters as data became available and have disseminated regular newsletters communicating research findings to all our families.

Among both leadership and individual service members and families, we have rarely received complaints about the randomized nature of the study. In our first study, a handful of families reported that they were disappointed not to be randomized to the intervention condition; in our second study, some were disappointed not to receive their preferred intervention format. Typically, these were families who had friends or colleagues who were allocated to a different condition. Overall, and to our surprise, study attrition was not significantly different between the intervention and control conditions in the original study. (Subsequent studies have not had a control condition; all families have received some form of ADAPT intervention.)

The primary challenge to the conduct of all three large-scale RCTs has been recruitment of families, and this appears to be the most common barrier to RCT implementation among our peer military family researchers. Ours are complex studies that require potential participant families to commit to three, 3-h-long, in-home assessments over a 2-year period, as well as to consider joining an ADAPT program format. Participants joined all studies via our online portal; they completed a brief screening tool, and, if eligible, were immediately routed to the online consent form. After they consented and completed a baseline survey, families were contacted by our interview coordinator to schedule a baseline in-home assessment.

Across all three of our studies to date, we have found similar trends in recruitment. Early outreach activities—introducing the study and the program, getting face time with key stakeholders, and online promotion—have typically resulted in strong recruitment in the first few months of early adopters, families highly motivated to engage in our study and/or who are seeking parenting tools. Since then, we have seen recruitment dipping and peaking in waves, often related to the military and school calendars (e.g., dips over the summer when most Permanent Changes of Station/PCS moves take place, or between Thanksgiving and Christmas; and peaks around the start of the school year or in early spring).

Our best recruitment tools are in-person meetings (e.g., family picnics, unit gatherings, or pre-deployment family briefings), word of mouth, and mass media mentions of the program. We have learned over time that families need to hear about ADAPT multiple times, from several sources, before they agree to participate. By diversifying our outreach efforts—using email, phone calls, letters, texts, social media, flyers, and meetings—we are able to share ADAPT with families in multiple ways. Once families participate in the program, word spreads that ADAPT is a useful resource. We are fortunate to have received good media attention, and every newspaper, radio, and television story about ADAPT has attracted more consenting families.

Convincing families to enroll in the study, however, is just the first hurdle to jump. As many as 20–30% of enrollees consent to participate, only to balk at the scheduling of a baseline in-home interview either by not responding to numerous contact attempts or by reporting that they have changed their minds about participating. Being more explicit about what each aspect of the study entails (e.g., providing length of time to complete each survey and interview) has, interestingly, not reduced the percent of families who *fell off* between consent and baseline assessment in our later studies.

As our studies grew, so has our study team. The team includes military veterans, military spouses/partners, those who grew up in military families, as well as graduate students and academic professionals. We have attracted many volunteers who are interested to serve and learn about military families or who have retired from the military and want to assist; they have served as interviewers, coders, childcare professionals, and recruitment experts and/or helped connect us with key military stakeholders.

Our participant parents have provided us with honest and direct feedback about our studies. At times we have sought out their advice regarding to what degree our study protocol was burdensome and how to discuss with families the option to provide genetic material (via saliva samples). We also have benefited greatly from strong working relationships with program officers at the National Institute on Drug Abuse and at the Department of Defense and with our human subjects protection/IRB office, all of whom have been very responsive and willing to answer a range of questions. Our approach is to preempt concerns whenever possible, e.g., to discuss recruitment concerns with our funder as soon as we could see trends.

After recruitment, the major challenge to successful implementation of our RCTs has been logistical, as they have been/are conducted in multiple sites and/or large

urban areas, and have included a group format for the intervention, which requires a number of families in one location. In the original effectiveness trial, when a family entered the study and was randomized to the intervention, their location was mapped; we would identify the most accessible/central location for a group of families and then identify an appropriate community space to deliver the intervention (typically a community center, church, school, or college). Families were asked for their time and location preferences (how far they were willing to travel to group and what nights they were available). Families living on the edge of our catchment zone, or unwilling or unable to travel more than 20 min to a group location, or with busy schedules, often had to wait several months to a year or more to be placed into a group. Given this challenge, we found it quite remarkable that 75% of the families assigned to the intervention attended!

Logistical challenges have been more than offset by the benefit families have reported from participating in ADAPT. Families' narratives often are not captured in the empirical data collection process. We have been fortunate to have in our study articulate families who found the ADAPT program to be beneficial and meaningful for their family. Several of our families' volunteered testimonials have been documented in news media reports about the program; for example, a front-page article about the program in the local newspaper reported interviews with two families who completed the program and reported benefits, even several years later.

Measures

All studies have included multi-method, multi-informant data gathered from parents, children, and children's teachers to enable us to understand parents' and children's adaptation over the 2 years of the study at multiple levels of analysis (i.e., behavioral, cognitive, emotional, and in the first study only, physiological and genetic). At all four time points, parents complete measures of parenting, social support, psychopathology, children's adjustment, and emotion socialization. At baseline, 12 months, and 24 months, parents and children are interviewed at home; teacher questionnaires about children's behavior and peer adjustment are gathered; and parents and children are videotaped completing Family Interaction Tasks (FITs). These assess multiple domains of parenting practices (i.e., teaching through encouragement, positive involvement, discipline, problem-solving, monitoring, and emotion socialization) and include teaching tasks, problem-solving tasks, a co-parenting conflict task for mother-father discussion, and a deployment issues task during which parents and children discuss an emotional issue associated with the parent's deployment. Children complete self-report measures of social, emotional, and behavioral adjustment, and parents complete measures of executive functioning and IQ. In the original effectiveness trial, chest strap monitors worn by family members provided heart rate variability data during the FITs to help us understand emotion responding within and across family members. Also, saliva samples were

gathered from parents and children for genotyping in order to examine genetic moderation of intervention effects.

Observational data are key to the theoretical model on which ADAPT is based, as the theory proposes that interactions are the mechanisms by which children learn coercive and aversive behaviors that subsequently generalize beyond the home environment. Coding of videotaped FITs thus assessed parenting on key dimensions: problem-solving, positive involvement, discipline, monitoring, and teaching through encouragement. Extending the model to military families also required coding of FITs for family emotion communication (i.e., parental emotion socialization).

Thanks to separate grant funding from NIDA to our colleague James Snyder, videos from a subset of the sample (two parent married families, mostly with only the husband deployed) were coded specifically to examine how PTSD symptoms might manifest in family interactions. This study yielded both global and microsocial/moment-by-moment codes of interpersonal interactions among family members that provide rich evidence for how couples and families behave following deployment. Snyder used an a priori approach to yield multi-item scales reflecting positive engagement (20 items), withdrawal (18 items), and reactivity-coercion (17 items). A fourth factor labeled distress avoidance emerged as a result of factor analyses of items that did not fall within scales as previously expected (Brockman et al. 2016; Snyder et al. 2016). Sample distress avoidance items included: "Engages in soothing in response to others' distress;" "Is fearful or anxious;" "Is wary and tentative;" and "walks on eggshells to not upset other family members." Snyder's team also coded moment-by-moment affect data using the Relationship Affect Coding System (RACS; Peterson et al. 2008). Affective codes included anger/disgust, distress, validation, positive affect, ignore, and no affect.

Cross-Sectional Examinations of Parenting: As noted earlier, we used baseline data from our first and second RCTs (the original effectiveness trial and the comparative effectiveness trial) to examine a military family stress model. In addition, in separate analyses to understand the factors associated with fathers' parenting practices, we examined relationships between specific risk and protective factors and observed parenting for the deployed fathers in the sample (Davis et al. 2015). Length of deployment (total number of months deployed) and father age were significantly negatively associated with effective parenting practices, while income was positively associated with effective observed parenting. That is, older fathers, and those who had been deployed for longer, showed poorer parenting, while higher income appeared to function as a protective factor or buffer for more effective parenting. In this model, PTSD symptoms and battle exposure were not significantly associated with parenting practices. It appears that the determinants of parenting in this sample may differ for mothers and for fathers. This may be due to the extended absence of fathers from their children's lives and the relative lack of active parenting among these fathers compared to the mothers. It is of particular interest that income was significantly associated with parenting in this sample; prior family stress model research has shown poverty to be a powerful family stressor affecting parenting (e.g., Masarik & Conger 2017), but no research of which we are aware has

demonstrated income to be a protective factor for parenting in a sample of largely middle-class families.

Another cross-sectional baseline study examined emotional parent-child interactions among mothers, fathers, and children (Brockman et al. 2016). Fathers' highly reactive and coercive behaviors appeared to amplify children's coercive behaviors, which elicited both coercion and distress avoidance from mothers. For example, a father might respond harshly to a child's noncompliance, eliciting a highly reactive and coercive response from mother (e.g., "Why are you so mean to him? He's just a child") followed by brief efforts to calm the child using distraction but lacking true empathy.

An examination of couple relationships at baseline focused on understanding the contributions of experiential avoidance, a key element of PTSD, and observed couple communication, to perceptions of relationship quality (Zamir et al. 2017). Using an actor-partner interdependence model, we found that greater self-reported experiential avoidance was associated with lower perceived relationship quality in both mothers and fathers, whereas observed positive couple communication was associated with greater perceived marital quality in both. In men only, greater experiential avoidance was associated with more negative couple communication and lower perceived relationship quality for their female partners. The results suggest that EA accounts for significant variance in relationship quality above and beyond observed couple communication skills.

In sum, our baseline/cross-sectional data has uncovered patterns in both behavioral and emotional communication in families. Patterns of emotional communication characterized by avoidance and reactivity appear to be particularly salient disrupters of effective family functioning (couple relationship quality and positive parent-child interactions) among families affected by a parent's deployment.

Outcomes of the ADAPT Program: Findings from the First RCT

Here, we summarize program process and outcome findings from the first effectiveness trial. The second study (ADAPT4U) has only recently been finished and data are currently being prepared for analysis; the third, SMART (ADAPT for Active Duty), is still underway.

Following baseline assessment for the effectiveness trial, all families were randomized either to the ADAPT program (60%; 207 families) or to a services-as-usual comparison group (40%; 129 families). Families in the comparison group were provided Web and print military resources for parenting after deployment. Families assigned to the ADAPT condition were invited to a 14-week group-based parenting program delivered on weekday evenings in community locations convenient to participating families. Childcare and dinner were provided, and groups consisted of 4–10 families (8–20 adults). Sessions were 2 h in length and provided parents with effective parenting tools via active teaching, discussion, and role play. Each session began with a review of the prior week's home practice assignment, followed by the

introduction of the week's target parenting skill, and a noticing/mindfulness exercise. The session ended with a summary and the new home practice assignment. The curriculum targeted six key parenting skills (the five PMTO/SIL-based skills of positive involvement, skill encouragement, problem-solving, discipline, and monitoring, plus emotion socialization). Skills were introduced incrementally and later sessions built on earlier ones. For example, emotion coaching skills require the capacity to identify and respond to one's own emotions, listen to children, and help them to solve problems and manage conflict. These skills were taught in the sessions preceding emotion coaching. Following each session, parents completed de-identified (numbered) satisfaction forms. Parent resources included a binder provided at the first session, parent handouts and summaries, and the ADAPT online site which provided videos demonstrating key skills and parents practicing those skills, short quizzes, as well as downloadable mindfulness exercises.

Of the families randomized to the ADAPT condition, 75% attended at least one group session with an additional 10% accessing the online materials without attending sessions (Doty et al. 2016). Families attending at least one session participated in 70% of available sessions (9.8 of the 14 sessions) on average (Pinna et al. 2017). Surprisingly, given the fact that mothers tend to engage in parenting programs more than fathers, we found no significant differences between attendance by mothers vs. fathers, or deployed vs. non-deployed parents. Participant satisfaction was high, overall, with a mean of 3.44 (SD = 0.48) on a 0–4 scale, where 0 = *not at all* and 4 = *very much* (Pinna et al. 2017).

The program's effects on parenting and child adjustment were examined at 6, 12, and 24 months post-baseline; all analyses were intent to treat (i.e., included the full experimental and control groups). At posttest (6 months post-baseline), the ADAPT program improved parental locus of control (i.e., sense of control and confidence in parenting) and reduced parental reports of ineffective discipline. At 1 year, the ADAPT program demonstrated salutary main effects on observed parenting, with the ADAPT program group showing significantly improved effective couple parenting compared with the services-as-usual group. Improved couple parenting, in turn, was concurrently associated with significant improvements in children's adjustment from baseline as reported by parents, teachers, and youth (Gewirtz et al. 2018a).

We examined paths from changes at posttest to improvements at 1 year. Program-caused improvements in parental locus of control at posttest predicted improvements in children's positive peer adjustment 6 months later (at 12 months post-baseline; Piehler et al. 2016). The program also had a positive impact on parent's own well-being: improvements in parental locus of control at posttest also predicted reductions in mothers' and fathers' depression and PTSD symptoms and suicidality at 1 year for those assigned to ADAPT, compared to the control group (Gewirtz et al. 2018a).

Two-year outcomes analysis for the sample suggests that program effects endure beyond 12 months for both children and parents. A key element of the ADAPT program, previously not incorporated into PMTO models, is emotion socialization. We hypothesized that strengthening parental emotion socialization (i.e., emotion regulation and emotion coaching skills) would improve parents' abilities to effectively

help their children navigate big emotions, and thus reduce children's internalizing symptoms. The ADAPT program (vs. control) reduced parent's non-supportive emotion socialization (e.g., critical, dismissive, or invalidating comments about children's emotions) over a 2-year period which, in turn, was associated with decreased child internalizing symptoms (Zhang et al. 2020b).

The ADAPT program reduced mothers' (but not fathers') PTSD symptoms over a 24-month period (DeGarmo & Gewirtz 2019). Given the main effects on mother's but not father's adjustment at 2 years, we have studied moderators of treatment effects for fathers, in particular. For the subsample of deployed fathers in two parent families (those on whom additional emotion coding was conducted by our colleague James Snyder) we tested father's experiential avoidance (i.e., avoidance of emotionally distressing or trauma reminders) as a potential moderator of treatment effects over 2 years post-baseline. Fathers in the ADAPT condition who were high in self-reported experiential avoidance at baseline showed stronger improvements (i.e., reductions) in observed distress avoidance with their children 2 years later compared to the control group (Gewirtz et al. 2019).

We have also examined physiological moderators of the ADAPT intervention's effectiveness. For example, higher vagal suppression, a physiological index of effective emotion regulation measured via heart rate variability, appears to function as a buffer in helping deployed fathers to parent effectively even in the context of high experiential avoidance (a core feature of PTSD). That is, among fathers with poor vagal suppression, experiential avoidance was inversely associated with effective observed parenting, but among fathers with higher vagal suppression there was no such relationship (Zhang et al. 2020a). Not surprisingly, then, vagal suppression was also found to function as a moderator of intervention effectiveness in fathers: those with higher vagal suppression showed significant benefit from the ADAPT program with stronger observed parenting, compared with those assigned to the control group (Zhang et al. 2020a).

In sum, the ADAPT program, theoretically informed by family stress and social interaction learning models, appears to change behaviors among both parents and children over a 2-year period. However, the studies also provide an opportunity to elucidate the natural processes by which mothers and fathers parent and interact with their children in the wake of parental deployment to war. These results enable us to refine our models as well as to develop, adapt, and rigorously evaluate prevention programs to strengthen and support military families.

Implications for Research and Practice

While findings from the ADAPT studies to date indicate the potential for RCTs to uncover both the impact of programs and the underlying mechanisms of impact, RCTs in military populations are few and far between. Not surprisingly then, there is much still to learn about both the developmental consequences of parental separation due to deployment and the impact of deployments on father's and mother's

parenting. Of note, there is an extreme dearth of research on the impact of separation due to deployment of mothers and on the corresponding psychological consequences for children. In our ADAPT studies, only a small minority of mothers (15–20%) have been deployed themselves, which is fairly typical for military family samples in which a majority of the deployed personnel are fathers but which presents a sample size problem for examining correlates of maternal deployment. By pooling baseline data across ADAPT studies for a larger sample size of deployed mothers we are beginning to examine unique stressors (e.g., military sexual assault) and family outcomes for this population (Rahl-Brigman et al. 2020). Nonetheless, the tiny body of research on the growing population of deployed military mothers suggests an urgent need to fund and execute studies on this issue (NASEM 2019).

Despite a growing body of longitudinal research on both the process and sequelae of deployments for families, the large preponderance of research on military families remains cross-sectional correlational research that relies primarily on a single informant (e.g., a parent). Such studies are characteristic of the early stage of a new field of research. Yet military family research is coming of age and now requires a far greater focus on processes of action and mechanisms underlying relationships which requires multi-method, multi-agent, and longitudinal research (NASEM 2019).

Our findings from the ADAPT studies suggest that parenting is malleable, but also that strengthening parenting via family-based programming reaps benefits for both parents and children. While this is not a surprising finding given the decades of research on evidence-based parenting programs for civilians, there is just a small evidence base for parenting programs among military families (Bloir 2020; NASEM 2019). ADAPT represents the integration of classic parent training strategies (i.e., GenerationPMTO) with key emotion socialization components (i.e., emotion regulation strategies for parents and emotion coaching skills). Furthermore, findings demonstrate benefits specifically to parents' emotional parenting behaviors that, in turn, improve children's emotional adjustment by reducing internalizing symptoms. The addition of these emotion socialization components to a traditional parent training program may have implications for practice not only with military families, but also with other populations exposed to traumatic stressors. Indeed, our research team is currently developing and examining the application of this program with another highly stressed population: medical providers on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Part IV
Overview and Next Steps

Chapter 10
Parent-Child Separation: Children and Family Adjustment in the Context of Parental Migration, Deployment, and Incarceration

Liu Bai and Lauren Newmyer

There are many reasons for the physical separation of children from their parents. These include divorce and union dissolution, migration and deportation, military deployment, incarceration, and parental death. A variety of factors, such as the contexts in which the separation takes place and the characteristics of parents, children, and their relationships, may shape the impact of parental separation on children's well-being—including their socioemotional development, health, education, and transitions into adulthood. The chapters in this volume aim to improve our understanding of the influence of parent-child separation on outcomes of children, parents, and families by focusing on three contexts that are increasingly common in the United States and can lead to prolonged separations (i.e., longer than days or weeks; Waddoups et al., 2019): parental migration and deportation, parental military deployment, and parental incarceration. These contexts share some similarities. All three cause separations from children based on structures and forces external to families themselves. There are also differences in the ways these types of separations may impact children. For example, there are some institutional supports for military families that are not available to families separated by deportation. And there may be stigma associated with some causes of parent-child separation, such as parental incarceration (Copp et al., Chap. 6). In this closing chapter, we first review the research presented in this volume by focusing on four themes: (1) parent-child separation and individual outcomes for children and caregivers; (2) parent-child separation and family processes; (3) multiple adversities among families experiencing parental separation; and (4) resilience in the contexts of parent-child separation.

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Building on these important contributions, we end this chapter with suggestions for future research directions, policy, and interventions.

Parent-Child Separation and Family Members' Outcomes

Attachment theory posits that prolonged separation between caregivers and children may have adverse and long-lasting effects on child development, especially during early childhood (Bowlby, 1969/1982). Being separated from caregivers or being threatened by parental separation can adversely influence child adjustment in a variety of domains, such as psychological and behavioral adjustment (Cardoso et al., Chap. 3; Fairbank et al., Chap. 8) and educational performance (Amuedo-Dorantes et al., Chap. 1). The research presented in this volume demonstrates that children experience multiple negative feelings as a result of their separation from parents, such as sadness, distress, and anxiety (Cardoso et al., Chap. 3; Poehlmann-Tynan, Chap. 4). Developmental and life-course perspectives also suggest that we should expect parent-child separation to influence child adjustment over time, although less is known about how long the effects of parent-child separation may last and whether they will accumulate, remain, or recede as children grow up. Dreby (Chap. 2) found that many young adults with childhood histories of parental separation due to immigration enforcement still reported feelings of trauma or loss.

Parent-child separation influences not only child outcomes but also parental well-being. Cardoso et al. (Chap. 3) found poor mental health and self-blame among mothers migrating without their children. In families with military deployment experiences, both the service members and their spouses at home are at higher risk for mental health problems (Donoho et al., 2018; Tanielian et al., 2008), which may in turn be associated with poor child outcomes (Copp et al., Chap. 6; Fairbank et al., Chap. 8; Gewirtz & Simenec, Chap. 9). In sum, parent-child separation is a family stressor that can put both parents' and children's adjustment at risk. However, the impact of parent-child separation varies across different types of families and across different contexts of separation—a topic to which we will return later in this chapter.

Parent-Child Separation and Family Processes

Family systems theory highlights the interdependence among family subsystems (Cox & Paley, 1997), suggesting that parent-child separation may serve as a shared stressor that disrupts dyadic and larger subsystems (e.g., the sibling subsystem) as well as family functioning overall. Maintaining connections between the separated parents and the remaining family members can be challenging for families during a parent-child separation. Indeed, several chapters highlight how parent-child separation experiences undermine parent-child relationships (Cardoso et al., Chap. 3; Dreby, Chap. 2; Turney & Marín, Chap. 5). Other studies have linked parent-child

separation to poor parenting quality and lower parenting confidence (Copp et al., Chap. 6; Gewirtz & Simenec, Chap. 9). Among families that experienced separation due to parental migration, parents also experienced high levels of parenting stress during their reunification with their children (Cardoso et al., Chap. 3). Thus, the disruption of parenting and parent-child relationships can be key mechanisms through which parent-child separation influences child outcomes (Wadsworth et al., Chap. 7; Palmer, 2008).

Experiencing Parental Separation: Multiple Adversities Among Families

Families with parental separation experiences are also more likely to experience other types of adversities or risks, such as housing instability, frequent moves, economic hardship, food insecurity, and parental mental health problems (Wakefield & Wildeman, 2013; Landale et al., 2014). The risk factors that co-occur with parent-child separation can vary across families, partially depending on the contexts of separations. For example, families experiencing parental incarceration and parental deportation are at high risk for economic disadvantages and unemployment (Copp et al., Chap. 6). Although families with parental military deployments have relatively steady income and universal health care (Hosek & MacDermid Wadsworth, 2013), they face some unique challenges, such as frequent relocation and risk of parental (physical and psychological) injury or even death (Cozza, 2014; Palmer, 2008).

Although parent-child separation may engender family risk (e.g., parental posttraumatic stress disorder as a result of combat experience; the stigma associated with parental incarceration), researchers also find that some family risk factors are evident prior to parent-child separation—*preexisting* factors—and *remain* during and after the separation period. Copp et al. (Chap. 6) found that parents with incarceration experiences exhibit more problem behaviors (i.e., criminal involvement, substance use, and violence at home) over time compared with their peers without incarceration experiences. They also found that incarcerated parents were more likely to have family members and friends who had engaged in deviant behaviors. These findings suggested that problem behaviors may be preexisting and recurrent features of the family climate for some families that experience parental incarceration (Copp et al., Chap. 6; Giordano et al., 2019).

The multiple risks and vulnerabilities among families experiencing parental separation make it difficult to isolate the effects of parent-child separation. Instead of trying to separate the influence of each risk factor, several chapters in this volume provide insight into the effects of preexisting and ongoing family risk factors on individual and family outcomes for families experiencing parent-child separation. These findings highlight the combined roles of parental mental health, parenting, and family relationships on child adjustment in such families (Copp et al., Chap. 6;

Fairbank et al., Chap. 8; Gewirtz & Simenec, Chap. 9). Other research demonstrates that parent-child separation can magnify the adverse effects of other risks on individual outcomes. Copp et al. (Chap. 6) found that the linkages between parental incarceration histories and child behavioral problems were exacerbated by lower levels of positive parenting behaviors. Poehlmann-Tynan (Chap 4) found positive linkages between preexisting stress symptoms and dysregulated stress responses in children who witnessed a paternal arrest. Emotional symptoms in children were directly associated with poorer child mental health, and this association was stronger for children who felt distressed about witnessing a paternal arrest (Poehlmann-Tynan, Chap 4). These findings underscore the importance of understanding the joint and interactive effects of parent-child separation and other family risk factors.

Resilience in the Context of Parent-Child Separation

Although adverse effects of parent-child separation on family members' adjustment and family processes have been documented, the impacts of parent-child separation are heterogeneous. First, the effects of parent-child separation on children's outcomes can differ as a function of the type, timing, frequency, and length of parental separation. For instance, Fairbank et al. (Chap. 8) found that the impact of parental military deployment on child disorders was moderated by the type of military deployment, length of deployment, and gender of the deployed parent. Wadsworth et al. (Chap. 7) also note that child health outcomes varied by the type of parental separation: Children who experienced parental deployment had lower risks of poor health and development outcomes than children who experienced parental incarceration. Moreover, children who experienced both types of separation evidenced the worst outcomes.

In addition, the consequences of parent-child separation are not uniformly negative. Fairbank et al. (Chap. 8) found that recent parental military deployment was unrelated to child mental health issues, with only one exception: children with experience of parental military deployment had higher levels of behavioral problems. Dreby (Chap. 2) found that many young adults with childhood histories of parental immigration reported feelings of trauma or loss, but some adults overcame and grew from such adverse experiences, evidence of individual resilience over time. Similarly, Turney and Marín (Chap. 5) found that although some father–child relationships were disrupted by paternal incarceration, others did not appear to be influenced by this experience. And in still other cases, children were able to rebuild positive relationships with their incarcerated fathers, another example of a resilience process.

More studies are needed to understand the factors that may protect children or help them recover from adverse effects of parent-child separation. And the chapters in this volume provide insights on potential resilience factors. First, studies have suggested that providing developmentally appropriate explanations of parental separation has helped to protect children from negative implications of parental

separation (Cardoso et al., Chap. 3; Poehlmann-Tynan, Chap. 4). Second, the authors emphasized the importance of maintaining positive communication with separated parents to enhance parent-child relationship quality (Cardoso et al., Chap. 3; Turney & Marín, Chap. 5). Third, social supports within and outside of the family—such as secure attachment to at-home caregivers and supportive school environments—have proven to be key resources for overcoming adverse effects of parent-child separation (Amuedo-Dorantes et al., Chap. 1; Cardoso et al., Chap. 3; Dreby, Chap. 2; Poehlmann-Tynan, Chap. 4; Wadsworth et al., Chap. 7).

Future Directions

The research presented in this volume will help guide future research by explicating the similarities in risks and challenges faced by parents and children separated due to several different structural institutional forces in the US. Here we discuss the strengths of existing work, potential for new methodologies and data collection, and areas of future inquiry.

Filling in the Gaps

First, we endorse the authors' suggestions for filling gaps in our understanding for each type of family separation discussed in this volume. There are clearly areas in need of further research in order to develop appropriate supports for these families. One example is separation due to migration that stems from restrictive immigration policies. Although children may not be directly involved, effects on other family members may have spillover effects on their daily lives and relationship experiences (Amuedo-Dorantes et al., Chap. 1; Dreby, Chap. 2; Cardoso et al., Chap. 3). Future research should consider not only how policy shapes parent–children separation and outcomes, but also how it affects other family members. A second example is maternal military deployment, which will be an essential area of inquiry as more women become active members of the military (Fairbank et al., Chap. 8; Gewirtz & Simenec, Chap. 9; Wadsworth et al., Chap. 7). Fairbank et al. (Chap. 8) noted that examining households with female service members might provide valuable insights into how the gender of the deployed parent shapes the effects of these separations on families. Lastly, Copp (Chap. 6) argued that focusing on the separation event itself (i.e., incarceration) and not on the events leading up to the separation is a limitation of some prior research. Future studies should investigate parent-child separation as a process to better understand parent-child outcomes.

Another direction for future research is to collect data from larger samples of families. Attention to sampling may not only increase the generalizability of the findings, but also allow use of advanced statistical analyses to address novel questions. Over-sampling key subgroups such as female service members, for example,

may provide novel insights into factors that increase the risk of or promote resilience in response to parent-child separation.

Finally, this volume covers three types of parent-child separations: migration, military deployment, and incarceration. However, some families undergo more than one of these separations as well as other types of separation (e.g., parental divorce; Dreby, Chap. 2). Future research should consider how children and families are affected when they experience different patterns of parent-child separations. Additionally, as we highlighted above, although the separations examined in this volume—as well as other types of separations not included here—may produce similar effects on families and children, comparative research is needed to illuminate the potentially unique processes through which various types of separation yield similar or different outcomes for children and families.

Theoretical Frameworks

Future research should continue to apply theory and conceptual frameworks to better understand the effects of person and contextual factors and moderators and mediating processes on family and child outcomes in parent-child separation. Frameworks such as the ecological and family systems perspectives consider the larger institutional and social structures in which parent-child separation is nested (Paley et al., 2013). Wadsworth et al. (Chap. 7) applied the ecological framework to better understand the role of contextual factors in the effects of parent-child separation due to military deployment. Similarly, a family systems perspective views the family as an interrelated system where the outcome of one member affects another (Cox & Paley, 1997). A family systems perspective directs attention to moderators and mediators that reduce the risk of adverse outcomes for families and children that may stem from separation (Fairbank et al., Chap. 8; Wadsworth et al., Chap. 7). The family stress model, which holds that family transitions affect children through mediating variables such as parents' mental health and parenting styles (Barnett, 2008; Conger et al., 2002; Elder et al., 1986), has also proven useful in efforts to better understand mediators that link separation to child and family outcomes: Gewirtz and Simenec (Chap. 9) applied the family stress model to assess the effects of military deployment on parenting, and in turn on children's adjustment. Additionally, these investigators applied the social interaction learning model (Forgatch & Gewirtz, 2017) to better understand how parents adjust and modify their parenting skills in the context of these separations. Future research should continue applying these and other theories to illuminate the roles of person and context characteristics and family processes in the outcomes of parent-child separations.

Research Designs and Methods

We also endorse the call by the authors of this volume for new approaches to data collection that would provide new insights on parent-child separation effects. Longitudinal research designs, for example, allow researchers to track the outcomes of parent-child separations by controlling for pre-separation factors, including child well-being, and also allow observation throughout the separation process. Along these lines, Copp (Chap. 6) contends that separation should not be studied as an isolated event, but as a process that unfolds over time. Additionally, Wadsworth et al. (Chap. 7) argue that much prior work has focused on current or recent military deployments, and much less is known about the long-term consequences: Longitudinal data would allow researchers to study separation as a process and identify its long-term effects. Researchers who collect intensive longitudinal data (i.e., high-frequency measurement data), such as via ecological momentary assessments, daily diaries, or devices such as sleep actigraphy, may also shed new light on parent-child separation effects. For example, Gewirtz and Simenec (Chap. 9) used physiological and observational data to test the effectiveness of family interventions. Mixed-methods approaches also hold value. For instance, several chapters showcase the utility of qualitative data collected via interviews (Cardoso et al., Chap. 3; Dreby, Chap. 2). Qualitative data may allow researchers to capture individuals' own voices, valuable in themselves but also useful in developing questionnaires and surveys. Additionally, researchers may collect observational data to provide more objective accounts of child and family functioning as compared to self-reports (Gewirtz & Simenec, Chap. 9).

These various types of data can provide researchers with opportunities to ask new types of research questions using different research methods. Fixed-effects models may provide valuable insights on separation processes and their correlates because they allow for examining both between- and within-person variation. Using a repeated measures design, one could learn whether children who have more contact with an incarcerated parent have better mental health than those who have less contact—but also whether, on days when a child has more contact with his or her incarcerated parent, he or she has better mental health than he or she usually does (i.e., compared to his or her cross-time average.). Additionally, as Amuedo-Dorantes et al. (Chap. 1) highlighted, family and child outcomes may be affected by public policies. Longitudinal administrative data (i.e., data collected by government agencies and offices such as child welfare and labor statistics) may allow researchers to better understand the effects of policy on family and child outcomes using approaches such as regression discontinuity designs.

Intervention: Family-Based Intervention

Many of the chapters in this volume highlighted the importance of family-based interventions for families affected by parent-child separations, and we concur that more work is needed in this realm as well. Gewirtz and Simenec (Chap. 9) highlighted how parenting intervention programs might improve mental health and reduce substance abuse for parents *and* children affected by military deployment. Their research also revealed how the effectiveness of interventions might be evaluated through monitoring physiological indicators: By monitoring vagal suppression, they were better able to detect their intervention's effect on parenting (Gewirtz & Simenec, Chap. 9). Poehlmann-Tynan (Chap. 4) described innovative modes of intervention including children's TV programming and parent-child visitation days that may improve outcomes for children and families with incarcerated parents. Future interventions should continue to test novel approaches for aiding children and families—including ways of addressing recruitment and retention (Gewirtz & Simenec, Chap. 9).

Policy: Focusing on Children and Family Well-Being

Finally, the research described throughout this volume has implication for policies aimed at mitigating risk and promoting the well-being of children and families facing parental separation. Although the chapters focus on particular contexts of separation (i.e., migration, military deployment, or incarceration), lessons learned in one setting may be applicable to others. For instance, the development of safe zones that are free from the threat of further separation or disruption in children's lives may improve children's educational outcomes and their overall well-being (Amudeo-Dorantes, Chap. 1). Additionally, policies aimed at decreasing unnecessary parental detainment would limit parent-child separations and their negative sequelae (Dreby, Chap. 2). When separation does occur, as in the case of parental incarceration or immigration-related detainments, policies and practices that support child visitation should be developed (Poehlmann-Tynan, Chap. 4). Lastly, policies aimed at providing mental and physical health services for all children who are experiencing parental separations may serve to reduce the risks of short- and long-term problem outcomes and promote their positive behavior, health, and development (Fairbank et al., Chap. 8; Gewirtz & Simenec, Chap. 9; Wadsworth et al., Chap. 7).

Conclusion

Together, the chapters in this volume provide unique and in-depth insights into the circumstances under which and the processes through which parent-child separation—due to three very different institutional contexts—may have impacts on children and their families. This research makes it clear that each kind of separation involves unique challenges—but also that parent-child separation, no matter the context, can have significant implications for child and family well-being. The larger structures in which families are embedded and the family system itself shape how children and families respond during these experiences; research should continue to consider the macro and micro processes involved in these family transitions. This broad and multifaceted area of research presents many exciting avenues for research by family scholars. Continued study may advance family theory as well as translation of research evidence into effective interventions and policies.

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Correction to: Children's Mental Health, Deployment, Parental Mental Health, and Family Dynamics: Findings from the Millennium Cohort Family Study

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This book was inadvertently published with the wrong affiliation of Dr. John A. Fairbank. The correct affiliation is

John A. Fairbank
VA Mid-Atlantic Mental Illness Research
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Durham VA Health Care System
Durham, NC, USA

This has now been amended throughout the book (COP, TOC) to the inclusion of right affiliation.

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