

# Examining the Lived Experiences of Children of Incarcerated Black Males

Emilia Rogers and Chance Young

## *Faculty Introduction*

---

*Dr. Melinda Weathers*

Emilia Rogers and Chance Young's article examines the lived experiences of children with formerly or currently incarcerated black fathers. With the use of standpoint theory, they build on the scholarship of feminist scholars whose work seeks to bring voice to traditionally muted nondominant groups in society. Here, the authors hope to encourage the voice of children of incarcerated black fathers; especially, because this phenomenon has been a consistent bi-product of their community and family structure for far too long. These accounts provide insight into the diverse communicative standpoints of the individuals who participated in this study, and have implications for social science research, practitioners, educators/advocates, and society at large.

## *Abstract*

---

With the use of standpoint theory, this study seeks to uncover the lived experiences of children with formerly or currently incarcerated black fathers. Standpoint theory acknowledges a person's social position and helps the researcher understand that a person's location in society has a major impact on how they respond to everyday realities they encounter. Traditionally, standpoint theory has been used to bring voice to women in a feminist framework. Our hope is to encourage the voice of children with formerly or currently incarcerated black fathers; specifically, because this phenomenon has been a consistent bi-product of their community and family structure for far too long. In-depth interviews were conducted with adult children (18 years or older) who self-identified as having a formerly or currently incarcerated black fathers. Participants ranged in age from 21-46 and included four women and four men. Findings indicate three overarching themes: (1) ability to be loved/ability to love; (2) bad men; and (3) filling shoes.

According to The Bureau of Justice Statistics the United States has 1.6 million prisoners, which constitutes the world's largest prison population (Glaze & Maruschak, 2010). Men make up 90 percent of the prison and local jail populations, and incarceration rates are significantly higher for minorities. In 2010, black men were incarcerated at a rate of 3,074 per 100,000 residents, while white men were incarcerated at 459 per 100,000 residents (Tyjen & Scommengna, 2012). The Bureau of Justice Statistics (2010) estimated that more than 1.5 million children (minors under the age of 18) had a father in prison at midyear; nearly half (46%) were children of black fathers. Black children were seven and a half times more likely than white children to have a parent in prison. As such, the children of incarcerated black men have become the silent victims, stigmatized as delinquents with maladaptive behavioral issues. This paper examines the lived experiences of children with formerly or currently incarcerated black fathers.

## Literature Review

Researchers have observed a range of issues related to the children of incarcerated black men, including increased probability of delinquency, foster care, and educational outcomes. Geller, Cooper, Garfinkel, Schwartz-Soicher, and Mincy (2012) showed that children of incarcerated fathers (CIF) scored significantly higher on measures of aggression, attention problems, and significantly lower on the verbal ability measure than children whose father had no history of incarceration. Children who had been exposed to parental incarceration at some point in their lives are at significantly greater risk of experiencing material hardship and family instability than children in fragile families with no history of incarceration (Christian, 2009). For example, children whose fathers were incarcerated, were 40% more likely to have an unemployed father and 34% more likely to face contact with the child welfare system. Often, CIF become at risk and are inducted into the care of Child Protective Services, or the state foster care system. Additionally, black children are seven times more likely to be in foster care than children of other races or ethnicities. According to Raeder (2012), delinquency is only the beginning for CIF who become part of the foster care system—run-aways, drug abuse, crime, and homelessness can often be found on the path to adult incarceration, especially if the child ages out of the system.

In measuring the communication between incarcerated fathers and their children, Alexander (2005) examined the contact prisoners had with their children through phone, mail, and visitation. Over 300 black

male prisoners participated in the sample; 75% reported having a good relationship with their children (Alexander, 2005). In uncovering the benefits of contact between incarcerated fathers and their children, Galardi and colleagues (2015) discovered that, nationally, the frequency of contact for minorities in prison was significantly higher than their counterparts. Black fathers had 48% increased odds of more frequent calls; whereas, Hispanic fathers had between 18% and 48% decreased odds of more phone calls than white fathers (Galardi, Settersten, Vuchinich, & Richards, 2015).

The challenge to construct a comprehensive solution becomes entangled as education and government systems lack the support needed to address the individual needs of CIF. While many organizations, religious groups, and courts advocate for the rehabilitation of incarcerated parents and children, a national effort to address this phenomenon is lacking. Recently, the California Department of Correction and Rehabilitation has implemented initiatives that support parent and child reunification, and incorporate counseling, training, and a framework for institutionalized parenting (Reader, 2012). However, much more can be done at the national and state levels.

---

***The future of CIF need not  
be defined by delinquency  
or dependency on  
government assistance...***

---

The future of CIF need not be defined by delinquency or dependency on government assistance, despite much of the public's attitude towards them.

Given the negative mental health and social outcomes of CIF, there is still much to learn about this group. Currently, there are no studies that examine the lived experiences of CIF. Instead, study after study have left these children in the hands of circumstances and statistics. Their individual and lived experiences are justification for qualitative research. With the use of standpoint theory, our study uncovers the lived experiences of these silent victims. Standpoint theory acknowledges a person's social position and helps the researcher understand that a person's location in society has a major impact on how they respond to everyday realities. It is used to understand the position of any group usually left in the margins of mainstream scholarly work (e.g., women, people of color, homosexuals, and people with disabilities). Traditionally, standpoint theory has been used to bring voice to women in a feminist framework. Our hope is to encourage the voice of children with formerly or currently incarcerated black fathers, especially because this phenomenon has been a consistent by-product of their communities and family structures for far too long.

Giving consciousness to these daily practices allows scholars to question the larger “taken-for-granted” assumptions that guide our communicative behaviors. Besides a crucial point of understanding the conflicting life perspectives between dominant and nondominant groups, this focus of inquiry also allows a discernment among the various standpoints within a specific co-culture positioning. (Orbe, 1998, p. 235)

## **Theoretical Framework**

Standpoint theory is the result of feminist scholars (e.g., Harding, 1987; Hartsock, 1983; Smith, 1987; Wood, 1992), who address the significance of acknowledging a special societal positioning and the subjective perspective of persons as they interact with themselves and with others. This theory argues that all perspectives are critical to fully understand social phenomena (Collins, 1986). Essentially, the framework suggests that for people to gain a deeper understanding of social phenomena, socially marginalized voices should be included (Collins, 1986). Thus, it is “through this process of inclusion, [that] alternative understandings of the world that are situated within the [everyday] activities of [nondominant] and dominant group members can be revealed” (Orbe, 1998, p. 235). Because all “truths,” in essence, are standpoints, it is important to include and recognize various social actors’ perceptions of their daily communicative experiences.

Standpoint theorists advance the proposition that “knowledge is always socially situated” (Harding, 2004, p. 7). That is, different groups develop knowledge that is grounded in gender, racial, ethnic, and social class differences, as well as in specific historical eras, socio-cultural contexts, and political milieus. As such, the knowledge produced by the dominant group is different from that produced by nondominant groups. Different relationships to domination lead to different life circumstances and social realities, all of which ultimately lead to qualitatively different knowledges. Because nondominant group members are forced to function within both of these social realities—that of the dominant group and that of their own nondominant groups have a distinct opportunity to develop a comprehensive knowledge of the organization of their oppression, as well as the potential to use this knowledge to their advantage in an effort to resist subordination. According to Hartsock (1998), “The vision available to the oppressed group must be struggled for and represents an achievement which requires both science to see beneath the surface of the social relations in which all are forced to participate, and the education which can only grow from struggle to change those relations” (pp. 107-108). Hence, a

standpoint is not a personal viewpoint nor individual perspective, but rather a social process that presents possibilities for developing forms and strategies of resistance as members of nondominant groups come to view their experience of oppression as an experience held in common with others who are members of their oppressed group.

The principle of our research is to give voice from the perspective of children who have experienced the absence of their biological father due to conviction and time spent in the United States incarceration system. Standpoint theory is the model

---

***This study seeks to gain insight into the lived experiences of children with formerly or currently incarcerated black fathers.***

---

best suited to focus on the everyday life experiences and to reveal the way in which the public world structures the private everyday lives not immediately visible as those lives are lived (Orbe, 1998). Accordingly, this study seeks to gain insight into the lived experiences of children with formerly or currently incarcerated black fathers.

## **Method**

Purposive sampling was used to select participants for this study, based on their history with having a formerly or currently incarcerated black father. Crabtree and Miller (1992) reported that this type of sampling is not concerned with representativeness, but, more appropriately, with gathering rich information to illuminate the study questions. Participants were adult children (18 years or older) with formerly or currently incarcerated black fathers. Participants ranged in age from 21-46, and included four adult women and four adult men.

Interviews were conducted with participants living in the greater Houston area. Interview questions measured the earliest age of their father's incarceration, engaged the participants on how they best understood their father's convictions, inquired about how the participants perceived social changes in their immediate and third party relationship, and asked questions related to health and wellness issues they may have/not experienced. In line with Institutional Review Board requirements, participants were asked to sign consent forms, acknowledging their participation in our research study, before interviews began. Interviews ranged in length from 30-120 minutes, either over the phone or face-to-face. The location/type of interview was determined by where the interviewees felt most comfortable speaking intimately about their experiences. All of the interviews were one-on-one occurrences, in order

to avoid distractions for the participants. We used phone calls to contact four of the participants, while the other four were conducted face-to-face. The advantages of face-to-face interviews are understanding people in the context of their own lives, understanding how people make decisions and how they do things, and simply spending more time with that one person (Crabtree & Miller, 1992).

Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Oliver, Serovich, and Mason (2005), state that there are two types of transcriptions, naturalized and denaturalized. Naturalized transcriptions are the transcription of interviews verbatim. We chose to use naturalized transcriptions because attention is paid to describing the conversation and examining it for patterns. Transcripts were transcribed verbatim and read by the researchers numerous times to become familiar with the lived experiences described by the participants. While listening to the audio-taped interviews, the researcher made notes on the transcribed pages. This process allowed the researchers to note similarities and differences in the life stories shared by the participants. Based on the underlying research question, the researchers coded each transcript for emergent themes. Once all pages of the text were thematized, the patterns and trends were examined. During this stage of analysis, thematic descriptions among participants were cross-checked and verified by the research team.

The primary method of analysis was thematic analysis, in which the researchers categorized data by identifying recurring themes and patterns. According to Keyton (2006), a theme is a conceptualization of an interaction, a relationship, or an event. Specifically, themes are identified in textual data based on three criteria: recurrence, repetition, and forcefulness. Recurrence is present when at least two parts of a report have the same thread of meaning. Recurrence is not simply repetition of the same words or phrase; different wording may result in the same meaning. Thus, this criterion focused on salient meaning. The second criterion, repetition, is the explicit repetition of key words, phrases, or sentences. The third criterion, forcefulness, is present when the data reveal vocal inflection, volume, or dramatic pause which serve to stress and subordinate some utterances from others (Owen, 1984). The three criteria—recurrence, repetition, and forcefulness—can be found in participants' vocal or written records. Thus, when used they identify what the salient issues are and demonstrate the degree of salience for participants. Once all pages of the text were thematized, the patterns and trends were examined. During this stage of analysis, thematic descriptions among participants were cross-checked and verified by the researcher team.

## Results

### *Ability to Love*

The ability to love characterizes relationship (re)building with friends, family, children, and parents. Reformation of love in the participants' lives is significant because of the love they lost earlier in life (i.e., when their father went to prison). The incarceration of their fathers left our participants at odds with how to conduct their lives as full-grown adults who have now become fathers and mothers. A heavy burden to achieve love that was never present becomes the goal. Unable to articulate the gap, one mother is the victim of unrequited love in relationships and romance while a father responds with unconditional love for his children to an unimaginable height.

*I call it over love, our kids are loved to death, because we know what it's like not to have that fatherly love. The dynamic of the family I have now, six kids, three biological, one daughter that I adopted, she's my wife's oldest, and two step kids. The daughter that I adopted is my wife's oldest, one of the first thing I did was adopt her and everyone asked me why, including her. I said everybody deserves to have a father, everybody... We don't know what a father's love looks like but we have this vision and we live up to that vision. Now this vision might be unrealistic, but we don't care; we're going to do it.*

*All my kids at birth, there was love out the womb. They never said anything, didn't give me anything, hold my hand, or give me a kiss for me to fall in love with them. It was an unconditional love. I don't think he truly ever felt that love because he never spent time around us.*

*I feel like because I didn't have that relationship with him and he didn't teach me how to be loved, when I date people, I don't expect them to love me back... I'm going to love you with all I have and you're going to give me what you can, if you can, when you can.*

*When I was a little girl they would ask me what I wanted to be when I grew up. I would say a wife, because my husband would love me.*

*I didn't want to have children because I remember experiencing disappointment and not to have my dad there, so I didn't want to have kids and have them experience the thing that hurt me the most.*

### *Reserving space for love*

The human response to change can result in different adaptations; the reserved space is a repressed physic of love and experience in a distal relationship. The absence of their father while incarcerated did not go unnoticed; even as adults our participants recount shared moments of communication and longing for relationships. A type of emotional reserve was built as a response to their father's absence.

*He was always a father figure to me, but I never really viewed him as my actual father. I respected him, but I always wondered what it would be like if my actual dad was there.*

*I remember writing letters back and forth, but I only saw him a total of two times during those 9 years...I used to ask him what he did in there. He used to tell me that he would play ball and lift weights and stuff like that. Every once in a while, like maybe three times a year I would draw my hand print on the back of the page to show him how much I was growing. Then he would send his handprint to compare. It was kind of cool because it was like we were touching hands.*

*I'm still like a little kid waiting for my dad to pick me up from school. If I could die and come back as anything, I would come back as a kid so I could do it over and have it the right way.*

*Towards the end it was different, because I was older. My attempt was to rekindle a relationship that just wasn't there when I was little...I credit part of our relationship with out of sight, out of mind.*

### *Bad Men*

The presence of a "man" or father-figure in the home has an undisputed impact on the welfare of children; the incarceration system has forced a double standard on the dignity of black men who have criminal conviction *and* their ability to be characterized as men of good character and moral stature. The demonizing of black men has been a crucial tactic for centuries; slandering the reputation of "dead beat dads" is a cruel dig on the black community. Society has no constructive platitude for the criminal justice system or the rehabilitation convicted offenders undergo while incarcerated, despite the rigorous demands of the system. More importantly, families lack support in addressing the social stigmas with their children that fortifies the relationship of their absent father. It is not fair to only characterize the crimes of the offenders as bad; when addressing the social welfare of children whose fathers are prey in their



own communities, “bad” is not enough to explain their absences.

*When I was younger I always understood what prison was and how he got there, it was an everyday lifestyle... To vent or say how I feel, I couldn't because it would have been, “well it doesn't matter; he's still your father.” It frustrated me and caused a rift in me and my mom's relationship because she was always defending this guy.*

*Well, when you grow up in a community where it's common, it's very difficult to digest as bad because you tie in your loved ones to things. When you're little, you see it as a way of life, ‘well if he does it, it must not be that bad...but if bad people go to prison and my dad's in prison then in essence my dad is bad.’ That can't be right. So you kind of get the understanding that is the way of life.*

*I grew up in a time where kids don't get into grown folk's business. “Your dad's in prison because he did something bad, and bad people go to prison.”*

*Growing up we weren't the only kids on the block in that situation. It was so common with the family, I was like ok he's gone and so is his brother. It wasn't special, and it began to be not traumatic.*

*Some people view him as a bad person, and that's the kind of thing he tries to warn me from. Like don't do the things I did because people will view you as that same old person.*

*I always viewed my dad as a great person, I never had the thought that he did it on purpose. He didn't want to leave us on purpose like that.*

### *Filling Shoes*

Filling shoes characterizes the ability of each participant to live and walk in their own experience and moral standard versus the expectations and conflicting moral obligation to fill the shoes of others. Participants addressed peer pressure and challenges in fulfilling the roles of their fathers. This becomes an underlying struggle now as mothers raise sons and encounter revelations of the looming path their fathers took to imprisonment. Filling shoes addresses the pressure and conscious choices made to walk beyond the shadows of expectation.

*It made me mentally stronger being able to deal with not having a father and having to grow up at an earlier age; I had to do things that the man of the house is supposed to do.*

*When I got older I would have people say, "I could do this, you don't have to do that because your dad was in prison." People were trying to make me do something greater, like I was a charity case.*

*Everybody started saying there's Buck's son. That stuff got to my head; I felt that I would let people down if I didn't shine.*

*Trying my best to teach them to pee standing up and play football, I realized my kids are too much like me and they needed something else; that played a part in me sending them to live with my dad. My four-year-old knows how to play chess. They say "I beg your pardon." Little things like that matter to me.*

*Dealing in illegal narcotics, it's like my family did it so it's a rite of passage kind of deal. The rude awakening is when you see what this dude went through, and you see 'ok, this is not ok'...it required me to make a transition, to say this dude's actions can affect me, I gotta be my own person.*

### *Painting pictures*

Painting pictures is a metaphor for the ideological role of a father and the lackluster nature of each individual experience due to the impacts of incarceration. Reconstructing the images of themselves and facing socioeconomic hardships becomes a part of their reality, which is less than ideal for young children who aspire for more. Many of our participants only experienced the absence of their father during their adolescent years and now share their adulthood with him; others have since suffered the loss of their father. Although these relationships were never "picture perfect," they still remain valuable.

*I always wanted to be daddy's little girl, but I grew up to be my dad's friend.*

*Growing up with my mom we didn't lack for anything at all, but with my dad we were counting change to make sure we had enough money to get a pack of toilet paper. Like, a fancy dinner for my dad was being able to buy Sonic without having to borrow money. But I had my dad and I wanted my dad there.*

*I don't want my kids to have a bad picture of me, so I don't ever go out and represent myself in a bad way. Like, a lot of people tell me stories of my dad and I just don't want people to paint a picture of me that's not the right picture, and tell my kids about stuff. I always want to be there for them whenever they need me and things like that.*

## Discussion

In recent years, the disproportionate number of African American men behind bars has come under speculation; movies, media, and grass roots social movements have flared in response. Black Americans can no longer trust the American justice system to protect them or their communities. Social injustices have long since been threats to upcoming generations of young black men and women born into a system some say is built to prey on their mistakes.

Our findings highlight an emotional commonality among children who experience separation anxiety and trauma as children. The effects of childhood trauma may be observed in the ways individuals form relationships with their family and friends (Yumbul, Cavusoglu, & Geyimici, 2010). The young mother that was included in our study initially feared becoming a mother. The mature father over-compensated in love and relationships with his children to affirm the role of a father he never had. Attachment theory, which explores the effects of childhood trauma on adult attachment styles, supports that childhood trauma affects the attachment style in romantic relationships as well as peers, and children later in life (Yumbul et al., 2010). The resolve of our participants was to become more focused on achieving the childhood values and memories they could never share with their fathers.

Respectfully, the predicted outcomes of CIF are synonymous with children who have been impacted by deployment in the United States military. Departures during war times may be unanticipated and limited. The opportunity to prepare children for saying goodbye and to support transition in care routines and changes in family structure may be especially difficult for children, as they lack coping skills and access to external support (Lester, Aralis, Sinclair, & Kiff, 2016). Lester et al. (2016) goes on to discuss that young children in military families affected by deployment have social emotional risk (e.g., emotional distress, behavior problems), greater peer problems, and decreased prosocial behaviors relative to their civilian counterparts, as reported previously with CIF. Clearly, such comparisons are not ideal, as civilian norms on standardized measures likely do not reflect baseline military-connected child “norms.” However, the latter comparisons are unavailable due to limited research on military-connected children. The children of both incarcerated black men and of children of deployed military personnel have been given little attention or resources in articulating the emotional distress.

As previously discussed, black fathers who are incarcerated have

significantly increased odds of contact with their children compared with incarcerated white fathers. Research on racial disparities in the prison population provides some possible explanations for these findings. One is that incarceration has become an increasingly normative experience for minority men (Western & Pettit, 2010). In addition to the increased likelihood of having incarcerated kin, there may be less stigma attached to contacting a family member in prison, which could facilitate the ability of minority families to embrace prison phone calls and visiting as a more “normal” life experience. Family and kinship ties have been found to be more important to nonresident black fathers than white fathers (King-Irani, 2004), which may also reinforce black fathers’ contact with their children. Black individuals are more likely than whites to see the criminal justice system as unjust (Hagan, Shedd, & Payne, 2005), and black women are more willing to trust the caretaking ability of criminally involved fathers than similarly situated white women (Swisher & Waller, 2008). This suggests that the family and friends of a black father may feel that the incarceration was due to factors beyond his control and to see his imprisonment as a challenge imposed by an unfair social system, rather than an indication of his personal failings.

As our results have shown, children are often a silent third party, navigating through their own shame and frustration of their father’s imprisonment. In an effort to rehabilitate the self-esteem and self-worth of young black males, the Children’s Defense Fund in Nashville, Tennessee, empowers the creativity of black boys who are one in three times more at risk for imprisonment, in a process intended to help see the value of their minds and souls (Durr & Brown, 2016). This effort is a direct challenge to narratives that define and confine black male image. The program’s use of canvasses for the art serves as storyboards that invite young men to engage and create images that affirm and highlight their value and worth (Durr & Brown, 2016).

## **Conclusion**

In our efforts to explore the narrative perspective of children with black incarcerated fathers, our findings reveal a cultural trauma that plagues the black community. Incarcerations and convictions of black men have become an all too familiar routine for black households who, since the time of slavery, have been under pressure from a dominant ethnocentric white America to strive for a two-parent household. The children of the black community are reminded how easily they are to becoming victims of the incarceration system through the ever-present injustices of the United

States court system. It is also evident that a unique form of trauma through this indoctrinating effort to demonize black men and criminalize young black boys is systemic in the measure of their self-worth. By bringing reform to the incarceration system, we can change the social welfare and impact the public good to address the circumstances and well-being of children with incarcerated fathers. With proper resources and community advocacy for areas of our country with high incarceration rates, we can implement successful visitation and rehabilitation programs that support the nurturing of children and recidivism of the convicted. There are many programs with positive reentry programs that incorporate the bonds between the offender and child(ren), which work to change the outcomes of future generations; but, without reform and public attention from federal agencies, these changes are minimized in light of their potential to negatively impact the future of millions of children across this nation. ■

## *References*

---

- Alexander, R. (2005). Associate and predictors of incarcerated African American father's relationship with their children. *The Western Journal of Black Studies*, 29(4), 667-676.
- Allen, B. J. (1998). Black womanhood and feminist standpoints. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 11, 575-586.
- Collins, P. H. (1986). Learning from the outsider within: The sociological significance of black feminist thought. *Social Problems*, 33, 514-532.
- Crabtree, B. F., & Miller, W. L. (1992). *Doing qualitative research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Durr, D., & Brown, E. (2016). Born sinner, fashioned divine: The criminalization, commodity and creativity of young black males. *Black Theory*, 14(1).
- Galardi, T., Settersten, R., Vuchinich, S., & Richards, L. (2015). Association between incarcerated fathers cumulative childhood risk and contact with their children. *Journal of Family Issues*, 38(5), 654-676.
- Geller, A., Cooper C., Garfinkel, I., Schwartz-Soicher, O., & Mincy, R. (2012). Beyond absenteeism: Father incarceration and child development demography, 49(1), 49-76.

- Glaze, L., & Maruschak. (2010). *Parents in prison and their minor children*. Bureau of Justice Statistics. Retrieved from <https://bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/pptmc>.
- Hagan, J., Shedd, C., & Payne, M. R. (2005). Race, ethnicity, and youth perceptions of criminal justice. *American Sociological Review*, 70(3), 381-407.
- Harding, S. (1987). *Feminism and methodology*. Bloomington, IN: University Press.
- Harding, S. (2004). *The feminist standpoint theory reader: Intellectual and political controversies*. New York: Routledge.
- Hartsock, N. (1983). The feminist standpoint: Developing the ground for a specifically feminist historical materialism. In S. Harding & M. B. Hintikka (Eds.), *Discovering reality* (pp.283-310). Boston, MA: Ridel.
- Hartsock, N. (1998). *The feminist standpoint revisited and other essays*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Keyton, J. (2006). *Communication research: Asking questions, finding answers*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- King-Irani, L. E. (2004). Kinship, class and ethnicity; Strategies for survival in the contemporary Middle East. In D. Gerner (ed.), *Understanding the contemporary Middle East* (pp. 309-344). Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.
- Lester, P., Aralis, H., Sinclair, M., & Kiff, C. (2016). The impact of deployment on parental, Family and children adjustment in military families. *Child Psychiatry Human Development*, 47, 938-947.
- Oliver, D. G., Serovich, J. M., & Mason, T. L. (2005). Constraints and opportunities with interview transcription: Towards reflection in qualitative research. *Social Forces*, 84, 1273-1289.
- Orbe, M. P. (1998). *Constructing co-cultural theory: An explication of culture, power, and communication*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Owen, W. F. (1984). Interpretive themes in relational communication. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 70, 274-287.

- Raeder, M. S. (2012). Special issue: Making a better world for children of incarcerated parents. *Family Court Review*, 50(1), 23-35.
- Smith, D. E. (1987). *The everyday world as problematic: A feminist sociology of knowledge*. Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press.
- Swisher, R. R., & Waller, M. R. (2008). Confining Fatherhood: Incarceration and paternal involvement among nonresident White, African American, and Latino fathers. *Journal of Family Issues*, 29(8), 1067-1088.
- Tyjen, T., & Scommengna, P. (2012). *U. S. has world's highest incarceration rate*. Population Reference Bureau. Retrieved from <http://www.prb.org/Publications/Articles/2012/us-incarceration.aspx>.
- Yumbul, C., Cavusoglu, S., & Geyimici, B. (2010). The effect of childhood trauma on adult attachment styles, infidelity tendency, romance jealousy and self-esteem. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 5, 1741-1745.
- Western, B., & Pettit, B. (2010). Incarceration and social inequality. *Daedalus*, 139(3), 8-19.
- Wood, J. T. (1992). Telling our stories: Narratives as a basis for theorizing sexual harassment. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 20, 349-362.

## *Student Biographies*

---

*Emilia Rogers*, an aspiring community leader, will be completing her undergraduate degree at SHSU in Communication Studies and Political Science in the spring of 2019. Identifying communication as a tool to share more than just meaning but also experience, Emilia's ideal venture is to serve her community through research and justice reform. Greatly influenced by the development of her local community, Conroe, Texas, and her current work as a shelter supervisor, post-graduation Emilia hopes to continue working in the non-profit sector, serving marginalized community members before pursuing a graduate degree.

*Chance Young* expects to graduate as an undergraduate with a major in Communication Studies and a minor in math in the fall of 2018. He came to SHSU with plans of attaining an engineering degree, but his plans changed when he switched majors to Communication Studies. The Communication Studies field and staff have changed his life and have directed him to his calling of being a teacher. Now, Chance plans to become a math teacher