



Justice Center

THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

Supporting Children of Incarcerated Parents: Addressing School-Based Bias and Stigma

Addressing the Needs of Incarcerated Parents and Their Minor Children

January 8, 2025

Presentation Outline

I. Welcome

II. Stigmas and Bias of parental incarceration

III. Emerging research from Minnesota

IV. Next Steps

Speakers



Dr. Rebecca Schlafer
Associate Professor,
Department of Pediatrics,
University of Minnesota



Dr. Erin McCauley
Assistant Professor,
Department of Social and
Behavioral Sciences, University
of California San Francisco



Tiana Smith, MS
Senior Policy Analyst,
The Council of State
Governments Justice Center

The Council of State Governments Justice Center

We are a national nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that combines the power of a membership association, serving state officials in all three branches of government, with policy and research expertise to develop strategies that increase public safety and strengthen communities.

Equity and Inclusion Statement



The Council of State Governments Justice Center is committed to advancing racial equity internally and through our work with states, local communities, and Tribal Nations.



We support efforts to dismantle racial inequities within the criminal and juvenile justice systems by providing rigorous and high-quality research and analysis to decision-makers and helping stakeholders navigate the critical, and at times uncomfortable, issues the data reveal. Beyond empirical data, we rely on stakeholder engagement and other measures to advance equity, provide guidance and technical assistance, and improve outcomes across all touchpoints in the justice, behavioral health, crisis response, and reentry systems.

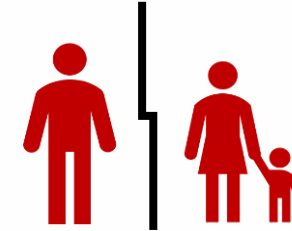
Disruptions to Family Life



- Loss of income
- Costs of incarceration
- Loss of job prospects



- Stress among family
- Steep health declines
- Shifted burden of care



- Relationship dissolution
- Changes in caregiving
- Differential resource access

Stigma

In Their Words: 4 Young People Share Experiences with Having an Incarcerated Parent



How does **parental incarceration** and **race** shape how teachers perceive and behave toward an otherwise identical student?

Funders: National Science Foundation and the Fahs Beck Fund for Research and Experimentation

SAMPLE

- 1,508 current secondary teachers
- Fielded between October 2020 and March 2021
- Recruited from three districts in each U.S. state*
- Invited to participate through web-scraped email addresses

*In Hawaii three complex districts were used

Experiment Components

1. Read randomly assigned student biography
(3x2)
2. Grade a student essay
3. Rate the appropriateness of college and career track programs for the student
4. Refer the student to one program
5. Complete a participant demographic questionnaire

Experimental Conditions (3x2)

Parental Incarceration:

- **C**: No mention of parental incarceration
- **T1**: Paternal incarceration
- **T2**: Maternal incarceration

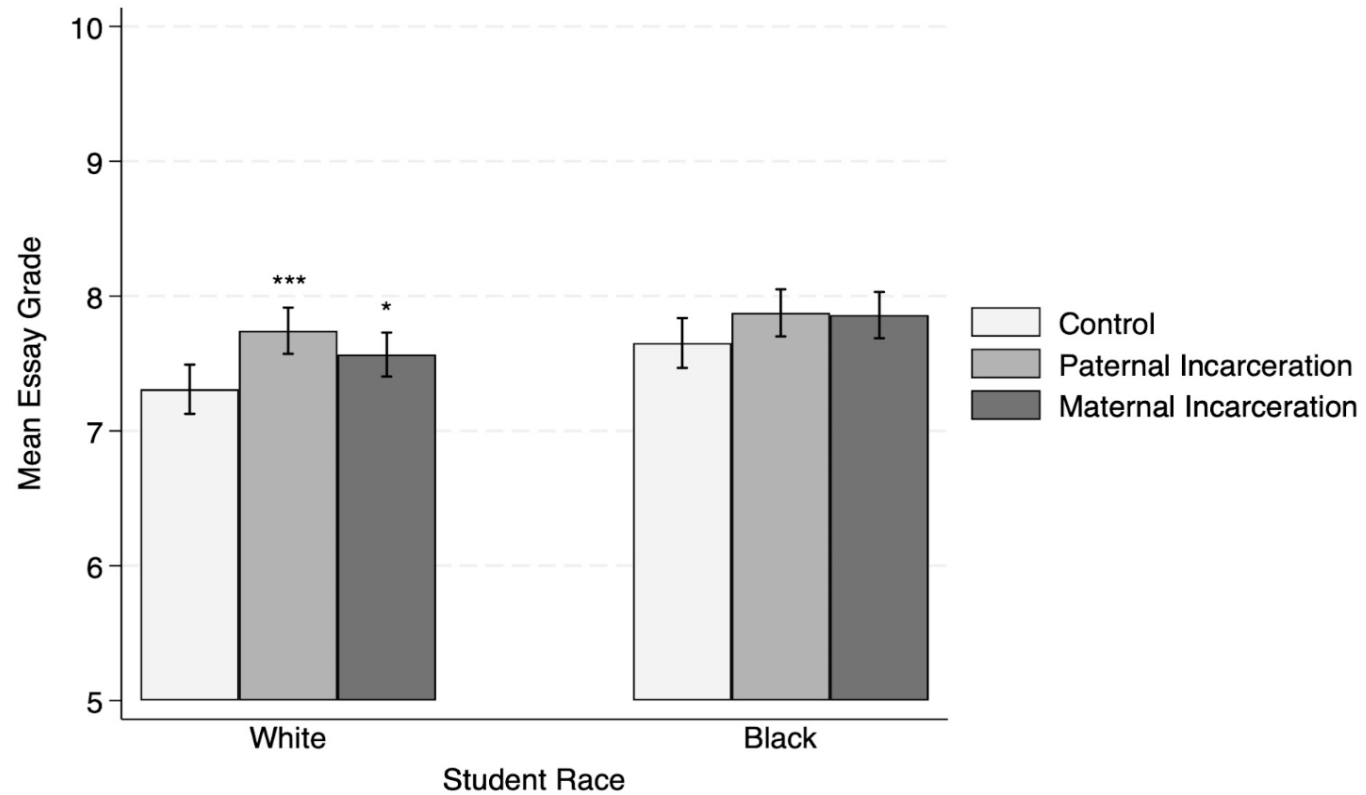
Student Race:

- **B**: Black associated name (DeShawn)
- **W**: White associated name (Connor)

Research Question 1

How does **parental incarceration** and **race** shape teachers' grading and feedback on a student essay?

Grade: Average 7.7



Qualitative Feedback Analysis

Coding Themes

- ✦ Sentiment (/ , - , +)
- ✦ Specificity (**S**pecific, **V**ague)
- ✦ Alignment (**A**ligned, **U**naligned)

Profiles of Feedback

- ✦ Specific Support (/+, **S**, **A**)
- ✦ Positive Promotion (+, **V**, **Un**)
- ✦ Personal Critique (-, **S**, **A**)

Positive Promotion

- Positive sentiment
 - “Solid!,” “Very well done!,” “Great job!”
- Vague feedback
 - “Improve the writing,” “try harder,” “could be better,” “nice writing”
- Feedback is not aligned with writing or the instructions
 - “I appreciate the paragraph about student choice in their food options, I have a very specific diet too”

Positive Promotion Examples

- Wow, great job! I think you make it clear that you are in favor of off-campus lunch. I like off campus lunch too! Nice to get out of the campus for a while and take a break. You could have stronger arguments for it though!
- I think you did a great job! Writing isn't super clear, but there are paragraphs. Keep up the good work!

Personal Critique

- Negative sentiment
 - “Not good,” “subpar”
- Specific feedback
 - “Vary word choice,” “use more academic language,” “consider using many choices of health food instead of just using the word good”
- Feedback is personal and not aligned with writing
 - “I’m not sure if you don’t care, or if you’re seriously behind,” “don’t think you’ll get away with low effort in my class,” “you let me down”

Personal Critique Examples

To be creative you need to apply yourself. This is not sufficient and if you don't care about your education I can't help you. If you'd like to rewrite see me after school. Primary issues with the essay include the lack of examples from your own life (read the directions next time), the poor grammar, and generally the elementary level ideas.

Not a good showing. Vary vocabulary (synonyms for boring) and sentence structure. If it takes me 5 minutes to grade, it should take you more than 5 minutes to write...

Proportion of feedback in each profile

	Control		Paternal Incarceration		Maternal Incarceration		Total
	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black	
Specific Support	0.97	0.95	0.90	0.84	0.88	0.69	0.87
Positive Promotion	0.03	0.05	0.10	0.16	0.12	0.13	0.10
Personal Critique	0.00	0.00	<0.01	0.00	0.00	0.18	0.03

Results Summary

- Parental incarceration and race are associated with more lenient grading.
- White students with incarcerated parents received a more lenient grade than those without incarcerated parents, but the same is not true among Black students who already experience leniency in grading.
- Two feedback profiles emerged that differed from the expected:
 - Positive Promotion: *Positive, vague, and unaligned feedback, which may undermine academic growth and engagement.* Common among **T** conditions.
 - Personal Critique: *Negative, specific, and sometimes personal feedback, which may discourage students and undermine engagement.* Near exclusively in the **BT2** condition.

Research Question 2

How does parental incarceration and race shape teachers' ratings of the appropriateness of and referrals to college and career track programs?

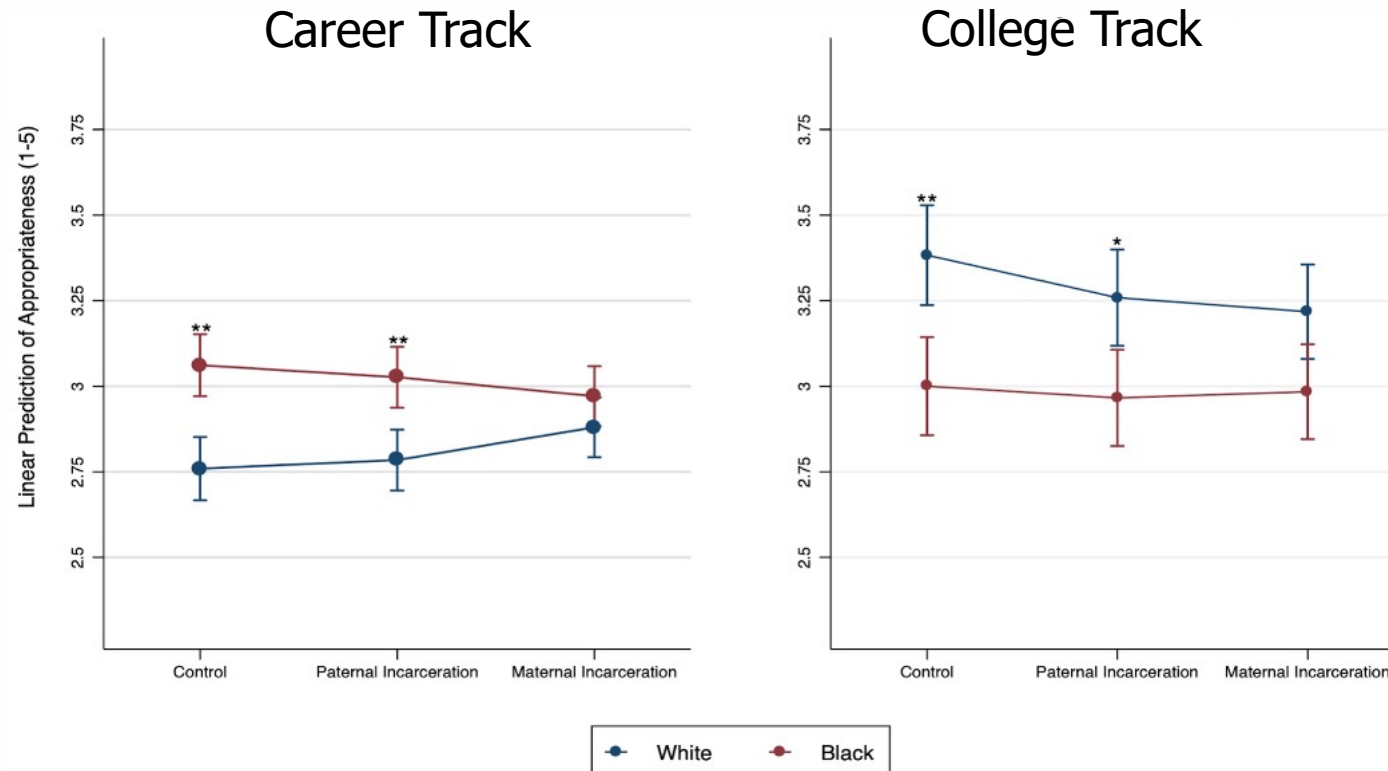
Table 1. Unadjusted means for teachers' average rating of appropriateness for the programs

	Control		Paternal Incarceration		Maternal Incarceration	
	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black
Appropriateness of Career Programs (1-5)	2.75	3.06	2.79	3.02	2.88	2.97
Appropriateness of College Programs (1-5)	3.38	3.00	3.26	2.96	3.22	2.99

Figure 1

Linear prediction of appropriateness of career and college track programs by parental incarceration and race.

Notes. N=1,508, *p<0.05, **p<0.01.



Teachers assess career track programs as more appropriate and college track programs as less appropriate when the student has a Black name

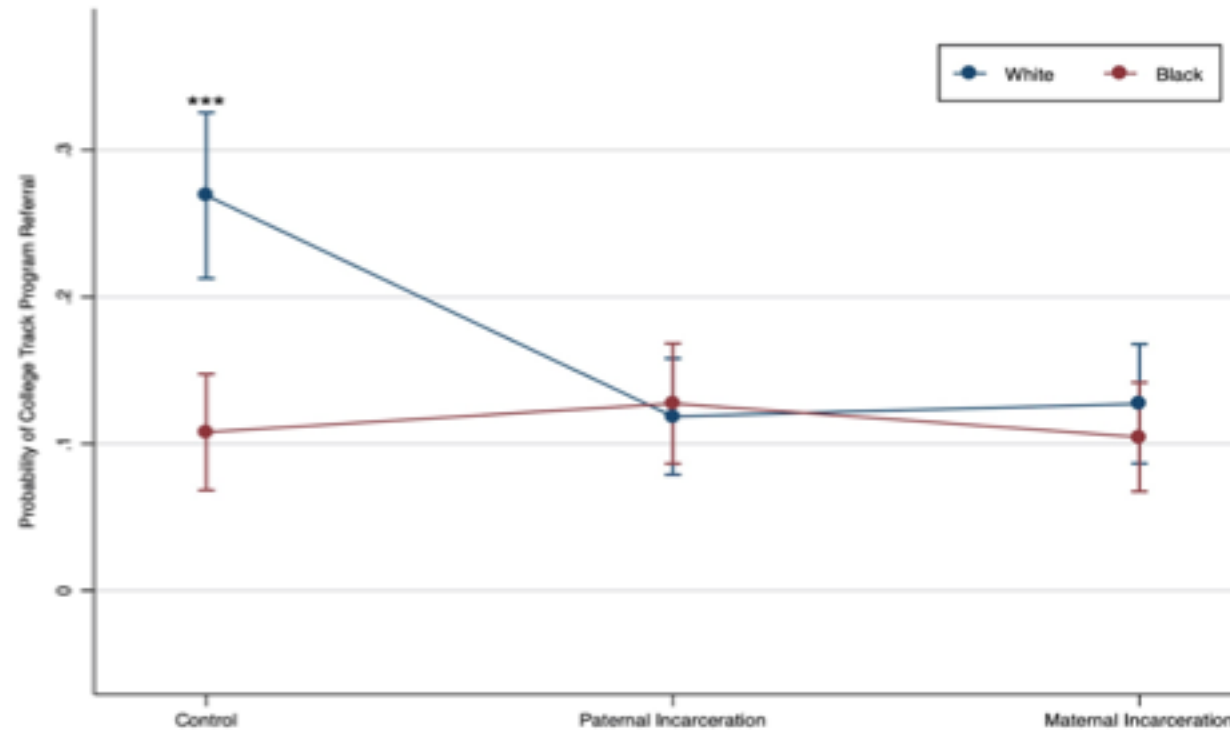
Table 2. Unadjusted proportion of teachers who referred to the student to a college program

	Control		Paternal Incarceration		Maternal Incarceration	
	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black
Referral to College Bound Program	0.27	0.11	0.12	0.13	0.13	0.10

Figure 2

Predicted probability of college track program referral by parental incarceration and race.

Notes. N=1,508, *p<0.05, **p<0.01.



Teachers had lower odds of referring the student to a college program if the student is Black, and if the student is White teachers have lower odds when they also have an incarcerated parent

Results Summary

- Parental incarceration does **not** affect teachers' ratings of appropriateness, but student's race does
- Teachers have ↓ odds of referring the student to college if they have incarcerated parents when the student is White... but the same isn't true if the student is Black

Implications of These Findings

- The stigma of parental incarceration likely shapes the educational experiences and trajectories of students, and this process is racialized.
- Points to incarceration as a salient factor in classrooms and teacher education programs.
- Opens the question of how stigma may shape other academic experiences and experiences in other institutions.

Research Questions

- To what extent is parental incarceration present in the peer-reviewed and practitioner-oriented literature of school psychology and related disciplines of school counseling and special education?
- What is the scope of how researchers and practitioners in school psychology and related disciplines are discussing parental incarceration in the literature?

Shaver, E. L., Floyd, A., & Sullivan, A. L. (2024). Parental incarceration in school psychology publications: A scoping review, content analysis, and comparison to related disciplines. *Journal of School Psychology, 107*, Article 101382. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2024.101382>

Method

- Scoping review of the literature across 23 years
- Searched school psychology publications and related disciplines of school counseling and special education
- Looked for mentions of parental incarceration (or a related term or phrase) throughout the whole article
- Gathered information from each article, especially around the scope of discussion on parental incarceration

Shaver, E. L., Floyd, A., & Sullivan, A. L. (2024). Parental incarceration in school psychology publications: A scoping review, content analysis, and comparison to related disciplines. *Journal of School Psychology, 107*, Article 101382. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2024.101382>

Key Findings

- Twenty-six school psychology articles had a mention of parental incarceration within the past 23 years
- Parental incarceration was not the sole focus of any article within school psychology peer-reviewed journals
- The only article published to date with a primary focus on parental incarceration in school psychology was published in a practitioner-oriented publication in 2022 (Communiqué)
- School counseling had both the highest proportion of total articles across publications and the highest proportion of articles with a primary focus on parental incarceration

Shaver, E. L., Floyd, A., & Sullivan, A. L. (2024). Parental incarceration in school psychology publications: A scoping review, content analysis, and comparison to related disciplines. *Journal of School Psychology, 107*, Article 101382. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2024.101382>

Research Questions

- To what extent and how is mass incarceration and parental incarceration included in the **curriculum** of APA-accredited and NASP-approved school psychology programs?
- To what extent are faculty members in school psychology **knowledgeable** on parental incarceration?
- What are faculty members' **attitudes** toward including parental incarceration within the scope of school psychology graduate education, research, and practice?
- What **preparation** have faculty members in school psychology received on the topic of parental incarceration?

Shaver, E. L., Corcoran, F., Sullivan, A. L., & Shlafer, R. J. (in preparation). *Training, knowledge, and perceptions on parental incarceration: A national survey of school psychology faculty members.*

Method

- Survey of all school psychology faculty members at approved and accredited programs (N = 1,143)
- Recruited via email in February–March 2024
- 173 faculty members completed the survey (15% of sampling frame)
- Survey developed iteratively by author with feedback from committee members, school psychology graduate students, and research methodology consultant
- Survey content areas (in this order): attitudes, perceived knowledge, curriculum, preparation, demographics, actual knowledge
- Data analysis

Shaver, E. L., Corcoran, F., Sullivan, A. L., & Shlafer, R. J. (in preparation). *Training, knowledge, and perceptions on parental incarceration: A national survey of school psychology faculty members.*

Key Findings: Qualitative

School psychology faculty members...

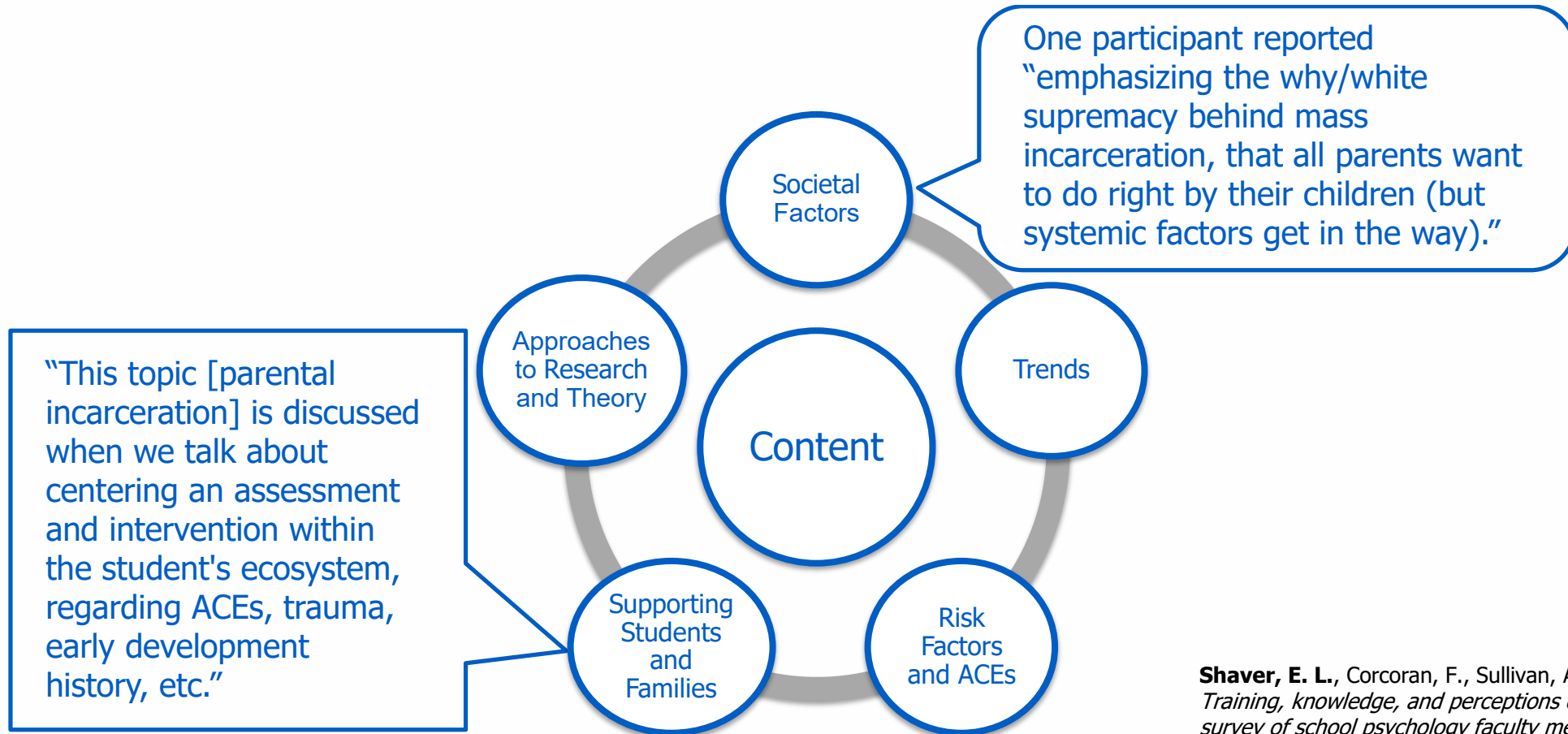
- Largely endorsed parental incarceration being relevant to school psychology
- Most had engaged in some preparatory experience(s) related to the topic
- Nearly two-thirds had included content related to mass incarceration and/or parental incarceration in their work with graduate students
- On average rated themselves as slightly knowledgeable about parental incarceration

Qualitative Questions

- Briefly describe the content you have covered in your course(s) on the topic of mass incarceration/parental incarceration. (in the past two academic years)
- Other than within the course(s) you have taught, briefly describe the additional ways in which you have discussed or included the topic of mass incarceration/parental incarceration as a school psychology faculty member within the past two academic years.
- Briefly describe how you have discussed or included the topic of mass incarceration/parental incarceration in your work with school psychology graduate students within the past two academic years. (non-teaching)

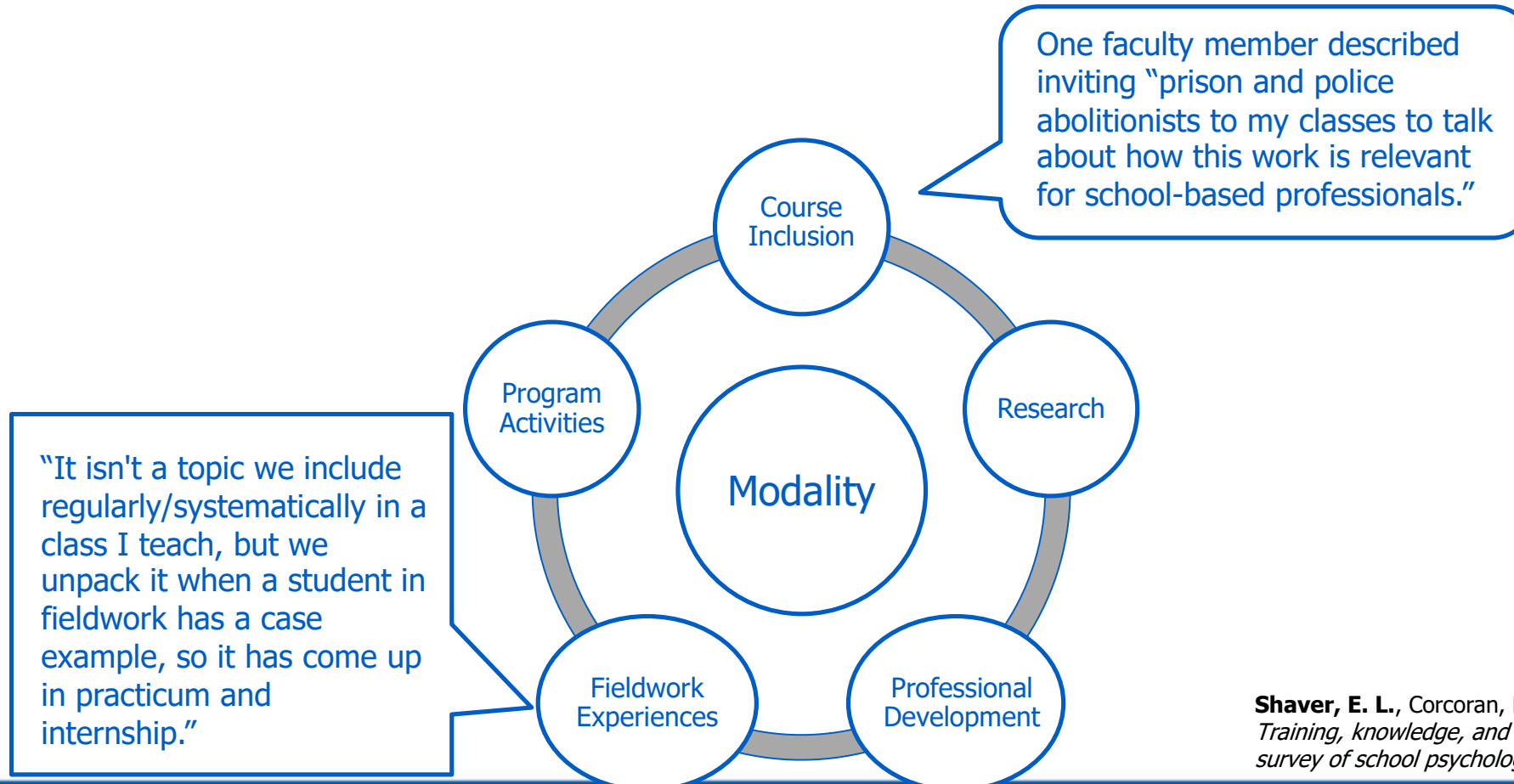
Shaver, E. L., Corcoran, F., Sullivan, A. L., & Shlafer, R. J. (in preparation). *Training, knowledge, and perceptions on parental incarceration: A national survey of school psychology faculty members.*

Key Findings: Qualitative



Shaver, E. L., Corcoran, F., Sullivan, A. L., & Shlafer, R. J. (in preparation). *Training, knowledge, and perceptions on parental incarceration: A national survey of school psychology faculty members.*

Key Findings: Qualitative



Shaver, E. L., Corcoran, F., Sullivan, A. L., & Shlafer, R. J. (in preparation). *Training, knowledge, and perceptions on parental incarceration: A national survey of school psychology faculty members.*

Scoping Review on Protective Factors and Resilience for Children with a History of Parental Incarceration

Comprehensive search of quantitative, peer-reviewed studies following PRISMA guidelines

- How many studies have examined protective factors and/or interventions aimed at building resilience among this population?
- What types of protective factors and interventions have been studied, and where are the gaps in the literature?
- Which developmental domains have been the focus of study outcomes?

Corcoran, F., Shaver, E. L., Morales D., Riegelman, A., & Shlafer, R. J. (2024). *Protective factors and interventions for children whose parents have been incarcerated: A strengths-based scoping review of the literature*. [Manuscript in preparation].

Scoping Review on Protective Factors and Resilience for Children with a History of Parental Incarceration

We identified 120 studies

74 (61.7%) focused on protective factors

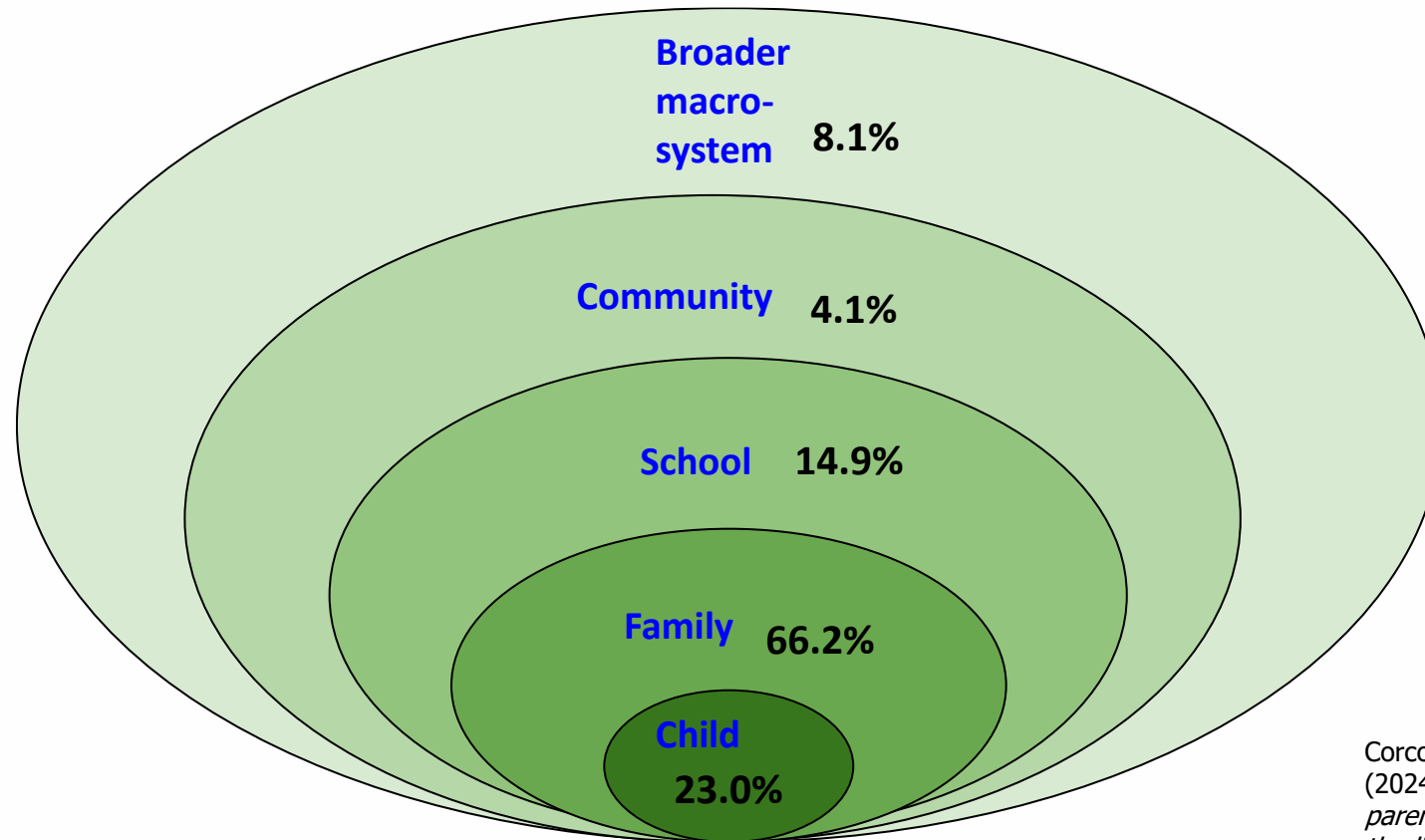
- ✘ Child: 23.0%
- ✘ Family: 66.2%
- ✘ School: 14.9%
- ✘ Community: 4.1%
- ✘ Broader Macrosystem: 8.1%

46 (38.3%) focused on interventions

- ✘ Child: 17.4%
- ✘ Family: 87.0%
- ✘ School: 0%
- ✘ Community: 0%
- ✘ Broader Macrosystem: 0%

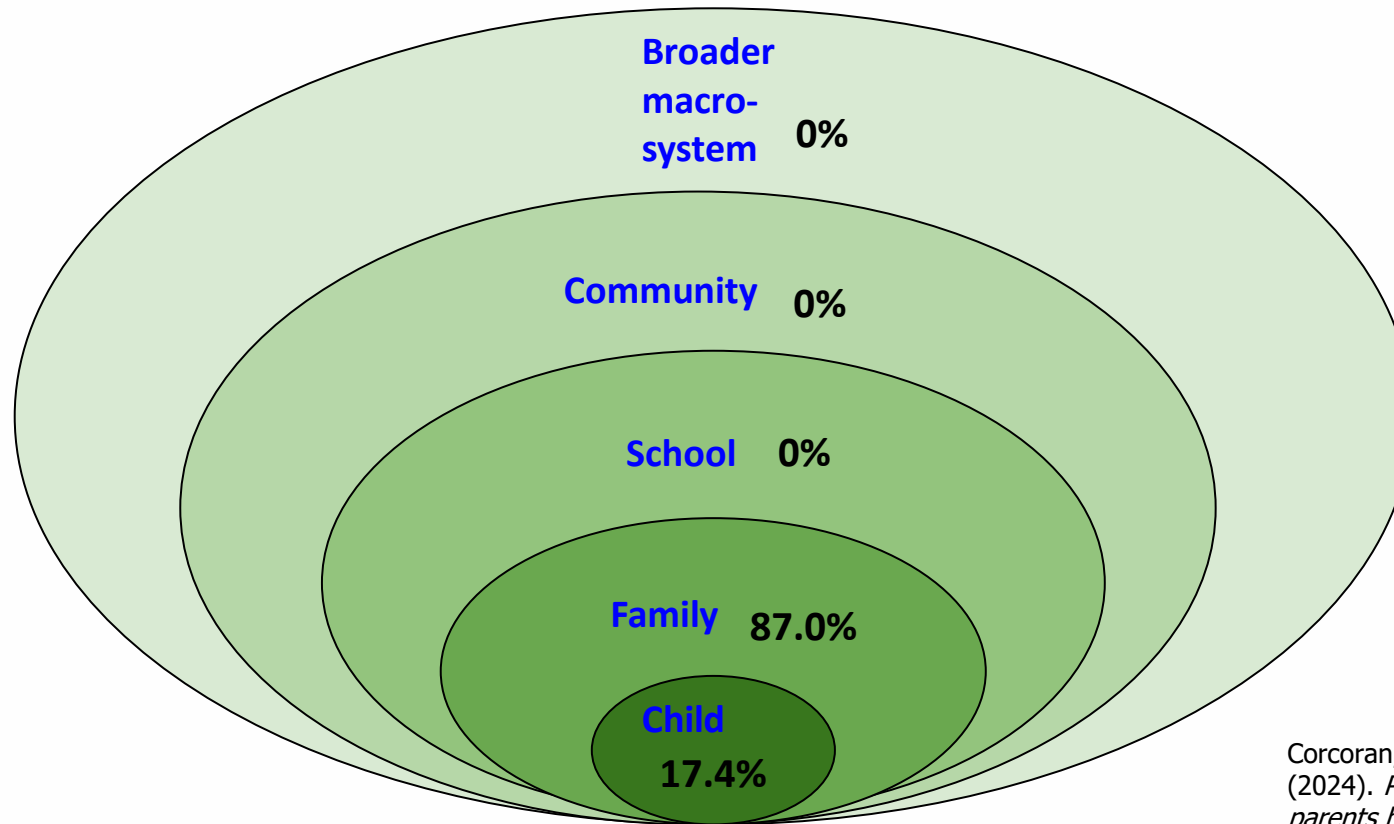
Corcoran, F., Shaver, E. L., Morales D., Riegelman, A., & Shlafer, R. J. (2024). *Protective factors and interventions for children whose parents have been incarcerated: A strengths-based scoping review of the literature.* [Manuscript in preparation].

Protective Factor Studies (n = 74)



Corcoran, F., Shaver, E. L., Morales D., Riegelman, A., & Shlafer, R. J. (2024). *Protective factors and interventions for children whose parents have been incarcerated: A strengths-based scoping review of the literature*. [Manuscript in preparation].

Intervention Studies (n = 46)



Corcoran, F., Shaver, E. L., Morales D., Riegelman, A., & Shlafer, R. J. (2024). *Protective factors and interventions for children whose parents have been incarcerated: A strengths-based scoping review of the literature*. [Manuscript in preparation].

Scoping Review on Protective Factors and Resilience for Children with a History of Parental Incarceration

Outcomes	n
Parent-child dyadic	67
Mental, social, emotional, and behavioral health	46
Delinquency and CJS involvement	14
Academic/educational	10
Broader measures of well-being	8
Behavioral and emotional well-being during contact with parents	6
Mentor-child dyadic	3
Physical health	2
Cognitive	2

Corcoran, F., Shaver, E. L., Morales D., Riegelman, A., & Shlafer, R. J. (2024). *Protective factors and interventions for children whose parents have been incarcerated: A strengths-based scoping review of the literature*. [Manuscript in preparation].

Parental Incarceration and Youth Mental Health: Relationships at Home and Beyond

2022 Minnesota Student Survey

- Population-based sample of 8th, 9th, and 11th graders who reported history of parental incarceration (17%; N = 13,423)

Aim:

- Use latent profile analysis (LPA) to explore how relationship closeness across six contexts form distinct profiles among MN youth with a history of parental incarceration and how these profiles relate to self-reported anxiety and depression

Corcoran, F., Bell, A. N., Shaver, E. L., Stone, K. J., Hindt, L. A., & Shlafer, R. J. (2024). *Parental incarceration, youth mental health, and resilience: Relationships at home and beyond*. [Manuscript under review].

Parental Incarceration and Youth Mental Health: Relationships at Home and Beyond

Distinct profiles emerged

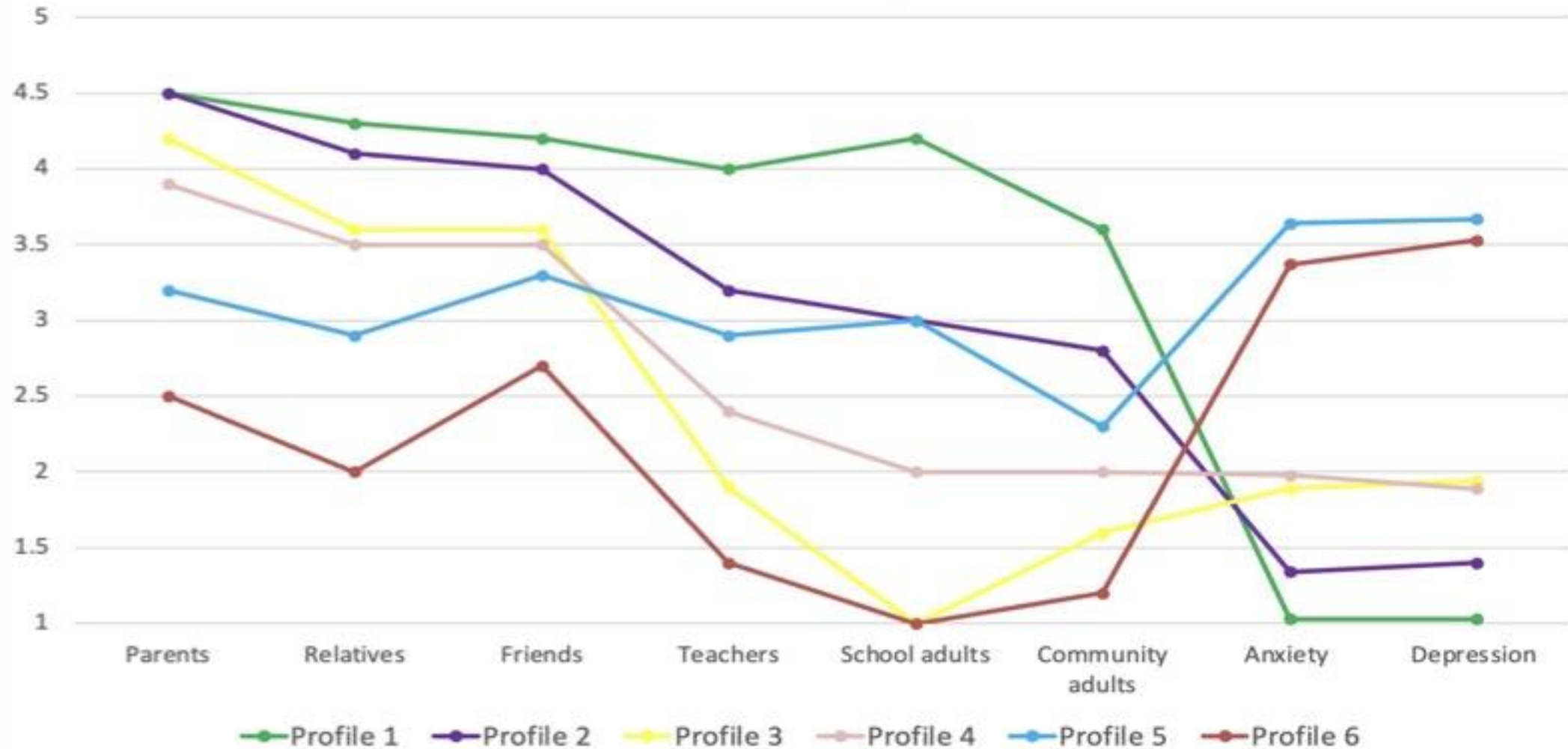
- Overall, youth had strengths in many relationships and reported feeling particularly close to parents, relatives, and friends
- The degree of closeness AND breadth of closeness across relationship contexts was associated with youth mental health
- Our results also point to the continued developmental importance of family connections during adolescence

Need for programs that support youth-family relationships and provide opportunities for youth to build close relationships in their schools and communities

Multi-system nature of resilience → multi-system interventions

Corcoran, F., Bell, A. N., Shaver, E. L., Stone, K. J., Hindt, L. A., & Schlafer, R. J. (2024). *Parental incarceration, youth mental health, and resilience: Relationships at home and beyond*. [Manuscript under review].

Anxiety and Depression Adjusted Means Across Close Relationship Profiles



Corcoran, F., Bell, A. N., Shaver, E. L., Stone, K. J., Hindt, L. A., & Shlafer, R. J. (2024). *Parental incarceration, youth mental health, and resilience: Relationships at home and beyond*. [Manuscript under review].

What does this mean for educators?

- Provide training opportunities that increase educators' understanding of mass incarceration, the impacts on children, and parental incarceration as an ACE
- Address educator bias
- Be inclusive and recognize where language may not be (e.g., "Donuts with Dad")
- Think about representation (e.g., in library books, in school assignments)
- Identify innovative ways to engage incarcerated parents in children's education
- Support programs that reach this population directly (e.g., Joining Forces)
- Develop programs to facilitate contact between incarcerated parents and school personnel

Questions?

Thank You!

Join our distribution list to receive updates and announcements:

<https://csgjusticecenter.org/resources/newsletters/>

For more information, please contact Tiana Smith at tsmith@csg.org

This project was supported by Grant No. 15PJDP-23-GK-02655-COIP awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention is a component of the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Office for Victims of Crime, and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

© 2024 The Council of State Governments Justice Center