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## The Impacts of Trauma Exposure and Differential Access to Medical Services on the Incarceration Experience

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# The Impacts of Trauma Exposure and Differential Access to Medical Services

## on the Incarceration Experience

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College of Liberal Arts & Social Sciences

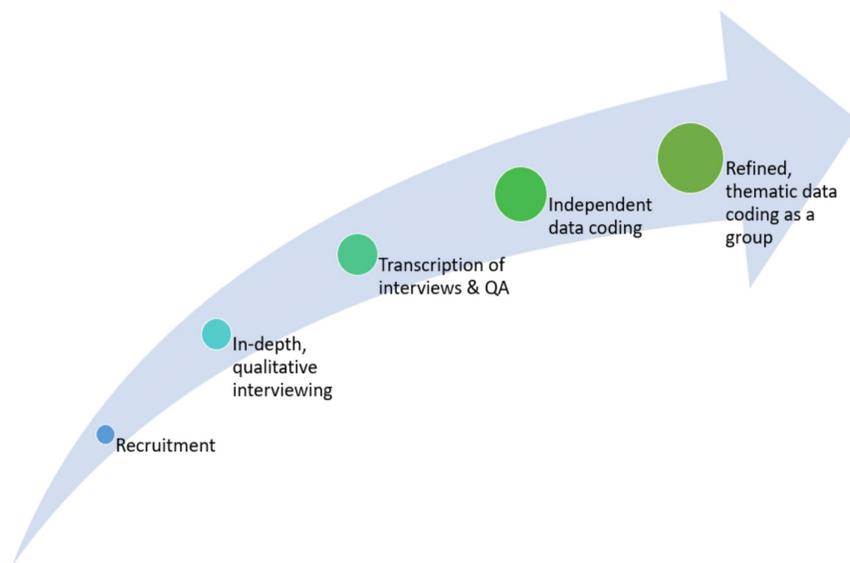
### PRIOR RESEARCH

Incarceration elevates risks for disease (Massoglia, 2008; Massoglia & Pridemore, 2015).

Interactions with staff and fear of other inmates have been identified as especially potent stressors during incarceration (Porter, 2018).

Prisoners are vulnerable to extreme hardships upon re-entry (Simes, 2018; Western, 2018).

### METHODS



Face to face, in-depth qualitative interviews were completed with 30 men and women at a re-entry center between the fall of 2017 and the spring of 2018. All men and women had been released from Ohio prisons within the last year (range = 3 days to 12 months). Interviews lasted an average of 52 minutes and each respondent was compensated with a \$25 grocery gift card for their time.

### THE SAMPLE

**Total N:** 30 (25 men; 5 women)

**Mean Age:** 44 years (range = 25 to 60 years)

**Mean Incarceration Length:** 45.1 months

**Mean # of Children:** 2.7

**Race:** Black (n = 16); White (n = 11); Bi-racial (n = 2); Hispanic (n = 1)

**Education:** 27% (n = 8) had less than a H.S. diploma/GED

**Employment:** 80% (n = 24) were unemployed

### RESULTS

#### **THEME #1: Access to medical was stratified**

"The medical? It depends on how that inmate was to that staff. That go back to never offending the wrong person [in prison]."

"He waited there for like 90 days...so imagine having colon and bowel cancer and not being treated for it."

#### **THEME #2: Respondents were exposed to extreme (and repeated) acts of violence**

"He came on the cell block and was like, 'I got parole!' And his boyfriend looked at him and clocked him out and took a razor and cut him for real, cut him to ribbons...I ain't never seen so much blood."

"They're called buck fifties...you get a slice from here [ear] to here [mouth]."  
*(continued above)*

### RESULTS (CONTINUED)

Int: "So, you actually tried to report the rape [to staff]?" Resp: [nods head 'yes'], "and I got raped [again] for it."

"They kept stomping on his head, like 10 on 1...they just kept stompin."

#### **THEME #3: Effects of trauma exposure contributed to respondents' adjustments to prison life and community re-entry**

"I'd rather commit suicide than go back to prison."

"I'm still.. alert, mindful my of surroundings. I don't like people standing behind me...being gone so long, [I'm just] trying to get familiar with things again."

"You lose your hair out, you just, stressing, stressing. Waking up saying, "everything's the same thing."

### POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Incarceration is a stressful life event that exposes it's captives to severe acts of violence, victimization, and medical neglect. These experiences threaten the development of human capital and call into question the humanity of our carceral system. Policymakers should make concerted efforts to limit its use and improve the conditions of incarceration.