

2017

Keeping the Children: Nonviolent Women Offenders in Two Michigan Residential Programs

Denise Smith Allen
Walden University

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations>

 Part of the [Criminology Commons](#), [Criminology and Criminal Justice Commons](#), [Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Commons](#), and the [Public Policy Commons](#)

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies Collection at ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu.

Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Denise Allen

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee

Dr. Mary Bruce, Committee Chairperson,
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Dr. Judith Fitzgerald, Committee Member,
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Dr. Tanya Settles, University Reviewer,
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer
Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
2017

Abstract

Keeping the Children: Nonviolent Women Offenders in Two Michigan Residential

Programs

by

Denise Allen

MPA, University of Michigan, 2010

BA, Alvernia College, 1979

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

March2017

Abstract

Seventy-five percent of women offenders confined to prison, jails, or residential treatment programs are custodial parents of minor children at the time of their separation. Little is known, though, about how prosocial networks are used to address the effects of separation from children. Using Bui and Morash's conceptualization of the theory of gendered pathways, the purpose of this phenomenological study was to better understand, from the perspective of incarcerated women, the experience of using prosocial networks to cope with the effects of separation. Data were collected through interviews with 10 mothers from 2 residential treatment programs in Michigan. Interview data were inductively coded, then subjected to a thematic analysis procedure. A key finding of this study was that women experience remorse, embarrassment, helplessness, and a sense of failure with respect to providing adequate care for their children and rely on their mothers or other female family members as the primary prosocial influence. Findings also suggest that Child Protective Services (CPS) is viewed by participants as intrusive and outside the prosocial network, yet significant to family reunification and permanency planning for children. Implications for positive social change include recommendations to criminal justice policymakers and Child Protective Services to consider provisions for supportive services for gender-specific programs that build on the influence of other, prosocial, female family members and promote a clear pathway to permanency planning for families, particularly where minor children are involved.

Keeping the Children: Nonviolent Women Offenders in Two Michigan Residential
Programs

by

Denise Allen

MPA, University of Michigan, 2010

BA, Alvernia College, 1979

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

March 2017

Dedication

This is dedicated to my beloved husband, Fred Allen, whose unwavering support ushered me through this arduous journey. To our sons, Joaquin, Kenny, Anthony, and Frederick, thank you for your love and support. I also dedicate this to my mother, Fannie S. Clark, whose intellect and passion for helping people set the standard I live by. To the justice-involved women who have overcome adversity and are still here to share their successes, I thank you for elevating my understanding.

Last but not least, I dedicate this to the probation/parole officers who uphold the tenets of the profession to protect the public while ensuring positive outcomes for those we have been entrusted to supervise.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost I thank God, the author and finisher of my faith. Thanks to Dr. Mary D. Bruce and Dr. Judith Fitzgerald for the support that guided me through this program. A big thanks to the gentle wordsmith, Elizabeth Jordan, who listened and understood me and provided invaluable input; otherwise this manuscript would not have taken shape. For certain, I wish to acknowledge Probation Agents, Donald Noble, and Katrina Coleman, along with Probation Agent Dave Toner for taking the time to encourage, review, and edit my work.

I also appreciate the thoughtful comments made by Tasha West, Reentry Coordinator. Also, special thanks to Walden Alums, Dr. Lonnie Brinson, and Dr. Michael Schenck, and Dr. Jacquinne Reynolds, for your moral support and prayers. To my cohort and dear friends Dr. Joyce Jones, Dr. Shari Merlano, and Kim Hyde who listened to me while I vented, thank you. Finally, to Dr. Tanya Settles, University Research Reviewer, for pushing me to my limit in order to make this dissertation my best work.

Table of Contents

List of Tables	v
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study	1
Background	1
Problem Statement	4
Purpose.....	5
Research Questions.....	6
Theoretical Framework.....	7
Limitations	9
Delimitations.....	10
Assumptions.....	11
Significance.....	13
Summary and Transition.....	14
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	17
Introduction.....	17
Literature Synopsis	17
Preview of the Chapter.....	19
Literature Search Strategy.....	20
Theoretical Foundation	20
Women Offenders.....	22
Women and Criminal Socialization	27
Women Incapacitation and Classification	35

Women Offenders Mothering from the Inside.....	47
Women and Reentry: Regaining/Retaining Custody.....	53
Summary and Conclusions	64
Chapter 3: Research Method.....	67
Introduction.....	67
Research Design and Rationale	67
Role of the Researcher	69
Methodology.....	71
Participant Selection	71
Data Collection Process	72
Data Analysis Process.....	74
Bracketing.....	75
Coding	76
Credibility and Trustworthiness	77
Transferability.....	78
Dependability.....	78
Confirmability.....	78
Ethical Procedure	79
Agreement to Gain Access Through Informed Consent.....	80
Descriptions of Ethical Treatment of Human Participants	81
Ethical Concerns Related to Recruitment and Data.....	81
Collection.....	81

Treatment of Data	83
Personal Ethical Issue	83
Summary	84
Chapter 4: Results	86
Introduction.....	86
Setting	86
Demographics	87
Data Collection Process	90
Description of the Data Analysis Process.....	90
Research Questions Responses and Emergent Themes	91
Trustworthiness of the Study	94
Results	96
Research Questions.....	97
Summation of Results.....	97
Theme I: Loss of Control as a Mother	97
Theme II: Image as a Mother.....	98
Theme III: Wake Up Call/Moment of Clarity	103
Prosocial Networks	106
Summary.....	106
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations.....	108
Introduction.....	108
Interpretation of the Findings.....	109

Support of the Theoretical Framework	117
Limitations of the Study.....	118
Implications.....	119
Recommendation for Action.....	120
Recommendation for Further Research	120
Researcher’s Experience.....	121
Conclusion	122
References.....	124
Appendix A: Recruitment Flyer.....	135
Appendix B: Demographic Questionnaire.....	136
Appendix C: Interview Questions for Participants	137
Appendix D: Coding Form	138

List of Tables

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Women Offenders Who Also are Mothers 88

Table 2. Representative Statements Theme I: Loss of Control as a Mother..... 99

Table 3. Representative Statements Theme II: Image as a Mother 102

Table 4. Representative Statements Theme III: Wake Up Call/Moment of Clarity..... 104

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The arrest of a women with minor children is well documented (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2015). Further, scholarly discourse regarding justice-involved women experiences of victimization and trauma has provided a glimpse of the journey these women travel through the criminal justice system. The war on drugs, mandatory minimum sentencing laws, and repressive public policies have had a damaging effect on society as a whole and on women offenders of all ethnic backgrounds who are mothers of minor children (Bloom, Owen, & Covington , 2004).

The goal of this study was to provide a voice for women offenders who also are mothers of minor children and document their experiences regaining or retaining custody of their children while involved in residential programming designed to address substance abuse and other related issues. I used Colaizzi's (1978) strategy for analyzing data for this qualitative phenomenological study by extracting and organizing datasets. Themes were developed based on the research questions, which will be outlined later in this chapter. My intent was for the study's findings to be instrumental in working to effect social change and affect public policy in the state of Michigan by shedding light on a growing phenomenon and offering recommendations to change the current trend.

Background

Although justice-involved women in a heretofore predominately male population are not a new phenomenon to the criminal justice system, efforts to address specific needs of these of women offenders have evolved out of necessity. Classic research by

Adler (1975) and Chesney-Lind (1997) confirmed that abuses in all its forms, along with mental health issues and the lack of resources available to address these various concerns have not been adequately address by local, state, and federal officials. When I began my career as a probation officer in 1987, there were no formidable assessments or classification instruments used specifically to address the needs of justice involved women.

Because the vast majority of inmates confined to prison were men, assessment and classification instruments were geared toward this specific population often to the detriment of female inmates (VanVoorhis, Wright, Salisbury, & Bauman, 2010). The major disadvantages resulted in overclassification, the "channeling of relatively low risk offenders to unnecessarily secure supervision levels or institutional placements" because the majority of justice-involved women were and continue to be low-level risk, nonviolent offenders (IResearchnet, 2016, p.7). Further, as stated by VanVoorhis et al. (2010), the assessment tools that were available were designed specifically for men by men. Moreover, issues related to women offenders with children were virtually ignored when many of them were sentenced to prison, jail, or long-term residential treatment programs.

Researchers have examined various facets of criminality hoping to gain insight on matters surrounding criminal behavior with studies tailored on addressing causal factors associated with environment, socialization, and genetics (Becker &McCorkel, 2011; Salisbury &VanVoorhis, 2009). More recently, the gender-responsive research of Brennan, Salisbury, and VanVoorhis (2012) offered a frame of reference to review a

historical perspective of the criminal justice system and the effect on women, particularly women who are mothers of minor children. To accomplish this overview, it was necessary to review how women became justice-involved: paths of arrest, conviction, probation, prison, parole, and reentry.

During the formation of the penal system in the United States, female offenders received limited attention from researchers and social scientists (Roth, 2011). Historically, sexism and racism were dominating factors which stifled empirical research on offending women. Belknap (2010) noted that approximately 19 scholarly articles presented between 1913 and 1971 published by the *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* specifically addressed issues related to women offenders (p. 1062). Moreover, Belknap (2010) asserted that more recent contributions by male authors and researchers failed to address the variables of race and gender in their articles which contributed further to the invisibility of women offenders.

Although it can be argued that the criminal justice system itself is not responsible for the care of minor children who are suddenly left without their custodial parent, the literature is clear that forced separation is traumatic and overwhelming with long-lasting detrimental effects to both mother and child (Celinska & Siegel, 2010; Mason, 2013). Researchers have recognized that economic pressures on single mothers are precursors to misconducts while incapacitated, and recidivism, once these women are released (Ney, Ramirez, & Van Diemen, 2012). Economic pressure compounded by traumas of forced separation creates and contributes to unique and crucial classification considerations for women offenders who also are mothers.

According to Celinska and Siegel (2010), mothers who were incapacitated as a result of criminal activity were guilt-ridden and experienced feelings of shame, which had adverse effects on fostering relationships with their children during confinement. Programs that allow mothers to nurture their children during incapacitation, while addressing substance abuse and other related issues, prove to be beneficial to both mothers and children (Cobbina & Bender, 2012). Providing a voice for and documentation of incapacitated women who also are mothers and how they regain or maintain custody of minor children following separation was the goal of this study. It is my intention that results from this study and additional research will prove beneficial in changing minds, perceptions, and more importantly, public policy.

Problem Statement

The Bureau of Justice Statistics (2015) reported that the number of women offenders is growing exponentially. Further, the number of women who are custodial parents of minor children is estimated as seven in 10 children, more than 1,300,000 children whose lives are affected (BJS, 2015). McDonald and Arlinghaus (2014) found that women frequently were parenting at least two children before incapacitation. Many women have experienced one or more forms of trauma and victimization, lived experiences that lead to or set them up for criminal justice involvement. Researchers Daly (1992); Bloom et al. (2004); and Salisbury and VanVoorhis (2009) identified trauma and victimization specific to women offenders as *gendered pathways*.

These gendered pathways not only focus uniquely on women that include women as mothers but also the import of their social networks (Reisig, Holtfreter, & Morash,

2002). Social network (partners or spouses, immediate and extended family friends, counselors, educators, church, and community organizations) play key roles in how women offenders experience separation from their children (Reisig, et al. 2002). Social networks that act to support and enable women offenders to continue their roles as mothers are known as *prosocial networks* (Reisig, et al. 2002).

Due to the increase in numbers of nonviolent, low-risk women offenders in the state of Michigan with minor children who experienced separation, I explored prosocial networks, in relation to women regaining or retaining custody of their children, in this study. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach and the theoretical framework of gendered pathways, women offenders with minor children, from two supervised residential programs, were interviewed to document their experiences. By providing a voice for an otherwise marginalized group, results from this study can be used to assist Michigan policymakers and stakeholders in more effectively addressing justice-involved mothers and how their prosocial networks influence and support them.

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to document the experiences of justice-involved women who also are mothers in regaining or retaining custody of their minor children during a period of incapacitation. Using a gendered pathways theoretical perspective and mothers as a method of inquiry, justice-involved women with minor children were given a voice in this study. My focus was on the role that prosocial networks played in nonviolent women offenders' lives as mothers and the extent to which prosocial networks were important in retaining or gaining custody of

their minor children. The Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) may find the results of this study useful for designing cost-effective strategies that mitigate incapacitation for nonviolent women offenders who are also mothers by minimizing disruption of families.

Research Questions

Daly (1992) stated that women offenders cannot be regarded as mere offenders or solely as women when women offenders are mothers of minor children. How women cope with mothering while incapacitated can depend on external support; external support presents as a prosocial network (Reisig et al. 2002). Prior research has established that incapacitated females are fraught with multiple challenges in regaining or retaining custody of their children (Celinska & Siegel, 2010; & DeHart, 2014). I designed the following research questions (RQs) to provide information that can serve as inroads to more productive correctional practices and provide answers to questions about the value of prosocial networks:

RQ1: What are the social implications for women offenders who also are mothers and experience separation from their minor children as a result of incapacitation?

RQ2: What are some strategies that women offenders who are also are mothers use in regaining or retaining custody of their minor children?

RQ3: How do women offenders who also are mothers use prosocial networks during incapacitation for determining interaction with their minor children?

Participants responded to the RQs through a phenomenological approach of structured interview inquiry. I identified, described, analyzed, and interpreted the themes

that emerged from the data I collected. Responses were rich in data which established themes that I will discuss further in Chapter 4.

The positive social change implications of this study include public policy driven advocacy for an otherwise marginalized group of women—namely, women offenders who also are mothers. In addition, social change initiatives can be achieved through the recommendation of alternative measures, such as child-inclusive on-site residential programs that help keep families intact while mothers deal with the consequences of criminal involvement. Moreover, the findings of this study can be used to address the establishment of programs highlighting the use of prosocial networking strategies, especially where family reunification efforts are ongoing.

Theoretical Framework

Using the feminist perspective lens and gendered pathways, the purpose of the study was to provide a new understanding of the shared experiences of justice-involved mothers who want to regain or retain custody of their minor children. I developed the RQs to gain an understanding of the process that justice-involved mothers go through and how they use prosocial networks while incapacitated. The literature review in Chapter 2 will encompass articles that argue women offenders in the criminal justice system have been physically, mentally, or sexually victimized. Their subsequent involvement in crime may be attributed to economics or situational events that take place in their environment (Daly, 1992). From a public policy standpoint, women engaged in reentry programming need to be considered in part of the discussion on what works or does not work to assist offenders' in reducing recidivism.

As a theoretical framework, gendered pathways provide a basis for understanding women in the criminal justice system. Justice-involved women enter the system through pathways, which are in many instances, the result of their gender (Bloom et al. 2004; Estrada & Nilsson, 2012). Further, scholars have established that mental and physical trauma during the formative years for young girls initially begins their involvement in the juvenile court system, where many girls are identified or classified as runaways (Chesney-Lind, 1997). Female runaways survive by engaging in petty criminal behavior such as shoplifting, or relying on men, who expose them to drugs or more violence by forced prostitution and other forms of coercion (DeHart, 2008).

Researchers also suggested that women in the criminal justice system are generally poor, undereducated, minority, with one or more minor children (Arditti & Few, 2006; Belknap, 2010). Women offenders typically struggle with issues of childhood trauma, the lack of prosocial networks, and on-going substance abuse, which increases the likelihood of recidivism (Salisbury & Van Voorhis, 2009). Social network theory, as outlined by Bui and Morash (2010), continued the discourse on social networks emphasizing the use of prosocial networks, such as family and church, which may be useful to these women.

The stigma of becoming a convicted felon presents additional barriers for women offenders, especially when their children have been placed in the care of family or the foster care system as a result of the mother's incapacitation (Arditti & Few, 2006). Another theory that I considered in this study was the social network theory or relational

theory. According to Bui and Morash (2010) social networks are necessary components to women offenders during incarceration and after release. Although social networks present strengths and weaknesses in relationship to the overall adjustment, efforts that justice-involved mothers make toward reunification in regaining or retaining custody of their minor children can be sabotaged or facilitated depending on the influences of the women's social network(Bui & Morash, 2010). To that end, the focus of this study was on prosocial networks justice-involved women used, which may be beneficial in fostering self-efficacy.

Limitations

As this qualitative study was limited to 10 participants, the findings may provide a more robust meaning and understanding of their individual perspectives in relation to the process of regaining and retaining custody of their minor children and how the participants used prosocial networks effectively. I also considered my inability to interview participants in another region or another state to examine prosocial networks a limiting factor. This inability stemmed from restraints on time and available resources.

Because participants were at various stages of incapacitation and reunification, I also considered the levels and degrees of willing disclosure a limitation as one or more participants could have found it difficult to disclose personal feelings or challenges with their children, family, or the foster care system. A glaring limitation was the paucity of literature on nonviolent, low-risk justice-involved women with children housed in supervised residential programs together as a family unit. My role, position, and status as

a parole/probation officer, which I was required by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to disclose to participants, was also a limitation.

Delimitations

In this study, I focused on incapacitated women who also are mothers housed in supervised residential programs in the state of Michigan, where justice-involved mothers are allowed to have their children with them on site. I interviewed participating mothers during the month of December 2015. Participants in this study were drawn from two programs: one program is federally funded and the other is funded by a Roman Catholic diocese of Michigan. The federally-funded program generated six participants, and the Roman Catholic diocese program generated four participants. I sought women participants between the ages of 21 and 45 years, who were mothers of children aged from infancy to 17 years old. Demographic data included name (I assigned a pseudonym to each participant), age, prior contact with the criminal justice system (Y/N), substance abuse history (Y/N), and number of minor children and their ages. The structured interview questions were open-ended and designed to elicit responses about mothering and about aspects of prosocial networks during incapacitation. Gendered pathways was the theoretical framework I used during this qualitative phenomenological study that focused on what Daly (1992) identified as two of the five most commonly occurring pathways unique to women: drug connected and economically motivated. Further, I examined the use of prosocial networks by women who are mothers and the role that prosocial networks played in maintaining contact with their minor children during incapacitation.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms are defined and their meanings and uses were as follows:

Female/women offenders/justice-involved women: Women who have been convicted of a felony crime which resulted in incapacitation in a correctional facility, halfway house, probation, or parole (IResearchnet (2016).

Incapacitation: Refers to the restriction of an individual's freedom and liberties they would normally have in society. This term can be used interchangeably with the terms incarceration, jail confinement, or supervised residential program (Study.com, 2017).

Prosocial network/relationships: One or more persons or institutions that offer emotional, financial, social, and personal support, motivation, or modeling that helps empower individuals toward self-efficacy. This can include, but is not limited to: family members, friends, church, self-help support groups, therapists, parole/probation officers, and educational institutions (Bui & Morash, 2010)

Assumptions

Justice-involved women generally engage in criminal activity for economic gain, and for the most part, refrain from crimes that would involve physical harm to their victims (Caputo, 2008). Researchers have presented substantive data relative to female offenders' overrepresentation in the vast majority of correctional facilities primarily due to drug dependency, which in fact, is the primary motivation fueling their involvement in property crimes, possession of illicit substances, and prostitution (Brennan, Salisbury,

& VanVoorhis, 2012). As an example, Caputo (2008) provided clarity to this assumption through an in-depth analysis of drug-addicted women who engaged in sex work and shoplifting as a means of survival, and in some cases, supporting an increasingly expensive drug habit.

As a result of sweeping national public policies in the criminal justice system, female offenders have been severely and adversely affected by *the war on drugs*, mandatory minimum sentencing, and *three strikes* laws focused on repeat offenders (Bloom et al., 2004). Based on diverse political and philosophical perspectives, the general public had an expectation of the criminal justice system, specifically in relationship to how it handled a resurgence of drug users and drug dealers (Phillips, Gleeson, & Waites-Garrett, 2009). The late 1980s and the early 1990s introduced stringent policies that increased the penalty for drug possession, especially cocaine (VanVoorhis, 2012). The assumption was that by increasing the penalty for this drug would minimize the demand. Contrary to this notion, drug addiction soared after *freebasing*, a method of using a crystallized version of the drug (commonly known as crack cocaine) increased in popularity (Caputo, 2008). The prevalence of the drug as an inexpensive high produced an epidemic in the 1980s (Campbell, 2013).

Although drugs penetrated all communities and impacted women and men, the public perception was that most drug abusers were men (Kruttschnitt, 2016). Consequently, changes in the drug policies resulted with the arrest a large percentage of women who were caught up in a world of drug addiction (Bush-Baskette, 2000). While women have participated in the drug trade as dealers, the vast majority have been arrested

for being “mules or couriers,” which involves transporting illicit substances to and from specific locations. With high numbers of female offenders incarcerated, there were increasing numbers of children who were left in the care of family, friends, or the foster care system (Loper & Tuerk, 2011). The assumption that women offenders would reenter society and immediately regain legal custody of their children and get on with their lives was challenged (Tuerk & Loper, 2006). In most instances, this was and continues to be far from their reality. Public perception, with respect to reentry for women, attributes reoffending to a lack of self-motivation to live a responsible, productive, and crime free life (Alfred & Chlup, 2009). Assumptions about justice-involved mothers were examined during this inquiry.

Significance

Although life circumstances are evolving in terms of the role of parenthood with significantly more single fathers positioned as custodial parents, mothers, at this juncture in time, are still primarily responsible for the care and well-being of their children. With respect to justice-involved women who are actively involved with regaining and maintaining custody of their minor children, prosocial relationships may be considered the linchpin to increase successful outcomes for these offenders. With the Department of Corrections seeking alternative measures to reduce recidivism rates, the findings and recommendations from this study may show cost-effective means to mitigate the need for further family disruption (as female offenders are generally engaged in nonassaultive crimes(Michigan.gov, 2017)). The primary benefit in terms of positive social change may be for women involved in the criminal justice system to have the opportunity to inform

key stakeholders and policymakers of the challenges associated with the process of regaining and retaining custody of their minor children.

Summary and Transition

In this first chapter, I presented the contextual framework for the study female offenders who also are mothers and custodial parents of at least one minor child prior to incapacitation. Historical references from Adler (1975) and Chesney-Lind (1997) regarding the progression of females in the criminal justice system were included because these scholars provided new insight and perspectives that began to address social and economic factors, race, gender, and abuse, which heretofore had been largely ignored. Salisbury and VanVoorhis (2009) provided insight into the life experiences of female offenders which in many cases involved mental, physical, or sexual abuse. Furthermore, Roth (2011) argued that women offenders were treated more severely because of gender and status in United States society. Researchers have garnered significant data regarding the abuse of females in general and women offenders specifically; however, there remains a gap in the literature regarding prosocial relationships and how they may influence outcomes for justice-involved mothers engaged in regaining and retaining custody of minor children.

In Chapter 2, I will focus on review of the literature in the field of criminal justice particularly with respect to female offenders. For example, research by Celinska and Siegel (2010) addressed mothering from prison and the guilt and shame associated with justice-involved women. They recognized that women returning home must address self-esteem issues regularly to combat negative thoughts and behaviors that may result with

reoffending. Bui and Morash (2010) argued that recidivism rates may be reduced with the internalization of controls by female offenders through fostering relationships.

In Chapter 3, I will describe the qualitative design used, the methodology selected, and the rationale for choosing phenomenological over other methods available. The theoretical design was based on gendered pathways using mothering as a focus of inquiry to examine prosocial networks. Chapter 4 includes the findings. Ten nonviolent women offenders who are also mothers were drawn from two supervised residential programs in Michigan and interviewed on site. A demographic profile table was created that represents component factors of the study.

I developed 10 structured, open-ended face-to-face interview questions, which participants provided responses to that addressed and answered the three RQs guiding the study. Thematic coding identified themes that emerged from the data and basic analysis without discussion will be presented. These data will be presented collectively, as participants were connected through their similar experiences as justice-involved women who have children and were fighting to regain or retain custody while incapacitated and faced with rebuilding their lives.

In Chapter 5, I will present the findings along with a discussion and offer recommendations that were intended to enable criminal justice professionals, policymakers, and women offenders themselves to address the inequities in current justice-involved public policies in Michigan. Findings from this research will provide evidence for policymakers and stakeholders who are interested in social change that seeks to minimize disruption of family units and increase alternative sanctions for nonviolent

offenses. To that end, the positive social change that my findings from this study could lead to would offer resiliency and hope to an otherwise marginalized group who seek to regain or retain custody of their children and have the means to provide for them. These findings will also contribute to the literature as they relate to the social implications for women who experience separation from their children as a result of incapacitation and the influences of prosocial networks.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to provide a voice for women offenders who also are mothers by documenting their unique experiences as an otherwise marginalized segment of society within the context of the criminal justice system. What I found during my review of the literature was a paucity of literature presented from the perspective of women who also are mothers, who experienced incapacitation and also engaged in the process of regaining or retaining custody of their children. This gap in the literature was what I expected to fill with the results of this study.

I organized the body of the chapter first into three segments that will provide background on justice-involved women which included studies conducted in the United States and globally. Next, I will focus on women offenders mothering from the inside with literature that examined various challenges that these women faced. Last, I will present literature that discussed women and reentry along with how regaining or retaining custody of their children intersects. I found it necessary to rely on foundational and classic research upon which to build and strengthen the search for relevant literature on justice-involved women who engaged in low-level offenses motivated by addictions or economic necessity and or greed.

Literature Synopsis

Several themes were established during my review of classical and recent scholarly literature on women offenders. The theory of gendered pathways references the trauma of mental, physical, and sexual abuse of women during their formative years

along with the subsequent effect of these abuses on women offenders (Bloom et al., 2004; Daly, 1992; VanVoorhis et al., 2010). In addition, the institutional classification process for women prisoners utilized instruments designed for classifying men (Rettinger & Andrews, 2010; Salisbury & VanVoorhis, 2009; VanVoorhis et al. 2010), and this resulted in over classification of nonviolent women offenders. Offending women experienced the effect of policy driven penalties including the war on drugs, mandatory minimum sentencing, and three strikes laws (Bloom et al. 2004).

Female offenders often sought ways to remain connected to their offspring during confinement (Arditti & Few, 2006; Brown & Bloom, 2009; Celinska & Siegel, 2010). Difficulties abound for women that had to rely on others to foster communications through letters, phone calls, or visits (Cox, 2009; Haney & Hurtado, 2000). Additional consideration provided in the literature with respect to women offenders involved in the criminal justice system is the high percentage of those diagnosed with mental health and substance abuse problems (Derkzen, Booth, Taylor & McConnell, 2013; Phillips, Gleeson, & Waites-Garrett, 2009) as are many justice-involved women experiences.

Women become involved in the criminal justice system through a series of precipitating factors, life events, or circumstances that unfolded in their lives. Those factors ultimately led several women to become part of a growing segment of females arrested, convicted, and sentenced through the judicial process (Roth, 2011). For many women, the pathway to criminality began during pubescence. As I highlighted in Chapter 1, researchers determined that physical, and or sexual abuse was most likely to have

occurred (Salisbury & VanVoorhis, 2009), creating additional problems for justice involved women.

The prevalence of early childhood trauma significantly contributed to an increase in the number of juvenile offenders' adjudicated as temporary, and in some cases, permanent wards of the court (Chesney-Lind, 1997). For example, teenage female offenders are often perceived and designated as runaways (Eckelkamp, n.d.). Many times adolescents have engaged in truancy based on what were interpreted as oppositional behaviors (Chesney-Lind, 1997). Although in many instances, juvenile offenders were attempting to protect themselves from mental, physical, and or sexual abuse that was perpetrated on them by family members or close family friends; the cry for help was missed due to their status as juvenile offenders (Lynch, Heath, Mathews, & Cepeda, 2012).

Preview of Chapter

In this chapter, I will present a historical overview of the most recent literature that specifically focuses on the female offender population. First, I will provide a review of existing literature on women who have been incapacitated as a result of receiving prison sentences through the gendered pathways theoretical lens. Then I will present a critical analysis of current research is presented that seeks to address issues related to classification of female offenders during their confinement. Through this literature review an exploration of the many unique challenges women face in maintaining relationships with their children during and after confinement was presented (Brown & Bloom, 2009; Celinska & Siegel, 2010).

Third, in this chapter I will focus on female offenders' self-concept as well as how these women are perceived by their children, family members, friends, and the community. Fourth, an analysis of the literature specifically addressed women offenders' issues of substance abuse, low-level nonviolent and economic crimes; along with mental health concerns quite prevalent within the populations of justice-involved women will be included. In later segments of this chapter, I will review women offenders who are mothers, mothering from the inside, and the notion of retaining and regaining custody of minor children.

Literature Search Strategy

I obtained the literature for this study by researching scholarly peer reviewed journals in the field of criminal justice, psychology, crime and delinquency, and offender rehabilitation. The process of gathering articles began during the fall of 2010 and included the search for key words including *female offenders*, *women prisoners*, *incarcerated parents*, *prosocial networks*, and *gendered pathways* through the Walden University Library. In addition, I reviewed many books by social scientists that provided an in-depth historical foundation on women offenders. Books were ordered 2012–2013 and included classic works obtained through Amazon and The Northeastern Series on Gender, Crime, and Law. I also made updates to my literature review in 2016. Lastly, statistical data were obtained from websites such as the Bureau of Justice Statistics and the MDOC.

Theoretical Foundation

Contextually, gendered pathways provided a theoretical framework for this study with respect to female offenders that come from some of the most challenging life circumstances (Bloom et al., 2004; Daly 1992). Daly's (1992) pathways research identified five areas: harmed and harming, or women who were found to have psychiatric problems and were abused and neglected as children. Street women were defined as women with substance abuse problems and extensive criminal records. Battered women were defined as women abused by intimate partners who came to the attention of the criminal justice system through incidents of domestic violence, while drug-connected women were defined as women engaged in drug trafficking who later became drug abusers. Other or economically-motivated women were defined as women who had offending patterns similar to their male counterparts.

It has been noted that most women were engaged in the criminal justice system as offenders of mostly nonviolent offenses (Salisbury & VanVoorhis, 2009). Physical, mental, and sexual trauma during their formative years set the stage for substance abuse along with mental health problems that many women offenders encounter (Daly, 1992). As a result of the war on drugs, mandatory minimum sentencing, and repressive policies, the number of women in prison has grown exponentially (Bloom et al. 2004). Often women were custodial parents of minor children at the time of their arrest. Gendered pathways stresses the consequence of repressive policies on the ability of women offenders who also are mothers to obtain housing, welfare benefits, health care, and other means of support to assist women in taking care of themselves and their families (Bloom et al., 2004).

Women Offenders

A historical overview of women offenders in the criminal justice system indicated that incarcerated women were ignored with scant programming to assist them with mental and physical trauma experiences prior to and after engaging in criminal behavior (VanVoorhis, 2012). Policies implemented over the past four decades were the result of classic research by feminist scholars that brought attention to women in correctional settings VanVoorhis (2012). Researchers have written about pathways of women and the need for gender responsive programming (Brennan et al. 2012). Surveys produced findings that assisted Congress to pass the Violence Against Women Act under the auspices of the Department of Justice (VanVoorhis, 2012). Gender responsive programming slowly evolved based on advocacy research, meta-analysis, and other studies used to formulate policies on behalf of women (Holtfreter & Wattanaporn, 2013).

Classic scholarly discourse on female offenders by feminist social scientists, including Adler (1975), evolved and underscored how women's involvement in criminal activity would increase and suggested female offenders' presence in jails and prisons would continue to increase as women gradually gained independence socially and economically. Additional foundational research (e.g., Chesney-Lund, 1997) offered a similar view of women who engaged in criminal behavior and argued that criminal behavior was primarily due to various forms of abuse in the home, which lends credence to Adler's research that primarily focused on the urban White and Black female offender population. Accordingly, Chesney-Lund (1997) determined young female offenders in Asian cultures of Hawaii were involved in more than status offenses, such as truancy,

curfew violations, or purchasing cigarettes, which underscored the need for culturally and gender-specific policies to address rising crime rates.

Teenage female offenders typically sought camaraderie with older females through drugs, alcohol, and gang activity which often were precursors to movement into the adult judicial system (Eckelkamp, n.d.). Chesney-Lund (1997) provided statistical data regarding the types of crimes teenage offenders engaged in, which included drug sales and possession, prostitution, and theft as well as some violent offenses. Ultimately, Chesney-Lund placed youthful female offenders on two tracks based on ethnicity. Chesney-Lund noted that non-White girls were likely placed in juvenile facilities, while their White female counterparts were placed in mental hospitals as a diversion away from the criminal justice system. Various studies concerning girls transitioning into the adult system offered a contextual basis for my literature review to further understand the lived experiences of justice-involved women.

Michalsen and Flavin (2014) noted approximately 62% of women confined in prison were custodial parents of minor children. Their study compared mothers with children with women who are not mothers that are in the criminal justice system. In the study, there were 262 women offenders who were not mothers versus 1,072 who were mothers included in the study. The women who were not mothers tended to be White, non-Hispanic females. Mental health issues were prevalent with non-mothers in the study. Findings from their study suggested that non--mothers were predisposed to violent offenses and had lengthy prior criminal convictions. Gendered pathways, the women's liberation movement, and changes in the perception of women with respect to crime,

contributed to public policies that were less harmful to women moving forward (Bloom & Brown, 2009).

In the same instance, Bloom et al. (2004) argued that public policymakers were “ill-informed” regarding women offenders, thus setting the stage for a systemic challenge for women convicted of non-assaultive felony crimes (p. 31). Researchers revealed that approximately 17% of women in the United States were on probation, parole, or incarcerated (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2014). Furthermore, women of color from lower social-economic conditions were overrepresented in this population Bureau of Justice Assistance Training Assistance (2011). Accordingly, the largest increase in the prison population was the result of the war on drugs, which increased prison confinement for women by 71% (Bloom et al., 2004; McDonald-Wilson & Jeffries, 2011).

Researchers also recognized the correlation between substance abuse, physical health, mental health, the marital status of these women, educational background and employment history, and whether women were custodial parents prior to confinement as determinants for justice-involved women (VanVoorhis, 2012). Moreover, current public policy adversely affected women with children across every major institution established to assist those in need (Bloom et al. 2004). Consequently, the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 created additional barriers for women in correctional facilities (Bloom et al. 2004) Depending on the sentence, parental rights can be automatically terminated if children are in the foster care system for more than 16 out of 24 months (Bloom et al. 2004).

Following this, Bloom et al. (2004) offered meaningful recommendations to address the inequities in the criminal justice system as it relates to women offenders. For example, public policies that speaks to fundamental inequities through a gendered pathways theoretical lens which responds to trauma, substance abuse, and mental health. Moreover, Bloom, et al. asserted that six guiding principles should be put in place to provide gender-responsiveness to female offenders:

1. Gender: Acknowledge that gender makes a difference.
2. Environment: Create an environment based on safety, respect, and dignity.
3. Relationships: Develop policies, practices and programs that are relational and promote healthy connections to children, family, significant others, and the community.
4. Services and supervision: Address the issues of substance abuse, trauma, and mental health through comprehensive, integrated, culturally relevant services and appropriate supervision.
5. Social-economic Status: Provide women with opportunities to improve their socio-economic conditions.
6. Community: Establish a system of community supervision and reentry with comprehensive, collaborative services (p. 43).

Bloom et al. (2004) concluded with ways to enhance the criminal justice system by utilizing the aforementioned approach in formulating sound public policy.

Hence, Alfred and Chlup (2009) agreed that the United States is responsible for roughly 25% of the world's prison population. The disparities by which women offenders of color

represented behind prison bars and under supervision on probation or parole were considered based on prior research which suggested women offenders increased 2,800% from 1970 – 2001, (Bureau of Justice Statistics as cited in Alfred & Chlup 2009) stated,

Black women most adversely affected with 349 per 100,000; they are twice more likely to be incarcerated than Hispanic females at 147 per 100,000 and 3.5 times more likely to be incarcerated than their White female counterparts at 93 per 100,000 p. 241).

Researchers used critical race theory (CRT) as a theoretical lens which establishes three bases: racism is a part of society; advances made by Blacks will advance the agenda of the majority group and race is a social construction

Accordingly, the war on drugs, mandatory minimum sentencing and repressive policies set the stage for the increased numbers of Black women in custody for non-violent property offenses, or drug related crimes. In many cases, these women were custodial parents before arrest and subsequent convictions. Women convicted of drug crimes are at a particular disadvantage with respect to welfare, housing, employment, and education, which places barriers limiting the life chances for women (Alfred & Chlup, 2009) in general and Black women offenders in particular. For instance, welfare imposes sanctions which include a lifetime ban after 5 years of assistance that disproportionately and adversely affect racial minorities. Alfred and Chlup (2009) concluded that needs of women should be a priority; in particular, gender-responsiveness was needed to minimize overrepresentation of Black women in the criminal justice system.

Comparatively, Salisbury and VanVoorhis (2009) questioned whether gender responsive-needs correlate directly or indirectly with recidivism (p.546). These scholars engaged 313 participants from the Missouri Department of Corrections through semi-structured interviews to ascertain relevant data regarding the preponderance of evidence that gendered pathways is closely aligned to women who enter the criminal justice system, and why so many self-medicate and are likely to recidivate without appropriate support. Salisbury and VanVoorhis (2009) concluded with recommendations to incorporate gender-responsive needs risk assessment tools to assist in producing better outcomes for female offenders.

Women and Criminal Socialization

Women in the *U.S.* criminal justice system have common experiences of physical, sexual, and emotional trauma. For example, Winfree and DeJong (2015) discussed the interaction with police and offending women in relation to the war on women. The definition of war on women included the 2012 election cycle that dealt with legislation regarding pay equity and limitation with respect to birth control. Further, quantitative inquiry of gender-specific arrest records over a 20 year period from 1993 to 2012 revealed that the arrest patterns of women surpassed male offenders. Offenses such as fraud were 56% female versus 48%, and embezzlement 64% female versus 21% male. Results suggested women were less likely to commit violent crimes thus indicated arrest trends were increasing compared to men.

Disparate treatment in sentencing was the focus of a study conducted by Goulette, Woolredge, Frank, and Travis (2015) where 3,593 felony cases in 2009 were analyzed

using the "evil woman" and gender conflict that asserted some women were treated more harshly by the criminal justice system for conducting themselves differently than expected societal roles. In the study it was noted that Black females were treated more severely than White female offenders due to cumulative societal advantages (Woolredge et al., 2015). Offenses were violent, property, and drug related and compared pre-trial release and sentencing outcomes. Woolredge et al. (2015) cited judicial chivalry and judicial paternalism prevalent throughout the findings. Recommendations included additional research that included marital status, employment, and residential stability as components that may provide additional perspectives on disparate treatment of female offenders.

Kruttschnitt (2016) examined the historical implications of justice-involved women in contexts of exclusion, bias, and indifference. Issues related to victimization and domestic assault against women come to light when the Family Violence and Prevention Act was an amendment to the Victim of Crime Act became federal laws; however, the subsequent counter-intuitive response for law and order negatively affected poor and minority women (Kruttschnitt, 2016). Victimization of female offenders has taken on a politicized posture, especially after various types of abuse inside prisons created the need to address the issues through policy initiatives with recommendations included use of gender-based solutions with recognition of on-going challenges related to justice involved women (Kruttschnitt, 2016).

MDOC selected probation and parole officers' interpersonal styles with offenders as a basis for inquiry Morash, Kashy, Smith, and Cobbina (2015). Of 330 offenders who

were under community supervision, 251 were on probation, 76 were on parole, and three were on both probation and parole. Of the 66 probation officers (POs) that engaged in the study, 63 were women and three were men. Findings suggested that negative interactions with POs and women offenders increased the likelihood of anxiety levels of justice-involved women. On the other hand, supportive, non-punitive interactions were useful in fostering positive relationships and likelihood of cooperation with POs.

Recommendations included more gender-responsive training for individuals working with women on probation and parole.

Scholars identified shared experiences in terms of pathways of criminality specific to women. While Bloom et al. (2004) provided a theoretical framework for female offenders and how public policy systematically created additional challenges for women involved in the criminal justice system. For example, VanVoorhis (2010) noted that significant differences exist related to gender as well as culture, race, and class. Those differences were exacerbated through convictions and sentencing rates. Further, poverty and substance abuse were deemed determining factors for most women in the criminal justice system who engaged in non-assaultive property crimes. More specifically, Bloom et al. (2004) discussed categories and common threads for female offenders, which included substance abuse, physical and mental health concerns and, single parent status.

Public policy in particular had an adverse effect on women with children in placing restrictions on justice-involved women in reference to obtaining housing, public assistance, education, and employment (Bloom et al. 2004; Goulette et al. 2015). Women

whose children were placed in foster care during a period of incapacitation were often forced to relinquish permanent custody of their children due to time limits imposed by law for the purpose of permanency planning. In order to address those and other concerns regarding women in the criminal justice system, a comprehensive gender responsive approach was recommended (Bloom et al. 2004; Goulette et al. 2015) assist justice-involved women who are also mothers.

Following this, DeLong and Cobbina (2009) presented the subject of recidivism through the lens of ethnicity and culture specifically addressing women involved with the criminal justice system. As an example, a longitudinal study that included 506 female offenders who engaged in reentry during 1998 with a subsequent analysis performed in 2006. Findings suggested that there was no statistical difference in the average prison stay, level of misconduct, and completion of prison programming prior to release (Huebner, DeLong, & Cobbina, 2009, p. 238). In this instance, women offenders were demographically identified as 334 white offenders and 185 women of color. Further, women of color were specifically identified as Black and Latina. According to Huebner et al. (2009), an average of five instances of misconduct was noted during incapacitation.

On average, women offenders were released approximately 16 months after confinement and were likely to re-offend within 2 years (Huebner et al. 2009). In reference to barriers women of color face upon reentry to urban areas, findings attributed barriers negatively affecting success rates primarily of justice-involved women due to poverty prior to confinement, and upon reentry, to the same circumstance. Consequently, the experience of incapacitation, coupled with programming essentially created for the

male prison population was found ineffective in preparing women offenders to engage necessary processes to regain legal custody of their children. Hence, researchers noted that approximately 58% of released offenders reoffend within a 6 month period, with one third garnering new convictions, while the remaining one third were incapacitated (Huebner, et al. 2009, p. 226) which is consistent with recent trends.

The socialization process for women criminal offenders often begins during the formative and adolescent years. As an illustration, Eckelkamp (n.d) postulated when girls elect to join a gang, factors that contributed to their decision stem from the lack of familial structure in the home environment, poor self-esteem, and the need for protection. Girls who became involved in gangs often gravitated toward groups that have a strong male presence (Eckelkamp, n.d). More often than not, underlying factors for these girls are related to prior sexual trauma they have experienced.

In another case, Garcia and Lane (2010) argued that personnel within the juvenile justice system responds differently to female offenders, with high penalties exacted for similar crimes committed by male offenders, especially as it related to minor property offense. Scholars postulated that girls are deemed incorrigible for issues related to family disputes and fights at school. Under such circumstances, female offenders who may be the victim of mental, physical, and or sexual abuse are subject to a status offense designation. In order to address this issue, Garcia and Lane (2010) noted that multiple approaches were necessary for their research. Specifically in the state of Indiana, use of data included statistics on female offending patterns that were obtained from the Office

of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency and Prevention assisted in facilitating a baseline of offenses committed by this offender population.

Women and girls were interviewed separately and participated in focus groups in order to ascertain important information from the adults who shared their experiences. Many women in the adult criminal justice system were products of the juvenile justice system. The goal in this exchange was to offer a perspective based on experiences in both systems. Through the interviews, Garcia and Lane (2010) confirmed that often female offenders remained in situations that were deemed inappropriate or dangerous while awaiting interventions by the juvenile justice system. Options available to the juvenile population were few. If they decided to stay in harmful situations, they were more likely to be subject to additional abuse, and if they choose to leave, (i.e., becoming runaways, they must fend for themselves). Some of girls engaged in prostitution or theft in order to survive. Ultimately, youthful female offenders seek assistance with their survival needs by consorting with men who provide food, clothing, and shelter--at a price. Discussions relative to various forms of abuse during their formative years were not directly approached; however, what emerged from the discourse spoke to the pervasiveness of it.

Ultimately, youthful offenders indicated there were specific needs that should be addressed in order to minimize repeat offending in the adult system. Ideally, gender-specific caring role models, counseling, relative to grief and loss, drug treatment, engaging parental figures in counseling and self-efficacy were recommendations summarized by Garcia and Lane (2010). Focus groups were comprised of 34 women

from two correctional facilities located in Indiana. Women participants in the study ranged in ages between 18 to 53 years old. Other demographics in terms of race, education, number of offenses, and prior contact with the juvenile justice system were obtained. The women were divided into four groups with various topics broached on behaviors subject to scrutiny such as underage smoking and drinking.

In another case, Golder et al. (2014) observed women with substance abuse issues and, (a) documented substance abuse patterns among women offenders on probation and parole; (b) compared and contrasted different use patterns, victimization, and court mandated substance abuse treatment; and (c) examined whether being under community supervision made a difference. The participants were recruited by the Kentucky Department of Corrections, Division of Parole and Probation. There were 406 women participants who indicated they had experienced trauma, both mentally and physically. Based on their experiences, illicit substances influenced their involvement with the criminal justice system. Golder et al.(2014) noted that participants identified alcohol, opiates, and cocaine as used most frequently by them.

Working with offenders and understanding the challenges faced by women offenders were discussed through one probation officer's reflective journey (McDermott, 2014). As a result of the relationships developed with offenders in the United Kingdom, issues of domestic abuse, single parenthood, economic disadvantage, and immigration issues were the focus. A prosocial agency referred to as Jagonari provided a series of services that included assistance with food, clothing, shelter, and support with their minor children, while probation officers offered guidance, emotional support, and

empowerment to offending women. Findings suggested that expansion of those supportive programs would provide positive outcomes for justice-involved women.

Estrada and Nilsson (2012) compared male and female offenders based on demographics such as age and type of crime committed. Using data from Stockholm Birth Cohort Study a longitudinal study for the period 1953-2002 centered on female offenders coming from homes characterized by poverty, physical, mental, and sexual trauma. Typically, the home also included family members living in the household with mental health issues, which often manifested in neglect or physical violence. Comparative studies indicated that female offenders experienced more challenges after release from confinement. Many justice-involved women began criminal activity in their early teens; however, by the time women reached the age of 48 and continued criminal activity, they were described as single, with approximately 20% living with a partner (Estrada & Nilsson, 2012). Researchers suggested women had a history of substance abuse markedly higher than their male counterparts; thus, the combination of substance abuse and criminality made it challenging to find a non-offender mate (Estrada & Nilsson, 2012). Recommendations for future studies included examination of male and female offenders' experiences as it relates to long term criminal behavior.

Wattanaporn and Holtfreter (2014) described the gendered pathways to criminal involvement of justice-involved women by presenting historical feminist pathway analysis offered by Daly (1994) who identified five pathways of engagement in crime that differed from the mainstream notion that crimes committed by males and females are gender neutral. More than half of the research completed by Daly (1994) focused on two

of the five categories cited. Street women and harmed and harming women were identified as offenders with lengthy criminal convictions. Other models for discussion came from scholars who sought to explore the pathways model and included other models of childhood victimization, relational model, and social and human capital model (Wattanaporn & Holtfreter, 2014, p. 195). Wattanaporn and Holtfreter (2014) established a framework by which future work in criminal justice would be explored by women of different ethnicities.

As an illustration, Erez and Berko (2010) found that, from a cultural context, Arab/Palestinian women who were in abusive homes resorted to criminal acts to protect themselves from continued abuse. Interviews conducted with Arab/Palestinian women indicated they sought relationships with men described as "forbidden" who were, more often than not, engaged in criminal activity. Meanwhile, Eckelkamp (n.d.) argued that women who had a history of gang involvement as juveniles learned that many girls chose to be beaten into gang membership as opposed to being sexed in. Being perceived as weak by other gang members, particularly male counterparts, was not deemed in their best interest. Any such perception was guaranteed to bring on more danger of abuse. Extensive research on girl gangs in Syracuse, New York conducted in the 1990s presented significant history of trauma that resulted in early motherhood or permanent physical injury. As a recommendation, gender-responsive programs germane to the locale were suggested (Eckelkamp, n.d.).

Women Incapacitation and Classification

Indeed, female offenders in the criminal justice system are not a new issue. As early as the 1850s, young women were placed in reformatories with emphasis on providing guidance or “mothering” with the hope of deterring them from further criminal activity (Roth, 2011). When those measures failed, women were subject to placement in mental health facilities or arrested as vagrants for petty offenses such as public drunkenness, theft, or prostitution. Current trends suggest that criminal justice system has vacillated between rehabilitation and punishment as the system explored ways in which to address the behaviors of offending women. For example, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS, 2014):

- An estimated 17% of defendants were female in 2009.
- In 2009, the most frequent offenses for females were fraud (37%), forgery (34%), larceny/theft (31%), and weapons offenses (4%).
- Females comprised 6.7% of the 2011 state and federal prison population.
- Eight states in 2011 had at least 10% state prison populations that were female.

As an illustration, Bordt (2012) presented 22 prison narratives written by women prisoners published between 1960 and 2010. Questions by the researcher included. What does the population of prison narratives look like? Who are the authors? What do they write about? What factors help explain the variation in content? What can scholars learn about prisons from unsolicited words of women prisoners? What, if anything, do these narratives reveal about the prison life that has not been learned from scholarly accounts? In preparation for this study, Bordt (2012) read books by women offenders and

subsequently coded demographic information. To emphasize the point, Bordt(2012) sought commonalities with respect to their prison experience as well as diverse experiences of the authors. As a result, Bordt (2012) found a strong relational bond existed with other prisoners beyond those who came from similar demographic backgrounds. Bordt(2012) noted categories by which the women wrote and described them as follows:

- Political Trailblazers – Celebrity Status – Political Crime
- The Fallen Angel – Celebrity Status – Nonpolitical Crime
- The Radical Foot Soldier – Non-celebrity Status – Political Crime
- The Innocent or the Reformed – Non-celebrity Status – Nonpolitical Crime

Regardless of status of the authors, the researcher noted a primary difficulty offenders had maintaining contact with their children due to the distance involved. In terms of the effect of losing contact with family and the outside world, many women experienced emotional pain because of the separation. Children of incapacitated offenders were viewed as a vital part of the support network for mothers. Social and economic circumstances were determining factors in the perception of correctional staff and how offenders responded to them. In other words, middle class or celebrity status of inmates was taken into account in how women prisoners were treated. Notwithstanding, political ideology would also determine how they were treated.

In conclusion, Bordt (2012) surmised that prisoner relationships have not changed much within the last 50 years. Consequently, Holtfreter and Wattanaporn (2014) wrote that successful reentry is contingent on a series of dynamics that should assist

women in areas such as mental health, substance abuse, past trauma, and financial instability. Further, when children were added to the challenges with regard to a mother's stability, it was not surprising that female parolees were likely to recidivate within three years of release. In response, Holtfreter and Wattanaporn (2014) argued that better assessment was fundamental for improvement, specifically to address the female offender population. Researchers noted the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) presented Transition from Prison to the Community Initiative as a viable program to reduce recidivism.

Approximately 15 states use this program which emphasized the need to address classification, particularly of women offenders. According to prior research, women were often over classified within the prison system. Once women have been classified, the next phase is a Transitional Accountability Plan which enables offenders and parole officers the additional means to develop goals and evaluate the effectiveness of said goals. Research on the state of Michigan and Arkansas were found to illustrate very distinct programs for women offenders.

In Canada, research conducted at a federal prison where 31 women offenders were recruited to participate in a qualitative study which encouraged participants to respond to semi-structured interviews and focus groups (Matheson, Brazil, Doherty, & Forrester, 2015). Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anger, and depression were prominent themes. Gender-responsive treatment used by participants recognized that gender matters and offered holistic approaches that addressed trauma experienced by women offenders. Treatment was also incorporated germane to culture and trauma specific programming.

Furthermore, Lynch, Heath, Mathews, and Cepeda (2012) contended that incarcerated women would benefit from gendered programming such as Seeking Safety (SS) which is a present focused cognitive behavior intervention that addresses both PTSD and substance abuse within this population (p. 89). As an illustration, 114 women volunteered to participate in a mixed methods study whereby half of the participants received the cognitive intervention through SS and the remaining half were waitlisted. Researchers noted that the majority of women offenders in the study were incarcerated for nonviolent offenses. Criteria for inclusion in the 12 week intervention included females who had experienced childhood or adult trauma and suffered from the effects, as well as women who engaged in substance abuse as a form of self-medication. Results were mixed. Initial findings supported the use of SS as an intervention strategy that reduced depression and distress associated with trauma. It was determined that the results may have been compromised upon discovery that some participants had shared material from workbooks that were distributed while the women were in the intervention program.

In the meantime, Cone and DeHart (2014) focused on one aspect of offending women's needs during and after incarceration and emphasized gendered bonding needs and the higher level of support needed. The study included 60 participants from a random sample of 300 inmates in a female correctional facility. A common theme in their responses to opened-ended questions was the importance of emotional support during confinement. Implications and recommendations formed the basis for support of gender responsive reentry programming.

Brennan, Breitenbach, Dieterich, Salisbury, and VanVoorhis (2012) examined the pathways research of Daly (1992) and Moffett (1993) in order to provide a cogent response to the creation of assessment guidelines. The National Institute of Corrections as an organization sought assessment tools to provide programming for female offenders both inside and outside of correctional facilities. The framework for qualitative research called for gender-responsive assessment instruments that acknowledged Daly's 1992 pathways model qualitative sample of 34 women. Pathways to criminal involvement were women and girls fleeing abusive situations; drug users or traffickers; chronic criminality based on childhood physical and sexual abuse; intimate partner violence; and those motivated by poverty or greed. Moffett (1993) offered a developmental typology focused on adolescent and life course constructs. The method of analysis included quantitative profiles of 1,000 women offenders which included the introduction of Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions as an assessment tool for justice-involved women. Results from the research suggested that pathways from Daly's 1992 and Moffett's 1993 research had become a hybrid in terms due to what is described as co-occurring offending dynamics. This research was instrumental in assessing women offenders.

A descriptive study on intimate partner violence by Dichter (2013) sought to understand women who were victimized by husbands, boyfriends, or partners arrested along with the perpetrator of violence against them through dual arrests, in some cases, to mitigate liability if the wrong person was arrested. A mixed methods study that involved 173 female participants used a social construct theoretical framework where participants

ranged in age from 19 to 54 years. The arrest had consequences for women who were denied services such as emergency shelter. Additionally, women with children were susceptible to child welfare involvement. Data was analyzed through a quantitative program. Semi-structured interviews focused on the shock of being arrested, the subsequent loss of financial stability, and children being taken away.

Shdarimah and Wiechelt (2012) examined Baltimore, Maryland's prostitution diversion program which utilized You Are Never Alone established in 1997 to assist women and girls who are victims of human trafficking and long term prostitution. The perception of 17 participants ages 22 to 55 years, were recorded through interviews and focus groups. Themes emerged that included the need to be treated like human beings, remodeling the criminal justice system, provision of services and most importantly, respect and dignity. Findings suggested additional programs for women who are seeking alternatives and support to desist from prostitution and become established in society.

Research conducted in prisons located in Ohio and Kentucky examined the misconduct patterns of male and female inmates (Steiner & Wooldredge, 2014). Of the 46 prisons between the two states, five of them housed women. The sample size included 6,997 from all facilities. Surveys were administered to 5,059 men and 570 women. Several types of misconduct were listed in the survey which included, threatening, causing physical harm, or attempting to cause physical harm to an inmate or staff (p. 440). Findings suggested that White women, more often than men Black or White, served less time, were more educated, had fewer misconducts, and were more likely unemployed prior to being confined (p. 442). It was further noted that women were more

likely to commit assaultive misconducts while male inmates were charged with drug related misconducts. In contrast to gender-responsiveness, researchers found there was no significant difference in the number of misconducts attributed to men and women. In essence, refuting gendered pathways in their discussion on gender-responsiveness, Steiner and Wooldredge (2014) noted that women in confinement were more engaged in self-improvement which reduced incidents of misconducts. Male offenders, on the other hand, were not prone to misconducts if engaged in structure activities including recreation.

Moreover, McDaniels-Wilson and Jeffries (2011) asserted that women across race and class were victimized sexually prior to confinement in prison in staggering numbers. Through qualitative inquiry at three prisons that housed women in the state of Ohio during the mid-1990s, the researchers found a significant issue related to sexual assaults on women. Women subsequently developed mental health issues because of the trauma they encountered. Utilizing pathways perspective and feminist theory, which speaks to childhood trauma and gender-based violence respectively, approximately 885 women were recruited for their study. Criteria for inclusion were that participants were at least 18 years of age. Two surveys measured intrusive and non-intrusive sexual assaults. There were 10 women from each prison randomly selected to participate in two semi-structured interviews. Findings suggested that over 70% of women in the study had been sexually assaulted at one point in their lives. Many women offenders had been assaulted more than once. With that, there was a high number of substance abuse reported among Black female inmates (56.1%) compared to White female inmates (43.5%).

In 2010 a subsequent study was conducted with 760 participants. McDaniels-Wilson and Jeffries (2011) noted similarities in their findings from the first study. Researchers concluded that sexual assault transcends race and gender and recommended public policymaker place the needs of women who suffer from sexual assaults on the agenda with meaningful programming that provides support in addressing this issue. The National Resource Center on Justice Involved Women (2011) offered evidence-based strategies to work with female offenders incorporating gender-responsiveness to increase positive outcomes. For example, the Level of Service Inventory-Revised and the Service Planning Instruments for Women are tools utilized to develop measurements to predict and reduce recidivism rates among women offenders. Moreover, corrections personnel located inside institutional settings, in the field probation and parole officers who received training women offenders are less likely to view justice-involved women as difficult to work with (National Resource Center on Justice Involve Women, 2011, p. 8). Pathway and feminist perspectives were incorporated discourse with regard to perception of women as sex workers, drug addicts, as well as various other forms of trauma that negatively affect women. Specifically, having children returned to this population becomes a barrier, particularly when resources are limited and multiple systems placed competing demands on women who are also mothers.

Comparatively, Rettinger and Andrews (2010) sought to capture predictive and incremental variable recidivism of 411 women offenders from a large province in Ontario, Canada. Factors that increased the likelihood of offending behavior among women were poverty or economic factors instrumental in determining the types of

criminal activity women engaged in. Results from the analysis indicated that “reconvictions rates were 45% and 13% for general and violence recidivism rates, respectively” (Rettinger & Andrews 2010, p. 36). More than 80% of women in the study were mothers; however, that did not determine whether those women would commit additional crimes. Overall, the findings suggested that personal distressing situations were precursors for criminal activity. Rettinger and Andrew (2010) recommended the need for gender-responsive initiatives to support women offenders and reduce recidivism.

Similarly, Zurhold et al. (2011) noted that, although United States has reportedly the highest prison population in the world, globally, countries are seeing an increase in their prison populations as well (p. 50). European nations were identified with an accelerated rate of prisoners including women offenders. Reoffending within this population was attributed to the lack of preparation for reentry and chronic substance abuse not addressed sufficiently during prison confinement. A qualitative study conducted with 185 drug addicted female inmates from Spain, Scotland, Germany, Australia, and Poland provided a baseline for the research in 2003-2004. Notably, Zurhold et al. (2011) engaged in a follow-up study in 2005-2006 focused on prisoners' drug dependencies. From that study, 150 women were identified for follow-up, noting the primary focus was to present options to women, to reduce stress in their lives, and provide alternatives to drug usage. Multiple tasks expected of newly released female offenders were overwhelming and considered a causal factor for justice-involved women who reconnected with substance abusing friends.

On the other hand, Becker, Andel, Boaz and Constantine (2011) contended that serious mental illness (SMI) is prevalent among female offenders. The Department of Justice provided a statistical breakdown that indicated 73% females of and 55% of males in state prison and 75% of females and 63% of males in local jails have mental health problems. With this in mind, Becker et al.(2011) examined SMI among men versus women and with gender-specific reoffending patterns as the focus. The study began in 2003 to 2004 with a subsequent longitudinal study in 2002 to 2006 that reviewed arrest patterns of individuals diagnosed with schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder, psychotic disorder, major depression, or bipolar mood disorder. The results indicated that 3,769 individuals were found to have met the criteria of SMI within the specified time frame. Further, the study paradoxically revealed that women were arrested less frequently than men and were less likely to be diagnosed with substance abuse problems compared to men.

Belknap (2010) emphasized historical research of women offenders was lacking in presenting childhood traumas as causal factors associated with many offenders' background. In fact, the pathways perspective was not considered which identifies mental, physical, and sexual trauma of many females housed in correctional facilities. Prior research also overlooked the connection between race, gender, and social class when assessment of women and criminality was conducted. Furthermore, when some scholars (who were primarily men) proceeded to mention ethnicity of women offenders, it was expressed through racially insensitive language (Belknap, 2010, p. 1062). Moreover, Belknap (2010) examined a series of articles written over a 30 year period that

examined offending behavior and prison life with an emphasis on living conditions during confinement. Female scholars, on the other hand, offered recommendations in terms of advocacy.

Meanwhile, Derkzen, Booth, Taylor, and McConnell (2013) agreed that women offenders under supervision have a higher prevalence of mental health issues than the general population. Canada has seen an increase in Aboriginal women compared to Non-Aboriginal women in prison, on probation, and those released on parole that experienced mental health and substance abuse related problems. Through quantitative inquiry, Derkzen et al. (2013) utilized a computerized diagnostic program to capture relevant data from offenders confined to six federal prisons. Several women had multiple disorders with PTSD being a primary disorder. There were 278 participants that confirmed trauma permeated their lives. The findings were useful in assisting the Correctional Services of Canada with recommendations for policies to address mental health issues in and outside the institutional settings.

As an illustration, Burgess-Proctor, Huebner, and Durso (2016) offered a gendered perspective noting that, during male offenders' confinements, families experienced financial hardship and loss of protection, whereas during female confinement, family instability, the loss of familiar ties, and custodial rights were major challenges for offending women. A quantitative analysis of 15,587 young adults ages 24-34 years, of which 8,925 were females and 7,292 were males found the self-reporting of criminal involvement with significant trauma and victimization histories was considered a gateway for criminal activity. Family and community controls were also factors

outlined in the study. Findings suggested a strong correlation between justice-involved mothers and the influence of arrest patterns of adult offspring.

Similarly, Huebner and Gustafson (2007) asserted that there is a correlation between mothers in jail and adult children criminality. Using strain perspective and social stigma control theories, Huebner and Gustafson (2007) found data for 1,258 mothers and 1,697 children obtained through the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth in 1979 Data collected provided a substantive representation of Black, Latino, and White mothers and their children. Evidence revealed that most women were involved in low level property and drug crimes which suggest that community based sanctions should be considered in most cases. Findings also suggested adult children of incarcerated parents were likely to engage in criminal behavior, compared to parents not confined in a correctional facility.

In another case, VanVoorhis et al. (2010) utilized the theoretical framework of correctional theory and responsiveness and questioned whether needs or risk factors should be screened based on gender. After researchers reviewed six to eight studies relative to gender responsive scales and six to eight prison assessments garnered on both male and female offenders, findings suggested needs analysis be reviewed of females who factored out as high risk and were in need of additional resources instead of punishment.

Women Offenders Mothering from the Inside

Offending women who also are mothers must cope with their confinement in addition to the effect of separation from their children. For instance, Mason (2013) conducted a case study centered on a 20 year old first time, nonviolent, White female

offender who learned she was two months pregnant while confined and awaiting sentencing in two counties, where prison was the anticipated outcome. A strengths-based and advocacy approach was used during their interaction in jail. The offender learned that she had custodial rights after the birth of her child up to 18 months behind bars New York State Corrections Law 611 (NYSCL, 2009). The offender experienced bias in treatment that included being denied entrance to a prison that housed mothers and children because her baby was detoxing from methadone. Advocacy for allowing the mother to breastfeed the baby was stymied and resulted with having her father and step-mother gain physical custody while she served prison time. Findings and recommendations included enhancing relationships with pro-social networks and providing options for the mothers who are incarcerated.

As an illustration, Tuerk and Booker (2006) examined relationships between incarcerated mothers and their children utilizing a survey method involving 357 female offenders. Attachment theory was used as posited by Bowlby (1988, as cited by Tuerk & Booker, 2006) whereby “an adult figure (usually a mother) in a child’s life provides protection, comfort, and support to a child...” (p. 27). Understandably, when this figure is no longer present, children experience a range of emotions including anger, depression, and abandonment.

Consequently, incarcerated mothers experienced feelings of shame, guilt, and depression. Tuerk and Booker (2006) focused on stress related to parenting children under the age of 21 during confinement. Through the Parenting Stress Index for Incarcerated Women, Tuerk and Loper (2012) ascertained relevant data suggesting that

women who were custodial parents prior to incarceration, and maintained contact with their children during confinement, were found to have reduced levels of stress during their confinement.

Female inmates who engaged in phone contact, letter writing, and visits were in a much better position to assume responsibility of their children upon release. Analysis of data supported the notion that less stress would be associated with incarcerated female offenders who maintained contact with their children. In fact, research results placed emphasis on letter writing as the primary method of regular contact with children. This form of communication was determined to be less stressful compared to actual visits in correctional institutions or phone calls which can be traumatic for both parent and child.

Furthermore, Carlson (2001) observed that children of incarcerated mothers were less likely to trust or form meaningful relationships. Children placed in foster care, after separation from their mother, found it difficult to bond with a new family. Often, care of children falls on family members, especially grandparents, although many were unable to provide for those children due to financial limitations. Since 1976, Nebraska established an overnight visitation program with inmates and children.

With the increase in the number of pregnant women entering correctional facilities, an innovative approach was initiated. In order to address this issue, Nebraska implemented a program for incarcerated women giving them the opportunity to nurture their children while participating in a "prison nursery." Initially funded through the National Institute of Corrections in 1993, services included space for the nursery,

supplies, and appropriate staff. In 1994, 44 inmates participated in the Mother Offspring Development Program through the Nebraska Correctional Center for Women.

The demographics of the state in 1990 revealed that Nebraska had a 93.8 % White and a 3.6 % Black population that was reflective of the population in the women's correctional facility (Carlson, 2001). A survey conducted with the 44 women offenders revealed women appreciated having their children with them and classes offered to assist them in being better parents. The offenders wanted more room, personal time, and wanted to be able to smoke cigarettes. The program was viewed as a new beginning garnering media attention based on reports from the warden on the conduct of women with children in the facility.

Here, Celinska and Siegel (2010) contended that mothers with impending cases that led to separation from their children experienced a significant amount of self-blame. Generally, women were custodial parents so their removal from the family presented immediate consequences for the children. In addition, separation was felt among women prisoners and was noted to be the most difficult aspect of their incapacitation (Celinska & Siegel, 2010). Research conducted with 74 woman participants from 2002 to 2004 included women with at least one child between the ages of eight and 18 years. Opened-ended questions were presented to these mothers in order to gain an understanding of their experiences.

Components of the study centered on women going through the court proceedings as well as those ultimately confined. In both instances, Celinska and Siegel (2010) confirmed that the role of motherhood was a central theme, along with their ability to

parent prior to and during confinement. Coping strategies employed by female offenders were determined by where they were in the criminal justice system. Mothering from the inside presented the most challenge with coping defined as problem focused or emotion. These researchers recommended that public policy address the issue of mothering from the inside through gender-responsive programming to increase self-efficacy.

Moreover, the female prison populations in England and Wales showed the prevalence of mental illness according to Gregorie et al. (2010) who enlisted 112 participants who were incarcerated mothers housed in seven prisons that had children under the ages of 18 months. Approximately 90% of the children were born prior to the mothers' prison confinements. Consequently, a large percentage of children were cared for by their fathers or other immediate family members. The percentage of children lost to the foster care system, on the other hand, was very low at approximately 3%. The research revealed that most mental health issues within the prison population were “unrecognized and untreated” (Gregorie, et al. 2010, p.388). Depression was noted to be the most prevalent mental health concern. Additionally, substance abuse, personality disorders, and other mental health issues would likely affect the care of children as many women who returned would have become custodial parents upon release from prison.

In the same instance, Loper and Tuerk (2010) confirmed that inmate mothers experience stress related sadness due to separation from their children and concern for their general welfare. Mothering from prison limits offenders' ability to effectively make decisions regarding “legal and educational” environments their children must adjust to. In order to increase better communication with children of incarcerated mothers, prison

parenting intervention programs were utilized. Thus, Loper and Tuerk (2010) sought to establish the effectiveness of a prison program entitled Parenting from inside: Making the Mother-Child Connection. As an illustration, Loper and Tuerk (2010) conducted and analyzed data on a waitlist control group of 46 female offenders and 60 who received intervention relative to reducing parental stress. Ultimately, there were 90 offenders who successfully completed the interventions and were found to have increased confidence in communication with their children. Findings indicated significant gains working with responsible individuals who provided care of children in the absence of custodial parents.

Similarly, Greene, Haney, and Hurtado (2000) agreed that children suffered significantly when their mothers were incarcerated. For some, the influence was felt through depression, anger, and feelings of abandonment. Greene et al.(2000) sought participation of 102 mothers in three California jails to discuss the offenders' background along with criminogenic factors that affected family dynamics. Through a structure interview of approximately one hour, the interviewer spent time focused on mental, physical, and sexual childhood trauma of participants.

A secondary item of inquiry was based on economic instability and its impact on mothers and children. Findings suggested women suffered trauma and economic marginalization that placed them at a higher risk of engaging in criminal behavior and substance abuse. Moreover, Greene et al. (2000) emphasized the need for programs specifically designed for mothers and their children to break the cycle of criminality. Further, Cox (2009) contended that children living in foster care were not likely to visit with their mothers in prison because they were deemed bad parents. Children of

incapacitated mothers often displayed signs of depression, aggression, and defiance (Cox, 2009).

Women and Reentry: Regaining /Retaining Custody

Female offenders presented an optimistic view of how they would lead their lives upon release from prison (Cobbina& Bender, 2012). Twenty-six women participated in in-depth interviews to understand optimism expressed by women offenders who also are mothers and how their mindset translated successes or biases for justice-involved women. Cobbina and Bender (2012) found that, when men participated in reentry, they generally returned to some level of support and family structure. Paradoxically, women did not fare as well and were met with challenges such as securing suitable housing and return of their children.

Scholars on women and recidivism noted that 58% of women involved with reentry reoffend within the first 3 years of release. In addition, one third of justice-involved women were convicted, and approximately 30% were returned to prison. The optimism expressed by women waiting to be released from prison and what they expected to accomplish upon their return to society was captured during in-depth interviews. Questions pertaining to reentry progress were ascertained through inquiry on how women were able to utilize pro-networks to obtain essentials like food, clothing, and shelter. Children and family provided the most important factors to stay motivated with regard to individuals and systems that supported the desire of women to remain in the community.

In a qualitative study utilizing social control as a theoretical perspective, Steiner, Makarios, and Travis (2015) interviewed 1,984 female offenders and noted that women recidivate within the first year of release without social networks or ties that encourage conforming behaviors. Findings included rearrest of justice-involved women who were without stable living situations, especially upon release from structured living environments such as correctional half-way houses. Mothers of infant children expressed considerable concern for their babies and wanted to be there to witness milestones achieved during the first twelve months. Formally incarcerated women (FIW), according to Heidermann, Cederbaum, and Martinez (2016), experienced multiple barriers upon release from California Department of Corrections. In-depth semi-structured interviews provided responses to how justice-involved women defined success, and described barriers and ways to mitigate barriers which included "economic marginalization, disenfranchisement, stigmatization, social exclusion, and on-going surveillance" (Heidermann et al. 2016, p.26). Thirty women participants were recruited. Themes identified as having a place of their own, being in a position to assist other family members, living free from the criminal justice system, persevering and living a "normal life."

Leverentz (2011) reported that race, class, and culture were important factors in relationship to reentry for African American females. By engaging 43 women from a halfway house in Chicago, interviews took place over a 16 month period. Care giving roles were significant, particularly with regard to family relationships and were magnified within the context of reentry. Furthermore, Leverentz (2011) explored theoretical

influences of social bonds and social controls (p. 239). Noting relationships and supportive families were crucial, Leverentz (2011) found within African American communities relational concerns were the primary focus. Maintaining relationship with children, one cannot overlook the important role the mother's family played with respect to placement of children which, in most cases, was within the maternal family.

The intersection of race and gender as it relates to justice-involved women, Gross (2015) pointed out the effect of mass incarceration on African American women was significant and noted that the incarceration rates tripled during the 1980s and 1990s. However, the racialized exclusionary practices precluded equal protection under the law which placed African American women in a place of vulnerability. Gross (2015) provided an historical overview of the racialized laws that allowed intimate partner violence to place Marrisa Alexander in prison for firing a warning shot in the air while George Zimmerman was acquitted for murdering an unarmed teen in 2013. After serving three years of an initial twenty-three year sentence, Alexander was released from a Florida prison on November 28, 2013. She was the victim of domestic violence by her abusive husband. Efforts to apply the Stand Your Ground law retroactively to Alexander's case were thwarted and upon her release to her mother, Alexander was placed on probation for two years with house arrest as a condition. Gross (2015) asserted that laws against domestic violence were not equally enforced leaving African American women to fend for themselves or face retribution from an intimate partner and the criminal justice system.

Moreover, Messina, Grella, and Cartier (2010) confirmed that women parolees benefited from gender-responsive programming. Of the 115 participants recruited, approximately 95% of the offenders met the criteria for alcohol and drug dependency. Furthermore, 79% experienced a history of depression. The prevalence of physical and sexual abuse was 71% and 55% respectively. When measuring the outcomes, Messina et al. (2010) reviewed programs available to women inmates prior to release and found recidivism rates were reduced by 67% when placed on parole and given an opportunity to participate in aftercare programming that targeted their specific needs.

Additionally, Reisig, Holtfreter, and Morash (2002) examined network relationships of 402 female offenders located in two cities in Minnesota and Oregon. By definition, Reisig et al. (2002) defined network relationships as relationships that foster women's ability to engage social capital (people) available to assist them in proactive life endeavors. The research design included semi-structured interviews. Reisig et al. (2002) used five dependent variables: network size, emotional support, social support, instrumental support, and overall support. The independent variables were social demographic characteristics. Results indicated the need for gendered responsive programming to assist women in broadening their social networking abilities.

Hunter and Greer (2011) observed that women offenders needed additional support prior to release from prison to enable them to be successful during reentry. The pressures were multifaceted in terms of minimizing recidivism. To alleviate stress, female parolees gender-responsive programming focused on substance abuse and issues related to working with various "systems" to ensure basics needs were met. As an

example, Hunter and Greer (2011) interviewed 41 women who anticipated release from prison within the last quarter of 2008. Most women were incarcerated for non-assaultive crimes and over half were convicted of drug offenses. One quarter of offenders engaged in property offenses and the remaining ten percent had served time for manslaughter or assaultive behavior. Themes emerged centered around women offenders' under developed sense of self. Recommendations suggested public policy should make provisions to increase prosocial opportunities.

Reentry programming offered through the Kentucky Department of Corrections honed in on the intensive care model. Through quantitative inquiry, 108 women newly released from prison were found to have been imprisoned due to low-level drug offenses or crimes committed to obtain money for drugs (McDonald & Arlinghaus, 2014). ICM women offenders were provided with gender-specific assistance, counseling, education, and job training. Results suggested the need for more programs like the Reentry Project.

In the meantime, Heidermann, Cederbaum, and Martinez (2016) examined the role that formerly incarcerated women (FIW) played on generative relationships which created shared latest experiences with newly released female offenders through reentry programming. Recidivism occurred most often when pro-social networks were not operational (Hunter & Green, 2011). Justice-involved women were faced with multiple stressors and found comfort from women who overcame similar experiences and desisted from their former lifestyle. Heidermann et al. (2016) recruited 40 FIW and used structured interviews and quantitative data collection that were addressed through triangulation. The first 30 women participated in the quantitative data collection while the

remaining 10 participants completed both structured interviews and quantitative data collection.

A category outlined in the study which was of particular interest to me was the aspect of mothering. Findings revealed mothering children after confinement was a compelling reason for FIW to desist from resuming illicit substance use and criminal involvement. Self-esteem and social support were significant to those identified as wounded healer in finding a space to give back or paying it forward.

Next, Fortune and Arai (2014) examined the inclusionary and exclusionary practices of communities when justice-involved women were released from federal correctional facilities. A shared responsibility to foster outcomes that were women-centered and empowering was an additional focus. Framing the discussion of social inclusion, which referred to (FIWs), was acknowledged as an integral part of the community through prosocial engagement (Fortune & Arai, 2014).

In contrast, the notion of exclusion suggested that punishment goes beyond the exacting of punishment for crimes but lingers, exacerbating marginalization (Fortune & Arai, 2014). The study engaged nine women newly released from federal prison and used photo voice as a research tool. Arai and Fortune (2014), "took pictures of people, places and things that contributed to feelings of either like they belonged or did not belong" (p.86) the nine participants included two Black females and seven White females with histories of criminal activity along with alcohol and illicit drug addiction. Their release dates from federal prison at the time of the study were two months to two-and-a-half years. Themes generated were being pushed out of the community as a result of limited

availability of resources and pro-social networks. Being pulled into community engagement occurred through measures of group and organizations willing to support FIWs involved in reentry while negotiating issues of responsibility pertaining to social inclusion. Participants were mid-20s to early 50s. Many discussed the need for places that were free from judgment and noted that crimes committed by offending women “begin with a shared responsibility” (Fortune & Arai, 2014, p. 101). Social change in this instance suggests that conditions of poverty and disenfranchisement should be recognized by society by engaging FIWs and accepting responsibility and societal maintenance of disparities (Fortune & Arai, 2014). Recommendations determined that Canada should provide space free of condemnation that allows FIWs an opportunity to be included in every aspect of society so that all can benefit.

According to Bui and Morash (2010), network relationships were beneficial to female offenders as newly released parolees. Often, immediate family members and friends provided financial and emotional assistance with childcare, and generally offered support to assist women in reshaping their lives. The assumption, in this instance, is that network relationships were conducive to the wellbeing of offenders. In most cases, those relationships were meaningful. In order to capture the importance of such relationships, Bui and Morash (2010) enlisted 20 participants of 38 initially recruited for participation. Interviews conducted revolved around women who presented significant events that lead to criminal behavior and the catalysts that subsequently lead women to make changes in their life circumstances. My research was closely aligned with Bui and Morash (2010). Noting the segment specifically that addressed the role of parole officers as a part of the

network relationships; this research confirmed the need to explore the role of women offenders who also are mothers and the use of pro-social networks. Examining the nuances of woman offenders who engaged network relationships, it was important to seek to understand outcomes that could limit contact with the criminal justice system.

As an example, McGrath (2012) insisted that Reentry Courts should be expanded throughout the U.S. citing the benefits of such specialty courts. Prior research suggested that 75% of women offenders are mothers and likely the custodial parent prior to prison confinement. As illustrated, "A Reentry Court is a system that uses incentives and sanctions with judicial oversight to effectively address the complex challenges of offender reintegration," (McGrath, 2012, p. 114). This program addresses issues related to parenting by fostering better decision making to minimize the permanent loss of children by justice-involved mothers. By supporting positive social networks, Reentry Courts are viewed as an alternative to the traditional role of parole officers whose changing role is based on increased caseload size.

Attention needed to assist mothers to remain drug and alcohol free while enabling women to attain through a coordinated approach includes (a) assessment and planning, (b) active oversight, (c) management of supportive services, (d) accountability to the community, (e) graduated and parsimonious sanctions, and (f) rewards for success (McGrath, 2012, p. 118). It was estimated there were approximately 100 Reentry Courts within the United States, where more than half were on the federal level and the remaining were on the state level. Consistency with predetermined sanctions and rewarding good behavior with an actual ceremony was a significant feature of specialty

court. With accountability built into the program, it was proven to be cost effective in a study conducted in Indiana by reducing recidivism rates by 30% (McGrath, 2012). As mothers across the country reenter society, Reentry Court was viewed as a genuine alternative to traditional parole.

As an illustration, Scroggins and Malley (2010) captured the dilemma women involved with reentry faced. Content analysis was employed to review 10 gender based reentry programs in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Dallas, Philadelphia, Houston, Miami-Ft Lauderdale, Washington DC, Atlanta, and Boston. These cities were chosen based on data collected from the US census with high crime rates and women who made up a tenth of those under community supervision (Scroggins & Malley, 2010, p. 152). How effective are gender-based programs? Research revealed many women dealt with the wreckage of their past and, in most cases, returned to society with the added stigma of convicted felon. Previous research underscored the problems women experienced during confinement. For example, prisons were at least 160 miles away from where families of women live, thus making visits infrequent or nonexistent. Without regular visits, many women returned to their families unprepared for reentry.

While confined, many offenders had serious mental and physical health issues that were minimally addressed, if at all. Upon release, women with children faced an uphill battle to demonstrate the wherewithal to become the custodial parent given barriers faced to gain housing and financial support (Scroggins & Malley, 2010). Results suggested that the programs reviewed failed to adequately provide for women in need of multiple services, particularly child-care and transportation. Recommendations for public

policymakers were to take those inadequacies seriously which had an effect on recidivism reduction.

In contrast, Severson, Bruns, Veeh, and Lee (2011) observed through one state's (New York) prisoner reentry program the use of multi-year evaluation. The contextual framework for inquiry was to determine plausible reasons why offenders return to prison. The study addressed variables such as positive urinalysis, age of offender, and type of criminal behavior. Results suggested that female offenders who participated in reentry were returned to prison more frequently than non-participants in reentry and were typically the result of technical rule violations.

Meanwhile, Spjeldnes and Goodkind (2009) examined literature on reentry programs since funding was made available through the Second Chance Act of 2007. Research provided a literature review of relevant studies on male and female offenders with children. In keeping with prior studies, it was determined that male offenders were involved in the criminal justice system due to assaultive crime, whereas female offenders were involved due to non-assaultive property crime or drug related based on gendered pathways of mental, physical, or sexual trauma. Spjeldnes and Goodkind (2009) noted that reentry efforts were stymied by public policy which excluded justice-involved women from basic provisions that allowed offenders to participate in society. Funding through the Second Chance Act of 2007, which provide resources along with technical assistance to exoffenders, needs to be expanded to adjust for more offenders returning to communities with limited resources.

An all-important phase for women offenders returning home is reestablishing their relationship with their children, yet this is not a seamless undertaking. Moreover, Brown and Bloom (2009) described women offenders and the process of reentry as a “gendered phenomenon” (p. 314) particularly as it related to women with children. Returning offending women must come to terms with how they will address multiple challenges dealing with their freedom and expectations in order to maintain said freedom. Multiple barriers exist for women offenders, including shame and guilt associated with a less than glowing reputation. Despite those issues, female offenders are expected to re-establish relationships with their children. In many instances, women must rely on public assistance for initial support. Then, they are expected to adhere to rules of child welfare agencies to have children returned within a given timeframe. To illustrate, Brown and Bloom (2009) examined the parenting experiences of 203 women in Hawaii on parole. Interviews were conducted with 25 women that provided background on participants prior to confinement. More than half had not completed high school and were unable to maintain stable residence for their families. Further, the interviews revealed that several children witnessed the arrest of their parents. Brown and Bloom (2009) found some mothers who engaged their children as participants in criminal activity. Women offenders who participated in reentry found it necessary to regain parental authority as a part of the reunification process. Researchers, Brown and Bloom (2009) noted that, “Mother remains a loving figure, but her stature as a moral leader in the home has been irrevocably discredited in very public ways” (p. 326). Hence, offending women

experienced many challenges to overcome that public policy can address through preparation for life on the outside after incapacitation.

In contrast, Phillips, Gleeson, and Waites-Garrett (2009) argued “that parental substance abuse has pervasive consequences for children’s family life” (p. 123).

Researchers illustrated how programming for families with substance abusing parents minimize parental involvement with the criminal justice system. Moreover, noncustodial parents, as in the case of those incarcerated and exposed to treatment, gained skills necessary that addressed their addiction, and assisted them as they became more dependable once released from prison and or treatment. Philips et al. (2009) suggested public policy should embrace practices that increase treatment for non-violent offenders as a cost effective approach to reduce recidivism.

According to Tuerk and Loper (2006), imprisoned female offenders who were custodial parents prior to incarceration maintained a level of communication with their children which reduced stress levels during confinement. Researchers' analyzed data gathered on 357 inmates and utilized the Parenting Stress Index for Incarcerated Women. Prior research found that minorities were over-represented in the prison system. Coupled with fewer resources and limited contact with caregivers responsible for their children, it was likely that parental authority of inmates diminished. The number of contacts between mother and children were measured along with types of contact which included letter writing, phone calls, and visits. Results suggested frequent contacts with their children were an indicator of successful reunification efforts once women are released on parole.

Summary and Conclusions

The literature identified several themes related to female offenders increased presence in the criminal justice system as a result of the war on drugs, mandatory minimum sentencing, and repressive public policies (Bloom et al. 2004; VanVoorhis et al. 2010). In most cases, justice-involved women were convicted of non-assaultive, property offenses and drug possession. Women were often over classified in the institutional setting based on classification instruments designed for men (Salisbury & VanVoorhis, 2009; Rettinger & Andrews, 2010; VanVoorhis et al. 2010). Women offenders were likely to have mental health and physical problems based upon gendered pathways theory which focused on mental, physical, and sexual victimization experienced by women (Daly, 1994).

Approximately 75% of justice-involved women were custodial parents of minor children at the time of arrest, subsequent conviction, and incapacitation. Although there were numerous studies on female offenders, this research contributed to the field of public policy and criminal justice in relation to women offenders who also are mothers and provided a "voice" for a marginalized segment of society in the United States. In addition, the literature review provided foundational descriptions of women offenders, their socialization into criminal activity, incapacitation, and attempts at mothering while confined, and when released to the community.

Both qualitative and quantitative methods were utilized by scholars throughout the literature review. While the literature examined classic and historic studies it was the intent to understand the lived experiences of mothers who presented a determination to resume custodial parenthood. The goal of this research was to fill the gap in the literature

with regard to understanding the process of regaining or retaining custody of children as experienced by women offenders and how prosocial networks were viewed by justice-involved women who are also mothers.

Several studies examined various aspects of women offenders, and how many of them became involved with criminal behavior as juveniles through adulthood. Attention was also given to specific aspects of women offenders who attempted to mother from behind bars. The literature review presented by scholars in the field included primary and secondary sources, interviews with offenders, official court records that disclosed offenses, preliminary physical and mental health records, as well as demographics as it related to age, race, and number of minor children.

In Chapter 3, a detailed description of the method utilized to complete the qualitative research and answer research questions was presented. Questions were viewed through the perspectives of women who experienced various forms of trauma and victimization which lead to criminal activities which resulted in incarceration, and were ultimately released through community based programs. Their collective journey offered important strategies mothers engaged in during and after incapacitation. The literature addressed the use of pro-social networks and efforts mothers used during and after incapacitation.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to document the experiences of justice-involved women who also are mothers in regaining or retaining custody of their minor children during a period of incapacitation. Using a gendered pathways theoretical perspective and mothers as a method of inquiry, I focused on the role that prosocial networks played in nonviolent women offenders' lives as mothers and the extent to which prosocial networks were important in regaining and retaining custody of their minor children. The MDOC may find the results of this study useful for designing cost-effective strategies that mitigate incapacitation for nonviolent women offenders who also are mothers by minimizing disruption of families. In this chapter, I will provide a methodological overview of the study and the research design, assumptions, role of researcher, methodology, participant selection, data collection process, data analysis, bracketing, coding, trustworthiness, ethical procedure, agreement to gain access through informed consent, description of ethical treatment of human participants, and ethical concerns related to recruitment and the treatment of data.

Research Design and Rationale

I considered four research designs for this qualitative study including ethnography, case study, grounded theory, and phenomenology. Ethnographic studies are conducted over long periods of time and involve the researcher as a direct participant or as a participant observer in the activities of the group studied (Patton, 2009). Because my population was incapacitated and access was granted to them only on a limited basis,

ethnography was eliminated as a suitable design. I did not choose the case study design, although ideal in gaining the most in-depth stories (Stake, 1995) of women offenders who are also mothers because time and access also made this type of study prohibitive.

Grounded theory is emergent in nature as the data drives the theory rather than the theory driving the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The established theory of gendered pathways framed this study; therefore, grounded theory was eliminated as possible design.

Phenomenological studies, as described by Lester (1999), seek to "illuminate the specific, to identify phenomena through how [one or more phenomena] are perceived by the actors in a situation" (p. 1).

My focus in this study was on the experiences of women offenders who also are mothers sought to use limited time and access in the form of interviews to gather personal stories about regaining or retaining custody of their minor children while incapacitated. The phenomenon of prosocial networks and the role that prosocial networks played in their lives as incapacitated mothers was the core of my study. Starks and Trinidad (2007) noted that phenomenology allows the researcher to collect a thematic description or the essence of lived experiences by those who experienced the phenomena. Themes provide descriptive data that, in this study, may assist corrections officials and other key stakeholders in understanding those experiences, and hence, I chose a phenomenological study design.

Within the research design of phenomenology, I used a gendered pathways lens to address the phenomenon of prosocial networks. Justice-involved women who also are mothers of minor children experience many challenges during and after a period of

incapacitation. The RQs were designed to provide a basis by which to understand the lived experiences of these women. How they deal with external support systems as seen through their eyes. It is my intent to provide information that will effectuate positive social changes for an otherwise marginalized group of women.

Role of Researcher

I sought justice-involved mothers who were or had been under supervision and their stories of regaining or retaining custody of their minor children while incapacitated. As a parole/probation officer serving women, for many years I had seen breakdowns of families due to separation and the custody struggles that justice-involved mothers face. As more women enter the criminal justice system and most of those women being mothers of minor children, the entire society bears the burden and responsibility for how families can or do stay intact when incapacitation interrupts and changes forever how they function as families. My interest in justice-involved mothers and their stories stemmed from a belief that the more first-person narratives available in the literature and available to policymakers, the greater the positive impact the criminal justice system can have in the lives of women and children. My role as researcher involved meeting with women offenders who also are mothers, in a face-to-face setting and collecting their stories through structured interviews.

Since 1987, my professional experience includes working with adult offenders supervised in the community. One of my duties is the preparation of presentence reports, which requires interviewing techniques to obtain information that includes social histories. Relying on those skills were useful for me as a researcher for this study. A vital

aspect of the role of researcher is to understand and interpret meanings (Janesick, 2011), and describe what these women ascribe to the process of encounters with various prosocial networks. In this study, the accuracy demanded of report writing combined with my adaptive skills of listening for meaning rather than interrogating for official purposes allowed me to take a more fluid and comprehensive approach to document their stories.

Janesick (2011) emphasized the importance of questions themselves, how those questions were asked, and how good questions encourage meaningful responses. My role was to explore how justice-involved mothers experience separation, limited communication, restored relationships, and the ultimate return of parental custody. I looked for themes, common nuances, and phrases that captured the essence of the participants' stories and those processes. In crafting questions, listening attentively, and recording accurately, I also was aware of power differentials and how required disclosure of my position as a parole/probation officer could be affecting participants. Although there were no conflicts of interest by location or previous knowledge of any participants or their histories, I needed to remain cognizant of these research factors at all times throughout the study. It was important for me to engage in continuous self-reflectivity by self-checking through journaling, debriefing with other professionals in the field, and reviewing notes to minimize bias. Participants were given the opportunity to review their responses for accuracy, and each received a \$25 Speedway gift card upon completion of the interview.

Methodology

Participant Selection

Upon approval from Walden University IRB (#10-02-15-0258020) and MDOC, I sought participants from three Michigan sites with which I had no prior contact or current affiliation. I sought MDOC approval to ensure compliance with established protocol regarding participants actively supervised on probation or parole, otherwise identified as a *protected class*. I contacted partner directors in each program via e-mail, explained my study, outlined criteria, and asked for participation.

Two of three sites responded positively. One program was federally funded and the other was funded by a Roman Catholic diocese of Michigan. Each director confirmed that their supervised residential program housed justice-involved women who met the criteria of the study and who were available for recruitment. Selection criteria included female offenders with children ages infant to 17 years old. My sampling strategy for this study, therefore, was convenience sampling based on a concentration of potential participants who met the criteria and who were located in community-based supervised residential program facilities.

I scheduled a face-to-face meeting with each director. In their respective meetings, both directors received 10 flyers each to be distributed in confidential envelopes to justice-involved mothers in their programs whom they determined met the criteria for inclusion in the study. The directors were also provided with their own copy of the recruitment flyer and asked to refrain from discussing the contents of the flyer with residents or staff. Although the directors served as gatekeepers in the selection process—

an unavoidable situation consistent with procedures for protected class offenders—I used confidential envelopes as an added means of ensuring confidentiality as research protocol and lawful procedures would allow.

I selected a total of 10 justice-involved mothers as participants. The federally-funded program generated six participants, and the diocese-funded program generated four participants. The 10 participants were justice-involved women, 21 to 45 years of age, who were mothers of children aged from infancy to 17 years old. The sample size of 10 participants was consistent with Nastasi's (2004) approach, which allowed for understanding experiences based on sample size, saturation, or repetitive statements. The directors of each program contacted me affirming volunteers and their availability, and I scheduled face-to-face interview dates and times with participants.

Data Collection Process

I conducted a total of three scheduled visits, 1 hour each, that took place in the federally-funded program and two scheduled visits, 1 hour each that took place in the diocese-funded program. On each scheduled meeting date, in each respective program, a private room was secured inside the facility to ensure confidentiality. At each meeting, I arrived early to set up my laptop and recording devices and to place chairs so that we would be comfortably facing each other. In my meetings with each participant, I introduced myself; explained the nature and purpose of the study; explained further that responses would be recorded, transcribed, transported, and stored by me to ensure anonymity; and went over the consent form with the participant.

Each participant was advised that she could discontinue participation at any point and that a certified therapist was on site and available through a hotline if at any time the interview process became uncomfortable. I then asked if there were any questions or if clarification was needed, and the participants signed the consent form. The demographic questionnaire was presented and filled-out by hand by the participants. I explained the recording devices and the interviews began. Participants answered 10 structured open-ended questions presented in sequence (see Appendix D).

I used a digital audio-only recorder concurrently with Naturally Speaking, computer software that captured responses and displayed text-to-screen responses in real time. As the interview questions were presented and answered, I was cognizant of participants' stories of separation, regaining and retaining custody, prosocial networks as well as their non-verbal cues and my part in the interview and research process. Patton (2002) postulated that, "the quality of the information obtained during an interview is largely dependent on the interviewer" (p.341). I used this approach to elicit responses in a nonconfrontational manner. At the completion of each interview, after the recording devices were stopped, each participant was thanked and received a \$25 gift card.

Interview questions were the main instrument I used for data collection. An interview protocol sheet, based on what Janesick (2011) provided as a guideline, was used for each participant interview. I reflexively made notes shortly after the end of each interview. Responses and key phrases were later transcribed and color coded. The data collected offered nuances and themes of participants' overall experiences in addressing and answering the RQs.

Data Analysis Process

Transcripts were generated from the digital recordings for all 10 participants. These data were reviewed several times and transcribed verbatim in order to answer the following three RQs:

RQ 1: What are the social implications for women offenders who also are mothers and experience separation from their minor children as a result of incapacitation?

RQ 2: What are some strategies that women offenders use in regaining or retaining custody of their minor children?

RQ3: How do women offenders who also are mothers use prosocial networks during incapacitation for determining interaction with their minor children?

I developed the RQs to determine the strategies that women offenders used in regaining or retaining legal and physical custody of their minor children by engaging the use of prosocial networks. The two components of the research design—gendered pathways with mothering as a method of inquiry and prosocial networks—guided the 10 structured open-ended interview questions. Responses to the interview questions generated the following categories: role conflict and confusion, panic and uncertainty about present conditions for children, coping strategies, clarity and panic and uncertainty about the future wellbeing of children, Child Protective Service (CPS) involvement. Categories were further reduced to three emergent themes: identity as a mother, loss of control as a mother, and wake-up call/moment of clarity as a mother.

I used color and coding for identifying responses with categories and themes. Color and coding composed the codebook for analysis. Pink coded statements identified

with the theme, identity as a mother. Blue coded statements identified with the theme, loss of control as a mother. Yellow coded statements identified with the theme, wake-up call/moment of clarity as a mother. Participants were assigned pseudonyms for reporting purposes. I organized demographic information drawn from the self-reporting demographic sheet and relevant to the study into a table and this information appears as Table 1. Member checking was self-evident as participants viewed their own responses displayed on the recording screen during the interviews; all participants declined additional need for checking.

Bracketing

During this qualitative phenomenological study, I used bracketing to remain aware of my personal biases regarding women offenders who also are mothers. According to Simon (2011), bracketing is a required process within phenomenological studies that assists the researcher in maintaining distance from the phenomenon and the participants. As a result of years employed as a parole/probation officer with the MDOC, the opportunities to work with women offenders who also are mothers of minor children remain prevalent. By engaging in reflexivity as described by Creswell (2007) and Janesick (2011) I became aware that, at the core of my biases, was the belief that women offenders created their own problems by engaging in drug abuse, criminal behavior, and abdication of responsibilities as mothers. Acknowledging those assumptions through journaling was essential in being able to look at the phenomenon of mothering through participants' experiences rather than my own. Before the interview process began, I identified my position on making choices, personal responsibility and, ultimately, on how

socialization supports and reinforces demonizing justice-involved women who are also mothers and blame the victim. Dialogue with colleagues and feedback from co-workers and other criminal justice professionals assisted me in the bracketing process of identifying and setting aside preconceptions.

Following each interview, I summarized my experience in the form of journal entries. Aware of my position and biases, I was able to engage participants from a perspective that allowed their autonomies as independent agents of their own experiences. One of my greatest challenges was refraining from offering solace, counsel, or direction to participants as women and as mothers which is "my normal" way of interacting with this population. These writings enabled me to remain focused on both verbal responses and nonverbal gestures made by women in the study thus minimizing prejudgment. Journaling became a necessary tool for maintaining objectivity because many of the participants had backgrounds similar to women whom I routinely encountered in my daily case management and supervision duties.

Coding

In this qualitative phenomenological study, the coding method used was thematic and inductive. The frequency of words and phrases were identified from the verbatim transcript. A master color coded list first established categories of repetitive or key phrases. Categories then reduced to emergent themes which were interpreted through the lenses of gendered pathways and prosocial networks. Miles and Huberman (1994) argued that "a chronic problem of qualitative research is that it is done chiefly with words, not

numbers. Words are fatter than numbers, and usually have multiple meanings," (p.54).

By developing categories, one sets the stage for the development of themes.

A coding form (see Appendix D) was developed and used for the purpose of synthesizing key phrases from the transcripts. Five categories were produced:

1. Role conflict and confusion
2. Panic and uncertainty about present condition for children
3. Coping strategies
4. Panic and uncertainty about future well-being of children, and
5. Child Protective Service (CPS) involvement

Once completed, the coded data was categorized and further reduced to three emergent themes: (a) loss of control as a mother, (b) image as a mother, and (c) wake-up call/moment of clarity as a mother.

Intra-Rater Reliability

Intra-rater reliability was established through review of transcripts initially coded then coded again on a different day. The coding forms yield little variance concerning how the forms were color coded by me. This method of coding a second time on another day confirmed inter-rater reliability with regard to this study.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

Credibility and trustworthiness of the data were established by using Naturally Speaking, a software program that provided written text of the interviews as they occurred in real-time. Participants had access to full view of their recorded responses as those responses were created. Participants also were given an opportunity to preview the

manuscript upon completion; however, as some of the participants were in a state of transition, member checking was presented in the form of providing my contact information if they were interested in reviewing the final draft. All participants orally declined the need to review the final manuscript and no participants contacted me after their interviews were completed.

Transferability

Strategies for selection of participants included primary demographic criteria to ensure a representation of all appropriate females with children as required for participation in the study. Selected women were given an opportunity to provide additional thick description of their experiences regarding the process of separation and utilizing prosocial networks to regain or retain custody of their minor children. Interview questions were asked in the same sequence to increase responses given by each participant.

Dependability

This research was designed to increase and primarily establish dependability during the course of this study by objective presentation of data, maintaining and providing an audit trail within the context and tradition of qualitative methods, and demonstrated through explanation of procedures used in this process. By following protocols as outlined, the ability to duplicate this study was also established.

Confirmability

Providing a cogent reflexive approach to this study would require that one present the meaning of the participants' experiences as seen "through their eyes." Participants

were provided with an opportunity to review transcripts for accuracy in describing their experiences. This process could have been achieved through member checking; however, the transient nature of the facilities housing justice-involved women presented challenges in that area.

Ethical Procedure

Participants for this study were justice-involved women who also were mothers who were housed in one of two Michigan supervised residential programs selected for this study. As a requirement for studies involving human subjects, Walden University Institutional Review Board also required certification from the National Institute of Health (NIH). Confidentiality was addressed and viewed as important. Protocols to ensure confidentiality were used by assigning letter numbers and pseudonym to participants (as an example R1-Ashia). Informed consent procedures were put in place to assist participants in understanding their role in the study and their ability to discontinue at any time.

Another ethical consideration, according to Janesick (2011), was enlisting peer reviewers to provide a different perspective and critique of my work. Ideally, this process ensured that such items as field notes are referred to adequately minimize bias. Patton (2002) provided an ethical issue checklist, which covers important points related to explaining the purpose of the study to participants, and making sure that one honors any promises and reciprocity. Another area addressed was to assess risks so that major areas of moral, political, psychological, and legal ramifications were reviewed. Patton (2002) suggested that one consider the storing and access to data, along with ownership and

disposal of such material. Lastly, data collection has its boundaries, which may also include legal constraints that one must adhere to.

Agreement to Gain Access through Informed Consent

Walden University requires that the Independent Review Board have on record a copy of my certificate of completion dealing with protecting human research subjects. In addition, a letter to participants stating the nature of the study including the voluntary component along with the minimal risk was presented. The informed consent was discussed with participants and each woman was advised that they could discontinue at anytime during the course of the interview.

Descriptions of Ethical Treatment of Human Participants

The specific vulnerabilities of women offenders who also are mothers were addressed throughout the literature with regard to separation, struggles to regain custody, available support networks throughout the process, and what it means to redesign lifestyles that will allow them to be successful mothers following release. As basic vulnerability levels, trust is a primary issue. The literature addresses the difficulty of building self-trust while simultaneously managing within the criminal justice system that routinely separates mothers from their children at one point which causes distrust.

The criminal justice system then sustains and monitors behavioral mandates with which justice-involved mothers must comply in regaining or retaining custody of their minor child or children even after completing the conditions of their sentences. On a personal level, my first goal was to convey a sincere regard for each participant as a human being whose narrative and responses to interview questions mattered beyond

merely a research study. Second, I wanted to meet the established goals and guidelines of ethical standards with human subjects in the most cognitively and emotionally trustworthy ways possible. I deeply appreciated wounded women who were agreeing to participate in my study, despite disclosure of my position as a parole/probation officer, and where the only tangible incentive was a \$25 gift card.

Aware of body language, voice, physical presentation, and demeanor, I greeted each participant, and invited rather than instructed her to become as comfortable as possible in the meeting space provided. Recording equipment was already set up as a nonverbal indicator of respect for the individual's time. The recruitment flyer was reviewed with the option to ask questions, the intent to not cause harm was stated, and the conditions of the consent form were reviewed before signing. Participants received instructions about the recording equipment, the microphone and computer screen were positioned so as to not distract, each of the 10 open-ended structured interview questions were asked, follow-up checking was offered, and contact information was given. Each participant was thanked and handed her gift card.

Ethical Concerns Related to Recruitment and Data Collection

As a researcher, I was viewed as an outsider, independent of my position as a parole/probation officer. The MDOC procedure required the director of each program to grant permission to interview, to review the recruitment flyer and consent form, and to determine who in their respective program met the study's criteria for inclusion. Those who met the criteria became the pool of participants. To that end, and due to legal constraints of accountability governing incapacitation, the two directors were aware of

who participated in the study but were not involved beyond the point of access and arranging meeting space for the interviews. As a parole/probation officer, I was viewed as an agent of the State interacting with current incapacitated offenders with protected class status and, therefore, subject to duties to report witnessing or suspecting behaviors that ran counter to supervised residential program and MDOC directives. Additionally, via IRB mandates, disclosure and conditions in writing were integral to participants' informed consent. Disclosure and conditions specific to the unique situation of interacting with incapacitated persons also included assurance that participation was voluntary, and that agreeing to participate would not affect offender status either positively or negatively. To the best of my knowledge, all parties involved met all conditions as stipulated.

The recruitment flyer and informed consent letter shown to both program directors were presented individually to each volunteer participant on the day of the interview. The recruitment flyer included the nature of the study, the time requirement of participants, what data would be collected, and the strategy used to collect these data. The informed consent letter referenced IRB standards related to recruitment including voluntariness and right to terminate at any point, disclosure of my MDOC position and duties concurrent with me as the researcher, confidentiality, and agreement.

Data collection took place throughout individual face-to-face structured interviews which lasted approximately one hour each. An audio-only recording device and laptop software with onscreen real-time voice-to-text capability each served as reciprocal confirming support. Recalled observations and researcher reflections were

logged immediately following each interview but away from the site. Digital recordings ensured accuracy and later eliminated ambiguity or guessing in transcript data analysis and discussion. All participants orally acknowledged being satisfied with the process and declined interest in or need for further contact to confirm or deny the accuracy of their responses or to challenge the data.

Treatment of Data

All notes, drafts, audio-only, and the onscreen digitally recorded interviews were transferred from the audio-only recording device and the laptop hard drive to a new unused jump drive and the hard drive partition was wiped clean. The transcript printout, consent forms, and hardcopy notes and drafts were placed into a single binder. The jump drive and binder were stored in a metal file with a locking device, located in my residence, where I am the only source of access. The data will remain with me for a period of 5 years after which time all data will be destroyed.

Personal Ethical Issue

This study met stringent requirements and approval by the IRB of Walden University. Although my career status is a parole/probation officer with the MDOC, personal ethical issues were minimal. Incapacitated women in the study were from a city and county different from where I work and live, were unknown to me prior to contact for the interviews, and none of the community partners involved in arranging access were known to me. As a result, no conflict of interest or concerns existed with participants, MDOC officials, or community partners. Possible personal bias based on experience was addressed and kept in check through bracketing.

Summary

In Chapter 3, I introduced the method by which recruitment, selection, and engagement of participants in the study occurred as established by Walden University and IRB standards. Gendered pathways consisting of trauma-related history unique to women's experiences were the theoretical lens by which qualitative inquiry was explored (Bloom et al. 2004; Salisbury & VanVoorhis, 2009; Wright et al., 2010). RQs sought to understand the experiences of justice-involved women who also are mothers, as seen through their eyes, as well as the influence that prosocial networks have on justice-involved women in of regaining or retaining custody of their minor children. After examining several research approaches, I determined that structured open-ended question interviews with approximately 10 participants would provide rich, descriptive data to draw from.

Precautions were taken to do no harm to participants, and informed consent established and clarified my role as researcher and parole/probation officer. The role of researcher was not in conflict as the intent was to seek justice-involved women regaining or retaining custody of their minor children during a period of incapacitation. A convenience sampling was utilized at two supervised residential programs that house justice-involved. Incentives for participation were \$25 gift cards. Issues related to credibility and trust worthiness was addressed through bracketing, journaling, and the used of an audit trail. To minimize bias, a reflexive approach was incorporated. Confidentiality was addressed from an ethical standpoint with adherence to Walden University and IRB and for the National Institute of Health certification. Finally, storage

and disposal of data within a 5 year timeframe as stipulated by Walden University and IRB was addressed. In Chapter 4, I reviewed the results of the study, including the setting, the data collection process, and the subsequent emergent themes that evolved and the use of prosocial networks by participants in the study.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to document the experiences of justice-involved women who also are mothers in retaining or regaining custody of their minor children during a period of incapacitation. Using a gendered pathways theoretical perspective and mothers as a method of inquiry, my focus in this study was on the role prosocial networks played in nonviolent women offenders' lives as mothers and the extent to which prosocial networks were important in regaining or retaining custody of their minor children was explored. This chapter includes a brief summary of the setting where data were collected, demographic information on participants, data collection process, a description of the data analysis process, results from raw data, and the resulting themes. I will conclude Chapter 4 with the evidence of quality and a summary of the chapter.

Settings

In this study of incapacitated women who are mothers, I drew participants from two Michigan community-based supervised residential programs, external to jails or prison, where incapacitated women are allowed to have their children on site. One program was federally funded and generated six participants, and the other program was funded by a Roman Catholic diocese and generated four participants. Respective onsite face-to-face structured interviews took place during December 2015.

Demographics

I sought women participants who were mothers of children aged from infancy to 17 years old. Demographic data I collected also included self-reported name (I assigned a pseudonym after collecting this data), age, color/ethnicity, number and ages of minor children, criminal history (Y/N), substance abuse (Y/N), and length of time away from children relative to current incapacitation (see Appendix D). Due to restrictions and protocol regarding protected class status, no information from court records or formal documents were used. Additional information shown on Table 4 emerged within narratives and was voluntarily disclosed by participants as they responded to interview questions about separation, mothering, and their social networks.

Table 1

Demographic Profile of Women Offenders Who Also Are Mothers

PARTICIPANT IDENTITY	AGE	COLOR/ETHNICITY	MINOR CHILDREN	JUSTICE-INVOLVEMENT	# of DAYS	CUSTODY
R1-Ashia	30	African-American	4 months, 4, 8, 10, 14	Economically Motivated	60	biological father / on-site
R2-Rebecca	36	White	6 mo, 2	Substance Abuse	7	maternal grandmother/ on-site
R3-Celia	22	Biracial Black/Latina	10 months, 3, 4, 5, 7	Substance Abuse	120	biological father & both families/ on-site
R4-Sherry	30	African-American	2 months, 7	Substance Abuse	180	maternal grandmother/ maternal aunt/ infant on-site
R5-Trina	43	African-American	4	Substance Abuse	270	CPS/ maternal cousin/ phone visits
R6-Lakesha	41	African-American	13	Substance Abuse	90	on-site
R7-Morgan	23	White	4	Substance Abuse	24	CPS/ maternal grandmother/ CPS/ on-site
R8-Tonya	22	White	15 months	Substance Abuse	180	CPS/ maternal great-grandparents/ visitation/ appeal for on-site
R9-Lori	27	White	3 months, 3, 5, 7	Substance Abuse	160	CPS/ maternal grandmother/ visitation
R10-Breanna	26	White	2	Substance Abuse	320	CPS/ maternal grandmother/ visitation

Note. “Participant Identity” is the alpha-numeric pseudonym assigned to each participant and is not the individual’s real name. “Minor Children” shows the number of minor children by age (in years except where indicated as months old) who are immediate custody concerns of participants. “Justice-Involvement” is the area of criminality for which the participant is currently incapacitated. “# of Days” is the number of days of incapacitation, rounded up to the nearest tenth, at the time of the interview. “Custody” shows the chronological progression of minor child custody from point of separation to placement at the time of the interview.

Participant ages ranged from 22 to 43 years where seven of the 10 participants were age 30 or younger. This was consistent with the literature and official reports showing that the majority of incapacitated women who also are mothers are age 30 and under (Greene et al. 2000). Color/ethnicity distributed across three self-reported identifications: Caucasian = 5, African American = 4, Biracial African American/Latina = 1. Five women were mothers of one or more minor children who were within their custody concerns, and five were mothers of only one minor child. Two women also were mothers of one or more adult children for whom custody was no longer a concern. Six women were mothers of infants ranging in age from 2 to 15 months, two women were mothers of teens ages 13 and 14.

Nine women currently were incapacitated for substance abuse, and one woman was incapacitated for conviction on economic motivation charges. All participants were incapacitated in supervised residential programs external to formal jail or prison environments. At the time of the interviews, incapacitation ranged from 7 to 320 days with no program completion or release anticipated within the next 90 days. Six mothers had their minor children with them on-site, and four mothers' minor children were in the care of maternal relatives under the auspices of CPS. Five situations of initial arrest and resulting incapacitation involved CPS prior to placement of minor children and five did not. Table 4 shows the progression of custody from the time of initial separation to the status current with the date of the interview.

Data Collection Process

The directors of both programs received 10 flyers in confidential envelopes for distribution from me. I conducted the face-to-face interviews with participants between December 3, 2015 and December 15, 2015 at both sites. Data collection for this research consisted of 10 women participants who met the criteria for inclusion. Participants completed demographic questionnaires followed by separate interviews which were recorded and transcribed verbatim using a digital recording device and the Naturally Speaking software program that recorded voice-to-text in real-time. Immediately after each interview, I made reflexive notations.

Description of the Data Analysis Process

I drew my data analysis process from phenomenological methods outlined by Moustakas (1994) who suggested that a researcher should understand the meaning of an experience through the lens of those who experience the phenomenon. Further, Moustakas referred to Colaizzi's (1978) provided steps for analyzing this type of data: reviewing the transcript, identifying significant statements, formulating meaning to significant statements, and placing themes in clusters or thematic maps. Using Moustakas' detailed methodology descriptions and Colaizzi's explicit strategies, I extracted and organized datasets, isolated meaningful statements, placed statements into categories, reorganized statements again as categories, and reduced those categories into emergent themes. As I described in greater detail in Chapter 3, data were transcribed verbatim, transcripts were reviewed several times, and color coding facilitated identifying

themes as they emerged. As a result, participant statements were deconstructed several times on many levels to ensure accuracy of meaning and interpretation.

Research Questions Responses and Emergent Themes

I designed the three RQs guiding this study and 10 structured open-ended interview questions (see Appendix D) to elicit women's stories about themselves as mothers relative to separation due to incapacitation, regaining and retaining custody, and the role that prosocial networks played in the process. Participants' responses to the interview questions produced five categories: role conflict and confusion, panic and uncertainty about present conditions for children, coping strategies, clarity and panic and uncertainty about the future wellbeing of children, and CPS involvement. Within those five categories, three basic themes emerged: (a) loss of control as mother, (b) image as a mother, and (c) moment of clarity/wake-up call.

In the following subsections, I will present data that responds to and answers each RQ through participants' responses to interview questions that emerged as common themes. Themes that emerged are identified here to demonstrate their relevance but will be discussed at length in Chapter 5.

RQ1: What are the social implications for women offenders who also are mothers and experience separation from their minor children as a result of incapacitation?

Social implications for justice-involved women can be subtle or significant (Brown & Bloom, 2009); nevertheless, the implications are far reaching. Many women have to address immediate needs of their children in terms of their safety and well-being. Interview Questions 1, 2, 3, and 7 provided data to answer the first RQ. The first three

interview questions were with regard to the participant's arrest and whereabouts of their children during the process of separation of participants and children. Interview Question 7 addressed barriers preventing regaining or retaining custody of minor children. The participants' common concerns were the effects that separation would have on their children and on responsible family members (if available) who would provide care for minor children within uncertain timeframes. This concern emerged as a theme identified as loss of control as mother. R1-Ashia stated the following:

I felt like I had no control and it was devastating to be away from your children even for a day. I never got to speak with them while I was in jail. I never seen them the whole 60 days I was gone. While I was incarcerated I would sit and rock and think, you know, like where are they? What are they doing? Even though they're with their father...are they eating things they like?

Three participants indicated that their children were with them when they were arrested. Other participants expressed embarrassment and failure as a parent indicating they were by themselves when the arrest occurred. R10-Breanna revealed the following:

My first pregnancy I was in jail and I had nothing. I felt like I needed a change. I felt like I was failing already [Note Participant began crying]. Whatever I could do to pretty much help us survive, but when CPS got involved, I went to treatment and stayed clean 3 1/2 months and my daughter stayed with my aunt the first couple of months.

RQ2: What are some of the strategies that women offenders who also are mothers use in regaining or retaining custody of their minor children?

In order to answer RQ2, I used data collected from Interview Questions 4, 7, and 9 that asked when participants received jail time if the minor children were aware, what barriers were in place to prevent resuming parental authority of their children, and what recommendations they would make to policymakers regarding justice-involved mothers with minor children. The theme that emerged from the responses to these interview questions was moments of clarity as a mother. For example, R9-Lori stated:

I wish my daughter was never in the guardianship with my mother and I would've liked my relationship to have gone differently, and not turn into a toxic situation to where I'm charged with child neglect because her dad put his hands on me in front of her and she could have gotten hurt.

Although many participants were concerned and angry over CPS involvement, overall, participants indicated that CPS was more helpful than hurtful in their specific cases. For example, half of the participants are allowed to have their children with them in their respective programs as a result of support given by CPS. When initial separation occurred, participants' minor children, in many instances, were too young to understand what had taken place during this separation. R3-Celia, however, indicated that her older daughter knew she was in jail and was angry with her. This participant indicated that the other children were eventually told by their father and his mother. As mentioned in prior research, letter writing, calls, and visits were effective in communicating with children during periods of separation from minor children. Of the three methods of communications used, letter writing was deemed the least stressful for both mother and child (Brown & Bloom, 2009).

RQ3: How do women offenders who also are mothers use prosocial networks during incapacitation for determining interaction with their minor children?

Participants indicated that their mothers were responsible for helping them by caring for their children during their absence as well as keeping them connected to their children. R1-Ashia and R3-Celia also credited their children's father, his family, and extended family members in achieving a level of continuity in the caring of their minor children. The majority of participants agreed that the programs they were involved in provided counselors and support people, including other program residents whom that they considered part of their prosocial networks. Although deemed helpful in some instances, overall, participants did not consider CPS as being a prosocial network.

In order to answer the last research question, interview questions 6, 8, and 10 asked participants to identify what helped in maintaining contact with their minor children, if there were challenges with reuniting with children, and what prosocial networks are in place and how their prosocial networks assisted them.. These questions elicited responses that developed into the last theme identity as a mother. R9-Lori stated her feelings about being a mother this way:

“I love my children very much, not just emotionally, I am here for them emotionally, physically, and financially, and although I am not a perfect person, I have good intentions and I can made safe decisions for my children.”

Trustworthiness of Study

As outlined in detail in Chapter 3, trustworthiness of the research study was solidified through the initial process of identifying and confirming sites for the study.

Hence, I put forth considerable effort to secure two sites to increase the likelihood of finding participants who would meet the criteria for inclusion. Trustworthiness was achieved through immersion in the setting. An authentic representation of data collected ensures that fairness and impartiality was achieved (Patton, 2011).

I engaged gatekeepers of both sites to ensure appropriate participant selection. I ensured credibility by advising participants that they would have the opportunity to review transcripts, which they declined to do as they had the opportunity to view their own responses in real-time via a program that recorded voice-to-text which eliminated the need for member-checking; however, this method of recording ensured credibility of responses made by participants. Participants expressed hope that what they said would make a difference. Transferability was established through the demographic questionnaire.

Participant sample size of 10 women was not large enough to represent the broad justice-involved population, in the state. However, the demographic questionnaire provided an equal number of self-identified Black, White, and Bi-Racial women to reflect a segment of the population in Michigan. It should not be construed however, that this study can be generalized. Confirmability was established with each participant by offering them the opportunity to review their respective transcripts in its entirety, which they declined. My contact information was provided just in case they changed their minds. Dependability was established through data collection process and an established audit trail. Each participant received a copy of the consent form.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) asserted that to effectively evaluate the rigor of a study one must ensure that credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability have been established through objective presentation of data collected and maintaining an audit trail. Lastly, I used bracketing as a method to separate any bias I might have in relationship to data collection, specifically in relationship to participants' perceptions of the events surrounding their arrests, subsequent separation from their children, and efforts in reunification.

Results

RQs were based on how justice-involved women come to terms with their experiences of being the custodial parent of one or more minor children and separation that occurs as a result of an arrest. Many issues arise for women as they begin the process of dealing with multiple systems including criminal justice, protective services and in some instances, foster care. Previous research studies have emphasized early childhood trauma with similar emergent themes on justice-involved women (Cobbina & Bender, 2012). My goal was to provide an understanding of the experiences of women who have experienced the additional trauma by the loss of their minor children, and to present their perspectives on the effects as well as what stands as possible barriers for them with respect to regaining or retaining custody of their minor children during this process. Contextually, direct quotes were used as derived from the actual interview of participants.

Research Questions

RQ1: What are the social implications for women offenders who also are mothers and experience separation from their children as a result of incapacitation? The primary research question for this study sought to understand the social implications for women offenders who experience separation from their children as a result of incapacitation. Many of the responses from the participants involved CPS complaints lodged against them based on participants' arrests and or substance abuse histories. Some participants expressed anger, resentment, and fear because of the control CPS has over their lives and the lives of their children. In contrast, participants shared appreciation for having their mothers, fathers' of their children, and extended family members on both sides for stepping up and assisting them during a difficult time in their lives.

RQ2: What are some strategies that women offenders use in regaining and retaining custody of their minor children? And RQ3: How do women offenders who also are mothers use prosocial networks during incapacitation for determining interaction with their children? The remaining two research questions sought to capture the strategies employed by participants engaging family and friends in the reunification process. Supportive people including other program residents were considered a part of their prosocial network. Although deemed helpful in some instances, CPS was not considered part of a prosocial network by participants.

Summation of Results

The findings will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5 however, it is noted that participants presented their perspectives as seen through their eyes on the criminal justice system, CPS, and foster care system. The majority of participants had substance abuse

issues that they were currently addressing. Some of the findings suggested that participants were deeply remorseful for placing their children at risk, particularly regarding possible permanent separation from them. Justice-involved women were deeply remorseful for placing their children at risk, particularly with regard to possible permanent separation from them. Because of the support they were receiving from pro-social networks, most participants believed that they would not get into further trouble with the law. My experience and bias working with a gender-specific caseload was surfaced internally at that time. While many women offenders have good intentions, without consistent supportive prosocial networks, they are likely to reoffend.

Theme I: Loss of Control as a Mother

Women offenders who also are mothers suffer stigmatization and obstacles not only as women but, more harshly, as women who are mothers. The literature identified several social implications that result from justice-involvement specific to women offender who also are mothers as they strive to establish or reestablish stable environments for their families. Social implications (Bloom et al. 2004) can include but are not limited to denial of housing, vocational licensing, social services, student loans, reduction of job opportunities; and ongoing mentoring, reporting and court ordered surveillance. Participants in the study described some of the social implications they encountered as mothers.

Table 2

Representative Statements Theme I: Loss of Control as a Mother

Participant	InQ-1 & InQ-2	InQ Responses
R1-Ashia	the arrest	They [children] were with at home. The police came and arrested me on the warrant. It was embarrassing and it was hurtful. I felt helpless.
R2- Rebecca	the arrest	My daughter was with me, but she was too young to know what was going on. I remember feeling very scared and feeling a lot of regret.
R4-Sherry	the arrest	My daughter was at school and I was pregnant with my son. When I told my daughter [over the phone] I was in jail she started to cry and that made me cry.
R7-Morgan	the arrest	My son was with my mom. I was arrested when my bond was revoked for dropping dirty. I was scared. I wondered what would happen to my son.
R8-Tonya	the arrest	CPS was at my house and took my son when I arrived. I ran, and then turned myself in later. It broke my heart. Guilt overwhelmed me.
R9-Lori	the arrest	My children were with my mom. She had guardianship of one of them. I felt I had failed my children. I was really disappointed with myself.
R10-Breanna	the arrest	I was pregnant at the time of the arrest. I felt I was failing already

Note. "InQ" refers to Interview Question.
Column two's notation "[the arrest]" refers to the topic of InQ -1 & InQ-2.

Although loss of control is understood as a natural response to incapacitation (Celinska& Siegel, 2010), loss of control experienced by women who also are mothers carries a different weight because forced separation of mother a child changes the dynamic of personal agency. Incapacitation of justice involved women like R2-Rebecca whose statement provided credence to the notion that self-blame was one aspect of many

difficulties associated with separation for justice-involved mothers and their children. Loper and Tuerk (2010) noted that separation underscored how women offenders who also are mothers adjusted and remained motivated to continue their mothering roles despite their circumstances. R9-Lori, much like R10-Breanna addressed concerns over losing control of their ability to parent, as they struggled with self-perceptions, while addressing their substance abuse issues. R10-Breanna also described what she believed to be a lack of professionalism demonstrated by CPS and foster care workers. R10-Breanna stated what she perceived as their view of her "as a drug addict that should not have her kid."

Theme II: Image as a Mother

When mothers have been separated from their minor children the criminal justice system oversees the direction of care and wellbeing of their minor children. Justice-involved women are expected to demonstrate active and ongoing interest and interaction with their children. As mothers, women use various strategies and means available (Brown & Bloom, 2009) not only to be nurturing mothers but also to show that they are putting forth the effort. Some strategies include but are not limited to letters, phone calls, scheduled visitation, off site activities, and family-centered activities when housed in residential programs. Participants in this study identified some of the ways that they established meaningful relationships while incapacitated.

Images and identity as a mother was a prominent theme throughout. Beginning with participants' recounting of their initial arrest, what their children witnessed and the degree to which their children were aware of what was going on was a major concern.

Those women with children too young to understand expressed relief similar to R1-Ashia who said, "my daughter was three months old, so she really did not know what was going on." Women with older children like R5-Trina, disclosed that her four-year old daughter was in the car when the arresting officer took R5-Trina into custody, who was immediately more concerned about her daughter witnessing the arrest. Daly (1992) identified the devastating effects that justice-involved women who also are mothers experience when at the moment of arrest they are torn between self-preservation and who they are as mothers.

Table 3

Representative Statements Theme II: Image as a Mother

Participant InQ-1 & InQ-2 InQ Responses

R1- Ashia	mothering	They looked clueless, like you know what was going on. It's always hard to look at them knowing that you got to go away for a while.
R2- Rebecca	mothering	I was relieved that the officer allowed someone to come get my child before they called CPS.
R3-Celia	mothering	I talked to my kids [by phone] told them I'll be home soon. I had faith I would be coming home and I wanted to comfort them.
R4- Sherry	mothering	I just wanted to be truthful because I know some people lie to their kids and tell them they are working or something. So often we don't take our kids into consideration.
R5-Trina	mothering	We had this saying; you know how much I love you. She would say more than the whole world. She [her daughter] would not say it when it was time to say bye, you know. If I tried to hug her she would turn away. I could not understand how in such little time my little girl became so disconnected from her mother's love and touch, and affection was gone.
R6 - Lakesha	mothering	When I got here, at the time I wanted my daughter with me. But when I got her up in the room it was like, I felt kind of guilty to where it wasn't her fault. So why does she have to come to treatment with me?
R7- Morgan	mothering	He [son would say come get me and I said soon. I seen all the other kids with their moms and it would make me sad. But I was not sure if I could have him here because of CPS.
R8- Tonya	mothering	That really affected me emotionally that he forgotten who I was. I started visitation and he [son] comes right to me.

R9-Lori

mothering I was a very lost person and I did not want to drag my daughters through that. I wish I would have not made the mistakes I made that I could be with them today.

R10-

Breanna mothering I wasn't being the mother I should have been, so it's easy for me to get upset and angry but in the end she [CPS Worker] was just trying to protect my child and so I have a lot of respect for her in the final analysis.

Note. Representative statements from 10 participants responding to interview questions 1 and 2 regarding Image as Mother

Wake-Up Call/Moment of Clarity

Women offenders who also are mothers quickly discover that when it comes to taking care of their children they cannot do things alone. When arrest occurs, there must be a legal authorized entity to care for their children. When no such person exists or is immediately available, CPS intervenes and moves the child or children from the home. This separation creates trauma for mother and child. The ideal situation is one or more available and legally capable family members who agree to custodial care until the justice-involved mother either is released or is able to be reunited with her children in a residential program. Those who are directly involved in helping the justice-involved mother maintain a positive relationship with her children composed her prosocial network.

Table 4

Representative Statements Theme III: Wake-Up Call/Moment of Clarity as a Mother

Participant	InQ2 InQ-7, InQ-8, In-Q9, InQ-10InQ Response	InQ Response
R1-Ashia	InQ-9 mothering response to decisions about child's wellbeing	It just was not worth it. There is nothing worth being taken away from your kids. I was constantly worrying.
R2-Rebecca	InQ-2 mothering response at point of arrest	Being away from her at this point in her life. I have never been away from her overnight.
R3-Celia	InQ-8 mothering response to separation and reunification process	If I did four years in prison my kids would not know me. My probation officer told me like you know if you mess up for four years you cannot be in your kids life. You got the risk of that.
R4-Sherry	InQ-9 mothering response to decisions about child's wellbeing	Any situation that keeps me from my kids is not a good idea. So often we don't take our kids into consideration, which is true we should have thought about our kids before we did the crime.
R7-Morgan	InQ-7 mothering response to custody barriers	I was scared because it is my first time in jail. I didn't know what was happening with my son because the judge did say he was calling CPS and I was scared that they would take him and I would have nothing. I had to make some changes. I am stronger today. I don't want to go back to a place of almost losing my son.
R8-Tonya	InQ-8 mothering response about separation and reunification process	It takes losing anything and everything I care about to what figure out what was wrong with the situation. I definitely hit my bottom and I don't plan on returning.
R9-Lori	InQ-10 mothering response to network of helpful people	You can't be a good parent if you are not good to yourself, you're worth it and most importantly, your child deserves a good parent.
R10-Breanna	InQ-7 mothering response to custody barriers	I felt like she saved my life and it was kind of like a moment of...I was in Miami, so her dad was in jail and I was in jail. Like I'm pregnant and on drugs and I don't know what to do. I don't know how to live. Let alone how I would raise a kid. I had to come home to Michigan so I can make a life for her.

Note. Representative Statements responding to InQ

Participants who expressed moments of clarity regarding what mothering really meant to them as individuals recalled challenging moments in great detail. When R3-Celia stated "I got the picture," she recounted her interaction with her probation officer who "broke it down" by pointing out that Celia would be separated from her five children for 4 years minimum unless Celia shifted her perspective and began to make changes in her life beginning immediately. Celia's demeanor changed as she told her part of her story; she began to cry and stated that she realizing what long term separation would mean had been the turning point in obtaining housing, a car, and job. Having her three youngest children in her care on site to maintain focus and resolve appeared important to Celia.

When R4-Sherry stated her wake-up call came when she disclosed to her daughter that she was in jail and her daughter began to cry. She stated that "it made me realize what the situation was, you know." Justice-involved women in the study expressed concern for the well-being of their children and that CPS could make decisions that could have long standing consequences for parents and children. For example, R5-Trina expressed concern that her daughter was placed in foster care away from family for 2 months before her daughter was eventually placed with a family member. Prior to her daughter's placement with a family member Trina recounted participating in visitation off-site with her daughter and foster care worker. Trina described her daughter as distant and "cool" toward her, which hurt her deeply. Trina stated that "perhaps it was her [daughter's] way of coping."

Prosocial Networks

Participants communicated with their children through supportive family and friends. These prosocial networks increased the likelihood that participant would maintain involvement in either programs involved in the study. Further, many women indicated that their own mothers were instrumental in keeping children from going into foster care. In some instances, maternal grandmothers took on the responsibility of temporary custody and or guardianship to prevent participants from permanently losing custody of their children.

Prosocial networks were compelling influences in decision making several for participants and confirmed in prior research (Bui & Morash, 2010). Many women viewed their relationships with their own mother as a solid influence for regaining or retaining custody of their children. Throughout the interview process maternal grandmothers and family members were cited as being central in maintaining communication and care for participants' children. Therapists, counselors, and probation officers were not specifically identified except in one instance; however, those influences were important to participants as well.

Summary

In Chapter 4, I presented the purpose of the study and provided answers to the research questions. Participants were drawn from two Michigan supervised residential programs, one federally funded program generated four participants and one privately funded program generated four participants. Participants filled informed consent forma

out demographic questionnaires. Responses to 10 structured open-ended interview questions formed the basis of analysis. Color coding a verbatim transcript revealed emergent themes: Loss of control as mother, Image as mother, and Moment of clarity/wake-up call.

Participants detailed accounts of their contact with the criminal justice system including, CPS involvement, and their interactions with prosocial relationships to help mitigate their entanglement in various the systems Emergent themes were codified and presented, highlighting actual quotes from participants. Once engaged in the interview process, no participant chose to discontinue. Each participant received a \$25.00 gift cards for taking part in the study. Significant findings included:(a) the importance of the relationships with their own mothers in regaining and retaining custody of minor children, recognized as a primary component in their prosocial network and (b) CPS involvement as necessary or helpful in the reunification process but not considered part of the prosocial network.

In Chapter 5, I will cover social implications as well as prior research studies involving various forms of trauma experienced by women that were contextually relevant to the participants in this study, especially as it relates to their role as mothers of young children. Limitations to this study as well the social change component will be outlined. Finally, the call for additional research on female offenders and prosocial networks will be presented in the conclusions.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand the complex challenges those women offenders who also are mothers with minor children experience as a result of incapacitation. My experience as a parole/probation officer whose charges are gender-specific—women only—coupled with research on justice-involved women who used prosocial networks (Bui & Morash, 2010) to regain or retain custody of minor children provided the catalyst for this study. Additionally, given the gap in the literature that provides the voice of these women, not simply studies about incapacitated mothers, fueled my desire to contribute to the limited research in this area. Incapacitation, in the context of this study, was specific to justice-involved mothers in supervised residential programs where they are allowed to have their children with them on site.

Self-esteem issues that emerged as the theme, image as a mother, were prevalent among justice-involved women who were involved in nonassaultive drug or property offenses which were exacerbated by substance abuse and mental health issues. Substance abuse and mental health issues are two conditions that Hunter and Greer (2011) documented as common to nonviolent women offenders. Prior research established that three quarters of the female prison population were custodial parents before confinement (BJS, 2015). As a result, mothers and children have been and continue to be negatively impacted by separation. To illustrate this point, I recruited 10 participants from two supervised residential programs in Michigan that housed justice-

involved women to participate in this study. Each participant was the mother of at least one minor child at the time of the interview.

This chapter will include my findings from the face-to-face structured interviews conducted with participants on site. I asked 10 interview questions of the participants in order to capture their experiences as viewed by them. These questions formed the basis for responses to the three RQs I had developed to guide the study. In this chapter, I will discuss these findings in relation to the literature review along with the implications for social change. Lastly, I will present my recommendations for further study along with my experience and a conclusion to the study.

Interpretation of the Findings

My findings from this study presented detailed perspectives from justice-involved women who were in various stages of regaining or retaining custody of their minor children to better understand their experiences. I developed RQs noting the limited literature related to women as mothers that substantiated the significant toll incapacitation exacts on mothers who wish to remain in their children's lives. I designed this study to answer the following RQs.

RQ1: What are the social implications for women offenders who also are mothers and experience separation from their children as a result of incapacitation?

Based on the data I gathered, the answer to this RQ was mothers who were incapacitated expressed immediate concern about the safety and welfare of their children in their absence. Themes emerged regarding the loss of control as mothers who had to deal with legal issues including who would care for the children while they were away.

Participants described remorse, embarrassment, helplessness, and a sense of failure with respect to providing adequate care for their children during periods of incapacitation.

Salient responses to Interview Questions 1, 2, 3, and 7 were provided by participants as follows: 1. Where were your children at the moment of your arrest? 2. Describe what you said to your children or how you felt, if you can recall? 3. Beginning with the court proceedings, were you aware of your children's whereabouts? 7. Describe the barrier(s) if any that prevented you from regaining custody of your children. R1-Ashia, a mother of five children, indicated that she was arrested at home on a warrant for an economically motivated crime in front of her children who ranged in ages of 4 months, 4 years, 8 years, 10 years, and 14 years.

My findings confirmed the gendered pathways theory (Daly, 1992), which identified economic motivation as one of five pathways to criminal involvement. R1-Ashia indicated that she enlisted her established prosocial network, including the father of her children and both maternal and paternal grandparents, to provide a continuum of support and care for the children in her absence. In determining a level of interaction with her children, she was provided with updates on their well-being including pictures and letters from the children that she would read "100 times a day." With regard to regaining or retaining custody of her children, upon release from jail, R1-Ashia stated that she secured transportation from her children's father and resumed parental responsibility of her children without CPS involvement.

Six of the 10 participants had active CPS cases. Most participants found CPS to be intrusive in their interaction with them; however, contrary to the intrusiveness of CPS,

participants readily accepted CPS support in securing temporary or permanency planning for their children. Although both supervised residential program encouraged mothers and children to be housed together as justice-involved women distance themselves from illicit substance usage, how cases are adjudicated depends on the type of court that is hearing and determining the case, charges and offender history.

In participants' cases involving the criminal court where active matters were pending or where participants were on probation, judges took no position regarding program involvement by participants with respect to programming for justice-involved women that allowed their children to be with them. The focus was on women offenders only and, according to R3-Celia, R4-Sherry, and R7-Morgan, minor children, motherhood, and custody were not considered. Although, R7-Morgan stated the following during criminal proceeding against her:

I was scared because it was my first time in jail. I didn't know what was to happen with my son because at the time the judge did say he was calling CPS on me and I was scared that they were going to take him away, and I had nothing.

In another instance, according to R1-Ashia, the judge considered her position as mother and allowed her to be bonded out pending sentencing. R1-Ashia stated, "You know my lawyer said, you know she does have children at home. So the judge said 'yes, she needs to take care of these children,' and was very lenient on me, very lenient."

On the other hand, where cases were heard in family court, participants R3-Celia, R-5 Trina, R7- Morgan, R8-Tonya, R9- Lori, and R10-Breanna indicated judges readily supported their ability to have their children with them in a supervised residential

program. In these cases, CPS primarily was responsible for orchestrating those arrangements. R7-Morgan stated, "Being here has been very helpful. Yep, being here has really helped me a lot like through the court cases, through CPS, and I am just glad I get to have him here with me." Even in those circumstances, however, where CPS support was necessary, participants did not view CPS as a prosocial component to their success.

RQ2: What are some strategies that women offenders use in regaining or retaining custody of their minor children?

The answer to this RQ and my focus on strategies is specific to this study. The state of Michigan has a few supervised residential programs for justice-involved mothers to have their children with them on site. Additionally, the courts, judges, parole/probation officers, CPS, and the women themselves were aware of options to usual and customary prolonged separation. In this study, seven participants had regained custody of their minor children by agreeing to participate in programs that accommodated them and their minor children in supervised residential housing. These justice-involved mothers were allowed to keep their families together. These types of supervised residential programs allowed mothers to nurture and bond with their children without interruption or further separation.

Strategies that these participants used came primarily from responses to Interview Question7: Describe the barriers, if any that prevented you from regaining custody of your child/children? Because these justice-involved mothers had their children with them, the strategies they identified were regarding retaining rather than regaining custody. Strategies included self-awareness in their roles in their immediate situations. For

example, R10-Breanna stated awareness of needing to "stay clean or lose my kid." R7-Morgan stated awareness of needing to maintain and build a strong bond, saying, "as long as I have him here with me, I don't have to sign over my rights."

In most cases, however, strategies for regaining or retaining custody of minor children depend entirely on availability of a family-centered facility, the parole/probation officer's knowledge, and the justice-involved mother herself. When a criminal court presides over a case, for example, if supervised residential program are unknown or do not exist, then women offenders who also are mothers have little opportunity to keep their families together while fulfilling sentence obligations. In these cases, where justice-involved women have no choice but to be separated from their children during incapacitation as researchers indicated, letters were easier than phone calls, but phone calls provided stronger interim bonds than weekly visits (Huebner et al. 2009).

For the participants who did not have their children with them, strategies in maintaining contact with minor children were more consistent with the literature on incapacitated mothers who continued to be separated from their minor children. For example, R5-Tina, R8-Tonya, and R9-Lori had regular visits with their children set up through CPS and coordinated them through family members who were responsible for the care of their minor children. I identified the themes of loss of control as a mother and identity as a mother through statements made by participants. The theme of loss of control as a mother was best reflected in R1-Ashia's response to Interview Question 1: Where were your children at the moment of your arrest? She responded by saying:

I actually never got to speak with them in jail. I never seen them the whole 60 days I was gone. While I was incarcerated I would sit up and rock and think, you know, like where are they? What are they doing? Even though they're with their father...are they eating things they like?

The best reflection of the theme of identity as a mother was illustrated by R2-Rebecca, R3-Celia, and R7-Morgan who indicated the mother/child bond was significant and the literature confirmed and expressed concern over maintaining that bond. In response to the first two interview questions (Interview Question 1: Where were your children at the moment of your arrest? and Interview Question 2: Describe what you said to your child/children or how you felt, if you can recall?), R2-Rebecca stated:

When I was arrested and I knew I would be bonded out, and while they were processing me I remember thinking how can I ever be away from her at this point in her life. I never was away from her overnight. I know the night I came home though, I was pregnant with my son, and my daughter came and slept in the bed with me. I just thought never again can I ever do anything, you know that will put me in this kind of position again. When I think about that I want to cry. I remember holding my baby that night. She don't have nobody but me, you know, she has family, but she really only has me. Her dad is not really around.

RQ3: How do women offenders who also are mothers use prosocial networks during incapacitation for determining interaction with their children?

The last RQ dovetails off the second RQ, which lends credence to how important prosocial relationships are in assisting mothers of minor children. A theme that emerged

in response to this RQ was wake-up call/moment of clarity where justice-involved women appeared to look at their own behavior in relationship to the affect their behavior was having on their children (Brown & Bloom, 2009). To illustrate, R3-Celia, the mother of five children, indicated she was away from her children for two and a half months. She stated that her case was drug related and that she was facing 4 years in prison. At that time R3-Celia's PO had her placed in residential treatment where incapacitation occurred followed by placement in the privately-funded program that offered opportunities to obtain housing, a car, and job.

She stated that her children's father, his parents, and her family, who did not get along with each other, worked in tandem to provide for the children until her release. In this instance, prosocial networks were an integral part of R3-Celia's determination to examine her own behavior and received the benefit of prosocial networks to prevent further disruption to her family. In two cases, the father of the children and his family were involved with ensuring visitation and other forms of communication, either by phone calls, letters, or pictures, especially during the period of incapacitation. At one program, mothers were given the opportunity to seek employment and secure housing for themselves and their children. In those cases, the program itself was viewed by participants as a prosocial network because of the opportunities afforded them to become responsible contributing members of society. Based on responses from participants, this was significant in reducing their propensity to reengage in criminal behavior or substance usage.

Frequently, mothers indicated substance abuse histories or economically-motivated crimes which align with Daly's (1992) pathway's research. Participants identified prosocial networks primarily centered on maternal family connections which, in essence, facilitated continuity with regard to visitation and a stable environment for their children. The findings with this research confirm by this study, prosocial relationships were instrumental in justice-involved women, especially in their ability to desist from reoffending behavior and resuming responsibility for their minor children (Reisig et al. 2002; Bui & Morash, 2010).

The primary prosocial networks were the family of the participants. In only one case, a participant specifically mentioned her probation officer as being a catalyst for change in criminal behavior. According to the participant, a good rapport was established between the participant and her PO who compelled the participant to listen. Of significance, was the officer's ability to present reality of the impact that long term incapacitation would have on the participant's relationship with her children.

The findings of this study support the notion that women offenders experience multiple stressors in their lives, especially, when they are the custodial parents of minor children at the time of their confinement (Tuerk & Booker, 2006). Stress is reduced significantly when mothers remain involved in their children's lives. Many participants expressed this in terms of being allowed to have continued communication with their children while away from them. Participants generally recognized that they needed assistance in decision making in order to break the cycle of criminality. The findings also suggests that without supportive prosocial networks in place to facilitate a smooth

transition to community life, along with the necessary financial and emotional support to sustain them and their children, the likelihood of reoffending is high (Greene et al. 2000).

Support of Theoretical Framework

Gendered pathways as a theoretical foundation confirmed the consequences of stressors associated with women who are unable to obtain the necessary resources to take care of themselves or the children (Bloom et al. 2004). This framework also takes into account the trauma experienced by female offenders who enter the criminal justice system (Salisbury & VanVoorhis, 2009). Responses from participants supported this theoretical concept. Some participants indicated they had been in abusive relationships with their children's father. One participant stated that her boyfriend encouraged her to make "drug runs" for them, meaning she would leave home for the expressed purpose of bringing back drugs for them to use, at any cost. At least three participants indicated they were being treated for mental health problems which is prevalent among justice-involved women (Celinska & Siegel, 2010).

Research on justice-involved women has been scant until recent years. Notably, Adler (1975) and Chesney-Lind (1979) provided historical research on adolescent and adult females in the criminal justice system. More contemporary scholarship sought to explore the trauma associated with women engaging in crime. Most notably, Bloom et al. (2004) established that most justice-involved women engage in nonviolent offenses. While the questionnaire did not seek responses on the specifics of the offenses participants engaged in, most spoke freely about their offenses during their respective

interviews. Participants disclosed drugs or economic crimes which usually precipitated their arrest.

Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations identified regarding the scope of this study. In obtaining participants to be interviewed there were numerous gatekeepers throughout the process. IRB mandated disclosure of my position as a PO, agent of the state and mandatory reporter with respect to observing suspected abuse of participants' children or participants themselves. It is well within the criminal justice system that each of these trust issues are beyond the scope of any single person's control regarding offenders' perceptions and feelings. However, this also acts as strength in this study to-wit because those women who are also mothers volunteered to be a part of the study.

There are other limitations in this research regarding scope. One limitation was the lack of participants at the initial site willing to participate. Another limitation is related to the sample to population transferability. The inability to interview female offenders in another region or state to examine the utilization of prosocial networks may be considered a limitation. If time and resources were available, a larger population of justice-involved women throughout the state of Michigan may have been recruited for participation. The second limitation of this research is the number of programs in the study. With two programs involved, the sample programs were insufficient in terms of identifying programs specifically engaged in assisting women in the reunification process.

Certainly, if all programs that house women in the state of Michigan were recruited to participate, a broader demographic in terms of age, race, educational level, number of minor children and length of incapacitation, may have been garnered. Moreover, if time and adequate resources were available a more inclusive number of women would provide sufficient data to generalize to a broader base of the female offender population. Lastly, participants as self-reporters may not present accurate recitation of events which may skew results. As such, the findings may not be generalized to represent all women offenders with children within the state of Michigan. My identified role a PO and mandatory reporter were revealed as a requirement by the IRB would be considered a limitation

Implications

There could be several implications of this study for positive social change. As mentioned earlier, several of the participants had active CPS cases, which they deemed intrusive yet, fundamentally necessary for the reunification process. This, I thought, was compelling in terms of social implications relative to public policy for women who rely on this entity for support in the process of permanency planning for their children. Policymakers can use the findings of this research to assist CPS, and justice-involved women, as well as other stakeholders, through education so barriers can be reduced in terms of how they are viewed by each other.

In other words, a reduction in a perceived adversarial role of CPS workers can increase a more cooperative relationship, which may decrease the number of separations between mothers and children. Women offenders expressed that they want to be treated

with respect and dignity, rather than as one participant stated, "It's like you're a drug addict and you shouldn't be with your kid. It's like that's how we're treated, sometimes like it's stereotyped, and they don't think about that real struggle that mother's have with addiction." Policy makers may utilize this study to seek additional resources to assist women in engaging in specific programs that allow them to nurture and bond with their children and utilize this pro-social network as a stabilizing force.

Recommendation for Action

Justice-involved women engaged in criminal behavior that caused separation from their children. This separation has a negative impact on the family unit. Research suggests that most women involved in criminal activity engage in low level nonviolent crimes (Hunter & Green, 2011). Public policymakers should seek alternative measures to prevent separation involving mothers and children by expanding on programs that offer housing for women who are combating substance abuse issues or who need brief confinement should have alternatives such as innovative jail programs to allow bonding with mothers (Carlson, 2001).

Recommendation for Further Research

The number of women behind bars or in treatment facilities in Michigan continues to grow (Bui & Morash, 2010). Many justice-involved women experience multiple stressors associated with separation from their children as a result of nonviolent convictions. Along with sanctions experienced through the criminal court system, CPS as an entity could provide data on the number of women who engage in the reunification process with a measure of success.

To that end, it may be beneficial to expand on research in this area by increasing the number of questions posed to women in regard to prosocial activities along with barriers they perceive to hinder their success. Similarly, research could explore the dynamic relationship between mothers and daughters, since according to this study; mothers 'were the primary source of support to incapacitated women. For those women who have children older than the 0 to 17 research could generate a clearer understanding with regard to the long range effect on older women and their relationship with young adult children.

Researcher's Experience

Supervising justice-involved women for several years has given me an opportunity to listen to and establish a favorable rapport with them. For the most part, my experience has been positive which allows them to feel comfortable sharing their experiences with respect to childhood trauma, substance abuse, and criminal histories. It was my hope that the participants felt that same level of comfort. Given their responses, it appeared that they did. Two participants asked what I would do with the study. After explaining that it would be shared with key stakeholders, including themselves, and policy makers they smiled and said thank you. The interviews obtained during this study provide additional credence to my perspective regarding the needs of women to be heard regarding the effects of separation from their minor children.

Many participants had contact with the court system and CPS that further stigmatized them. Drug addiction was also common that was highlighted by participation in both supervised residential programs. Each system, from their perspective, placed

barriers that men were not likely to experience regarding reunification with their children. In some instances, my professional and personal bias came to mind as I listened to anecdotal incidences where the participants reasoning defied logic, and common sense. However, I made it a point to remain nonjudgmental in facial expression and tone when asking probing or clarifying questions.

Conclusion

In this qualitative phenomenological study, I examined the effects of incapacitation, separation, regaining or retaining custody, and prosocial networks on justice-involved women who also are mothers of minor children as seen through their eyes. The findings suggest that justice-involved women experience multiple stressors regarding the safety and welfare of their children. More often than not, CPS is intricately involved with temporary or permanency planning for the minor children. And, although most of the women in this study found CPS involvement helpful but intrusive, they did not consider this entity a part of their prosocial network. This is indicative of a longstanding perception of an adversarial relationship between them.

Additionally, women in this study experienced an over reliance upon their own mothers in assisting them with visitation and other court ordered stipulations deemed necessary by CPS on behalf of family court. In view of a significant number of women who experience substance abuse issues as well as mental health concerns, it is recommended that policymakers consider the results of this research as a first step in understanding these relationships. Moreover, a recommendation to broaden this study by including more programs in the state of Michigan as well as the inclusion of addition

women offenders housed in such programs across the state may prove beneficial in addressing the growing need for systematic reunification efforts. These efforts would likely address a cost effective approach to reunite families and reduce the number of women incarcerated for low-level non-assaultive property and drug offenses. It is incumbent upon lawmakers to promote the use of prosocial initiatives to reduce family disintegration.

Finally, policymakers and stakeholders would have an opportunity to review the recommendations set forth in this study with the hope that a continuum of services are made available, such as expanding upon residential programs for mothers with minor children that promote a nurturing environment for families in crisis. Additionally, increased supportive services to assist in mental health, education, and vocational programming can prove to be a cost effective approach to incapacitation, especially for non-assaultive crimes. It may also be beneficial to assist justice-involved women with transportation and child care needs to increase their outcomes for success in refraining from reoffending behavior which may result with reduced recidivism rates. With opportunity, justice-involved women who also are mothers can turn their lives around and become productive contributing members to their families, communities, and society as a whole.

References

- Adler, F. (1975). *Sisters in crime: The rise of the new female criminal*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Alfred, M., & Chlup, D. T. (2009). Neoliberalism, illiteracy and poverty: Framing the rise in black women's incarceration. *Western Journal of Black Studies*, 33(4), 240–249.
- Arditti, J. A., & Few, A. L. (2006). Mothers' reentry into family life following incarceration. *Criminal Justice Policy Review*, 17, 103–123. doi: 10.1177/0887403405282450
- Becker, M. A., Ansel, R., Boaz, T., & Constantine, R. (2011). Gender differences and risk of arrest among offenders with serious mental illness. *Journal of Behavioral Health Services & Research*, 38(1), 16–28.
- Belknap, J. (2010). Offending women: A double entendre. *Journal of Criminal Law & Criminology*, 100(3), 1061–1097.
- Bloom, B., Owen, B., & Covington, S. (2004). Women offenders and the gendered effects of public policy. *Review of Policy Research*, 21(1), 31–48.
- Bordt, R. L. (2012). From Angela Davis to the long island Lolita: An analysis of contemporary women's prison narrative. *Women & Criminal Justice*, 22 (2), 135–155. doi:10.1080/08974454.2012.662125
- Brennan, T., Salisbury, E., & VanVoorhis, P. (2012). Women's pathways to serious and habitual crime: A person-centered analysis incorporating gender responsive factors, *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 39, 11.

doi:10.1177/009385481245677

Brown, M., & Bloom, B. (2009). Reentry and renegotiating motherhood: Maternal identity and success on parole. *Crime & Delinquency*, 55, 313–336. doi:

10.1177/0011128708330627

Bui, H.N., & Morash, M. (2010). The impact of network relationships, prison experiences, and internal transformation on women's success after prison release. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, 49, 1–22. doi:10.1080/1050967093435381

Bureau of Justice Assistance National Training and Technical Assistance. (2011).

National Resource Center on Justice Involved Women. *Achieving successful outcomes with justice-involved women*. Retrieved from

<http://bjatraining.org/2011/07/12/justice-involved-women-webinar-video-slides/>

Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2014). Retrieved from <https://www.bjs.gov/>

Burgess-Proctor, A., Huebner, B. M., & Durso, J. M. (2016). Comparing the effects of maternal and paternal incarceration on adult daughters' and sons' criminal justice system involvement: A gendered pathways analysis. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 43(8) 1034–1055 doi:10.1177/0093854816643122.

Bush-Baskette, S. (2000). The war on drugs and the incarceration of mothers. *Journal of Drug Issues*, 30(4), 919–928.

Caputo, G. A. (2008). *Out of the storm: Drug-addicted women living as shoplifters and sex workers*. Lebanon, NH: Northeastern University Press.

Campbell, C. (2013). *The war with no end: Sentencing disparities in the "war on drugs" and national trends that are defining a nation* (Doctoral dissertation).

- Carlson, J. R. (2000). Prison nursery 2000. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation, 33*(3), 75–97. http://doi.org/10.1300/J076v33n03_05
- Cauffman, E. (2008). Understanding the female offender. *Future of Children, 18*(2), 119–142.
- Celinska, K., & Siegel, J. A. (2010). Mothers in trouble: Coping with actual or pending separation from children due to incarceration. *Prison Journal, 90*(4), 447–474. doi:10.1177/0032885510382218
- Chesney-Lind, M. (1997). *The female offender: Girls women and crime*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cobbina, J. E., & Bender, K. A. (2012). Predicting the future: Incarcerated women's view of Reentry success. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation, 51*(5) 275–294. doi: 10.1080/10509674.2012.683323
- Clone, S., & DeHart, D. (2014). Social support networks of incarcerated women: Types of support, sources of support, and implications for reentry, *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation, 53*(7), 503-521.
- Cox, B. (2009). *Changes in parenting perceptions of incarcerated mothers who participate in parenting classes* (Doctoral dissertation, Texas University, ProQuest #32010)
- Creswell, J. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Daly, K. (1992). Women's pathways to felony court: Feminist theories of lawbreaking and problems of representation. *S. Cal. Rev. L. & Women's Studies.*, 2, 11.
- DeHart, D.D. (2008). Pathways to prison: Impact of victimization in the lives of incarcerated women. *Violence Against Women*, 14(12), 1362–1381. doi: 10.1177/1077801208327018
- Derkzen, D., Booth, L., Taylor, K., & McConnell, A. (2013). Mental health needs of female offenders. *Psychological Services*, 10(1), 24–36.
- Dichter, M. (2013). The arrested me--and I was the victim: Women's experiences with getting arrested in the context of domestic violence, *Women & Criminal Justice*, 23(2), 81–98. doi:1080/08974454.2013.759068
- Eckelkamp, A. (n.d.) Girl gangs: The myth of rising inequality.
Retrieved from <http://wrt-intertext.syr.edu/XII/girlgangs.htm>
- Erez, E., & Berko, A. (2010). Pathways of Arab/Palestinian women in Israel to crime and imprisonment: An intersectional approach. *Feminist Criminology*, 5, 156–194.
- Estrada, F., & Nilsson A. (2012). Does it cost more to be a female offender? A life course study of childhood circumstances, crime drug abuse, and living conditions, *Feminist Criminology*, 7, 196–219.
- Fortune, D., & Arai, S. (2014). Rethinking community within the context of social inclusion as social justice: Implications for women after federal incarceration, *Studies of Social Justice*, 8(1), 79–107.
- Fischer, M., Geiger, B., & Hughes, M. E. (2007). Female recidivists speak about their experience in drug court while engaging in appreciative inquiry. *International*

Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology, 51(6), 703–722.

doi:10.1177/0306624X07299304

Garcia, C. A., & Lane, J. (2010). Looking in the review mirror: What incarcerated women think girls need from the system. *Feminist Criminology*, 5(3), 227–243. doi:

10.1177/1557085110376341

Golder, S., Hall, M., Logan, T., Higgins, G., Dishon, A., Renn, R., & Winham, K.

(2014). Substance using among victimized women on probation and parole

Substance Use & Misuse, 49, 435–447. doi:10.3109/10826084.2013.844164

Goss, K. (2015). African American women, mass incarceration, and the politics of

protection. *Journal of American History*, 102(1), 25–33. doi:10.1093/jahist/jav226

Goulette, N., Woolredge, J., Frank, J., & Travis, L. (2015). From initial appearance to

sentencing: Do female defendants experience disparate treatment. *Journal of*

Criminal Justice, 43, 406–417. doi:10.1016/j.crimjus.2015.07.003

Greene, S., Haney, C., & Hurtado, A. (2000). Cycle of pain: Risk factors in the lives of incarcerated mothers and their children. *Prison Journal*, 80(3), 3–23.

doi:10.1177/0032885500080001001

Gregoire, A., Dolan, R., Birmingham, L., Mullee, M., & Coulson, D. (2010). The mental

health of imprisoned mothers of young children. *Journal of Forensic Psychiatry*

& Psychology, 21(3), 387–392. doi:10.1080/14789940903294317

Holtfreter, K., & Wattanaporn, K.A. (2013). The transition from prison to community

initiative: An examination of gender responsiveness for female offender reentry.

Criminal Justice and Behavior, 41(1), 41–57. doi:10.11077/0093854813504406

- Heidermann, G., Cederbaum, J., & Martinez, S. (2016). Beyond recidivism: How formerly incarcerated women define success. *Journal of Women and Social Work, 31*(1), 24–40. doi:10.1177/0886109915581702
- Heidermann, G., Cederbaum, J., Martinez, S., & LeBel, T.(2016). Wounded healers: How formerly incarcerated women help themselves by helping others. *Journal of Women and Social Work, 18*, (1), 3–26. doi:10.1177/462474515623101
- Huberman, A., & Miles, M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: A sourcebook of new methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Huebner, B. M., DeJong, C., & Cobbina, J. (2009). Women coming home: Long-term patterns of recidivism. *Justice Quarterly, 27*(2), 225–254.
- Huebner, B. M., & Gustafson, R. (2007). The effect of maternal incarceration on adult offspring involvement in the criminal justice system. *Journal of Criminal Justice 35*, 283–296. doi:10.1016/j.jcrimjust.2007.03.005
- Hunter, V., & Greer, K. (2011). Filling in the holes: The ongoing search for self among incarcerated women anticipating reentry. *Women & Criminal Justice, 21*(3), 198-224. doi:10.1080/08974454.2011.584462
- IRResearchnet. (2016, October 30). Offender classification. Retrieved from <http://criminal-justice.iresearchnet.com/system/offender-classification/7/>
- Janesick, V. J. (2011). *Stretching exercises for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kruttschnitt, C. (2016). The politics, and place, of gender in research on crime. *Criminology, 54*, 1, 8–29.

- Lester, S. (1999). An introduction to phenomenological research. Retrieved from s.lesterdevmts.co.uk
- Leverentz, A. (2011). Being a good daughter and sister: Families or origin in the reentry of African-American female ex-prisoners. *Feminist Criminology*, 6(4), 239–267. doi:10.1177/1557085111414859
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry* (Vol. 75). Newbery, CA: Sage.
- Loper, A. B., & Tuerk, E. H. (2011). Improving the emotional adjustment and communication patterns of incarcerated mothers: Effectiveness of a prison parenting intervention. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 20, 89–101. doi:10.1007/s10826-010-9381-8
- Lynch, S., Heath, N.M., Mathews, K.C., & Cepeda, G. J. (2012). Seeking safety: An intervention for trauma-exposed incarcerated women. *Journal of Trauma & Dissociation*, 13(1), 88–101. doi:10.1080/15299732.2
- Mason, L. G. (2013). The journey of one pregnant incarcerated woman through systemic bias: How family support workers can positively affect change—A case study. *Journal of Women and Social Work*, 28,(1), 32–39. doi:10.1177/088619912475173
- Matheson, F., Brazil, A., Doherty, S., & Forrester, P. (2015). A call for help: Reflections on trauma care. *Women & Criminal Justice*, 25(4), 241–255. doi:10.1080/08974454.2014.909760

- McDermott, S. (2014). You empower us and then what? A practitioner reflection on work with offenders. Why this must go beyond the probation interview. *Probation Journal*, 61(4), 358–364. doi:10.1177/026455051458253
- McDonald, D., & Arlinghaus, S. (2014). The role of intensive care management services in reentry: The northern Kentucky female reentry project. *Women & Criminal Justice*, 24(3), 229-251. doi:10.1080/08974454.2014.909759
- McDonald-Wilson, C., & Jeffries, J. L. (2011). Women behind bars: An illuminating portrait. *Journal of the Institute of Justice & International Studies*, 129, 129–144.
- McGrath, E. (2012). Reentry courts: Providing a second chance for incarcerated mothers and their children. *Family Court Review*, 50(1), 113–127.
- Messina, N., Grella, C. E., & Cartier, J. (2010). Study: Gender-responsive substance use treatment generates benefits for female offenders. *Brown University Digest Addiction Theory and Application*, 29(5), 1–7. doi:10.1002/data.20115
- Michalsen, V., & Flavin, J. (2014). Not all women are mothers: Addressing the invisibility of women under the control of the criminal justice system who do not have children. *Prison Journal*, 5, 94, (3), 328–346.
doi:10.101177/00328851457600
- Morash, M., Kashy, D., Smith, S., & Cobbina, J. (2015). The effects of probation or parole agent relationship style and women offenders' criminogenic needs on offenders responses to supervision interactions. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 42(4), 412–434. doi:10.1177/0093845814551602

- Ney, B., Ramirez, R., & Van Dieten, M. (2012). Ten truths that matter when working with justice involved women. Silver Spring, MD: National Resource Center on Justice Involved Women.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). Qualitative interviewing. *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 3, 344-347.
- Phillips, S. D., Gleeson, J. P., & Waites-Garrett, M. (2009). Substance-abusing parents in the criminal justice system: Does substance abuse treatment improve their children's outcomes? *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, 48(2), 120–138.
- Reisig, M. D., Holtfreter, K., & Morash, M. (2002). Social capital among women offenders: examining the distribution of social networks and resources. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, 18(2), 167–187. doi: 10.1177/1043986202018002004
- Rettinger, L., & Andrews, D. A. (2010). Gender risk and need, gender specificity, and the recidivism of female offenders. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 37 (1), 29–46. doi:10.1177/0093854809349438
- Roth, M. P. (2011). *Crime and punishment: A history of the criminal justice system*. (2nd ed.). Belmont, CA: Cengage.
- Salisbury, E. J., & Van Voorhis, P. (2009). Gendered pathways: A quantitative investigation of women probationers' path to incarceration. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 36, 541–566.
- Scroggins, J. R., & Malley, S. (2010). Reentry and the (unmet) needs of women. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, 49, 146–163. doi:10.1080/10509670903546864

- Severson, M. E., Bruns, K., Veeh, C., & Lee, J. (2011). Prisoner reentry programming: Who recidivates and when? *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, 50, 327-348. doi: 10.1080/10509674.2011.582931
- Shdairmah, C., & Wiechelt, S. (2012). Converging on empathy: Perspectives on Baltimore city's specialized prostitution diversion program. *Women & Criminal Justice*, 22, (2), 156-173. doi:10.1080/08074454.2012.662131
- Simon, M. (2011). Dissertation and scholarly research: Recipes for success, Seattle, WA: Dissertation Success.
- Spjeldnes, S., & Goodkind, S. (2009). Gender differences and offender reentry: A review of the literature. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, 48, 314-335. doi: 10.1080/10509670902850812
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Starks, H., & Trinidad, S. (2007). Choose your method: A comparison of phenomenology, discourse analysis, and grounded theory. *Qualitative Health Research*, 17, 10, 1372-1380
- Steiner, B., Makarios, M., & Travis, L. (2015). Examining the efforts of residential situations and residential mobility on offender recidivism, *Crime & Delinquency*, 61, (3), 375-401. doi:10.1177/0011128711399409
- Steiner, B., & Wooldredge, J. (2014). Sex differences in the predictors of prisoner misconduct, *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 41, 4, 433-452. doi: 10.1177/0093854813504404

- Tuerk, E. H., & Loper, A. B. (2006). Contact between incarcerated mothers and their children. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation, 43*(1), 23–43.
- VanVoorhis, P. (2012). On behalf of women offenders: Women's place in the science of evidence-based practice. *Criminology & Public Policy, 11*, (2), 111–145. doi: 10.1111/?j.1745-9133.2012.00793.x
- VanVoorhis, P., Wright, E. M., Salisbury, E., & Bauman, A. (2010). Women's risk factors and their contributions to existing risk/needs assessment: The current status of a gender-responsive supplement. *Criminal Justice and Behavior, 37*(3), 261–288. doi:10.1177/0093854809357442
- Wattanaporn, K., & Holtfreter, K. (2014). The impact of feminist pathway research on gender-responsive policy and practice. *Feminist Criminology, 9*(3), 191–207 doi:10.1177/1557085113519491
- Winfrey, L.T., & DeJong, C. (2015). Police and the war on women: A gender-linked examination behind and front of the blue curtain. *Women & Criminal Justice, 25*(1), 2, 50–70. doi:10/1080/08974454.2015.1023881
- Zurhold, H., Moskaleswicz, J., Sanciente, C., Schmied, G., Shewan, D., & Verthein, U. (2011). What affects reintegration of female drug users after prison release? Results of a European follow-up study, *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation, 50*, (2), 49–65 doi:10.1080/10509674.2011.546221

Appendix A: Recruitment Flyer

**ATTENTION!!**

I am looking for mothers of children that are between the ages of infancy - 17 years old who are currently being supervised or have been supervised on probation or parole to participate in a doctoral study. Your participation is voluntary and confidential and will not be connected to any open custody/criminal cases or for journalistic purposes. I want to hear about your experience in working to get your children back. If you are interested in being interviewed please contact Denise at [REDACTED]

Appendix B: Demographic Questionnaire

Name _____

Age _____

Race _____

Number of Children _____

Children's Ages _____

Criminal History Yes _____ **No** _____

Substance Abuse Yes _____ **No** _____

Length of time away from children _____

Appendix C: Interview Questions for Participants

1. Where were your children at the moment of your arrest?
2. Describe what you said to your children or how you felt, if you can recall?
3. Beginning with the court proceedings, were you aware of your children's whereabouts?
4. If you received jail or prison time for the offense, were your children told by you or a family member?
5. Did you communicate with your children during your time away from them?
6. What was helpful to you in maintaining contact with your children?
7. Describe the barrier(s) if any that prevented you from regaining custody of your children?
8. How would you have liked the process of reuniting with your children to have taken placed?
9. What would you recommend to those who make decisions with regard to you and your children?
10. Is there a network of people available that assisted you in the process, if so, without naming them, who were they (family, friend, etc) and what did they specifically do?

Appendix: D

Keeping the Children: Nonviolent Women in Two Michigan Residential Programs

Date: Time Started: Time Finished:

Participant: Coder:

Coding Form

Key Phrases from 10 participant transcripts

1. Role conflict and confusion
2. Panic and uncertainty about present conditions for children
3. Coping strategies
4. Panic and uncertainty about future well-being of children
5. Child Protective Service (CPS) involvement

Directions for Coders:

Color Key: Phrase 1 - <i>Pink</i> Phrase 2 - <i>Blue</i> Phrase 3 - <i>Orange</i> Phrase 4 - <i>Yellow</i> Phrase 5 - <i>Purple</i>

Color code according to verbatim statements made by participants in the above categories