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Prison Nurseries and Social Work Practice

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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Brooke Sheehan

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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the review committee have been made.

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The Office of the Provost

Walden University
2019

Abstract

Prison Nurseries and Social Work Practice

by

Brooke Sheehan

MSW, Springfield College, 2015

BS, Springfield College, 2013

Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Social Work

Walden University

November 2019

Abstract

This study sought to examine what gaps existed in practice through the perspectives of correctional social workers in terms of helping incarcerated mother–infant dyads bond. Additionally, it examined whether a prison nursery was viewed as a possible option within a smaller correctional facility. Theories used to guide this study included attachment theory and separation-individuation theory, which align with the research questions that sought to explore gaps in services, supports that could be established, and program feasibility. Action research, using an anonymous online survey, resulted in $N = 6$ social work participants who worked as prison social workers in the northeast region of the United States. Data were coded using thematic analysis to explore latent and semantic themes. Conclusions drawn from the dataset include the restrictive nature of the prison setting being a barrier to promoting attachment. An increase in parenting classes, substance use programming, and mental health treatment was seen as beneficial for supporting attachment. Promoting childhood normalcy and having access to nature and play things was seen as integral to the development of a prison nursery program. A prison nursery was seen as feasible within a smaller correctional facility in the northeast. Potential positive social change resulting from these findings include development of specific interventions to maintain mother–infant bonding in small departments of correction.

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I am filled with pride to have reached this milestone, the completion of my action research study. It is of utmost importance to me to give thanks to those who have made this achievement possible.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study and Literature Review

Incarcerated pregnant women are a population that has steadily increased in size, which has also led to an increase in births occurring while women are in correctional custody (Fritz and Whiteacre, 2016). This increase in this particular populace is cause for concern for social workers because as the National Association of Social Workers, otherwise referred to as the NASW, (2017) stated, social workers have a primary mission of improving the quality of life for individuals while also focusing on the improvement of the wellbeing of society. Infants born while a mother is in correctional care traditionally will not remain with the mother for longer than 48 hours, and the process of attachment will then be interrupted (Warner, 2015). Thus, the social work problem explored in this paper involves gaps in practice that exist in terms of supporting incarcerated pregnant women in developing attachment necessary for post-release family unification, including the concept of prison nursery implementation through the perspective of social workers.

The research methodology was action research involving qualitative data. An anonymous online survey was created and administered to social workers who work within a northeast correctional facility via the agency contracted to provide healthcare services. The contracted healthcare agency employs social workers who work with incarcerated juveniles, adult men, and adult women, which can include incarcerated pregnant women. The social workers were asked to share their impressions regarding what barriers exist within the mother–child relationship when incarceration occurs through questions on the anonymous online survey. Emails were used to contact the potential participants, and I sent out a total of two emails, one of which was sent after not

gleaning enough participants from the initial email. I obtained the email addresses from the matrix of employees available through the contracted healthcare agency. A consent form and invitation to participate were included within the email, and when recipients chose to participate, they were asked to complete the survey outside of working hours. Informed consent is of critical importance, which is why I included it in both of the emails sent to the potential participants. Due to the survey being anonymous, the forms administered to the potential participants made clear that completing the survey was considered providing consent.

Potential positive social changes that could come from this doctoral study include social workers and social work research developing a more complete understanding of what gaps in practice are impacting opportunities for incarcerated mothers and their infants to bond. Furthermore, the doctoral study may explain what practices are currently in existence and appear to be working, while also providing suggestions from survey participants regarding what could be beneficial for promoting mother–infant attachment. The focus was on how smaller correctional facilities that do not have the same populace as larger correctional departments could make changes to services provided to incarcerated pregnant women so that family systems can remain intact and infants can develop healthy attachment styles. This section includes the problem statement, purpose, nature of the doctoral study, significance of the study, theoretical and conceptual framework, values and ethics, and the literature review.

Problem Statement

The social work practice problem examined in this doctoral study is the rising number of incarcerated pregnant women who give birth while in custody and thus are unable to properly attach to their infants. This inability to form secure attachments is only further complicated by lack of ability to develop parenting skills that can keep women from recidivating, and in turn increase their chances of maintaining an intact family system upon release. As it stands, women are outpacing men in regards to becoming incarcerated by 50%, and of that, 5% of women who become imprisoned will give birth while in custody (Fritz & Whiteacre, 2016). Although challenging to establish concrete numbers, researchers estimate that 3-10% of women are pregnant upon admission to a correctional facility (Goshin, 2015). This information suggests that women are becoming incarcerated more frequently and an assessment on the impact of incarceration on pregnancy and on family systems is recommended when it comes to providing correctional care. Social workers should pay special attention to this issue due to the ethics and values that the NASW mandates social workers must uphold.

There has been some response to this issue on a national level, most commonly seen with prison nurseries. Bedford Hills Correctional Facility located in upstate New York has created a precedent for the implementation and use of a prison nursery. According to Pishko (2015), the eight states where the nurseries are located are: Washington, Nebraska, Indiana, Illinois, South Dakota, West Virginia, California, and Wyoming. According to Elmalak (2015), the purpose of a prison nursery is to provide incarcerated women and their infants the opportunity to secure healthy attachments,

provide women with parenting skills and other needed programming, keep families together, and help reduce recidivism among the women involved in the program.

Currently, nine states offer a prison nursery program, which means that 18% of United States correctional facilities have this service. Additionally, each state has different regulations for its prison nursery program, although there are some general concepts that remain consistent throughout facilities. Women in the program maintain appropriate disciplinary comportment, have a relatively short time left to serve, and demonstrate suitable conduct with their children and the other mothers while on the nursery unit (Yager, 2015). Additionally, other barriers exist that put further restrictions on who can participate in this type of programming. Yoho and Backes (2015) said women with violent offenses, have disciplinary records while in custody, women with crimes against children, women or infants with more intense medical needs, and women with more than a few years left on their sentences are not allowed access.

A substantial number of infants born to incarcerated women will either enter foster care or be placed with relatives who may already be overburdened (Berger, Cancian, Cuesta, & Noyes, 2016; Yager, 2015). Foster care placement may leave family systems disjointed or in disrepair. Many correctional facilities list options for incarcerated individuals to remain connected to their families, including visits, writing letters, and using pay phones. However, visits may not only feel invasive to family members but can also be strenuous in terms of travel due to facility location or transportation not being affordable (Friedmann, 2014). Additionally, as Friedmann (2014) stated, many incarcerated individuals struggle with literacy and writing, which for some eliminates

writing letters as an option. Pay phones require finances, which again may not be an option for those who are indigent or come from impoverished conditions (Friedmann, 2014). This gap between the logistics of visitation and the impact on family dynamics is an area that social workers servicing these systems can benefit from further exploring. This involves examining prison nursery programs further, along with discovering other potential options for maintaining mother and infant bonding.

Purpose Statement

The goal of this research study was to use the action research methodology to explore the gaps in practice that exist in terms of helping incarcerated pregnant women develop attachment necessary for post-release family unification, to include the concept of prison nursery implementation, through the perspectives of social workers. This study serves the purpose of enriching the current body of literature and knowledge on this subject, most notably through identification of the barriers to bonding between incarcerated mother and infant dyads as assessed by social workers. Establishing what options may be feasible to alleviate this issue is also of importance.

This research is imperative because it examines a gap in practice that exists in supporting incarcerated pregnant women and their infants and maintaining family unification. This gap in information regarding how to provide support to incarcerated pregnant women and maintain family unification appears to be particularly limited when it comes to smaller correctional populations. This research focused on how to provide support to a small correctional institution in the northeastern United States which currently does not have a prison nursery program and averages a population of 217

incarcerated women per month, with a median age of 37. The research questions guiding the study are as follows:

RQ1: What are the gaps in terms of interventions, programs, and services that exist for helping incarcerated mothers develop attachment necessary for post-release family unification from the perspective of prison social workers in the northeast?

RQ2: According to prison social workers in the northeast, what supports can be established to help incarcerated pregnant women increase their ability to formulate healthy attachment styles with their infants, which will be necessary for post-release family unification?

RQ3: What is the understanding of prison social workers in the northeast about how prison nurseries could assist incarcerated pregnant women to develop attachment necessary for post-release family unification?

RQ4: What do northeast prison social workers identify as barriers to the successful implementation of a prison nursery?

Key terms used throughout the doctoral project include attachment, post-release, family unification, and prison nurseries. *Attachment* is the affectional tie or bond formed between two people, with the first attachment a person experiences being with the mother (Ainsworth, 1974). A *prison nursery* is a specialized unit in a correctional facility away from the rest of the general population that allows mother and infant dyads to remain together for a specified period to foster attachment and maintain family systems (Fritz & Whiteacre, 2016). *Post-release* refers to women returning to society after being discharged from a prison nursery program in a correctional setting (Goshin, Byrne, &

Henninger, 2014). *Family unification* is the maintaining of mother and infant dyads through supportive programming for them to remain together after exiting a prison nursery program (Fritz & Whiteacre, 2016).

Nature of the Doctoral Project

The doctoral project focused on how prison nurseries and social work practice can align to establish support for incarcerated pregnant women and lead to post-release family unification. Attention is given to how nurseries could benefit smaller correctional systems and what barriers exist to implementing such programs. As mentioned previously, action research with a qualitative element was the research methodology that was used.

Action research is a type of methodology that seeks to find solutions to real-life problems as identified through a research process (Durak et al., 2016). Durak et al. (2016) also suggest the importance of viewing this type of research as a “learning by doing” (p. 71) process, which is based upon the researcher, stakeholders, and participants in equal parts. According to Stringer (2007), a qualitative element exists when the researcher works with participants and stakeholders. In this study, I worked with the participants through the use of an anonymous survey as the tool to accurately understand what the identified gap in practice meant to them. I informed stakeholders (the contracted healthcare agency working in the northeast correctional institution and social workers employed by the agency) of the results upon completion of the data analysis. The results of this study could lead to the implementation of different services, such as prison

nurseries or more targeted parenting programs for incarcerated pregnant women in the future.

The data assessed was from anonymous surveys for social workers employed through a contracted agency working within a northeastern department of correction. The 11-question anonymous survey was done online. Potential participants were contacted via email and provided a direct link to the anonymous survey, consent form, and an invitation to participate. A follow-up email was sent in order to obtain more participants, which led to a total of two emails being sent over two weeks and a total of six individuals choosing to participate in the anonymous survey. Once the gathering of data concluded, I used Microsoft Excel to assess latent and semantic themes.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

There are two theories used in this research study, the first of those being attachment theory as established by Mary Ainsworth. According to Ainsworth (1969), the first attachment for an infant is generally with the mother, and disrupting this process may harm the infant's ability to form secure attachments as he or she develops. The second theory used in this study was the separation-individuation theory by Margaret Mahler. According to Bergman, Blom, Polyak, and Mayers (2015), Mahler's theory focuses on how an infant begins to form a separate identity from the mother while still having access to her for support; it also is part of the process that promotes understanding of self and others. These theories were chosen to inform this study because one of the foundational arguments for prison nurseries is that it helps nurture attachment between the mother and infant that would otherwise be interrupted. The research questions also

have a strong focus on attachment and how a prison nursery may be able to improve post-release family unification.

Attachment Theory

Ainsworth (1969) recognized the importance of the mother–infant relationship, and stated that the first attachment for an infant is usually with the maternal figure and noted that disrupting the bonding process may impact the infant so significantly that he or she may be unable to form secure attachment styles. Through her consistent work, Ainsworth demonstrated to other leaders in the attachment field, such as John Bowlby, that an infant’s connection to his or her mother is significant and instinctual in nature, rather than just being related to a mother tending to the infant’s satiation needs (van Rosmalen, van der Horst, & van der Veer, 2016). Ainsworth is also well known for introducing the Strange Situation Procedure, in which the mother and child pair enter an environment, a stranger then enters the room and then the mother leaves the room so that only the infant and stranger are in the space together (van Rosmalen et al., 2016). As Ziv and Hotam (2015) support, the Strange Situation Procedure remains the “gold standard” for measuring attachment in infants.

Byrne, Goshin, and Joestl (2010) conducted a study on the attachment styles of infants involved with prison nursery programs. This was orchestrated via Ainsworth’s Strange Situation Procedure, which includes a mother and child dyad as well as an individual who is a stranger to the child. The mother and stranger then enter and exit the room in a preestablished pattern, and the infant’s interactions with the mother are examined during those intervals (van Rosmalen et al., 2016). The results showed that

60% of infants who were involved with the nursery program were securely attached (Byrne et al., 2010). Furthermore, the longer infants remained in the program with their mothers, the higher this rate of secure attachment became, with 75% of infants demonstrating secure attachment after spending a year or more in the program. The mothers in this study were given an Adult Attachment Interview before the intervention with their infants, and even if the mothers had poor attachment styles, the infants still tended to have more secure attachment styles given the supportive environment of the prison nursery.

Separation-Individuation Theory

The second theory that framed this study is the separation-individuation theory by Margaret Mahler. As Bergman et al. (2015) said, the theory describes how an infant can form a separate identity from the mother through her being present as the infant gradually explores his or her environment. This ultimately leads the infant to understand the idea of self and others, but having the mother available as a support system is a critical aspect of the infant's success in developing a separate identity from the mother (Bergman et al., 2015). According to Mahler (1967), the infant must go through a series of phases prior to reaching a period of separation individuation. The first of these phases is referred to as normal autism, which is the time during the first few weeks of life where the infant is unable to discern between inner and outer surroundings. The next phase is the symbiotic phase, where the infant begins to realize that his or her needs will be met through outside influence. This phase lasts until months 5 and 6, which is when separation-individuation begins. Before this phase, the infant's sense of self remains fused with the mother. There

are four subphases of separation-individuation in the neurotypical infant, which all lead to the infant beginning to develop a sense of self while still feeling secure with a caregiver.

Powell, Marzano, and Ciclitira (2017) said that more frequently than not, professionals focus on how the impact of separation is experienced by a child, but substantially less concern around the impact the severance has on the mother. This spurs dialog on how the separation from an infant can often add to the already lengthy amount of trauma that the incarcerated mother has suffered in her life. These concepts are critical when considering the potential that a program such as a prison nursery may have on a mother's recidivism rate as well as the development of secure attachment styles for the mother's infant.

Values and Ethics

The NASW Code of Ethics exists to guide social workers in their daily practice of the profession, and one of the values most applicable to the social work problem assessed in this study is social justice. The NASW (2017) Code of Ethics also stated that a guiding principle in social work practice is "social workers challenge social injustice" (para. 6). Since the social work problem in focus involves how to increase attachments between incarcerated mothers and their infants, both populations would qualify as being vulnerable, one due to incarceration and the other due to age and not yet legally being responsible for themselves. Clinical practice is therefore guided by an air of sensitivity towards the position that both mothers and infants are vulnerable groups. Goshin, Arditti, Dallaire, Shlafer, and Hollihan (2017) and Delap (2016) supported that incarcerated

pregnant women meet criteria as a vulnerable population. Goshin et al., (2017) lists the specific needs of this population as receiving appropriate nutrition, safety, and access to an obstetrician. Secondly, identifying injustice when it occurs, which some may say is what transpires when a mother and infant are separated and unable to form a secure attachment, is another guiding concept of social work practice.

Based on the literature, prison nurseries appear to adhere to the social work value and principle listed above by providing a safe and secure unit where women and their infants can form attachments with the guidance of trained professionals (Byrne et al., 2010). In reviewing the New York Department of Corrections website and the description about the prison nursery program, the oldest in the country, the department describes the program as providing parent education and child care while mothers attend educational and vocational programming, and assistance with release (NYS DOC, n.d.). This prison nursery's values of promoting bonding and healthy family systems are evident in this particular action research project, which examined how attachment is impacted by this type of supportive programming. The NASW Code of Ethics guidelines are also mirrored in the nursery program as it strives to eliminate a gap in social services.

Review of Professional and Academic Literature

The academic and professional literature reviewed for this paper pertains to the practice problem of how to support incarcerated pregnant women in developing attachment necessary for post-release family unification, to include the concept of prison nursery implementation. The literature search was done through the use of the Walden University online library, with searches conducted directly through EBSCOHost and

Thoreau. Through both databases, full text and peer-reviewed scholarly journals were selected with articles published between 2015 and 2018. Articles dated prior to 2013 were included as a direct result of their pertinence to the study and the support they offered contextually. Specific search engines were Expanded Academic ASAP, Social Sciences Citation Index, Academic Search Complete, Complementary Index, Science Citation Index, InfoTrac, LegalTrac, Education Source, and Science Direct, EBSCOHost, and Thoreau.

Other articles were published by correctional departments or were largely from independent organizations that specialize in advocacy for criminal justice populations. Recurrent search terms used in the databases to find articles were: *attachment, strange situation procedure, separation-individuation, separation, infancy, babies, prison, infants, foster care, object relations Ainsworth, incarceration, and incarcerated mother*. Combinations of the search terms were utilized while searching due to the limited nature of scholarly articles written directly about prison nurseries.

Upon conducting the literature review, there were studies about the recidivism of incarcerated mothers involved in nursery programs, but relatively few articles regarding the impact of prison nurseries on attachment. The common theme presented in the published works included prison nurseries decreasing rates of recidivism for the women involved in the programs with their infants (Byrne et al., 2010). Although more limited in availability, literature pertaining to attachment suggests that positive correlations between infant participation in the nursery programs and secure attachment styles exist. Byrne et al. (2010) said that infants who participate in the nursery programs present more

frequently with secure attachment styles and that the longer infants are involved in the nursery programs, the more securely attached they appear to be.

Perhaps the biggest weakness in the data is that there are few current resources that pertain directly to the impact of prison nurseries on attachment, and I did not find any substantial singular literature on the connection between the impact of a prison nursery on how an infant later progressed in their own parenting style. Longitudinal studies following these infants into adulthood to see whether or not they became involved with the criminal justice system were limited. A strength of the empirical research is that researchers have conducted longitudinal studies that show the positive influence on maternal recidivism and mother–infant dyads remaining together after the conclusion of their participation in the nursery programs, including the work by Byrne et al., (2010). I strove to compile data that demonstrated the impact of a prison nursery setting on infant attachment since the data on this topic is relatively scarce and must predominantly be drawn from literature.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables/Concepts

Attachment

Studies have focused on the impact of prison nurseries on recidivism rates for incarcerated women, but few have examined the impact on attachment (Powell et al., 2017). It is precisely this gap in the literature that makes it so important to further examine the concept of attachment along with the social work practice problem of support for incarcerated mothers in developing attachment necessary for post-release family unification, including the use of prison nurseries. As most of the studies on

attachment and separation theory support, it is imperative for an infant to form a secure attachment with a caregiver if the infant is going to be able to thrive in life, including regulation of both emotional and physiological responses (Smith, Woodhouse, Clark & Skowron, 2016). Additionally, secure attachment to a maternal figure in infancy has been linked to increased gray matter in regions of the brain associated with emotional, cognitive, and social functioning (Leblanc, Degeih, Daneault, Beauchamp, & Bernier, 2017). As Bergman et al. (2015) said, both separation- individuation theory and attachment theory are based on naturalistic observations of early relations between a child and a mother. This literature review examines this aspect of infants forming a secure attachment to their incarcerated mothers at the time of their birth.

Attachment theory, which was originally established by John Bowlby but was expanded upon by Mary Ainsworth, began as a way to observe what happens when children separate from their mothers (Bergman et al., 2015). Most of Bowlby's initial impressions on this topic came from the work of Sigmund Freud, and the predominant belief was that an infant's first object of attachment was his or her mother, chiefly due to the connection of being breastfed, otherwise known as the oral stage in psychosexual development (Ainsworth, 1969). However, this theory gradually became less psychobiological and focused more on the impacts of parenting when Mary Ainsworth added the element of the Strange Situation Procedure to Bowlby's work. Bowlby initially believed that the process of feeding was why infants formed a robust attachment to the maternal figure (Fearon & Rosiman, 2017). Additionally, Ainsworth (1969) helped change the dialog from Freud's psychosexual changes through her work with Bowlby.

Gradually, the term ‘attachment’ became popular to describe her and Bowlby’s work, which was truly focusing on affectional ties (Ainsworth, 1969). The concept of affectional ties has since been researched by Cindy Hazan and Phillip Shaver. Hazan and Shaver (1987) suggested that infants’ attachment style will further impact them in adulthood when they are striving to connect with romantic partners, thus lending credence to how attachment styles developed in infancy carry forth into adulthood.

As van Rosmalen et al., (2016) said, the Strange Situation Procedure is done in a lab for eight sessions and involves both mother and child being present. At one point, a stranger will enter, the mother will leave the infant with the stranger, the mother will return, and then the stranger will exit, as will the mother, leaving the infant completely alone. In essence, the quicker the child resumes exploration of toys in the room when the mother returns, the more secure the child is. The researcher performing the procedure also looks for how quickly the child is put back at ease when the mother returns, should the child demonstrate being distressed. As supported by Ziv and Hotam (2015), the Strange Situation Procedure is recognized as the “gold standard” for measuring attachment in infancy, and as such, it has been utilized for decades as a way of empirically examining attachment. According to Bergman et al. (2015) adding the Strange Situation Procedure which observed the way children used their mother as a secure base, helped establish how a mother’s state of mind influences a child’s ability to form an attachment. Cumulative interactions with the mother impact this connection.

Separation-individuation theory examines how a child can develop a sense of autonomy and separateness in the presence of the mother figure. This theory is based

around a child's first 2 years of life and how he or she develops nonverbally with the support of caregivers during this period (Bergman et al., 2015). Through a longitudinal study in which 1,525 children, mothers and teachers were selected via conditional random sampling, Birmingham, Bub, and Vaughn (2017) said that the first 2 years of life are significant in the development of an attachment style. Sensitivity when parenting and providing a secure and safe environment for infants to develop leads to better self-regulation in the preschool setting. Although this process starts within the first 2 years of life, Jiang, Yang, and Wang (2017) said that the importance of these early interactions reappears when an individual becomes an adolescent.

According to Jiang et al. (2017), the more secure the attachment of the child, the more successful they will navigate separation-individuation, and the more likely they will self-disclose and communicate to their parents during adolescence. This helps the child in developing healthy relationships with others as they enter adulthood. This information was established through an online survey involving 505 unmarried young adults recruited from Hong Kong universities. Additional studies have been done supporting the momentousness of an infant developing healthy attachment styles to transition into a successful adolescence. Saraiva, Brandao, and Matos (2018) also supported the importance of appropriate separation-individuation during the transition into adulthood, stating that the healthier the separation-individuation process is, the higher an individual's self-esteem and lower his or her rate of depression will be. This information was collected via questionnaires administered to university students during class periods.

A total of 387 Portuguese emerging adults participated in the questionnaire, all of whom were involved in a romantic relationship, which was one of the criteria for participation.

Shahar-Maharik, Oppenheim, and Koren-Karie (2018) said that the more securely attached an infant was, and whether or not his or her mother was insightful, the more likely the infant would develop into an astute and emotionally aware adolescent. One hundred thirty mothers and children were recruited from infant medical centers or via snowball recruitment in Israel to partake in this longitudinal study. The participants were engaged in two home visits and a laboratory visit during the infancy phase, and the Strange Situation Procedure was used at those times. The participants again participated in another in-home session when the infant had become an adolescent, asking them to bring a friend during that time. Recording of play interactions and completion of questionnaires by the mother and friend were completed during that time as a way to evaluate how insightful the adolescent was. These examples further demonstrate how the process of separation-individuation is powerful not only in infancy but also in terms of influencing the impact of how an individual will relate to others throughout his or her lifetime.

According to Hadary (2015) via Mahler, Pine, and Bergman (1975), separation-individuation is the process of a child being able to function independently even when in the presence of the mother. Engaging in play and reading are important aspects of a child's ability to communicate, and both activities can also assist in developing communication with the maternal figure. During separation-individuation, these activities can help mother–infant dyads better process the emotions surrounding the infant's push

towards individuation. Hadary (2015) said that engaging in both play and reading activities allows for the mother–child dyad to express concepts of loss that occur as the child gains independence from the mother and inevitably acts out emotionally, which can lead to maternal frustration. These concepts were examined in a North London parent-toddler group and then assessed in more detail between a toddler and mother dyad.

The concept of loss, which does occur during the transitional process of individuation, is essential to the topic of separation-individuation because it can have a powerful impact on the way an individual relates to others. Cavalli (2017) said that if the ego has not matured enough to process emotions such as pain, grief, and loss, the individual may develop autistic defense mechanisms. If the individual does not get support around events that lead to dysthymic emotions, there can be significant repercussions in emotional development. Cavalli (2017), through the use of case study, examines the loss of breastfeeding for one infant, noting that events that lead to a traumatic separation during infancy can have damaging effects that lead to delayed development and emotional outbursts. This is particularly relevant when considering the trauma infants will experience when suddenly removed from their mother's presence and care when the mother has to return to a correctional facility.

There continues to be limited data regarding the experiences of infants in prison nurseries. However, Condon (2017) observed 17 infants living with incarcerated mothers and said that they were at risk of having detrimental social outcomes, such as poor relational skills, if their attachment to their parent becomes disrupted due to incarceration. Furthermore, Condon (2017) said that establishing positive relational health in infants is

most critical during the first 1,000 days of life, and if a mother can provide active engagement, responsiveness, imitation, and repair upsets with the infant during that time, the infant is more likely to have a healthy attachment style. van Rosmalen et al. (2016) said that infants require a consistent and nurturing relationship with one or more caregivers in order to develop into healthy individuals.

Chinitz et al. (2017) said that infancy is the “most plastic and receptive period in human development, as well as the most foundational” (p. 190). However, when disruptions in the attachment process exist such as incarceration, poorer outcomes for the infants are the result (Harris, 2017). Harris (2017) said that women are most frequently the primary caregivers for their children, and 60% of incarcerated women have children under the age of 18. When these women enter correctional institutions, they often face the reality of losing custody of their children, which primarily has to do with the copious amounts of women who receive drug charges and the short time period (12-24 months) in which they can apply to get their children back (Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), 2016). The shortened time frame is a result of the Adoption and Safe Family Act of 1997, which requires a termination of parental rights should a parent not meet reunification requirements and the child has been in foster care 15 out of the last 22 months. This does not correlate well with the average time given for most drug sentences, which tends to be closer to between 15-18 months.

Byrne et al. (2010) conducted the first longitudinal study on the effects of attachment and prison nurseries using 30 mother–infant dyads at a New York State correctional facility for women, which makes it a relevant resource for this social work

problem. This study is also crucial because it looked at the bonding and relational aspects of a prison nursery, when historically, most studies have been focused on the incarcerated mother's rate of recidivism. There is a plethora of information that evolved from this study including the following: 75% of the infants who lived in the nursery for over a year demonstrated healthy attachment styles, while 43% of infants who resided in the program for less than a year showed healthy attachment styles (Byrne et al., 2010). Byrne et al. (2010) said that this is on par with samples of mother–infant dyads from the general population. Additionally, this was the first study to demonstrate that mothers involved in a prison nursery program are capable of rearing securely attached infants at rates comparable to mother and infant dyads in the community.

Interrupted Attachment with Maternal Incarceration

As discussed previously, attachment is a critical element that ultimately plays an essential role in an infant's development into a healthy adult. Future attachment can be harmed by early negative experiences, and being taken away from one's parents and placed in foster care can be exceptionally traumatic (Lang et al., 2016). Foster care is imperative to consider when examining prison nurseries since infants born to incarcerated women are generally only allowed to remain with their mother for 48 hours postpartum (Warner, 2015). According to Warner (2015), if no family members are available or willing to take the child, nor any accessible prison nursery programs, the result will be placement in foster care. This can impact the infant's development into adolescence, and eventually, adulthood.

There are many reasons why women become incarcerated, with some of the most pressing evidence suggesting that America's harsh sentencing laws in regards to crimes related to illegal drugs has led to more women entering correctional facilities, and in turn, more babies being born while mothers are in correctional care (Fritz & Whiteacre, 2016). Financial struggle, which influences 34% of maternal incarceration (Foster & Hagan, 2017), is also a critical element that can lead to parental incarceration. To further illustrate the significance of financial struggle, Jung and LaLonde (2017) found that mothers, both incarcerated and not, earned between \$150- \$200 less per quarter than childless women. With more women becoming incarcerated and only a handful of prison nursery programs in the country, the consideration for what happens to children born to an incarcerated woman has become pressing.

According to Jung and LaLonde (2016), women who have had early (ages 10-14) foster care placements experience higher rates of re-incarceration regardless of whether or not they experienced parental reunification during that foster care experience. Furthermore, Jung and LaLonde (2016) identify incarcerated women with foster care experience as requiring extra support at the time of release from correctional custody as a result of the compounding adverse experiences that came from being in a foster care placement and losing connection, even for a small duration of time, with a biological parent. This suggests that being in foster care as a female youth impacts the likelihood of entering the correctional system as an adult. Lambdin, Comfort, Kral and Lorvick (2018) said that individuals who frequently spent time in jail also had a higher prevalence of

foster care placement, further supporting the impact of foster care on correctional experience.

According to Shaw, Bright, and Sharpe (2015) infants are less likely to reunify with their parents than other children, although they are more likely to be successfully adopted. This suggests that incarcerated pregnant women who must put their newborns in foster care are substantially less likely to be reunited with them upon release. Shaw et al. (2015) said that children in the foster care system due to parental incarceration are more likely to present with delinquent behaviors, have cognitive challenges, demonstrate insecure attachment styles, and have higher rates of homelessness as young adults. Cooley, Thompson, and Murray (2018) stated that as adults, individuals who were previously in foster care had higher incidences of physical and emotional health concerns than those adults who did not experience foster care as youth. Children of incarcerated parents are therefore an at-risk and vulnerable group of individuals.

There remains a gap in the literature concerning the role that parental incarceration has on children entering foster care, but the information is beginning to become more available. Goshin (2015) examines maternal incarceration specifically and contends that having an incarcerated mother has shown to increase the time a child is spent in protective custody, while also decreasing the likelihood of reunification. Additionally, Kotlar et al. (2015) said that 60% of children with incarcerated mothers do not have secure attachment styles, which further demonstrates the detrimental impact that separation from the mother can have on a child.

In 1945, Spitz conducted a seminal study of children residing with their mothers in a penal institution's nursery program compared to children in a foundling home, otherwise known as an institution for orphaned youth (Yager, 2015). The results showed that children in the nursery program were not only healthier but also demonstrated a higher level of curiosity and intrigue compared to those in the foundling homes, which was a locale in which children were in the community and not confined behind prison walls. This demonstrates that despite being a closed setting that does not mirror the community, children fared better in the supportive environment of the nursery with their mothers as opposed to being separated from them and placed in the commonwealth.

Carlson (2009) published a longitudinal study regarding the impact of prison nurseries on maternal recidivism as compared to the general population who did not receive the same service (Byrne completed the first study on this topic in 2003 making her a seminal author on the concept). A discovery was made that 50% of women in the general prison population who were separated from their infants recidivated compared to only 17% of those mothers who were able to remain with their infants in the nursery program (Carlson, 2009). Both studies appear to support the advantages of a prison nursery program on both maternal and infant well-being.

Parental incarceration, particularly maternal imprisonment because of the higher chance of a child residing in foster care or with a relative, can lead to lifelong health issues for the children involved (Foster & Hagan, 2017; Harris, 2017). A substantial part of this is due to children being at a higher risk of developing chronic healthcare issues

and health insurance typically ending once the child turns 18 (Foster & Hagan, 2017).

Goshin (2015) said that the growth of incarceration amongst females has led to multigenerational effects. Kearney and Byrne (2018) also supported that having an incarcerated parent can lead to intergenerational stress, which does not assist a child in maintaining either emotional or physical wellness, with some detrimental factors including poverty and complicated family dynamics.

Currently, there are not any national standards or best practice guidelines in existence, or at least formally written down, to guide a response to parental incarceration. This means that state and local governments are in charge of how to address this issue at each facility across the country, and results in a plethora of ways in which this matter is approached (Goshin, 2015). There also are not any national policies in the United States that detail how to approach newborns born to incarcerated mothers (Warner, 2015). This does not promote confidence that the United States values the impact of parental incarceration on youth or how it impacts health and human services on a macro systemic level. Strickman (2017) stated that separation from a parent is found to be as psychologically damaging as a parent dying; this is a significant statement and is another reason why developing policy and programming regarding the separation of mother and infant dyads is a pressing matter.

History of Women in Correctional Custody

When considering the concept of supports for incarcerated mothers, it is first important to understand the history behind women in correctional custody. According to Jones and Johnstone (2011), women historically have been incarcerated or deemed

criminal for engaging in behaviors that were perceived as demonstrating moral failings such as prostitution, vagrancy, or being lewd. Kurshan (2012) further expanded on this point, stating that patriarchal double standards historically had influenced when women were deemed criminal. As explained by Kurshan (2012), these double standards expect women to be sexualized, but also condemn them for demonstrating sexuality, leading to arrests for adultery or prostitution.

The first female prison was created in Indiana in 1873, and by 1997, all 50 states had established at least one facility for women (Elmalak, 2015). However, it is important to note that today's modern-day correctional facilities are not where females with criminal records were housed originally. The first exclusively female prisons came to fruition after the Civil War, but before this, women were primarily housed in the attics of male penitentiaries (Yager, 2015). Prison camps were one of the initial constructs used for managing females, but this eventually evolved into custodial prisons, reformatories- which started around the 1900s, a hybrid of custodial prisons and reformatories, and finally the modern-day correctional model (Kurshan, 2012; Yager, 2015). According to Warner (2015), prison nurseries were previously commonplace across the United States until 1950 when prison budgets began to decrease and the numbers of incarcerated females were relatively low. The result was almost the complete eradication of this type of program, except for the historical program in Bedford Hills. As mentioned previously, there are currently nine prison nursery programs in operation in the United States.

Information regarding the impact of maternal incarceration suggests that children are more likely to be in foster care if they have an incarcerated mother as opposed to

father, and the number of children who have incarcerated mothers has more than doubled in the last 25 years (Berger et al., 2016). Data also suggests that maternal incarceration leads to an increased chance of children residing with relatives or being placed in the foster care system, as opposed to living with the father (Foster & Hagan, 2017). This information is critical for assessing how impactful maternal incarceration is on children, and also for developing a dialog on what can be done in regards to programming to ease this strain on family systems.

Available information also shows that America's harsh sentencing laws about illegal drugs has drastically impacted the number of women, and subsequently, women with children, who become incarcerated (Jung and LaLonde, 2017). As Couvrette, Plourde, and Brochu (2016) establish, most women who are using drugs and alcohol that become pregnant experience an identity crisis in regards to identifying themselves as either being a mother or someone who uses substances. However, becoming pregnant, incarcerated, or losing custody of one's children are three events that have been found to spur maternal motivation and lead women to question their criminal involvement (Couvrette et al., 2016). Another way in which incarcerated pregnant women may struggle with their identity is in the process of becoming a mother, or a mother again, dealing with being an incarcerated person, and for most of this population, managing the threat of losing their child (Kingdon, Shaw, Kingdon, & Downe, 2015). Kingdon et al., (2015) also support how difficult it is to wade through pregnancy, birth, and postpartum experiences without being an incarcerated person, stating that these experiences are profound and can have lifelong impacts on mother and child outcomes. Knowing this

information makes it pertinent to examine the concept of a prison nursery since it is a setting where women can explore maternity with appropriate supports.

Prison Nurseries

To consider a prison nursery program, it is useful to understand what the main goals of the program include. The following are goals for the program: sustaining attachment between mother–infant dyads, providing a solid foundation for child development, and preventing recidivism (Byrne, Goshin, & Blanchard-Lewis, 2012). As mentioned previously, incarcerated pregnant women are a high-risk and vulnerable population (Delap, 2016; Kotlar et al., 2015) and as such, they are less likely to have engaged in prenatal care prior to incarceration. Therefore, the nursery programs also strive to provide a solid foundation of parental education along with medical treatment.

The Ohio Prison Nursery, which opened in 2001, is one example of a prison nursery located in the United States. The nursery program is called Achieving Baby Care Success and it operates through the utilization of attachment-based programming, which has been found to increase mother–infant bonding and reduce maternal recidivism (Yoho and Backes, 2015). Yoho and Backes (2015) also describe the program as providing a pediatrician that does weekly visits with the infants, receiving approval from child welfare for the children to be in the program, providing an atmosphere that is as child-friendly as possible, and providing nannies through the use of trained inmates who are not mothers in the program. Strict regulations also apply for admission to the program including the mother having a release date within 36 months, being medically clear, having appropriate conduct, and not having any crimes against children. The infants must

also not have a familial risk of SIDS, be born drug-addicted, or have congenital disabilities.

South Dakota's prison nursery program is reportedly less structured than Bedford Hills and also requires a fee for women to participate. If the women can afford this fee, they are allowed to remain with their infant in the nursery program for 340 days, or in other words, just shy of a year (Warner, 2015). This differs from Bedford Hills, where there is no fee required and infants are allowed to stay for over a year. Warner (2015) also details that the Bedford Hills nursery program provides services such as daycare, daily parenting classes, early intervention programs, and assistance with both child placement and release planning. Substance abuse programming is also included in some of the prison nursery programs (Ostheimer, 2016; Warner, 2015). As Byrne et al., (2012) contend, criminal recidivism and substance abuse histories are the biggest threats to continued mothering upon re-entry, which is why substance abuse treatment for women involved in nursery programs is so imperative.

The Indiana Department of Corrections also offers a prison nursery program, which they call Wee Ones Nursery or WON for short. According to Fritz and Whiteacre (2016), the nursery utilizes other female inmates as nannies that live on the unit to provide support and childcare for the mothers when they engage in programming or individual and group treatment. An example of programming that women participating in WON must attend is parenting and child development classes. As Fritz and Whiteacre (2016) support, programming that focuses on parenting skills and provides knowledge on child development helps boost parental self-esteem and confidence in utilizing learned

skills, which are both beneficial for optimal parental functioning. Coster and Brookes (2017) also support that prenatal and parenting education is imperative for this vulnerable population to receive since they are more likely to have experienced multiple adversities in their lives that did not provide them with an inviolable role model for “good enough parenting” as British psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott recommends.

According to Strickman (2017), California allows for women convicted of manslaughter, which is considered a violent crime, to be considered for participation in the prison nursery program if the crime was in response to a physically abusive partner. This is substantial to mention because one of the foremost requirements held by almost every prison nursery program offered within the United States is that women with this type of offense are not permitted to participate in the program. Although prison nursery programs are gender-responsive, it could be argued that not including women in a nursery program as a result of having a violent crime is not gender-responsive in regards to circumstances where women were involved in instances of domestic violence. As stated by Kearney and Byrne (2018), a woman’s path to prison is notoriously different from a man’s, with experiences of domestic violence and complex trauma commonly playing a part in how a woman enters a correctional institution. California is particularly gender-responsive by considering women with violent crimes for nursery programs.

Prison Nurseries outside the United States

The requirements for entry into the prison nursery program are not particularly unusual, with the consensus about prison nursery admission in the United States viewed as rigorous (Goshin et al., 2017). Furthermore, the Bangkok Rules established in 2010 by

the United Nations, along with existing research, suggests that more humane approaches to pregnancy and women with children must occur for the United States to align with international standards for incarcerated women (Goshin et al., 2017). As stated by Warner (2015), the United States is one of only four countries to commonly separate incarcerated women and newborns despite women being less likely to be incarcerated for violent crimes. This is problematic because, as reported by Kotlar et al., (2015), the age range of women most likely to be incarcerated is between 18 and 34 years, which are also prominent child-bearing years. As mentioned previously, but again reiterated by Kotlar et al., (2015), the War on Drugs and Sentencing Reform Act, which limits a judge's ability to consider individual circumstances in sentencing, has led to dramatically higher rates in the incarceration of women, including those who are pregnant.

England and Wales, like an array of locations in Europe, currently operate six Mother and Baby Units (MBUs), which are the equivalent of the United States' prison nurseries, and they allow for a total of 64 babies to reside with their incarcerated mothers until 18 months of age (Delap, 2016). Delap (2016) identifies that over 100 babies are born to incarcerated women each year in England and Wales and the MBUs provide support for the women and infant dyads, including breastfeeding support. Windham Stewart (2016) reports developing two different treatment groups, one for pregnant women and another for mothers and babies within a women's correctional facility in the United Kingdom, with both models having psychotherapy elements that the women most likely would not have received otherwise. The curriculum was called the "Born Inside Program" and addressed the increased depression pregnant women who were not going to

be able to keep their babies in the MBU may be feeling, along with working with mothers and infants in the MBU program to provide additional mental health support (Windham Stewart, 2016). According to Warner (2015), it is also common for the fathers to participate in the prenatal classes along with the incarcerated women in the MBUs, which does not occur in American prison nursery programs.

Germany's Preungesheim Prison is renowned, boasting the most comprehensive prison nursery program in the world (Warner, 2015). This nursery program is an internal unit that is designed to be similar to an apartment. Additionally, it allows for high-security prisoners to keep their children with them until age three, while low-security prisoners are permitted to keep their children with them until age five (Paurus, n.d.). Paurus (n.d.) also describes the program as offering additional benefits such as allowing women 21 days to spend with their older children outside of the correctional facility, and if women are permitted work-release, they can take care of their children for the day and return to prison at night, since Germany considers being a stay-at-home mother full-time employment.

Canada also offers a prison nursery program, which allows infants to stay with their incarcerated mothers full-time until age four or part-time and on holidays until age 12 (Warner, 2015). Warner (2015) reports a unique aspect of this prison nursery, which is the power that the children have to terminate the arrangement of living in the prison setting should they state this is what they want. France also has a prison nursery in which 50 mother–infant dyads are allowed to stay in the nursery setting until 18 months, although the average length of stay is 6.2 months (Blanchard et al., 2018).

Incarcerated pregnant women who do not have access to a prison nursery program report many distressing concerns that very well could be eliminated through the use of a nursery program, at least via the information supported in this literature review. Fritz and Whiteacre (2016) list some of these concerns as the following: delays in access to prenatal care, feeling ignored by hospital staff when going for obstetric appointments, lack of support while in labor due to restrictions and departments of correction not providing advanced notice for support persons to be contacted, shackling in some states with male staff frequently being the ones ordering this, and limited postpartum support.

In conclusion, in the past three decades, the number of incarcerated women has risen 800%, and women have also outpaced men by 50% when it comes to incarceration rates (Harris, 2017). Additionally, the United States holds 1/3 of the world's incarcerated women, and 61% of those women are of reproductive age, while 60% report having a child who is a minor upon incarceration (Goshin et al., 2017). When considering the benefits of a prison nursery, it is important to remember the impact that mothers have on child rearing and the likelihood that children will be displaced if they are not with the maternal figure (Foster & Hagan, 2017). According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), children have a right to family integrity, which means that a child should be raised by a birth parent if possible, and prison nurseries provide the opportunity for a family's integrity to remain intact (Goshin et al., 2017). Additionally, as Jung and LaLonde (2015) and Yager (2015) substantiate, women who have been incarcerated and have had their children placed in foster care are more likely to recidivate as opposed to those involved with a prison nursery program.

Additional Options and Concerns of Critics

Opponents of prison nurseries would suggest that there are other options to try before placing infants in a correctional setting (Elmalak, 2015). According to Elmalak (2015), arguments against these types of units report that they are too exclusive and thus limit the number of women and infant participants, they leave older children excluded, and the consideration of these units solely for women also leaves fathers excluded, violating their 14th Amendment rights. Another issue frequently discussed in the literature surrounding incarcerated women is that there is usually only one correctional facility per state that houses them; this makes it immensely difficult for the family, including older children, to be able to visit an incarcerated woman (Delap, 2016). This is why some opponents of prison nurseries suggest a woman and her infant enter a community setting. This still allows for supervision and is most likely closer to the women's family unit, rather than remaining in a prison nursery setting.

Goshin, Byrne, and Henniger (2014) also recommended utilizing a family-focused criminal justice intervention, such as supportive housing or home confinement programs, as a way of keeping mother and infant dyads together without either party entering a correctional facility. This family-focused intervention is one of the suggested alternatives that still allow for corrective action, but also decrease the number of women entering correctional facilities, while still providing infants with maternal care. Another suggested way to take corrective action is utilizing early-release programs more frequently for low-risk offenders (Strickman, 2017). Although this still means separation,

critics of nurseries would argue this would allow for reunification at a quicker pace and reduce interaction with the foster care system or the loss of parental rights.

Goshin (2015) claimed that health and social inequities are two of the main reasons women who become incarcerated struggle in caring for their children prior to being placed in correctional custody. Goshin (2015) recommended supportive housing and diversion programs as appropriate alternatives to incarceration for women who enter the criminal justice system pregnant since it provides a home-like environment to engage in legal requirements while still providing an opportunity for women to care for their children. Kotlar et al. (2015) recommended residential substance abuse treatment programs as a type of diversion program for women and their infants for similar reasons.

Some opponents also feel that despite the potential disruption in attachment, infants are better off being placed in foster care in order to have the chance of becoming adopted, rather than remaining in a restricted environment without the stimuli that come from being in the free world (Byrne et al., 2012; Warner, 2015). Warner (2015) also stated that another argument against prison nurseries is that the pregnant women have been found responsible for committing crimes and that incarceration should be focused on punishment; other opinions are more judgmental in nature, claiming these women are poor role models for the infants and lacking in moral fiber due to criminality. Byrne et al., (2012) said the risk and potential interferences with security protocols that come with having children in a setting designed for adults convicted of a crime. Strickman (2017) also reports that concerns about regimented prison schedules being challenging for an infant or toddler and that the children are also affected if the mother loses privileges.

An additional concern that critics of prison nurseries may have is around cost. The average estimated cost per infant per year in a prison nursery program is around \$24,000 (Clark, 2016; Schiavocampo, 2010). Foster care costs have been estimated at approximately \$25,782, while adoption as costing \$10,302 (Zill, 2011). The ASFA of 1997 aims to look for a permanent placement for children who are away from their families 15 out of the last 22 months (DHHS, 2016). This act looks at family reunification options, but if the given timeframes cannot be met, ASFA pushes for permanency placement for the child. A reality of this time frame is that reunification and/or adoption are not always possible, and foster care becomes the de facto placement. It is also important to consider that some argue that prison nursery programs may cost substantially more upfront, but will cost less in the long run if women do not recidivate.

Summary

There still are significant lapses in how to address this issue in everyday life. However, in examining the literature review, there is a plethora of information that substantiates that prison nurseries provide benefits to the women and infants who have been a part of these programs as opposed to placing the infant in the foster care system. There are of course many areas of concern, as iterated above, by critics of prison nurseries, but as the data in the literature review substantiates, there are copious benefits to utilizing this type of program, not least of all the positive benefits for the infants.

Additionally, there is research that suggests that there are three significant events that assist in building a maternal identity in women who break the law and have previously engaged in substance use. These three events are pregnancy, loss of custody, and incarceration (Couvrette et al., 2016). As a result of these events having a substantial impact on motivating maternal instincts, it lends credence to the importance of the concept of a prison nursery, since these programs are directly confronting substance abuse treatment as well as criminal thinking through group work and enhancing parenting skills while developing the bond between mother and infant. As Yager (2015) also stated most of the world balances public safety without separating mothers and infants; perhaps it is time for the United States to more rigorously consider this when it comes to treatment and programming for incarcerated pregnant women.

In Section 2, the research design and process of data collection is further explored. The gaps in the research, as identified previously in the literature review, are focused on how to support incarcerated pregnant women in regards to post-release family unification. This was explored through action research, via the perspective of social workers, using attachment theory and separation-individuation theory as lenses. Section 2 includes the research design, methodology, data analysis, ethical procedures, and summary.

Section 2: Research Design and Data Collection

The purpose of this study is to add to the current body of knowledge regarding the current gaps in practice that exist in terms of supporting incarcerated pregnant women to develop attachment necessary for post-release family unification, to include the concept of prison nursery implementation, through the perspectives of social workers. Action research was used to explore these gaps in practice while helping to establish what options may be practical for improving the problem. This section includes the research design, methodology, data analysis, and ethical procedures.

Research Design

The social work practice problem addressed in this study is how to enhance assistance for incarcerated pregnant women in developing the attachments necessary for post-release family unification, to include the concept of prison nursery implementation, through the perspective of social workers. The prison nursery and its potential fit within a smaller correctional facility was examined along with other options for expanding supports for incarcerated pregnant women and their infants. The research questions are as follows:

RQ1: What are the gaps that exist in supporting incarcerated mothers develop attachment necessary for post-release family unification from the perspective of prison social workers in the northeast?

RQ2: According to prison social workers in the northeast, what supports can be established to assist incarcerated pregnant women develop attachment necessary for post-release family unification?

RQ3: What is the understanding of prison social workers in the northeast about how prison nurseries could assist incarcerated pregnant women to develop attachment necessary for post-release family unification?

RQ4: What do the northeast prison social workers identify as barriers to the successful implementation of a prison nursery?

This doctoral project explored how prison nurseries and social work practice align and what barriers may exist for the implementation of a nursery program. Special consideration was given to potential barriers that exist when considering introduction of a nursery program within a northeast correctional facility, but the study also has implications for other smaller correctional facilities throughout the country. The approach to examine this practice problem was action research. I used the list of employees accessible through my employment with the contracted healthcare agency to obtain the email addresses of the potential participants. The desired range of participants for the anonymous survey was between five and 10 individuals.

I work for a contracted company that provides healthcare services within a correctional facility in the northeast and also occupy a lead clinical role. In order to prevent any ethical violations or undue pressure on potential participants, an anonymous survey was utilized to collect the data. This helped ensure that my role did not impact anyone's participation in the research.

The purpose of this study aligns with the action research methodology and the use of an anonymous survey for a variety of reasons. Action research promotes finding solutions to real-world problems and engaging participants who have stakes in the

outcomes (Durak et al., 2016). The exploration of this practice problem through action research allowed for the social workers, which work with incarcerated individuals during their careers, to share their valuable opinions in an anonymous fashion. This aligns with Stringer's (2007) perspective regarding the importance of collecting data from individuals directly involved with the practice problem, rather than simply relying on the researcher's ideas to identify the issue.

As mentioned previously, to obtain the data, I created an anonymous survey through the website Survey Monkey. Upon finalizing the survey and sending out the link to it along with an invitation to participate and a consent form, data analysis began. This included the evaluation of the themes that arose, both latent and semantic, through Microsoft Excel for coding and data organization. Surveys allow for the collection of data that otherwise may not be routinely captured due to fear of stigmatization or discomfort that may come from other forms of data collection, such as discussing opinions in a public forum (Kelley-Quon, 2018; Wu et al., 2016). Additionally, Kelley-Quon (2018) said that in order for a survey to be effective, it must not lead a participant towards a certain perspective or answer, and it must also be understandable, which is what I strove for in creating the survey used in this study.

Methodology

Prospective Data

The data for this action research project was collected via an online survey and completed by social workers who chose to participate anonymously. The social workers received an email with information about participating in the research that Brooke

Sheehan, LCSW, a doctoral student at Walden University was conducting. The email included the invitation, consent form, and link for accessing the survey. The potential social worker participants were all employees of the contracted healthcare agency working within a northeast correctional facility.

Upon receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board, the anonymous survey was distributed to the emails of the social workers employed through the contracted health care agency. The email calling for participants was sent out a total of two times, with three being the limit recognized by the IRB. As mentioned previously, the e-mail received by the social workers employed through the contracted health care agency consisted of an invitation to participate, which provided a link to the online survey, and a consent form that participants were encouraged to save for their records. The importance of maintaining the Health Insurance Privacy and Accountability Act, otherwise known as HIPAA and best known for protecting private healthcare information (HIPAA Journal, 2017), was explained in the consent form and again during the online survey. A short description of a prison nursery was present prior to the participant answering the survey questions to help clarify the concept should a participant be unfamiliar. The qualitative nature of this study allowed participants to share their perspectives on how to increase healthy attachment between an incarcerated mother and her infant, as well as the concept of a prison nursery by providing responses to the online survey. The research questions were predominantly open-ended and related to the social work perception of the problem. A limitation is that the northeast correctional facility is just a small piece of the correctional landscape in America and has a populace that is

geographically older and less diverse than other parts of the nation. As a result, the opinions shared by social workers may not be nationally transferrable.

Participants

Surveys were sent to a total of 28 individuals; a participant total of five, as based on university requirements, was needed for the study. Convenience sampling, which Lee-Jen Wu, Hui-Man, and Hao-Hsien (2014) stated as a nonprobability method of sampling in which subjects are more readily available to the researcher was used to obtain participants upon receiving approval from the contracted healthcare agency and the northeast correctional institution. In order to participate in the study, individuals had to hold an active social work license within the northeast (LCSW, LMSW-cc, LSW), be currently working in either the contracted healthcare agency or the northeast correctional facility, and be willing to participate in a one-time anonymous online survey outside of working hours and away from company computers.

Instrumentation

Twenty-five social workers employed through the contracted healthcare agency received an e-mail regarding voluntary participation in an anonymous survey. I was unable to find any social workers employed through the department of correction that currently hold an active social work license. Two e-mails were sent to potential participants due to not receiving enough participants with the first e-mail. Both e-mails included the invitation to participate, consent form, and link to the survey. Upon accessing the survey, participants were informed about the concept of a prison nursery and reminded to refrain from violating HIPPA. They then went on to complete 11

questions, most of which were open-ended, however two of the questions were closed. As Roulston (2018) stated, broad questions allow for the participants to detail their experiences with the topic of the research and that was the intent behind utilizing the open-ended questions on this survey.

Existing Data

The existing data included in this study pertains directly to the northeast correctional facility and will include statistics available to the public from the correctional facility's website regarding the female populace. This information will be used to provide further substance as to whether or not a prison nursery program would be fitting within a smaller correctional facility. Data utilized from the northeast correctional facility's public website will be from 2019 and published by the correctional department's central office administration.

Data Analysis

As Meyer and Avery (2009) stated, a plethora of information is generally collected when utilizing qualitative research methods, which means coding is an essential aspect to making sense of the data. In order to manage the knowledge gleaned from the anonymous survey, I implemented an array of tools to ensure thorough examination. The first aspect of the data collection process entailed utilization of Microsoft Excel to organize the data, with the next steps including highlighting, coding and sorting the information with a specific focus on patterns that arose.

In order to analyze the data, I first took the questions and their responses from the anonymous survey and migrated them to a Microsoft Excel document. Bree and

Gallagher (2016) suggested collecting data and then migrating the information into Microsoft Excel in order to allow for sorting of the information by column or by specific features, such as by color. Upon transitioning the information to Microsoft Excel, this writer began looking for semantic themes that arose from the data and color-coded accordingly. As Bree and Gallagher (2016) supported, this was an initial step in looking at the data, but going back and examining latent themes and color-coding provides for a flush analysis. Individual cells were also reviewed after both the semantic and latent themes were established to provide for a thorough examination, with multiple documents (Excel sheets) created to produce transparency and a documented progression of how the themes evolved (Bree & Gallagher, 2016). As Saldana (2015) stated, there are multiple approaches to analyzing qualitative data that largely depend on the educational background of the researcher. The techniques that I utilized are codifying and categorizing. As Saldana (2015) described this means the data is organized in a systematic way based off of shared characteristics amongst the data. It was then reviewed multiple times to ensure thoroughness.

The use of self-description/ reflexivity ensured rigor. As Hadi and Closs (2016) stated, this means that the researcher describes her position within the study as well as what personal beliefs and training may be influential. Hadi and Closs (2016) contended that this technique helps maintain transparency and also reduces researcher bias. Morrow (2005) also supported this notion and described the process of stating one's position within a study as "monitoring of self" and being "rigorously subjective" (p.254). Once again, this assists with transparency and may allow scrutinizers of the research to

appreciate my awareness of self and how it can create potential bias, even when unintended.

Ethical Procedures

Ethical procedures involved in this process included the use of informed consent for the research participants and obtaining IRB approval before having any contact with potential participants. The IRB approval number is 04-03-19-0667800. Most social workers that are involved with the correctional facility and the contracted healthcare agency know each other, which makes the likelihood of the participants knowing one another extremely high. This is what led to the use of an anonymous survey. I reiterate that the raw data will remain on my laptop with a secure password that is accessible only to me and kept only for the minimum amount of time required by Walden University. A request that participants be mindful of HIPPA and not discuss individual client details in the survey was also addressed both in the content of the recruitment e-mails and at the beginning of the survey.

Summary

Section 2 provided information on the implementation of the anonymous online survey, how data was collected, eventual destruction of the data, and how ethical procedures were upheld. This body of data served the purpose of examining the opinions and experiences of social workers involved with the northeast correctional facility through the contracted healthcare agency. It additionally strives to inform whether or not a prison nursery would be a proper consideration for a smaller correctional facility. Additionally, this research will expand the available body of knowledge in regards to

supporting incarcerated pregnant women develop attachment necessary for post-release family unification, to include the concept of prison nursery implementation, through the perspective of social workers. The next sections will focus on the presentation of the findings, with a particular attention to data analysis techniques.

Section 3: Presentation of the Findings

The social work practice problem addressed via this study was how to better assist incarcerated pregnant women develop necessary attachments for post-release family unification, including the concept of prison nursery implementation, through the perspective of social workers. Through the examination of the research questions and data collected using SurveyMonkey, an anonymous online survey was created. Data were organized through Microsoft Excel for coding purposes, including examination of semantic and latent themes. Self-description and reflexivity allowed for rigor to be maintained. The research questions that were evaluated were:

RQ1: What are the gaps that exist in supporting incarcerated mothers develop attachment necessary for post-release family unification from the perspective of prison social workers in the northeast?

RQ2: According to prison social workers in the northeast, what supports can be established to assist incarcerated pregnant women develop attachment necessary for post-release family unification?

RQ3: What is the understanding of prison social workers in the northeast about how prison nurseries could assist incarcerated pregnant women to develop attachment necessary for post-release family unification?

RQ4: What do the northeast prison social workers identify as barriers to the successful implementation of a prison nursery?

Section 3 presents the following subsections: data analysis techniques, findings, and summary. This section will focus on the process of data collection. The process

around the data collection will then transfer into how the analysis of the data led to the findings

Data Analysis Techniques

Through Survey Monkey, an anonymous online survey was sent to 28 potential participants utilizing e-mail, although only 25 of the individuals I sent emails to were still working with the company and able to participate at the time they were sent. The email, which included the invitation to participate and consent forms, was sent to all potential participants through blind carbon copy and were sent out to the cohort twice, as the first round of emails generated four responses, and a minimum of five was needed. The second email led to two more participants completing the survey, for a total of six responses out of a possible 25, which is a 24% response rate. The data collection occurred over two weeks, and as mentioned previously, all of the recruited participants were working for the contracted healthcare agency serving a northeast correctional institution at the time.

Data analysis occurred using Microsoft Excel, which I utilized as a way to code the data and then review. As suggested by Learning for Action (n.d.), organizing the data in individual Excel worksheets for each survey question allows for transparency and a clear trajectory in terms of how data was coded and reviewed. Six core steps, as recommended by Maguire and Delahunt (2017) used in the data analysis process were: (a) being familiar with the data, (b) generating initial codes, (c) searching for themes, (d) reviewing themes, (e) defining themes, and (f) writing up the data. There were 11 survey questions, which translated into 11 separate Excel worksheets. Themes were identified as

either latent or semantic and individual responses were analyzed and color-coded when identifying core concepts articulated by participants. The research questions were then cross-referenced with the participant responses to develop themes in a more in-depth manner.

The use of identifying latent and semantic themes through coding is well-documented (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017; Braun & Clarke, n.d.). As Braun and Clarke (n.d.) said, thematic analysis involves identifying themes across a set of data. Identifying semantic themes means looking explicitly at what responses have been written or said verbally (Braun & Clarke, n.d.; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Examining latent themes means the researcher is looking at the deeper meanings behind the semantics, including ideologies and assumptions (Braun & Clarke, n.d.).

Validation procedures used included reflexivity and self-description. The development of reflexivity occurred through my journaling small notations involving internal responses to each survey question based on the researcher's experiences. As May and Perry (2017) said, reflexivity is an ongoing practice that a researcher uses throughout the research by revisiting reflections throughout the study. This was upheld by reflecting on perspectives I held prior to and during data collection, and throughout the analysis of the data. I utilized self-description by disclosing that I have worked with incarcerated pregnant women previously and that the concept of a prison nursery is one that I support as an intervention for incarcerated pregnant women.

Qualitative research comes with challenges, one of which includes the qualitative researcher's capability to demonstrate trustworthiness, or rather, the ability of the

researcher to accurately depict the perspectives of the participants (Leitz & Zayas, 2010). In referencing the seminal work of Lincoln and Guba (1985) Leitz and Zayas (2010) reaffirm the importance of developing trustworthiness by exemplifying the following: credibility, transferability, audibility, and confirmability. The researcher reflects on how these elements aligned in her study.

In regard to credibility, I chose to use an anonymous survey due to the participant pool being one where I have either worked or held a supervisory role. As mentioned previously, the correctional department is small, and the participant pool of social workers is even more minute. Through the IRB process and conferring with my Doctorate of Social Work (DSW) academic committee, an anonymous survey appeared to be the most ethical and credible way to perform the study. Limitations to credibility include a lack of random sampling and data triangulation. McLeod (2019) described random sampling as an ideal goal in research because everyone in a target population for participants would be chosen. However, with an anonymous survey utilized it was unlikely that random sampling could effectively occur. In regards to data triangulation, Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, and Neville (2014) defined this as utilizing more than one data source or method to understand qualitative data.

Transferability is often viewed as generalizability when examining quantitative research. However, as seminal authors Lincoln and Guba (1985) via Lietz and Zayas (2010) state, when transferability is referred to in qualitative research what is truly necessary is that the findings can be useful in practice, theory, or future research. Due to my being unable to find research on prison nurseries that applied directly to the opinions

of correctional social workers or nurseries operating in smaller departments of correction, the conclusions drawn in this study could be useful in advancing future research and knowledge on this subject matter. Limitations to transferability in this study include the total number of participants (6) being too small to be generalizable, in the traditional sense of the term.

Auditability refers to how well research procedures are detailed so that a researcher who replicates the study would be able to do so successfully, which can often include the use of an audit trail (Lietz & Zayas, 2010). The use of an audit trail frequently incorporates the use of reflexivity, which was utilized. Furthermore, the procedural steps taken throughout this study have been detailed within the confines of this paper, which provides an audit trail. Feedback from the DSW academic committee and IRB was also taken into consideration and applied throughout the research process.

Confirmability is the fourth element in maintaining trustworthiness during the research process. Shenton (2004) via Lietz and Zayas (2010) described confirmability as the process of ensuring that the findings are authentic to the participants rather than a demonstration of the researcher's perspectives. Bias was eliminated to the best of my ability, but human nature does provide a limitation in this regard. Utilization of elements previously discussed, such as reflexivity, self-description, and an audit trail, were all utilized and added to the element of confirmability.

Findings

The purpose of this study was to understand the perspectives of social workers on how to better nurture attachment between an incarcerated mother and her infant,

considering a prison nursery system, so that they can remain a unified dyad after release from prison. Although demographic information was not collected due to the potential for the violation of anonymity, all participants did self-identify as maintaining an active social work license through their answers provided on Survey Question 1.

This was a mandatory requirement for participation as the action research is specifically examining the perspectives of social workers on this topic.

The themes that arose from the collected data in connection with the research questions include a) gaps in restrictive nature of prison setting b) programming, treatment, and other supports needed c) promoting childhood normalcy d) prison nurseries as implementable.

Gaps in Restrictive Nature of Prison Setting

As aligned with RQ1, the research sought to better understand what gaps in practice existed in promoting attachment sufficient for post-release unification between incarcerated mother and infant through the perspective of social workers. The fifth survey question honed in on limitations within the system and participants were asked to identify what barriers exist that prevent the bonding between incarcerated pregnant women and their infants while they are in custody. The responses from the participants ranged from concerns about facility structure and the restrictive nature of the prison setting, restrictions on visiting with child and establishing a bond, not being able to co-parent, no current system where mothers can care for their child, and concerns about medical needs the newborn may have.

Analysis of the data suggest the two strongest semantic themes were bonding (33%) and time (33%). The latent theme that arose from data analysis was that administrative and facility barriers, along with restrictions related to the correctional environment, keep incarcerated mothers from being able to bond with their infants. Participant 6 said, “Currently women are not able to have appropriate bonding time with their infant children because they have to return to the facility.” Other participants articulated concerns around incarceration being the barrier, with Participant 1 stating, “The restrictive environment, structure of the facilities, restrictions about play objects, access to nature, and work requirements for mothers with children.” The concern about the infant’s access to appropriate resources was continuous, both semantic and latently, throughout the dataset. Another example of this is the comment by Participant 3 addressing the “lack of being able to co-parent “as being a barrier, which relates to the structural nature of incarceration. Other concerns vocalized included barriers due to administration regarding rules/regulations.

Additionally, Survey Question 2, provided information regarding additional institutional concerns that participants had regarding pregnant inmates residing in a correctional facility. Responses indicated the following concerns: cost, safety, stress to mother or baby, access, bonding, education on parenting, institutional concerns, and future repercussions. The most prominent semantic components were around health and growth of the fetus. Specific concerns vocalized by Participant 3 included, “Diverting Subutex and other medications/drugs-the health of the fetus when on prescribed Subutex/medications/drugs. Those that can be with their children and those that cannot

and the disparity.” This comment from Participant 3 perhaps best surmises both elements of the most prevalent semantic and latent themes that arose from Survey Question 2. As mentioned prior, health and growth of the fetus were of significant importance according to semantic analysis, and the most prevalent latent theme according to 50% of respondents to this question was focused on fairness. This included fairness to the fetus, whether that be in access to services, or as the quote above suggests, how the program will navigate the disparity between an individual who is unable to take part in this service.

In summary, participants felt that the structure and rules and regulations surrounding the correctional facility may be a barrier to the formation of healthy attachment between mother and infant, with the general identification of incarceration being the barrier. Furthermore, participants saw ensuring the health and growth of the fetus as a necessary element to attachment developing appropriately. This information is important as it identifies the gaps in practice as seen by social work professionals working within the correctional field as being around structure, rules and regulations, and ensuring health of the fetus.

Programming, Treatment, and Other Supports Needed

The fourth survey question asked participants to identify what programs or forms of treatment they felt were important for incarcerated pregnant women to receive. The semantic themes that permeated were 83% of respondents placing a high value on parenting related programs or treatment, as well as 50% valuing substance abuse related

programs or treatment. Additional themes that arose semantically but were less prominent included those programs and treatment options related to mental health; prenatal, birthing and breastfeeding; care for the child upon release; having access to programs or treatment that would be available in the community. Latent themes that surfaced were around the idea of holistic treatment that optimized support. Approximately 66% of responses demonstrated positive or neutral stances towards the incarcerated mothers, while 33% of responses presented as more negative towards the mother and her choices or capability to support a child. An example of this is demonstrated by Participant 3: “Women need to address the issue of why they are in prison, whether it is for driving, drugs/etho, sex trafficking; they also need decision-making, boundaries and parenting classes.”

This quote demonstrates, latently, the notion that the incarcerated woman is in prison without social influence, which eliminates substantial biopsychosocial factors such as poverty, race, gender, mental illness, addiction, and trauma. If this was not the latent theme the participant intended, it illustrates one of the limitations of this type of data analysis as survey answers do not provide an opportunity for follow-up questions as an interview would.

Survey question six asked participants what forms of support they believed were accessible to incarcerated pregnant women outside of corrections that may help them sustain their family systems. The spectrum of support ranged from mental health and substance abuse treatment, vocational rehab, general assistance, group homes, government programs, personal relationships, and being unsure of what is available. The analysis of semantics demonstrated the most frequent responses as being unsure (33%),

mental health and substance abuse services (33%), and utilizing the state government (33%). The latent theme that arose included the inference that the community and government programs were a predominant source of support over something such as family or friends. However, responses regarding specific community programs were mostly generic and un-descriptive, which leads the researcher to believe that participants are less aware of service availability than they represented. This is notable, because if practitioners want to be most comprehensive and promote continuity of care, a theme that arose in this dataset, then understanding what is truly available to women with children upon release from incarceration is critical.

An example of the general responses regarding service availability is reflected by Participant 2 in the following statement, “Community mental health, community substance use services, and voc rehab, general assistance.” This response demonstrates the ideas around what services exist for incarcerated pregnant women upon release, but is unable to articulate how accessible these services would be to women exiting a correctional facility. Additionally, smaller states may not have as many resources as larger ones, which could lead to services existing, but perhaps openings in the programs are limited.

The seventh survey question sought to establish what the participants perceived correctional social workers being able to do to help support pregnant women while incarcerated. The responses provided five ideas on ways correctional social workers could be supportive, including providing mental health and substance abuse services, providing psychoeducation particularly around parenting, modeling compassion,

providing access to supports or services, and fostering rapport. The semantic themes that developed through analysis included support, parenting, and mental health being reported by 60%, 50%, and 50% of respondents respectively. The latent theme that developed and appeared shared by most participants was the concept of support from social workers being as holistic as possible. Examples given in responses included supporting the individual from the time they enter the correctional institution, both pre- and post- natal, and the release from the correctional institution. This ranged in responses from social workers being accessible and in frequent communication with the incarcerated pregnant woman to helping connect them to supportive services upon release. Some respondents felt it was within the social worker's duty to campaign for services at the state level, as reflected by Participant 4's statement "Advocacy for additional supportive programs in (the northeastern state) that would promote child care, education, vocational endeavors."

Survey question eight asked the participants to consider how correctional social workers can help incarcerated pregnant women have a relationship with their infants post-release. The semantic theme that surfaced was the importance of the social worker facilitating community supports, with 66% of respondents placing value on establishing this connection. 33% of respondents also viewed the use of a probation officer as potentially helpful when discussing the establishment of community supports. As one Participant 5 stated, "Engage them or refer them to appropriate services or programs. Coordinating services and communicating with the probation officer." The latent theme most represented (by 50% of participants) pertains to the continuity of care. The participants' responses reflected the importance of maintaining intervention both inside

and outside of prison walls. One suggestion was to incorporate a step-down (less restrictive) program where the incarcerated pregnant women could get specialized resources and connections to the community.

In regards to programs that participants felt were already accounted for, medical and prenatal services were well spoken for. Survey Question 3, which asked participants to articulate what knowledge they had about medical services offered to incarcerated pregnant women, established the predominant themes of prenatal and general medical services, which both showed up in 50% of the answers reported by participants. Other services noted by participants but not in the semantic majority included dental, psychiatry, seeing a provider in the community, and being unsure of what services were available. The latent theme that developed was the belief that the available services were well rounded.

In conclusion, these survey questions all supported RQ2, which asked participants to identify what supports could be implemented to promote attachment between mother and infant post-release. Services were already viewed as well-rounded when examining the latent theme in Survey Question 3. Suggestions for implementation included more parenting programs, substance use programming and mental health treatment. Continuity of care was also discussed in responses in Survey Question 8, but barriers to this became evident when examining the lack of in-depth understanding for what services exist within the community already.

Promoting Childhood Normalcy

The ninth survey question focused on what the participants' viewed as important if a housing program for incarcerated pregnant women were to exist. The responses ranged from including access to nature, making sure the setting was home-like, ensuring there were plenty of play objects, ensuring the nursery unit was away from other inmates, and making sure an array of programs were available to the mother. One respondent skipped this survey question, slightly altering the percentages. For example, semantically the terms that appeared the most were home-like and play, which both occurred within 60% of responses.

Latent themes that presented from the analysis included the idea of bringing a sense of normalcy to a nursery set in prison along with ensuring there is a notable clinical presence. Survey responses that reflected both of the semantic and latent sentiments include the following remark made by Participant 1: "Warm, clean, cozy, more home-like, better access to baby stuff and play objects, more access to nature." Participant 4 stated, "The unit would need to be self-contained and away from other units. The unit would likely more successful if structured like a therapeutic community. Aside from developing supportive structures outside in the community for release, the unit would need to be educational and skills based." A different response by Participant 2 suggested a nursery program should be, "Set-up like a home with living areas, dining, child's room, and play area." This sentiment is optimistic but perhaps is more privileged than what the socioeconomic status is for women re-entering society post-release.

The survey questions addressed in this paragraph all address RQ3, which sought to understand how prison nursery programs could assist in promoting healthy attachment between mother and infant post-release. The information from the dataset suggests that making the placement of the nursery within a correctional complex and what is done to make the nursery as home-like as possible are essential. Participants demonstrated interest in a nursery being separate from the rest of the prison population and mirroring what a child may have in the community in regard to access to nature and play objects. A latent theme that arises is that participants may make suggestions based on privilege and perhaps not taking into consideration that being in nature is not always typical for individuals who live in the inner-city.

Prison Nurseries as Implementable

Survey question ten asked participants to identify what elements would be viewed as preferable if a nursery program were established. The main components of interest included having the same amenities as a regular birthing unit and providing parenting education and additional support in the form of psychoeducation, skills, and training. Analysis of semantics established the terms parenting and support as the most widely used terms at 83% and 50% respectively. Parenting was mostly associated with parenting education or classes being provided, with the term supports being connected to mental health, substance abuse, and vocational supports. The latent theme that arose is that the majority of respondents viewed the nursery program as an entity to meet the needs of the infant first. A couple of respondents identified equal consideration for both the incarcerated mother and her infant, but the overarching ideas were in support of

meeting the infant's needs first. Participant 3 shared, "Education, parenting support, healthy role modeling. Explain what happens to the fetus/baby if the mother is in constant turmoil, using drugs/ alcohol, is in an abusive relationship. What an impact the pregnant inmate makes on the baby."

The final survey question asked the participants whether or not they felt a prison nursery could be feasible in a smaller correctional facility. 66% of participants agreed a nursery would be feasible in a smaller correctional facility, while 33% stated they did not believe it would work. Three of the four participants who expressed that they envisioned a nursery to be feasible expressed that the following elements would be useful to the implementation of a prison nursery: funding, if the idea were supported, and if the safety of the mothers and their infants was a top priority. As stated Participant 2 "Yes, there are resources available and such services are needed for continuity of care, programs would support both the mother and child, it would improve child development and improve the mother's mental health and stability." Participant 4, who was one of the four participants who described a nursery as feasible reported that feasibility depended upon it being a stand-alone structure that served all incarcerated pregnant women in the state, "This type of programming would likely be feasible if it was a stand-alone structure that served all pregnant inmates in the State. Implementing such a program in all prison or jail settings would likely be untenable."

The 33% of participants who did not agree with program feasibility stated barriers as being a belief in the costs being too high, there already being opportunities for children to visit, and there needing to be a deterrent. The following quote by Participant 3

expresses the latter of the two points and demonstrates a latent theme of punishment:

“No, I think the women should do their time, then establish full time with their children when they leave. They have opportunities to bond/visit while in prison. It is prison, there needs to be a deterrent--you go to prison, you do not get to have your children here or get what you would get if you were on the outside.”

These questions align with RQ4, which asks participants whether or not a nursery program would be feasible. The results of the data analysis suggest that participants viewed the nursery program as being implementable within a small department of correction, such as the one in the northeast, with a few specifications. These specifications appear to center around the maintenance of the safety of the infant.

Unexpected Findings

The most surprising results were that the majority of participants viewed a prison nursery program as feasible in a smaller department of corrections. I had expected this concept to be less well-received. Additionally, I was surprised that the participants were unable to provide detailed examples of supportive services within the community. This seems like an area where a potential gap may exist in services within the community that can help promote or maintain family relationships.

Summary

In summary, the data unearthed four essential findings. The first included the barriers in promoting attachment seen as being around structure, rules and regulations, and ensuring health of the fetus. The second finding included the services currently available to incarcerated pregnant women being seen as well-rounded.

However, suggestions for implementation were still made. These included increasing parenting programs, substance use programming and mental health treatment. Continuity of care was also discussed but barriers to this became evident with participants surface-level responses to what supports already exist within the community. The third finding was that nurseries were recommended as being “home-like” and placed away from the rest of the prison population. This was identified by participants as being beneficial for both the mothers and infants. The final finding included nursery programs seen as being implementable within the northeast correctional institution.

Four key themes were identified in Section 3 including a) gaps in restrictive nature of prison setting, b) programming, treatment, and other supports needed, c) promoting childhood normalcy, and d) prison nurseries as implementable. In Section 4, I provided application to professional ethics and social work practice, recommendations for social work practice, implications for social change, and a summary.

Section 4: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Social Change

As mentioned throughout this research, the purpose and nature of this study was to learn how to assist incarcerated pregnant women in developing healthy attachments to maintain family unification after releasing from a correctional institution. This includes the implementation of a prison nursery program and explores these concepts through the perspectives of correctional social workers. The application to professional practice and implications for social change will be identified within this section.

Key findings, led by the research questions, established through data collection include the following: Facility structure, restrictive nature of the prison setting, limitations on visitations, and challenges to co-parenting were all identified as gaps in practice or services that prevent attachment between incarcerated mothers and infants. Parenting classes, substance abuse and mental health services, and vocational support were all identified as supports that could help foster attachment for post-release unification. Participants found that prison nursery programs could potentially help promote attachment by being home-like and providing infants with access to materials aligned with childhood normalcy, such as toys, as well as access to nature. The prison nursery program was viewed as implementable in a small correctional environment provided certain criteria were present.

The results from this study inform social work practice and extend knowledge in the discipline by establishing more literature on the perceptions of social workers regarding prison nursery programs in smaller departments of correction. I have not come across any other research on this topic while conducting the literature review.

Additionally, the exploration of prison nurseries has the potential to help social workers consider additional methods in which they can assist two vulnerable populations: incarcerated pregnant women and children. Furthermore, this study has the potential to spur social change by providing further information on the importance of maintaining familial bonds, especially if family maintenance is of critical concern. Recommendations will be discussed along with application to professional ethics in social work practice and implications for social change.

Application to Professional Ethics in Social Work Practice

The NASW social work guiding principle of challenging social injustice relates to the social work practice problem addressed in this paper. Not only are pregnant women a vulnerable population, but so are incarcerated individuals and children. Therefore, social workers have an ethical responsibility, as supported by the NASW Code of Ethics, to find ways to assist these populations in ways that provide safety, growth, and care to not only pregnant women but infants as well.

An additional aspect of the NASW Code of Ethics (2017), which states that social workers must improve the quality of life for individuals while also enhancing the well being of society, also relates to the practice problem. As suggested previously, infants born in correctional care frequently do not spend more than 48 hours with their incarcerated mother, which can lead to the disrupted attachment (Warner, 2015). The knowledge that one will have between 48 and 72 hours with their infant dependent on delivery method can cause substantial anxiety and depression. According to Oulette (2016) anxiety, stress, and depression experienced by a pregnant mother can lead to low

birth weight, being born early, ADHD, developmental delays, language delays, anxiety, depression, and behavioral or emotional issues. Additionally, mother's experiencing depression have higher rates of recurrent depression and suicide (Oulette, 2016). This information supports the importance of providing services to incarcerated pregnant women and their children in order to provide a better quality of life to both mother and infant. This study can impact social work practice by inspiring social workers to examine the importance of maternal health on a developing fetus and in regard to the impact on the mother during the postpartum phase. Services such as prison nurseries are one option to examine.

Recommendations for Social Work Practice

Based on the findings, two action steps that clinical social work practitioners working in small correctional departments can perform are communicating with staff and providing parental education. Communicating with staff regarding the importance of the mother's wellbeing on the developing fetus is essential for proper growth and providing the fetus an internal environment where it can thrive. Additionally, social work practitioners should become familiar with supportive services for families within the state and community where a mother and infant dyad will return to after the mother completes her sentence. Maternal health and well-being have a direct impact on the fetus not only at birth, but in the future (Oulette, 2016). Additionally, mothers experiencing depression and/or anxiety tend to have increased challenges with both depression and anxiety during pregnancy (Oulette, 2016). Social workers can help represent the NASW Code of Ethics and its values by investigating ways to help make maternal health a priority for

incarcerated women. Due to the findings demonstrating a strong semantic pull towards parenting education and a latent theme pertaining to a lack of in-depth knowledge regarding services available to support family systems post-incarceration, it is recommended that correctional social workers advocate for parenting education to any women with children within a correctional system. Additionally, increased social worker awareness and connectedness with outside services that provide assistance to families, as well as mental health and substance use treatment, would be integral in maintaining continuity of care and hopefully assist family systems in staying united.

As an advanced practitioner, these findings have an array of implications. I work in the field of corrections and have experience working with the incarcerated female population within the northeast correctional facility referred to in this study. Having firsthand knowledge about incarcerated pregnant women in a smaller department of correction is helpful when paired with the findings because it provides a context in which I can share the results with the administration of the northeast correctional facility as well as the contracted healthcare agency to better support incarcerated pregnant women, and in turn, their infants. This could affect not only this department, but also other human services agencies within the northeast who are involved with taking responsibility for children born to incarcerated women should she not have any other available supports to take custody of the infant.

Transferability in its traditional term is often viewed as generalizability, but qualitative researchers have described this term fitting more accurately within the qualitative field when connecting it to usefulness in practice, theory or future research

(Lietz & Zayas, 2010). In regards to generalizability, the study is too small to be reflected similarly in other small departments of corrections. This leaves room for the study to be replicated with other social workers in smaller correctional departments. This study is also useful in practice because it has the potential to provide social workers with information that they can relay to their employers regarding the importance of physical and mental maternal health.

On a broader level, this could impact the way social workers understand the importance of providing well-rounded services to women who are pregnant and currently under the care of the state, particularly in a restricted setting. The implications are poorer outcomes for both mother and fetus if maternal health is not addressed appropriately. This includes taking into consideration the impact of depression and anxiety on both the pregnant woman and fetus and considering programs that may better provide for both vulnerable groups individuals. For smaller departments of corrections without prison nursery programs, this is something social workers can further explore in regards to policy implementation.

The small number of respondents to the study is a limitation since it doesn't make it particularly generalizable. However, the anonymous nature of the sample is a strength. Recommendations for further research include replicating this study in other small departments of correction throughout the country. The demographics of individuals residing within the state where this northeast correctional facility resides are mostly White. I suggest replicating this study in other geographical locations to explain to whether limited diversity had an impact on responses.

The information gleaned in this study could be disseminated through a plethora of ways. However, with the intended audience being social workers and those involved in administrative roles within corrections, there are two different approaches recommended. The first recommendation would be to share the findings, via e-mail, with all of the individuals who were listed as potential participants, since any one of those individuals may have participated, and thus are co-researchers in the study. Secondly, this researcher would share the findings, via e-mail and potentially presentation, to the stakeholders in the study, including the northeast department of correction and the contracted healthcare agency. To begin disseminating this information among an increased number of social workers, this writer would recommend taking the findings to an NASW conference.

Implications for Social Change

The findings from this study present implications for social change on practice, research, and policy levels. On a practice level, correctional social workers may gain a clearer understanding of what services would be beneficial to incarcerated pregnant women, particularly those who are hoping to reunite with their child upon release. One example of this from the study would be the inclusion of more parenting education within a female correctional environment.

In regard to research, the study has been transparent about its limitations in transferability; with a total of six participants, it is not easily generalizable. However, this provides a strong foundation for interested researchers to replicate the study in other, small departments of correction for expansion on and comparison of the data from this study. Additionally, this study identified the perspectives of social workers on gaps in

practice that exist in promoting mother–infant attachment in a correctional environment. I have never seen other pieces of literature that focus on correctional social workers perspectives on this subject, which in turn, leads to this study helping to fill a gap in the current knowledge around promoting healthy attachment in mother–infant dyads when incarcerated.

Policies can be impacted through the findings in this study, particularly in smaller departments of correction. To reiterate one of the key findings in this study, the majority of participants found a prison nursery to be feasible. Presenting this information to administrative staff in the northeast correctional institution and, if supported, presenting it in front of a legislative body could also help transform policy and perhaps lead to the development of a prison nursery program. If a prison nursery program is unable to be orchestrated, policies can still be impacted in regards to what services and additional programs are offered to help promote the development of healthy attachment styles for mother and infant dyads post-release.

Summary

As reported in this study and through the literature review process, the health and well-being of an infant begins in-utero (Oulette, 2016). Pregnancy, birth, and postpartum timeframes are challenging to navigate without being incarcerated, and the impact of these experiences can have lifelong effects on both the mother and infant (Kingdon et al., 2015). As mentioned throughout this study, a prison nursery program serves the purpose of providing support for incarcerated pregnant women so that they can learn skills that

may assist them in helping their infants develop healthy attachment styles for maintained family systems post-release.

This study utilized an action research modality, which incorporated the use of an anonymous survey. Through the use of the anonymous survey, 6 participants, all correctional social workers working for a contracted healthcare company within a northeast correctional facility, responded to qualitative research questions regarding attachment and the feasibility of a prison nursery in a smaller correctional facility. The findings suggested that barriers in developing attachment between incarcerated mothers and their infants included facility structure, restrictive nature of a prison environment, limitations to visitations, and challenges in co-parenting. Additionally, education around parenting, substance abuse and mental health treatment, and vocational supports were all viewed as useful supports needed in the correctional setting for the population at hand. Participants also stated that nursery programs could help enhance attachment if they are home-like and provide access to things such as nature and toys. The majority of participants also found the introduction of a prison nursery program feasible within a smaller department of corrections.

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Appendix: Survey Questions

What is a prison nursery? A prison nursery is a correctional program that provides an opportunity for incarcerated women who give birth while in custody to continue raising their children while completing their prison sentence. There are currently 9 states offering prison nursery programs across the United States including: New York, Washington, Nebraska, Indiana, Illinois, South Dakota, West Virginia, California and Wyoming. Each state has slightly different rules and standards of operation including eligibility for the program based on length of sentence, behavior while incarcerated, and nature of a woman's crime. Women with crimes against children are currently not allowed participation in any of the existing prison nursery programs across the country and some programs do not accept women who have a history of committing a violent crime as well.

Additionally, programs range from 9 months to 3 years depending on what program is examined. One nursery program requires a fee for participation. The nursery programs all offer an array of opportunities for the mothers including a focus on parenting programs. Some programs have other incarcerated women in good standing assist in childcare during the day if the incarcerated mother is attending an education or vocational program. Some programs allow the incarcerated women to access early intervention programs as well as WIC benefits. The nurseries are all separated from the rest of the correctional facilities they are in, whether it be in separate wings with locked doors or separate buildings. There are often play areas outside for the children and the incarcerated mothers to utilize together.

*Please note, the term “post-release” is utilized in this survey. It is referring to release from the correctional facility.

Addendum: Please do not include any HIPPA related information when completing the survey. Thank you.

Survey Questions

1. Are you a licensed social worker (LSW, LMSW-cc, LCSW)?
 - a. Y or N
 - b. If an answer of “No” is selected no further responses are needed.

2. What concerns do you have about pregnant inmates within a correctional facility?

3. What healthcare services are provided to pregnant inmates that you know of?

4. What programs or specific forms of treatment are important for you in regards to pregnant inmates or inmates who give birth while in custody? Explain.

5. What barriers exist in promoting bonding between incarcerated women and their children including those women who give birth while in custody?

6. To the best of your knowledge, what forms of support do the pregnant inmates have outside of corrections to sustain their family systems?

7. How can correctional social workers help pregnant inmates while they are in custody?

8. How can correctional social workers help incarcerated pregnant women have relationships with their infants post-release?

9. Ideally, if a housing program existed within a female correctional facility that provided supports to pregnant inmates what would it look like?

10. If a program existed within a female correctional facility to provide support to incarcerated women who give birth while in custody, what would you like to see it include?

11. Do you think this type of program (referring to question 10 above) is feasible within a smaller correctional facility? Explain