

**The Social Organization Of Motherhood And Mothering
For Formerly Incarcerated Black Women**

BY

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DISSERTATION

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I dedicate this dissertation to Perla Lopez, whose steadfast love, faith, and patience carried me through; and to Cindy B., who inspired me to pursue my educational goals because “education is the great equalizer.” I will never forget you, Cindy B.

To the women whose stories I have the privilege of sharing in this project, thank you for teaching me about being a survivor and for making me a more compassionate scholar. I hope this work makes you proud.

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SUMMARY

This qualitative study focused on the significance of motherhood on the post-incarceration experiences of women with stigmatized social identities, as they relate to their socially prescribed gender roles as women, mothers, and partners or wives. It builds on existing research that demonstrates the disproportionate effects of mass incarceration on Black women, which, while important, has not adequately addressed the consequences of incarceration on them, in relation to their role as mother. The methodology involved a combination of semi-structured interviews and participant-observation with formerly incarcerated Black women to explore how motherhood as a social identity and mothering as a set of actualized practices becomes obscured by their involvement in illegal activities and subsequent incarceration. The findings indicate that the organization of motherhood and mothering for this group of women involved managing the tension between their lived experiences and normative ideals of the maternal role; managing the effects of a criminalized identity that overshadows the performance of tasks associated with the role of mother; and navigating an arduous reintegration process while attempting to remaining in compliance with systems of oversight that tended to exacerbate the long reach of punishment and disconnect them from the maternal role and mothering process.

In sum, the findings illuminated the interactions between structures of oversight by the criminal justice system, drug treatment facilities, the child welfare system, and prisoner reentry programs with micro-level practices in the women's daily lives, which include maintaining sobriety, securing employment and housing, and child-rearing as female offenders, Black women, and mothers, especially while engaged in the reintegration process following a period of incarceration.

I. INTRODUCTION

This study explores the social organization of motherhood and mothering for a group of formerly incarcerated Black women. Using qualitative research methodological techniques, this study examines how the social organization of motherhood as a social identity and mothering as a set of actualized practices is impacted by the women's involvement in illegal activities and their subsequent incarceration. Further, this dissertation illustrates that challenges and triumphs in the lives of a group of formerly incarcerated Black women as they navigate the reintegration process. It builds on existing research that demonstrates the perilous effects of mass incarceration and its disproportionate impact on the lives of those most vulnerable within the US social hierarchy, which, while important, has not adequately addressed the consequences of incarceration on Black women in relation to their role as mother.

This introductory chapter provides an organizational guide for the dissertation. It begins with an overview of the problem of mass incarceration in the United States. This context serves as the literary and theoretical underpinnings of this study and is expounded upon further in chapter 2. Also included in this introduction is a synopsis of research design. This study uses a two-stage qualitative research design to explore the meanings and experiences of the formerly incarcerated Black women in this study, which is described further in chapter 3. The introduction also includes a brief discussion of the researcher's assumptions and anticipated outcomes that will be addressed further in chapter 4. Lastly, it concludes with the rationale, significance, and implications of the study, which are covered in the final two chapters of this dissertation.

Although there is a growing body of scholarship concerning the problems associated with the exponential growth of the correctional system, the U.S. criminal legal system is distinct from other industrialized nations in that it has the largest population of citizens under some form of

correctional supervision (Mauer, 1999; Pew Center on the States, 2009). In fact, it can be argued that the United States is a “prison nation” given that mass incarceration has become a primary method of dealing with social problems related to poverty, mental health issues, and violence (Richie, 2012).

In chapter 2, the literary and theoretical backgrounds of the study are presented. This section begins with empirical data on mass incarceration in the United States. The U.S. incarcerates more of its residents than any other industrialized nation (Pew Center on the States, 2009). According to statisticians for the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), there were nearly seven million adults, or approximately 1 in every 34 adult residents in the US population, under the supervision of correctional agencies at yearend 2011 (Glaze and Parks, 2012). Correctional agencies that supervise adult offenders include federal and state prisons, local jails, and community corrections organizations like probation and parole (Glaze, 2011). Federal and state prisons had custody of nearly 1.6 million men and women within their correctional jurisdictions (Carson and Sabol, 2012), whereas approximately 4.8 million adult US residents were under the jurisdiction of probation and parole departments (Glaze, 2011). When accounting for the jail population as well, there are more than 2.3 million individuals incarcerated in the United States (Glaze and Parks, 2012).

For a number of reasons, the effects of mass incarceration disproportionately impact the lives of those most vulnerable within the US social hierarchy, especially poor women and women of color (Clear, 2007; Mauer and Chesney-Lind, 2002; Mauer, 1999; Richie, 2012; Sudbury, 2005). Chapter 2 also illustrates how, in recent years, women have become a subgroup whose lives have been most significantly impacted by mass incarceration (Díaz-Cotto, 2006; Davis, 2003; O’Brien, 2001; Richie, 2001; 2012). Their lives are impacted by their relationships

with partners who have been in conflict with the law and by their status as mothers of children who are coming in contact with the criminal legal system more frequently than ever before. Further, women are coming in contact with the correctional authorities as offenders at a higher rate than men (Carson and Sabol, 2012). The incarceration rate refers to the number of individuals incarcerated per 100,000 US residents (Sabol, West, and Cooper, 2009). Women account for nearly 7% of sentenced adults incarcerated in state and federal prisons (Carson and Sabol, 2012). However, for the last 3 decades, women's growth rate among incarcerated populations has consistently outpaced men (Chesney-Lind and Paskow, 2004; Sabol, West, and Cooper, 2009). At yearend 2011, federal and state prisons have seen a 19% increase in the number of female inmates under its jurisdiction, whereas men accounted for a 14% increase (Carson and Sabol, 2012). On average, the adult female inmate population increased at a rate of 1.7% per year between 2000 and 2010, whereas the adult male inmate population increased at a slightly lower rate (Carson and Sabol, 2012). Overall, the number of sentenced male and female inmates, per capita, decreased slightly from 2010-2011. However the imprisonment rate for women, that is the number of women incarcerated per 100,000 US residents, remained steady at 67 incarcerated women for every 100,000 female residents in the United States (Carson and Sabol, 2012; Guerino, Harrison, and Sabol, 2011).

While the disproportionate growth rate between sentenced men and women is no longer as stark as previously recorded, empirical research on incarcerated women has illuminated, possibly inadvertently, disproportionate racial dynamics among incarcerated populations. The arrest rates for Blacks is significantly less than that of Whites, 28% and 70%, respectively (Department of Justice, 2011). However, Black men are incarcerated at a rate 7 times higher than White men and Black women are incarcerated at a rate 3 times higher than White women

(Guerino, Harrison, and Sabol, 2011). Numerically, there were 129 Black female prisoners, for every 100,000 U.S. residents, sentenced to more than 1 year in correctional facilities under state and federal jurisdiction at yearend 2011 (Carson and Sabol, 2012). This rate is 3 times that of White women and twice that of Hispanic women. Criminological scholarship has devoted empirical studies to these trends in mass incarceration (Clear, 2007; Mauer, 1999, 2013; Tonry, 2011) however, consistent data on incarceration by both race and class simultaneously is not regularly tabulated by governmental statisticians. As such, empirical data on criminal offenses and incarceration of Black women is not readily accessible.

This study is situated within a contextual backdrop in which empirical data reported by local agencies to the Federal Bureau of Investigation shows that incarcerated women are most typically arrested for drug or property offenses (Department of Justice, 2011; Guerino, Harrison, and Sabol, 2011). In 2011, aggregate data on the number of arrests reveal that male offenders are arrested far more frequently than women, 74% and 26%, respectively. Further, women are more likely to be arrested for property and substance abuse offenses than violent crimes (Department of Justice, 2011). The sole offense category where women's arrests vastly outnumbered men's was that of prostitution and commercialized vice (Department of Justice, 2011). This suggests that gender functions as a significant factor in the disproportionate representation of female arrests in this offense category (Traylor and Richie, 2012).

The increasing rate of incarceration for women is significant not only because of their disproportionate rate of incarceration, but because of the dramatic affects of the collateral consequences (Mauer and Chesney-Lind, 2002) of their incarceration. Their families, especially children, are particularly vulnerable to the effects of the increase in women's incarceration (Enos, 2001; Wildeman, 2009; Wildeman and Western, 2010). This study would be remiss if it

failed to include an empirical description of the larger context of parental incarceration in an age of mass incarceration. The women in this study were incarcerated during a time period when US correctional agencies were experiencing a peak in the number of incarcerated parents (Glaze and Maruschak, 2008). In a 2008 report on parental incarceration for the Bureau of Justice Statistics, Glaze and Maruschak reported that between 1991 and 2007, US prisons experienced a sharp, 79%, increase in the number of parents incarcerated in state or federal prisons. At midyear 2007, more than 1.5 million people were incarcerated. Among those inmates, there were over 800,000 prisoners who are parents to more than 1.7 million children under the age of 18 (Glaze and Maruschak, 2008). The increase in the number of incarcerated parents coincided with the dramatic increase in the rate of incarceration of women. Most telling, is the faster rate of growth in the number of mothers being incarcerated, which increased by 122%, as compared to fathers, which increased by 76% between 1991 and 2007 (Glaze and Maruschak, 2008). As the rate of women being held in state or federal prisons and jails has spiked, so has the number of incarcerated women who are mothers.

A composite summary on mothers in prison is difficult to create, given that information on this subgroup of the inmate population is not regularly tabulated by criminal justice agencies. However, it is clear that the vast majority of female inmates are mothers to minor children. Over 70% of the women incarcerated in the US are mothers (Glaze and Maruschak, 2008). Women are more likely than men to have lived with their children and to have acted as the primary caregiver to their children prior to the incarceration. In the month prior to arrest and just before incarceration, 64.2% of women compared to 47.9% of men reported living with their children (Glaze and Maruschak, 2008). Approximately 37% of female inmates report that the father was the primary caregiver, while 88% of male inmates report that the mothers are the primary

caregivers (Glaze and Maruschak, 2008). These statistics illustrate another dimension of the problem of mass incarceration: incarcerated mothers must deal with motherhood in their lives behind bars and the continued effects of incarceration upon release. For example, incarcerated women are faced with the task of reestablishing relationships with the family members they left behind at a much higher rate than men. Their male partners may have had little to do with the daily care of their children, played a minor role maintaining in the family unit, or had female partners who ensured they maintained a connection to their children. Issues related to parental incarceration, especially maternal incarceration, are significant because they illustrate the far-reaching effects of mass incarceration in that an increasing number of families are fractured as the female incarceration rate increases, especially as the number of women who are mothers increases.

Using aggregated data, scholars such as Glaze and Maruschak, (2008); Morash and Schram (2002), and Greenfield and Snell (1999) have analyzed empirical data to create a generalized profile of the typical incarcerated woman. The general characteristics of an incarcerated woman can be summarized as an unmarried, poor, woman of color (African-American or Latino) with little education or job experience, between the ages of 25 and 44, and one to two children under the age of 18 (Glaze and Maruschak, 2008; Greenfield and Snell, 1999; Guerino, Harrison, and Sabol, 2011; Morash and Schram, 2002). Further, she would have been incarcerated for property crimes, drug offenses, or prostitution. This summary of incarcerated women provides a general perspective on the population; however, statistics do not distinguish between the nuanced experiences of incarcerated women and the circumstances by which they became incarcerated.

The later half of chapter 2 described the theoretical frameworks used in this study, particularly related to the construction of motherhood and its influence on conceptualizations of the Black women in that role. It is situated within a Black feminist theoretical framework in order to analyze the ways in which the Black family unit represents one of the most vulnerable populations in US society due partly to sustained ideological constructions of pathology concerning Black motherhood and mothering (Collins, 2000). Furthermore, the prevalence of incarceration within Black families furthers their vulnerability, especially when it is the maternal figure that is incarcerated (Western and Wildeman, 2008). Negative conceptualizations of Black motherhood further the vulnerability of the family as a whole.

The relationship between motherhood, race, and Black women's status as formerly incarcerated women warrants further study because motherhood, as a primary social identity for women, and mothering, as a set of actuated duties required of women, represent a fundamental socially institutionalized site of contradiction because of their historically-sustained subordination within a racialized, classist, and patriarchal social system. Black women who are mothers are simultaneously revered as the "backbone" of the Black family, while also viewed as major component in the deterioration of the Black family (Collins, 1994, 2000; Giddings, 1984; Moynihan, 1967). Further, Black mothers are often stigmatized for raising children who are branded "delinquent", regardless of the children's involvement in criminalized activities. In turn, these children are considered detrimental to the rest of society (Richie, 1999). These contradictions have persisted and have had a dramatic effect on the lives of Black women who are mothers. As such, the relationship between Black womanhood, racialized constructions of motherhood, and mass incarceration form the basis of the social context in which this study is situated and the problems it seeks to address.

Despite the prevalence of research that demonstrates the perilous effects of mass incarceration and its disproportionate impact on the lives of those most vulnerable within the US social hierarchy, a thorough analysis of the consequences of incarceration on Black women, in correlation to their role as mother, is lacking. This research was designed to explore the relationship between the motherhood social identity and daily performance of mothering by formerly incarcerated Black women who also are mothers. For this subgroup of women, incarceration obscures their social identity as mothers, imposes limitations on their performance as mothers, and influences society's response to them in this role. This study attempts to bridge the gaps in scholarly research on this subgroup and suggests prosocial policy responses to issues concerning motherhood and mothering, racialized constructions of identity, and incarceration.

The significance of this research relates to the prevalence of mass incarceration in the United States and the far-reaching implications it has on Black women and their families. While statistics illustrate the prevalence of mass incarceration in the lives of women within the general population, Black women's disproportionate representation among incarcerated populations of women is worth noting. The consequences of incarceration are especially alarming because Black women are incarcerated at a rate of nearly 3 times that of White women and twice that of Hispanic women. As the rates of incarceration for the general population of women and mothers increase, so does that of Black women who are mothers. Black women are differentially impacted by mass incarceration on numerous dimensions; first, as women with disproportionate incarceration rates, second, as mothers to children who are coming in contact with criminal legal agencies far more frequently, and third, as partners of individuals subjected to high-levels of surveillance and criminalization. Further, the construction of pathological images of themselves in their social roles as women, mothers, and partners exacerbates their vulnerability. Despite

their disproportionate representation among incarcerated women, there is little research focused exclusively on Black women, especially mothers. Further, there is a lack of scholarship into how constructions of Black motherhood, the circumstances that serve as pathways to incarceration, and the lived experiences of Black women within racist, classist, and patriarchal social systems are illustrated in experiential knowledge and lived experiences of formerly incarcerated Black women who are mothers. This study seeks to address this gap in knowledge.

Chapter 3 presents the research design used in this study. The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between motherhood and incarceration while filling the void in knowledge about how these topics affect the lives of formerly incarcerated Black women. In order to investigate the organization of motherhood and mothering for formerly incarcerated Black women, this study utilized multi-case study research techniques rooted in the qualitative research tradition. This study employed a combination of semi-structured interviews and participant observation techniques to gather data that would illuminate the ways formerly incarcerated Black women who are mothers conceptualize motherhood and mothering, that would show how they make sense of their role as mothers who have been incarcerated, and would reveal how they organize their daily lives as formerly incarcerated Black mothers.

This multi-case study is dynamic in nature and because it responds to the issues and topics that emerged from the participants' understanding of the relationship between motherhood, mothering and incarceration. It is structured to explore the following research question:

- How are motherhood and mothering organized for formerly incarcerated Black women who also are mothers?

This study uses an iterative process that evolved as the research process progressed. In a broader context, this project explores the experiential knowledge, subjective meanings, and feelings of each participant, given their lived experiences. Also, it explicates their understanding of the objective or concrete experiences that have influenced and organized their lives both as formerly incarcerated Black women and Black mothers.

With the approval of the University of Illinois at Chicago's Institutional Review Board (see Appendix A), this qualitative study utilized a two-stage methodological approach to explore and describe the experiential knowledge, perspectives, and subjective meanings and feelings of a group of formerly incarcerated Black mothers from their *own* standpoint. During stage one, audio-recorded semi-structured interviews were conducted with 13 formerly incarcerated Black women who were mothers to at least one minor child and had been released from a correctional agency within three years prior to the interview. During stage two, ethnographic data collection techniques, specifically participant observation, were employed with two of the stage one participants over the course of a 6-month period.

The primary data collection techniques implemented in this study were a combination of semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and casual or informal interviewing, which are most useful in eliciting the rich and detailed data implicit of the qualitative research tradition (Creswell, 2003; Weiss, 1994; Yin, 2009). The data were analyzed using a process of coding and drafting of analytic memos on emergent themes in relation to the analytic frameworks of the study.

The study's findings are described in chapter 4. The women in this study shared insights into the social organization of motherhood and mothering. As this is a qualitative study, narratives from the women's interviews and the participant observation component of the study

are presented. Key research findings derived from the data are categorized into four emergent categories: role as mother, involvement in illegal activities, relationships and other maternal influences, and reentry and reintegration. The categories were revealed through careful analysis and grouping of frequently occurring themes in the data, as opposed to pre-determined categories selected by the researcher.

The findings chapter concludes with central findings from the ethnographic narratives collected during 6 months of participant observation research with two participants selected from the stage one participant pool. Central themes from observation of Camille and Candice's daily experiences show how motherhood and mothering are organized when women are actively engaged in the reintegration process and recovering from long-term drug addictions.

The central findings of this study revealed that motherhood and mothering in the lives of the group of the Black women in this study involved managing the tension between their lived experiences and normative ideals associated with the maternal role; managing the effects of a criminalized identity that overshadows the performance of tasks associated with the maternal role; and navigating the reintegration process while remaining in compliance with oversight systems tended to exacerbate the long reach of punishment and disconnect them from the maternal role and mothering process. Chapter 5 demonstrates how these analytical categories align with the women's experiences and connect with the theoretical frames and ethnographic data obtained during stage two.

This chapter concludes with a discussion of a number of theoretical assumptions held by the researcher at the onset of this study. These assumptions relate to the social organization of motherhood and mothering for formerly incarcerated Black women based on reviewed literature on motherhood, mass incarceration, and parental incarceration and Black feminist epistemology.

The first assumption relates to the process of mothering for formerly incarcerated women who are mothers. Specifically, it assumes that the women in this study will want to regain custody of their children upon release. This assumption is based on the commonly held premise that women instinctually desire to care for their children, despite the difficulties that impede their abilities to do so (Enos, 2001; O'Brien, 2001; Snyder, 2009). The second assumption posits that resuming the maternal role will encourage desistance among formerly incarcerated mothers. This assumption is based on reunification literature that suggests reuniting formerly incarcerated women with their dependent children strongly encourages them to refrain from further involvement in criminal activities (Michalsen, 2011). A final assumption is that the women's access to social supports will be negatively impacted by their status as ex-offenders with felony records; and in turn will impede their abilities to mother their children while reintegrating into "free" society following their incarceration. This assumption is based on the premise that formerly incarcerated individuals are barred from certain types of jobs, housing options, and sources of income and funding because of their criminal record (Petersilia, 2004). Further, it is assumed that this premise will be most evident in the women's descriptions of their experiences during the reintegration process.

The dissertation concludes by revisiting the analytical categories described in chapter 5 and expounds upon the rationale and implications of the study. The rationale for this study stems from the researcher's interest in the effects of maternal incarceration on the Black family unit, given the far-reaching implications of Black women's disproportionate representation among incarcerated populations in the US. Further, this study is derived from the researchers interest in the negative impact of ideological constructions of Black motherhood and mothering when they intersect with other stigmatized social identity, in this case the criminal identity.

This project offers four significant contributions to the scholarship. First, this study contributes an intersectional understanding of the institutionalization of motherhood in US society. Motherhood has been socially constructed and institutionalized as a fundamental social identity for women (Chodorow, 1999; Rich, 1986; Rothman, 2000). Investigating the first-hand experiences of Black women who are mothers who have been incarcerated, allows their narratives to illuminate how mainstream constructions of motherhood, rooted in White, heterosexual, patriarchal conceptions of womanhood, diverge from their lived experiences. Normative conceptions of motherhood (an analytical framework to be discussed in the next section) present a unique challenge for these women because their social location and the effects of interlocking oppressions based on race, class, sexuality, and gender. These factors make it nearly impossible to achieve the ideals of hegemonic notions of motherhood, as it does not give space to women who present a challenge to normative gender roles. In this case, the insights and experiences of the Black women in this study challenge race, class, and gender assumptions about normative motherhood and mothering. The social identities of Black women who are mothers have been historically pathologized and constructed as deviant, therefore Black women have been viewed as an affront to womanhood and, hence, motherhood. A history of incarceration only furthers the pathological construction.

Secondly, this study contributes to the development of a more comprehensive understanding of the role of motherhood and mothering in the Black community. By investigating the construction of motherhood and mothering and its effects on Black mothers who have experienced incarceration, this study broadens an understanding of motherhood, given a phenomenon that is occurring in the lives of an increasing number of Black women at a higher rate than their White and Latina counterparts. Therefore, this study demonstrates the need for

centralizing this prominent social role for women at the forefront of efforts to address the issue of incarceration within the Black family and among Black women.

A third contribution that this study makes to criminological understandings of female incarceration relates to gender-specific reintegration efforts. While gender-specificity has been shown to be most effective in reintegrating women into the outside community following incarceration, there must be a broadening of the approaches used (Bloom, Owen, and Covington, 2005; Richie, 2001). In particular, gender-specific approaches must incorporate the nuances associated with social roles and contexts from an intersectional analytic framework, especially when working with women of color. Black women, who are also formerly incarcerated, are a seriously understudied subgroup within the criminal justice system. However, the research that is available demonstrates that women are affected differently, given their social position and the context within which they reside (Bloom, Owen, and Covington, 2005; Shearer, 2003; Traylor and Richie, 2012). The experiences of the women in this study show that reintegration approaches must be able to account for these differences, whether they are related to race, class, gender, sexuality, or women's social roles as a mother.

Lastly, this project contributes a pragmatic understanding of the far-reaching effects of mass incarceration, especially for those most vulnerable in the social hierarchy. As such, a discussion of policy recommendations for providing effective social support services to formerly incarcerated Black women who are mothers is included in the conclusion of this study. This research offers a reconceptualization of understandings of Black motherhood in the age of mass incarceration in order to centralize the experiences of criminalized Black women in such a way that they are no longer rendered invisible by the criminal legal system, scholars, or policy makers. This research highlights the need to better understand the lives of this subgroup of Black

women as it relates to their identity as mothers and formerly incarcerated individuals. By focusing attention on one of the most marginalized subgroups of US society, this study challenges practitioners, scholars, and policymakers to actively and effectively address the needs of this vital component of the Black community in ways that go beyond mere crime control and desistance.

The study also concludes with both research recommendations for future study related to motherhood and mothering, racialized constructions of identity, and mass incarceration, as well as the researcher's reflection on conducting the study.

A. **Key Concepts and Definitions**

1. **Motherhood**

In this study, “motherhood” is conceptualized as a social identity and role for women; whereas “mothering” refers to a set of actualized processes required of women in performance of the role of mother. Motherhood is defined as a social role that is embedded within patriarchal social arrangements in US society, which privileges men over women in the social hierarchy. Normative conceptions of the role of mother are enforced via “direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law, and language, customs, etiquette, education, and the division of labor” (Rich, 1986).

2. **Mothering**

In this study, “mothering” is defined a process best understood as the actuated processes linked to women's gender role, lived experiences, and actuated tasks performed as a mother (West and Fenstermaker, 1995). Mothering involves performing tasks associated with caretaking including such duties as providing nourishment, shelter, health care, and education for offspring.

3. **Intersectionality**

Intersectionality is an analytical framework that illustrates the differential impacts of interlocking oppressions on women of color, particularly Black women (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1991; Glenn, 2000; Hull, Scott, & Smith, 1982; Richie, 1996; Sudbury, 2005). In this study, an intersectional framework rooted in Black feminist epistemologies is used to analyze the simultaneous influence race, gender, and class social structures on the conceptualization of the role of mother and the mothering process for the women in this study. Further, intersectionality, as a critical inquiry, is appropriate for use in this study because it centralizes Black women's voices, experiences, and ways of learning and doing mothering.

4. **Mass incarceration**

"Mass incarceration" is conceptualized in this study to refer to the exponential growth of incarcerated populations within US jails and prisons due to the use of incarceration as the primary method for addressing social problems associated structural inequality, which manifests itself via poverty, substance abuse, mental health, and violence.

5. **Reentry**

Prisoner reentry is conceptualized to refer to a process of leaving prison and returning to society (Travis, 2005). In this study, reentry relates solely to the moment of departing correctional jurisdiction and reentering "free" society.

6. **Reintegration**

Reintegration is differentiated from reentry in that reintegration refers to the ever-changing process of adaptation back into social life following incarceration. In this study reintegration is conceptualized to incorporate the challenging process most former prisoners face

in dealing with the stigma associated with being formerly incarcerated individuals, upon their return to the community (Travis, 2005).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Introduction

In order to situate this study within the landscape of scholarly work on Black women who are mothers and have a history of incarceration, this dissertation research builds upon four bodies of literature within the disciplines of criminology, sociology, feminist studies, and Black feminist epistemology. This chapter begins with an overview of the criminological literature on female offenders and incarcerated women. The first section of the chapter uses official statistics from justice organizations to describe the prevalence of women under correctional jurisdictions and provides the contextual background of empirical research within which this study fits. This section also includes an overview of feminist criminological literature concerning the study of gender and crime. Feminist scholars have been instrumental in centralizing gender in the study of crime and justice in response to women's virtual invisibility in criminological research. This scholarship is important because it provides a critical assessment of theoretical explanations of women's involvement in criminal activities extrapolated from studies on male subjects.

Scholarship on normative constructions of motherhood and mothering processes comprise the second area of research this study is built upon. Studies on the construction of motherhood and ideological work that reify gender roles for women have been central to understanding the conflation of motherhood and womanhood under patriarchal social arrangements. This body of literature slightly overlaps with the third area of literature that this study builds upon, intersectional research on Black feminism and the meaning of motherhood for Black women. Black feminist scholarship centralizes the epistemologies of Black women and their varied experiences, particularly in various social roles including motherhood. Further, this body of literature illuminates interlocking systems of oppression experienced by Black women

due to the influence of racism, classism, and sexism conjointly. This literature demonstrates how interlocking systems of oppression influence the construction of images of Black women who are mothers.

Lastly, this study builds upon intersectional research on Black motherhood, crime, and incarceration. This body of literature, although lacking in vastness, illuminates the complexity of the race, class, gender, and sexuality dimensions of the crime and incarceration. This literature is composed of research on the criminalization of poverty (Fineman, 1991; Gustafson, 2009, 2011); scholarship documenting the prosecution of drug addicted mothers (Martinot, 2007; Roberts, 1997), and research challenging the construction of the “unfit” or “immoral” Black mother (Henriques, 1982, 2001; Richie, 1999). Further, studies in this area have been essential to contextualizing the criminalized social identities of Black women engaged in illegal activities. This literature in this area also demonstrates the perilous effects of interactions between race, criminality, and motherhood in the lives of the Black family, who are disproportionately impacted by mass incarceration.

This dissertation contributes to these four bodies of literature and fills a number of gaps in scholarship concerning female incarceration, Black women’s motherhood identity and mothering process, and intersectionality. It culminates into an interdisciplinary study on the lived experiences of formerly incarcerated Black women who are mothers.

B. Empirical description of women involved in illegal activities

Empirical data on women’s involvement in illegal activities and incarceration have contributed valuable descriptive information of the prevalence of female offenders under the jurisdiction of the US correctional system. The US Department of Justice’s Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) is one of the few official governmental agencies that frequently produce

empirical data on women under the jurisdiction of correctional authorities. Generally, correctional authorities have jurisdiction nearly seven million individuals, nearly 3% of the US population, in federal and state prisons, local jails, and community corrections organizations like probation and parole. (Glaze and Parks, 2012). One in 50 of these individuals are under community supervision through parole or probation offices (Glaze and Parks, 2012). One in 107 or 2.2 million adults are incarcerated in jails or federal and state prisons (Glaze and Parks, 2012).

According to statisticians from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, women comprise nearly 7 % of all prisoners under the jurisdiction of state and federal corrections authorities (Carson, and Sabol, 2012). This translates to more than 111,000 women who are under the legal jurisdiction of state or federal officials for more than one year, regardless of where they are physically held in prison facilities (Carson and Sabol, 2012). Males were imprisoned at a rate of 932 per 100,000 residents, which is 14 times higher than the incarceration rate for women. But, the rate of increase in women under the jurisdiction of correctional authorities continues to outpace men. In fact, although there has been an overall decrease in the number of men and women under correctional jurisdiction from 20010-2011, the imprisonment rate of sentenced female prisoners increased at an annual rate of 1.1% in the previous decade 2000-2010. This increase was twice that of sentenced male prisoners (Carson and Sabol, 2012). Data on the growth rate of sentenced females under correctional jurisdiction demonstrates a trend in the changing dynamics occurring within the correctional system. This data highlights a sustained influx in the number of women entering correctional facilities and under the authority of correctional officials.

While the disproportionate growth rate between sentenced males and females is no longer as stark as previously recorded, empirical research on incarcerated women has illuminated,

possibly inadvertently, disproportionate racial dynamics among incarcerated populations. Generally, the arrest rates for Blacks is significantly less than that of Whites, 28% and 70%, respectively (Department of Justice, 2011). In 2011, Black men were incarcerated at a rate between 5 to 7 times higher than White men. During the same time period, Black women were incarcerated at rate between 2 to 3 times that of White women and 1 to 3 times that of Hispanic women (Carson and Sabol, 2012). Further, there were 129 Black female prisoners, for every 100,000 U.S. residents, sentenced to more than one year in correctional facilities under state and federal jurisdiction (Carson and Sabol, 2012). Some criminological scholarship have devoted empirical studies to these trends in mass incarceration (Mauer, 2013; Tonry, 2011) however, governmental statisticians do not regularly tabulate consistent data that compare the interaction of both race and class simultaneously. As such, empirical data on criminal offenses and incarceration of Black women are not readily accessible, however, a 2013 study on shifting racial dynamics in women's incarceration found that trends in race and gender dynamics of incarceration over the last decade show Black women's incarceration rates appear to decline while the rates of White and Hispanic women are increasing (Mauer, 2013). Mauer contends these declines are not the result of the end of the mass incarceration of Blacks but may indicate policy shifts in law enforcement, changes in Black women's engagement in illegal activities, or socioeconomic shifts.

Empirical data reported by local agencies to the Federal Bureau of Investigation show that incarcerated woman are most typically arrested for drug or property offenses (Department of Justice, 2011; Guerino, Harrison, and Sabol, 2011). Aggregate data on arrests reveal that male offenders are arrested far more frequently than women. Further, women are more likely to be arrested for property and substance abuse offenses than violent crimes in comparison to men

(Carson and Sabol, 2012; Department of Justice, 2011). This suggests that gender functions as a significant factor in the disproportionate representation of female arrests in this offense category (Traylor and Richie, 2012).

Empirical data on incarcerated women must also include data on parental incarceration, although it is not regularly collected. Research on parental incarceration and its effects on children indicates that a parents' incarceration may negatively affect children by increasing the likelihood of children's future incarceration, poor educational outcomes, and antisocial behavioral outcomes (Wakefield and Uggen, 2010; Wildeman, 2009; Wildeman and Western, 2010). In a 2008 report on parental incarceration for the Bureau of Justice Statistics, Glaze and Maruschak reported that between 1991 and 2007, US prisons experienced a sharp, 79%, increase in the number of parents incarcerated in state or federal prisons. Among the 1.5 million inmates in US jails and prisons, there are 809,800 prisoners who are parents to 1,706,600 children less than 18 years of age (Glaze and Maruschak, 2008). The increase in the number of incarcerated parents coincided with the dramatic increase in the rate of incarceration of women. Most telling, the incarceration rate for mothers increased 122% compared to fathers, which increased by 76% between 1991 and 2007 (Glaze and Maruschak, 2008). As the rate of women being held in state or federal prisons and jails has spiked, so has the number of incarcerated women who are mothers.

A composite summary on mothers in prison is difficult to create because data on this subgroup of the inmate population are not regularly collected by criminal justice agencies. However, over 70% of incarcerated women in the US are mothers to minor children (Glaze and Maruschak, 2008). Further, these women were more likely than men to have lived with their children in the role of primary caregiver prior to the incarceration. In the month prior to arrest

and just before incarceration, 64.2% of women compared to 47.9% of men reported living with their children (Glaze and Maruschak, 2008). Nearly 37% of female inmates report that the father was the primary caregiver, while 88% of male inmates report that the mothers are the primary caregivers (Glaze and Maruschak, 2008). These statistics are an indication of the prevalence of incarcerated women who are mothers and the implication of their incarceration on their children. Not only are these women dealing with their lives behind bars but they also encounter the daunting task of reestablishing relationships with the family members they left behind at a much higher rate than men who may not have played a major role in the care of their children or have not had their role interrupted as significantly as women.

The women in this research project fit a generalized profile of incarcerated women in US jails and prisons (Glaze and Maruschak, 2008; Greenfield and Snell, 1999; Morash and Schram, 2002). An analysis of empirical data on the general characteristics of an incarcerated woman reveal an unmarried, poor, woman of color (African-American or Latino) with little education or job experience, between the ages of 25 and 44, and approximately two children under the age of 18 (Glaze and Maruschak, 2008; Greenfield and Snell, 1999; Carson and Sabol, 2012; Morash and Schram, 2002). Further, the general profile also indicates that women are most frequently incarcerated for property crimes, drug offenses, or prostitution. This summary of incarcerated women provides a general perspective on the population, however statistics do not thoroughly distinguish between the nuanced experiences of incarcerated women and the circumstances and contexts that precipitated their incarceration.

C. **Feminist responses to the study of gender and crime**

Feminist criminological scholars have been instrumental in addressing the disparities in the creation of knowledge concerning women's experiences with crime. These scholars

challenged the shortcomings of traditional sociological and criminological explanations of women's involvement in criminalized activities (Belknap, 2001; Britton, 2000; Chesney-Lind, 1998; Chesney-Lind and Paskow, 2004; Daly, 1994; Flavin, 2001; Naffine, 1987; Richie, 1996; Simpson, 1989). Further, research by feminist criminologists provided much needed critiques of dominant theoretical explanations of female offending, which were typically rooted in essentialist notions of women's lived experiences within a patriarchal social system.

The literary landscape of the field of criminology traditionally has focused on male offenders, thus relegating "women's issues" to the periphery of criminological research (Belknap, 2001, Chesney-Lind, 1998; Daly and Chesney-Lind, 1988; Faith, 1993). When consulting criminal justice statistics, it appears that women are more law-abiding than men due to their low numbers of arrest and incarceration in comparison to men (Carson and Sabol, 2012; Department of Justice, 2011; Glaze and Parks, 2012). It has been argued that women's invisibility seems somewhat logical, as they are not engaged in illegal activities at such alarming rates as men (Daly and Chesney-Lind, 1988; Flavin, 2001). However, feminist criminologists have countered that given the dramatic increase in the number of women incarcerated in state or federal prisons and local jails, it is no longer adequate to continue to dismiss topics of gender and women's experiences as marginal within criminological research (Belknap, 2001, Chesney-Lind, 1998; Daly and Chesney-Lind, 1988; Faith, 1993).

Criminological scholarship has traditionally focused on male subjects, while women virtually have been invisible in the study of crime (Naffine, 1987; Wilson and Rigsby, 1975). This pattern is not new or unique to criminology, however, as most areas of social scientific inquiry have shown bias toward male subjects. In her pivotal work on the gender and the construction of knowledge, Harding (1980) points out the epistemological privilege of male

researchers in which the productions of social knowledge was purported to be objective, even when constructed solely from a male gaze. The female experience and femininity were constructed in opposition to the standard of the masculine experience and were therefore perceived as marginal in comparison. Harding calls for the development of a new epistemological paradigm that challenges oppositional approaches to the production of social knowledge and incorporates women's experience into the construction of such knowledge.

The influence of epistemological privilege and patriarchal social arrangements on the construction of knowledge about criminality is not a new trend in criminological scholarship, nor is it solely based on male interpretation of female criminality. Hughes' work tested the representation of women in criminological literature. Hughes (2005) conducted a content analysis of criminological and sociological research articles from 1895-1997 and found that the underrepresentation of women in criminological studies could be attributed to an overrepresentation of male researchers in the field who tend to concentrate on male crime and delinquency (19). In her examination of both American and British research articles, fewer than 11% concentrated on women. Hughes' findings supported the contentions of previous feminist scholars that women's inclusion in criminological research is minimal (13). Lastly, Hughes' findings also show that a great deal of the research conducted on women was actually done by male researchers, *not* female researchers (19). In addition, female researchers also were more likely to focus on male subjects (19).

When gender has been acknowledged in criminological theory, it still reified normative gender constructions of women's identity (Adler, 1975; Simon, 1975). For example, within a normative patriarchal social structure, "fallen" or "unruly" women who engaged in illegal activities were not only violators of legal statutes but also transgressed their feminine nature

(Heide, 1974; Roberts, 1995; Simpson, 1989). Early studies of women and crime commonly presented this notion of female transgressions as acts against her “womanly nature” (Adler, 1975). Women involved in illegal activities were maladjusted to their gender role and thought to have conflated their gender with that of men by engaging in criminal activities. Adler termed the emergence of these “deviant” women as the “new female offender” (Adler, 1975; Chesney-Lind and Rodriguez, 1983). Few challenged the rhetoric created by Adler’s assessment of the changes in women’s arrests (Chesney-Lind and Rodriguez, 1983). However, it was later demonstrated that in fact the notion of a “new” masculinized female offender had not emerged, as women were not committing more crimes traditionally committed by men, such as murder, rape, and robbery. Scholars, such as Naffine and Steffensmeier, also critiqued the notion of the new female criminal and pointed out that the increase in women’s arrests could be linked to macrostructural shifts in how crimes typically committed by women are viewed and adjudicated (Naffine, 1987; Steffensmeier, 1980). Because women typically committed property and vice crimes associated with individualized issues, drug addiction, for example, they were less likely to come in contact with the criminal legal system. However, with the emergence of the moral panic created by the proliferation of the notion of the “new female offender” and a public backlash against feminism, women were adjudicated more frequently than before. Work by these scholars refuted essentialist characterizations that linked women’s patterns of offending to the embodiment of masculinity.

As more scholarship was generated concerning women and crime, scholars illustrated how underlying narratives about women’s “criminal nature” were rooted in patriarchy and led to “more repression conditions” for women involved in the correctional system (Davis, 2003). Davis was pointing out an ideological and political backlash against women on the part of

authorities in the criminal justice system and legislators in the name of gender equity. Chesney-Lind (1998) introduced the notion of “vengeful equity” to describe the response of the justice system to feminist calls for equal treatment between men and women within the correctional system. According to Chesney-Lind, the “emphasis was on treating women offenders as though they were men, particularly when the outcome is punitive, in the name of equal justice” (69). Roberts states that “these women not only break the law, but by breaking the law they transgress their own female nature and their primary social identity as a mother or potential mother” (Roberts, 1995). Essentially, vengeful equity turned feminist calls for equality under the law against women. Therefore, when a woman engaged in illegal activities, she was seen as violating the tenets of womanhood by “acting like a man” and was punished harshly for those transgressions.

The critiques of the influence of patriarchal social arrangements on the perception of women’s criminality gave way to a focus on gender-specificity, another body of literature central to the understanding of women and crime. Whereas, a gender-blind approach to the study of crime centered the male experience as the “norm” and gave way to a backlash against women, feminist and criminological scholars attempted to centralize women’s experiences by advocating for gender-specificity to address the overlooked needs of female offenders. Messerschmidt (1997) centralized gender-specificity as a focal point by identifying gender as the strongest predictor of crime. Gender, along with race and class, historically have been ignored in the study of crime, except when incorporated as a “side note” (Messerschmidt, 1997). Boys and men are overrepresented in criminal involvement and this notion tends to be taken for granted by criminologists. In order to centralize women in the study of crime, feminist scholars called for

gender-specific or gender responsive approaches (Belknap, 2001; Bloom, Owen, and Covington, 2005; Daly, 1994).

Gender responsive approaches focus on “creating an environment in the criminal justice system that acknowledges the realities of women’s lives, their pathways to offending, and the relationships that construct their lives” (Belknap, 2001; Bloom, Owen, and Covington, 2005; Daly, 1994). According to this framework, women’s involvement in illegal activities must be understood within a context of a gendered experience based on macro-level social structures that reproduce gender inequality. That is to say, women experience a world that relegates them to a subordinate social position, which must be considered in order to theorize about their involvement in illegal activities. This context challenges the notion of understanding women’s criminality to be the solely result of individual pathology.

The literature on women’s pathways to incarceration demonstrate that gender does in fact matter when it comes to understanding women who are in conflict with the criminal justice system (Belknap, 2001; Chesney-Lind and Paskow, 2004; Richie, 1996; Young and Reviere, 2006). Generally, it is accepted that women’s pathways to crime are different from men’s; but a definitive contention on the factors that most prominently set women on a pathway to involvement in illegal activities and incarceration is lacking. Despite all of this, three patterns to women’s pathways to incarceration that distinguish them from male offenders have emerged. The body of feminist research shows that women are more likely to have a history of trauma and victimization; to have an addiction to illicit substances prior to arrest; and to have committed property or drug offenses which led to their arrest and subsequent incarceration (Bloom, Owen, and Covington, 2005, Britton, 2003; Chesney-Lind and Paskow, 2004; Covington, 2007; DeHart, 2008; Díaz-Cotto, 2006; Faith, 1993; Richie, 1996, 2012; O’Brien, 2001). Literature on the

pathways to incarceration provides an understanding of the factors that influence women's patterns of involvement in illegal activities in a nuanced and critical manner.

Lastly, gender-specific approaches centralize relational theory in the understanding of women's criminality. Relational theories of women's criminality posit that relationships have a significant impact on women's decision-making process regarding her involvement in illegal activities (Covington, 2007). According to Bloom, Owen, and Covington (2005), women are motivated by a need for a strong sense of connection with others, especially loved ones. Further, the childhoods of women involved in the criminal legal system were characterized by violence and disconnection from their loved ones (Bloom, Owen, and Covington, 2005). As such, women's involvement in illegal activities is understood as a way to create intimacy (Richie, 1996), provide household resources (Owen, 1998), and protect vulnerable members of the family from arrest (DeHart, 2008), or as a way to avoid or minimize victimization (DeHart, 2008). Paradoxically, relationships may also have a deterrent effect in that women may desist from illegal activities to protect their children and minimize harm related to their involvement in illegal activities (O'Brien, 2001). Criminalized women cite their connections with their children as their most significant relationships, especially during their incarceration (Baunach, 1988; Enos, 2001; Greene, Haney, and Hurtado, 2000; Henriques, 1982). That is to say, women's maternal role, along with their patterns of offending, are affected by the relationships they maintain.

D. Constructions of motherhood

This study was designed to explore the social organization of motherhood and mothering for a group of Black women who are mothers and have a history of incarceration. These women's lives as mothers and as Black women have placed them in a social position that has

been constructed in opposition to normative constructions of motherhood and mothering. To gain a clearer understanding of their lives, it is imperative to examine normative constructions of motherhood and mothering, as well as constructions of Black motherhood and mothering. This strain of literature was useful in contextualizing the women's experiences with motherhood and mothering within a system that differentially disadvantages them because of their social position as Black women, mothers, and women who have been in trouble with the law.

1. **Normative constructions of motherhood and mothering**

Feminist and gender scholars have shown that motherhood is a central aspect in the construction of women's identity and is imbedded within cultural norms of western society (Collins, 2000; Glenn, Chang, and Forcey, 1994; Hays, 1996; O' Reilly, 2004; Rich, 1986; Ruddick, 1995). The image of the "normative mother" is based on an ideal of a "full-time, at-home, married, middle-class White mother" (Allen, Flaherty, and Ely, 2010; Arendell, 2000; Boris, 1994, as quoted by Johnston and Swanson, 2003; Jones, 1982; Kennedy, 2011). A considerable body of feminist and gender studies literature has been generated that focuses on theoretical work related to motherhood and mothering as well as some empirical literature that considers women engaged in mothering (Arendell, 2000). Research on motherhood and mothering bridges academic disciplines, given that identities, ideologies, epistemologies, and lived experiences are rooted in the process and embodiment of motherhood for women, both mothers and non-mothers.

Within a normative framework, women's maternal role is central to the social organization of sex and gender because it affects the ideologies and conceptualizations of femininity and masculinity for women and men in society (Chodorow, 1999; Hays, 1996). Chodorow's seminal psychoanalytic study of the maternal role and its influences on the

construction and reproduction of gender norms was central in complicating hegemonic notions of why women are expected to mother the children and nurture and support husbands (Chodorow, 1999). In The Reproduction of Mothering, Chodorow draws on psychoanalytic theory of female and male personality development to demonstrate that women's mothering is reproduced cyclically and not intrinsically. Mothers teach their daughters to mother based on the same patriarchal social arrangements in which they learned to mother, a pattern which repeats generationally. In sum, mothers are made, not born naturally.

Chodorow's arguments extended the conversation about the social role of motherhood and mothering initiated by feminist scholar Adrienne Rich in her groundbreaking book Of Woman Born (1986). Rich outlines western society's conceptualization of motherhood by examining the historical, analytical and contradictory foundations upon which such normative conceptualizations of womanhood, and by extension motherhood, are rooted. For example, Rich lays out a constructionist analysis of womanhood in which women are the domestic and subservient mother and wife (Rich, 1986). Further, Rich provides an analysis of the seemingly inextricable linking of womanhood and motherhood. The linkage is the by-product of the influence of patriarchy over the lives and identity of women in western culture, which renders women powerless over the construction of their own identity in whatever form, be it mother, wife, or woman.

When referencing the social phenomenon of mothering, scholars have focused attention on the duality of motherhood and mothering wherein women's social position gives them access to various social privileges associated with motherhood; yet they face immense oppression due to influences of the patriarchal social system in which women are subordinated (Chodorow, 1999; Fineman, 1992; Hays, 1996; Rich, 1986). Within normative constructions of motherhood

and mothering, women are compelled to uphold iconic and stereotypical attributes of womanhood and motherhood, which include being nurturing, loving, self-sacrificing, and subservient (Fineman, 1992; Hays, 1996; Rich, 1986). Motherhood represents an intersection in which the cultural contradictions associated with women's prescribed roles under patriarchy meet (Hays, 1996). Further, the duality of motherhood also points to the gap between women's lived experiences as mothers and idealized notions of what mothering entails.

Empirical studies on motherhood and mothering demonstrate the pervasiveness of the contradictions between motherhood ideals and mothering practice. Prevailing notions of motherhood highlight the connection between a woman as wife and mother to her husband and children. Cowdery and Knudson-Martin explored this notion in their qualitative study of 50 heterosexual couples (Cowdery and Knudson-Martin, 2005). They explored the division of tasks and relational aspects of motherhood for mothers, children, and fathers. Interestingly, this study found the sexual division of labor is upheld and perpetuated even among couples that deny ascribing to traditional gender norms. Prevailing notions of gender roles and expectations of "mother", "father", and "child" are seemingly irrefutable and fundamental aspects of western society, even under arrangement seemingly equitable across gender.

Women are judged against standards of normative conceptualizations of motherhood and mothering within the social hierarchy of US society that perpetuate idealized "myths" and ideologies about the role (Silva, 1996). Johnston and Swanson (2003) identified prevailing myths and ideologies about mothers present in contemporary magazines. In line with previous scholars on normative notions of motherhood, they found that cultural productions like magazines reify traditional ideological images of motherhood as White, stay-at-home mothers, confined within the domestic sphere. However, these women also appeared unhappy and overwhelmed. This

contradicts traditional notions of mother as the “happy homemaker”, exemplifying the paradoxical nature of normative motherhood. The proliferation of hegemonic myths and ideologies that uphold cultural representations of motherhood and mothering undermine the efforts of segments of mothers who live outside the confines of normative motherhood, such as women of color, employed, single, non-custodial, and lesbian mothers.

2. **Constructions of motherhood and mothering for Black women**

The previous section described the theoretical and cultural constructions of normative motherhood for women. For the purposes of this study, the contradictory nature of normative notions of motherhood was discussed to demonstrate how they conflict with women’s lived experiences as mothers. This is particularly true for women subjected to multiple, interlocking forms of oppression (Collins, 2000). Prevailing notions of normative motherhood render motherhood a contested identity for Black women due to the influence of the intersections of race, class, and gender oppression and the lack of critical analyses of the roots of the images and the ideologies they foster (Collins, 2000; Martinot, 2007; Roberts, 1993).

Underlying the images of Black mothers is the theme of devaluation of Black motherhood (Davis, 1983). The racialization of motherhood positions images of Black mothers against a standard of White, middle-class womanhood and sets Black womanhood as the deviant “other” and constructs binary social arrangements between dominant and subordinate groups based on social factors like race, class, gender, etc. (Collins, 2000; Martinot, 2007). Within binary constructions, perceived differences are set in opposition to one another—with one group placed in a dominant position and another as the subordinate. Those in dominant positions have access to power to construct ideologies about themselves and set them as the standard against which other groups are judged. Ideologies about motherhood are influenced by normative

frameworks related to motherhood and form images of womanhood that are integrated into controlling images of Black women and hence, motherhood and mothering by Black women.

The devaluation of Black motherhood has its roots in the period of enslavement of Blacks within the US and has flourished through means that sustain the colonization and oppression of Blacks ideologically, politically, and institutionally (Davis, 1983, Simms, 2001). Further, controlling images are used to justify the exploitation and subordination of Black womanhood and motherhood (Simms, 2001). In a content analysis of literature on the construction of images of enslaved African women in the United States, Simms argues that proslavery intellectuals legitimized the use of controlling images through religion, natural sciences, popular literature, social sciences, politics and law, and philosophy (2001). According to Simms,

When hegemonic intellectuals produced these demeaning caricatures, they were making a class-conscious effort to portray Black women stereotypically within an expansive, society-wide culture of systemic exploitation. In short, they helped construct a comprehensive ideological mechanism of oppression (Simms, 2001; p. 895).

Controlling images became the dominant ideological frame in which Black women and their role in US society were constructed.

The pervasiveness of controlling images of Black women was manifested in social policy with far-reaching implications for Black mothers and families. A vivid example can be found in the fallout from the 1965 report by Daniel Moynihan entitled “The Negro Family: A Case for National Action” (Moynihan, 1967). Moynihan implicated Black women, in particular Black mothers, as a central component to the deterioration of the Black family and as exacerbating the lack of full equality and participation among Blacks in US society. This work pathologized

Black motherhood, thus providing justification for the impoverishment of Blacks. One could extrapolate from Moynihan's work that the prevalence of female-headed households and overbearing Black women was the main proponent of oppression in Black families.

Unfortunately, Moynihan paid scant attention to the influence of ideological and macrostructural forms of oppression in the lives of Black families. Oppression is defined as "any unjust situation where, systematically and over a long period of time, one group denies another group access to the resources of society" (Collins, 2000). It is important to emphasize the historic and systematic elements of oppression because in the case of Black women, race, class, gender, and sexuality interact in such a way that their subordination and differential treatment maintains their social status hegemonically.

Throughout US history, Black women have contended with the continued debasement of their identity as mothers and women. Davis (1983) described how womanhood and motherhood for Black women was influenced by their exploitation as a part of the institution of slavery. During enslavement, motherhood for Black women involved the reproduction of the slave labor force. Black women were faced with the realization that their child birthing perpetuated a system of oppression that enslaved their offspring. Furthermore, the institution of slavery also bred the image of the Black mother and her offspring as subhuman chattel to be used according to the wishes of the slave master (Davis, 1983). The US slave system represented the intersection of patriarchy and capitalism, undergirded by racism, perpetuated through Black female slave labor (Jones, 1982). According to Jones, the lives of enslaved Black women illustrated a duality in which Black women "produced goods and services through their labor while reproducing and caring for the future workforce" (Jones, 1982). In addition, 19th century ideals of womanhood and femininity were denied Black women (Davis, 1983). For Black women, this was a denial of

their personhood as well as that of their offspring and demonstrated a lack of sanctity for human life.

Further complicating the effects of the devaluation of Black mothers was the ideological work embedding hegemonic images of Black women into the psyche of American society. Collins states that the “ideology of the slave era fostered the creation of several interrelated, socially constructed controlling images of Black womanhood” (Collins, 2000, p. 71). Controlling images of Black mothers include the mammy, matriarch, welfare queen, and jezebel. First, the mammy is the Black mother whose “loving, nurturing and caring for her White children and “family” better than her own” (Collins, 2000; Simms, 2001). The image of the mammy is that of the Black female caretaker of the White family who leaves her own family to ensure the prosperity of the White household. This image speaks to a very specific social arrangement in which the needs of the dominant group are met through the work of the subordinate group. Additionally, it demands that subordinate group members deny their own wants and needs in meeting the needs of the dominant group and in some ways begin to internalize the fulfilling of these wants and needs as their own.

The conceptualization of the mammy image is extremely problematic for Black mothers for several reasons. The most evident reason the mammy image complicates the lives of Black mothers lies in an underlying assumption that Black mothers who internalize the role of the mammy are not the caretakers of their own children or they completely forsake the needs of their family. It is true that within this social arrangement the needs of the White family are perceived to have priority over those of her Black family. However, it is important to point out that historically, Black mothers have had to develop alternative methods to care for and educate their children on methods to navigate the world and facilitate their survival. As such, Black mothers

are actually prioritizing her Black family's need for *survival* over all others. But, these methods tend to be overlooked and devalued in favor of institutionalized conceptions of motherhood partly due to the influence of ideologies that uphold controlling images of Black mothers.

The controlling image of the mammy is complicated for Black mothers because of its symbolic function. The mammy, when juxtaposed to the image of the White mother, is the symbolic "other" and therefore naturally inferior. In addition, the symbolic function of the mammy serves to place Black women, who internalize this image, into their "proper place" within the cult of true womanhood (Welter, 1966), therefore making them somewhat acceptable women within the White family. The cult of true womanhood involves the "attributes of True Womanhood, by which a woman is judged by herself and by her husband, her neighbors and society...[these] attributes include four cardinal virtues—piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity" (Welter, 1966, p. 152). The mammy is loyal, submissive, and asexual and therefore harmless to the power structure within the White family. Any threat the Black mother is perceived to possess has been neutralized by her identity as mammy. The mammy image supports the ideology of true womanhood (as much as Black women can), and therefore motherhood.

The second controlling image that has helped construct the image of Black motherhood is that of the Black matriarch. The "superstrong" Black mother is an image most people in US society are familiar with because it has been perpetuated, for better or worse, throughout various facets of our society. This image is represented on popular television sitcoms, in national newspapers and magazines, and in government reports, most prominently. The Black matriarch is usually a single-head of household, with at least two children, struggling to make ends meet in her low-paying job or through government assistance. But despite the racial, economic, and

gender-related obstacles the matriarch encounters, she recognizes the importance of her role as mother and does all she can to ensure the survival of her family.

The controlling function of the image of the Black matriarch is vital to understanding the intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality in the lives of the Black family. Blacks comprise approximately 13% of the US population and 30% percent of Black families are female-headed households, 3 times higher than White households (US Census Bureau, 2013). These statistics are important when analyzing the controlling function of the Black matriarch in that they display the way in which racial, gender, and economic exploitation have had dire effects on the Black family. This is in no way placing blame on the Black mother for the continued devaluation of the Black family, but to illustrate the linkage between the continued exploitation of Black women and how that affects the Black family. The controlling function of the Black matriarch seeks to maintain the subordinate status of the Black family intergenerationally and scapegoat the Black mother as the reason for their subordination.

The Black matriarch is the opposite of the mammy and is characterized as the “overly aggressive, unfeminine [Black] woman” (Collins, 2000) who does not recognize her place as a woman in society, especially within the Black household. Symbolically, the image of the Black matriarch lies in the stigmatization attached to women who challenge their prescribed gender roles. Because the Black matriarch does not fill the role of a proper woman, she is stigmatized as a bad mother. As such, that image is perpetuated as a stereotype of the overly assertive Black women. Furthermore, the perpetuation of this image works to disempower Black women from exercising their agency within the context of their family. However, little attention has been paid to the structural issues that necessitate the prevalence of female single-headed households in the Black community and the problems that arise out of this arrangement for mothers.

Next, the Black welfare mother is an identity that is economically and politically designed to provide the ideological justification for the state to control the sexuality of poor Black women. Although Black women are entitled to state-sponsored economical support, they must contend with an intrusive government system that penalizes them for having children they “cannot afford.” As a result, poor women and Black women who mother within impoverishment become an unfair target of politicians seeking to curb the drain these women and their families have put on the system (Fineman, 1991), leading to the institution of public policy that denies vital funds for the survival of the family, further perpetuating the cycle of poverty in their lives.

Symbolically, the welfare mother image criminalizes poor Black women’s sexuality as well as the product of her reproduction. Impoverished mothers and their children are stigmatized for the poverty they endure and for accessing aid for the survival of her family. The symbolic function of the welfare mother is intertwined with the controlling function in that both are useful in maintaining the system of economic exploitation of Black women who are mothers and keeping their families subordinated within this capitalistic system. Although the number of Black families who receive food stamps is significantly less than White families (US Census Bureau, 2008), it is the image of the Black welfare mother and her “illegitimate” children that are symbolically represented as deviant. The image of the welfare mother is so powerful that the government uses it to justify the erosion of welfare services to the poor. Neoliberal policies have systematically deteriorated access to rights and benefits that support those most vulnerable because of the decline in their economic means, such that poor women and poor women of color have had to turn to alternative and sometimes illegal means to provide for themselves and their children (Gustafson, 2011; Richie, 2012).

Lastly, the construction of Black motherhood has been influenced by the final controlling image of the jezebel. This image reflects the perception of the sexuality of Black women, including those who are mothers. Closely tied to the image of the welfare mother, this image necessitates the function for controlling Black women's sexuality in order not to birth too many Black children. It characterizes Black women as insatiable, unbridled sexual beings and stigmatizes such behavior as outside the limits of true womanhood.

Symbolically, the jezebel image illuminates the dehumanization of Black women and their sexuality. Under this image, Black women's sexuality becomes associated with animalistic tendencies, solidifying the image of the breeder on the plantation during the enslavement era (Simms, 2001). Further, this image justified the violation of her body, through rape, by the slave owner. Perpetuating the image of the jezebel was necessary to continue the institution because as the importation of slaves became illegal, the breeder function of the Black jezebel became a central part of the institution of slavery (Carby, 1987).

It is important to note that Black women's sexuality, in and of itself, is not the problem with the controlling image of the jezebel. The problem lies in denial of self in the construction of Black female sexuality. The Black women's sexuality is not defined by them, but evaluated against that of White men and women. For the White man, she is the temptress who must be possessed regardless of her contestations. And for the White woman, she is competition. According to this conception, the Black jezebel has the ability to fulfill White men in ways their wives cannot because the White woman must deny her sexuality in order to embody the attributes of true womanhood.

Again, controlling images are central to understanding the construction of Black womanhood and by extension motherhood. The power of these images resides in the ways in

which ideologies about them construct the dominant discourse surrounding Black women and perpetuates their subordinate status in US society. The intersection of race, class, gender, and sexuality represents a social location of vast contradiction in the lives of women, especially Black women who are mothers. The Black mother is both revered and vilified. As such, the controlling images come to symbolize the contradictions in the lives of Black women who are also mothers.

D. **Conceptual framework: Black womanhood, motherhood, and criminality**

The conceptual framework of this study was constructed to illuminate how the lived experiences of the Black women in this study are symbolic of criminalized Black motherhood in that they experienced dual criminalization due both to the effects of interlocking oppressions that perpetuate negative ideological images and also their involvement in illegal activities. That is to say, Black motherhood is criminalized in such a way that Black women are not solely accountable for violations of legal codes, but also perceived social and ideological violations of race, class, and gender social norms.

In this study, the conceptual framework is rooted in Black feminist theory to provide a critical response to the hegemonic notions of motherhood and mothering that exist within the normative motherhood. Black feminist theory complicates and contextualizes how motherhood and mothering for Black women with a history of incarceration are understood by centralizing the epistemologies, contexts, and experiences of the women under study. The review of criminology, sociology, feminist studies, and Black feminist epistemology contributed to the development of a conceptual framework that sharpens the precision of the methodological design, data collection, analysis, and synthesis of the findings of this study.

E. **Analytical response to normative constructions of motherhood**

The theoretical foundations of Black feminist theory can be attributed to the work of Black women activists and scholars, such as Hull, Scott, and Smith (1982), Crenshaw (1991), Collins (2000), members of the Combahee River Collective (1981), Davis, (1983), Lorde (1984) and Giddings (1984). These and other Black feminist theorists were instrumental in addressing the lack of Black women's voices and experiences in work meant to address issues of gender and class. In particular, Black feminist activists and scholars have been essential in struggling against racism, sexism, heterosexism, and class oppression *simultaneously* (Combahee River Collective, 1981), establishing Black women's epistemologies in arenas in which they were previously denied, such as academia (Hull, Scott, and Smith, 1982). Lastly, Black feminist theoretical frameworks were instrumental in illustrating the differential impacts of interlocking oppressions such as those experienced by Black women who have been victimized (Crenshaw, 1991).

Black feminist theory centralizes the experiences and epistemologies of Black women *themselves* in the construction of theories about their lives because it can best account for the complexity that arises when studying this subgroup given their unique social location due to the interlocking oppressions of race, class, sexuality, and gender. Within the canon of Black feminist theory, racial, gender, and class categories are reconstructed to centralize the experiences of Black women (Collins, 1986, 2000). Black women's knowledge, experiences, and consciousness are viewed as fundamental to understanding how race, gender, and class operate in individuals' lives and the larger society in which they reside. These attribute of the Black feminist theoretical frame are at the forefront of the analytical strategy of this study.

Traditionally, race, gender, and class have been studied as separate categories. If they were studied simultaneously, it was through the use of some additive formula that tended to set

up a hierarchy of oppressions, as though racial oppression was more significant than sexism (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1991; Glenn, 2000) or vice-versa. Black feminist theory, as a critical inquiry, challenges notions that race, gender, class (and sexuality, as well) can be compartmentalized and studied as separate identities while also asserting that the additive approach is not adequate either. In this study, Black feminist theory provides the context for how narratives on motherhood and mothering are constructed about Black women. By illustrating how Black feminist theory asserts the ways Black women experience the effects of interlocking marginalization simultaneously, this framework effectively illuminates the ways motherhood and mothering are constructed for Black women by allowing Black women to create their own narratives about their lives as women and mothers (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1991; hooks, 1984). Because Black feminist theory centralizes the study of Black women's lives, it is used in this study to develop a more complete understanding of the unique effects of interlocking oppressions on criminalized women; while providing a critical inquiry into how social science understands the ways that Black women who are mothers who have been incarcerated make meaning of and within their lives, while remaining resilient despite the oppression encountered.

For the purposes of this study, Black feminist theory is a vital analytical framework to analyze the experiences of Black women who are mothers and have been incarcerated because this framework centralizes the multidimensional levels of oppression the women in this study encounter as mothers, women, members of families and communities with sustained disadvantage, and women under surveillance of state and legal agencies. This framework challenges the assumptions made about their academic worth as research subjects, their social status, and their identity as mothers and women with criminalized identities. This framework challenges the notion that all Blacks worth studying are "men" and all women are "White"

(Davis, 1981; hooks, 1981, 1984; Hull, Scott, and Smith, 1982; Russell-Brown, 2004). Black women tend to be overlooked in the study of “race and crime” in favor of Black men because Black men make up a larger percent of the prison population (Russell-Brown, 2004). Black women are overlooked in the study of “gender and crime” in favor of studies focusing on White women because numerically White women make up a larger percentage of women who are incarcerated, even though their rate of incarceration is significantly less in proportion to their representation in the general population (Russell-Brown, 2004; Sabol, West, and Cooper, 2009). Furthermore, when Black women’s rates of incarceration were examined, it was comparable to the criminality of both Black *and* White men. A Black feminist theoretical framework was useful in contextualizing the social context of mass incarceration in the lives of Black women and the dire implications of their disproportionate representation among incarcerated populations. This framework allowed for an examination of how race, class, sexuality and gender oppression impacts this phenomenon.

Black feminist theory provides an analytical response to normative conceptualizations of motherhood and mothering central to the understanding of the experiences of the women in this study. Black feminist theory illuminates the unique challenges Black women in general, and the Black mothers in this study in particular, face because their social location makes it nearly impossible to achieve the ideals of normative conceptions of motherhood and mothering within patriarchal social arrangements. Black feminist theory complicates the evaluation of Black women’s motherhood identity and mothering process in the institutionalized motherhood analytical framework. Specifically, Black feminist theory shows how normative concepts of motherhood and mothering do not give space to women who challenge idealized notions of motherhood as an identity for women and mothering as a process by having a stigmatized social

identity, whether due to the influence of interlocking oppressions or history of incarceration. The central identity categories for the women in this study are viewed as an affront to normative conceptualizations of womanhood and hence motherhood.

In conclusion, a review of four bodies of literature relating to female criminality, constructions of Black womanhood and motherhood, and intersectionality situates this study within criminological, sociological, feminist and gender studies, and Black feminist epistemological research. This literature has been useful demonstrating the interconnectedness of these disciplines. Empirical criminological research on the prevalence of incarceration provided important statistical data however as feminist criminological scholars have demonstrated has traditionally overlooked the nuances embedded in gendered social arrangements. Further, feminist literature also was central in scholarship on normative constructions of motherhood and mothering, but overlooked the implications of interlocking oppressions, a central contention of Black feminist scholars. Literary gaps in knowledge within these bodies of work necessitated the development of this research project to provide an intersectional analysis to the influence of normative conceptualizations of motherhood and mothering for formerly incarcerated Black women who are mothers.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

The methodological strategies employed in this study were designed to explore the relationship between motherhood, mothering, and incarceration. This study attempts to fill the void in knowledge about how these experiences affect the lives of formerly incarcerated Black women. This qualitative study utilized a two-stage multi-case study approach to explore and describe the experiential knowledge, perspectives, and subjective meanings and feelings of the research participants from their *own* standpoint. In order to investigate the role of motherhood and mothering for formerly incarcerated Black women, a combination of semi-structured in-person interviews, participant observation, and casual interviewing were used to collect data from the participants. These techniques have been shown to be most useful in eliciting rich and detailed data in the qualitative research tradition (Creswell, 2003).

Because sampling, data collection, and data analysis were conducted at two separate stages of this study, this chapter is organized into two primary sections—stage one methodology and stage two methodology. The chapter begins with a description of the stage one methodology, which includes a discussion of the sampling strategy used and a demographic profile of the research sample for that stage. Next, the semi-structured interviews conducted with 12 stage one participants are discussed. This is followed by a discussion of the analytical and data synthesis strategies of the interview data collected. The stage one section concludes with a discussion of the triangulation of the data in order to address validity issues with the data.

The second half of this chapter describes of the methodological design of stage two. This section begins with a description of the sampling strategy, including the creation of a subject pool comprised of participants from the stage one interviews. This subject pool was used for selecting two participants who would continue in this study. Next, the participant observation data

collection design is discussed followed by a description of the data analysis and synthesis design used to analyze the field notes collected during this stage. This last section concludes with an explanation of the data triangulation strategy and the benefits and limitation of the research methodology used in this study.

This study was structured to explore the issues and topics that emerged from the participants' understanding of their relationship with motherhood, mothering and incarceration. Therefore, the study explored the following research question:

- How are motherhood and mothering organized for formerly incarcerated Black women who also are mothers?

This study sought to explicate the experiential knowledge, subjective meanings, and feelings of each of the women, as well as their understanding of the concrete experiences that have influenced and organized their lives as they navigate numerous settings and context as formerly incarcerated Black women who are mothers.

A. **Stage One Methodology**

During stage one recruitment, a combination of purposive sampling and snowball sampling techniques were used for recruiting participants. Purposive sampling involves selecting research participants based on the purpose of my research topic as opposed to drawing a random sample of participants (Bachman and Schutt, 2012). Snowball sampling was used because this “word-of-mouth” technique provided access to participants who are hard to reach or not easily identifiable. Snowball sampling involves identifying a participant for inclusion in the study and then asking them to identify others who are willing to participate in the study. Then, the subsequent participants are asked to identify others who may be interested in participating, and so on (Bachman and Schutt, 2012). In this case, participants were chosen based on their shared

experiences and their knowledge about being formerly incarcerated Black woman who are mothers to minor children. In total, thirteen participants were recruited during stage one of this study.

A participant was withdrawn from the study by the researcher during stage one because she was found to have been ineligible due to her lack of minor children. Although this participant was screened prior to the interview, she answered “yes” when asked whether she had any children under the age of 18. This omission was discovered during the course of her interview. Withdrawal of this participant from the study did not affect compensation for her time in the interview. Given the withdrawal of this participant, only interview data from twelve participants was included in the study.

Most of the stage one participants were recruited from local social service agencies that provide resources for women who have been incarcerated. The agencies, located across a large mid-western city, included transition and recovery homes that provide housing, substance abuse treatment, access to employment and training, along with mental and physical healthcare to formerly incarcerated women. To expand the subject pool and gain access to participants not living in transition or recovery homes, I contacted a program coordinator from a support group for women released from the county jail and obtained permission to attend a support group meeting and speak to members about participating in the study. This support group provides social support and empowerment for the women, as well as access to networking opportunities that enhance their reentry and reintegration process following incarceration. Flyers were placed at all of the agencies and with the support group with my phone number for prospective participants to call if interested in the study.

Once respondents contacted me about participating in the study, they were read a recruitment script that included a description of the study, its purpose, perceived risks and benefits, and the participants' rights. Additionally, respondents were asked a series of questions to determine their eligibility to participate in the study (Appendix B). Participants had to be Black/African American women, 18 years and older, with at least one minor child, and had been released from jail or prison within the last 3 years. The eligibility requirements were derived from both my research interest, as well as the general profile of incarcerated women in US jails and prisons (Glaze and Maruschak, 2008; Greenfeld and Snell, 1999; Morash and Schram, 2002). Once eligibility was ascertained and verbal consent to participate was granted, respondents were reminded that they would be compensated with a \$20 gift card for their participation in the study. Interviews were then scheduled at a location of the respondents' choosing in order to protect their privacy and confidentiality, while ensuring their comfort during the interview. Interview locations were most frequently the respondent's home or a private room within the social service agency from which the participant was recruited. When conducting the interview at the social service agencies, the researcher's role was not disclosed to anyone other than the participant.

1. **Sample Description**

The research sample for stage one of this study included 12 Black/African American women between the ages of 24 and 46 years.

2. **Semi-Structured Interviews**

During stage one of this study, semi-structured in-person interviews were conducted with 12 participants. The interviews ranged from 39 minutes to over 2 hours depending how in-depth the participants' responses were to the interview questions. The interview guide (Appendix E)

was organized around five ecological and contextual dimensions of the participants' lives as formerly incarcerated Black women who are mothers. The development of the dimensions was

TABLE I provides a demographic description of the women in this study. One participant was deemed ineligible for inclusion in the study and withdrawn from the project; therefore, only data from 12 participants was included in the study. Each participant had been released from jail or prison within the 3-year period prior to the interview. The offenses for which they had been incarcerated included retail theft, solicitation, and aggravated child battery. The most common offenses were drug-related charges such as possession with intent to distribute. Half of the participants were residents of transition or recovery homes, while the other half lived in housing within the community.

Most participants were mother to multiple minor children. Two of the participants lived with at least one of her children, while one participant had no contact with her children whatsoever. Another participant was in the process of regaining custody of her minor child. She had weekly overnight visits with her son. Collectively, the participants had 54 children between them. The number of children ranged from one participant who was mother to one child to one participant who had nine children. The majority of the participants had two or more children. The youngest child was 2 years old, while the oldest was 29 years old. No data was collected from any of the children. **TABLE II** contains demographic data on the participants' children. The characteristics of the research sample are in line with aggregate data on incarcerated women in US jails and prisons, which states the average incarcerated woman is a poor woman of color, usually Black or Latino, with at least two minor children, little education, and has been incarcerated for drug or property offenses (Glaze and Maruschak, 2008; Greenfeld and Snell, 1999).

2. **Semi-Structured Interviews**

During stage one of this study, semi-structured in-person interviews were conducted with 12 participants¹. The interviews ranged from 39 minutes to over 2 hours depending how in-depth the participants' responses were to the interview questions. The interview guide (Appendix E) was organized around five ecological and contextual dimensions of the participants' lives as formerly incarcerated Black women who are mothers. The development of the dimensions was

TABLE I
SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS

¹ Thirteen interviews were conducted. However, during the course of the interview it was revealed that Participant 10 was found ineligible for the study, as she had no minor children. The interview data were not used from this participant.

	Age	Offense(s)	History of Substance Abuse	History of Multiple Incarcerations	Age at Motherhood Onset	Number of Children
Jeanne	45	Home invasion robbery; Drug offenses	Y	Y	25	2
Camille ^a	42	Drug offenses	Y	Y	16	6
Beverly	48	Drug offenses; Prostitution	Y	Y	30	3
Monique	44	Drug offenses; Retail theft	Y	Y	18	5
Sonja	40	Drug offenses; Prostitution	Y	Y	17	5
Alisha	38	Retail theft; Drug offenses	Y	Y	19	5
Lori	24	Aggravated battery of a child	N	N	18	1
Alana	41	Check fraud	N	N	20	3
Paula	46	Drug offenses	Y	Y	19	6
Joyce	39	Drug offenses; Prostitution	Y	Y	19	4
Geneva	46	Drug offenses	Y	Y	17	9
Candice ^a	45	Drug offenses	Y	Y	15	5

TABLE II.
SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS' CHILDREN

	Number of Children	Children's Ages	Parental Contact	Parental Rights	Children's History of Incarceration
Jeanne	2	20 16	Y	N	Y; child #1
Camille	6	24 15 12 9 6 2	Y; child #1, #6	Y; child #6	Y; child #1
Beverly	3	18 17 13	N	N	Unknown
Monique	5	24 22 19 13 10	Y	Y	Y; child #2
Sonja	5	23 22 18 17 16	Y	N	Y; child #1, #2, #5
Alisha	5	18 15 12 8 6	Y	N	N
Lori	1	5	Y	Y	N
Alana	3	20 18 11	Y	Y	N
Paula	6	27 24 18 16 13 10	Y	Unclear ^b	N
Joyce	4	20 17 11 5	Y; child #1, #3, #4	N	N
Geneva	9	29 28 25 24 18 16 10 5 2	Y	Y; child #9	N
Candice	5	28 22 17 14 12	Y; child #1, #2, #3	N	N

^a In process of determining parental rights status for youngest 3 children

derivative of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of human development (1994), in that they demonstrate the interconnectedness of the situational contexts and interactions the women experienced across the lifespan, which were vital in shaping their development as women and mothers. The five dimensions—self, family, community, social institutions, and state/legal agencies—were used in this study as operationalized indicators of the contextual and situational settings the women interact with during their daily lives (see Figure 1).

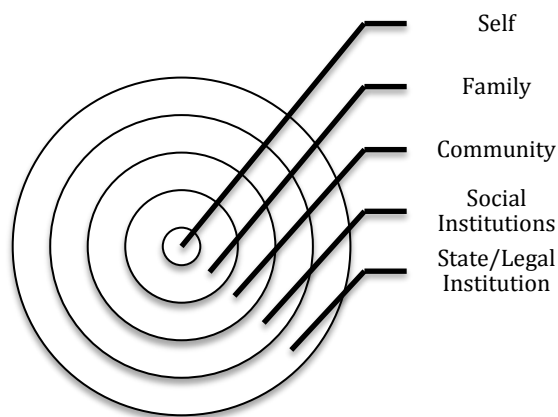


Figure 1. Ecological model of situational context

Semi-structured in-person interviewing allowed more flexibility during the data collection process, as the participants were able to freely direct the flow of the conversation while being guided by the questions I asked them (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). This technique extracted the rich, descriptive data necessary to describe the ways in which the participants' mothering process and motherhood identity has been structured, embodied, and organized, given their history of incarceration. For example, the use of semi-structured in-person interviewing provided space for the participants to elaborate on their perceptions of how their involvement in illegal activities and subsequent incarceration affected their embodiment of the mother role, inhibited their abilities to practice a continuity of care with their children, and disrupted their mothering process.

Semi-structured in-person interviews have been utilized frequently in studies of Black women and women who have been incarcerated (O'Brien, 2001; Richie, 1996, 2001). They have been useful in gathering data from difficult-to-reach subgroups. The women in this study represent a subgroup of women whose mothering and motherhood identity have been seriously overlooked in scholarly research, especially in relation to their involvement in illegal activities and incarceration. Lastly, in this case, this qualitative data collection technique fit well within the Black feminist theoretical framework utilized in this study because it centralized the voices, perceptions, and epistemologies of Black women in ways other research methods do not (Collins, 2000; Few, Stephen, & Rouse-Arnett, 2003). While the researcher's role in this study was to collect and analyze the data, the participants' voices and perceptions of their identity as mothers and their mothering process remain central to the analysis and are privileged in this study, in line with the Black feminist theoretical framework.

Once consent forms (Appendix G) were explained, signed, and compensation was made to the participants, the audio-recorded semi-structured interviews were conducted. Audio recording of the interviews was an effective tool used during the interviewing process because it increased my attentiveness to the flow of conversation with the participants, while decreasing the distraction of manual note taking (Hagan, 2010; Lofland, Snow, Anderson, and Lofland, 2006). All audio recordings were destroyed following the transcription of the interviews. During each interview, I jotted down any keywords or phrases used by the participants that should be probed further with each participant (Lofland, Snow, Anderson, and Lofland, 2006). For example, when participants were asked how they felt about becoming a mother for the first time or to describe what they are most proud of with their children, I jotted down words or phrases that indicated those feelings and descriptions, such as "happy," "scared," or "curious." Then, participants were

asked to elaborate on the point they made. Also, I made note of physical cues that revealed the participants' feelings about their experiences, such as smiles, tears, laughter, or fluctuations in the volume of their voice. These nonverbal cues were used to demonstrate further the women's responses to the interview questions in ways their words did not always convey.

The interviews were transcribed following the completion of the interviews. Identifying information that potentially could tie the participants to the interview transcripts was separated from my notes to maintain their anonymity and confidentiality. Initially, participants' names were removed and numbers were substituted. Later pseudonyms were used in place of numbers to maintain the participants' privacy, while giving them a human presence in the study instead of merely a number. The interview data was transcribed primarily by the researcher (9 out of 12) as a means of getting acquainted with the data and gaining analytical insight into the topics discussed in the interviews (Lofland, Snow, Anderson, and Lofland, 2006). The three interviews not transcribed by the researcher were read thoroughly while the audio-recordings were listened to once more for clarity and accuracy by the researcher.

3. **Data Analysis and Synthesis**

The data analysis process began simultaneously with the data collection process. Computer-assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) was used for data transcription, analysis, and synthesis. CAQDAS programs, HyperTRANSCRIBE and HyperRESEARCH (Researchware, Inc.) were used for transcription and analysis of the interview data from the 12 research participants. These programs were useful in accelerating the data transcription and analysis. The CAQDAS programs also kept the vast amount of interview data organized electronically. Interview data was analyzed through a process of coding and memo drafting, along with within-case and across-case comparisons were conducted (Lofland,

Snow, Anderson, and Lofland, 2006). The coding and memo drafting process is described in further detail below. The interview transcripts collected during stage one were used to identify both key themes in the participants' experiences as mothers who have a history of incarceration and also to identify potential participants for stage two of the study.

Codes were used to classify words, phrases, and ideas within the transcripts that were relevant to the interview questions and prompts (Lofland, Snow, Anderson, and Lofland, 2006). Stage one data coding involved organizing data into numerous meaningful categories that relate to the theoretical frameworks of this study. The primary coding process involved an initial line-by-line inspection of the interview transcripts in order to condense and organize data into numerous relevant and meaningful categories. The coding scheme was devised using a process of structural coding. Structural coding is appropriate for use when coding semi-structured interviews because they are "question-based", meaning codes are developed based on the topics of the questions in the interview schedule (Saldaña, 2009). For example, one of the first questions in the interviews asked the participants how they felt about becoming mothers for the first time. Responses to this question ranged from "excited" to "curious" and "scared." Although each participant's response varied, each phrase described the participants' feelings and were coded as "feelings about first becoming a mom." Further, this category related to the "role as mother" dimension of the analytical frameworks of the study because it indicated how they women perceived themselves as entered the role of newly expectant mothers.

A frequency report was run using the HyperRESEARCH CAQDAS program to identify primary codes from the initial line-by-line analysis of interview transcripts. Across the 12 interviews, 186 unique codes were used. The frequency report revealed that the most commonly reoccurring codes were "relationship with kids" (91 occurrences), "addiction" (69 occurrences),

“relationship with family” (66 occurrences; children excluded), “self-perception” (49 occurrences), and “DCFS” (45 occurrences).

Next, a second, more focused coding process was conducted to synthesize related categories into overarching themes related to the theoretical framework of the study (Lofland, Snow, Anderson, and Lofland, 2006). This coding scheme during this round of coding was developed using a process of focused coding in which the most frequently reoccurring codes are categorized into broad themes (Saldaña, 2009). The initial codes were categorized into six overarching themes based on subject matter of coded interview text. The most commonly occurring primary codes were grouped into the following overarching themes: self-perception, role as mother, relationship with children, relationship with other family members, addiction, and personal responsibility.

Lastly, I found the six overarching themes too broad to draft analytical memos on the data they represented. Therefore, a final round of pattern coding was conducted in order to condense the data further. The pattern-coding scheme involved collapsing the six overarching themes and the codes that comprised them into smaller categories that best reflect analytical patterns found in the data in line with the organizing research issue of the study. Four patterns emerged from this coding process, which included *role as mother*, *involvement in illegal activities*, *relationships*, and *recovery and reintegration*. Results from the interview data are discussed in detail in the following chapters.

The emergent category *role as mother* is a compilation of instances in which the participants spoke of their life histories, perceptions, and reflections in relation to the role of mother and performing the duties of mothering with their children. Interview data coded to reflect this theme included passages where the participants spoke of first becoming a mother,

how they learned to perform mothering tasks, whether they were ready to be a mother, and whether they became a mother before or after their first incarceration. Further, instances where the participants spoke of particular challenges related to the role of mother were also included within this category. Lastly, excerpts in which the participants spoke of influential experiences or relationships that affected their mothering experiences either positively or negatively and their thoughts on what is most important about being a mother were also encompassed within this emergent category.

The emergent category *involvement in illegal activities and incarceration* is a compilation of aspects of the participants' life histories and reflections on the impact of criminal activities, including illicit drug usage, retail theft, prostitution, child battery, and forgery. Other aspects of the women's life experiences within this emergent category include their first incarceration experiences as mothers and the differences in being a mother both before and after incarceration. The participants' perception of the consequences of their involvement in illegal activities is also assessed as it relates to their role as mother.

The emergent category *relationships* represents a compilation of instances in the participants' lives in which they described and reflected upon significant relationships and interactions with those they consider family members. This category encompasses instances during the interviews where participants described their children, their children's lives before, during, and after their incarceration, and the relationship the women have with their children at the time of the interview. Also included in this emergent category are discussions of the participants' attempts and desire to regain custody of their minor children, interactions with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) case workers, and how they perceive their children's understanding of their involvement in illegal activities and subsequent incarceration.

Lastly, this category also refers to the meanings the women ascribe to relationships with parents, aunts and uncles, partners, and their children's caregivers that influenced their lived experiences. Further, included in this theme are topics surrounding instances where family members were sources of strength for the participants, especially during recovery from drug addiction and the reentry process. Instances where familial relationships were detrimental to their wellbeing, such as when they were victims of abuse by a family member, are also encompassed within the *relationships* emergent category.

The last emergent category *recovery and reintegration* represents a compilation of instance in which the women spoke of their lives post-incarceration. This category encompasses excerpts from the interviews in which the participants spoke directly about their recovery from drug addiction, efforts to recover and reestablish their role as mother, and the systems of oversight they must interact during their reintegration.

Following the coding process, the coded interview data was separated into common overarching themes related to the analytical framework. A within-case analysis was conducted in which analytic memos, in the form of case reports (Stake, 2006), were drafted with notes about relevant and reoccurring themes that emerged from coding the interview data related to each participants' experience individually. The case reports included brief demographic descriptions of the participants, a list of salient themes from the coded data, and descriptions of the participants' experiences based on the overarching themes as they relate to the theoretical frameworks. The case reports were vital to the data analysis process because they helped me create a synthesized version of the interview data and kept the interview data from becoming overwhelming given the vast amount of data collected (Lofland, Snow, Anderson, and Lofland, 2006).

Further, the case reports synthesized the topics and themes related to the five contextual dimensions of the theoretical framework of this study and the development of emergent categories (Richie, 1996) and assertions (Stake, 2006) in relation to the organization of motherhood and mothering for Black women who have a history of incarceration. For example, upon examination of interview data from a participant named Alisha, I noticed she had a keen self-perception about her role as a mother in that she was very forthcoming about who she is and how she her identity as a mother was shaped. Therefore, the overarching theme of *role as mother* was explored further in Alisha's interview data and an analysis of this aspect was written up in her case report in relation to the "self" dimensions of the theoretical framework. Lastly, the case reports were used for the theoretical sampling strategy used to select participants for stage two of this study.

4. **Data Triangulation**

Once the data was coded and a within-case analysis conducted for each participant, the data was triangulated in order to verify that my interpretations and assertions about the participants' perceptions and experiences were congruent with the participants' descriptions. Triangulation involves making use of multiple sources of data and/or methods to clarify the meaning of key assertions in the data and provide corroborating evidence of themes or perspectives under study (Creswell, 1998). During stage one of this study, triangulation occurred during the interviews via questioning for clarification and asking similar questions in different way at various points in the interview. For example, during the interview with Jeanne, I was interested in whether her positive feelings about the presence of DCFS in her relationship with her children were authentic, as some participants have found their oversight unwelcome and threatening, while others welcomed it as a source of support in the mother role. To figure this

out, I asked Jeanne whether she believed DCFS was helpful or harmful to her as a mother a couple of times. She was adamant that she felt they were helpful to her, almost to the point of frustration with my line of questioning. Her frustration was evident in her emphasis that they were “HELPFUL” in her mothering process and relationship with her children and reminding me that she had already answered that question.

The interview data was triangulated using a process of redundancy during the data collection (Stake, 2006), wherein I reviewed both the interview transcripts, my notes from the interview, and listen to the excerpts of the audio-recorded interviews when necessary to ensure clarity in my understanding of the data.

B. **Stage Two Methodology**

Whereas stage one participants were purposively sampled because they met the eligibility criteria of the study, stage two participants were selected using a theoretical sampling technique based on how well their experiences related to the five dimensions of the theoretical framework and how aspects of their daily lives illuminated the relationship between motherhood, mothering, and incarceration (Bachman and Schutt, 2012). The participants from stage one created a subject pool from which two participants, who best represented aspects of the theoretical frameworks, were selected for inclusion in stage two of the study. These women’s experiences and knowledge, as formerly incarcerated Black women who are also mothers, made them best suited to represent the theoretical constructs of this research.

A theoretical sampling strategy was used for stage two of this study, which began with an across-case analysis of the case reports generated from each participant’s stage one interview. To facilitate the across-case analysis of the stage one case reports, a two-by-two matrix—the stage two sampling matrix (Figure 2) was constructed in order to evaluate each participant on two

levels—motherhood as identity and mothering as process. In particular, the sampling table was used to evaluate how well their self-perceived motherhood identity and mothering process demonstrated the relationship between motherhood, mothering, and incarceration on a daily basis. The participants' motherhood identity was assessed as either strong or weak based on their descriptions of themselves as mothers. For example, Jeanne was forthcoming in reference to the relationship between motherhood and her identity as she stated “No, it don’t MAKE me, but it is...it don’t make me, it don’t give me my identity or my self-worth, but it does bring joy into my life...” In this case, Jeanne was assessed as having a weak motherhood identity because although she acknowledges that being a mother brings joy into her life, it is not central to her sense of self. In contrast to my assessment of Jeanne’s weak motherhood identity, Alana strongly identifies with her role as a mother. Becoming a mother was a pivotal moment in her life as she described in the following excerpt, “...And then when I became a mom, oh my God, it was just...I was thankful, I was blessed. I was blessed. I tried to be the best mom I can to my kids, even now. When I got incarcerated, I felt like I had just let them down. ...I was never ever separated from my kids.” In this passage, Alana described the joy she felt upon becoming a mom and the heartbreak she experienced upon her incarceration. She believed that she “let her children down” and left them with no one to care for them in the way she does. This passage exemplified a common thread shared by many of the participants in the study because their identity as a mother was both a source of pride and in conflict with their identity as formerly incarcerated women.

The assessment of participants’ mothering process was based on whether they were actively mothering at least one minor child at the time of the interview. “Actively mothering” refers to the actuated tasks involved in the practice of mothering, which was broadly

		Motherhood as Identity	
		Strong	Weak
Mothering as Process	Yes		
	No		

Figure 2. Stage two sampling matrix

conceptualized for the purposes of stage two sampling, given the variance in the types of relationships and level of contact this subgroup of mothers have had with their children due to their pathways to incarceration and subsequent incarceration. Therefore, in this study, “actively mothering” can include maintaining regular contact, such as phone calls, letters, and visits with minor children during and after incarceration. For instance, Lori’s son was an infant when she was incarcerated and he was placed in the care of his paternal grandmother. Although she was unable to maintain physical contact with him during her incarceration, she was able to maintain a presence in his life through phone calls, visits, and letters. It was important to her that he knows that she is his mother. “Actively mothering” can also include instances where the participants are collaborating with their children’s caretakers in childrearing. Although active mothering was not an eligibility requirement for inclusion in the stage one of the study, this was a central factor of

consideration for inclusion in stage two of the study. A participant was not immediately excluded from stage two if she was not actively mothering; however, participants who were actively mothering their children were given preference for inclusion in stage two.

Additionally, participants' experiences were assessed for differences and similarities in relation to one another and in line with the general profile of incarcerated women described earlier. The women were also evaluated on similarities such as their incarceration experience, age, engagement with social service systems, and relationship with their minor children. Also, participants were evaluated on differences related to substance abuse, level of identification with the motherhood identity, their engagement with the mothering process, and contact with their children including their relationship with their children's caregiver. For example, both Camille and Beverly have a strong motherhood identity. They both view this dimension of their identity as an important aspect of their sense of self. Also, both are recovering drug addicts who have been incarcerated because of their addiction. However, Camille is actively mothering her toddler son, while Beverly has no contact with her children and is not mothering in any way. Therefore, Camille was included in the stage two subject pool, while Beverly was not. These factors were used to create the demographic profile of each participant included in the stage two subject pool. In total, two participants were recruited for inclusion in stage two.

1. **Sample Description**

After assessing each participant's motherhood identity and mothering process, an across-case analysis was done and each participant's Stage Two Sampling Matrix was compared. Camille and Candice were included in stage two of the study. Camille, a 42-year-old mother of six, was selected for inclusion in stage two because she is actively engaged in the mothering process and has a strong motherhood identity. In 2008, Camille was released and completed drug

treatment after being actively involved in her drug addiction for 15 years. Camille's engagement with the mothering process and strong motherhood identity was most evident in her efforts to reestablish the connection with her toddler son, whom she lost custody of at birth in 2008.

Further, Camille has maintained contact with her 24-year-old son, despite multiple absences from his life since his childhood. All of these efforts demonstrated a shift in Camille's motherhood identity and indicated a strong motherhood identity in ways that had been long absent from her life. Therefore, Camille was selected for inclusion in stage two of this study.

The second participant selected for stage two was Candice. Candice is a 45-year-old mother of five, who spent over 20 years in her drug addiction and has had multiple incarcerations. Candice has contact with her three eldest children, ages 28, 22, and 17, but lost custody of her two youngest children at birth. Candice's two youngest children are 14 and 12 years of age. Candice was selected because she provides a good contrast to Camille's experience as a formerly incarcerated mother. The children Candice maintains contact with are older now, so she is not actively mothering them, but she strongly identifies as a mother. Her relationship with her children and ways of mothering them as adults is a great contrast to Camille's mothering process with her toddler. Further, Candice is involved in assisting her eldest daughter in mothering Candice's grandchildren, who are 6 and 2 years old.

These two women were selected for inclusion in stage two of this study because they are believed to best illustrate the nuances embedded within the organization of motherhood and mothering following a period of incarceration. The variance in their lived experiences as Black women who are mothers who have been incarcerated, and their knowledge about the relationship between motherhood, mothering, and incarceration best demonstrates the complexity of

embodying the role of mother and navigating a complicated reintegration process, given a history of involvement in illegal activities and a subsequent period of incarceration.

2. **Ethnography**

In stage two, I took on the role of participant-observer for approximately 6 months per participant, which allowed me to become immersed in Camille and Candice's daily lives and gain an "insider's" perspective (Creswell, 1998). Upon attaining consent (Appendix H) from both participants, the researcher became immersed in their everyday lives, while making it explicitly known that research data was being collected (Maxfield and Babbie, 2008). The ethnographic portion of the study included visiting with them at their home, attending support group meetings, going to church, visiting with family members, accompanying them to appointments with doctors and other professionals, and attending family gatherings such as birthday parties. Although the researcher's role was clear to the participants, it was not revealed to anyone else the participants interacted with while in the presence of the researcher. Only the participants were permitted to disclose the researcher's role and relationship to them. In this study, the researcher's role as overt participant-observer was most useful in building rapport, establishing a higher level of comfort for the participants, and collecting difficult-to-obtain data from a seriously understudied subgroup of women (Yin, 2009).

Attending activities and observing Camille and Candice's interactions with others in relation to their unique experiences as mothers with a history of incarceration was useful in gaining a better understanding of the embodiment of the mother role and their recovery and reintegration. Occasionally, at the observation sites, field notes were taken of their implicit and explicit interactions with family, friends, and professionals. Examples of implicit interactions include nonverbal cues and gestures like inflections in speech, giggles, and sighs. Also, explicit

interactions within each setting were noted, such as verbal communication, reactions, and inflections as they related to motherhood and mothering, incarceration, and the participants' daily life.

3. **Field Notes Coding and Analysis**

Data analysis for stage two involved a similar process of coding and creation of analytical memos from my field notes. The data analysis process began simultaneously with the data collection during the observation sessions. Detailed field notes that were written following each observation session were entered into the CAQDAS program, HyperRESEARCH and were coded and analyzed for emergent themes in a similar manner as the interview data in stage one.

As this dissertation project is a multi-case study and therefore dynamic, the emergent themes from each observation session were explored further in subsequent sessions with the participants. For example, a central theme among both of the stage two participants was the complexity involved in navigating numerous systems of oversight as women with criminalized identities. This was most evident in visits to social service agencies, support groups, and interactions with members of their communities and neighborhoods. The emergent themes provided areas that required further exploration to be analyzed. Results from the participant-observation component are discussed later in this dissertation.

4. **Data Triangulation**

Data triangulation during stage two also involved a process of redundancy during the observation sessions (Stake, 2006), wherein the researcher reviewed any aspects of the field notes that lacked clarity prior to the sessions and prepared clarifying questions to ask participants during the subsequent session. This was done to ensure the accuracy of the field notes from the previous observation sessions. For example, clarification was needed about how Camille was

negotiating her relationship with the caregiver of her son now that she was attempting to regain custody of her child after he had spent 2.5 years with the caregiver. A process of “member checking” was used during this stage of the study to verify the data, as well. The field notes and interview excerpts were reviewed with the participants and checked for the accuracy of the researcher’s interpretation of the events (Creswell, 1998). The triangulation techniques used in this study were useful in verifying the data collected from the participants in order to increase the validity of the study. They were also useful in ensuring the validity of the participants’ recollection of their experiences and in ensuring clarity of the researcher’s interpretation of the data.

C. **Benefits and Limitations**

This study benefited significantly from the use of multi-case study research as the methodological strategy. First, as a qualitative method of inquiry, multi-case study research via semi-structured interviews and participant observation was most useful in gaining an in-depth understanding of the real-life phenomenon of motherhood and mothering for Black women who have a history of incarceration. The combination of interviewing and observing falls in line with the Black feminist theoretical framework (Few, Stephen, and Rouse-Arnett, 2003) used in this study to contextualize the experiential knowledge of Black women who are both mothers and have been incarcerated by centralizing the experiences of the women as they make meaning of their experiences themselves. Using both interviewing and observation techniques in this study is an advantage because they allowed me to ask questions of my participants when ideas, behaviors, or interactions were unclear instead of interpreting them myself. The participants’ understandings of their ideas, behaviors, and interactions within various settings were understood from their own perspectives and their voice was privileged above all others, as is central to the

Black feminist theoretical framework (Collins, 2000; Few, Stephen, and Rouse-Arnett, 2003).

These techniques were especially beneficial to this study because unlike using quantitative surveys with predetermined answers, this methodology was best for eliciting rich, detailed data from the participants through conversational interactions in a non-threatening manner (Bachman and Schutt, 2012). Holding the interviews and observation sessions in settings of the participants choosing and reassuring them that they had agency in the telling of their stories as part of the data collection process, was essential to gathering the detailed data necessary to explore the situational and contextual settings and experiences from the participants' perspective.

The data collection techniques used in this multi-case study were flexible because they relied on multiple sources of data, including verbal and nonverbal cues as well as environmental descriptions to gain a clear picture of the participants' daily lives (Creswell, 1998). This is a significant advantage in using multi-case study research techniques because they conform to the nuances found within the field where data collection took place and these methods best illuminate their relationship to the theoretical frameworks of the study. An advantage of using semi-structured life history interviews during stage one is the increased flexibility of the interview guide, which allowed the participant to speak freely while being gently guided and probed by the interviewer (Lofland, Snow, Anderson, and Lofland, 2006). The participants had agency to discuss what they felt was important (Kvale and Brinkman, 2009), while the interviewer probed them to expand or clarify meanings on the topics they discussed. For example, in further developing the theme of "religion as a coping mechanism," Camille was asked to elaborate further on the role religion plays in her recovery from drug addiction, as well as her role as mother. Camille's explanation was important because she frequently references "God" during our interactions. These references occurred frequently in reference to performing

tasks associated with mothering, such as when she gets frustrated with her son's behavior and states that she "prays for patience." However, she rarely spoke directly of the centrality of religion in her daily life. As Camille elaborated further on the role of religion, or more specifically, spirituality in her life, the assessment of the role of religion in her life shifted from viewing it as a coping mechanism to understanding it as a survival mechanism. The flexibility of the multi-case approach and qualitative research techniques used in this study allowed for the reconceptualization of this theme.

The flexibility of the multi-case study methodology used in this study provided advantage to gathering data through observational techniques (Stake, 2006) as well. For example, in the observation sessions with Camille it was clear that changes would occur constantly as we moved from one setting to another, whether it was from her apartment to church and on to her mother's house. Therefore, I adjusted my data collection techniques to account for multi-topic conversations with her at home, quietly observing her during church services, or observing her reminisce with her mother over family photos of many events she missed while in her addiction. The use of participant observation and immersion into the participants' lives helped to facilitate a higher level of comfort and rapport such that participants were more willing to disclose personal info and build enough trust with the research such that she could accompany them into and out of various settings.

There are also limitations found in using this qualitative methodology. First, this methodological approach was expensive and very time-consuming (Bachman and Schutt, 2012). While I still believe that compensating the participants for their time was important because the majority of the participants came from significantly economically disadvantaged backgrounds and communities, it was costly. Secondly, I underestimated the enormity of the time-consuming

aspect of interviewing, transcribing, and analyzing the data from stage one in order to move to stage two. This miscalculation of time meant there was a lengthy time period between stage one and stage two. As this subgroup of women, many of whom live in transition and recovery homes, is highly mobile, I feared the effects of attrition on the study. Attrition became an issue during the second stage recruitment because contact information was lost with a few of the participants, as phone numbers and residences had changed. In some cases, I had to choose alternate participants for stage two who shared similar characteristics and experiences with the participants who were chosen initially.

In addition, while I viewed the stage two data collection technique as an integral part of the study, it also was extremely time-consuming. I spent a vast amount of time in the field becoming immersed in the lives of the participants, writing field notes, composing analytic memos, and revisiting emergent themes, which at times became very tedious for both the participants and me. However, despite the monotonous nature of drafting field notes, the techniques yielded rich and informative data that are central to gaining an understanding of the organization of motherhood and mothering for formerly incarcerated Black women.

Initial discomfort experienced by the participants was another limitation encountered in using these methodological techniques. This affected the type of data the participants were willing to share at the beginning of the interviews and observations. Data was being collected from participants after a lengthy time period with little contact between the research and participants following the stage one interview. The research was possibly perceived as a complete stranger asking questions about their lives, ideas about motherhood and mothering, and their incarceration experiences. These topics have the potential of triggering uncomfortable emotions for the women, especially as they were retelling these experiences to a perceived

stranger. Too much discomfort can lead to a lack of disclosure by the participant and can adversely affect the study. For example, during a phone conversation with Camille, she mentioned that she had gotten a call from her son's teacher because he used a curse word at school. Upon being asked how she responded, she hesitated to reveal the method of discipline she used. She brought this up in a later session and admitted that she was embarrassed to disclose how she disciplined him for fear of judgment by the researcher. Therefore, the researcher placed heavy emphasis on establishing a positive rapport with the women while getting reacquainted during the initial observation sessions. The researcher worked to maintain a positive rapport throughout the course of the data collection process by remaining actively engaged and interested in their lived experiences and knowledge. A number of techniques were used to build rapport with the participants. First, the researcher was cognizant of working with other Black women from a background comprised of a number of social disadvantages; therefore, she located herself in the research by disclosing her own background that made her relatable to the participants. The women also were reassured that the information they disclosed was not abnormal and no judgment would be passed on their actions and experiences by the researcher. They were reminded that they had agency in the data collection process and could ask to leave or stop the interview if it became too overwhelming and needed time to debrief (Bachman and Schutt, 2012). Lastly, to deal with the discomfort the women felt regarding others knowing that they were a part of a research study on their lives as mothers who have been incarcerated, they were repeatedly informed that only they could disclose the researcher's identity to anyone interacted with during the observation sessions, as all information disclosed was confidential, including their identity as a research participant (Maxfield and Babbie, 2008).

The sampling methods used to recruit the women for this study created another potential limitation. In stages one and two, a combination of purposive, snowball, and theoretical sampling methods were used to sample a small subgroup of Black women who are both mothers and have been incarcerated. The use of local social service agencies that serve these women created a problem of sample selection bias. Sample selection bias shows up as a systematic error in the selection procedure in the research design of the phenomenon under study and biases the assertions made about the cases (Collier and Mahoney, 1996). Further, sample section bias was an issue in this study because via the use of a non-randomized sample with a small number of participants. This leads to the potential of skewing the assertions drawn from the cases chosen for the study (Collier and Mahoney, 1996). The participants' use of the social service agencies, particularly the same transition homes, increased the possibly of extreme cases that could bias the results of the analysis. These participants' experiences could be so extreme that they necessitated the use of these social service agencies; whereas more common experiences of formerly incarcerated Black women who are mothers may not have required utilization of these services. While the data did not reveal many extreme differences between the experiences of the women who utilized social services, like transition homes, and those who did not, a limited number of participants from a single social services agency were selected. Further, snowball-sampling techniques were used to gain access to participants not directly or actively affiliated with social service agencies to deal with the issues that arise with sample selection bias.

Another slight limitation to the multi-case study methodology used in this study pertained to issues associated with generalizability and validity. These are common critiques of qualitative research methods that were recognized upon choosing to conduct a qualitative study with a small sample (Bachman and Schutt, 2012; Lofland, Snow, Anderson, and Lofland, 2006). A

combination of purposive, snowball, and theoretical sampling techniques, instead of randomization, was used to engage the subjective perspectives and experiences of the participants. While emergent analytical themes were developed and analyzed, drawing generalizations to all Black women, mothers, incarcerated individuals, or those with similar experiences is not appropriate nor is it a goal of this study. However, the assertions drawn from the study, especially those related to the complex relationship with oversight agencies, custody arrangements, and the role of formal and informal relationships within the five dimensions of the situational context of normative motherhood discussed previously, can be used for further study with larger samples in subsequent research.

The methodology used in this study has also been critiqued because of issues of validity with the research data collected from participants. Validity, sometimes referred to as “credibility” or “trustworthiness” in qualitative research, is an issue concerning whether the participants were honest in revealing their experiences or whether merely responding with what they thought the researcher desired to hear in order to appear favorable (Creswell, 2003). As these concerns tend to arise when using self-reported data, such as interviews, the researcher anticipated encountering them during the course of this study (Richie, 1996). In addition, there may be questions about the study’s validity related to interpretation of the data on the part of the researcher. These issues were addressed by employing a process of triangulation, as mentioned above. The research triangulated the data by asking the same question in different ways during the interview, asking for clarification when necessary, and confirming the data with the participants’ interviews and field notes to ensure consistency throughout the data collection and analysis process (Stake, 2006).

Despite these limitations, the multi-case study research techniques utilized in this study, interviewing and participant observation, were the most beneficial methodological techniques for gaining a better understanding of the daily organization of motherhood and mothering for Black women who have a history of incarceration. The experiential knowledge of this subgroup of Black women has been vastly overlooked in social science research. This methodology was useful in gaining an in-depth perspective and eliciting responses from the participants in order to fill the gaps in knowledge about their lives as Black women who are both mothers and have been incarcerated. This methodology was also useful in providing a basis for beneficial public policy responses to the issues faced by criminalized women and families from racially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to explore the social organization of motherhood and mothering with a group of 12 formerly incarcerated Black women who are mothers. This chapter presents key findings derived from in-person semi-structured interviews with the women regarding their perceptions and insights on their lived experiences as both Black women and mothers. It is organized around four emergent categories from the research data: role as mother, involvement in illegal activities and incarceration, relationships and other maternal influences, and reentry and reintegration. These themes were not pre-determined by the researcher, but were revealed from careful analysis and grouping of frequently occurring themes, as discussed in the previous chapter on the research design and methodology.

First, the insights shared by the women in this study related to the embodiment of the mother role demonstrated the challenges they faced while attempting to meet cultural and interpersonal expectations about motherhood. The women shared their feelings and understandings of the situational contexts related to shifting into the mother role for the first time. The women's stories illustrated the complexity of mothering within contexts marked by tremendous social disadvantage, while still finding moments of fulfillment within the role. Included in this section is a discussion of the onset of motherhood for the women and their level of preparation for mothering. It also includes the women's perceptions of their lived experiences as mothers, their insights into the most important factors in being a mother and influences on their maternal role. The role as mother section concludes with the women's descriptions of the challenges they face as mothers and a focus on Alisha's feelings and insights on rejecting the maternal role.

In order to better understand the relationship between their role as mothers and the performance of the tasks associated with mothering their children, an examination of the participants' involvement in illegal activities and their subsequent incarceration is necessary. This section begins with a summation of the illegal activities in which the women in the sample were involved. Particular attention is paid to the centrality of drug addiction in the lives of the women in this study because substance abuse serves as a primary pathway to incarceration for women—a characteristic that was upheld for the women in this study as well. The participants also discussed their experiences with being a mother before and then after a period of incarceration in order to examine their understandings of the interruptions in their mothering process due to their incarceration. This section concludes with the women's insight into what it takes to be a mother following a period of incarceration.

The discussion of the third emergent theme is focused on the central relationships in the women's lives. This section is the lengthiest, as it reflects the intricacies embedded in the women's relationships. The women described their relationships with their children and the family dynamics they encountered. Because the focus of the interviews were about the women's perceptions of motherhood and mothering given their history of incarceration, direct questions about their families were limited, except in reference to their children. However, the women were asked to elaborate further when they spoke of central relationships and interactions with other family members, such as partners, parental figures, siblings, and extended family members. The later portion of the section on the women's relationships is dedicated to their discussion of numerous aspects of their relationships with their children. It begins with a demographic description of their children and continues with the women's discussion of their child custody arrangements and the transitions in the custody of their children, including the status of their

parental rights. Next, the women share their insights on the effects of their involvement in illegal activities on their children and their perceptions of their children's responses to their involvement in illegal activities and subsequent incarceration. This portion of the finding related to their relationships concludes with the women's descriptions of what they are most proud of with their children.

The final emergent category is focused on the reentry and reintegration process. Reentry and reintegration are processes that involve the reemergence and resumption of all aspects of life following a period of incarceration. In this section, the participants' insights into these aspects of their reintegration process as they relate to being formerly incarcerated Black mothers are presented. The women described their development and assertion of a sense of personal responsibility; successfully utilizing resources to negotiate the risks associated with returning to the community; and learning to access systems of support, particularly with family, such that they will remain in compliance with numerous systems of oversight from both formal and informal authorities. This section concludes with the women's aspirations for their futures.

Lastly, this chapter ends with central findings presented as ethnographic narratives obtained through 6 months of participant observation research with 2 of the participants—Camille and Candice. The purpose of the participant observation stage of the study was to gain insight into the women's daily experiences as formerly incarcerated Black women who are mothers. This section begins with a brief summary of contextual data from their semi-structured interviews and proceeds with narrative descriptions of the embodiment of the maternal role during their daily lives as they are engaged in their reintegration process.

An analytical discussion of these findings rooted within the Black feminist theoretical tradition is presented in chapter 5.

A. **Role as mother**

This first section focuses on findings that illuminated the women's understandings of the embodiment of the mother role, the meanings ascribed to the role, given their experiences with illegal activities and incarceration, and their abilities to meet expectations in performing duties associated with the role of mother. To gain insight into the women's understanding of their motherhood identity and mothering process, this section begins with results related to the onset of motherhood.

The onset of motherhood revealed a mixture of feelings for the women in this study. The participants' age at the onset of motherhood was an underlying commonality shared between them and greatly influenced their feelings about first becoming a mother. Of the twelve women interviewed, nine of them were between the ages of 15 and 19 years at the birth of their first child. Alana and Jeanne were 20 and 25 years of age, respectively, at the birth of their first child. Beverly, the oldest participant in the study, was 30 years old at the birth of her first child. The participants expressed a range of emotions concerning how they felt about first becoming a mother. The feelings expressed by the participants were categorized as negative, positive, or ambivalent.

In cases where the participants expressed negative feelings, these emotions ranged from being "scared," "disappointed," and "in denial" about first becoming a mother. These women were primarily those whose onset of motherhood was during their teenage years. For example, Sonja, a 40-year-old mother of 5, was 17 when she gave birth to her first child. Like many of the participants who were teenage mothers, she remembers being "scared" of what mothering would entail and the new expectations motherhood would bring to her life. According to Sonja:

“Yeah, I was scared. I didn’t know what to expect. But, then I dropped out of school. I felt that since I had a child that I’m going to stay home with my child. But I dropped out of school....Um, when you become a mom...you don’t know what to expect. You know, ‘am I doing this right? Am I feedin’ him right? Or burpin’ him right?’ [laughs] So, you know, I was scared.”

Several other women in the study had similar questions concerning their abilities to mother a child, especially when they were still young themselves. Paula, a 46-year-old mother of six, was in the 11th grade when she gave birth to her first child. She remembers feeling “I was going out of my mind” about having a baby, so much so, she asked her mother to take her to have an abortion. However, Paula’s desire to terminate her pregnancy conflicted with her mother’s desires for Paula to “settle down”. Therefore Paula’s request for an abortion was denied and she proceeded with the pregnancy and gave birth to a baby boy. During her interview, Paula recalled this situation.

“At first, I was like going out of my mind because I was like ‘what am I going to do with a baby, you know?’ But, I was kind of wild in my teens and my mom, she was like “no you are going to have this baby.” Because I had asked her to get me an abortion because I was not ready for kids and she was like “no, you are going to have this baby because you need to slow down...”

Similar to Paula’s experience, a number of the women were given anti-abortion messages concerning their first pregnancies. The messages were usually from a maternal figure in their lives and were either explicit or implicit in dissuading the women from having an abortion. Whereas Paula’s mother was explicit in denying her daughter permission to have an abortion, Candice recalls the message she received from her mother to be subtler. Candice, a 45-year-old

mother of five, was 15 and on her high school cheerleading squad when she first gave birth. Like most teens, she wanted to graduate from high school, not care for a baby. Candice denied she was pregnant for most of the gestation period. Further, Candice felt she had little autonomy in the decision to continue her pregnancy.

“Honestly, I had went to the doctor for the stomach flu. My mom had took me [to the doctor] and they told my mom that I was pregnant and they told my mom go home and talk with your husband about her being pregnant and you all could talk and decide whether you all want her to have an abortion or not. Because back then it [the abortion procedure] was free. My mom never mentioned it to my dad and by this time, you know what I am sayin’, I kind of felt my mom wanted me to have the baby...I was young I did not know too much. I did not know no better so by that time I had the baby...”

The three participants who first become mothers when they were over the age of twenty expressed positive sentiments about the birth of the first child. Of all the women who first became mothers while in their teens, only Joyce, a 39-year-old mother of four, who was 19 when she first became a mother, expressed positive feelings about becoming a mother during her teenage years. Jeanne, a 45 year-old mother of two and Beverly, a 48 year-old mother of three, recalled being excited to become mothers at 25 and 30, respectively. Alana, a 41 year-old mother to three children, was “proud” to become a mother at 20 years old. Once again, the women’s age at the onset of motherhood was an influential factor in their positive feelings about first becoming a mother.

A couple of the women believed that becoming a mother would fill a void in their lives. Joyce recalled being scared and excited at the same time because she “always wanted a baby

who would be someone to love her.” Following her mother’s death when she was 2 years old, Joyce and her siblings lived with her grandmother, whom she felt denied her love and affection. She “always wanted a baby to have someone who loved me for me.” Joyce was excited because she was looking forward to be able to care for the child and she believed she would “have someone to LOVE me. This baby was going to love me.”

Sometimes life tragedies bring about a reconceptualization of the role of mother. In Alana’s case, the onset of motherhood started over at the age of twenty following the tragic loss of her first-born son when he was 3 months and she was 18 years old. This loss only deepened the void she felt due to a lack of love and affection from her mother. She recalls that at 20 years old she was “proud” to become a new mom to her daughter because becoming a mother filled a void in her life left by the death of her son and the inattention of her mother. Alana characterized herself as a “new mom” with the birth of her daughter and felt she would at last be loved unconditionally.

“After he had passed away, I was like, 'oh wow'. He was like my first child and he was everything to me. And my grandparents and everybody had loved him to death. And he was so handsome. So after he passed away, I had immediately wanted another one. So that was when I had my daughter...I was proud to be a mom, because that was what I wanted—a child. Because as I was coming up, I didn't feel that mother and daughter love from my mom so I had always said that once I had my own child then I'll know that that love was unconditional. So I wanted my own child. And when I had her I was blessed to have her. She is the sweetest thing in the world to me. She is everything to me. My pride and joy. So I was proud to be a mom.”

The feelings of eagerness Alana felt to immediately have another child also indicates how a number of the participants were able to take initial negative feelings about becoming a mother and develop a positive outlook about the circumstances. Three women described a mixture of emotions, both positive and negative, concerning first becoming mothers because they did so under conditions that they considered less desirable. For instance, Camille initially felt disappointed in herself for getting pregnant at an early age. However, a mixture of nervousness and excitement at the birth of her “adorable” son replaced those feelings of disappointment almost immediately. As she recalls,

“My first pregnancy, I was a little disappointed in myself because I was a teen parent. I was nervous and EXCITED. It was a mix of emotions. I would say a mixture of emotions but, I would say the good outweighed the bad in my feelings about it because I had a healthy baby boy and he was adorable. So it was exciting. It was an experience. You know, it was exciting for me.”

The other two participants, Alisha and Monique, described more ambivalent feelings about first becoming mothers. Alisha, a 38 year-old mother of five who first gave birth at 19, recalls not knowing what to expect but also was curious about the physical aspects of the birthing process. She recalls wondering about her baby’s physical appearance. Similarly, Monique described feeling “ok” upon first becoming a mother. The 44-year-old mother of five elaborated further and stated she felt distressed due to questions concerning her son’s paternity. Monique had expectations for herself of having only one partner father her children. Not meeting these expectations dampened the positive feelings she had about becoming a mother.

“Um it was, it was okay. It was all right um my oldest son he, he, he grew up not knowing his father so you know it was pretty hard. And then I had this other guy

thinking that he was his father and at the age, when he was at the age of like 10 that's when I finally told the other guy that it, that he wasn't his father, but my son was still thinking that that WAS his father. And my nephew overheard a conversation with my other son's father and told my son that, that wasn't his father so um my older son he never seen his father.”

Related to the participants’ feelings about becoming a mother for the first time are their insights concerning their readiness for motherhood. Preparing for motherhood is a daunting task for most women, however for the women in this study motherhood is particularly challenging given their lack of stability in most areas of their lives. In order to gauge the participants’ feelings related to the transition into the motherhood identity and their understanding of the expectations associated with the performance of mothering tasks, they were asked whether they felt ready to become a mother for the first time. Nine of the women in the study felt they were not ready to become a mother upon giving birth to their first child. The responses from this group of women focused on three major themes, including their unwillingness to accept the news of their pregnancy, not being ready to give up their freedom in order to take on the expectations associated with raising a child, and being too young to be a mother.

Again, age at the onset of childbirth was a determining factor associated with whether the women felt ready to be a mother. The participants who became mothers during their teenage years most frequently responded that they were not ready to be mothers because they were too young, wanted to reach milestones associated with adolescence like high school graduation, or lacked a sense of stability to mother a child. Candice, Paula, and Alisha responded that their lack of readiness was related to their unwillingness to give up their lifestyle as youth. Alisha “realized

[her] freedom was gone.” Paula felt she was not ready because she “wanted to run the streets.” Candice’s denial of her pregnancy at 15 was associated with her stage of adolescence as a high school student. Candice felt, “to be honest back then I really was not ready for little babies but I denied it so long until by the time I went to the doctor I was 7 months and it was too late...[to] have an abortion.”

For Lori, a 24-year-old mother with one son, having a child at 17 was not in her plans for her life. After stating that she was not ready, she elaborated that she “was planning to have a baby in [her] twenties.” I asked her what would have made her ready to be a mother. According to Lori,

“Being ready is like you are able to take action. You know what to do having [had] all the safe classes and stuff and parenting classes while I was in high school. You know you be already finished with high school. You be in adulthood. You be trying to get a job.”

Similar to Lori, stability would have made Camille feel she was ready to handle motherhood and the expectations associated with mothering in a manner that was better than her lived experience of becoming a mother at 16. Camille felt being ready to be a mother meant:

“...Being mentally, spiritually, and financially stable, period....Yeah, and emotionally....I mean just you have a pretty good understanding of what’s to be expected, you know. You have your priorities a little better established and intact.”

In contrast to the women described above, three of the participants felt they were ready to become a mother when they gave birth to their first child. These three participants were not in their teens when first becoming a mother. Their responses focused on how their age made them

mature enough to be mothers and feel like they were stable enough to support themselves and their child. Interestingly, the participants who felt they were ready to be a mother shared Camille and Lori's conceptualization of preparedness for motherhood, which included mental and economical stability. Jeanne, Beverly, and Alana stated they were ready to be a mother because they were at a mature age for mothering and had a sense of stability. Jeanne recalls that although she was unsure of what to expect from motherhood, being 25 years old and self-sufficient made her feel ready to become a first-time mother. Jeanne stated,

“I was really excited about being a first [time] mother and I didn't know what to expect...I was 25. I didn't have [the baby] early or when I was at home with my mother. I waited until I was out on my own, working and able to support myself.”

As a follow up to questions about the participants' readiness to be a mother, they were asked to describe what they thought motherhood would be like or feel like for them. I was interested in whether the participants' image of motherhood and their expectations of the role of mother were in line with their lived experiences as a mother in order to ascertain the tension between idealized notions of motherhood and mothering and the lived realities of life for formerly incarcerated Black women who are mothers. The participants' responses focused on four themes, the performance of tasks associated with mothering, an identity shift as they moved into the role of mother, the loss of an idyllic image of motherhood, and how drug addiction interrupted their mothering process.

Performing tasks, such as cooking, cleaning, and caring for the baby was the most frequent response about what motherhood would feel like for them. Eight of the participants discussed their feelings about performing mothering tasks and the difficulties that arose for them within the role. Beverly thought motherhood would be, “staying in the house and cooking

dinner” and having to “dress up” after she had her children. Beverly’s reality of mothering was in contrast to her desire for freedom outside her mother’s home and the strict rules enforced by her mother. Beverly’s desire not to be held down was in conflict with the reality of her life as a mother, making performing the tasks complicated for her. For Beverly, these experiences are a reason she waited to be a mother until she was 30 years old.

“I was wondering and getting to be free because my mother was kind of strict. I was glad to get out and got wild. She said you got with the wrong crowd...Yeah, I was wild and wanted to move around and did not want nothing to hold me down.”

One of the most influential aspects of the women’s lives that affected their experience of mothering their children was their involvement in illegal activities, particularly drug usage. For Sonja, the conflict between mothering her children and her drug addiction complicated her image of what motherhood would be for her. According to Sonja, motherhood involved performing tasks with and for her children. However, her drug addiction consumed her life and interrupted her mothering process.

“I think a mom would be like a mom taking care of the kids, preparing food, getting them prepared for school. You know, like when I’m getting them prepared for school. You know, like when they at school, I’m at work. Later on down the road, that happened and then I got into the drugs. I know what it’s like a little bit [to be a mom like she described], not much but a little bit because I did it, but the drugs took over.”

Both Beverly and Sonja described their expectations of the maternal role and the ways in which their conceptualization conflicted with their lived experiences. Three of the women spoke about the idyllic image they had of motherhood and how it was diminished by the reality of their

lived experiences. According to Jeanne and Alana, issues that arose with the fathers of their children shattered their image of what motherhood would entail. For Jeanne, this was especially troubling because,

“...I knew I’d enjoy it [motherhood] because I was ready. I waited until I was 25. So of course, I was ready to have a family. I wanted to get married to their dad but it didn’t happen because life threw us a curve. People have issues that they don’t address when they are younger and so they bring them into the relationship. Then, if you are in a relationship with a person, they become your issue sometimes. You allow them to cross your boundaries and then you want to help a person or feel like you can help them. But in [a sense] sometimes we are not healthy ourselves and not able to recognize that, then become a crutch to them. Or we become co-dependent, and enabling, instead of being able to help them. We are sick ourselves and don’t know it and it’s not healthy being in a dysfunctional relationship, an unhealthy relationship.”

Jeanne’s attempts to lessen the effects of her partner’s drug addiction on their family unit were detrimental to her mothering process with her children. Instead, she took on the role of mother with her partner. Jeanne described her relationship and the role she took on in her partner’s life like this:

“Well, he was...he had got into his addiction. And so I would try to be supportive to him and not knowing that I was unhealthy myself because I came up in a family where we were co-dependent. My mother was co-dependent and so I thought I could fix him. I thought I could be there. Instead, the things I did were

unhealthy for him because I became the role of his mother so to speak because I didn't know....

...I would have had three kids by him but I miscarried with a baby before [my daughter] was born. From the stress, you know, and working too much and under stress dealing with his addiction. Not knowing how I could help him and wanting to help him. You just, when you love somebody and you want the best for them, and they don't want the best for themselves, sometime we just fall into the cycle. We get wrapped up in their world and lose ourselves in the meantime..."

Alana also thought motherhood would foster both a sense of stability in her relationship with her children's father and financial stability to meet her children's wants and needs. Unfortunately, that image was shattered by her lack of financial stability, as well as infidelity and later abandonment by her children's father. For Alana, the experience of motherhood meant:

"That I was able to give my kids any and everything they wanted as they were coming up. But I didn't know when I first had them that I was going to struggle to get to that stage. But I did. I thought everything was going to be picture perfect. I was going to have their father. We were going to be married and we were going to be all right. It's like the Bill Cosby family [from The Cosby Show television series]. That's how I pictured my family being. I mean, I don't regret being a mother at an early age. Well, I ain't gon' say early [because] I was grown when I had them. But [with] what I know now, if I knew it back then, I would have been financially stable. I would have finished school to make sure my kids had what they needed and wanted. But, since they were here, I just took it day by day."

Alana's involvement in illegal activities and subsequent incarceration also created a conflict between her expectations of motherhood and the reality of her lived experiences mothering her children. According to Alana, her incarceration changed the idealized "Huxtable family" image she had for her role as a mother and the type of romantic relationship she wanted with her children's father.

"...I say that it [incarceration] changed that for me because now I know I won't be able to have that Huxtable family because it's very rare that you are going to find a good man out here. And when you are locked up and you think you have someone in your corner, that person goes out your life slowly but surely. And that's what happened to me. I thought I had a good relationship with a guy. We were on good terms and everything. And once I got locked up, I didn't hear from him anymore. I didn't know what was going on with him, I didn't know anything."

Of the women who described how the realities of mothering conflicted with the idyllic image they held concerning what motherhood would be like for them, Alisha was the most explicit in describing her rejection of the role of mother. As the image she held of her life as a mother shifted from a "glorified version" to the lived experiences of performing "frustrating" tasks in caring for her daughter, she retreated from mothering.

As Alisha recalls,

"Well, I had this glorified version, you know. My mom was like, "she's not a baby doll. That's not a doll you're playing with." You know, I would get up bathe her, dress her, comb her hair, feed her, change her and, you know, want to carry her around all day....That was fine but then you got to the part where you have to potty train and show them how to feed themselves and just teach them how to

walk, teach them how to crawl. Just different things that you had to show them. That part I was not good at. I had no patience. I became very frustrated. It became very frustrating for me. And as a result my mom ended up raising my children in the end.”

Camille was the only participant who stated her lived experiences as a mother met her expectations of what motherhood would be like for her. Other than being 16 years old and still in high school, she was excited at the challenge of mothering her baby. She also relished the attention and support bestowed upon her as a new mother. Camille was the only participant to directly describe positive feelings about her image of what she thought motherhood would be like for her.

“It was exciting, it was challenging as well at the beginning because [deep breath] waking up in the middle of the night, mind you, I was a high school student so my mom she stated, “Camille, you’re grown now.” My mom didn’t believe in abortions and she said “I’ll help you through high school but you’re going to raise this kid yourself.” And I did! I woke up in the middle of the night and was still able to go to school everyday [and] take him to day care. He started day care pretty young, I think at 6 months....So yeah, it was what I expected. Kind of what I expected it to be. It was exciting because you get a lot of attention in the community that you are in, especially when you are a new mom with a new baby. You get a lot of support and praises give or take. You know, “how adorable he is” and this, that, and the other. So it was kind of what I expected but, it was a challenge as well. So I expected the challenge as well. [deep breath] So it was what I expected. [chuckles]”

Regardless of the level of preparation the women felt they had as they shifted into the role of mother, most of the women in the study described a tension between their expectation of motherhood and mothering and their lived experiences as mothers. The women's recollections focused on the amount of stability they perceived themselves to have, the influence of idealized images of mothering, and the complications that their involvement in illegal activities brought about for their experience in the role of mother.

Despite the precarious circumstances in which the participants were fulfilling the role of mother, they held many of the ideals conceptualized within the normative constructions of motherhood and mothering described earlier in this study. This was most evident when the women were asked what was most important about being a mother. Overwhelmingly, the women's responses focused on the importance of having a continual presence in the lives of their children. The participants' descriptions of "being there" for their children varied between physical, mental, financial, emotional, or a combination of these forms of presence within their children's lives.

Beverly feels that "being there for your child regardless" is most important to being a mother to her children. She elaborates further that..."even if you are at work you can call and check on them...just showing that somebody cares." For Geneva, a 46-year-old mother of nine, "showing them love and respect...teaching them the right things to do" matters most in being a mother to her children. Other participants, including Sonja, shared these notions of "being there regardless and teaching them the right things." Sonja focused on another aspect of "being there" for the kids, which involved being responsible, even when it is painful. Sonja experienced this firsthand when her son challenged her regarding his memories of a hurtful incident during childhood between him and his mother.

“Just being responsible; being there for the kids. It’s not all about ME, you know. I believe when the kids are younger and what they see us doing, it affects them. What I did, one of my sons that just got out [of prison], he threw a couple of things in my face that he remember from when he was little. I thought in a million years that he didn’t know that. He didn’t remember that and he did. And it hurt. That pain [*pause*] you know so.... He remembered when, he said uh, “mom, I remember when I was with my dad and you was walking down the street and you seen us and you stopped and said hi I love you and this and that. And I asked you where you were going and you said you were going to the store.” And I said, ‘is there anything you want?’ And he told me he wanted some chips, some candy, or some pop. I remember that and I told him I’d bring it back and I never did see him again. So, that affected him. And he said, “mom, you remember that?” And I said, ‘yeah’.”

In hindsight, Sonja feels that putting aside her own self-interest in favor of her children is one way of being responsible in her role as a mother. She believes that the actions the children observe from their parents have an effect on them, so she tries to remain honest with her children in order to “make things better between them.” This incident also had a significant effect on Sonja because it helped her begin working on forgiving herself. Also, it impacted her relationship with her son in that they are beginning to develop a relationship with one another.

Other women in the study focused on being a “good” example for the children. Being a good example involved such acts as encouraging them to desist from illegal activities and providing spiritual guidance. The women wanted their children to learn from their experiences of

drug addiction and repeated incarcerations so they would not continue these cycles in their own lives. According to Jeanne, the most important factor in being a mother to her child is:

“To be there to steer them in the right direction, to be there to just listen, you know, when they need a shoulder to lie on. To encourage them that they can do it. To be an EXAMPLE for them, that they don’t have to run in and out of prison before they get their...[inaudible, drifts off] so they don’t have to use drugs. To let them know they can overcome any obstacle in their way, so long as they get their relationship right with God, first.”

At different points in the interview, the women who expressed the importance of maintaining a continual presence in their children’s lives also described their struggles or failures at meeting this expectation with their kids. Their responses demonstrated the primacy the women placed on the ideal of being present in their children’s lives, even though they had been unable at different points of their children’s lives. Alana felt that “being supportive and being there for them” was most important as well, but she also felt her incarceration inhibited her ability to do that. She described feeling that “by me not being there those 19 months, I wasn’t there to be supportive. I wasn’t there to let her [daughter] know or my son know everything was going to be ok.” Alana was particularly concerned about the lack of support her daughter received, as the children’s father took custody of Alana’s son but left their daughter behind during Alana’s incarceration.

The women elaborated on how they believed incarceration affected their ability to enact the expectations they felt were most important in fulfilling the mother role. Many of the participants identified their drug addiction as the key element that facilitated their absence from their children’s lives. Incarceration, while extending the absence, was conceptualized as a

secondary consequence of their lifestyle while active in their drug addiction. These women had already been absent from their children's lives due to the effects of their drug addiction. A few of the women recalled how they might have still been physically present with their children, but being under the influence of illicit drugs inhibited their mental and emotional presence. Alisha shared a similar response in that the most important factor in fulfilling the role of mother is "being there with your child." Alisha stated this meant "not just being there, but also being a part of the child's life. Interacting with the children. Um...just having a bond with them". Her incarceration in conjunction with the lifestyle she was living while active in her drug addiction affected her ability to be an involved and continuous presence in her children's lives. Alisha elaborated further in describing her perception of the effects of her incarceration on the role of mother.

"Oh, most definitely! Definitely. You know, it's kind of like a cause and effect. I was living a certain way which ended up causing me to go to jail or to be incarcerated. And I would say definitely that played a huge role and it limited me to what I could do with the children or how I could be accessible to them. It hurt that I wasn't accessible for them, especially my older ones. My oldest daughter, I wasn't accessible for her and she was going through a period in her life where she needed me to be accessible. She knew...you know she felt like I was the only one that could understand her, but I wasn't accessible to her. So, that became a very trying time for her. Yeah, it definitely interfered a lot."

Alisha's recollections were emblematic of the experiences of most of the women in the study. The women shared similar perceptions of the most important factors in fulfilling the role of mother, which reflected normative constructions of motherhood and mothering, especially

concerning remaining a constant presence in their children's lives. Unfortunately, the embodiment of the maternal role, including maintaining a continual presence in their children's lives, was deeply influenced by a host of complications related to the women's involvement in illegal activities, particularly illicit drug usage. Drug addiction, as well as other positive and negative factors, was central to the women's development as mothers.

The women's understanding of their role as mothers was linked to the effects of positive and negative influences in their lives. Eleven of the women named a female relative as a positive influence for them as mothers. Interestingly, these women spoke of relationships with female relatives that developed as an alternative to the negative relationship they had with the primary maternal figure in their lives. The most common reasons the participants identified an aunt, sister, cousin, mother, or grandmother included the positive maternal characteristics displayed, the positive morals the relative imparted to them, a lack of negative judgment of their behaviors, and that the relative reminded them that they were "good mothers."

An excellent example of the centrality of a female relative's influence on the women's maternal role can be seen in Joyce's relationship with her cousin, Michelle. Joyce's cousin, Michelle, was a positive influence on her as a mother because she is a "real mother and a strong Black woman." Michelle's positive relationship with her daughter serves as an example for Joyce. Joyce states she would love to be the kind of mother Michelle is with her own children. Joyce expressed proudly that despite everything Michelle has been through herself, Michelle encouraged her and reminded Joyce to remain positive despite her challenges. Michelle reminded Joyce that no matter how shameful she may have felt about her role as a mother to her children, "you don't want your child to see you in pain." Joyce says these words stuck with her and served as a source of strength. Michelle reminds her that no matter how Joyce has fallen

short in her role as a mother, Michelle will remain supportive. Joyce feels that although she has disappointed Michelle because of her drug addiction and repeated incarcerations, she can count on Michelle's encouragement.

In some cases, it is the "hard truths" given to the women by certain relatives that were most influential on their lives. Even though their messages were painful to hear at times, Sonja cites her sister and grandmother's "tough love" and encouragement to do the right thing for her children as the most positive influences on her life as a mother. According to Sonja,

"[My sister] tells me all the time "You are so beautiful and you have beautiful kids. They need you." And my grandmother...on my father's side. My grandmother tells me, "they need you. They are getting older now [and] before you know it they be on they own and you need to be doin' the right thing."

In addition to the influential messages from their relatives, many of the women reference their sense of personal responsibility in heeding the encouragement and advice given to them throughout their lives. Geneva's grandmother has had a positive influence on her life since she was a child. She and her older sister were sent to live with their grandmother after they were sexually abused while in their mother's care. Geneva credits her grandmother with instilling morals that have remained with her through adulthood. Despite the positive influence her grandmother has had on her, Geneva also recognizes that it is her choice whether she lives by those morals or chooses a different lifestyle. Geneva felt her grandmother was a positive influence on her life...

"Because one, [my grandmother] always said, "your word is your bond; when you're wrong, you're wrong." It stuck with me. "No matter what you do, you don't have to lie to me." She told me, "whether you are wrong or right..." I mean it was

things that she put in my mind that stuck with me. The old school shit...a lot of values. Yeah. Some things you can take and do the right things and some things you just know and don't do the right things. You choose your own road.”

While the majority of the participants identified a female relative as a positive influence in their lives, Jeanne and Paula did not name a person as their positive influence. Instead, these two women described how the development of personal characteristics during their recovery from drug addiction has been a positive influence in their lives. According to Paula, maintaining honesty and the “truth” about her past and the secrets within her family, which she links to her lifestyle choices and drug addiction, have influenced her positively. She is adamant about the damage that family secrets cause and believes that in order for her to “get free” and “to get well” she has to be honest about her experiences.

For Jeanne, religion, a personal relationship with God, and involvement in her local church has been a positive influence for her. Upon being asked about who or what has been a positive influence for her as a mother, she begins by talking about how grateful she is to be alive following all of the dangerous situations she has been in due to her lifestyle while active in her drug addiction. Jeanne is thankful “that I’m still alive now. After all that I’ve been through that I’m still alive. That gives me hope.” To get Jeanne to elaborate further, this response was followed with a question about whether there was someone or something that engendered this insight into her character. For Jeanne, the relationship she has with God shaped her perspective of the past lifestyle and helped her find positive role models.

“Yes, by studying the word [Bible scriptures] and going to bible study, going to church. Being around positive influencing people that I met down on this journey this time. My pastor, my chaplain that I sit under. The ladies that was in the

[inaudible] dance with me and the usher board with me. Ladies that came along and extended their hand in my time of need and told me that it's going to be ok."

The participants' responses illustrated that positive influences on their mother role are drawn from varied sources. For the majority of the women in the study the encouragement and "tough love" from a female relative served as affirmations to enhance their role as mothers to their children. For others, the development of personal characteristics was most positive in their understanding of the influential factors in shaping their mother role.

In addition to their description of the positive influences in their lives, the women also spoke of factors that had a negative influence on them as mothers. Half of the participants responded that a relationship with a female relative, usually a maternal figure, had a negative influence on them. Three of the women referenced their involvement in illegal activities, particularly their drug addiction, as having negatively influenced them as mothers. Lastly, two participants responded that social conditions such as growing up in a low-income community and the lack of social support for mothers who have lost custody of their children had negative influences in their lives.

While female relatives were most frequently identified as positive influences on the majority of the women in the study, half of them also responded that a female relative was a negative influence on their role as mothers. Typically this relative was someone who served in a maternal role in their lives, such as a mother, sister, or grandmother. In fact, a number of the women had a visible emotional response while describing their relationship with this relative. Two of the most compelling responses concerning the negative influence of a female relative came from Lori and Geneva. Both participants expressed negative emotions during their discussion of their relationships with their mothers. Lori described a long and tumultuous

relationship with her mother across her lifespan in part because she felt that her mother prioritized her relationships with male partners over mothering Lori and her sister. She became angry as she responded,

“I would say my mom. She never taught me how to be a mom....Me and her never got along. If she had a man, it was her man before me and my sister. She was no mama.”

Geneva's emotions were more guarded than Lori's when discussing the negative influences on her role as mother. Initially, Geneva refused to answer the questions because it was too painful for her to remember the negative influence her mother has had on her life. She feels her mother was responsible for the abuse she endured as a child, which should have never happened. At first, Geneva responded, “I don't want to answer that question. [*pause...*] Well, my mom. I'm going to keep it real. My mom.” Upon being asked to elaborate on why her mother was a negative influence, Geneva responded,

“[*pause*] She didn't raise me. She was in and out of my life. I saw things I shouldn't have. There were things that happened in my life that shouldn't have happened and she allowed them to happen. So, it was negative to me. I love her, but she did her thing. You know, sometimes I think I'm a replica of her. Some things I face in life, decisions I've made, a lot of people say "you're just like your mom." I couldn't see it but in a lot of similarities, we are the same.”

Geneva realizes the negative influence her mother had on the relationship Geneva has with her own children included being absent from her life and not shielding her from “the things that shouldn't have happened.” While her mother's influence on her role as a mother has had a strong

impact, Geneva also is cognizant of her own efforts to keep her daughters from repeating the same patterns and instead be responsible for their children.

“She didn't raise me and I didn't raise my kids. But I told my daughters; they have to stop that cycle. Be responsible. I'm the baby in the family so I did what I wanted to do and everybody took my responsibility. I see now that it wasn't cool. But I see my kids and they respect me. But at the same time, I see at the back of their minds they got doubts. You know how shit is.”

Alisha, Jeanne, and Paula responded that their drug addiction and the lifestyle they lived while active in their addiction was a negative influence on their lives as mothers. According to Paula, the answer was simple because her drug addiction had taken over her life and made her forget she even was a mother.

[*chuckles*] “Drugs because on the influence I mean it is so powerful. It will make you forget your children, yes. Yes, and I could remember that. Like I said I thought I was doing the right thing by staying out of their [her children's] life when I was using, you know. They were with their dads I figured they was ok but they weren't...”

As Paula stated, spending years active in her drug addiction had a significant negative impact on her relationship with her children and interrupted her mothering process. Similarly, Alisha, who was active in her drug addiction for approximately 16 years, also experienced the all-consuming influence of drug addiction. Like Paula, her life revolved around her drug addiction and involvement in other illegal activities to support her drug addiction. In fact, she feels the influence of her addiction was so negative that it “robbed” her of the things most

important to her, such as her freedom, a relationship with her children, and the support of her family. According to Alisha, her drug addiction was negative...

“...just all around the board. The using, the addiction, the lifestyle. The using to live, living to use. Not being functional just being a hardcore addict. Not caring, just giving up. It robbed me....It stole my family. My integrity. My character. Me, as a person. It robbed me of my freedom. It robbed me of time. It robbed me of so many things that I just won't ever be able to get back. Peace of mind. *[long pause]* Um, yeah...”

Alisha's recollection of the negative influence drug addiction has had on role as a mother was illustrative of the experiences of the other 10 participants also recovering from long-term drug addictions. The influences the women described as having either positive or negative influences on their role as mother had a tremendous effect on numerous aspects of their lives, not just the mother role. Given that the negative influences have the ability to further their vulnerability to repeat patterns of illegal activities, many of the participants attempted to emphasize the positive influences in order to mitigate the effects of the negative influences. However, this was very difficult for the women in this study, who already were dealing with a unique set of challenges as formerly incarcerated Black women who are mothers.

The women in this study face challenges as formerly incarcerated Black women who are mothers that further complicate their role as mothers to their children. Many of the challenges these women must overcome are related to the consequences of their involvement in illegal activities, their inability to meet and conform to normative expectations of women in the role of mother, and limitations on their ability to perform tasks associated with mothering. Despite the numerous challenges faced by these women, given their disadvantaged social position,

insufficient access to resources, and a profound history of violence, victimization, and substance abuse, they demonstrate a strong sense of personal responsibility for the consequences of the choices they have made which fostered many of these difficulties. Further, the women's responses demonstrated their commitment to surmount these challenges for their own sake and their children's sake as well.

Half of the participants described how the consequences of their involvement in illegal activities were most challenging to them within their role as a mother. Further, learning to deal with their loved ones' responses to their past mistakes particularly challenging, given many of the women's attempts make amends. Others found it challenging to provide their children with guidance in order to minimize the influence of their involvement with illegal activities. They did not want their children to follow their path into delinquent activities. This challenge was especially poignant for the participants with drug addictions. Geneva spoke candidly about the challenges that arise for her when her actions, such as a relapse into her addiction, contradict the messages she gives her children about doing the right thing. While Geneva understands the importance of providing guidance for her children to prevent them from making similar mistakes, it is difficult to do so when she continues to make those same mistakes. For Geneva, this contradiction is most challenging.

“Not doing the right things and trying to tell them to do the right things; because then you contradict yourself. But at the same time, you try to give them advice not to go down the same road that you went down. But no matter what, you're their mom and experience is the best teacher in everything, so if they want to do what they do, they do. But all I can do is give them advice and show them I love them and try to guide them down the right path.”

Geneva recognizes that her actions are contradictory, but she wants a better life for her children than what she had and is presently living. Despite the contradictions she is grateful for the successes her children have acquired. She stated that,

“...through the grace of God all five of my kids, the oldest ones, graduated and got their own jobs. Two of them are in college. Like I told them, be better than what I am. Don't do what I do.”

For Jeanne and Sonja, facing their children's reactions to learning about their past mistakes is difficult to deal with as a mother. Jeanne is Although Jeanne wants her children to understand the roots of her problems with drug addiction and repeated incarcerations, she is concerned about “being able to share [her] past with them.” For Jeanne, being open about her past is especially important...

“...because I want [my children] to know where all this stimulates from. How I lost my parental rights to them and let them know it wasn't their fault. It's nothing they did to make mama use drugs or anything. To let them know they were loved, but I was sick and I had a disease and I couldn't help myself. So it was best that God intervened and someone stepped in to take them, as they probably would have been worse off then where they are today. Somebody could have been messing with them, molest **THEM**, you know what I'm sayin'.”

Whereas Jeanne was determined to explain her absence to her children no matter how challenging or uncomfortable it might have been for her, Sonja was fearful of her children's response to her past mistakes. According to Sonja one of the most significant challenges to being a mother is “them throwing my past in my face.” Sonja fears being rejected by her children. Given her extensive history of repeated periods of incarceration and multiple absences from their

lives, Sonja realizes she must face the consequences of her past mistakes, including her children's anger. Sonja recalls that the risk of rejection is strong with...

“The kids because at one point in time when I did get them back, my oldest son was like, “you not my mom, you a bitch!” From them—rejection. You know, because I run from pain. I don't like dealing with pain and now I know I can't run no more. I gotta deal with it.”

For a number of the women in this study, meeting expectations associated with the role of mothers is the most challenging aspect of their experience as mothers. These expectations include providing such necessities as shelter, nourishment, education, and health care for their children. The responses of the women in the study demonstrate that they desire to meet the expectations associated with normative conceptions of mothering and value them, particularly those concerning the performance of mothering tasks. However, the women find meeting these expectations challenging when their disadvantaged social position, access to resources, and a criminal background limit them. For example, Alana's limitations on accessing adequate financial resources to give her children their wants and needs compelled her to use illegal means to meet her desire to appease her children. The challenge of financial strain was a point Alana elaborated on when she stated,

“Well I can say challenging for me was not being able to give my kids what they need and want and going to a new [illegal] means of support. Messing with credit cards and stuff and not being able to get a job and stuff. I had a little job [as a caretaker for the elderly], but sometimes business would get slow and your patients would fall, you know, [or] would die and you'd be off work for a little while. And my kids would be asking for something. Then the hardest part that

hurt me was my daughter would come up to me and be like, "mom, I need these gym shoes or I need some micros [braids] in my hair" and I wasn't able to give them to her."

Alana learned early on to express her love through purchasing gifts and other items for her children. Therefore, when financial resources ran short, she turned to illegal means to continue to express her love for her children. Although Monique experienced similar challenges concerning having adequate financial resources for her children's wants, she did not express using illegal means to provide for her children. Monique also discussed that the challenge was not only her limitations in meeting her son's desires but also coming to terms with his lack of understanding of her financial limitations. According to Monique, it was difficult...

"Not being able to...not being able to give them the things that they want. Not being able to give them the things that they want....It's, it could be just the little stuff, you know, my son um wants a certain kind of books, a game or somethin' and me not being able to do that for him. But him not being able to understand 'cus he don't understand."

Alana and Monique both faced financial challenges and desired to surmount these limitations to provide for their children. However, one dealt with it by turning to illegal means to meet this challenge and one dealt with it internally to condition herself to handle her child's reaction. Most evident in the women's recollections was the challenge of appearing as a mother who could provide for her children no matter the obstacles. Falling short in this area weighed heavily on all of the women in this study, as expressed by some of the women. Beverly felt challenged "just being a mom raising a child" overall. Further, she expressed the importance of "giving the children a good start right from the beginning" of their lives. Related to the notion of

giving the kids a good start, Lori felt that although it has been challenging to put her son's needs ahead of her own, it is necessary because she is now responsible for him as well as herself. For Lori, this means challenging herself to learn new skills so she can teach her son once she is able to regain custody of him. According to Lori,

“It is not about you no more it is about them. Instead of buying things for you, you got to buy stuff for them. Say you have to teach them something...[to] read, spell, math, count their money. I am still learning how to count money and tell time. I never got taught how to tell time but [Grace House] is teaching me. I am learning so I can teach him. I am learning how to count money. I am not good at math at all. I can't stand math!”

Lori's recognition of the impact her personal limitations could pose for her son was symbolic of the consciousness of the group of women in this study. They were perceptive of their challenges and the affect they have on their children. The women described challenges they faced in fulfilling the mother role that are not very different from concerns and challenges faced by mothers in the general population. However, their constraints in attempting to meet expectations associated with mothering are uniquely complex when examined in the context of profound social disadvantage, involvement in illegal activities, drug addiction, and limitations on their access to consistent and stable resources. The incarceration experience, a physical disruption of the mothering process, only exacerbates their challenges as mothers.

While many of the participants spoke of initially not being ready to become a mother or having negative feelings about first becoming a mother, most of them accepted the role of mother and willingly performed the tasks associated with mothering to the best of their abilities. Alisha was the exception. Alisha was the only participant in the study who was adamant that

taking on the role of mother was not a “responsibility” she wanted for her life. Her role as mother in her children’s lives was unique from the other participants in that she was unequivocal during her interview about rejecting the role of mother and its associated tasks. Alisha felt she was “not cut out to be a mother” because it meant a “loss of freedom” and autonomy. Upon the birth of her first child, she felt her “life of leisure” had ended. According to Alisha,

“I had responsibilities. I had a daughter. And so my lifestyle of leisure couldn't go on. I had someone else depending on me. I couldn't just get up and go when I was ready. There were certain places I couldn't go because I had her. If I had to take her with me then, I couldn't...you know what I'm saying. I had to secure a babysitter....Our environment, my environment, who I had around me, who I had in my house. There were just a lot of things that changed that you don't even think about prior [to having a child].”

Embodying the mother role required life-altering changes that demanded a level of commitment Alisha was unwilling to make. As Alisha became frustrated with the mothering tasks associated with caring for her children, she decided to give custody of them her mother. Alisha felt she did not learn to be a mother to her children because her mother took up the mothering tasks for her. As Alisha recalled,

“She [mother] had my oldest when she was 7 and at the time my youngest was 8 months and I only had three [children]. And then I later had two more. And she took those too but uh, yeah... [pauses] ...I missed a lot of the parent teacher/conferences and going to school. I missed the children um, you know, having to discipline them. Um, I didn't potty train any of them. My mom did that. Because my first child, my mother pretty much kept her all the time. So I never

really had her. But, I don't know. I guess you could say I never really learned how to be a parent because I got the easy way out.”

Although Alisha did not have custody of her children any longer, she recognized the affect her drug addiction and subsequent incarceration had on her life as a mother and her children’s lives, particularly as it related to her repeated absence from their lives. According to Alisha,

“Being incarcerated played a very big part in my mothering because it's hard to parent over the phone. It's hard to parent, let alone with incarceration. In my experience, I didn't have custody of my children, my mom did. And I learned later that my incarceration affected them. My lifestyle affected them, because I was in and out of prison; in and out of jail and subsequently I was in and out of their lives.”

Alisha’s daughter, the oldest of her children, felt the impact most profoundly; presumably because she spent more time with Alisha than any of her other children. Alisha shared a strong bond with her oldest child so her absence was significant for both Alisha and her daughter. She shared her insights into her decision and the impact her absence had on her oldest child.

“So, and for the first 5 to 7 years my oldest daughter had problems because she thought that I was going to get them back with me one day. When really that wasn’t my plan. I didn’t want any children. I just wanted to be single. And I liked the freedom. I never really tried with a great effort to get them back with me. I felt like that they were with my mom and she could give them more than I could ever give them and that would be the best place for them. So, I never really tried to get them back.”

Alisha's rejection of the role of mother was unique in comparison the other women in the study. She was the only participant to openly state she was unwilling to give up her "freedom" to mother her children. She acknowledged the difficulties her lifestyle, including an unstable living environment, drug addiction, and repeated incarcerations, has had on her abilities to maintain a continual presence in her children's lives. Despite all of these challenges, Alisha strongly upholds her identity as her children's mother, despite her rejection of performing the tasks associated with mothering.

In sum, the pervasiveness of normative constructions of motherhood influenced the embodiment of the maternal role and performance of tasks associated with mothering for the women in this study in multiple ways. First, when shifting into the mother role, age at the onset of pregnancy influenced whether the participants felt they were prepared to take on the tasks associated with mothering. In addition to a lack of preparation and an identity shift, the age of the onset of motherhood left the women vulnerable to stigmatization rooted in controlling images of Black women particularly, images of the promiscuous "Jezebel" and economically irresponsible "welfare queen" (Collins, 2000). The women were cognizant of the effects of the stigmatization these stereotypical images generated, as was evident in the negative perspectives on the onset of motherhood from the women who became mothers in their teens in comparison to the positivity of the women who became mothers in adulthood. For these Black women, becoming a teen mother left them vulnerable to stigmas associated with prevailing narratives about the sexuality of poor women and women of color. The women in this study became mothers under circumstances that conflict with normative constructions of motherhood, all the while embodying a social identity as women whose racial, class, and gender identity along with a criminalized background that furthers their marginalization.

The women in this study sit at the intersection of multiple levels of social disadvantages as a result of interlocking racial, class, and gender oppressions. Compounding the effects of these disadvantages are challenges brought about by their involvement in illegal activities and subsequent incarceration. The experience of motherhood and mothering was tied to positive and negative influences for the women in this study, including their own involvement in illegal activities, lack of adequate resources to mother, and their relationships with loved ones. All of these factors affect the women's abilities to meet expectations they have for themselves as mothers. Additionally, the notion of maintaining a consistency of care with their children, a critical aspect of the mother role cited by the women in the study, was also impacted by the women's interpersonal issues related to their involvement in criminalized activities. These factors were especially detrimental to the mothering practices for the women with drug addictions. Structurally, maintaining a consistency of care was impacted by the women's reality of life in economically disenfranchised Black families and communities, as well as institutional barriers to resources could have mitigated the effects of their criminalized backgrounds and economic disadvantages. Despite the significant challenges they face as formerly incarcerated Black women who are mothers, they still upheld normative expectations of themselves concerning their role as mother and the performance of the tasks associated with mothering. For many of the women in this study, the expectations they held, particularly concerning "being there" for their children, transcended their involvement in illegal activities and subsequent incarceration.

B. Involvement in illegal activities and incarceration

As is common among incarcerated women, most of the participants in this study disclosed a serious drug addiction (Morash and Schram, 2002; Traylor and Richie, 2012).

Further, the offense categories in which the illegal activities the women in this study were involved are not abnormal in comparison to the general population of female offenders; drug offenses, property offenses, and vice crimes (Carson and Sabol, 2012). The criminal offenses the participants in this study disclosed illustrated the gendered dynamics of criminal activities in that women are more likely to be incarcerated for drug and property offenses than they are for violent offenses (Traylor and Richie, 2012). Drug offenses were the most prevalent illegal activities committed by the participants. As most of the women in this study described themselves as recovering drug addicts, ten of the participants revealed that they had committed and were incarcerated for at least one drug offense during their lifetime. Nine of the participants revealed they committed other illegal offenses to support their drug addiction, such as prostitution and retail theft.

Alana and Lori were the only participants who had never been incarcerated for drug-related crimes. Alana was incarcerated for check fraud and Lori for aggravated child battery. Alana, along with nine other participants reported being involved in illegal activities for economic gain. Jeanne's home invasion robbery charge was related to her drug addiction. Further, Alana and Lori described illegal activities directly related to their roles as mothers. Jeanne and Lori reported being incarcerated for violent offenses, which were the offenses of home invasion robbery and aggravated child battery, respectively. A listing of the participants' involvement in illegal activities is included in Table 1, Appendix C.

As this study's aim is to explore motherhood and mothering for formerly incarcerated Black women, I assumed that the illegal activities in which they were involved were secondary to the effects of their incarceration on their lives as mothers. However, during the course of the interviews, the participants articulated narratives that demonstrated that their involvement in

illegal activities, especially drug use and addiction, was central to understanding their role as mothers who have been incarcerated. In fact, incarceration was described as merely the next logical step in a life where long-term drug addiction was one of the most poignant life experiences for many of the women in this study. This is not to discount the significant impact that incarceration has had on their lives, but demonstrates the primacy of the effects of drug addiction on the women's lived experiences.

All of the participants who disclosed dealing with a drug addiction had been using illicit drugs for over a decade of their lives. Camille described fifteen years of instability, drug relapses, and incarceration as exhausting.

"I, uh, I then, had a long road of hell with drug use, was in and out of jail, and in and out of rehab. So then pretty much after 15 years I got tired."

Similarly, Candice had spent many years in her drug addiction. At the time of her interview, 43-year-old Candice had been sober 4 years and 10 months after having been in her drug addiction for over 20 years. According to Candice, living drug-free for even one day was a miracle.

"Yeah...for me to be clean one day is a miracle because I never thought I would ever be clean. I never thought I would ever be clean. And I got a whiff of it [sobriety] and I like it. You know what I am saying."

Despite the onset of their drug addiction having taken place decades ago, for the women in this study, the recollection of that moment was related with such clarity that it seemed to have happened in the days prior to their interview. For Candice and Camille, the onset of their drug addiction was linked to relationships with men who themselves were drug addicts and dealers.

According to Camille, her addiction derailed her educational career and altered the course of her life in ways she had not imagined. As she recalled,

“I was a heavy girl and my self-esteem was kind of low. As I was going to college, I had a break up in my 10 year relationship that I was in. So I lowered my standards and started dating a drug dealer, um, drug dealer—slash—addict. I didn’t know he was an addict I just thought he was, you know, a dealer, which still was against my standards—my original standards. SO...I, um, dated him and started using drugs with him, to put it short. I dropped out of college and I spiraled down basically.”

Being in an intimate relationship with a partner who dealt drugs provided Camille access to a drug supply that allowed her addiction to consume her life. Similarly, Candice described the “easy access” she had to her boyfriend’s drug supply for years. But once they broke up, she had to go out to the streets to support her addiction, which put her at risk for increased contact with police and possible arrest. This is when “the game change[d]” in her drug addiction.

“Actually back then the guy I was dating then he sold drugs. So it was like I had easy access and it was free. It was free for like 4 years, you know what I am saying. I did not have to go out of the house or anything. And then after that him and I broke up. And that’s when they started bringing crack and it is like the high changed and the game changed.”

The damage associated with the onset of widespread crack cocaine usage was felt most profoundly in urban, impoverished neighborhoods, like those Candice grew up in. Further, Candice’s introduction to heroin and crack cocaine in the 1980s was a change she had not anticipated. Candice’s initial drug usage had been a part of her socialization process within her

community and among friends. However, as Candice recalled, the social use of drugs she had experienced initially became deeply personal and constant.

“...like I’d work all week and then on the weekend I’d get high. It was social so I could go to work and just do it on the weekend. But if I would have known back then I was going to lose everything, you know what I am saying, to that I would have never used it.”

For some of the women in this study, the onset of their drug addiction correlated with challenging circumstances in their relationships. Paula, Jeanne, and Beverly describe the onset of their drug addiction as a way to cope or escape the other problems occurring in their lives. All three of these women described problems in relationships with loved ones as a significant influence on their drug addiction. Paula’s desire to block out her own perception of shortcomings in the relationships with her children compels her to use drugs. She readily admitted “...if I had my way I would be somewhere high (*chuckles*) ...[I] don’t have to deal with the problems. That was my escape. I stayed high so I did not have to deal....” Similarly, both Jeanne and Beverly spoke of trying to cope with their feelings about the relationship with their children as having a significant impact on their drug addiction. According to Jeanne, the desire to block out the feelings about losing of custody of her children was so strong it led her to seriously contemplate suicide. Instead of ending her life, she went deeper into her drug addiction.

“Yeah, I’m glad I’m here too because I was, I was trying to take my life by using the drugs. I felt like that part of my life [losing custody of the children], I just couldn’t fill that void no more. I just felt like I wanted to run away. My kids weren’t there anymore to take care and to nurture and love on, so I felt like there wasn’t anything to live for. I just wanted the drugs to take my life, but God saw

different for me.”

The escalation of Jeanne’s desire to outrun her problems via drug use and suicidal ideations was not uncommon among the other women in the study. Four additional participants link the escalation of their drug addiction with traumatic events in their lives. This was especially significant for Beverly and Monique, who link the intensification of their drug addiction with the loss of loved ones. Both participants already were in their drug addiction when the loss occurred, however the event propelled them further into their addiction and subsequent incarceration.

Losing custody of her children was one of the most traumatic events in Beverly’s life. In fact, upon the removal of her children from her care and termination of her parental rights, Beverly had suicidal ideations and contemplated killing herself and her children. She was subsequently sent to the mental health ward at a local hospital. She described the hospitalization and doctor’s recognition of the effects losing her children had upon her psyche.

“Yeah, I know how people feel being away from their kids. It hurts so bad. I thought about trying to kill myself and all my babies. And I did [attempted suicide]! That was all I had...I had nothing left to lose [so] I tried to kill myself.

They sent me away to the crazy house.”

The loss of her children was so profound that although the removal of her children happened over 16 years prior to her interview, she still experienced the loss as if it occurred presently. Its effects are manifested through her drug addiction.

“...They sent me to therapy and that is how I went to therapy. The doctor, he said that I was depressed over losing my children. That is what made me get worse and going to jail and stuff and getting high and stuff that is what it was. I had nothing else to do...”

Monique also experienced an intensified drug addiction as a result of the trauma of losing a loved one. When Monique's mother died in 2005, she experienced the loss of her safety net. The loss of her mother represented the removal of a support system that Monique could count on to mitigate the effects of her drug addiction and repeated incarcerations, especially for her children. Monique and her children lived in her mother's home for many years, so she had to deal with the loss along with her children. The loss of her mother unsettled Monique's life in numerous ways. Her relationship with her siblings and her children were altered negatively, mostly due to the escalation of her drug addiction.

Monique recalls how conflict with her sister following their mother's death caused her to leave her mother's home with one of her children. Monique fled her mother's house to get away from the conflict. She had taken her youngest son with her to a friend's house and was "just doing what I do, basically just gettin' high and going back and forth to the stores. That's what I was doing." Monique elaborated further to describe the complicated situation she found herself in with her sister.

"I never stayed away from my kids. I never. Um, but after my mom died that's the first time I ever just like left, you know left my kids. I was staying with my mom and my sister, the one that got my youngest one [son]. She um she moved up here 'cus she moved back up here from Mississippi to take care of my mom. And my mom wound up dying, so um it's like she [sister] just came up here and basically took over. And she thought that I had got my Link card [public assistance debit card] and just messed off the money and stuff, which I didn't. But so um so she locked [my] room up and everything. She locked the room up and everything and um and told me I couldn't drive my brother's car no more. My brother in jail and

[she] told me I couldn't drive his car no more. It's like she came up there and just took over.”

Her sister’s appearance in their lives rendered Monique powerless to advocate for her needs following her mother’s death.

“So, I already done lost my mom and I felt like she was coming up here taking over. So I started taking my youngest son to the doctor one day, I took him with me and [coughs] I never went back. She came and got my son and asked for me to sign over guardianship for them. And that's what I did. And I was in jail a month later.”

Monique experienced the loss of her mother right along with her children. Her mother’s death was not only difficult for Monique; it affected her youngest son especially hard. She feels his acting out in school is related to the loss of her mother. His grandmother was the primary maternal figure in his life. Monique sees his acting out as a response to this loss and the loss he experienced with Monique’s absence from his life because of her drug addiction and repeated incarcerations. She is trying to make sense of his behavior so she can get proper assistance for him.

“He's just holding a lot of hurt in ‘cus he's not a bad kid, but I think he been through a lot since my mom died. Could you imagine your grandma dying and that's the one that was taking care of you? Your mom was there but your grandma was the one that was taking care of you. It's like they lost both of us, me and my mom, ‘cus after my mom died I was gone. You know what I'm saying? So it was like they lost both of us.”

The participants' recollections of the onset of their drug addiction, even decades later, demonstrate the power of drug addiction on their lives. In fact, Jeanne characterizes her heroin addiction as a disease she has to "keep maintenance on" or she will relapse as she had in the past. Paula and Sonja believe their drug addiction is so powerful it makes them "forget everything," even that they are mothers. Candice has "no regrets" about her drug addiction, other than losing custody of her two youngest children, because she learned something from the experiences while active in her addiction. In contrast, both Sonja and Alisha spoke of their drug addiction in relation to what it has cost them. Alisha felt her drug addiction "robbed" her of such things as significant relationships and her integrity. Sonja wanted to convey the toll drug addiction has on women's lives, generally.

"I want you to know that when we women are out there using drugs, it takes a lot. And we lose a lot. WE lose loved ones, family, and friends. But we have to realize that we have a disease and the disease is called addiction. It's not easy to stop getting high on your free will. I believe if you make a decision that you want to stop getting high, you should get some help. But you've got to have the desire to want to stop."

Addiction is particularly powerful in precipitating strain within the family unit. Five of the participants directly spoke of distancing themselves from their family members while active in the addiction. But when they were sober, they felt they could interact with their family members and the strain would diminish. Jeanne, Paula and Alisha recalled attempting to hide their addiction from their families. Jeanne "didn't want anyone to know," while Alisha sought to avoid the judgment of her family members. Alisha described how she and her brother have drug addictions and are distant from one another and the rest of the family when they are active in

their addictions.

“So it's like when we aren't doing what we are supposed to be doing; we aren't really trying to be around the family too much. We're kind of distant. Even though I've been in my addiction for years, for my family to actually see me in active addiction, no. They know it, but they haven't actually seen it.”

Further, Alisha stays away from her family because she does not want to hear their recollections of her failures. She “already knows.” According to Alisha,

“...you don't want nobody judging you. You know you have already messed up so you don't need nobody else telling you YOU messed up. You know, we are our worst critics anyway. You know, so I don't need you telling me or you looking at me saying "you need to get yourself together." I know I fell apart. I don't need you to keep telling me.”

Alisha's defiant response to her family's concerns about her drug addiction indicates her use of defense mechanisms to keep their criticisms at bay. Monique takes a similar stance in dealing with her family's issues with her drug addiction. She stated that her drug addiction causes her to distance herself from her family because she felt they would not want anything to do with her because of her addiction and repeated incarcerations. According to Monique,

“When I'm, when I'm not using drugs I feel like me and my family we have a pretty good relationship. Because you know, 'cus when I'm using drugs I don't go around my family. I barely even talk to them. They probably don't want me to come around neither, but I don't go around them...”

Monique's fear of rejection by her family is strong. However, when Monique was sober, she did not feel it was necessary to stay away from them and has fond memories of those times. She

shared a memory of a time when she was drug-free and gathered her family together to celebrate Thanksgiving. She felt good about getting her family together because her sister told her she felt she had no one. Although at time their relationship was strained, Monique was significantly affected by the impact her repeated incarcerations and drug addiction had on her sister.

“...And it made me feel kinda a little sad because I was like she ain’t got nobody but me, you know. ‘Cus I be in and out of jail, I be doing my thing so it, it just made me feel real sad. I said ‘well you do have family, you have family.’ She said “well I do, but don't nobody want to be bothered with me but you.” So it just made me feel good ‘cus I got the family together we all, everybody came over, we spent Thanksgiving together, me and my sister we cooked. It was nice, it was real nice.”

The women in this study also spoke of the effect their addiction had on their sense of agency to act on their own behalf. Both Camille and Joyce spoke of the limitations their drug addiction has imposed on them. The shame Joyce felt about her addiction and repeated relapses caused her to limit her interactions with others, whether it was being involved in her church or visiting with her children. Joyce recognized that both church involvement and the bonds with children could be positive sources of strength for her, but she restricted herself from accessing them because of the shame she felt about her drug addiction.

Camille described how the consequences of her drug addiction limited her access to housing assistance programs necessary for her reintegration back in to society. She experienced this when seeking adequate housing in order to meet the stipulations set forth by the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) as she attempted to regain custody of her youngest child. Camille’s application was rejected for housing in a neighborhood away from where she

had used drugs and she had to settle for less-than-desirable housing in a high-crime neighborhood. Camille conceded,

“I can’t do it on my own. Incarceration and trying to reintegrate into society, it’s something that I believe that you can’t do on your own. Once you’re incarcerated, especially if it’s a felony, you need some assistance in trying to find stability as far as housing...in all aspects. Because the first place that I tried to get an apartment, I was turned down because of my incarceration...because I’ve been incarcerated they rejected my application and that’s how I ended up here.”

While drug addiction limited some aspects of the women’s lives, it propelled them in others. Nine of the women in this study disclosed being involved in other illegal activities in order to support their drug addiction. These other activities include prostitution and solicitation, drug dealing, and retail theft. Seven of these women responded that they were involved in retail theft to support their drug habit. Two of the women spoke of dealing drugs in addition to their drug usage. Lastly, four of the women disclosed engaging in prostitution to support their drug addiction.

Jeanne and Monique spoke about the long-term adverse effects their involvement in retail theft to support their addiction had on their children. Monique recalled receiving a letter from her 19-year-old son while in prison. In the letter, he reminded her of a time during his childhood when he knew she went out stealing and did not return. Monique recalled her son disclosing that he was “just waitin’ up and he just started cryin’ waiting on me to come back, and he said I never came back.” She did not return that night because she had gotten arrested and was subsequently incarcerated for the crime.

Jeanne's involvement in retail theft first brought her to the attention of DCFS. She had involved her young son and he was caught by store security. As Jeanne's son aged, he continued to come in conflict with legal authorities. She connects his delinquency to herself and his father. Jeanne disclosed that she believes her son picked up those traits [theft] by witnessing her and his father stealing to support their addictions.

"He learned that from us, so of course he's going to use what he learned early on. Because, see, my son was very...he's very intelligent. So he was growing up too fast anyway. I was letting him see too much....So my son could have been in prison when he was a juvenile when he was seeing me stealing and he started stealing. So you know, a lot of the bad traits that I was displaying were rubbing off on him."

Although Jeanne was grateful that her son was not incarcerated as a juvenile, he later was incarcerated for aggravated robbery during adulthood. Unfortunately, Jeanne's involvement in illegal activities had lasting effects for herself and her family members.

While Monique and Jeanne spoke of the negative consequences of their involvement in retail theft to support their drug addiction, Beverly, Sonja, and Geneva disclosed their involvement in prostitution to support their drug addiction. Beverly recalled the onset of her addiction to cocaine which led to her involvement in prostitution.

"I mostly started out shoplifting and stuff a long time ago that is when my record really started before I was doing retail theft and I went to prostitution once I got addicted to cocaine."

For these women, there was a substantial amount of risk involved in supporting their drug addiction. Sonja candidly spoke of how her engagement in risky behaviors while involved in prostitution could have had long-term negative consequences for her health and wellbeing.

“I mean when you out there using drugs, you do what you have to do for the sake of one more [hit]. You know, and jumpin’ in and out of cars [prostituting], I thank God I did not catch no disease. And I got tested for everything...because I didn’t use condoms. I mean I ain’t gon’ be like a saint and say I used condoms every time. No, I didn’t! So....”

Both Joyce and Paula divulged dealing drugs to support their addiction. They also recalled the dangers associated with their involvement in the drug trade. Joyce refers to that time of her life as playing “Russian Roulette” with her life. She remembered the life-threatening situations she faced while dealing drugs, including having guns pointed at her head. Joyce was grateful to be alive in spite of these dangerous situations and chaos she faced while trying to support her drug addiction. Joyce, like the other women with drug addictions, described the instability and chaotic nature of the culture of addiction (White, 1996) brought on by her addiction.

"I think back on my life all the time and all the craziness, especially using drugs. It was like it was a daily routine. From sun up to sun up to sun up. There was no sun down, it was sun up all the time..."

Joyce’s description illustrates what White terms as the “culture of addiction” (1996). This term refers to, “an informal social network in which group norms (prescribed patterns of perceiving, thinking, feeling and behaving) promote excessive drug use” (5). This non-stop routine of selling drugs that Joyce describes also endangered Paula’s life and significantly

affected her loved ones. Paula experienced both the threat to her health and wellbeing due to her own actions as well as at the hands of others involved in the drug trade. Paula recalled two incidents in which her sons and nephew were called to find her, as she was suffering severe injuries on both occasions. After the first incident...

“...my oldest son put me in a crazy house. One time he found me in a abandoned building where I was selling drugs at and I had not had no sleep for like 3 or 4 days...I was not myself and somebody went to get my son. Him and my nephew took me to [the] hospital and he signed me into the mental ward.”

Paula’s children worry about her involvement in the drug trade, especially after being called to pick her up after she had been injured. They are fearful of encountering worse repercussions for Paula. In another incident, Paula recalls her sons and nephew once again coming to get her after two men robbed. The men held her at gunpoint because they believed she was carrying money and drugs. She had a gun pointed at her and was thrown from the third floor of a building to the ground. Paula recalled the circumstances of that incident:

“I never was a prostitute or anything but the lifestyle...selling the drugs, people trying to stick you up. I had a gun in my chest, you know, **“BREAK YO’SELF!”** [a verbal warning to submit your belongings during a robbery] And I did not have nothing but they said they knew I had the drugs. And [they] did not kill me. I was thrown off a 3rd floor building [after being] robbed. Two guys threw me off a 3rd floor building and my kids had to come and pick me up and take me to the hospital. I had two broken ribs, this burn on my arm right here was from the grass, but that was all I suffered...that was God amazing grace, you know, and but my kids had to come and pick me up my oldest two boys and my nephew...”

Paula's children have felt the effects of her lifestyle most profoundly. She recalls their fears of getting a call that she had been killed. Initially, Paula did not understand the roots of her children's fears about her safety. But later she conceded that their fears grew out of their experiences and understanding of the lifestyle she led to support her drug addiction.

"...They [the children] were worried about finding me in a garbage can dead because a couple of ladies I know were found in alleys raped and beaten and killed, [with their] throat slashed and stuff. And my kids were like we don't want to have to come and identify you, you know, for them takin' you out of a garbage can or anything....I was like where did that come from, you know? But I knew where that was coming from because of the type of life I lived."

Drug addiction played a central role in the women's lives in ways that consumed most other aspects of their lives. For the women who disclosed a drug addiction, their addiction limited them in some areas of their lives and propelled them into the chaotic culture of addiction in others. Clearly, drug addiction and its extension into various types of illegal activities, significantly impacted the women's embodiment of the role of mother and their abilities to perform the tasks associated with mothering.

While drug addiction significantly impacted the embodiment of the maternal role for the majority of the women in this study, two of the participants had committed non-drug-related offenses yet were equally impacted by the far-reaching effects of their involvement in illegal activities. Lori and Alana had not had drug convictions or disclosed having a drug addiction. Twenty-four years old, Lori was sentenced to 6 years in prison for aggravated battery to a child due to an injury to her only son when he was "2 or 3 months old." Alana was incarcerated for 19 months for forgery and check fraud. While the participants with drug addictions spoke of the

linkages between their addictions and other aspects of their lives, including their relationship with their children, Lori and Alana's offenses were related *directly* to the performance of their role as a mother to their children.

Following their convictions, Lori and Alana were incarcerated for the first time. As "first-timers," both of whom had no previous direct contact with correctional authorities as offenders, they described being greatly affected by their incarceration. Alana's perception of herself both as a woman and mother to her children was altered upon going to prison. Lori's incarceration for aggravated battery to a child also affected her internal perception of herself. But most telling were the effects of her incarceration on her mental and physical health. Lori remembered,

"They put me on psyche meds. Yeah, we were on locked down in County Jail. I am in a room by myself but everybody else got a roommate. Could not go nowhere. In a room by myself and there was the same card game to play over and over again. I forgot the name of it. They had no homework because I was going to school while I was locked up and I did all the homework. I had nothing to do. I had no roommate."

Lori's description is underlined by a sense of isolation at having been removed from her loved ones, especially her son. Currently, both Alana and Lori live away from their children in a transition home. Alana and Lori identify strongly with their role as mothers, so their absence from their children deeply affected them. For Lori, despite initial nervousness, becoming a mom was a great experience. She particularly cherishes hearing her son call her as "mom," so being away from him during her incarceration and now while in the transition home has been very difficult. She assuages some of her feelings about not being with her son by keeping his picture nearby.

“Having somebody call me “mom.” It was kind of fun. It was like how they say “mom.” It is something about it. It’s in my head everyday....I go to sleep and I had a big old picture frame in my room on my dresser. When I wake up he’s there; when I go to sleep his there. It’s like he’s closer to me than he is with his grandmother [whom he lives with].”

Alana’s children are her “pride and joy” so her prison sentence and subsequent separation from the children was devastating for all of them. Alana’s three children had depended on her as their sole source of support for most of their lives. By going to prison for 19 months, Alana’s children had to rely on other family members with whom they had little prior contact. Further, Alana felt “like a disappointment” for leaving them without having taught them to care for themselves in her absence. According to Alana,

“I feel like a disappointment. Like I disappointed my children, because they were out there with people I didn't think they'd have to be out there with. I never showed my kids how to, how do you say it? I carried them so much. I put the shield over them so long that they didn't know how to be independent without their mom. They depended on somebody. They had to. Which was me. And they depended on me more than they depended on their father.”

Although the illegal activities for which they received prison sentences were very different in the nature of the offenses, both Alana and Lori’s involvement in illegal activities were related to their role as mothers to their children. First, Lori’s conviction for child battery was a result of an injury to her son’s leg during infancy. She disputes having physically abused her son and is still very angry about her conviction. Although she did not elaborate much, Lori

spoke very angrily about the charges brought against her and expressed dismay about the far-reaching effects of her conviction.

“It [the conviction] is for my son. They say I broke his leg and **I DID NOT**. The fat, white man kept getting on my nerves...the detective.... I will never forget. I will never live around kids because they will hate me.... He [son] said he fine now because he be walking, busy.”

Like most of the participants, Alana was self-reflective about how she came to be involved in the illegal activities that led to her incarceration and the effects her involvement had on her life. Alana’s focus on acquiring name-brand items that were beyond her economic means cost her and her children 19 months of her life. Alana’s involvement in forgery was not solely about economic gain. Buying her children the expensive items they desired was a way to express her love for them, even if she was not economically able to afford the items using legal means. According to Alana, the circumstances that led to her incarcerated included...

“Doing forgery. Messing with people's credit cards and checks and things. Things I knew was wrong. Things that I should have left alone but I got greedy with it [while] hanging around with the wrong people, places, and things.”

Further, Alana views her time in the transition home post-incarceration as an opportunity to change her surroundings and influences.

“That's why since I've been away from home, I have to change that [involvement with negative influences]. I have to change that. My people, places, and things maybe they might feel like I'm being cruel or mean or on some personal stuff right now, but I'm not. I just have to fix me.”

Alana elaborates on her motivation for engaging in the illegal activities that led to her incarceration.

“I learned this the hard way. Materialistic stuff, that's going to come and go, but that love will never go anywhere. That was what I was stuck on, materialistic stuff. I felt that if my kids had the updated stuff, the updated fashion, [then] I loved my kids. I thought they got to have that. You know, the Nikes, the Jordans, all that. I felt like they had to have the name brand. Then, by me being gone those 19 months, that was all material things and my kids just needed their mom. That love and support from their mom. I didn't look at it like that back then. But now, I look at it from a whole different perspective....”

Alana does not dispute the charges for which she was convicted however; she attributes her forgery conviction to the influence of friends she was spending time with while working as a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) doing private care duty. Alana became “hooked” on the instant gratification that came with having access to the items she wanted at that moment for herself and her children.

“...[I was working] as a CNA at the time. I was doing private duty then. I had my own clients then and looking for an easy way out, instant gratification. I was looking for that. I was like, man I need stuff now. I wanted it now. It's like when I set my mind on something and I want it then. I want it then and there. And that was an easy way for me. I seen it. The first time I went through it was ok. I was like, 'oh this is easy. I can do this.' I kept doing it with them and I ended up getting caught.”

Although Alana and Lori were the only two women in the sample who had not had a drug conviction, their involvement in illegal activities and subsequent incarceration were detrimental to their maternal role and their abilities to mother their children in the manner they would have liked. These two women described how their convictions were related directly to their role as mothers in ways that distinguished them from the other participants. Their involvement in illegal activities was in conjunction with the performance of tasks associated with their role as mothers.

All of the women in the study described how the circumstances that led to their incarceration affected their maternal role and abilities to perform tasks associated with the mothering process. Most of the participants were mothers in their teens, so the majority of the women (n=10) also were mothers prior to their initial incarceration experience. Only Beverly and Jeanne were mothers after their first incarceration experience. To gain insight into the women's perception of this interruption in their mothering process, they were asked how they felt about being mothers before they were incarcerated. The women's responses primarily focused on their feelings about the mistakes they made with their children, especially their negative feelings about how their actions interrupted their mothering process.

Geneva summarized the responses most concisely when she replied that being incarcerated and not being with her children "felt like it wasn't a smart decision to do the things that I was doing." Her response was indicative of the other women's perceptions of becoming incarcerated once they were already mothers. Joyce "felt bad" about having been a mom before she was incarcerated because "idle time was taken away from her kids." Joyce believed her children were being punished because of her absence from their lives. Joyce felt that "no child should be punished by having his or her parents away from them."

Sonja's absence from her children's life tapped into her own feelings of abandonment by her parents.

"I feel like I abandoned them. It was a sense of abandonment...because, that's what happened to me when my mom wasn't around. I felt like she abandoned me.

But I had to realize that she was sick. So, it was a sense of abandonment..."

Sonja's feelings were rooted in her experience of feeling abandoned by her own mother, who was institutionalized as a result of mental illness when Sonja was a preteen. According to Sonja, the feelings she had about having abandoned her children by getting incarcerated was a continuation of the cycle of abandonment she experienced from her own parents. Further, Sonja recognized the linkages between her sense of abandonment by her mother, her father's incarceration, and her drug use. She felt her drug usage was a way to cover her painful feelings about her parents not being a part of her life. Although she understood the circumstances that led to her parents' absence, it was still a painful experience for her.

"...Someone put six tabs of LSD, uncut, into her [mother] drink. Yeah, my mom was gorgeous. Just as gorgeous as she wanted to be, you know. I think that also played a part into me—my drug use. You know, to cover up the pain because I loved my mom. I wanted my mom there and my father but my father was locked up too. You know, it's like a cycle."

As Sonja's response indicates, having children prior to the first period of incarceration tapped into deeply personal feelings and patterns from the participants' past experiences, especially with family members. Also, Sonja's perception that she uses drugs both to cope with the pain of her own abandonment and her lack of continual presence in her children's lives

reflects how the past experiences are linked to the present circumstances the women find themselves in.

Being a mother prior to incarceration triggered intense feelings for a number of the women in the study, particularly concerning their feelings about past mistakes they made with their children. Similarly, the participants' responses concerning mothering after a period of incarceration were related to making amends with their children for their previous mistakes. Also, the women's responses focused on the ways they can work on themselves in order to remain out of prison and mother their children.

Fulfilling the role of mother following a period of incarceration required many of the women in the study to deal with the difficult task of facing the consequences of the mistakes they made with their children. Seven of the participants focused on tasks that would assist them in rebuilding relationships with their children. Regardless of the type of illegal activities the women were involved in prior to their incarceration, whether a drug, economic, or violent offense, they focused on the importance of working on their relationships with their children.

Geneva, Candice, and Beverly spoke specifically about actions they could take to rebuild relationships with their children following their incarceration. According to Geneva, the first step in being a mother after incarceration was "learning to get your respect back from your kids." After a long pause in her response, Geneva added that "spending quality time" with her kids was also how she worked on being a mother to her children after incarceration. While Candice agrees with Geneva that spending quality time with her children is important in reestablishing a bond with them, she added that patience is key in reestablishing the bond, especially when dealing with the children's anger concerning their mother's absence from their lives. For Candice, being a mother following a period of incarceration requires working...

“To bond back with your kids. You know, to be patient. You got to be patient with your kids. You got to look at it from their point of view because a lot of kids they be angry when their mother be locked up and on drugs. Just by the grace of God my kids wasn’t angry with me. They wasn’t angry with me and I am very grateful for that. Because kids be angry because you done let them down. Now mind you, the three that I got are not like that but in my addiction the State done took two of my kids and I plan on seeing my kids one day. And I pray and ask God to put it on their heart to forgive me. Yeah...”

Candice felt she was able to reestablish a bond with her three oldest children by remaining patient and assessing her children’s state of mind on her return to their lives. While she hopes for forgiveness from the two children removed from her custody at birth during her addiction, she is grateful that the children she has contact with never denied her or expressed shame about her drug addiction:

“When I came home, I did not try to rush in to anything I sit back and see where my kids was, you know. They just love me unconditionally. Besides it all, “they felt this my momma. This still my momma regardless,” you know. And they show me love, you know what I’m sayin’. They did not like what I was doing but they never **DENIED** me. Because kids nowadays they be ashamed of their mother ‘cus their mother be on drugs. But my kids, they never denied me. They loved me through it all.”

Remaining patient during the reunification process was a sentiment also shared by Monique. Monique’s understanding of her children’s hesitation to reunite with her following her

last incarceration compelled her to remain patient with them and work at keeping her word to “do the right thing”. Monique learned that it was important...

“Not to rush. Not to rush the process because when I first got out I just wanted my older son to just talk to me and come see me and I used to invite him over to do this and do that and he never did. So I said I'm not going to force nothin' on him. I'm just gonna to go with the flow and keep doing what I'm doin'. If I'm doin' right, if I'm doin' the right thing he gonna come around. I'm not gonna tell what I'm gonna do or how I'm gonna do it, I'm just gonna do it and he'll see this.”

Remaining patient with her kids was important to Monique because she understood that her children had seen her attempt and fail at both remaining sober and out of prison.

“Because I know, I know it was going to take some time anyway. ‘Cus it's not like it was my first or second time going to jail, and it's not like it was my first time staying clean. So I know that, I knew it was going to take some time because they seen this before, you know. They seen me get out, doing the right thing before. I don't know maybe they see something different this time [and that's] the reason he done came around but I didn't, I didn't force myself on ‘em. I didn't force my, I didn't force no relationship on my kids.”

According to Beverly, when attempting to rebuild a relationship with children following a period of incarceration, it is important to provide emotional comfort to the children such that they gain a better understanding of the separation and are reassured of their mother's love for them, regardless of whether they are together. The primacy she places on reassuring the children of their mother's love is rooted in the tremendous negative impact Beverly's separation from her children had on her. Again, it had been over a decade since the children were removed from her

custody, yet she described her experience of the loss as if it happened recently. Further, Beverly sees the value in being upfront and truthful with the children about her involvement in illegal activities in order to discourage them from becoming involved in similar activities. She recognizes the importance of managing the contradictions that can occur when attempting to dissuade the children from becoming involved in delinquency as well. According to Beverly, being forthcoming about the past mistakes means...

“...letting them know that what you did was wrong. Being upfront with them and truthful with them. And then not saying that is something that you did and you do it again and you know in your heart you gonna do it [again]. ...and you are not looking for plans [to do it again]...but asking them not to do those things. And letting them know that regardless of wherever you are you will always love them. And if you do ever go to jail again, you can write them their own PRIVATE letters separate from the other letters to the mother or grandmothers letting them know you care.”

In fulfilling the mother role after having been incarcerated, Beverly feels that establishing and sustaining a personal relationship with her children that solely is between them and their mother is vital. This is significant for Beverly because her relationship with her children was always moderated by outside influences from her family members and later State agencies, like the Department of Children and Family Services, and foster or adoptive caregivers, once the children were removed from her custody.

Another common theme among the participants' perceptions of being a mother following a period of incarceration concerned working on themselves in order to desist from involvement in illegal activities, remain out of prison, and mother their children in ways that were enriching to

them and their children. The women responded with a variety of personal characteristics to develop within themselves and actions they could take to help themselves deal with the consequences of their past mistakes. Among the characteristics the women felt were important to develop were better communication skills with the children, compassion, stronger intuition into the children's concerns, and humility. Further, maintaining a support network and creating a new, positive environment for the children were also described as key aspects to mothering their children following incarceration.

Communication is one of the traits Sonja believes she must better develop within herself in order to be a mother to her children following incarceration. She feels that by communicating well with her children she will be able to get to know them better as she tries to rebuild a relationship with them. Forgiveness is another trait that Sonja is attempting to develop within herself in order to mother her children. According to Sonja,

“Communication. Communicate. Get to know my kids. And forgive myself because I can't change what happened. But I can change what's going on now.”

In addition to developing good communication skills to get to know the children, Camille responded that a stronger sense of compassion for the children's experience of their mother's absence from their life is key to mothering after incarceration.

[*chuckles, deep breath*] “I would say a lot of compassion for your child because they have suffered not being with you then they definitely have had some sort of affect because of that and so any acting out or anything of that sort of may go back to you not being in their lives.”

In the previous excerpt, Camille laughed before giving her perception of what it takes to be a mother after incarceration because her answer focused on the tasks of making amends to her children.

“I mean because I, I was gonna say a lot of making up you know when you asked what it takes to be a mom after incarceration. A lot of making up you would think but... [*deep breath*] that’s what, that’s what I was laughing about. You know you got a lot of apologizing...”

This is a complex subject for the women in this study because they have conflicting feelings about with it means to make amends, given that they cannot make up for the past, per se. However, like Sonja and other participants, Camille hesitated to give much credence to making up for the past because as many of them have said, “the past is the past” and they must now focus on making their current situation better for themselves and their children.

“Well I can’t make up for my past because to that degree what’s done is done. All I can do is... The best way to make up for me, in my case, is not to use drugs ever again. You know to stay drug-free and you know just to stay clean and do the right thing in life. That’s the best making up I can do.”

Initially both Alana and Alisha hesitated and prefaced their response with statements about why they felt they might not be able to explain what it takes to mother their children following incarceration. However, both elaborated further and spoke of the importance of developing a new, positive environment for their children. First, Alana felt that given that it had been her first time ever incarcerated, she might not be the best person to explain it. However, Alana would like to work on herself so that she may be able to mother her children in ways devoid of involvement in illegal activities. Further, Alana, like Sonja and Camille, spoke of

making amends despite their limitations on making up for the past. It is important to Alana to address the pain her absence has caused her children.

“I think there's time that you have to make up. Things that you know you can't fix now because it's the past, but I will try anyway because that's just how I am. I would try to fix the pain and hurt that my children had when I was gone and try to be the mom that I used to be, BUT in a better way. You know, doing things the right way and the legal way this time. I know they are grown and I know I can't make up the past but I can try to make it better for us now. I know there's a lot we have to fix because there are a lot of wounded feelings that I have to patch up.”

Although Alana wants to make things better for her children and “change their surroundings and influences,” she also wants to be clear that life following her incarceration will be different for them than it was prior to her prison sentence when she was involved in illegal activities. In particular, she needs her children’s understanding that she will not be able to purchase expensive items for them as she had in the past via acquiring funds illegally.

“Their [children] minds are all over the place. Their feelings are all over the place. Like, 'I'm glad my mom's home and things are going to be like they used to be.' But it's not going to be like that now. I have to sit down and explain that to them now. ‘Things have to be done a different way now. Things I know now, I didn't know back then. But it's going to take time for me to get a job, get an apartment. But y'all gon' have to realize mom can't do what she used to do because the things I did was bad and if I don't want to go back to prison, and if y'all don't want to lose your mom again, y'all wouldn't expect me to get right out and do the things I used to do’.”

Alisha, on the other hand, felt because she did not raise her children, she was not in the best position to give her perception on what it takes to mother after incarceration. She cites her lack of “responsibility” for raising her children for her lack of knowledge in what it takes to mother after incarceration. However, upon further elaboration, she was very insightful in what it takes and what is most important in being a mother following a period of incarceration.

“You know, Tosha, my oldest is grown. She's an adult and I still can't really tell you what it is to be a mother because I don't have them [my children]. I don't have that responsibility where I have to do everything around them, schedule everything around them. You know, because my mom still has them. They're adopted. So, it's like I could still pick and choose when I want to see them, when I want to be a mother, when I want to be bothered, when I don't want to be bothered.”

Despite her feelings of incompetence in what it takes to be a mother, Alisha shares Alana's perspective that by creating a new environment for herself, she will be able to create a stable and positive atmosphere for children when they choose to spend time with her. In Alisha's situation, she is especially concerned about creating an environment in which she can welcome her children and appease her mother's fears of allowing Alisha's children, whom she has raised since childhood, to enter Alisha's environment and visit their mother. As Alisha explains,

“...I am trying to make it to where I'm stable and they can come and spend nights with me or come and spend time with me in my environment, rather than me coming to their environment and spending time with them. My daughter is older now. She goes to school [downtown], somewhere over there. And I'm sure there's going to be times where she just wants to catch the train and camp out at mom's

[Alisha's] house. I want my mom to feel comfortable and ok with that, because even though [my daughter is] an adult, I'm positive that she's going to have to adhere to my mom saying if that's conducive or if that's healthy or even if she approves of her coming into my area. So I'm trying to make it to where my mother will be comfortable with my environment, where I'm living, and how I'm living. Comfortable enough to where [my daughter] can come and live or stay the night and my mom not be worried about it.”

In sum, an examination of the experiences of the women in this study and circumstances in which they became involvement in illegal activities and later incarcerated revealed a centrality that criminality played in shaping their role as a mother. The gendered organization of mothering and its intersection with female offending is evident in the women's narratives of their experiences as Black women who have been incarcerated. All of the women in this study were convicted of or committed offenses commonly associated with women, particularly drug offenses, vice crimes, and property crimes, all of which disrupted the maternal process. Even in the case of Lori and Jeanne, who were both convicted of violent offenses, underlying mechanisms related to their gender influenced the nature of their offending. When examining from an intersectional framework, the complications of interlocking oppressions are evident in the context within which the women are immersed as formerly incarcerated poor Black women who are mothers. The women's narratives of their experiences as Black women and mothers demonstrate racialized and gendered undertones their sustained social and economic marginalization. Their voices and understanding of their involvement in illegal activities contextualizes their experiences, fostering a clearer understanding of their life histories and them mechanisms that put them on their pathway to offending and incarceration. When viewed in this

manner, the effects of interlocking racial, class, and gender oppression are manifested in their involvement in illegal activities, regardless of offense category.

Most impressive about the women's narratives on their experiences as mothers was their keen insight into the effects of criminality and incarceration, as well as what it would take to surmount the challenges brought about by these experiences. Whether their involvement in illegal activities is directly or indirectly linked to their performance as mothers, all of the participants were aware of the negative effects of the absence caused by their lifestyle and subsequent incarceration. All of the women in this study were or had attempted to mother in contexts rife with antisocial influences such as drug addiction, poverty, violence, and strained relationships with loved ones. Further, the women were clear that redefining self, managing a criminalized identity, rebuilding relationships with loved ones, and desistance following a period of incarceration is challenging given the long-term effects of their involvement in illegal activities. The women's analysis of their involvement in illegal activities emphasizes the conscientious management of their criminalized identity within a context that lacks adequate safety nets to buffer them from antisocial influences that further their vulnerabilities for recidivism. Lastly, the women in this study expressed a desire to transform internal and external influences that inhibited their abilities to desist and interrupted their mothering process, particularly those that not only affected them but their children as well. A number of these influences will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

C. **Relationships and other maternal influences**

Key findings related to the women's relationships focused on their descriptions of the dynamics within their families their influences on them as mothers and formerly incarcerated individuals. The participants' understandings of influential relationships central to their lives,

regardless of whether the connections were prosocial or antisocial, are also discussed. In line with previous research on relationships in the lives of women who have been incarcerated, relationships were influential in the women's understanding of their maternal role, involvement in illegal activities, sense of self-worth, and the fostering of prosocial and antisocial outcomes across their lifespan (O'Brien, 2001; Traylor and Richie, 2012). Most frequently, the women in this study cited relationships with their children, parental figures, partners, and siblings as having shaped their identity as mothers most significantly. The women described a schism in their various familial relationships in that they tended to oscillate between the prosocial and antisocial influences in the women's lives. For example, while some women may have described relationships with their children having as a positive influence on their lives, these same participants would describe how being involved with their children reminded them of their failures in their mother role, which resulted in guilt that compelled them to seek out an escape mechanism. Most frequently the attempts to escape their guilt resulted in prolonged absences from their children's lives and involvement in illegal activities.

Familial relationships generally were described in ways that illustrated a complex network of interconnections between the women and their family members. When the relationships are examined with respect to their motherhood identity and mothering process, a convoluted pattern of concurrent prosocial and antisocial influences become evident. In fact, many of the women described antisocial relationships with a particular family member that contributed to their pathway to incarceration, yet also was deeply fulfilling at the same time. The theme of concurrent prosocial and antisocial familial influences is central to understanding the women's relationships with their loved ones and the connection to their motherhood identity.

The women described relationships with family members, including their children, parental figures, extended family, and former partners. All of these relationships demonstrate their centrality in women's lives, especially women who have been incarcerated, in that these particular relationships have been shown to be influential in the women's pathways to incarceration, their role as mothers, and their abilities to desist from further illegal activities upon release (Bloom, Owen, and Covington, 2005; Covington, 2007; O'Brien, 2001). Findings related to the women's relationship with parental figures illustrate this point well.

Although the primary parental figures in the lives of the women in the study varied, half were raised by their mothers. Lori and Alana reported being raised by both their mothers and grandparents, whereas a grandparent primarily reared Sonja, Joyce, and Geneva from childhood. Beverly was the only participant who reported being raised by both her mother and father. These relationships were significant influences in the women's self-perception as mothers to their children and their involvement in illegal activities, as they were the first examples of motherhood for the women. These relationships with their mothers and grandmothers were extremely complex because most were simultaneously prosocial influences on their lives, as well as antisocial.

The nature of the relationships the women had with the maternal figures in their lives varied widely. In fact, the women described relationships, particularly with their mothers and grandmothers that illustrated a convoluted mix of influences over their lives, while also eliciting a range of emotions as they recalled their experiences with these figures. These relationships directly influenced their sense of self and their role of mother, both positively and negatively. The participants described relationships that contributed to prosocial and antisocial outcomes in their lives, especially when viewed in relation to their involvement in illegal activities. The

findings related to the women's relationships with maternal figures illuminated the overall complexity of the central relationships in their lives and demonstrated how these familial interactions could produce concurrent positive and negative influences.

The women demonstrated the complexity of their relationships with the maternal figures in their lives as they discussed how their mothers and grandmothers served a compensatory role in minimizing the effects of their involvement in illegal activities and the shortcomings in their role of mother. Further, other participants also discussed instances in which the maternal figure provided safety and stability for them in the face of dangerous situations hastened by their involvement in illegal activities. Most frequently, the positive influences that the women described in relation to maternal figures in their lives occurred when the maternal figure assumed the mothering tasks of the participants' children, supported them through their drug addiction, or served as a role model for achieving their future goals.

During their interviews, several of the participants explained how a maternal figure in their lives played a supportive role in their lives that minimized the effects of their involvement in illegal activities and their shortcomings in the role of mother. Further, some of the participants described how their relationship with a maternal figure provided them with a sense of security and stability. Geneva's relationship with her grandmother and Monique's relationship with her mother were uniquely positive in comparison to the other participants in the study. Geneva cites her grandmother as "a positive person in my life." Geneva's grandmother filled the role of the primary maternal figure in Geneva's life after she and her sister were molested and removed from their mother's custody. Geneva acknowledges that her grandmother taught her values despite her choice of a "road" that led to antisocial outcomes for her life.

“Because one, she always said, “your word is your bond; when you're wrong, you're wrong.” It stuck with me. “No matter what you do, you don't have to lie to me.” She told me, “whether you are wrong or right...” I mean it was things that she put in my mind that stuck with me. The old school shit....A lot of values, yeah. Some things you can take and do the right things and some things you just know and don't do the right things. You choose your own road.”

Monique’s relationship with her mother was unique in that it demonstrated how even in the midst of a severe drug addiction she was able to maintain a positive relationship with her mother, which extended itself to a strong sense of stability for her children. She described her mother as “an enabler” in relation to her drug addiction. Monique’s mother provided her financial assistance at times, even though her mother knew she would most likely use the money to further her drug addiction. Monique described a relationship with her mother that was rooted in admiration for the support, encouragement, and sacrifices her mother made to care for Monique and her siblings. Monique and her children lived with her mother until her mother’s death in 2005.

“My mom died from cancer too. And my mom she was a single parent, she took care of us herself. And you know, she didn't have much but what she had she made sure we had. She, she took care of us the best way she could. And she was a single mom.”

As Monique continued to discuss the death of her mother, the significance of that tragic loss on the lives of Monique and her children became evident.

“It's like it's been hard on me since 2005, since my mom died but before that my mom always been there, she always been there for me even if I was in my

madness, doing good whatever, my mom was always there. But when she died in 2005 it's like yeah being incarcerated was real hard 'cus I didn't get a chance to see my kids or talk to them or anything."

Monique's mother cared for her children while Monique was active in her drug addiction and later incarcerated. The children developed a strong bond with their grandmother, as she provided the continuity of care that Monique could not.

"(long pause) It be kinda hard. I just lost my mom in 2005, so it's, it's still kinda hard on me 'cus my mom was the one that's always been there, she's always been there even to her death, to the day she died. Me and my kids was there with my mom. So it's been, it's been kinda hard because I'm not used to doing things on my own and I know my kids miss, miss her I know they do."

Both Monique and her children were profoundly affected by her mother's death, as she was the most stable figure in all of their lives. Monique was trying to come to terms with the effects of the loss on herself, while trying to figure out how to assist one of her younger sons adjust to the loss of his grandmother and sense of stability. Monique's son was 7 years old when his grandmother died and had been acting out in school. Monique linked his behavior to his lack of coping skills in dealing with her mother's death.

"...I don't know, he's [son] just holding a lot in. He's just holding a lot of hurt in. 'Cus, he's not a bad kid, but I think he been through a lot since my mom died. Could you imagine your grandma dying and that's the one that was taking care of you? Your mom was there but your grandma was the one that was taking care of you? It's like they lost both of us, me and my mom, 'cus after my mom died I was gone. You know what I'm saying? So it was like they lost both of us."

Monique's loss of her mother meant she also lost her home. She was resentful that her sister stepped in and "took over" the household by instituting a new oversight system that Monique never encountered while her mother was alive. To cope with the dramatic shifts in her sense of stability, Monique went deeper into her drug addiction and was subsequently incarcerated once more.

"Um but after my mom died that's the first time I ever just like left, you know, left my kids. I was staying with my mom and my sister, the one that got my youngest one. She um, she moved up here 'cus she moved back up here from Mississippi to take care of my mom. And my mom wound up dying. So um, it's like she just came up here and basically took over and she thought that I had got my Link card [public assistance debit card] and just messed off the money and stuff, which I didn't. But so um, so she locked the room up [bedroom] and everything. She locked the room up and everything and um and told me I couldn't drive my brother's car no more. My brother in jail [and she] told me I couldn't drive his car no more. It's like she came up there and just took over. So, I already done lost my mom and I felt like she was coming up here taking over so I started taking my youngest son to the doctor one day, I took him with me and (*coughs*) I never went back. She came and got my son and asked for me to sign over guardianship for them, and that's what I did. And I was in jail a month later."

The participants' descriptions of the instances in which a maternal figure in their lives served a positive role must also be understood in the context of competing negative influences maternal figures had on their lives. The women described relationships with maternal figures that negatively influenced their lives. These descriptions were evident in their negative perspective of

their mother or grandmother's fulfillment of the role of mother. Further, the relationships were depicted negatively when the women found themselves in conflict with their mother over her intimate relationships or when they felt their mother failed to protect them from abuse as children.

An example of this dynamics can be seen in Lori's narrative of her relationship with her mother. The relationship between Lori and her mother has always been strained. In fact, upon being asked who she considers to be family members, she did not include her mother but referred to an aunt, uncle, grandmother, father, cousins, and even the director of the transition home where she resides. Throughout the interview, she rarely spoke of her mother positively. She felt her mother negatively influenced her as a mother because she "never taught me how to be a mom." Further, Lori felt she never got along with her mother, especially if her mother was in an intimate relationship.

"Me and her never got along. If she had a man, it was her man before me and my sister. She was no mama....We never got along. Every time we got along, it was when she had money or when my dad or brother threatened her about me; [about] taking me away from her... a lot of stuff."

Lori's father and brother intervened on her behalf with her mother, which compelled her mother to change the way she treated Lori. However, Lori feels the negative relationship is related to other reasons concerning her mother's personality among other issues. Lori's conflicts with her mother were evident when I had arrived for her interview. Lori was frustrated with her mother's constant requests for money from Lori. Lori was angry that her mother is not using the income she receives responsibly to care for herself or Lori's sister. Lori shared her insight into the reasons for the strained relationship with her mother.

“I don’t think it [a close relationship] is with my mom because I look just like her for one; I don’t let her talk to me in any kind of way; and three, I don’t like her ways right now. She lies. She makes excuses, excuses, excuses. She’s playin’ too much. She don’t get her way with me. She is always asking for money now.... Because [as if speaking to her mother] ‘you get a check too, yours and my sister’s. I just get my son’s [check] but still I still got money. You should still have money you get too.’ It is crazy.”

According to Lori, the relationship with her mother regressed further when her mother was in an intimate relationship with a man. Paula experienced similar conflict with her mother concerning her intimate relationships. Paula did not want to repeat her mother’s relationship patterns by having multiple partners because this had created a dangerous situation for Paula during her adolescence. The tension between Paula and her mother became violent when her mother’s boyfriend raped her at thirteen.

“Me and my mom we are kind of like separate but together, you know. I follow in her footsteps after I did not ever want to follow in her footsteps with the different men and things. I said my kids are not going to have different fathers and things like that but I found myself in the same way and I am like how did I end up here. But me and my mom now we get along until she starts drinking. And then I don’t like to be around her when she drinks because she says things and gets me upset. And you know, she blames me for her boyfriend raping me telling me. ‘I was too fast’ [promiscuous] and I am like 13. And I carried that for a lot of years.”

As expected, Paula’s victimization greatly affected her life and tainted her relationship and perception of her mother. According to Paula, life would have been different for her had she

had help dealing with the rape. In fact, she believes her choices of older men as intimate partners and her shortcomings in the role of mother were affected by her rape and not having support in dealing with her victimization. Instead, her mother blamed her for the assault.

“...I think that people want from themselves and get into a lot of negativity to cover up what is really going on, you know. Getting help when you need help because a lot of things stem from adolescence, you know. When you’re young and you don’t get no help, you know. And due to me getting raped, I thought my thing was to use men [especially] older men because they are going to get me what I want because I am young, you know. And if I would have gotten help maybe my life would have turned out different as far as child bearing and all of that.”

Like Paula, both Geneva and Alana experienced strained relationships with their mothers stemming from experiences of sexual molestation as children. In reference to her mother’s influence, Geneva stated, “she didn’t raise me and I didn’t raise my kids” as the reason she believed her mother was a negative influence. Geneva and her sister were raised by her grandmother after they were molested while in their mother’s care. She recalled her mother’s multiple absences from her life, which she found herself repeating with her own children. Further, she believes her mother allowed the abuse to take place when it should not have happened. Geneva blames her mother for failing to protect her from the molestation she experienced as a child.

“*[paused, following response that her mother was a negative influence]* She didn’t raise me. She was in and out of my life. I saw things I shouldn’t have. There were things that happened in my life that shouldn’t have happened and she allowed

them to happen. So, it was negative to me. I love her, but she did her thing. You know, sometimes I think I'm a replica of her. Some things I face in life, decisions I've made, a lot of people say "you're just like your mom". I couldn't see it but in a lot of similarities, we are the same.”

Initially, Geneva hesitated to speak about her mother and the victimization she experienced while in her mother’s custody. Upon being asked about her hesitation, she paused again, and then responded, “Sometimes it hurts. It's painful. You don't want to remember.” Both Geneva and Paula both connected their painful childhood experiences to antisocial outcomes in their relationships with their mothers and their role as mother to their children.

Of all the participants, Alana described one of the most profoundly negative relationships with the maternal figures in her life. Alana vividly elaborated on the verbal and sexual abuse she endured because of the negativity in their relationship, which was also present in the relationship with her grandmother. Alana’s mother gave birth to her at 15 years of age. Alana recalled never feeling close to or supported by her mother while growing up. Alana listed a number of reasons for the distance she felt from her mother, such as being rebellious, having a brother whom her mother favored, and her mother’s own history of verbal abuse by Alana’s grandmother. However, she stated she never could fully identify why her mother treated her so badly.

“Well she had her first child when she was 14, but my brother passed away. She said he was born stillborn. Then she had me at 15. Maybe it was the way she was brought up, because my grandmother used to call her "Bs" and "Hs" [“bitch”; “ho”] as she was coming up and told her that she wasn't going to be anything and this and that nature. But I don't know why she was so harsh to me as me coming up as her daughter. By her not showing me love that made me be resentful. I

didn't want to stay at home. I was doing sneaky stuff—going out and seeing boys when I wasn't supposed to because she was never there. There was nobody I could talk to when I was going through things, you know, problems. And I felt like if I did, she would tell all her girlfriends. So I felt like I didn't have that support from her. And why she felt that way, maybe it was because it's the way her mother did her coming up. Maybe that rubbed off on her, I don't know but she was never a mom to me. I never felt that mother's love. Why? I can't explain why now, but I don't know.”

As Alana aged, the conflicts with her mother worsened to the point of verbal abuse. She could not understand why her mother would berate her, given her history of verbal abuse from her own mother. Further, Alana felt that while her mother denied her love and affection, she showed favoritism to Alana's brother. This further deteriorated Alana's relationship with her mother.

“As I was coming up, I didn't feel that love or that guidance from my mom because I have another brother and, to me, my mom showed favoritism. I feel like if you have more than one child, treat them both the same. Because he was a boy and she felt like he needed that special attention. But I always felt left out.”

The resentfulness Alana carried toward her mother affected various aspects of her life as both an adolescent and an adult. As a child, Alana's uncle—her mother's brother—sexually abused Alana. The negative relationship with her mother prevented Alana from disclosing the abuse. Alana feared her mother would not believe that her “favorite brother” could have abused her daughter. Further compounding Alana's fears were thoughts that she would be blamed for

the molestation. Alana recalls an incident in which her uncle was caught abusing her. Similar to Geneva, Alana felt that her mother should have protected her from the abuse.

“And when I was coming up, I had an uncle that I just don't discuss. [pause] I don't discuss it with nobody. He molested me when I was a child. I was like 9 years old and I feel like my mom should have been there. After, I was afraid to tell because of course he threatened me and scared me. "If you tell, I'm going to break your leg, I'm going to break your arm. And your mom is not going to believe you because I'm her favorite brother." And he was her favorite brother. They did everything together. Then, I would never want to be alone with him. And then one night, it's how she found out because she had come in one night late. I guess she had went out. At this time my grandma was working for CTA [public transit organization] and my grandfather was at work that night. I was sleeping. I was always real scary. Scared of him. So when he had come, he had pulled my underwear down and they were at my ankles. My grandma had this lounge and I was sitting there watching TV in the front room and I had dozed off. It couldn't be no more than 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning and my mother had just come in. He had heard my mother coming up the stairs and he ran to the room. My mother was coming to get me to take me off the couch. When she pulled the covers back, that's when she saw. And she was like, "why are your panties down?" Then I told her.”

Alana's disclosure of her abuse generated a negative response from her grandmother, the other maternal figure in her life. Upon coming home and hearing the commotion about her son molesting her granddaughter, Alana's grandmother denied it happened.

“By that time, my grandmother was coming in from work. When I told her what happened, my grandmother didn't believe it. She didn't believe it. Then my grandfather went crazy. He just went off. My grandfather told my grandma he [uncle] had to leave, but my grandma didn't believe he had done that to me so my mom and I had to move out. And he [uncle] and my mother had gotten into a fight and she stabbed him or whatever....”

Consequently, Alana's home life was ruptured, so she and her mother had to move out of her grandparents' home.

“...She had stabbed him because she was like, "that's my daughter. She's only 9 years old. How could you do that to your niece?" He was like, "I didn't do that, man. I ain't do that." Lyin' or whatever. So when they ended up going to the hospital [because of the stabbing], I went to the hospital too. The doctor told my mom I **HAD** been tampered with down there. But my grandmother was still in denial. I don't know why but when the doctors told her I had been tampered with down there, she just still couldn't believe it. Maybe that was because he was her favorite son. I don't know why but she just couldn't believe it.”

Despite Alana's fears that her mother would not believe her or would place blame on Alana, her mother defended her. However, it did little to assuage Alana's disappointment that her mother had not been there to protect her from the abuse. It also did not provide Alana comfort to begin confiding in her mother.

“I feel like my mom was supposed to had been there as someone I was able to talk to, but I was also afraid she wouldn't believe me because that was how she made me feel all the time. I was never able to come and talk to her about nothing. I just

didn't feel that confident around her. I don't know why but maybe it's the way she treated me as I was coming up.”

Both Paula and Alana's experiences with childhood sexual assault deeply affected their role as a mother. Like her mother, Paula used to blame herself for the rape. But as she moved past the self-blame, she had more pressing concerns about protecting her daughters from sexual abuse. For Paula, the experience of being raped by her mother's boyfriend altered her identity as a mother and generated fear for her own daughters' safety. These fears manifested in a sense of overprotectiveness of her daughters' bodies.

“Yes, finally, finally I found out that it [the rape] was not my fault. But I blamed myself for years. I was like maybe I was, you know, because I liked to wear provocative clothes *but* not at 13 once I got older. And I was like maybe that was my fault. I never wanted to have girls because I never wanted them to experience [being raped]. And that is another thing, I have two daughters and they live with their fathers and I am like I will die and go to hell if one of them tell me that somebody did something to them. I am going to jail, you know. I am the point now even now if one of my babies...because my oldest daughter is 16 [and] my baby girl is 10. I will go to jail. I blanked it out of my mind that it could happen to my boys and, you know, I don't even want to think about that part. I just focus on the girls, you know, that I will kill somebody about my daughters.”

Alana's experience with childhood sexual abuse also fostered feelings of overprotectiveness with her children. Her negative relationship with her mother prevented her from experiencing a sense of safety as a child, so she worked to ensure her children always felt protected.

“As they were coming up, I never let them go over nobody's house and stay all night. They always would stay at home with me. My daughter was like, "mom, I can't go over my girlfriend's house?" I was like, 'no, they can come here but you can't go over there.' I was always overprotective of them. And then by me being small and my mom not being there with me, things happened to me that weren't supposed to happen. But if my mom was there like she was supposed to be, it would have never happened to me. And so I believe that's why I have that shield over my children and I didn't let nothing and no one in between that circle. Because I feel they had to be protected. And that was me, I was their protector and didn't let anything harm them.”

Alana felt that had her mother been there for her, she would have never felt threatened or have been violated by her uncle. Both Paula and Alana later worked towards healing their fractured relationships with their mothers following their mothers' diagnosis of a terminal illness. Paula used to argue constantly with her mother over her mother's failure to protect and defend her from the man who raped her. However, after her mother's lung cancer diagnosis, she decided it was best to let it go and enjoy the time she has left with her mother.

“If I came though on holidays, [I would] start up a bunch of stuff and leave, you know. Go off on my mom on how she did not do nothing to the man that raped me. Oh we went through that for years, you know. So now it is not even about that, I just want to spend as much time as I can with my mom while she is here, you know.”

Alana's mother was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, so Alana decided to use her nursing training to care for her mother in lieu of sending her to a nursing home. It was during this

time that Alana finally was able to tell her mother how she felt about their relationship and the long-term effects it had on her life as a mother.

“I took care of her, but I also let her know how I felt in between that time when it was just me and her. I let her know how I felt coming up as a child. How I felt like she wasn't a mom to me when I was coming up and now she needs me. But I told her, 'I would never throw up in your face what I'm doing for you, but I'm just letting you know how much you hurt me as a child and that it's a scar on my life that I can never let go.' And I told her, 'that's why I am like I am with my children.' I'm overprotective with them. I've got a shield over them that I can't let no one come in between.' I feel like I have to be there for my kids because if I don't no one will.”

While the support of a maternal figure in their lives was expected to produce prosocial outcomes for the women and their children, this aspect of their relationships was not always straightforward. In fact, the intervention by the maternal figure produced outcomes that oscillated between prosocial and antisocial or positive and negative. Several participants spoke of a maternal figure whose initial intervention in the women's lives was done with positive intentions, however they fostered antisocial outcomes. Conversely, other participants recalled instances in which they negatively perceived the mothering style of the maternal figures in their lives and desired to use those experiences to develop positive mothering styles that would generate prosocial outcomes with their children.

Beverly and Jeanne had supportive relationships with their mothers. As their drug addiction took over their lives, Beverly and Jeanne's mothers assumed custody of their respective grandchildren instead of allowing them to enter the child welfare system.

Unfortunately in both cases, the positive interventions ended up with negative outcomes for the women.

Beverly cites her relationship with her mother as one of the most important in her life. “I have the best mother in the whole wide world. If it was a matter if I could choose who I want to be my mother I would not want nobody but the one I got.” Beverly was thankful to her mother for caring for her sons while she was in her addiction, despite the eventual removal of the children from her custody. However, Beverly blames her mother for losing custody of her children, to an extent.

“I always used to let thing build up. I got that from my mother. I told her when I broke down. When I first started getting out of it, I told her that it was her fault that I lost my kids, her and my dad. I told them and they kept telling me to just let it go, let it go.”

Nearly all of the participants described how their experiences with the maternal figures in their lives, usually their mother or grandmother, influenced how they perceived their role as a mother to their own children. Most prevalently, the women in the study cited instances in which they negatively perceived their mother’s parenting style. They felt their experiences with their mothers negatively affected them so they used those experiences to shape prosocial outcomes in the role of mother. A common thread between the participants was a desire to do things differently than their mother did with them. Candice, Joyce, and Alisha’s experiences with their mothers best illustrated how many of the participants were able to turn negative aspects of their relationship with their mothers into potentially positive mothering approaches with their own children.

Candice's relationship with her mother was somewhat strained because of her mother's denial of love and affection toward her. During her adolescence, Candice observed her mother showing favor to her siblings, yet denying it to Candice. This experience had long-term effects on Candice's identity as a mother.

"It's like when I was growing up my mother did not show me a lot of love. And I seen how she would show it to my other brothers and sisters it was something that I wanted but I could not make her give it to me. But she influenced me to don't do as she has done to me. She influenced me not to treat my kids any different. When she did negative I made it my business even through my addiction to turn it to positive. I never ever treat my kids differently so she really influenced me."

Candice took this negative experience in her relationship with her mother and turned it into a positive outcome for her own mothering style with her children. Like Candice, Joyce felt she was denied love and affection from the grandmother who raised her. Her grandmother had raised Joyce since her mother's death when Joyce was 2 years old. Joyce recalls feeling like the "black sheep of the family" when she was a child because the other kids, her brother or cousins, would get new clothes, while she got hand-me-downs. Joyce's negative self-image primarily stemmed from the denial of love and affection from her grandmother. She expected it to get better upon the birth of her child, but instead her grandmother showered the love and affection Joyce desired onto the baby. Due to the influences of these negative experiences in her relationship with her grandmother, Joyce decided, "everything that I didn't get, they [the children] were going to get." Like Candice, she would turn these negative maternal influences into potentially positive outcomes for her own children.

Alisha described herself as “rebellious” against the maternal influences of her mother. Alisha is a self-described “PK” or pastor’s kid and was raised in an upper-middle class family by a “disciplinarian” mother. Alisha recalled rebelling against anything her mother felt was important for her upbringing.

“...I was rebellious. I grew up as a "PK", a pastor's kid. And I was just determined that, 'Hey, I'm going to do this the way I want to do this and it's not going to be the way that you [mother] think it should be. I'm going to live like how I want to live and that's not how I want to live.' So, I did things defiantly just because I knew she [mother] would disapprove, you know...”

Although Alisha gave custody of her five children to her mother, she was determined to develop a relationship with them that was different from what she had with her mother. Open communication is a key component of the type of relationship Alisha wants to have with her children, even concerning topics that she could never talk about openly with her mother.

“NO, there are some things I wouldn't dare tell her [my mother]. I wouldn't even think about telling her because she would just...oh my God... But my kids, I don't want them to feel that way about me. I want them to feel like they could come and talk to me about any and everything. I'm talkin' about everything. So, I have to talk to them like that in order for them to feel comfortable with things like that.”

Further, Alisha recognizes that in order to get her children comfortable enough to be open with her, she has to reassure them that she will maintain their confidence despite their concerns about their grandmother’s disapproval. This was of particular concern for Alisha’s oldest daughter. Alisha recalled an instance when she had to address her oldest daughter concerning sex and contraception.

“What we talk about is what **WE** talk about. I don't share that with my mom. That's between us. And I ask my daughter, 'are you having sex? Because if you are having sex, and you shouldn't be having sex, but we can go and put you on the pill because we know you don't want to have no kids. So you know, I need to know.' She's like, 'well Nana...' I said, 'I'm not talking about what your grandma says, I'm talking about me and you because let her tell it, 'if you're not having sex, you don't need no pill' and that's not true. I don't know what type of world she [my mother] live in, but you know, she just [*exasperated sigh*]...but that's a whole different story. But anyway...but that's because...well that's a whole different story, but anyway. Yeah [*chuckles*].”

Candice, Joyce, and Alisha wanted to build a different type of relationship with their children than they had with their mothers. However, they were limited by the intermittent contact they had with their children, given their involvement in illegal activities and multiple incarcerations.

Similar to the relationships the participants shared with their maternal family members, their relationships with male partners, especially their children's fathers, were multidimensional. They also manifested in both positive and negative influences and outcomes. When referencing their male partners, Candice and Camille described how their partners were instrumental in their introduction to illegal activities, especially drug usage. Also, four of the women discussed how they usually entered relationships with older men because they provided them with safety and stability in ways younger men could not. Further, in a number of cases the children's fathers mitigated the effects of addiction on the participants' role of mother, usually by assuming custody of the children when the women were heavily involved in their drug addiction.

In other cases, the relationships with male partners facilitated the women's entrée into their drug addiction. Camille and Candice link their drug addiction to their involvement with men who worked as drug dealers and had drug addictions themselves. Camille was the mother of a toddler and enrolled at a local community college when she became involved with a man who was both a drug dealer and drug addict. Camille's relationship with him led to a "downward spiral" and 15 years actively in a drug addiction.

"I was a heavy girl and my self-esteem was kind of low. As I was going to college I had a break up in my 10 year relationship that I was in so I lowered my standards and started dating a drug dealer, um, drug dealer *[slash]* addict. I didn't know he was an addict I just thought he was, you know, a dealer, which still was against my standards—my original standards. SO...I, um, dated him and started using drugs with him, to put it short. I dropped out of college and I spiraled down basically."

For Candice, the onset of her drug addiction and its link to a former male partner is less easily identifiable as in Camille's case. Candice described her early drug use as a "sociable high", as in she only used illicit drugs when interacting socially with friends and on weekends. However, Candice also recalled how her drug usage shifted from a "social high to a personal high" during her involvement with a male partner who was also a drug dealer. Following the end of that relationship, Candice's access to highly addictive drugs increased and her drug addiction intensified with the emergence of heroin and crack cocaine in her impoverished neighborhood. This "game change", as Candice characterizes the shift in her drug addiction, hastened a 20 year active addiction to illicit drugs.

“Actually back then the guy I was dating then sold drugs. So it was like I had easy access and it was free. It was free for like 4 years, you know what I am sayin’. I did not have to go out of the house or anything. And then after that, him and I broke up and that’s when they started bringing crack [cocaine] and it is like the high changed and the game changed.”

While Candice and Camille described the inception of their drug addiction as being linked to negative influences in their relationships with male partners, some of the women relationship dynamics in which their role included facilitating their partner’s drug addictions. In Jeanne’s case, she was involved with her children’s father, who had a drug addiction. At the time, Jeanne was not yet using drugs, but she stated she had other “unhealthy behaviors” that manifested in the continuation of a cycle of codependency in her intimate relationship. Some of Jeanne’s unhealthy behaviors included stealing to help support her partner’s drug addiction.

“Well, he was...he had got into his addiction. And so I would try to be supportive to him and not knowing that I was unhealthy myself because I came up in a family where we were co-dependent. My mother was co-dependent and so I thought I could fix him. I thought I could be there. Instead, the things I did were unhealthy for him because I became the role of his mother, so to speak because I didn’t know. You know, I thought when you are in love with somebody, you want the best for them because I had that upbringing, but I didn’t do it in a healthy way. By me, being sick with unhealthy behaviors as well it wasn’t good for the relationship.”

Further, the negativity Jeanne endured in her relationship with her partner had dire consequences on both her physical and mental health. As a result, Jeanne miscarried one of her pregnancies.

“I would have had three kids by him but I miscarried with a baby before [my daughter] was born. From the stress, you know and working too much and under stress dealing with his addiction. Not knowing how I could help him and wanting to help him. You just, when you love somebody and you want the best for them, and they don’t want the best for themselves, sometime we just fall into the cycle. We get wrapped up in their world and lose ourselves in the meantime.”

Involvement in an intimate relationship with male partners was cited as an opportunity to be cared for and feel a sense of security and stability for a several of the women in the study. Beverly, Sonja, Paula, and Geneva recalled their experiences being involved with men who were significantly older than them. In many ways, the men’s maturity appeared to represent a life vastly more stable than the lives they were experiencing. This notion was central in Beverly’s repeated experiences of difficult relationships with her male partners, including the death of her oldest child’s father. The lessons Beverly learned from her earlier experiences with men shaped her preference of partners who were more mature. In fact, Beverly expressed a fondness for dating older men because they were quiet and more responsible. While discussing having waited to have children until after she turned 30, she spoke of her desire for relationships with quiet, older men.

“I guess I matured more and really made a decision on what type of men I liked. I was more so like, I liked the quiet men. I mean like in relationships, I liked the quiet men more. They are more dependable. Um hm [*affirmative*], they would be there for me besides [despite] me doing my dirt, doing my little scheming around. But I knew they would be there for me if I needed them. I always did like older men. They do look out for you and do things for you and take you places.”

As Beverly elaborated, she spoke of wanting an intimate relationship in order to combat the loneliness she felt now that she was out of prison. However, she also expressed conflicting feelings about being controlled by her previous partners and left with little autonomy over her own choices, including choices related to her sobriety. Beverly expressed a belief that being in love would help her desist from further involvement in illegal activities, as being in love would make her want to do right.

“I want to find somebody I feel I am ready for a relationship somebody who I can laugh and talk and be with somebody. I don’t want to be alone....Yeah, I find good men but then they just want somebody [else]. I have not been in love in a long time. ...I just got tired of being lonely now....I know I be happy and I want to do the right thing and love make you want to do right and do stuff by your idea.”

Sonja was also involved in a significant relationship with an older man. Although Sonja was still in high school, her family believed a family friend could care for her more than the grandfather who raised Sonja and her siblings following their mother’s institutionalization for mental illness. Sonja’s marriage to her 60-year-old husband at the age of 16 was less about a preference for relationships with older men and instead about the security he could provide.

“... I was 17 years old [at the birth of the first child]. Before that I got married at the age of 16. I married an older guy. It was for security I believe even though I was still in school. The man was 60 years old....He knew my family and he took on the responsibility of me.”

Geneva, Camille, Sonja, Alana, and Paula were involved in relationships with men who would eventually assume primary custody of their children once the women left the relationship

or became involved in illegal activities and subsequently incarcerated. Geneva, Sonja, and Paula were involved with older men, as well. According to Geneva, a lack of readiness made being a mother hard for her, yet her “much older” partner insisted despite her reluctance. After having five children Geneva determined, “I couldn’t deal with their daddy anymore” and left him with the children. He, “pretty much he raised all five [of nine] of my kids,” while Geneva retreated into a life in the streets and her drug addiction.

Paula entered into relationships with older men because she was seeking a sense of security long denied her since childhood. Paula linked her sexual assault at age 13 to her pattern of seeking relationships with older men. According to Paula, “my kids’ fathers are older than I am. I use older men because they could provide me with what I wanted, you know.” She also felt her youth was an asset because “they are going to get me what I want because I am young, you know.” These men also provided a stable environment for Paula’s children. Similar to Geneva, Paula gave her children over to their fathers’ care because she felt they would be better off out of her custody while she was in her drug addiction. Paula had determined that she would not be left as a single mother raising her children, like her own mother. So, although she believed it was in the children’s best interest to live with their fathers, she retreated before the men could leave her.

“The type of men that I was involved with, they wanted their kids, you know. And I felt like ‘hell, I am not doing nothing but messing my life up so at least they will have one parent.’ Because, you see, men always left my mom, you know. And I think that is kind of why my thing is reversed. I always left, you know, instead of them leaving me with the children. I left them with the children, you know. And my kids, they like “all we ever wanted was you no matter how messed up you

were”, [but] no, I was not well to be with no children at that time. ‘No, that is why I left you guys with your fathers, you know’.”

The family dynamics Paula described in her relationship with her children and their fathers were illustrative of many aspects of other participants’ relationships with their children. Many of the women described how the birth of their children filled a void in their lives in that their children gave them the love and affection they lacked in other significant relationships. Subsequently, when the women experienced the removal of their children from their custody, usually due to the effects of their involvement in illegal activities and intervention by the child welfare system or other family members, the women described a profound and enduring sense of loss, guilt, and shame. Lastly, the women’s relationships with their children are complex in that they overlap with and influence relationships with other members of their families, especially when custody issues are involved.

The women’s relationships with their children were one of the most persistent themes throughout the interview. Their relationships with their children are complex because they represent areas in which the women most frequently described their failures or mistakes in the maternal role, while simultaneously signifying sites of hopefulness for opportunities to excel in the mother role. The twelve participants in the study were mothers to a total of 54 children. All of the women, except Lori, were mothers to multiple children. Geneva was the mother of nine children, the most of all the women in the study. The majority of the children (37) were 18 years and under, whereas 17 of the children were over 18 years of age at the time of the interviews. The mean age of the children was 16 years. The majority of the women in the study had experienced their first incarceration after becoming mothers. In fact, only Beverly and Jeanne

had experienced periods of incarceration prior to the birth of their first child. A table with the children's demographic information can be found in Table 2, Appendix D.

Parental custody arrangements significantly impacted the ways in which the women were able to mother their children and the relationships they were able to build with their children. As such, the women's relationships with their children were marked by frequent transitions in the custodial arrangements and the legal status of these arrangements. The myriad of custody arrangements of the women's children were complex because they shifted rapidly depending on the women's history of involvement in illegal activities, types of illegal activities in which they engaged, whether they were incarcerated as a result of their involvement in illegal activities, and which child the custody arrangement involved. Another key component to the participants' relationships with their children concerns navigating a complicated system of custodial arrangements comprised of familial and non-familial custody arrangement, or a combination of both. These custody arrangements shaped the type of contact the women were allowed to have with their children. Further, the legal status of the participants' parental rights over their children and their involvement with the child welfare system added another layer of complications as the women attempted to reestablish or maintain contact with their children.

The women described a complex system of custodial arrangements for their children, which usually began following the onset of their involvement in illegal activities. For most of the women in this study, family members had assumed custody of their children upon their involvement in illegal activities, regardless of whether they became incarcerated as a result. The children of Monique, Alisha, Lori, Alana, and Paula were in the custody of family members during their mother's involvement in illegal activities and/or subsequent periods of incarceration. Camille, Sonja, Joyce, Geneva, and Candice had children who had been in the custody of both

family and non-family members. Jeanne's children were in the custody of family members, initially, and then transitioned to non-familial care later. Only Beverly's three children were solely in the custody of non-family members.

Given the complexity of the custody arrangements for their children, many of the participants described their efforts to maintain contact with their children. While incarcerated, many of the women spoke of attempting to communicate with their children through cards, letters, phone calls, and occasional in-person visits. For some of the women, it was easy to maintain contact with their children due to their inquiries about their mothers with other family members. This was the case for Camille and her oldest son.

"It was easy because he [oldest son] always inquired about me. You know, 'y'all heard from my mom?'" Because even in my addiction, I would always call my mom at least every month or every other month to let her know, 'mom, I'm still alive. How are you doin'?' ...So he would keep in touch with me through them. So once he became aware that I was incarcerated, he immediately sought me out."

While it was easy for Camille to maintain contact with her oldest son, the participants with children involved in a combination of custody arrangements had a harder time. Managing relationships with both the children and their caregivers in order to have contact with the children is particularly complex due to preexisting strain surrounding perceptions of the women's mother role, involvement in illegal activities, and the perceived influences they have on the children. As such, the women typically had access to just a few of their children. Geneva responded that it was easy to contact her children while incarcerated, given most were either adults living on their own or minors in the care of family members. The two oldest daughters "used to come and see me [in prison]." However, she recalled, "my son said he couldn't stand it.

And my [other] sons, the ones my uncle and auntie got, he wouldn't bring them, so..." Similarly, the custody arrangements for Joyce's children were such that she was allowed to talk to her youngest two daughters who were living with her cousin. However, she was not allowed to speak to her oldest daughter due to the objections of her daughter's caregiver—the paternal grandmother.

Both Joyce and Geneva, along with a few other women in this study, had children living with relatives whom they had to appease in order to receive visits with their children. Just as Geneva's relatives refused to bring her sons to the prison to visit her, Candice's mother objected to bringing her children to visit during Candice's incarceration. Candice utilized a prison visitation program to bring her children to visit her while incarcerated.

"Actually, on my second bid [incarceration], they had a bus. I was on this program and they would bring a bus down there like every 4 months and I got them in the program because my mom don't visit the penitentiary. She will never go visit the penitentiary. So they came with the program that's when one of them was 18 the other one was 11 and then my son was like 6. And then once [my oldest daughter] got a car and everything on my last bid she brought my grandbaby. *[smiling]* They come see you, yeah."

The women described the challenges they encountered when managing relationships with caregivers in order to have contact with their children. However, at times it was the children who refused to have contact with their mothers. Sonja was able to maintain contact with "a couple of them [children]" via telephone calls. However, she added, "It was hard because, you know, they didn't want to have nothin' to do with me, which I understood. Those were their feelings and

they're entitled to feel like that." In Monique's case, she had a difficult time remaining in contact with her children because they had stopped responding to her.

"Remember I was telling you I seen 'em twice that was it? I was in this program...um matter of fact, the two times that I seen them she [the program coordinator] paid for my sister to bring them down to see me so my sister brought both of them down there to see me. And I used to read books to them and send it to them but I never got a response from neither one of my kids. I never got a response from them."

For the women in this study, custodial arrangement and contact with their children are tied to their abilities to manage relationships with caregivers, child welfare agents, and their children. These tasks can be particularly challenging for these women given their geographical proximity to their children, perceptions about their abilities to desist from further illegal activities, and their history of multiple incarcerations. All of these factors influence the women's legal rights to their children.

The women's custody arrangement and contact with their children was related to the legal status of their parental rights as well. The women were asked about the status of their parental rights for their minor children. Six of the women did not have parental right to any of their minor children. All six of these women had been arrested and incarcerated for offenses related to their drug addiction. Monique, Lori, and Alana stated they had maintained their parental rights over their children. Lastly, Camille and Geneva had their parental rights over their youngest child restored, despite having their rights revoked for most of their other minor children.

Seven of the women in this study reported having had minor children involved in the child welfare system at some point during their involvement in illegal activities and incarceration. All of these women were involved in illegal activities connected to drug addiction. Jeanne's case illuminates the complications the women encountered concerning the custody of their children due to their involvement in illegal activities and subsequent incarceration. Jeanne lost her parental rights when her son was 8 and her daughter was 4. They spent 3 years in the foster care system and eventually were adopted together into a family. Jeanne recalled how the negative relationship with her children's father and the escalation of her drug addiction led to the loss of her parental rights.

"It [maternal role] had changed due to all of that [the relationship with her husband]. Then when I came into my addiction, I lost my parental rights towards my kids. I really didn't get to raise them like I should have and been there as their support and been there nurturing them. Someone else had to step in and do that for me. And then later on down the line they came back. They were reunited back with me."

Caseworkers from the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) entered Jeanne's relationship with her children following a shoplifting arrest involving Jeanne and her adolescent son. Jeanne did not immediately lose custody of her children and attempted to keep her children within her care. However, her drug addiction had consumed her life to such a degree that she ended up arrested again facing a longer prison sentence. Jeanne's mother took custody of the children for a while. Unfortunately, that custody arrangement did not work out and the DCFS caseworker was called to place the children in foster care.

"Oh, then I got caught again. But then my mom...they [DCFS] took them to my

mom's house and they [children] were there for a while because I didn't get right out of jail. And she [mother] was feeling like it was too much for her, overwhelming. Then my sisters were in her ear saying, "Oh, those kids are too little and you can't be taking care of them. You go to work. You need to get your rest when you come home." So one day, I called her and she told me, "I'm going to call that case worker and I'm going to tell her to come and get these kids! I can't be doing all this!" And she did it. And that's how they ended up in the system. They stayed in the system for like three years."

Like Jeanne, Camille lost custody of her children due to the involvement of family members. Camille had already sent her oldest son to live with his father following the onset of her drug addiction. But once the extent of Camille's drug addiction had become known to family members, an older sister reported her to DCFS and three more children were removed from her custody. Camille would later have two more children removed from her custody at birth or shortly after. Camille characterized her drug use during pregnancy and while her children were in her custody as "neglect." These feelings compelled her to give up custody of her sixth child. She was incarcerated four months later.

"During my last incarceration, uh, a little bit before that, I gave birth to my sixth child. Uh, and, he, um, because I was still in my addiction, I feel that it's neglect. I feel that it's neglect, Tosha, being with your kids on drugs and being without your kids on drugs. It's neglect and abuse both ways. But I just think that being with your kids on drugs is a little tougher. My personal opinion. And so, I gave my baby up and when he was four months that was when I was incarcerated for possession with intent to deliver."

Camille felt it was best to give her children up because of her drug addiction and lifestyle. Similarly, both Geneva and Joyce felt they were not living a lifestyle conducive to raising children. While these three women found positive aspects to having their children removed from their custody, this was not the case for Beverly. Beverly experienced the loss of her parental rights and the custody of her children profoundly. Beverly is a 48-year-old mother of three. At the time of her interview, Beverly had been released from prison three months following the completion of a sentence for offenses associated with her drug addiction. Sixteen years prior to her interview, the Department of Children and Family Services removed her oldest two children from her custody. Her youngest son, age 13 currently, was removed at birth. These shifts in custody profoundly affected Beverly. She still grieves for the removal of her children from her custody as if it happened recently.

In the following exchange, Beverly's emotional disposition deteriorated as she began to talk about what she believed motherhood would entail for her. This question triggered an emotionally intense response concerning losing custody of her children.

LT: Ok. What did you think being a mom would be like for you?

Beverly: Staying in the house and cooking dinner I had to dress up after I had my children.

LT: Really tell me more about that.

Beverly: [*Starts weeping*] I am just, I wish I had my...I wound up losing my children.

LT: You lost your children?

Beverly: Yeah...[*crying*]

LT: How did you lose them?

Beverly: DCFS [*crying*]

LT: They came and got them?

Beverly: Yeah [*crying*]

LT: Can you tell me about that?

Beverly: [*Weeping*] I need them.

LT: I am sorry.

Beverly: [*Weeping*] I'm crying and my mother be crying. They would not give them to my mother.

LT: They would not give them to your mother?

Beverly: [*crying*] No, because their dad had did something. He died last year. And he got into a fight with some lady when they were fooling around. And they called him "nigga" and they used that against him and they would not let him get custody. We have been trying to find my oldest son. He is in Denver. He goes to college [for] broadcasting. He wants to be a news broadcaster. He say he getting' As and Bs. And my [middle] son, he in Elgin. He a good boy. The lady [caregiver], I met her she takes care of him... I just did not want my mother to be...[*trails off*]. I want to make her so happy. They spent a lot of money trying to get my son back with the lawyer [*crying intensifies*]. I don't think they had the right lawyer. I don't want to talk about that no more.

LT: Ok, I am sorry I know this is hard. I apologize. We will move a little bit away from that. Let's talk about your incarceration. Is that ok?

Beverly: Yeah [*crying*]

Later in the interview, she elaborated further on her feelings about her children not living with her.

“I miss them a lot. I look at people at other people’s kids. I be wishin’ and I look at TV and I wish I could have gave and showed them...*[trails off]* I know they look at people, other families with their families, with their moms. I just wanted them with their natural relative, blood relative not somebody who was a stranger. I don’t know I did not know who...*[trails off]*”

Beverly felt the DCFS caseworkers were not cooperative with her and her family because they refused to give her children to their father or her parents. When asked whether the intervention by the DCFS caseworkers was helpful or harmful to her relationship with her children, Beverly responded as expected,

“Harmful. It is very painful and emotional. They [DCFS] mess with your heartstrings and that hurts... [They are harmful] in not really giving you a chance to understand you or come talk to you before they did it they don’t understand what happened...they just take them take them. They are like being police....They need to talk to you.... They did not talk to my son one-on-one.”

Beverly was adamant that her children were unjustly removed from her custody. As she continued, her anger and resentment of the treatment she had received from the caseworkers became palpable.

“They don’t care! They really don’t care! The good workers you don’t know who they are and you don’t get a good worker. There are bad seeds. The Mexican ladies are hard and the other ones are turning cold. They have to have more. I know they could investigate more and they ought to be having [of] them do more

than just paperwork. They are really not into it even just put a little more feeling and passion and concern into a child, even if you got to find them another good place to stay and take them to the children's homes...where they keep the kids, the orphanage, the orphanage. They don't keep no compassionate workers in there [DCFS]..."

Beverly's response to the role of workers from the Department of Children and Family Services in her relationship with her children was not illustrative of the general sentiments of the women in this study. Generally, the participants who were involved with DCFS believed their caseworkers had their children's best interest at heart. In fact, majority of the participants with DCFS cases responded that they felt being involved with DCFS was "helpful" to them as a mother. For instance, Jeanne felt her caseworker was helpful...

"Because anything I had need for the kids, I called my DCFS worker and she was there. She was there to help me...Because they took my kids for them to be safe. You know? Because they did let them stay home with me the first time. Remember I told you, they didn't just take them out the home. It's just I kept on catching cases."

Although Joyce's most recent involvement with DCFS feels "terrible" she also saw the helpfulness of having the DCFS caseworker involved in her life. When disclosing her current DCFS case, Joyce recalled the incident that resulted in losing custody of her baby in 2008.

"Because I relapsed in, uh, 2008 and I was in a shelter. I had paid someone [another resident of the shelter] to keep my baby until I make it back. Uh...at the shelter. Pick her up from school and bring her back. And she [caretaker] came back to the shelter and said that I left, uh, I didn't tell her to keep the baby, [to]

keep my daughter. And they ended up, by the time I got back there, which was curfew, and there were like...curfew was at 11 o'clock so I got back at 10:45 and the lady had just left with my baby. They called DCFS in the process because I left her unattended. So I understand they had to do their job. So in the process, I had to...they took [my baby] because of that.”

As Joyce continued, she closed her eyes and shook her head before responding that she felt it was “terrible” being involved with DCFS.

“It’s terrible. Well, I mean it could benefit you, you know, as long as you doin’ what they say do. It could be helpful. But once you get in there [child welfare system], it’s hard to get out. It is.”

Despite having the resources provided by her caseworker, Joyce still feels a deep sense of loss concerning the custody of her children.

“I went to parenting classes. I mean it’s, it’s...[trails off]. I miss my kids a lot. It’s just, you know, I would never wish this on no one. For their kids to be taken away because it’s a hurtin’ feelin’. It’s like somethin’ that can’t be filled.”

Joyce felt her involvement with her DCFS caseworker was helpful because the agent providing her with someone to talk to when life gets too complicated for her.

“Because it’s like I said, um, if I need to talk...if I’m going through something, I can call ‘em and they can give me some suggestions or resources to call, you know. It’s like I’m not dealin’ with everything alone. Rather than if I had no one to call, you know, when I’m going through these situations it’s really hard dealin’ with things by yourself. Knowing you got somebody here to help you makes it a little lighter. Makes the burden a little lighter.”

The women's narratives related to child custody issues illustrate their insight into the effects of their mistakes on their maternal role and relationships, as well as the far-reaching implications of those errors. The women also shared their perceptions of the effects of their involvement in illegal activities and incarceration on their relationships with their children. Three common themes emerged from the responses. First, they described instances in which at least one of their children took on the role of caregiver for their mother and siblings. Second, nearly half of the participants linked their involvement in illegal activities to their children's subsequent involvement in illegal activities and incarceration. Lastly, seven of the women discussed what they perceived to be physical effects on their children's wellbeing.

Candice, Sonja, Paula, and Joyce recalled moments with their children where a child stepped in to compensate for their shortcomings in their role as mother, which were brought about by their involvement in illegal activities. Most times, the women described instances in which a child performed many of the duties associated with childrearing, such as feeding, bathing, clothing, and at times providing shelter for themselves or their other children. The women's recollections of their children taking on the caregiver role ranged from situations in which the children had to care for their mother following a life-threatening situation brought about by her addiction. In Paula's case, her sons were called to pick her up after she suffered a mental health lapse following days of being awake selling and using drugs. Her oldest son took her to be committed in the "crazy house" following this event. Other women recalled moments where their children took care of one another. Sonja remembered a conversation with one of her sons about his childhood during which she spent most of her time out using drugs. She remembered that he would care for his younger sisters while she was in her addiction.

“I remember that he changed diapers. He knew how to change diapers. And I said, ‘you used to change your little sisters’ diapers all three of the little girls.’ He used to change their diapers.”

Similarly, Joyce discussed her relationship with her 11 year old daughter, who she nicknamed “lil’ mama” because she took on the mothering role in their family by caring for her younger sister and Joyce. She describes her daughter as “the mama of my children.” I asked her to tell me about her daughter.

“...OH MY MAMACITA! My mamacita! She’s just precious. Precious. She’s the mama. **SHE’S** [*heavy emphasis*] the mama. That little girl... In my addiction, I be worn out because I been up so many days, been up a few days getting high. I be in there sleep. She come in there “mom, mom wake up come on get you somethin’ to eat. I be like, ‘ok, I’ll get somethin’ in a minute.’ And she done went in there gave her sister a bath, combed her sister hair, washed her sister, combed her sister hair. I’m talkin’ about she 8 or 9 now... 7 or 8 somethin’ like that. Combed her sister hair and then went in there fixed some noodles for her and her sister to eat and brought some to her mama, “here mama, here come fix you somethin’ to eat”.”

Although Joyce lovingly called her little girl “the mama” of the family, she also spoke of the hurt she felt over her daughter having to take on that role.

“**[crying]** It hurts me, it hurts me because that’s my role, that’s not the role she’s supposed to been takin’. She’s supposed to be a child, she not supposed to be takin’ over for mama! Doin’ what her mama supposed to be doin’! But that’s

what she did. So I call her, “mama”, “lil’ mama”. And she loves...she loves her mama. She loves me. She mad at me [right now], I know, but she loves me.”

While Joyce described the ways her younger daughter stepped in for her while she was in her addiction, Candice had an older daughter who did similarly for her younger children. When asked whether she felt her incarceration affected some of the challenges she faced as a mother, she responded,

“Well I can’t really say that it did because all through it I got a daughter that is 28 and one that is 22 so she is like 6 years older than her next sister and then my son she 11 years older than him. So by the time, she was growing up she knew that like “just because my mother on drugs, I am going to help my brother and sister all I can.” All while during my addiction, she always did for them. She always did for them. She got her own apartment when she was 18. She would come and get them and take them to spend the night. She would just do anything she can to keep them together as a family. She did that for some years.”

While some of the children took on the role of caregiver to compensate for the effects of their mother’s involvement in illegal activities, others became involved in illegal activities themselves. During their interviews, five of the women disclosed that they had children who had been convicted of crimes and incarcerated. All of five women had older sons who had been incarcerated. Sonja, who had three children who had been incarcerated, also had a daughter in juvenile detention.

At the time of her interview, Jeanne’s son was incarcerated for aggravated robbery. Although she had hoped he would not go down the same path as she or his father, she felt she

could not be angry with him about his incarceration because he saw his parents engaged in illegal activities from an early age.

“I can’t really be angry because I didn’t raise him really. So I can’t really be angry. All I can do now is really set any example for him that he don’t have to keep running in and out of the revolving door [of prison]. There is a better way to live. He can do it. [I] just continue to encourage him and speak life into him and pray for him that whatever’s God’s will let it be done. That he be healed from...[trails off] because I know he’s got a lot of anger going on inside from my lifestyle; from me not being there and somebody else having to step in and take my role on, his dad’s [role] too. So, I understand, so I can’t be angry. I can’t be mad at him. All I can do is support him and love on him at this time and just set an example. That’s all I can do.”

Despite the affects her incarceration and addiction had on her son, Jeanne felt she had a chance to set a new example for her children now that she is clean and living a different lifestyle.

Monique also has tried having an optimistic outlook on her son’s involvement in illegal activities and incarceration. Her third oldest son was incarcerated for armed robbery at the time of her interview.

“My third child, yeah right, he's been going back and forth to jail since he was probably 11 or 12. So he's incarcerated right now... he's in the penitentiary. He’s going to school actually, he's trying to get his GED while he's in there.”

Monique elaborated on her hopes that he will make the necessary changes for his future and stay out of prison.

“I’m just hoping and prayin’ he get out and do the right thing, but they talk ‘bout statistics, statistics and they said that when they young like that and they go [to prison] that nine out of ten they gonna go back because they young and they not, they not gettin’ it. But when he writin’ letters he sound like he’s um he’s gonna do the right thing, but I know I also did that too when I was incarcerated so I never know until, you know, he get out. But I also taught him about [a local residential transition home], you know, about that place and how they help you, so I don’t know what he gonna do. He said he thinking about paroling out of town. So I don’t know what he gonna do when he get out. He been locked up for um about 2 years. He did more time than I ever did.”

The sentiments found in Jeanne and Monique’s recollections of their sons’ robbery convictions were common among other participants who reported having children in prison. However, Sonja’s case was unique. Of her five children, Sonja had two sons who had been incarcerated and a 16-year-old daughter in detention at a juvenile facility. When asked to describe her children, she began by talking about their convictions.

“Well, [my 23 year old] is locked up. He’s the oldest one [and] he has a daughter. He was living that lifestyle selling drugs, doin’ drugs, weed, token’ weed and just doin’ [him]...My second son just got out. He’s 22. He went to jail for robbery. He’s out. He’s got a family and a girlfriend. He’s living with her. She’s got a stepson.... But my 16 year old, she got locked up. She’s a feisty little somethin’....She’s in a girls’ thing [juvenile detention center] in [downstate] somewhere.”

While some of the women in this study linked their children's incarceration and delinquency to their own mistakes, some of them also perceived numerous ailments their children experienced as having derived from their involvement in illegal activities. This notion was particularly poignant for the women who had drug addictions. These women reported such illnesses as cerebral palsy, asthma, Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder, cognitive developmental delays, hearing impairments, and behavioral conduct problems. For instance, Sonja described a situation when her 16-year-old daughter was younger and needed open-heart surgery. She expressed feelings of shame, as she attributes her daughter's illness to her cocaine use during pregnancy.

"She, uh, she had open-heart heart surgery. I think by her being a cocaine baby. [pauses; sighs] Me doing drugs played a part in her heart being like that. Yep, so....[trails off] When I first found out about it, I was hurt. I was like, [quietly] 'WOW, my daughter's gettin' surgery and I'm out here gettin' high.' I couldn't stop....Yeah, I was devastated. And you know, things like that kept me out there getting high. I don't want to deal with it. I don't want to deal with life."

Sonja's expression of guilt was shared by other women in the study who attributed their drug use to negative impacts upon their children's health. Paula's 18-year-old son was born with developmental disabilities that Paula said were because he was a "drug baby." Although he lives with his father, she is hesitant to spend time with him because it is hard for her to witness his disabilities. This has created conflict with her and her son's father. According to Paula,

"...he was a drug baby and he is kind of slow and he lives with his dad. Right now his dad is not talking to me because I said I was going to do something and I

did not do it. And so he is like he is pissed and he won't let me talk to [my son]..."

As Paula continued, she discussed the tension between her and her son's father.

"I was supposed to come and get him and let him spend the weekend with me. And [his dad] was like [my son] was so excited and I let him down. I could not do it! I am like, I don't even really know [him] anymore since he was a little boy. Now, he is this man. He is 18 years old, you know, but still a little boy inside and I did not know if I could handle what I put him through. When I look at him I see all of my destruction as far as drugs and my lifestyle, you know, when I see him. And it breaks my heart because he did not deserve that. He did not deserve to be born drug addicted. That hurts me, you know. And it's like I block it out because if I don't see him...it is like I block it out, you know."

Monique also disclosed her difficulties seeing her youngest son who receives medication to deal with his behavioral problems. She gave birth to him prematurely when she was 6 months into her pregnancy and just weeks after being released from prison. He has a hearing impairment but Monique says, "he's okay." She is mostly concerned about his behavioral problems. It is hard for her to witness the differences in his behavior with and without his medication.

"He's a good kid, you know, he's been through a lot, he's been through a lot. Since a baby, you know, he wear hearing aids. I had him at 6 months. He was one pound nine ounces. And I really, I really don't know too much about him. I just know that's my son and, you know, I go see him. And I know I don't know if I can deal with him without his medicine because he do not listen to me [laughs]....They give him medicine because he have a behavioral problem. But

when I first seen him off that medicine I cried. When I first...my sister told me how it was, but when I actually first seen him, 'cus I seen him when he was off the medicine and then my sister gave him some medicine. We was going to church then she said "I'm gonna give him some medicine, his medicine so he can calm down since you here." And she gave him his medicine and I actually cried because it, it's like when he on, when he on that medicine he's like basically like a zombie because he's just quiet and don't say nothin' he just look and stare. But when he not on the medicine he all happy, you know, it's like he can't sit down. So I don't know, I don't know which one I'd rather deal with. 'Cus it's sad, it's sad."

The women were keenly aware of the effects of their incarceration had on their relationships with their children. In discussing the effects of their incarceration, the women also were asked about any conversations they may have had with their children about their incarceration and the response they received. The women who spoke about their children's responses to their drug addiction all discussed the negative reactions they perceived from their children. The children's responses concerning their mother's history of incarceration was varied in comparison to the responses to drug addiction, which was generally negative. Paula and Camille felt their children, particularly their oldest sons, were "relieved" that they were incarcerated because they were no longer in the streets using drugs. Candice perceived her children to be "interested" in why she was incarcerated, while Jeanne imagined her children were traumatized by her absence. Finally, Beverly, Monique, and Joyce felt their children wanted their mothers home with them instead of incarcerated.

Camille felt her son had mixed feelings about her incarceration. On the one hand, he had “ill feelings” because she was incarcerated, but also “relieved” that he knew her location and she was not out in the streets or in danger. According to Camille,

“I think he had some ill feelings about it as well as mixed feeling about. I think he had ill feelings about it because, no one wants to say “where’s your mom?” and have to answer “in jail.” But I say he had mixed feelings about it because it was his shot of hope where he was able to connect with me again, to communicate with me even, because never in the street....it was his shot of hope because he was able to connect with me again, communicate with me again, and all. So, that’s why I say mixed feelings because he had ill feelings because it doesn’t look good that your mom is incarcerated. But, the good part was, by her being incarcerated....she’s sitting down, so....”

Candice also recalled the conversation she had with her children about her incarceration. She used it as an opportunity to warn them from following in the same path she had taken.

“I told them that due to the fact that I was using and selling drugs I was locked up and I don’t want you to take the same road that I took. At first, I was kind of shy but it is about being honest and telling your kids the truth. Telling the truth from your experience, making sure that you don’t want them to experience the same things I went through. Don’t do the same thing that I did.”

Although she felt “kind of shy” initially, Candice recalled the children “were very interested” and “understanding” of her incarcerations and drug addiction. She also was grateful for the lack of judgment from her children. “My kids they never judge me they never showed me that side. They where always understanding.”

Monique's experience was a different from most of the other women in that she did not discuss her incarceration with her kids. Monique believed

"They knew. They know [what] it's like, 'cus it's not...it's not the first time so. It's like when they don't see me they know where I'm at...So they know."

When asked whether the same reaction was applicable to her first incarceration, Monique's response was slightly different.

"The first time, you know, my mom didn't tell 'em. She was telling them that I was going to school or something, I can't remember. She did not tell them I was incarcerated, no. And they was young then so...I don't know, you know, what right now today. I never asked my older kids how they feel, or how they felt about my incarceration. I have never talked to them about it. But I can imagine how they felt, you know. I'm sure they probably felt like they was alone, and wondering where my mom at, you know."

Joyce's recollection of her children's responses to her incarceration was one of the most compelling insights into how they perceived their children's reaction to their incarceration.

"Well, um, I be honest with my kids. So, you know, even though my family or somebody will tell them when I come home, I tell them too. And you know, I try to tell them where they could understand, 'so, well mommy did something she wasn't supposed to do and so she had to go do, you know, pay her consequences'. You know, so..."

When asked how they responded to her explanation, Joyce replied,

“Well [my 11-year-old daughter] had told me, she said, “well mommy you had better start doin’ right because I don’t like it when you leave me”. So...*[small chuckle]*.”

As Joyce elaborated further, she remembered feeling concerned about her children’s responses because she was unsure she had the appropriate language to explain her involvement in illegal activities.

“It was hard because I didn’t know how to it or what words to say, you know. What they was gon’ think of me? You know, um, would it be more questions, which is just gon’ get harder? You know.”

She recalled writing poetry while incarcerated to help explain her life history with illegal activities and incarceration to her oldest daughter.

“So and like with [my oldest daughter], uh, the last time, well in 2003 she was asking me questions what did I do, what did I do, what did I do. And I had caught another case while I was there inside the county [jail] and I wasn’t able to tell her over the phone. I was in the hole [solitary confinement]. So, I was writing a little poetry about my life and able to tell her things I had done and you know, I would send it to her and let her read it. You know, she said she couldn’t read it all because she would start cryin’.”

While they women were clear of the negative effects their incarceration had on their relationship with their children, they women expressed pride in their children. The women most frequently focused on character traits or their children’s accomplishments. Generally, the women were delighted to express the pride they had in their children. They would usually bring out photo albums or cell phones to share photos of their children. The women described a range of

positive character traits they perceived of their children, such as “respectful,” “good,” “smart,” and “hardworking.” Many of the participants also were proud of their children’s achievements, such as doing well in school, graduating high school, having their own family and apartments, and working. They also were proud that their children did not have children at an early age, had not been in trouble with the law, and were focused on the future.

For example, Geneva was one of the women most proud of her children’s personality traits.

“They are respectful. They graduated. I don't have bad kids. I mean all kids are bad, but I didn't have to go through the drama shit that some people had to go through.”

Despite Alisha’s persistent absence from her children’s lives, she was proud that they have continued to excel and do well in school.

“I'm proud of that in spite of that they didn't have their mother that they still excelled and that they still do well. They didn't let that stop them. I have some strong kids and they have been through some stuff mentally and that they are still able to conquer and overcome. And I'm proud of them for that.”

Joyce and Candice were proud of their children’s perseverance despite their mother’s long-term drug addiction. Joyce was proud that they “did not let the bad things that have happened get them down.” She went on to describe how her 11-year-old is improving her grades. She also was proud that her 20-year-old daughter “received her high school diploma, went to Job Corps, and received her certified nursing assistant’s license.” Joyce was especially proud that her daughter had accomplished these goals as a mother of three children.

Like Joyce, Candice was proud of her children's ability to move beyond the problems she had during her addiction. Candice was proud...

"...That they did not let what I did affect them to, you know what I am sayin', to say "well, I am gonna be just like my momma". They took the other road. That they want to be something in life."

Camille summed up the sentiments of Geneva, Joyce, and Candice about being proud their children had overcome some of the challenges posed by their mother's history.

"That they're not a menace to society, [*deep sigh, and pause*] especially because I wasn't in his life. I thank God that he finished high school. He leads me on today that "I'm going back to school, ma. I'm going back to school". 'Ok...ok, you're working a job, yeah that's good....' But you know... I mean I can't really rag on him because I was an example for him before I used drugs. He saw how I was studying and going to school and working and here it is, you know. So I can't rag on him because, I didn't finish [college]. But I want him to learn from my mistakes and do different than me. But, I'm going back [to college] so.... I'm just glad that he's still alive and well and in his right state of mind and a productive member overall."

Sonja and Paula's pride in their children was different from the other women. Both described being proud that their children still let them be a part of their lives. Sonja was proud "that they talk to me." As she continued, she spoke of the pride she has in one of her daughters. She is the only one of Sonja's children who has not been in trouble.

"[*deep sigh and pause*]...My oldest daughter, I am so proud of her. Out of all my kids, including me, there's one that's doing the right thing. I mean, she's never

got in trouble. Never been locked up; never fingerprinted, nothing like that. She's grounded in church. My grandmother was talking about her the other day. She said, "out of all your kids, that [girl] loves church." I'm happy for her."

Sonja also spoke about being able to attend her daughter's upcoming high school graduation. This was an especially joyful moment because she had not attended her eighth grade graduation ceremony.

"But I am invited to her graduation and I will be there for her graduation! **THIS YEAR!** No, because her eighth grade graduation, I wasn't there. But the twelfth grade graduation, if the Lord let me live long enough, I'm gon' be there. I'll be down there on June 3rd. Her graduation is June 4th."

Paula pride in her children focused on still being recognized as their mother, despite her absence from their lives brought on by her drug addiction. According to Paula, she was most proud...

"That they still love me in spite of [that] they know all the ugly stuff. And you know how some kids call their mothers by their names and stuff mine they know I don't play that! I wish one of them would call me Paula! Mom. My youngest two is 'mommy' and my oldest children they call me 'mama' and that means something to me today. "Mama" means something."

Upon being asked to elaborate on the meaning she ascribed to being recognized by her children as their mother, Paula replied...

"That I am somebody important in this world because I am trying to move forward and I am gonna. I am moving forward. I am not where I used to be and I am not where I want to be right now. But I am not where I used to be and that is

very important. So I am striving to whatever greatness God has for me. It is his world I am just in it [*laughs*], you know.”

In sum, relationships are central to understanding the experiences of incarcerated women and their pathways into the criminal justice system. The relationships the women in this study established with their loved ones were complex in that they represented another duality in their lives. When examined within the context of a stigmatized social identity due to interlocking forms of oppression and a motherhood identity that is deeply impacted by their involvement in illegal activities and subsequent incarceration, convoluted patterns of prosocial and antisocial influences become evident. As the narratives from the women in this study demonstrated, the relationships they developed with maternal figures, siblings, partners, and their children were simultaneously prosocial and affirming, while also antisocial and degenerative. The women described how the implications of these conflicting influences in their relationships exacerbated their vulnerability to continued involvement in illegal activities, thus furthering their social disadvantages as Black women and mothers.

The women in this study are Black women who were partners to criminalized Black men and experienced the effects of their partner’s involvement in illegal activities through a desire for shared intimacy and connection. They desired connection and increased stability to counteract the effects of profound socioeconomic disadvantage. However, the situational context in which many of the women reside, which included a culture of drug addiction, poverty, and crime, intensifies the effects of the relationship challenges with their partners, especially their children’s fathers.

The women’s narratives of their relationship experiences in their families also indicated conflicting feelings of both gratitude and in some cases resentment. These conflicts suggested the

influence of intergenerational strain and conflict in their families. At times, their relationships with maternal figures, partners, and siblings served as support to necessary resources to desist and mitigate the influences of their involvement in illegal activities, despite the socioeconomic marginalization their families may have endured. Conversely, the women's families were sites of increased vulnerability to victimization and the replication of antisocial influences with their own children, at times.

Lastly, the women in this study experienced relationships as Black mothers to children, a role they found simultaneously fulfilling and challenging. The women's relationships with their children were deeply influenced by both internal and external factors, including interpersonal issues with drug addiction, incarceration, and the intervention of child welfare agencies, throughout their mothering process. While they attempted to keep their children from repeating their mistakes, the women also faced a unique aspect of maintaining a relationship with their children insofar as having to explain their criminality to their children. Further, they have to develop strategies to cope with both their children's response and their own reaction to it, especially when they foster feelings of guilt. Generally, the women's relationships with their children directly illustrated their understanding of their maternal role within a context of significant challenges and hopeful aspirations for their future as mothers, many of which influenced their outlook on their reintegration post-incarceration.

D. **Reentry and reintegration**

Central findings grouped under the emergent category, reentry and reintegration, focus on the participants' process of leaving prison and returning to "free" society. The reintegration process is ever-evolving and shifting as individuals adapt to life following a period of incarceration (Travis, 2005). For the women in this study, these processes involved developing

and demonstrating a sense of personal responsibility to account for their histories with illegal activities and incarceration; attempting to access a tenuous network of familial support; managing relationships with formal and informal systems of oversight, including parole and probation; and focusing on their aspirations for the future of their loved ones and themselves.

The women in this study shared their insights into what would be necessary for them to reintegrate into society, embody the maternal role, and desist from further involvement in illegal activities following a period of incarceration. The participants consistently reiterated the importance of their own personal responsibility for their reintegration. In accordance with an emphasis on personal responsibility, two common themes associated with this notion emerged: an emphasis on the individual's role in accepting responsibility for one's actions and the necessity of utilizing the available resources during their recovery and reintegration.

When discussing the reintegration process following incarceration, four of the participants discussed the role of the individual in the reentry and reintegration process. Jeanne, Geneva, Candice, and Alisha spoke of the reentry and reintegration process as an individualized approach in which one's agency must be activated in order to desist from further involvement in illegal activities. The importance of accepting responsibility was an undercurrent of many of the participants' discussion of their sense of personal responsibility for their reintegration process.

Jeanne's insight into the individual's role in accepting responsibility for their actions articulated the sentiments of many of the women in the study concerning their personal responsibility for reintegration. Jeanne is a mother of two children and had been incarcerated multiple times. As such, she had engaged in numerous reentry and reintegration processes since her first incarceration in 1986. Despite the level of assistance and encouragement Jeanne

received, the efforts to support her reintegration were in vain because she had not made the personal decision to stop “getting high.”

“Yeah, I had support every time. It was just **ME** [*pats chest*] that wasn’t ready to stop getting high. So it didn’t matter if I had support or not. It was the mentality that I still was at. I didn’t feel that my pain outweighed the pleasure yet. You know?”

As Jeanne elaborated, she discussed the personal responsibility the individual has in deciding that they need to change their behaviors.

“It’s up to us as individuals to make up our minds that when we had enough...until we’ve had enough. I don’t care how much support we have, how many times you put us in treatment or what you do until we’ve had enough and we know we need help. You can want it all day for me, it ain’t gone work. You know what I’m sayin’...You can throw me in treatment or whatever. If I’m not ready, sick of being sick and tired of my life, and see no need for me to change because it’s not hurting anybody and it’s not causing no consequences, I ain’t gon’ change.”

Like Jeanne, most of the women concurred that no amount of support would be effective in ensuring a successful reintegration if they had not made the decision to desist from involvement in illegal activities. Related to the women’s emphasis on the role of the individual in the reintegration process, a number of them spoke about the importance of utilizing the resources available to them to support their reintegration.

Access to adequate resources for successful reintegration is a major challenge for women exiting prison (Henriques and Manatu-Rupert, 2001; O’Brien, 2001; Richie, 2001). Housing,

mental and physical health care, nourishment, employment and job training, educational opportunities, and substance abuse treatment are resources cited by researchers, practitioners, and offenders as essential to the reentry and reintegration process (O'Brien, 2001; Richie, 2001). Most of the resources available to the participants in this study were due to their involvement with local transition homes and support groups for female offenders. Although only half of the women in this study were living in a transition home at the time of their interview, nearly all of the participants had lived in a transition home following a period of incarceration at some point in their lives. Further, only two of the women, Joyce and Geneva, reported not being involved with community support groups whatsoever.

Resource utilization and support group involvement during reintegration was a fundamental part of Camille's plan following her incarceration. According to Camille,

"I have no choice not to be. If I want to reintegrate into society, I have to have some network of people to guide me and to refer me and to point me out and to advise me or whatever you want to call it."

During her interview, Camille reiterated a sense of personal responsibility for her role in the "bad decisions" she had made and the consequences of her involvement in illegal activities, including losing custody of her children. However, she also noted that she could not reintegrate on her own. She had to be willing to utilize the resources available to her in order to reintegrate successfully.

"I can't do it on my own. Incarceration and trying to reintegrate into society, it's something that I believe that you can't do on your own. Once you're incarcerated, especially if it's a felony, you need some assistance in trying to find stability as far as housing...in all aspects."

For first-timer Alana, reaching out for assistance was especially difficult because of an over-riding sense of self-reliance in meeting her or her children's needs. Reintegrating and starting over without housing or a source of income was a challenge she had not anticipated.

"I know I don't want to go back to prison. So I know if I don't have support from nobody else, I have to have it from myself because I know I can't leave my children again and I know prison is not a life for me."

Alana's self-reliant identity shifted somewhat and she opened herself to asking for assistance with her reintegration. She described wanting to access numerous groups to assist her in parenting and desistance from illegal activities. In fact, she planned on becoming involved in substance abuse groups as a precautionary measure, even though she did not have a drug or alcohol addiction.

"I want to go to parenting groups. I don't get high or anything like that but I still want to attend those type of groups because different effects affect different people. So I want to get involved with NA or AA groups if I could just for the support just in case, say for instance, I get involved with the wrong crowd. I just want to make sure that I'm strong enough for this."

Alana's description of the types of support services she was interested in illustrate the variety of support systems the women were accessing during their reintegration processes. Familial support is one of the informal systems of support many of the women attempted to access during their reentry and reintegration. Access to familial support is a vital resource for the women in this study following their release from a period of incarceration. However, support during reintegration can be difficult to attain, especially from family, due to perceptions of their women's criminality and history of incarceration. In this study, the participants were asked a

series of questions concerning their relationships with family members. They were asked to describe the support they received following their release from jail or prison. Responses ranged from “always supportive” to “not very supportive.” Their responses were followed with a question about the complications they experienced in getting support from their family members. Generally, support was tenuous when family members felt the women were being dishonest about their involvement in illegal activities, had a history of repeated incarcerations, or when they were perceived not to be serious about desistance from illegal activities. Despite the complications that arose in receiving support from their families, only two of the participants felt their families were not supportive of them whatsoever during reintegration.

Eight of the participants felt their families were supportive of them following their incarceration. Jeanne, Geneva, and Camille responded that their families were “always” or “very supportive” of them following their release. Despite years of drug addiction and multiple incarcerations, Geneva felt “blessed” to have a supportive family “throughout all of the trials and tribulations of my life” who never turned their backs on her. Geneva shared that...

“No matter what I did, they always told me what was wrong and what was right.

They never shut any doors on me. I never burned no bridges. And they always told me when I was wrong, no matter if it hurt or not. They always told me.”

Jeanne held similar feelings concerning the support she received from her family. Her family had experienced her repeated incarcerations since her first time in prison in 1986. Although they disliked Jeanne’s involvement in illegal activities, she felt they were always wanted the best for her. Although she had their support, Jeanne felt that she had to educate her family on her [drug] addiction because they had never been around her when she was using. In

some ways, Jeanne had to assist them in providing the support most appropriate for meeting her needs following her release.

“My family has always been supportive to. They don’t always like the things I do. I had to educate them about my addiction because they didn’t know. They were naïve. A lot of time, when I start using I run away, where they won’t see me, because I don’t like them to see me in that state of mind. They are always supportive when I get locked up. I call them and they’re there for me.”

During her last incarceration however, Jeanne’s support system waivered slightly. She found herself receiving “tough love” from her family members, who had witnessed Jeanne’s repeated periods of incarceration for more than two decades. Jeanne’s response to her family mostly was self-reflective than defensive.

“But this time...the last time I was incarcerated, they kind of gave me tough love. So I pretty much had to step back myself and take a look at the picture. I had to start working on myself [and] really getting down to the root of the issue of why I keep feeling like I need one more [hit]. I had to live life on life’s terms and stop playing the blame game. Stop pointing fingers at others and point it at Jeanne because I had a part in it too. Didn’t nobody twist my arm or point a gun to my head and make me do anything. I have choices today. So I realize that. It all stimulates back to me and what part I played in it. I’m grateful that God pulled them [children] away. It had to just be me and Him [God]. I had to focus on Him and my relationship with Him so I could get stronger and I could grow, so I don’t come out [of prison] and make the same mistakes. So, it was all good.”

In Jeanne's reflection on her role in supporting herself, she also referenced her belief that God removed her children from her care so that she could focus on her recovery. Support for the care of their children was also referenced by Beverly and Monique. Monique's sister has been supportive of her by caring for her son, but also was there for Monique in her recovery and reintegration after the most recent incarceration. Monique recalled,

"My sister, she still, you know, taking care of my son. When I first came out, you know, when I needed little personal stuff [personal care products] or whatever, my sister she would help me you know, as far as get that...."

Monique understands that the level of support she receives from her family is not unconditional, particularly concerning desisting from further involvement in illegal activities.

"Yeah and she even went to meetings [Narcotics Anonymous] with me. She went to a meetin' with me and she liked it, she said she would go back with me. And she just, she just real supportive...So I have support, as long as they see me doing the right thing my family behind me."

At the time of the interview, Alisha had been released from her most recent sentence for only 4 days. However, she had been incarcerated numerous times throughout the 15 years she spent in her drug addiction. As such, Alisha knew that the support she received from her family upon her release was fragile at best. In fact, she knew that in order to receive their support she had to show them, especially her mother, that she was serious about staying out of prison.

"Well I just got out Thursday, December 9th [4 days prior to her interview]. So, it's only the 13th. But my family will support me 100% when they see the footwork. When they see that I'm serious. I gotta show 'em. I've given them mouth action for so many years. 'Oh, I'm gonna do this, I'm gonna do that.' And

now it's like I'm not really saying too much, I'm just kind of doing it. And they're there to help me 100%. My mom's happy.”

Alisha’s experience illustrates the correlation between desistance and familial support, which was most frequently discussed when the women spoke of the difficulties accessing familial support. Eight of the participants spoke about the difficulties they encountered in getting support from their family members when there was concern about a drug relapse or concern about influences that would lead to involvement in illegal activities. Also evident in the women’s description was an erosion of trust with their family members as a result of their drug addiction.

For a few of the women, the difficulties they experienced in getting support from their families related to money or financial assistance. In Joyce’s experience, family members were afraid of her motives for wanted money from them. Due to their fears, Joyce states, “they found other ways to help”, like giving food or being available for her when she needs to talk. At the time of the interview, her family’s fears had been exacerbated due to their concern over a large payout of \$17,000 Joyce was receiving in past due benefits from social security and disability insurance. At the time of her interview, Joyce had a contentious relationship with her family because they expected her to make them the payee on her account so they could keep track of her spending. Specifically, Joyce’s family members were worried she would use the money to support her drug addiction; while Joyce was concerned her family would use her money to meet their own needs.

Alisha’s mother was vocal about her frustration with providing Alisha financial support upon release, only to see Alisha return to the same activities that precipitated her incarceration. Alisha is resolute that her family’s hesitation to support her is “*BECAUSE THEY DON'T*

BELIEVE ME!” She elaborates further about the frustrations she and her mother share concerning the support she receives.

“*[pause]* When I whole-heartedly haven't made a decision that I want to do right and I just want to do enough to get by or act a certain way long enough so I can get what I want and return to do what I want to do...

...And then my mother's thing is, "I don't mind helping you, but every time you get out of jail I'm helping you. I give you a coat and then you don't even know where the coat at. And then I help you get started and get you clothes and get you this and get you that and then you go on and get locked up and you don't even know where that stuff is at." And that's what she always fusses about...

...she says, "I've given you pictures of the kids and this and that and you left them somewhere you don't even know where you left them. Where are they at?" That's her thing. It's not so much...and then she say. "I got to keep on helping you with the same stuff. I mean come on now!" And I just said, 'alright mama, alright.'”

The family's frustration and fear of relapse that Joyce and Alisha described are shared by most of the women in the study who disclosed a drug addiction. The family's fear of relapsed affected the level of difficulty that the women experienced in gaining familial support upon release from jail or prison. Camille spent over 15 years actively in her drug addiction, which kept her away from her family members for much of that time period. Camille says that while her family members were “tremendously” supportive of her financially, mentally, and spiritually since her release, this has not always been the case.

“Well, just to go back.... The only time that it was hard to get support from my family was when I got out of jail and went back to my old behaviors because they

did not support that at all. They were not accepting that at all. So, that's the only time that I had a hard time in getting their support from them...because I was killing myself. I was using drugs and they weren't supporting that."

Camille expected her family members' lack of support for her drug addiction and was surprised to observe that some of her acquaintances maintained familial support and even acceptance of their drug usage.

"Yeah, a lot of families...a lot of people that I got high with in Robbins, they accept their family's drug use. They still will feed them, still allow them, you know... My mom still allowed me to her house but not under the influence, you know. That's ironic because *your* husband [referring to mother's husband]... But hey if she likes it, I love it. Yeah, but they didn't accept when I was in my addiction."

Several women in the study had similar experiences as Camille concerning a lack of familial support when they were actively in their addiction. Many of their family members were adamant that they were not going to contribute in furthering their addictions in any way. Monique agreed that "when I'm using drugs, I can't get nothing from them." However, the post-incarceration support Monique experienced varied according to the family member from which she was received support. This was particularly true with her mother.

"...Because they [my family] not gon' be no enabler. My mom was my enabler, that's what I'm saying. Even when I was doing drugs, I could get whatever from her if she had it. My family not gon' do that."

For most of the participants, familial support post incarceration was almost inextricably tied to the level of trust the family members felt with the women. Many of the women in the

study reported being denied familial support when their families believed they were not being truthful concerning their involvement in illegal activities. Paula commented that her family did not trust her. Her family's lack of trust was not related to her victimization of them or stealing from them to support her drug addiction. Paula links her difficulty in attaining familial support to the family's distrust of her because they did not understand her unpredictable personality or know what to expect from her attitude from day-to-day.

“Them trusting me because they did not know who the hell I was! Half the time I came, they did not know what to expect [*chuckles*], you know. But I never stole from them or cheated them or anything like that. My addiction did not take me there, you know. I stole from my mom or things of that nature? *No!* Or stole from my kids? *No!* It was my attitude, you know.”

Paula's description of her family's distrust illustrates the weariness many families feel in dealing with a loved one who has been actively involved in illegal activities over long periods of time or who has been incarcerated repeatedly (Brown and Bloom, 2009). The uncertainty that families experience over the safety and wellbeing of a loved one complicates their willingness to lend support to that family member. Sonja described this experience vividly when discussing the difficulties she has getting support from her family, especially her sister.

“Um, not very much supportive....No. Uh, just like, “stay out of jail”, you know. That's about it. Just stay out of jail, you know. Not very supportive. But happy that I'm out, you know what I'm sayin'. I remember one time, my sister said she prayed me into jail because she didn't know where I was at. And when I...[*chuckles*] when I did tell her I was in jail, she was like, “oh my God, my blessings passed. I prayed you in jail.” I'm like, ‘*WHAT!* Wow. Yeah...”

Despite Sonja's shock at her sisters' happiness about her incarceration, she also understood the underlying cause to her sister's response. Her sister was relieved to find Sonja safe, even if she was in jail.

“Because I was missin’! I was on drugs and when I get in trouble...you know, when we get in trouble, we call people. You know, we get those foxhole prayers out. ‘Lord, if you get me out of this, I promise...’ [*laughs*].... And it was like a relief. It was like so much pressure lift off their shoulders.”

Along with Sonja, Camille, and Paula shared similar experiences with their family members' conflicted feelings concerning the women's incarceration and the level of support they could lend. Paula's family told her she needed help with her drug addiction. Paula knows her family felt “relieved when I got locked up because I was so crazy it was either that or somebody was going to kill me.” Paula disclosed that her incarceration was a relief for her mother as well as her children because they no longer would have to look out for her when she was out in the streets using or dealing drugs. Sonja noted that her family felt similarly in that they were glad she was not dead or hurt unbeknownst to them. Camille described her incarceration as a relief for her family because they knew where she was and that she was “sitting down” instead of out in the streets using drugs.

Alana and Candice's description of the level of support they received from their family members upon their release was unique from the other participants. Both expressed hurt by their perceived lack of support from their families. Alana felt she “never” had support from her family and was resentful of their lack of support for her and her children during her incarceration. At the time of the interview, she only had been released one day prior yet; she still expected no support from her family members as she had received none during her incarceration.

“Them not, like I said before, not writing me. Not coming to see me. Not seeing how my children were doing while they were out here and I was locked up. That has been the whole ordeal. It just was a letdown.”

Alana had come to expect the worst from her family, despite their expressions of love and a familial bond. She felt it was hard to get support from her family because they had always shown her otherwise. Whereas, the other participants’ families hesitated in providing support when they expected the women to relapse into their involvement in illegal activities, Alana expected *her family members* to return to those previous patterns of being unsupportive of her and her children.

“Well I could describe...like to me, I feel like it's being phony right now because I just got out and they haven't heard from me in so long. Now, they want to come see me and see how I'm doing. "I love you, I miss you. I know we ain't been there but family is family and family is gon' always be there." So, I feel like they're just being phony right now. Things are going to be back to the regular like it used to be. I know it is.”

Candice felt it was not difficult to get support from her family because they “don’t have a lot of money. So other than money they help me anyway they can.” However, she was hurt by her family’s expectation of a relapse and an imminent return to prison. Candice felt that only her children and some friends outside of her family were willing to have faith in her to stay sober and not return to prison.

“...They all thought because I’ve been to the joint [prison] three times [and] the last two times I’ve came from each one [periods of incarceration] I got high. And they all were saying she is going to get high again. Because one thing about

drugs, it is a very negative atmosphere everything about it is negative and they all were betting saying “she was going to go right back to using...

...It like hurted my feelings. But I feel like this...they talk about Jesus Christ so you know they are gonna talk about me when I am dead and gone....So I stopped worrying about what people said it is what I know in my heart what I want to do.

It still bother me but I look at it like this when they stop talking about you that is when you need to worry.”

The women’s narratives about their access to informal systems of support, like family, highlights a central feature of the reintegration process. Another influential component connected to the participants’ reentry and reintegration involves their interactions state and legal agencies, particularly parole and probation. In order to better understand the context within which the participants reintegrate, it is necessary to examine the women’s involvement with these formal agencies following their incarceration. In many ways, the parole or probation officer served as the gatekeeper to necessary resources for the women’s reintegration. As such, the relationship with the officials was crucial to success during the reintegration process.

Generally, the women expressed favorable sentiments about their interactions and relationships with their parole or probation officers. The majority of the women in this study have been on parole and/or probation previously and understood how the system operated. Further, they understood what was expected in order to remain in compliance with the parole or probation stipulations. Most of the women in this study believed their parole or probation officer was helpful, if they remained compliant with the stipulations laid out for them. Further, several of the women responded that being on parole or probation was helpful in their recovery from drug addiction, search for employment, and gaining access to resources to mother their children.

Camille and Paula reported having successfully completed drug and mental health court, a requirement of their probation. Lastly, some of the women reported being willing to “do the work” necessary to complete their parole or probation as early as possible.

All of the women in this study have been involved in some type of supervised release through a parole or probation office. During their interview, most of the women spoke positively about their relationship with their parole or probation officer. Jeanne, Candice, Camille, and Alisha had no problem with their officers or the stipulations set forth by the officer. A common theme among the women who responded accordingly was that there was “no problem” so long as they are “doing right things” or are in compliance with the requirements of their parole or probation. Candice’s response articulated the most frequent replies when the women were asked how they felt about having to check in with parole or probation.

“It is not a problem. I look at it like when I was locked down I could not go anywhere. I could go as I please now I don’t mind checking in... You know at first when I was coming home and I was trying to be slick and getting high I used to hate it but I don’t mind at all now.”

Other women in the study share Candice’s disposition that checking in is no problem because they are no longer being “locked down” but able to move freely. Conversely, Alisha recognized that despite the geographic change from prison to “free society” she was still not completely free from the jurisdiction of correctional authorities. Alisha candidly spoke on the clarity she felt about her role in completing the parole stipulations.

“Parole, I’m ok with it, especially my parole officer. I’m not confused that I am still incarcerated in a sense. I’m just in a different phase. I’m not confused about that and that’s ok. That’s ok. I’m all right with that.”

Camille had an 18 month probation stipulation, which required her to complete 6 months of intense drug treatment. She felt “ok” with being under community supervision because she was able to get clean from her 15-year drug addiction. For Camille,

“I was ok with it [because it] was something to help me stay on the straight and narrow. Because I wanted to get out of the system or get out of their face, I did what was asked of me which was to make meetings, take drops, and whatever else.”

Jeanne was clear that her successful completion of the community supervision term was contingent upon doing the “next right thing.”

“I don’t have any problem with that because I’m doing the next right thing today. When you are doing the next right thing, it doesn’t bother you so much than when you are not doing the next right thing. Yeah so...that means a lot. I don’t have anything to hide today because I’m doing the next right thing. I’ve got to follow rules. If that’s what they require me to do, that’s what they require me to do. I don’t have any control over that. I put myself in that predicament so I have to get myself out of it.”

Jeanne felt her lack of control over the stipulations was all a part of having involved herself in illegal activities. Further, Jeanne’s response alluded to a shift in her sense of personal responsibility for remaining in compliance and successful completion of parole. Jeanne has been on parole before and has returned to prison a number of times. She has also had parole officers who have given her chances when she has been noncompliant, particularly with her drug screenings. Given all of this, Jeanne places a heavier emphasis on her personal responsibility for successfully completing her parole supervision.

“They are not going to come and snatch me off the street and put me back in prison. If I break the law, or come up dirty so many times... They even work with you. Parole will even work with you too. If you come up dirty, they don’t just throw you back in prison. They’ll send you to a recovery home and let you withdraw and then you’ll go to classes there. So they’ll try to work with us.”

The women in the study repeatedly referred to the helpfulness of the parole or probation officer, especially if they abided by the terms of their community supervision. Alisha’s disposition concerning her parole officer was simple because...

“...they are there to help you! So if you want to do right, they are there to help you. But if you just want to do what you been doing, they are there to harm you. In other words, if you want to just continue getting high and keep going in to a store, that’s a harassment. You don’t want to be bothered.”

Some of the women spoke of the officer’s helpfulness in supporting their recovery from drug addiction and in finding employment. Camille responded without hesitation that her probation officer was “very helpful” in aiding her recovery by requiring regular drug urine screenings.

“It’s going back to...just helping me to stay clean, to put it short. It helped me to stay clean because I had to have clean drops to successfully complete anything...Because when you’re a severe user like I was...like most users are...if you don’t have those consequences of not following up with your probation officer, then you are easily detoured or pulled back to the old behaviors because that’s your comfort zone. That’s what you know. You are so out of touch with

reality and society, and *LIFE* that you go back to what you are used to what you are familiar with.”

Candice felt her parole officer was “trying to be helpful” in assisting her with finding steady employment. Once Candice demonstrated that she could keep a job consistently, her parole officer eased some of the stipulations and even attempted to get an early parole release for Candice.

“Yeah, she has been trying to be helpful to me all she can. They help you find a job but once she seen I had a job and that I was keeping my job she was like she’s doing pretty good and she’s holding on to this job. When she first tried it [early release] was like 3 months I had got the job and I been out and I worked there for 2 years.”

Camille felt having to check in with her probation officer helped her as a mother also. During her last incarceration, Camille decided she wanted to regain custody of her toddler son. Part of the requirements for her to do so was successful completion of her probation, which included intensive outpatient drug rehabilitation. According to Camille, these stipulations helped her get clean and, by extension, mother her son. As such, she did not find her probation officer’s presence intrusive.

“Yeah, because I brought this in my life. It’s not like they just *go* into a person’s life. My actions resulted in them being in [my life]. So I’m accepting of ‘ok, I’m human and I made a mistake’ and I have to deal with the mistakes I made. And these are some of the results of the mistakes I made. Ok, let me get this in so I can move on, you know.”

“First-timer” Alana finds her 1 year parole sentence strange because she feels like she is still an inmate. The stringent nature of having to check in daily with her parole officer made her feel like she was “state property.” According to Alana,

“It's strange because I'm still an inmate, you could say. I'm still, how do you say it, state property because I have to check in every week. I've never had this experience before. But now it's something new to me that I have to do in order to keep myself out of trouble. It's kind of strange but I guess I can get used to it. I won't be on it long because I'm going to make sure I do all I can, my best, and do things right so I can get off early anyway.”

Alana referred to her desire to get off of parole early. Jeanne, Camille, Paula, and Candice were also willing to meet any stipulations necessary to get off of parole or probation supervision early. In fact, Camille and Paula were successful in completing the stipulations of their drug treatment and mental health probation, which resulted in their early release. Camille jokingly recalled graduating from drug court with *honors* and reaping the rewards of the achievement.

“My case went to drug court when I completed my probation, Tosha, and I graduated from drug court with *HONORS!* [*chuckles*] And so now all I need to do is graduate from college!...Yes, yes! So, yeah that's just [me] being funny. But, yeah, so I completed drug court successfully. By me graduating with honors, they let me off 6 months early, waived all of my [court] fees, and he [the judge] paid my rent for like 3 months, for the last 3 months that I was at the recovery home.”

During her interview, Paula showed me an award and the cap she wore during her graduation ceremony from mental health probation. She was very happy not only to graduate 2

months early, but also that the programs she completed have been able to help others in similar situations.

“I graduated 2 months early from mental health probation. I was supposed to have graduated in February but my judge said I did everything I was supposed to have done and above and beyond that. So he left me off 2 months early.... But it is very rewarding because not only did I graduate but some of the programs I went through they are using those programs today to help other people.”

Candice was not as fortunate as Camille and Paula in that her request for early parole was denied. Candice’s parole officer applied for her to receive early release because she had met all of the conditions of her parole and was considered rehabilitated. However, Candice recalled getting caught up in a political backlash against parolees following a “failed” state-wide early release program that saw numbers of parolees, including violent offenders, released early and recidivating almost immediately.

“She put me in for early release like a year ago. It has been over a year. They did not give me no early release because I had passed every level by coming home and getting a job staying clean and doing everything I had to do. But when [the Governor] let them people go that’s what messed me up getting early release. She is still trying right now and I get off parole in October. She had put in for me to get off of parole after a year and a half that I was home.”

In addition to accepting personal responsibility for their life decisions, accessing varying levels of support, and utilizing resources to assist with their reintegration, a sense of hopefulness for the future was also essential to the reintegration process after incarceration. The women in this study confronted many challenges as formerly incarcerated Black women who are mothers.

They faced embodying an ill-fitting mother role premised upon upholding normative conceptualizations of motherhood, while desisting from previous involvement in illegal activities, negotiating complex relationships with family members and other loved ones, and navigating a reintegration process complicated by numerous levels of social disadvantage. Despite these challenges, of which the women were cognizant, they expressed a strong sense of hopefulness about their future as formerly incarcerated mothers and about the futures of loved ones.

During the interview, the women were asked to describe some of their hopes and dreams for the future. The women's articulations of their hopes for the future provided insight into the importance of a successful recovery and reintegration on their maternal role and desistance from further involvement in illegal activities. Generally, the women not only expressed hopes and dreams for themselves but also their loved ones. Their responses focused on three central themes: ambitions that would offer stability, personality and lifestyle changes, and lastly, expectations associated with their mother role.

Several of the women aspired for resources that would increase their sense of stability. These resources included adequate housing, employment, educational diplomas and degrees, and reliable transportation. Monique, a mother of five, had educational and career goals for herself, but also desired stability for herself and her sons. Her hopes and dreams for the future included,

“...To, well, to get my high school diploma. To get me a permanent job and a place where me and my boys can be there. A place for me and my boys and just be stable. ‘Cus my son has just, he done been everywhere...done been everywhere and he wound up right back with me. He's been everywhere.”

Lori also desired a stable career, although on a significantly larger-scale. She visualized achieving a notable career as a leader in the fashion industry. She envisioned a career like the characters she saw in movies.

“I got my hopes and my dreams. I always wanted to be a boss. Have you ever seen the movie, *The Devil Wears Prada*? I don’t want to be the younger girl I want to be the boss...the evil lady, the devil. I don’t want to be mean, I want to be her saying “no, that is not nice that is not pretty.” I want to be that. I don’t want to work for them, I want to be the boss.”

Employment stability was also expressed in Candice’s description of her hopes for the future. She had recently lost her job and was living with her sister at the time of her interview. Like Monique, Candice echoed comparable hopes for resources that would give her stability.

“To be honest I got quite a few but I just want to this, this is what I want...I want to get me a job because right now I am not working. I have been off work tomorrow it will be 2 weeks. I want to get me a job if I have to go back to school to get a better job I will. I want to get my own apartment and, you know what I am saying, make my life better by having me an apartment. Get me a car just get the things in life that I felt I had before and I deserve, you know what I am saying.”

As Candice continued, she emphasized the importance of these resources in reuniting her family.

“I am not saying that I want a white picket fence and all that I just want to live comfortable. Be able for my kids and grandkids to come over and spend the night and eat Sunday dinner together. Just a family thing, you know, because you can have a lot of things in life but love is priceless. I found that out. I know that

everybody want better but right now, right now I just want my own place just to live comfortably and get me another job just right now.”

For the women in this study, stability represented more than just material resources; their responses indicated a desire for lifestyle changes. The women’s responses illustrated this point focused on aspects of their character they hoped to change in the future. For example, Lori simply wanted “to be a better person and leave the past behind and let the future roll.” Lori recognized that she would encounter a number of challenges because of her felony conviction for child battery. Despite these challenges, she described ambitions for herself rooted in her perception of her personality.

“I want to set a good example for my son, for everybody you know. Let them know that this is a new me and not the one you all met. The evil, crazy, switch role one, ‘cause one minute I can be with a person I like and then, *MY GOD*, I get aggravated. Except I can’t be around a person for too long because I get irritated that’s why I like to go places by myself because you can’t irritate yourself.”

Most of the participants’ aspirations of lifestyle changes were connected to their relationships with loved ones. For instance, Lori described a desire to change her personality in order to set a good example for her son and others. Similarly, Paula’s hopes and dreams included working on herself to “get better.” These goals included attaining her GED (General Educational Development diploma).

“Oh wow hmm...I am going to go to school in April. I am waiting for the weather to get better because I cannot stand the cold to get my GED. I have been putting it off for years and I think now that I am in somewhat of a sound mind I think I need to exercise it and go to school, you know. I don’t have the kids this is the perfect

time to really just work on me and the process to make my life fuller and better.

And as I get better, they will get better.”

As she elaborated further, Paula spoke of joining a local support group for formerly incarcerated women and making use of their resources to increase her skill level and employability. Decades of drug addiction kept Paula away from her children and grandchildren, so she set goals that would improve her and, by extension, the relationships she held with her loved ones.

“So I am going to talk to them [because] they have a computer class. I said I am gonna learn about the computer, so I am gonna hang out with them. You know, in a peaceful place, you know, and just get better. That is my main goal to just get better for my grandkids to know me and I mean really know me. [I will] get to take them places [and] do things with them, you know. I am not going to let my son be the invisible man in their life. If I got to stand in his place because my mama stood in my place, my sisters stood in my place, [and] their dad stood in my place, you know. So it is time for me to stand in somebody’s place. So if I have to stand in my oldest son place with his children, oh well you know, that is what is up.”

According to Paula, working on herself included caring for her grandchildren in ways her oldest son did not. Paula’s goals of “standing in” for her son with her grandchildren illustrate the third theme of responses concerning the women’s hopes and dreams for the future in that they were associated with expectations of women in the maternal role. A number of the women in this study described hopes and dreams connected to their role as mothers. These responses included expectations for themselves as mothers and aspirations for their children.

Most of the women in the study considered maintaining a continual presence in their children's lives one of the most important aspects of the mother role. In line with this sentiment, both Camille and Geneva hoped to raise their youngest child to adulthood. Geneva had relinquished custody of her nine children, both voluntarily and involuntarily, while active in her drug addiction. When asked about her hopes and dreams for her future, Geneva pointed to her 2-year-old son playing nearby and responded with aspirations for a "good future" for him.

"Well, for a minute or two I had gotten my life together. I got him [2-year-old son] back from DCFS. I got me a job and my apartment. Somewhat I'm slacking right now but my hopes and dreams are to raise him and teach him to be a good person, a good man...I know he's going to have a good future. I just know it's destined for him."

Similarly, Camille hoped for a positive future in order to meet her personal goals of sobriety and to mother her son to adulthood. For Camille, the hopes and dreams for her future were...

"To continue to stay drug free, uh, to stay clean and do the right thing, you know to put it in a nutshell. I want to go back to school. I *PLAN* to go back to school to obtain at least my masters. I don't know, uh, to raise my child from infancy to adulthood. I want to do the full, the long haul, that's a real big goal of mine because I want to be there throughout."

Following an introspective pause, Camille also responded with her hopes for all of her children.

"[*pause*] I just hope that they'll be healthy and happy and a productive member of society."

In addition to describing their hopes and dreams for the future, the women in this study were asked how it felt to think about their aspirations for the future. Most of the women responded with positive feelings about attaining their goals. For instance, Monique felt good when she thought of her hopes for achieving a sense of stability for herself and her sons.

“It's a good feeling ‘cus it'd be somethin'...it would actually be something that I never had. Because when me and my kids was together before we stayed with my mom, you know what I'm saying, and then I was in my addiction then. So it'd be, it'd be somethin' different it'd be somethin' new, somethin' that I want to see.”

For Monique, stability meant having her own apartment, among other educational and career goals. However, she described having trouble envisioning what it would look like despite being implored by those around her to visualize a key aspect of her future goals, a new apartment. She had never had stability before, so that posed a difficult task for Monique.

“You know what? I don't know. I don't know ‘cus [I] ain't never picture it personally. People tell me “you need to picture this, picture it” and I haven't been doin'...But I felt I need to see it first you know what I'm sayin'. I just feel like I need to see it and then I'll be able to visualize it. I just can't just picture it, you know, I have to see it first.”

A few of the women responded positively about achieving their future goals, but added a caveat about their sense of personal responsibility for attaining their goals. When Lori spoke of her desire to work on herself, she described feeling “good” about her future. She connected her outlook for her future to a personal sense of responsibility for achievement.

“Because there is something that I know in my heart in the future; I know I want to be something. Everybody can say that there is a man or a dream for everybody but **you** only make it how you want it to you look.”

For Geneva, ensuring a positive future for her youngest child meant she had to “make the right decisions” in her own life. When asked whether she felt she could follow through with making the right decisions, she stated, “Yeah. I mean, I'm hopeful. Yeah, I'm hopeful. As long as I keep it real and keep God first, it'll be all right.”

Similarly, Sonja felt positive about her future goals of making a better life for herself and her family. She felt “good” that she could achieve her hopes and dreams for the future so long as she continued to desist from her involvement in illegal activities.

“I feel good because it could happen. But it's up to me. It's like the ball is in my hand. The minute that I don't do something right, I'm going to fall down. And I know I can do it. I've done it [before].”

Lastly, only a few of the women spoke of negative feelings when thinking about their hopes and dreams for the future. Alana felt “disappointed” that she had not yet achieved her educational and career goals for her life.

“Since I haven't accomplished my hopes and dreams now, I feel like a disappointment. I really *REALLY* go hard on myself real bad, because I feel like if I had put myself on this pedestal and don't succeed at it, I feel like I'm a let down. I feel like I could have done it this way or I could have finished school. I'm 39 years old and I don't have a high school diploma. I don't have anything. I'm like wow...”

However, as Alana elaborated further, she described a more optimistic outlook on her situation despite the setbacks she encountered.

“But then since I have been locked up and have heard a couple of people say, “you are never too old to go back to school for anything. You can accomplish anything you want. It might take a little more time because you are older now and got a [criminal] background, but that don't stop you.” That's what I want to do. I want to go back to school. I don't care how long it takes. I could be 45 years old. I want to get a bachelor's. I really wanted to be a nurse when I grew up, but now since I got this [criminal] background I know I'm not going to be able to do it. Maybe in due time probably I can get my stuff [criminal record] sealed but that takes like 7 years or whatever to do all that. But maybe I can change my field for right now and just do something different.”

While Alana strategized to move beyond her feelings of disappointment when thinking about her hopes and dreams for the future, Paula and Alisha felt apprehensive about their abilities to achieve their goals for the future. Paula felt “scared” when she thought of her future because she was still unsure of what lies ahead for her now that she is drug-free. Alisha, on the other hand, was apprehensive about the work she would have to complete in order to achieve the stable future she desired.

“In the back of my mind, I feel a little bit apprehensive but, um... I know anything worth having is worth working for. I know that everyday I have to press my way even the days that I feel like I don't want to. And I feel like they're obtainable. I feel like they are within my reach. I don't feel like they're way far away. I feel like they are within my grasp. And there's just different things that I have to go

through in order to get them. But I can get them. And I'm ok with that.”

In sum, the women’s narratives illustrate how the nature of reintegration can complicate their return to the community and resumption of relationships with loved ones. Although reintegration after incarceration is a difficult process for most former inmates, the reintegration experience for the women in this study is compounded by the addition of stigmas associated with being formerly incarcerated individuals while occupying a social position at the intersection of interlocking oppressions based on their race, class, and gender, simultaneously. Navigating the reintegration process is arduous and requires that the women demonstrate that they accept responsibility for their involvement in illegal activities and mistakes as mothers. Demonstrating responsibility taps into rhetoric related to respectability politics for Blacks in the U.S., which is differentially complicated for Black women. Regaining respect as mothers and Black women was central to the women’s reintegration. Their attempts to regaining their respect involved a delicate balance of claiming their shortcomings openly and honestly, appearing repentant for their mistakes, and vowing to move beyond issues that led to their incarceration and disrupted the mothering process.

The women were cognizant of how micro processes in their daily lives during reintegration involves successfully negotiate the risks associated with returning to disadvantaged communities with inadequate supports to resume the mothering process or buffer them from the influences that make them vulnerable to recidivism. Generally, women returning from a period of incarceration reintegrate under conditions in which they have less access to support that would facilitate an easier reintegration process in comparison to returning men. The narratives of the women in this study demonstrate the ways their race, class, and gender exacerbates the effects of limitations in reintegration support, when they are faced with severe limitation on their access to

both formal and informal support systems due to sustaining conditions of disadvantage in their families and communities.

Lastly, the women's experiences during reintegration are significantly influenced by formal oversight systems prevalent in Black bodies, which leave them exposed to structural forms of inequality. They are tasked with demonstrating oversight compliance with stipulations mandated by numerous oversight systems, such as child welfare, public assistance, housing authorities, and community corrections agencies. The women in this study are positioned at the convergence of social policies put in place by these agencies that complicate their reintegration process so strongly that it is continuously disrupted, sometimes at the expense of their relationships, maternal role, along with their freedom. Despite all of these seemingly insurmountable odds, the women in this study remained hopeful for future stability and success for themselves and their children. The women's narratives related to their reintegration illustrate a persistent sense of resilience and optimism despite their vulnerability in a highly unstable environment.

An analysis of these findings is presented in the next chapter.

E. **Ethnography results**

The interview findings provided insight into the women's role as mothers and their mothering process, which are the primary focus of this study. To gain a deeper understanding of the daily organization of motherhood and mothering, participant observation was conducted with two of the women for 6 months. Their daily routine as formerly incarcerated Black women who also are mothers were observed to demonstrate the navigation of the reintegration process as women who are at two different stages of the maternal role and mothering process. Upon regaining custody of her toddler son, Camille saw herself as a new mother for a second time.

Conversely, Candice was negotiating a new role in the lives of her adult children, while helping to mother her grandchildren and in turn maintain a mutually beneficial relationship with her eldest daughter. Both of these women's daily routines demonstrated the complexities that arise for women who are mothers, but especially those who mother within constrained circumstances.

1. **Sample Description**

Camille is a 42-year-old mother of six and recovering from a drug addiction. At the time of the stage one interviews, Camille was 40 years old and 60 days away from reuniting with her 2-year-old son, who had been removed from her custody at birth. Of her six children, Camille only had contact with her oldest son, age 24, and her youngest son. The middle four children had been adopted a few years after or immediately at birth. Camille disclosed that her oldest son had been sent to live with his father when he was between 9 and 10 years old. During this time period, Camille's drug addiction took consumed her life and she could no longer care for him. Later, she would lose custody of her next two children, when they were 2 and 4 months, respectively. The removal of Camille's children was the result of an intervention by an immediate family member who had discovered the extent of her drug addiction; particularly that she was addicted to crack cocaine. Camille's older sister reported her to the authorities at the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). While Camille's sister felt her intervention was necessary, the family would never see the children again. Camille's mother had tried to get custody of the children, but her calls to the DCFS caseworker were never returned.

During her stage one interview in early December 2010, Camille was living alone in a small apartment on the south side of the city. At that time, she mentioned she had never had her own apartment, as she always was cared for by "sugar daddies" that she could stay with when she needed somewhere to sleep. Camille had lived in that apartment just under a year and

appeared apprehensive about my visit to her home for the interview. This was noticeable when she watched me coming and going, which indicated she might have been concerned about the safety in the area. Later in the interview, Camille expressed that she was worried about raising her son in that neighborhood, but was trying to make the best of it. At that time, she was most concerned about having her toddler in her home for New Year's Eve. She was fearful of her neighbors shooting their guns in celebration of the holiday.

During the stage one interview, Camille was still sharing custody of her toddler with his foster caregiver, Robyn, who they refer to as his godmother. Camille would have weekly visits with him from Friday until Monday morning when DCFS transported him back to his godmother's care. At that time, she shared a "good relationship" with his godmother. She calls her "Miss" Robyn because she is a "little diva." Miss Robyn is younger than Camille and has no biological children of her own. She also cares for a 6-year-old foster daughter in addition to Camille's son. Miss Robyn had been a foster parent, which Camille refers to as "the profession," for 5 or more years. Since Miss Robyn had primary physical custody of her toddler, Camille tried to comply with any requests from Miss Robyn in order to maintain access to her son and keep their relationship amicable. She made sure she was on time to her visits, even without a car, as to not disturb Miss Robyn's schedule.

During Camille's interview, I was left with the impression that she would be an ideal candidate for inclusion in stage two because she is actively engaged in the mothering process and has a strong motherhood identity, in comparison to the other women in the sample. She had resumed the mothering process, after a nearly two-decade disruption, and was essentially a new mother once again. Camille was excited to start stage two of the study and had called me a few times following the interview to inquire about the selection of participants for that stage of the

project. As her interview was early in the process, I informed her it would be a few months before I had gotten to the stage two portion of the study. Stage one data still needed to be collected. When I called her in early January 2012 and informed her that I would like to continue the study with her, she was thrilled so we set up a time to meet that following week.

Candice is a 45-year-old mother of five and in recovery from a drug addiction that lasted nearly three decades. At the time of the stage one interviews in February 2011, Candice was living with her sister in the same high-crime, impoverished neighborhood in which she was raised. She had spent most of her time out in the streets when active in her addiction in this same area of the city. Candice maintained contact with three of her children, now adults, ages 29, 23, and 18. She had no contact with her two youngest children ages 15 and 13, whom were removed from her custody at birth due to the effects of her addiction.

Candice's experiences as a recovering drug addict are especially poignant for this study because they are representative of a common experience among mothers who have been incarcerated for drug offenses—the addiction significantly influences the relationships with her children. It is most significant in Candice's case because her children are adults now and can articulate to her the ways her drug addiction and subsequent multiple incarcerations have affected them. Observing Candice's experiences is also useful for the second stage of this study because, despite having no contact with her minor children, Candice is helping her oldest daughter care for her grandchildren. Candice spent nearly three decades in her addiction, so she had not filled the maternal role for a long while. Helping care for her grandchildren has reintroduced Candice to the mothering process, which had been severely disrupted by her drug addiction and multiple incarcerations.

Reconnecting with Candice during stage two revealed a number of changes in her life. Most noticeably, she was caring for her grandchildren on a daily basis and she had moved to her own one-room studio apartment in an income-subsidized building south of where she had lived during her stage one interview. Candice mentioned that mostly elderly individuals occupied the building, so the presence of her grandchildren on a daily basis causes conflict between Candice and her neighbors occasionally. Some of the neighbors are not always understanding of the noise the children make while at their grandmother's home. Candice's new home is located in a non-descript, multi-story walk-up building that provided housing for homeless and elderly individuals in need. The apartment is furnished with a bed, closet unit, kitchenette with refrigerator, television, and a folding table and chairs.

Candice was contacted in May of 2012 about whether she was interested in continuing in stage two of the study. She agreed, so we set up an initial interview for the following week. Beginning stage two was delayed with Candice due to an emergency in her family. On the day of the initial interview, Candice called to cancel because her mother had been hospitalized again and she was needed at the hospital. We rescheduled for a date toward the end of June, but Candice cancelled again because she had been called back to the hospital about her mother's deteriorating health. As the delays continued, I wondered whether she was just uninterested in continuing but also did not want press the issue, as not to add more stress to the situation with her family. To remain connected with her, I called Candice to express my concern for her and her family and let her know she is welcome to call if she would like to reschedule. Shortly after, Candice called to let me know her mother had passed away and that she would contact me after the funeral services were over, so we could set a time to meet sometime in early July.

2. **Reconnection for stage two**

a. **Camille**

On the day of Camille's first observation session, I traveled to a new location as she had relocated to a new apartment. Camille was steadily receiving subsidized housing funding, which enabled her to obtain the new apartment. She was excited to have me visit her in the new apartment, which was located in a 10 floor high-rise building close to the lakefront. She had been living there since the previous November and was pleased to have her own apartment where she had been able to cook her first Thanksgiving holiday dinner, a task she had never done before. Camille felt happier living in this new apartment, as opposed to the previous apartment where her stage one interview had been conducted. She felt this apartment was in a nicer area. However, she had some safety concerns related to living on the eighth floor with a young child, if there was a fire in the building. Camille was also concerned about the level of crime in the neighborhood. She recalled taking a number of steps to ascertain the safety of neighborhood, including speaking with neighbors in the area and visiting the neighborhood at night to get another perspective on the neighborhood. She was told it was less safe in the area four to five blocks south of her building, but the neighbors were vigilant about calling the police to maintain the relative safety of the area. Overall, she was happier and felt safer about raising her son in that neighborhood as opposed to the previous apartment.

b. **Candice**

Like Camille, Candice had moved to another apartment from the one in which we had met during her stage one interview. When I arrived at her new apartment, it was noticeable that she was still grieving the loss of her mother, which had happen within the last month. Given the delicate circumstances, I was careful about getting too intrusive with my

questions, initially. Therefore, we began the session by discussing the events that had taken place in her life since the stage one interview. One of the most noticeable changes that had occurred was the presence of Candice's 22-month old grandson, who seemed much older than he appeared. Candice mentioned he would have a birthday soon, but was already in his "terrible twos." She explained that she had had a difficult time securing adequate employment, so her oldest daughter was supplementing her income by allowing Candice to babysit her two grandchildren during the week. Candice's grandchildren were with her from 6:30am until 6:30pm, when her daughter returned from work.

Upon obtaining consent for participation in stage two, Candice's initial session began. The observation sessions with Candice were different from the sessions with Camille because Candice was less mobile than Camille. Because she worked from home caring for her grandchildren, she tended to stay in the house. Candice commented, "I don't go no where" other than babysitting the kids or visiting her "guy." I reassured that for the purposes of the research project her mobility limitations were not a problem, because her experience as a mother with adult children was still compelling. Further, this new role with her grandchildren added another interesting aspect to her experience as a formerly incarcerated Black woman who was a mother.

During that session, I was introduced to Candice's family members through photographs. She was excited to share the family photos of her children, mother, and other siblings. She was especially proud to share a photo from her son's high school graduation and prom, both of which had recently taken place. Sharing the photos of her son were significant for Candice, because she had previously expressed concern about his behavior in school and feared he would not graduate from high school. Although she remained concerned about his behavior, she still celebrated this milestone that her son had surpassed.

Candice also took a moment to share pictures of her mother from the program distributed during the funeral service. Candice has a large family; in fact, her mother left behind 81 immediate family members, when solely including her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. During her stage one interview, Candice described a strained relationship with her mother. However, during her final days alive, Candice reminisced about her mother telling her how she felt about the strides Candice was making in her recovery. She told Candice that attending the Narcotics Anonymous meetings were “helping you, [so] don’t stop going.” Candice disclose that she had finally heard her mother tell her “well done.” Candice was so touched because she had never heard those words from her mother. She always felt that her family was usually waiting for her to relapse and head back to prison, because she had done so many times in the past.

Candice’s experience with the recent death of her mother was another aspect of her experience discussed at length during that initial session. I was interested in the effect her mother’s death had on her efforts to maintain her sobriety. Candice had been in recovery from a long-term drug addiction, in which she spent decades active in her addiction. She disclosed that day that she had been drug-free for 6 years, 2 months, and 8 days. Candice appeared awed that she had been sober for such a long time period, given that she had previously characterized her sobriety as a “miracle” that she considered impossible for her to attain. She had spent nearly three decades addicted primarily crack cocaine, which had resulted in multiple periods of incarceration.

Candice refers to the disease of addiction as the “devil” that is “always messing with your mind.” She spoke of psychological and emotional impact that addiction has on individuals with drug addictions. Candice spoke of how their fear of failure is rooted in a history of relapse,

which at some point comes to be expected. She went on to describe how for some without drug addictions, the fear is called “doubt,” but “without the next step of getting high,” as is the experience for those with drug addictions.

Candice has attempted to lessen the effects of her history of drug addiction on her state of mind, relationships, and self-concept. She spent the previous 2 months trying to make amends with her mother after her mother’s illness worsened. After her visits with her mother at the hospital, Candice revealed that she had been crying every day. Candice shared memories of her mother; including the times her mother would sit on the porch in front of her home watching what was going on in the neighborhood. As she continued describing her memories of her mother, Candice stated she would have given anything for her mother to walk through the door. Although she cherishes the memories, they remind Candice of how much she misses her mother. Candice finds relief in feeling her mother comforting her and telling her it was time to stop crying because she was in a better place now.

Despite the grief she is enduring, Candice believes “getting high was not an option.” She shared her insight on her drug addiction and its affect on her emotional wellbeing. Candice believes that when a person has a drug addiction,

“...our spirit always cries out for failure. [Because]...you are afraid of failure, but also afraid of success because the addiction tells you that you can never accomplish anything so you may as well get high.”

Overall, the observation sessions with Candice were less frequent than those with Camille. However, a great deal of insight was gained related to her maternal role and mothering process, as a formerly incarcerated Black mother. She was initially reticent to allow someone to observe her daily life too frequently, but as the study progressed Candice became more

forthcoming about her experiences in a new maternal role with her adult children and her young grandchildren.

3. **Resuming the maternal role**

a. **Camille**

Camille resumed the maternal role and was transitioning into full-time physical custody of her son when the ethnographic portion of the study began. The transition into full-time physical custody of her son was complicated for Camille. She was worried about her abilities to fulfill the maternal role, especially caring for her son regularly. Camille and her son's foster mother, Miss Robyn, were transitioning his physical custody arrangements and had negotiated staggering the complete custody exchange in a way that would benefit them both and did not disrupt his routine significantly. Miss Robyn agreed to allow him to continue coming to her in-home daycare center. The travel distance to Miss Robyn's home was too far for Camille to travel back and forth, so Miss Robyn agreed to him to staying overnight a few times a week. This system seemed to work well for them both for a short time.

Shifts in her relationship with Miss Robyn also complicated Camille's transition back into full-time custodial mothering. Her son had lived in a group home setting until Miss Robyn was given custody of him at 6 months. Miss Robyn intended to adopt him however; unbeknownst to her, Camille was seeking to regain custody. When the baby was just over age 1, Miss Robyn had taken the baby to visit Camille while she was in jail and was informed that Camille was interested in mothering her son once more. Camille recalled that it was "hard" on Miss Robyn to come to terms with the impending change in custody of her foster son. The relationship became further strained when the time for the change in custody arrived. Camille was upset that Miss Robyn had not only relinquished custody of her son, but everything that

belonged or pertained to her son, including photos, toys, and clothes. Camille recalled “having feelings [of anger and sadness]” about the circumstances of the custody shift because it seemed that Miss Robyn was trying to banish her son from her life, which was not Camille’s intention at all.

The complications with Miss Robyn illuminated some of the external issues Camille faced in resuming the maternal role. Internally, Camille was concerned about whether she possessed the proper attributes to care for her son adequately. Her fears were evident during the initial observation sessions as she meticulously described her routine. Camille was concerned with demonstrating she was doing “the right things” to provide a proper home for herself and her son. Making a good impression was important to Camille. This was evident during my tour of her home. She lives in a nicely furnished two bedroom apartment and made sure I viewed all the rooms and looked outside her bedroom window to see her recently purchased car.

Learning to be a “good mom” to her son was a central focus of Camille’s life during this reintegration period. Goals and ideals of mothering that many take for granted are valued highly in Camille’s new role as a mother. Finding ways to nurture and connect with her son are essential to Camille’s new role and engagement in mothering practice. Examples of how these efforts were prevalent throughout Camille’s daily routine. For instance, during my tour of her son’s room, I noticed his bed sheets were decorated with professional wrestlers. I mentioned to Camille that I knew the names of the wrestlers. She was shocked by my knowledge of professional wrestling. She laughed about it; but also asked to be taught the names of each wrestler so she could share it with her son. She saw this as an opportunity to connect with him and teach him something new. Camille felt he would be excited to know she could identify the wrestlers and she could show an interest in something he enjoyed.

Another aspect of Camille's efforts to improve her mothering skills involves attending parenting classes. The parenting classes have given Camille insight into her parenting style, which she learned was authoritative. She often prays for patience with her son because he is really advanced and energetic. She described him as manipulative and independent so she is learning to "stay a step or two ahead of him." These traits worry her. She recalled a recent incident where she had to address these issues. A few days prior to our initial observation session, he told her that he was "a man." Camille was taken aback by the boldness with which he expressed himself. She corrected him and told him that he was a "young man." After the correction, she jokingly asked him how he had gone from a boy to a man so quickly.

As with most new endeavors, fears related to the novelty of reengaging the maternal role underscored Camille's recollections. She had been disconnected from mothering process for over 15 years, such that she questioned her abilities to mother her son adequately. For example, an incident had arisen in which Camille was faced with the challenge of having to teach her son to use the restroom. She described feelings of anxiety about the level of urgency of the situation because his eligibility for a daycare program near their home was contingent upon being potty trained. She had to relearn how to potty train a toddler. Camille attempted to negotiate with the school director by asking to have him placed in a lower level classroom with teachers who could assist with the process. The director refused because he is cognitively advanced for placement in classes for the younger children. As a compromise, the director volunteered to assist him and that she and Camille would work together on teaching him how to use the restroom properly. Camille remembered being frazzled and embarrassed about not being able to teach her son how to use the restroom properly. She sought advice from her support network, which included her mother and Narcotics Anonymous sponsor. They taught Camille strategies to teach her son how to use the

restroom himself. Once again, tasks conceptualized as appropriate and common for women actively mothering their children, is challenging for women like Camille who have been disengaged from the mothering process for a lengthy period.

During Camille's transition into full-time custodial mothering, she was also learning to adjust her routine to include her son. A major part of Camille's routine and recovery are attending support groups and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) meetings. She specifically had concerns about taking him with her to NA meetings at night because they are comprised of adult discussing topics she deemed inappropriate for her son to hear. Camille was apprehensive about the influence of language being used by the adults during the meetings. Once again, she sought out her sponsor for advice who told Camille not to worry about it and that he "would be fine." Camille disagreed. Although, I agreed with Camille that NA meetings are probably not a place a toddler would like to be, I also recognized the economic challenges arranging night-time childcare would pose. So, on the nights when she had to attend meetings, she would have to arrange childcare for him despite the financial strain it may cause.

Throughout the participant observation sessions, Camille's concerns about negative influences on her son's behavior continued. One of the most salient illustrations of Camille's attempts to buffer her son from negative influences that may impact his behavior took place one afternoon midway through the observations sessions in which I accompanied them to an appointment with Camille's doctor. As we were leaving the appointment, her son was excited to show he could push the revolving door by himself. He was thrilled when I commented afterward, "Wow, you're strong!" As we headed to the car, he continued smiling and started to walk with a strut and swagger. While I did not find his behavior was alarming, it triggered Camille's fears that her youngest son could become a "thug." She spoke of being careful with the music he

listens to because she felt “he can become a thug really easily.” That is to say, Camille feared that the rap music her son may hear on the radio or while out in the neighborhood might negatively impact his behavior. She links negative aspects of hip-hop and rap music, such as profanity and discussions of drugs and violence, to an increased likelihood that he may become attracted to “street life,” resulting in his becoming involved in illegal activities and later incarcerated. Despite her son’s young age, Camille is mindful of the long-term effects her past mistakes could have on him. One way she has attempted to counter potentially negative outside influences rap music may have on him is by allowing him to listen only to gospel music. She recently discovered gospel rap and considers its content appropriate for her son. Camille had even talked about this genre of music with her imprisoned adult son. She mentioned encouraging him to consider a career in gospel rap, because, as she told him, “what you are doing with your life isn’t working.” Her replied with a noncommittal response that he would think about it.

Resuming full-time motherhood was also worrisome for Camille because she knew her mothering skills were under constant surveillance by both formal and informal authorities. Camille was accountable to formal agents through the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), Housing Authority, and Department of Human Services that provided financial assistance to her and her son. She was also accountable to family members and the women in her support groups, who were vocal about how she should mother her son, including how he should be disciplined. While Camille called on these authorities and mentors for support during her recovery and resumption of mothering, she also felt the weight of their scrutiny.

One such instance arose when she noticed a scratch under her son’s eye when we picked up her son from preschool. When questioned, he shrunk back into the seat and hesitated to provide an answer about what happened to his face. I asked him as well, “so [his] mommy can

find out if someone is hurting [him].” Camille let him know she agreed with what I was said, so he finally agreed to tell what had happened to his face. While at school, a classmate had scratched him in his face when they had gotten into a little skirmish in class. While the scratch was minor, no more than a few centimeters long, Camille knew it could have major repercussions for her. Camille was afraid that authorities would misconstrue the origin of the cut. I was confused about why she was so worried about a tiny scratch. She responded simply, “I have an open DCFS case.” Further, she was worried about the response the women in her support group would have when they saw the scratch under his eye. Camille was worried that they would think she had physically abused her son. According to Camille, the director of her support group, a woman she considers a mentor, had previously admonished her about what she “bet’ not do to him” so she was worried about the assumptions that would be made about her mothering capabilities.

The morning following the incident with her son’s face, I met them at the office where the support group meeting was held. The meetings took place in a small storefront office run by a nonprofit social service agency in an economically disadvantaged neighborhood. The nonprofit organization that leads the support group provides a “holistic approach to rehabilitation and reentry” for women who have been involved with the criminal justice system. The organization rented office and meeting space from the social service agency for their meetings. I had been acquainted with the director and members of the support group previously so I was not completely out of place being there with my notebook in hand as the other women began arriving.

Camille and her son arrived shortly after we entered the building. I waited in the lobby for them and was greeted with a warm hug from both. Almost immediately, Camille’s son was

scooped up into the arms of nearly all of the women in the room. As Camille had expected, the women noticed scratch on his face. The director turned to Camille and asked, "What happened to his face?" Camille tried to explain that his classmate has scratched him, but was met with skepticism. Again the director admonished, "you bet' not be hurtin' that boy." Camille exclaimed that she had not hurt him. I observed this exchange from my seat next to her son. Then, the questions turned to him. The director asked, "Who scratched your face?" Again, he hesitated. "Tell her who scratched you," Camille told him. From his seat at the head of the table, he responded quietly with the classmate's name. His response to the questioning was fitting, given the image of his small frame dwarfed by the large conference table and adults questioning him while towering above. The director then asked, "Did your mommy scratch your face?" He said, "no." "Okay," the director responded. She then turned to Camille, "you betta be nice to him." Camille responded, "I am!" The exchange was playful, but had serious undertones. Camille later told me she had called his teacher to verify the story and make sure he did not come home with any more scratches on his face.

Camille's new resumed maternal role was fraught with worries about "doing the right things" and whether she was capable of doing it again. She was also worried about the consequences her previous drug use had on him. Camille characterized herself as a "hardcore drug addict." who admittedly had used drugs while pregnant with nearly all of her children. When her son misbehaved or acted in ways that she perceived were abnormal in comparison to the other children in his preschool, she became uneasy. Camille was also worried because his teacher had mentioned he did not talk much at school. Further, he recently had a breakdown when asked to help clean up the toys in the classroom. He also was refusing to take a nap during "naptime" at school. This was really bothersome to Camille because he would be exhausted

when she picked him up from school, fall asleep, and then not sleep at night when his bedtime arrived. This situation came up on one of the visits with Camille. She was really upset that he had not taken a nap at school and was falling asleep while we were driving. To deal with this, she would wake him continuously, ask him to cough, or have him drink water to keep from falling asleep. Camille linked his behavior to both her drug use while pregnant and his bond to Miss Robyn, who “spoiled him.” Camille used to pray while she was pregnant that God would protect him from her drug use. She recalled that she “pushed him out and went and got high.” Again, she just hoped he was protected from it.

Camille also believes her son is acting out in response to the lack of a male figure or father in his life. While traveling to one of her doctor’s appointments, Camille shared her feelings about this concern. She recalled how her son had heard his nephew, who is her oldest son’s child, call his father “daddy.” Camille was taken aback when her son began to repeat his nephew and call her oldest son, his big brother, “daddy” as well. She attempted to explain to him that her oldest son is his brother and her son just like him. She was unsure whether he understood. Further, Camille is unsure how she will address his inevitable questions about the identity of his father. Camille’s history of risky behavior while in her addiction included unprotected sex with multiple partners. Therefore, all she knows about her son’s father is that it could be one of three drug dealers. I asked her how she anticipated dealing with explaining to him about his paternity. She referred to the recovery model she had learned through Narcotics Anonymous in which she would turn to her support network, who had “similar or worse” experiences with drug addiction and mothering. Camille resolved to make use of her support network to address this issue in her maternal role.

Not all of Camille's experiences in resuming the maternal role were characterized by her worries about doing things correctly. In fact, there were many moments in which she demonstrated a high level of competency in mothering her son. For instance, during the 6 months I spent observing her, her son's fourth birthday occurred. Camille invited me to join her and her family at a local children's pizza chain for his celebration. She disclosed feeling nervous, while also excited, to have everyone together for his birthday. When she introduced me to her family, Camille explained that she was a participant in my study for my doctoral degree, because I never disclose my identity to those she interacts with in order to protect her confidentiality and anonymity. I had previously met her mother and step-father, but her son's birthday party was the first time I was introduced to her extended family and friends. There were approximately 30 children and adults gathered together to celebrate both Camille and her son. This party was as much a celebration for her son as it was for Camille becoming a new mom because a month prior, her DCFS case had been closed and she had legally regained full custody of her son.

A noticeable absence from the celebration was Miss Robyn, despite assuring Camille she would attend. There was still tension between Camille and her son's former caretaker, which only were worsened when Miss Robyn questioned Camille's decision to schedule the birthday party in the evening instead of during the day. Camille explained that many of the friends and family members she had invited worked during the day so she scheduled it in the evening when more people could attend. Miss Robyn said she would attend and asked if she could take Camille's son home with her that night so she could take him on a trip to a waterpark for his birthday. Miss Robyn said they would have to leave immediately after his birthday party. Camille agreed, but "had feelings" about this arrangement. She also expected that her son was going to have an emotional meltdown when Miss Robyn brings him back, especially because he

had not seen her in a while. Camille reached out to a friend to talk about her feelings about the situation because she felt “a little jealous” of Miss Robyn and the special bond she shares with Camille’s son. She felt Miss Robyn was trying to outdo her by taking him to the waterpark. According to Camille, Miss Robyn had a history of giving him extravagant birthday parties, including spending \$3,000 on one of his birthday parties, something Camille could not do for him. All in all, the birthday party turned out well. Camille was exhausted but started everyone had a great time. Miss Robyn picked him up the following morning for their trip to the waterpark.

Following the birthday party for her son, I spoke with Camille by phone about how she was feeling about the event. She told me that on the previous Wednesday, which was his actual birth date, she had taken cupcakes to his school so he could celebrate with his friends. She had stayed the whole school day. Coincidentally, it was also “Parent Week,” at the school, so she participated in the classroom and read a book to the children. Camille said her son was “impressed” she was at his school and helping his classmates with their work. Camille also was able to speak with one of the teachers that she has a positive relationship with in comparison to the others at the school. The teacher told Camille that “he [her son] is not like they [the other teachers] say, just watch him.” In other words, his behavior is not as bad as the other teachers had been reporting to her. He was just a kid adjusting to a new environment. The teacher’s words relieved Camille of her worries about his behavior in school somewhat.

Camille monitors her son’s behavior constantly for any actions that may indicate she is not capable of mothering him or may make her vulnerable to increased scrutiny. She spoke of being watched by family and friends concerning what happens with her son. Camille is cognitive of the scrutiny she receives from these individuals, as she had already experienced her sister

reporting her to DCFS following the admission of using crack cocaine. Camille does not resent the surveillance and oversight, but considers it a blessing because they help her continue “doing the right things.” Despite this positive outlook about the oversight, she admitted worrying about having her mothering practices judged. In a recent phone call, she disclosed being intimidated to tell me how she disciplined her son recently. She mentioned that he had a “potty mouth” and said “bad [curse] words” at school. The night before our phone call, Camille received a call from her son’s teacher who informed her that her son had used a curse word while at school. The call from his teacher upset Camille, so I asked how she dealt with the situation. Initially, she said she sat him down and talked to him about it. However, I was skeptical of this approach because her actions seemed out of character for her parenting style. The following day, we met and she admitted that she had been hesitant to reveal how she had “disciplined him.” I asked her to clarify how he was disciplined to which she replied, he received a spanking. I tried to reassure her that I did not judge her mothering practices. Camille’s response seemed appropriate given her mothering performance is under constant surveillance.

In sum, Camille experience with resuming the maternal role was characterized by a series of worries about whether she was capable of mothering her young son following a prolonged absence. She remained grateful for the moments of joy she also experienced and optimistic for the opportunity to “do the right things.” Camille had doubts about whether she “could do this again” so she utilized the support of both formal and informal social networks comprised of DCFS caseworkers, caregivers, family, friends, and mentors for advice and to assuage her fears.

b. **Candice**

While Camille utilized a vast support network to resume the mothering process, Candice’s process involved significantly smaller and an insular network of individuals

and agencies, in comparison. Currently, motherhood for Candice has taken a different form in that although she is mother to five children, she only has contact with the three adult children. Further, she has taken on a maternal role in the lives of her oldest daughter's children, her two grandchildren. The exploration of motherhood and mothering with Candice was shaped by the relationship and role she has taken in the lives of her children and grandchildren. The continual presence of her young grandchildren and adult children provide an interesting contrast to the organization of motherhood and mothering for Camille. In particular, Candice's resumption of a maternal role with her grandchildren is significantly influenced by a lack of resources, supports, and an increase of barriers in her reintegration process.

After a challenging start in setting up the observation sessions, Candice and I were able to set a date to meet in mid-August for our first session. Candice invited me to her grandson's birthday party as a way for me to meet her other family members all at once. The birthday party was held at a national pizza chain restaurant focused on children's entertainment. The day of the event, I arrived at her apartment building around 3:15pm and called to let her know I had arrived. Candice's apartment building requires all guests to be signed in and out of the building, therefore we decided it would be easier for Candice to meet me outside. Five minutes following my arrival, Candice arrived downstairs with grandson. Both Candice and her grandson were dressed nicely for his birthday party. He was dressed really nice in a pair of blue jeans and a nice collared dress shirt, which made him appear much older than two-years-old. In addition to the new clothes, I noticed right away that his hair had been cut. When I first met him, during Candice's initial observation session, his hair was long and had been kept in braids or a number of small ponytails. When questioned about his hair cut, Candice simply replied that his

hair had been cut, “so he won’t look like a girl.” References to appropriate gender socialization of the grandchildren came up numerous times during the 6 months I spent with Candice.

Most of Candice’s observation sessions were comprised of casual, informal interviews interspersed throughout our time together. The conversations took place in the car while she was completing her daily errands. This arrangement kept the observation sessions natural and unobtrusive of Candice’s daily routine. Candice’s financial situation was a frequent topic of discussion over the six months of observations. On a trip to pick up her granddaughter from school, Candice mentioned her unemployment eligibility was running out, so she needed to go to the Department of Employment Security to discuss a continuance of benefits with a caseworker. In the meantime, her oldest daughter is supplementing her income by allowing her to provide childcare for the children. This arrangement was mutually beneficial for both Candice and her daughter. It also provided Candice an opportunity to care for her grandchildren in a way she had not been able to with her children because of the effects of her drug addiction. I asked Candice if she felt assisting her daughter in this manner was a way to make up for lost time, given the disruption of her mothering process with her own children. As articulated by many of the women in this study, Candice also does not feel she is making up for lost time. However, she is grateful to be able to help her daughter because her daughter took care of Candice’s other children while Candice was active in her addiction.

An example of the long-term effects of Candice’s history of substance abuse and financial instability were revealed in present circumstances as she described the process of getting her car registered. She thought she was responsible for three outstanding tickets and intended to pay for them. However, upon her visit to the Department of Motor Vehicles, Candice learned she was financially liable for numerous others violations dating back to 1990. She did

not know that she was “on the boot list” [vehicle wheel immobilizer device] when she bought her current car. Remediating the issue with the tickets was necessary for Candice because her new job caring for her grandchildren required reliable transportation. Although the financial hardships she encountered were worrisome for Candice, she remained realistic about her financial situation. She is not concerned about paying her rent because “it is paid even if I have no income” by the company that owns the building. But she has other financial obligations that must be met, such as her phone bill, car note, and groceries.

Candice has developed new coping mechanisms for dealing with setbacks she encounters in her daily life. In describing the issues that have arisen, she noted that she would have had little patience to deal with these problems previously. I witnessed an instance during a trip to buy a gift for her grandson’s birthday. Candice’s car stalled while we were at the shopping center. She was eventually able to start the car, but appeared slightly embarrassed about the car problems while I was observing her and her grandchildren questioning her about the issue. Despite the setback, Candice remained patient about the situation. She mentioned that she prayed for a car for the following year but God brought her one this year. Candice was grateful to have a car and hopes it remains reliable to get her around; not necessarily take her around the world, just around.

On the drive back to her house, Candice openly shared some of her life experiences related to her multiple incarcerations and relationship with partners and her grandchildren. She had been incarcerated three times for 6 years total. Two of her prison sentences had been for two and a half years. Candice also spoke of her relationships with former partners. She was open about her previous experiences in abusive relationships with both male and female partners. While she did not discuss specific details about her relationships, Candice spoke of not knowing

how to be in a relationship that was not abusive. Candice's expectation of violence in her intimate relationship has led her to question the lack of abuse in her current relationship. She had questions about her partner's love for her because he was not abusive. Candice also questioned herself about these feelings and was working on developing a new understanding of intimate relationships. During the time Candice has been helping her daughter care for the children, she has noticed a change in her demeanor. In her role of grandmother and caretaker, her personality has shifted to a more nurturing and patient person. This was evident in her interactions with the children; especially when considering the care and pride she takes in grooming them. On a trip to a clothing store with Candice, I noticed the importance she places on ensuring her grandchildren look well cared for. After picking up her granddaughter from school, we drove to the clothing store to purchase a hat for her grandson. She wanted a specific brand of hat to go with his birthday outfit, but unfortunately, they had no hats his size. Candice noticed a children's clothing store on the way to the car. After trying on a few, she found two hats that fit well. Candice bought one of the hats as a birthday gift to give to him at his party later that evening. Buying her grandson a nice name brand hat was significant for Candice because she felt it demonstrated her love and care for him.

Candice also demonstrates her love for her grandchildren through the pride she takes in combing her granddaughter's hair. This action has become a central part in Candice's caretaking role with her granddaughter, as her daughter only has time to comb the child's hair on the weekend. Assuming this role with the children does not appear to be a hardship for Candice. She seems to enjoy being able to dress them how she sees fit. She mentioned that her daughter does not buy the children brand name attire, such as clothes made by Nike, Adidas, and other urban-style apparel. Candice stated that her daughter buys them clothes made by Osh-Kosh and Levi's

because she does not like the “hip-hop styles” that Candice prefers. This is a point of departure for Candice and her daughter in the care of the children, as Candice wants to “keep it real” in the urban-style of dress she prefers for the children, which is different from the mainstream style of dress her daughter favors. Although Candice acknowledged that caring for her grandchildren altered her maternal identity and mothering practices, she believed she still needed more patience in dealing with the children. She mentioned instances in which she “snapped” at her granddaughter for talking too much and her grandson for hitting her dog and throwing the seatbelt at his sister. While she acknowledged that he frequently misbehaves and “likes to fight, hit, and bite”, she also recognizes that she needs more patience in trying to stop him from behaving in this manner.

Upon returning to Candice’s apartment following our shopping trip, Candice’s daughter had arrived from work to pick up the children. I was introduced to her daughter, who initially seemed reticent about my presence. The children were bouncing around the studio apartment in excitement to see their mother and about the birthday party that evening. Inside Candice’s apartment, I sat at the table and observed her interactions with her daughter and grandchildren. Candice retreated slightly from caring for the children, as their mother took a prominent role in the caretaking. As her grandson played and ate an ice pop, she dressed for the party. Her daughter was dressing Candice’s granddaughter in a pair of overalls that she did not seem very fond to be wearing. A funny moment occurred when Candice’s granddaughter let everyone know she was not thrilled at all with her outfit. The disgusted look on the face of Candice’s granddaughter face, while humorous, also made her feelings clear that she was not happy about her outfit. She said she felt she looked like a farmer in the overalls her mother brought for her to wear. Candice laughed and encouraged her granddaughter by asking to borrow them because she

thought she looked nice in them. Her granddaughter laughed at the idea of her grandmother wearing her clothes and seemed to push the topic of her outfit aside.

Candice's daughter was rushing her mother to get to the restaurant because we were behind schedule and the birthday party was set to begin at 6:00 p.m. The party had to be over by 10:00 p.m., regardless of whether the party was complete. Despite the time constraints and everyone being ready to go, we had not left the apartment. In the time we were waiting to leave for the party, I witnessed the behavior Candice had mentioned previously concerning her grandson. In this incident, he walked over to Candice and for an unknown reason spit on her while she was packing her overnight bag. Candice was shocked and became upset. She spanked his bottom and sent him to the bed to sit until it was time to leave. He cried from being disciplined and instead of going to the bed went over to his mom for comfort. She asked what happened and when Candice explained what he had done, she agreed he deserved to be spanked. This exchange demonstrated the co-parenting aspect of Candice's relationship with her daughter.

During this visit, another aspect of Candice's relationship with her daughter concerned the relationship Candice had with me. For instance, after Candice's grandson stopped crying he asked for a drink of water from my bottle. I gave it to him and he drank most of the water in the bottle. Candice's daughter felt bad that her son had drank all of my water. She tried offering another bottle, but they were all frozen, as Candice keeps the bottles frozen as a cool option on hot summer days. I told her not to worry about it, but she was unconvinced that it was not an issue for me. Candice knew I did not mind that he drank the water, but her daughter did not because I was a stranger to her. This interaction left me uneasy about her daughter's reaction, because she seemed uncomfortable with me being around her mother.

Candice and I decided that I would follow her to the birthday party in my own car because she had plans after the event ended and would not be able to bring me back to her apartment to retrieve my car. Candice's daughter loaded her son into her SUV, but Candice's granddaughter wanted to go with Candice. Upon arrival to the restaurant, I noticed the parking lot was nearly full of cars, so I waved to Candice as I passed her in the lot to let her know I was there. She waited at the doors for me and we walked in together. Her daughter was just arriving so we walked to the back of the restaurant to the party table, while her daughter went to set up the table for the party. Again, Candice stepped back, while her daughter took the lead. As the other guests began to arrive, Candice introduced me to her nieces and nephews, great-nieces and great-nephews, as well as Candice's son-in-law and his mother. Camille, another research participant, was also a guest at the party, with her son and granddaughter. She and Candice have a pre-existing relationship, outside of this study, as evidenced by the carton of cigarettes she brought for Candice. In my time with both Candice and Camille, I learned that while their relationship is close, it becomes strained relatively easily as well.

As the party got underway, Candice sat across from me and described all the guests present. She was pleased that so many of her family members had gotten together to celebrate her grandson's second birthday. The pizza chain has a number of characters that dance around and sing for the children. Most of the children loved this aspect of the restaurant and were having a great time singing and dancing with the characters. However, Candice's granddaughter was extremely afraid of characters and did not enjoy it at all, while her grandson loved it. She cried when her father tried pushing her toward the characters on stage. Candice's daughter stepped in and comforted her daughter, while scolding her husband about making the child cry. Candice kept busy by helping serve the pizza and making sure everyone had food to eat. The restaurant

gives each group a limited number of drinking cups based on the party package purchased, so some of the party guests shared the cups and passed them on to be refilled when they were thirsty. This brought up a fun memory for Candice from when her children were younger. Candice's daughter shared a story of how when they were children they would keep refilling the cups until they were too soggy to reuse. Everyone around the table laughed at this memory from their childhood.

At one point in the evening, Candice wanted to go out and have a cigarette with Camille. However, Camille had to take granddaughter to bathroom, so she asked her to wait and promise not to go out without her. Candice seemed annoyed that Camille made her "promise" to wait for her, but was used to requests like these from Camille. Candice's plans to go out for a cigarette were thwarted when the countdown began for the main character to come out and greet the children celebrating birthdays that evening. Candice was right up front taking pictures when the character came out to celebrate with her grandson, although she was concerned whether her phone was able to take the pictures she wanted. As the party progressed, we sang "Happy Birthday", cut the cake, and the children continued playing while the adults sat around the table and talked. At this point, the relationship strain between Candice and Camille became apparent as Candice came over to me and sat between Camille and me. Throughout the rest of the evening, this relationship dynamic between them would emerge more frequently.

Candice decided it was time to go outside for a cigarette and invited me to come along. Candice's daughter came outside with us as well, but did not stay long. While we were outside, Candice saw there was a [store] nearby so we walked over to the store to find an item she needed. After looking through the store shelves for a while, she found the item she needed, paid, and headed back to restaurant. On the way back to the restaurant, Candice shared more of herself

with me. She described how she was afraid to have fun when she was in her addiction. Candice spoke of never letting herself have fun because the addiction told her “the only way to have fun was by getting high.” As she shared these insights, I realized how central her drug addiction had organized so many aspects of her life. Candice stated that she never looked another person in the eye when she was getting high because she was ashamed. But now that she has been sober, she can stand up straight and look people in the eye when talking to them.

As we walked back into the restaurant, Candice said she considers me a friend also. I was flattered by her confession, especially because she had been so guarded with me in the beginning of our time together. Another of her nieces had arrived to the party. She was pregnant and had a 10-year-old child as well. We sat at the table once more and Candice proceeded to further introduce me to the other guests around the table. Her daughter asked me how we knew each other. Candice told her about the "survey" interview I had conducted with her during stage one of the study and that this was the second part of the "survey." Candice's daughter got a surprised look on her face and was taken aback by what Candice had told her about me and the study. Her daughter was concerned about being "surveyed" without her knowledge. I explained that I understood her concerns and that she was not a part of the study directly. I only record info about Candice and her interactions with others, not on them directly. Further, I informed Candice's daughter that all of the data is dis-identified so that their confidentiality is maintained. She was reassured when I repeated that I was only interested in her mom and her interactions with others. When I revealed that the study was part of the degree requirements for the Ph.D., she replied, "So you'll be Dr. Tosha?" to which we all laughed. At this point, Camille interjected that she was a participant in the study as well. All of a sudden it seemed as if I was caught in a tug-of-war between Candice and Camille for my attention. Again, the strained dynamics of their relationship

manifested. Candice would later say that she felt Camille was attempting to cut in on her time in the study.

Candice has a strong relationship with her grandchildren, as I witnessed when we were leaving the party. After thanking Candice's family for having me at their party, it was time to leave for home. Candice also decided to leave at the same time. However, her grandson got upset because he did not want his "granny" to leave without him. His mother attempted to calm him, but he told her "no" when she scooped him up so Candice could leave. He started to cry that his grandma was leaving without him. Candice told me she felt badly for not being able to take him but she was not comfortable taking him with her to her boyfriend's house. Candice's daughter held her son while he cried and Candice was able to make her way out of the restaurant.

Candice walked me out and waited with me while I waited for Camille to come out as well, as she did not want me waiting outside alone. I appreciated her consideration. Again, Candice shared more about herself during this time that we were alone. She explained the importance of me meeting her family because she considers me a friend and her family knows she does not have many friends. She called Camille her "BF." She said she loved Camille even though they argue sometimes. As we were talking, we were interrupted by a man who told Candice he thought she was "fine" [good looking]. Candice giggled and appeared slightly embarrassed. We did not have time to continue this aspect of the conversation because Camille came outside and we all said our goodbyes for the night.

In sum, the events immediately preceding the birthday party held for Candice's grandson provided an opportunity to observe how Candice has resumed a maternal role with her grandchildren. Although she struggles, she has managed to develop a relationship with the

children and her daughter that also enhances her own personal characteristics, while contributing to the lives of her grandchildren and daughter.

4. **Camille: reintegration, recovery, and relationships**

During the stage one interview, Camille characterized the primary goal of her recovery and reintegration was to live a “drug-free, smoke-free healthy and happy life.” Camille was last incarcerated in 2008. Camille is one of the individuals whose case was eventually diverted to drug court instead of being processed solely as a criminal offense in the criminal division. Camille’s reintegration began when she was given 18 months of probation with the stipulation of completing intensive outpatient drug rehabilitation. When she successfully completed the program in 6 months, the judge was so impressed that she was released from community supervision 6 months early, had her court fees waived, and her rent paid for the last 3 months that she lived at the recovery home. Camille’s achievements in her rehabilitation was in line with what I observed related to how she worked to manage the challenges between her life goals, maternal role, and personal desires as she continued the reintegration process. All three are deeply affected by her history of involvement in illegal activities, especially drug usage, and the formal and informal systems of oversight during her reintegration.

As we became reacquainted during the first observations session, while sitting in her relatively new apartment, she spoke once more of her goal to return to school. Camille discussed at length in her stage one interview of her desire to complete a higher education degree and possibly a master’s degree. Learning is important to Camille, with attaining a degree being a central component of her reintegration process. As we sat in the living room of her two-bedroom apartment, we talked more about education, while watching the “Jeopardy!” game show. Camille explained that this activity is a major part of her daily routine. In Camille’s home, all activities

stop when “Jeopardy!” or “Wheel of Fortune” are on television. I joined her in watching the game show and was amused by her surprise at the number of questions I guessed correctly. Camille asked how I had known so many answers to which I replied that frankly I am not sure how I have so many random facts in my head. She was still surprised.

Camille’s response was remnant of our meeting a year prior to this session when Camille had expressed an interest in and was “impressed” by my educational background. This compelled her to share her own aspirations to complete her education and become an alcohol and drug counselor. Camille spoke openly about her fears of being denied financial aid to attend school because of her felony background. She stated that she had gotten discouraged when she first started filling out the financial aid forms and came across the question about felony convictions. The question asks, “Have you been convicted for the possession or sale of illegal drugs for an offense that occurred while you were receiving federal student aid (grants, loans, and/or work-study)?” This was troubling for Camille because her previous college term, during the 1990s, had been disrupted by her drug addiction. Obtaining financial assistance to cover the educational expenses she would incur was vital to Camille’s ability to continue her education. Some of her fears were assuaged when I explained that there are ways to have those the convictions overlooked so she should still apply.

Camille was encouraged by our conversation about financial aid; especially in finding out she may not be denied aid outright. She had encountered a number of structural barriers during her reintegration, in addition to the barriers to access financial aid for education. Camille relayed a similar story about being initially denied Section 8 housing assistance [via a subsidized housing program] because of her felony background. She was able to appeal the decision by demonstrating how the positive changes she has made since her last incarceration outweighed the

negativity of her felony background. She was granted a Section 8 housing voucher and given 90 days to find housing. Camille felt this was a very short time period to find adequate housing for her and her son because she anticipated challenges in attaining approval for an apartment given her background. She is very grateful, especially to God, for having been able to find housing for her and her son. Camille desired an apartment away from the area of the city in which she spent most of her time while active in her addiction. However, her family was located in that area so she wanted to make sure she was in close proximity to them in case she needed their help with anything. They were important components of her support network during reintegration.

While Camille and I were talking that evening, her Section 8 caseworker called to schedule an appointment for the next day to conduct a home inspect and ensure Camille's home meets their standards. This is one of the many benchmarks she has to meet as she attempts to live a "drug-free, smoke-free healthy and happy life." Camille's disposition noticeably changed during the conversation with her caseworker. She had been upbeat while talking with me, but became contrite during the conversation with the caseworker. Camille understood the ramifications if she did not please the caseworker. In addition to the possibility of losing custody of her son, Camille could lose her housing and access to funding to attend community college provided by the Section 8 housing program.

Camille's reintegration has been full of challenges, yet she has also fought to maintain her tenacity to overcome them. Finding permanent employment remained difficult. Camille aspires to find and keep a job for at least a year because; she has not had steady annual employment since she was employed through work-study while at the community college in the 1990s. In the meantime, she earns money occasionally by chauffeuring an elderly woman to complete her errands. She is the wife of one of Camille's relatives. Camille laughed as she

described that she was “literally driving Miss Daisy because that is the woman’s name!” Camille also earns an income by doing errands and performing odd jobs for others, such as styling her sister’s hair and driving her around on her errands. She recently completed participation in a 3-year study where she earned money for her time, in addition to what she earned for being a part of my study. Camille stated she does these odd jobs not only to supplement her income, but because she is not content to live off of public assistance benefits. She reiterated that she wants to work and be able to keep the job for at least one year.

Another important aspect of Camille’s reintegration is participation in her support groups and church. Both entities provide spiritual support for Camille during her reintegration and recovery. During the evening of our initial observation session, we attended a service at her church. Camille attends a mega-church primarily attended by Black congregants. Throughout the day, she had been debating with herself about whether she would attend the service that night. All of the services on Wednesday for that month were part of an overall fast the congregation was doing for the New Year, so she felt it was important to be there for the bible study. On the way, we picked up one of Camille’s friends, who attended the church as well. Her friend has a similar background with drug addiction. Camille’s interaction with her friend was somewhat subdued; even as her friend filled her in on an issue she and her boyfriend were having with her his brother. Camille did not seem fazed by her friend’s story of how the brother had been sleeping at their house because he is hiding from some men with whom he has become indebted.

Both of the two church parking lots were full when we arrived at the large red-bricked building. We did not want to park too far away in consideration of the frigid weather that night. We parked on the sidewalk across the street from the church. According to Camille, congregants do this all the time because it is the church’s property. We rushed across the street and into the

church. We were greeted at the door by two older Black women and passed through a large glass and marble-floored lobby before being ushered into the sanctuary. The church choir was singing because the service had started by the time we were seated. Camille laughed as she told me that she was usually 15 or so minutes late because she watches “Wheel of Fortune” and does not want to miss the show. The sanctuary was approximately three-quarters filled with congregants all standing and singing along with the choir. The choir was singing comforting, upbeat music and Camille appeared to enjoy it as she sang along. As the end of the music portion of the service neared, the choir moved to a few slower songs to allow the congregation to do a bit more worshiping. Camille was active in this portion of the service with her arms lifted in worship along with the music.

The reverend made his way onto the stage around 50 minutes past the hour and began his sermon on obedience and spiritual maturity. Camille was active and very engrossed in the service and the reverend’s sermon. Numerous times during the sermon, she raised her hands in agreement and responded “amen” to the pastor. She was responsive to the sermon in which the reverend spoke about the grace of God and remembering the difficulties one has overcome in one’s past. This portion of the sermon resonated with Camille. At times, she chuckled as she reminisced over the reverend’s words. Camille was considerate in sharing her bible with me, at times, so I could follow along. I mentioned to her how I remembered some of the scriptures from growing up in church during my childhood and youth. She appeared surprised to learn about this aspect of my history. After the sermon and passing of the offering baskets, we turned to leave the service. However, we paused against the back wall of the sanctuary out of respect and to pray along with the congregation because baptisms were being performed in a section above the altar.

In addition to the church services, attending Narcotics Anonymous (NA) meetings is another major component of Camille's support system during her reintegration process.

Attending two NA meetings with Camille was an opportunity to observe her interactions with other members of the recovery community. The first meeting was held in a room in the basement of a local hospital. Inside The room contained desk-attached chairs like those you would find in a college classroom. The chairs were set up arbitrarily around the room and appeared to have been moved to be more accommodating to those using the space. There was a large table positioned on a slightly raised stage at the front of the room. The meeting coordinator sat at the table waiting for the attendees to arrive. Although I am not a member of the group, Camille was granted permission so that I could attend. Luckily, this was the one "open" meeting the group holds at the end of the month so guests can attend.

Camille was going to be late for the meeting because she was out in the suburbs getting her car serviced. She sent a text message to inform me that she was running behind, but to go ahead into the meeting and she would meet me shortly. All of the NA members in attendance were African American adults of varying ages. Two older men and a woman, who turned out to be the meeting coordinator and Camille's sponsor, greeted me at the door. As I was coming down the long hallway that led to the meeting location, I must have appeared lost because the men looked at me as if they knew I was out of place. I greeted them and one of the men asked if I was "looking for the meeting." The other man noticed the cup of tea in my hand and asked, "what's in the cup?" I responded that it was "mango passion fruit tea and as boring as it sounded." He thought it "sounded good." That was when the woman chimed in that the "mango sounded good but [didn't] know about the passion fruit." I laughed and wondered whether they

thought I was carrying alcohol in my cup, initially. After this exchange, I walked in and sat toward the back of the room as not to draw attention to myself.

Camille still had not arrived by the time the meeting started. I had never attended a 12-step meeting and was curious about their organization. The meeting opened with a moment of silence and the serenity prayer. Next, passages from NA publications were read and responded to accordingly. At this point, the coordinator asked if there was anyone present who had never been to a meeting. There were two women who raised their hand. As they responded, individually, the room erupted with applause. The ladies were welcomed and told that as newcomers, they were the most important people in the room. There was an abundance of support and affection in the room, which made it clearer why Camille attended her meetings. An older man moved to the front of the room to discuss the NA publications available free of purchase. He then went through a series of colored key chains that corresponded with the number of months or years that one has been drug-free. He started with 30 days and continued on to 18 years, which was the longest sobriety time period for one of the members in attendance. As the members responded to the time periods called, they were applauded and told to come forth for hugs by the members.

Camille arrived during the activity in which the members stated their months or years of sobriety. She greeted me and motioned that she would sit at the front of the room. I stayed in the back, as not to disturb the meeting however, Camille asked me to join her up front. Upon joining her at the front of the room, I noticed she was very engaged with what was happening in the meeting. Camille would occasionally lean over to explain the activities taken place. Attending the NA is very important to Camille. She informs me that takes an active role during the meetings and usually reads some of the passages aloud during the meetings. She also serves the food—a plate of chicken, salad, and rice—during the break time of the meeting. One of the most

poignant moments in the meeting for Camille occurred was when the member with 18 years of sobriety spoke before the group. Camille was amazed as she turned to me and said, “I can’t wait to get that many years. [My son] will be 18!”

Narcotics Anonymous meetings consist of various rituals and procedures rooted in members baring witness to their experiences with drug addiction. One ritual within the meeting I attended involved one of the members giving *lead*. This involved a member coming forward as the speaker for the evening. One of the men who greeted me at the door earlier was the speaker this evening. While giving lead, dinner is served to the attendees. Camille helped serve the food for the evening, which included a plate of chicken, rice, salad, and a cup of orange soda. Upon returning to her seat, she became engrossed once more in the speaker’s story. Camille and the other group members were very encouraging of the speaker. His story seemed to resonate strongly for Camille, as she affirmed what he was saying throughout his talk by nodding her head and responding vocally at times. Camille’s response to the speaker was reminiscent of her response during the church service. At the conclusion of the lead, the coordinator asked if there was anyone else who wanted to share. Three members shared aspects of their stories in response to the speaker’s story. Again, the words seemed to resonate for Camille in that she vocally affirmed what each member had to say.

The meeting ended with a few encouraging and tough words from the coordinator to the newcomers. Once again, she welcomed and reminded them to “keep coming back.” The phrase “keep coming back” had been repeated at different times during the meetings, especially after someone shared their story. As the meeting closed, all the members gathered at the front of the room. Camille beckoned for me to join her at the front where everyone was gathered in a circle with arms around each other. The group recited both the Serenity Prayer and the Lord’s Prayer to

conclude the meeting. More hugs and encouragement to remain clean were shared, as the members reminded one another to “keep coming back.”

Camille’s attendance at her NA meetings keep her encouraged in her sobriety and is a central component to her reintegration process. While attending the NA meetings expose Camille to others involved in recovery from drug addiction, she also attends a support group exclusively for women, which provides her with mentorship as a woman and mother. This group meets twice a month in a storefront-style building belonging to a local nonprofit social services agency. The facility is located in an economically depressed neighborhood. I met Camille one Saturday morning at the location so I could observe her during this support group meeting, another key aspect of her reintegration. The director is one of Camille’s mentors and has a history of drug addiction, as well. She is also a mother and has been clean for many years. She uses insightful history of addiction and incarceration as sources of encouragement for the women in the group. Camille respects the director and looks to her for advice whenever she has questions about anything, including mothering her son.

The support group functions as a small 503c non-profit organization that supports women reentering society following a period of incarceration. The members are all women of different racial and socioeconomic backgrounds, although most of the members were primarily Black women from economically marginalized communities around the city. The organization does not have a permanent meeting space so the director rents office space from a social service agency, which allows the group to use their rooms for meetings. As the meeting began, it was evident the group was struggling financially as a discussion of the lack of paid dues from members was brought forth. The members are asked to pay dues of \$10, much of which is used to pay their \$200 a month rent to use the meeting space. The director was concerned about their lack of funds

to pay the rent, as she could not afford to pay it on her own. During the meeting, a small amount of money was raised from the members' dues. Other members were encouraged to contribute more if they were able.

Camille serves on the board of the organization and took notes during the meeting. Although the support group was founded to include all women released from a jail or prison in the area, it has a Christian religious focus. This was evident by the presence of a local female pastor who works with the group and the use of prayer and Bible readings. Although the prayer was intended to bless the lunch that was served, the pastor once again brought up the organization's finances. After the prayer, a few more members were cajoled into donating more money to the organization. Camille stated she had wanted to give more but did not have change for a \$100 bill. She had recently received her tax refund and had been using the money for expenses such as repairing her car. The pastor turned her attention to Camille and said, "Let me minister to you." She then began to tell Camille that a "new house," "new job," and "babysitting" were coming to her. She told Camille blessings were coming her way if she donated the full \$100 to the organization. Camille seemed caught between her economic limitations and her desire to give so that she would be blessed in return. She needed the money, but she also needed a home, job, and regular childcare. Ultimately, Camille donated the money. Although she later expressed to me her concern over the financial impact it would have immediately. In the end, Camille's donation was enough to help the group raise the rent for the following month and pay all of the member's dues.

As the meeting continued, the director and the pastor asked the group how they could get more women in the group. The pastor spoke about her experience of potential members hanging up on her. One of the women questioned why they could not come together like the men.

Another stated that she attended the meeting because of the personal connection with the director. The pastor stated that she believed people only came when they were giving things away. This discussion continued a little while longer. Then, the director focused the conversation towards me. She introduced me as a student from UIC and had me introduce myself. I was very uncomfortable with this, as my purpose for being in the meeting was to observe Camille. I looked at her and she nodded that it was ok. I did not disclose who I was there to observe in order to protect Camille's confidentiality and anonymity. A few of the women asked me questions about going to college and accessing financial aid to pay to attend college. After answering their questions, I returned to my seat. The meeting adjourned shortly after. As the women exited the space, they were given gift bags with toiletries, like lotion, razors, and body spray. The director also opened a room that contained donated clothing and shoes for the women to select what they would like to take with them. Camille gave me a gift bag to take home and asked if I wanted any of the clothes. I declined. We said goodbye and walked out of the meeting space.

Like her NA meetings and support group, Camille is adept at making use of the community resources that provide free or low-cost assistance for women who have been incarcerated or are in recovery. In the time I spent observing her, it became clear that part of Camille's progress in her recovery and reintegration had to do with her immersion in programs that ease some of the burden of her past involvement in illegal activities and assist in the resumption of the mother role. During the observation sessions, I drove Camille to various appointments with organizations that provided services for women in her situation. One such appointment was with an organization that provides dental services and professional clothing for individuals who have been homeless or in need. Camille was excited to have the dental

consultation, because she believed she would be able to get dentures to fix her teeth that had been damaged as a result of her drug addiction.

While in the lobby of the organization, Camille started a conversation with another client. Camille told the woman about her history with drug addiction and was surprised to learn the women did not have a criminal background. As we continued to wait, Camille was getting anxious and upset because we had been “waiting too long” for her appointment to go into the “Clothes Closet” to pick out some of the donated clothing for herself. The Clothes Closet Program assists clients by providing professional clothing for job interviews. She had a 12 p.m. appointment to go into the closet, but was not called to go in until 12:52 p.m. Camille was also concerned because she had another doctor appointment at 2 p.m. at another location. She walked over to the Plexiglas reception window to question the worker about the delay, as we had been there since 11 a.m. Camille returned to her seat upset because the worker was a “jerk” and really “rude” to her. Camille stated if she had to continue dealing with his rude responses, “my old behaviors about to come out.” She did not want to lose control of her temper at this location. Shortly after her visit to the reception window, Camille was given a yellow sheet of paper with the rules for entering the Clothes Closet Program including the 30-minute time limit. The time stipulation concerned Camille the most because she was worried about not having enough time to sort through the clothing and the appropriate outfits for herself.

After Camille completed her time in the Clothes Closet, an odd exchange occurred between Camille, the organization staff, and me. I asked to take some pictures of some of the signs displayed around the lobby, including housing and job announcements. The worker at the reception window seemed confused by my request and called the supervisor. The supervisor appeared at the window and rudely asked what was going on. Camille decided to explain the

study to her, as I do not disclose my identity as a researcher to anyone other than Camille. The supervisor replied “no” to the request. The supervisor seemed upset to have a researcher in the organization without disclosing my identity as a researcher, although I stated I was not taking any data on how they conduct their business. I attempted to ensure the supervisor that I solely wanted to record data on Camille’s reintegration process, of which their services are a part. The explanation did not assuage the supervisor’s anger, so Camille gathered her clothes and we left. In the car, I asked Camille how she felt about telling people about her involvement in my study because we both were taken aback by the supervisor’s response. Camille has never expressed a problem with telling others about my role; despite the number of times I stated the importance of maintaining her confidentiality and anonymity. In fact, she is usually excited to reveal to others that someone is “studying her.”

While observing Camille’s reintegration process, I noticed she repeatedly referred to her “old behaviors” coming out when she was in situations where she had an uncomfortable reaction to an event or interaction. A vivid example of these instances occurred on a day when I drove Camille to a doctor appointment and then over to her great-nephew’s birthday party. I was running behind getting to her house because of a traffic accident and Camille was short on patience because she was worried about missing the appointment. She and her son joined me in my car and we left for the appointments. In addition to being stressed about missing her appointment, Camille was upset because her son was sleepy as a result of an on-going problem with him refusing to take a nap while at school. On the drive, she repeatedly woke him up because she did not want him to be unable to sleep that night when it was his bedtime. She also did not want to have to wake him for the birthday party later because he would be grouchy. Camille was preoccupied by these concerns during the drive to the appointment. She called the clinic to let

them know she was running late and was told her not to worry and come anyway. When we arrived, I stayed in the car with her son while she went in for the appointment to give her a break from some of the stress she was feeling. Thirty minutes later, Camille came out of the appointment “THRILLED” to have lost 6 pounds since her last visit.

Next, we headed to meet her sister at her house, which was nearby the clinic. Throughout our time together, it was important to Camille that I meet her family. Camille was excited for me to meet her sister. By the time we arrived, it was night. Camille’s sister met us outside her home, a large white home with plenty of yard space and other greenery. Camille is the youngest of her mother’s children but based on their interactions with one another, her sister seems to be the younger of the two. Camille later told me she feels her sister “lives above her means” because of the big house and sport utility vehicle she drives. Camille said that growing up she was the strong one and took care of and cleaned up her sister when her sister started using cocaine. Her sister stopped using once she got pregnant. Camille remembered that through all this time period her mother did not visit her. According to Camille, back then her mother felt Camille was independent and did not need to her mother to take care of her. Unfortunately, Camille’s drug addiction had consumed her life by that time. I asked if she noticed the change in herself as she started using and became addicted. Camille replied, "I went from sugar to shit with my eyes wide open!" She said she knew it was happening, but could do little to stop the addiction for taking over her life.

We left her sister’s house to drive to her great nephew's birthday party. He is the grandson of the sister I had just met. As we approached the area, I noticed various characteristics of the street that indicated that was a rough neighborhood. The houses looked worn down with peeling paint and disheveled yards. There was a group of men outside working on a disabled car

and another group of men talking at the corner of the block. Camille looked anxious about me seeing all of this and told me that we would only “stay an hour at the most.” I attempted to explain that I was fine and not uncomfortable in the least. When we entered the small house, I immediately noticed that there were **MANY** people inside but little to indicate that it was a child’s birthday party. There was a group of young adults in the back garage smoking marijuana and cigarettes. There were kids, teens, and young adults all over the living room, dining room, bedrooms, and kitchen. Camille and I appeared to be the oldest people at the party. In fact, Camille’s family members were surprised Camille had shown up to the party. She replied that she wanted to give her great-nephew some money for his birthday.

Camille’s nephew is the father of the child whose birthday they were celebrating. In addition to celebrating the child’s birthday, Camille needed to talk to her nephew about a money issue with her son. Her son had received a federal tax refund, but was incarcerated and unable to cash the check himself. Camille’s son asked her to cash it and put the money on his commissary account at the prison. Camille was unsure how that would work. I suggested she take the check to the prison and have her son endorse it over to her. Another woman at the party confirmed that she’s done something similar in the past and it worked out fine. Camille remained unsure of how she would be able to get the money her son needed to him in a timely manner.

Before we left the birthday party, Camille and her son took pictures with her nephew, niece, and great-nephew. As our time at the party progressed, Camille started to get anxious and stated that she needed to leave because of the drinking, smoking, and marijuana smoking in garage. Camille was very worried that testing dirty [with drugs in her system from the secondhand smoke] would affect her eligibility for the other study she was participating in, which required regularly urine tests for drugs. Although we only spent approximately 20 minutes

in the party, she was still concerned. As we were leaving, Camille's sister arrived at the party. Camille warned her sister that there was marijuana smoking going on at the house. Her sister replied that she needed to get her young daughter—Camille's niece—out of there.

After the visit to her great-nephew's birthday party, Camille and I did not see one another primarily as a result of scheduling conflicts. We consistently missed each other's phone calls but finally connected with one another for a phone conversation approximately 4 weeks after that event. I was concerned about Camille's state of mind because she seemed unsettled by the drug activities going on at her nephew's house. When we talked on the phone, I could tell she was down by the tone of her voice. I asked what was wrong and she disclosed that her NA sponsor had dropped her. The sponsor dropped a few of her the members she sponsored because she was overwhelmed with things going on in her own life. Camille had realized something was wrong when her sponsor kept canceling meetings with her. Camille took the news hard. She said that she would now have to attend more NA meetings to look for another sponsor. She told me, "you have to watch closely to be careful when choosing your sponsor." Camille had told a friend about being dropped by her sponsor. The friend reminded her that she has the tools to make it. I reminded her of the same things and tried to provide more encouragement. During our phone conversation, Camille said she was also down because her job prospect "keeps being put off." If no job opportunities come about in next month she realized she would have to "pound the pavement to find work or enroll in school." I reminded her to stay encouraged. She replied, "I know. I'm holding on to that."

Camille remained vigilant in working at her reintegration process and staying drug-free. She reminded me often, "it just takes one," to get her hooked on drugs once again. On another trip out to a doctor appointment we talked about some of the "risky situations" she had found

herself in recently. First, she had a recent health scare when she broke out in hives on her hands and feet. The doctor was concerned that it might have been syphilis. Camille was afraid her “past had caught up” with her. Camille meant that she was worried that this health issue was the result of her history of unprotected sex while she was active in her drug addiction. The doctor told her she would call only if something was wrong. Camille had not heard anything from her, so she took it as good news. Another risky situation arose when she had gone over to her brother’s house to pick up money he owed her for the work she was doing for him. Camille describes her brother as a “functioning addict,” meaning that he regularly uses drugs and is addicted. He is still able to maintain his home and job as a certified public accountant, like those without drug addictions. She showed up at his house and he was using drugs in front of her. This is unusual because typically he hides his drug usage out of respect for Camille’s sobriety. I asked her how she felt after she turned away from the drugs with he was using. She was proud of herself for doing it because there was a time when she would have joined him. I asked why she thought her brother did not cover up the drugs and paraphernalia as he had in the past. Camille believes that he thinks she is beyond all the drug usage and temptation because she has been clean for so long.

Camille’s experience at her brother’s house was a significant point in her recovery process. After leaving his home, Camille called a friend to talk to her about what had transpired while she was there. The friend reprimanded her stating that Camille was greedy for the money because she knew better than to go to her brother’s house when he is getting high. Although Camille agreed with her friend, she also was proud of herself for looking away and focusing on her purpose for being at her brother’s house and not on the drugs. Camille also called her ex-sponsor about what had happened at her brother’s house. Her ex-sponsor called her out for not taking her recovery seriously. Camille had described her former sponsor as upfront and

straightforward, which are characteristics she appreciated most about her. She did not disclose to her ex-sponsor that she had gone to her brother's house for the money. Camille makes extra money by supplying her brother with clients for his tax processing business. Camille said her ex-sponsor told her she was "on some bullshit," being manipulative, and she would be better to Camille as a friend. Camille admitted to me that was hurt and cried when her ex-sponsor dropped her.

During another visit with Camille, we drove by an old motel where she used to "get high and stuff" [sexually activities]. We were in the town where she had spent most of her time getting high while actively in her addiction. On this visit, we also stopped by Camille's mother's apartment for short visit. While her mother excitedly showed me the "nomorerack" website and the bargains she was finding on the site, a young lady, who was no more than 16, stopped by with her baby. Camille talked to her about being a young, first time mother. She told the young lady she will pray for her and reminded her to pray for patience to deal with new baby, just as Camille did with her son. Camille also told the young lady about her experience of becoming a mother at 16 years old. She tried encouraging that young lady by telling her how her mom made her finish school while taking care of the baby.

The visit with her mother was abruptly ended when Camille got into an argument with her mother's husband. They have a history of a strained relationship. Her mother's husband was offended that she had pulled at his shirt to get him to move so she could hug her mom as we were leaving. He scolded her in response and yelled, "you think I'm a kid or somethin'?" He turned to Camille's mother and pulled at her nightgown to show what happened. Camille was taken aback by his reaction and seemed embarrassed as well. Camille contritely responded, "excuse me, sir" to get him to move so she could hug her mother. She was NOT happy. The

room had become silent because of the tension caused by the disagreement. We both hugged her mother and left the apartment to return to the city. Camille said she was glad we were able to meet up today. I noticed she was still shaken and possibly angry by the scolding from her mother's husband. She attempted to play it off in front of me, but her frustration boiled over when she scolded her son pretty harshly for leaving his game and hat in my backseat when we arrived at her house. She was upset that he was not taking care of his things. He started to cry, but tried to hold it in, unsuccessfully.

Camille's frustration has also gotten the best of her with a local agency that was lagging on finding her a job placement. She decided to enroll in a local community college instead and scheduled an appointment with an advisor. During another phone conversation, Camille called to tell me she had met with an advisor and enrolled in a local community college. She would start during the upcoming summer semester. Camille had set up a meeting with an advisor to prepare to take a math placement exam and was nervous about taking the exam. She also was conflicted about taking it because she wanted to attend a presentation I was giving at a local conference. I reassured her making her appointment with the advisor was more important. Camille replied that she was going to reschedule with the advisor but told herself, "Tosha will kick my butt if I didn't make this meeting [appointment with the advisor]." We laughed as I jokingly told her it was true. I let her know I was proud of her good news and was genuinely happy for her.

Returning to college was a significant goal for Camille. It was a key turning point in her reintegration process. When I saw Camille next, she had begun attending tutorials for the math placement exam the day before. She was excited to tell me she was picking up "integers" fast in her class and that the teacher thought so as well. She was still intimidated to go back to school because she had not been since she dropped out in 1995. Camille knows she can learn quickly, so

she uses that to encourage herself. According to Camille, returning to school was also a lifestyle change for her because she felt the “idle time” she had when she was not in school brought on her weight gain. So now, “it’s time.”

The next few observations and interactions with Camille were centered on her transition into college. These included numerous phone calls about navigating the process of going into college, course requirements, and financial aid information. During one phone conversation, she had called to ask about how she could receive her transcript. I went online to the college’s website and found out. She also asked me to explain some of the unfamiliar academic jargon, including credit hours, general education requirements, and the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) application. Camille was contemplating enrolling as a social work major because she was interested in going into a career where she could help others recovering from drug addiction. Camille was really excited about enrolling, but nervous also. She was worried that her past drug usage had “killed too many brain cells.” Camille wondered whether her past was going to affect her future aspirations. As she reviewed her transcripts she saw that she had previously completed 40 credit hours, she said she could easily identify when her drug use started by the decline in her grades. Camille recalled that her boyfriend at the time, who she described as a “drug dealer-slash-addict” had an engineering degree and was very controlling. She felt he did not want her to “rise up and earn her degree,” but instead wanted her totally dependent on him. This was the first time she went elaborated about the context of her relationship with this man who was central to her drug addiction.

Camille asked to meet me at my university office to help her with her FAFSA application. She was intimidated by the application and wanted me to do it for her, but I explained that I would teach her how to do it herself. Upon arriving on campus, Camille stated

she had never been on the campus before although she spent all of her life in that area of the city. She was “impressed” but apprehensive about being at the *university*. Camille brought her paperwork and I entered the data for her. She was glad for my help and overall happy to be working on getting back in school. During her time in my office a student arrived to ask for help on a paper. Camille was sitting at my desk using my laptop to check her email. When the student left, Camille stated that she was impressed with my approach in working with my students. “It looks good on you,” she said. After receiving copies of her paperwork, Camille left for her meeting at the community college. Later that evening, she sent a text message saying that the meeting had gone well. She had wanted to talk about the meeting. I called her late that night but Camille was still awake and told me about her meeting. The meeting went well and she was given credit for 44 credit hours.

As we were nearing the end of the participant observation sessions, Camille’s goal of returning to college was coming to fruition. Approximately one week after her meeting with the counselor, Camille and I went to the community college to register for classes for the summer semester. Camille expressed that it was important that I accompany her because she was worried she would not know what to ask if she was confused about the process. She was concerned that she had been removed from the process for too long. Camille’s history presented some barriers to reenrolling in the college. One of the first obstacles Camille encountered was a financial hold because she had been on academic probation when she dropped out of school back in 1995. She also ran into an issue due to policy changes enacted by U.S. Congress concerning the amount of time a student can receive financial aid for college. Camille had a “maximum time hold” which meant she was running out of semesters for which she was eligible to receive financial aid. Although the policy had just been enacted that previous summer, the policy was applied

retroactively. Based on this new policy, a student is allowed only 12 semesters for completion of their degree while on financial aid. Camille had already used most of them during her previous college enrollment. I explained all of this to her as best as possible. Camille previously has expressed concerns about how her past mistakes would impact her educational goals, so this setback was especially disheartening for her. Initially, she was discouraged about the news, but Camille was determined not to let this setback deter her plans to get her degree. She asked for the information she needed to submit an appeal to have the holds removed so she could receive financial aid for her classes.

Camille was very excited about getting registered for college courses. We were out in the common-use computer area when an academic advisor came up and asked if she needed help. Camille was grateful to have the advisor there to assist her with the registration process. The advisor informed Camille of a few steps in order to create an academic plan, so she was not wasting the few semesters she had left for financial aid eligibility. The advisor told her she needed to do a degree audit to find out which degree she is closest to completion, so she can move on to transferring to a university. The advisor could not do the degree audit right then because it takes up to an hour. Camille was a little disappointed, but she was still able to enroll in some classes for summer. Camille had a good rapport with the advisor and asked the advisor if she could have her as *her* academic advisor. The advisor stated that the college assigns academic advisors to students, so she had not control over which student she was assigned.

At this point, Camille had received information to have the financial aid hold removed, enrolled in her classes, and learned about creating an academic plan. The last step was for Camille to go to the business office to pay for her classes with the voucher given to her by her Section 8 caseworker. Camille was under the impression that all of her fees were covered, but the

business office informed her that \$35 was still needed to pay for her courses. Despite this additional setback, Camille was not discouraged. The workers in the college's business office told her that the Section 8 program would get an invoice and cover the fees. Camille said she would also call the caseworker to inform her, so the invoice did not surprise her. Camille was now enrolled in college.

To celebrate becoming a college student once more, I treated Camille to lunch. This provided an opportunity to debrief, talk about how she was feeling, and get clarification on a few unanswered questions about her reintegration process. One particular area I was interested in was Camille's faith and its connection to "doing the right things" in her reintegration process. I asked if she felt her religion was a coping mechanism for dealing with the stressors she encounters during her reintegration. Camille conceptualized the role of her religious beliefs differently. She views her religion "not as a coping mechanism, but a means of *survival*." Camille responded that she needed to totally surrender her life to God in order to survive. Camille characterized herself as having a rebellious nature when it came to obedience to God. She attributes some of the rebellion to being youngest child in her family and being taunted by an older sister. She stated that her rebellious nature is what keeps her from totally surrendering to God, stopping smoking, and losing weight. If she were not rebellious she would be doing what she considers "the right things."

Two days following Camille's enrollment in college courses, she received a job offer. She was happy to receive the offer because she had been waiting a long time for a job. Finding stable employment was another of Camille's life goals. She wanted to maintain a job consistently for at least a year. She had never done that previously. The job was a full-time position overseeing a women's unit and intake at a local residential treatment center. She would work

forty hours a week and any overtime as needed, earning minimum wage. The job also provided health benefits for her and her son. While she was thrilled and relieved for the employment opportunity, Camille was conflicted about taking the job because she had just enrolled in school. She was also concerned that the work hours were not suitable for her while mothering a young child. Camille sought the opinions of trusted friends and family members. Her mother told her to call “her little sister” [me] for advice on the next step. One of her mentors said she should take it because she had gone to school, worked, and raised two kids at the same time so Camille could do it too. Camille did not believe the mentor’s idea of what was best for her. A minister friend told Camille that she should take the job because she had prayed for employment by that month. Camille reminded her that she asked for a job at the **beginning** of the month not the end, however. When Camille asked for my opinion, I responded honestly that I thought she should consider what will be best for her and her situation and not what others who are removed from her life circumstances have done. I added that if she does not feel it is good for her and her son; it may not be a good idea. Camille felt that by going to school and working fulltime, she would not be available for her son. She worried about the effect it would have on him. I told her she seemed to know what she wanted to do, but needed reassurance that it was the right decision. Camille stated that, financially, she and her son would be fine. At that point, it sounded like she was not going to take the job after all.

One month prior to the end of our 6 months together, Camille and I discussed the changes that had occurred in her life during that time. Although she had begun the reintegration process years prior to the observation session, the process had accelerated recently. She had experienced a number of events that changed her life in the past few months. Camille’s child welfare case was closed and she had officially regained custody of her son. She had re-enrolled in college

after decades away because of her drug addiction. She was reaching out to her support network even more frequently to assist with both of these changes. She had a friend with a master's degree who was giving her advice on setting an academic plan to transfer to a university and complete a bachelor's degree. She is also interested in getting a master's degree, eventually. Camille turned down the job she had been offered the month prior and decided to prioritize school. She still desires to hold a job for at least 1 year. Camille also was considering having weight-loss surgery. She qualified through her current medical coverage so she was seriously considering it. She called it compulsive and attributed it to her desire for "instant gratification."

Camille herself as to whether her desire to drastically and immediately change her body was linked to her new relationship. Camille had started seeing a guy she had known for years through her addiction and recovery. He had also been in recovery. She giggled through most of our conversation as she described her new "boyfriend." Camille referred to herself as having "tunnel vision" with this new relationship because he was all she thought about. I reassured her it was normal at the beginning of a relationship. He had been pursuing her for 4 years, but she resisted because she needed to focus on her recovery and reintegration. He was persistent and was now ready to settle down with her and her son. Camille said he works as a truck driver and is supportive of her going to school. He would like to "have [my] hand in marriage." He had met Camille's family. Her mother already called him her son-in-law. Camille felt she was "seeing the big picture," but didn't "know what to make of it." But she is sure she "can see a future with him." Again she giggled as she told me, "I have a boyfriend!"

Camille's son is "really diggin' this guy." According to Camille, her son sees him as a role model and her boyfriend loves her son. She feels he finally has a male role model to look up to, which was a major concern for her as a single mother of a male child. She says she is being

careful though because her son is already calling him “daddy.” This worried me as well. I asked her if she thought her son enjoys having a male role model or if he might just like the new attention. Camille sees it as a combination of both. Her son is getting curious about who and where his father is, so she told him that *she* is the mom and dad.

Camille began classes that June, our last month together. We had another phone conversation in which she told me about her transition into this next stage as a “new college student.” She realized that consistent access to the internet was needed and that writing was “not like writing 20 years ago!” She described how “discovering” the Blackboard classroom management tool that she uses for her classes was amazing. She had to change her schedule because one of her classes was cancelled for low enrollment but she added a speech class in its place and enjoys it. Camille felt the only significant downside to going to college during the summer semester is the city summer events that alter the public transportation schedule. This makes it difficult for her to travel between work and home. The day we spoke, she was preparing speech topics for her class and had been networking with classmates. Camille still had some fears about choosing a major, so she reached out to her support network for advice. The friend she spoke with advised against social work in favor of “an -ology” [a major in a discipline ending in the suffix -ology] although Camille was keen on the social work major.

Camille enrolled in a college success course, designed to acclimate students to college early in their college career. In the course, she was given an assignment in which she had to design a life map that depicted “how did I get here.” While working on the assignment, she got to 1993 in her timeline and paused because that was the year she started using drugs. Camille was concerned about being too forthcoming about her past and recovery. Her boyfriend advised against sharing about her past. She was upset about it and tried calling me, but I was unavailable

that night. Camille called other friends and they agreed with her boyfriend. She admitted that she felt "they were so right." Camille decided not to share that part of her history with her classmates. However, she chose to disclose this information to teacher because the teacher shared about "being addicted." Camille, as well as her friends and loved ones, were concerned about the stigma and judgment she would receive because of her history. They stressed that she should not put something out there that may put her at a disadvantage. But Camille felt she should put it out there and if it comes back on her, it just does. Her mentor reminded her that "it is my past and I'm at a new chapter in my life. I do not have to keep putting it out there." Camille was trying to figure out how to own her past while moving forward and managing her reintegration given the stigma attached.

5. **Candice: managing stigma, reintegration, and motherhood**

Following her grandson's birthday party, I did not see Candice again until the beginning of the following month. Again, scheduling became a persistent difficulty with Candice. Between cancellations and scheduling conflicts at times when either of us had availability, our next observation session was not until the following month. I expected schedule fluctuations, given the level of instability that many of the women in this study illustrated in their narratives about their lives. During the time period between her grandson's birthday party—our second observation session—and our next session Candice and I rescheduled at least four times. In one instance, Candice sent a text message to ask for help filling out education loan deferment papers. The loan was taken out when she was taking courses at the community college a few years ago. Candice asked if I could come over afterschool on the following day to work on them. Unfortunately, I was not free until that evening, so we rescheduled for the following afternoon.

The day of the meeting I received another text message from Candice asking to reschedule because her daughter was sick with an ear problem. She was concerned because her daughter was dizzy and had vertigo from her ear problem. She also needed to be present to help her daughter with the grandchildren. I called later that same day to check on Candice and her daughter, as well as to check in with her because of the repeated cancellations that were happening. I wanted to ensure Candice understood that she was free to withdraw from the study if she desired to do so and could say so at any time. Candice stated she wanted to continue in the study. She sent another text message later that night to express her gratitude that I cared about the situation with her daughter and to say her daughter was doing better with the vertigo symptoms. Candice surprised me with the message because she also stated that my checking in with her “lets [her] know that there is still love in the world.” I was touched by Candice’s message and glad she was still willing to participate in the study. We scheduled another session for the following Monday, but she called to cancel. Once more, I was concerned she would drop out of the study. However, she asked if we could meet the next day. I was available that afternoon, but once again she sent a text that morning to reschedule for Wednesday because her son had gotten arrested. Candice’s son was arrested for an old warrant because he failed to appear in court on a charge of criminal trespassing in a vehicle. Candice was going to go visit on Tuesday, which are visiting day at the county jail. Therefore, we rescheduled for Wednesday afternoon.

Before I drove to Candice’s apartment for our session, I called to ensure we were still meeting and to asked if she wanted to have a late lunch. She said sure but she was still waiting for her daughter to come for her grandchildren. Candice changed her mind and told me to eat without her. I agreed and let her know I would see her soon. A few minutes later, she called

again and asked if I could use my phone to go online and find out the amount of her son's bond. Candice, her niece, and his friends were trying to collect the bond money, but were unsure of the exact amount. They all thought it was \$250, which is 10% of his \$2500 bond, however her son said the jail officials told him that his bond was \$350. Candice's "guy" [boyfriend] also told her it was \$250. The search was more complicated than I anticipated so I would have to call her back when I found the right website. Once Candice gave me her son's name, the site listed two cases against him. Both had \$2500 as the bond amount, but we were unsure whether there were two separate cases or just a duplication on the website.

I arrived at Candice's apartment that afternoon much faster than she anticipated. She and her grandchildren were as I parked. They all greeted me and her granddaughter gave me a hug. After signing all of us in at the front desk of her apartment building, as she must do with all visitors, we went up to her fourth floor studio apartment. Candice was dressed more casually than she does when I meet with her. On that afternoon, she was dressed in a yellow t-shirt, cut off sweatpants, and her hair was wrapped in a headscarf, all of which I believed to be her pajamas. I sat down at the table, a black card table with matching folding chairs, and made small talk while she settled the children down with a snack of Ramen noodles and cartoons on the Disney Channel.

While waiting for Candice to finish getting the children settled, I asked whether her daughter was feeling better. She replied that she was doing better but her hearing had not returned to one of her ears. The conversation switched to her son's arrest. Candice described feeling conflicted about her son's incarceration and about posting his bond. She wants him to learn a lesson because he is dealing drugs, but also does not want him to be locked up. Candice wants him to learn from the mistakes she has made in her life, but also recognizes that he is 19

years old now and not a kid anymore. All during the time we were talking, Candice was also receiving phone calls from her niece and her son's friends who were trying to gather the bond money. Candice's income is severely restricted so she did not have any extra money to help with his bond. She was relying on his friends would step up and help bond him out or else he would be in county jail longer. According to Candice, this was not her son's first arrest. He had been arrested one other time for playing a dice game when the police arrested everyone in the area who were also playing.

The conversation switched to issues her family was having with one of her mom's life insurance policies. Her mom died approximately 3 months prior, but one of the insurers will not pay out the insurance policy because the mother is listed as her own beneficiary. This error means that no one can collect on the policy because the beneficiary—Candice's mother—is deceased. Candice is concerned because her daughter paid for the funeral and the payout from insurance policy was to be used as reimbursement. One of the insurers was willing to split the payout among the nine children (seven daughters and two sons) and she wanted asked for my help filling out the paperwork. Candice wanted to fill out as much of the paperwork as possible in order to expedite the process for her siblings, especially her brother who was incarcerated. The situation is further complicated because one brother is incarcerated and the siblings agreed he will be named a beneficiary of a smaller payout amount. The other siblings agreed to have their payout sent as checks to Candice's daughter's address so she can collect all of the checks together and deposit them into her checking account as payment. Candice and I went over the paperwork but were unable to finish, so we planned another session to complete them.

A couple of times while at her apartment, Candice disciplined her grandson. She does not have patience for him whining for things. She also did not want him crying like she was "killing

him” when she did not hit him hard. It was difficult witnessing him getting spanked. I noticed his sister was also affected by witnessing him being disciplined. She sat up straighter and we both seemed to hold our breath. I tried to distract her by asking her to read to me and helping sound the words out. Shortly after, Candice’s daughter called because she was downstairs to pick up the children. Candice and I decided to leave to get some food after her daughter left with the children. Her daughter still seemed uneasy around me, but less so than when I met her on the day of her son’s birthday party. As we stood outside, the children were playing while Candice and her daughter were talking. Candice talked about her son’s bond once more with her daughter, because they still were trying to figure out the correct bond amount in light of the two cases seen online. Her daughter also agreed that the amount should be \$250. At this point, Candice and her family said good-bye, but her grandson started to run away from his mother's car because he wanted to stay with Candice and not go home with his mom. She reminded him that they had talked on the way downstairs that he was not going to start the crying and whining when it was time to go home. Eventually, he went to his mother and got in the car to go home.

Candice and I left her home to get something to eat. On the drive, she continued to receive calls from her niece and her son’s friends about who was going to bond him out. She told her niece that her daughter agreed that it was \$250 although her son still insisted it was \$350. Between her niece and her son’s friends they were able to collect the \$250, they just needed someone with a car to go to the jail and post bond for him. While we were driving to get something to eat, Candice asked if I could show her where President Obama’s house was. As we drove by she was shocked by all of the security and barricades around the house. We drove around the neighborhood and talked about the other huge “mansions” nearby. Candice mentioned how she tells her boyfriend about her dream homes when they past houses she really

likes. Candice asked if “this was where the White people lived.” She also commented that they [she and her family members] “do not go over to that side of the neighborhood” because it was where the White people lived. I was shocked that she had spent her entire life in the city, but had never ventured to this side of town. However, her statement also made sense given the level of racial and class segregation across the city neighborhoods.

We drove to a small strip mall that had some restaurant choices. Again, she wanted me to decide where we would eat. She was growing more impatient that I would not just tell her where we would eat. In fact, she snapped at me a little so I would choose where we would eat. I reminded her that these observation sessions were about her and she was guiding our time together. I realized she was not going to choose, possibly because she did not spend much time in this area, so I choose the restaurant. However, she was self-conscious of how she was dressed, so I decided a dine-in restaurant would not be comfortable for her. We decided to get chicken from a take-out restaurant nearby. I went to the bank ATM for cash and then into the restaurant, while she smoked a cigarette. After we ordered, she went back outside to finish her cigarette and make more calls about her son. Our food came quickly, so we went back to the car while she was still on the phone with her niece concerning her son. Candice’s niece told her there still was no one to go over to the jail to pay her son’s bond or even take the money to Candice. Candice was also in a bind because she did not have much gas in her car and little money to fill up. I asked whether she wanted me to take her over there to get the money. She seemed surprised that I would offer and asked if I was sure. I told her it was fine because I wanted to observe her in this process further, if it was ok with her.

First, we need to stop at her mother’s apartment to get the money for his bond. Candice explained to me that they decided to keep her mother’s apartment so her son and nieces live in

the apartment now that her mother is deceased. She seemed surprised that I was willing to drive her around. I explained that this was part of my role as an observer of her daily life. On the way to her mother's apartment, Candice talked more about being unemployed and the toll it was taking on her. She described being depressed and sleeping a lot. She mentioned that when her grandson gets to her apartment around 6:30 a.m., she lets him in and then goes right back to bed. Although she is unemployed, she is also pleased that she is no longer working in her previous job picking up garbage around the city because she felt she was underpaid and overworked. The job paid \$33 a day, regardless if she worked her 3 hours or if it took her 5 hours to complete her duties of picking up garbage across 60 blocks [30 blocks up the street, 30 blocks back down]. Candice's daughter helped her out by giving her a raise in her pay for taking care of the kids. She increased Candice's pay by \$25 per pay period to help her out with the gas she uses to go pick up her granddaughter from school. I commented that I remembered her saying she does not feel that helping her daughter has to do with trying to make up for not being there for her children when she was out doing drugs and dealing. Candice is grateful for her daughter's help, but assists her daughter so she will not have to worry about whether her children are being cared for properly. Candice described how her daughter works in the corporate world but can still go over to their old neighborhood and be "ghetto fabulous." There is pride in Candice's voice as she elaborates that her daughter tells her that she has to be able to switch between worlds.

As we were driving closer to her old neighborhood, Candice pointed out an alley where the police had stopped her when she was still active in her addiction. Candice proceeded to tell me about a time she was trying to buy "two blows" from a dealer she knew and the police pulled up on them. The officers stated, "if [they] have any drugs on them, they had better tell them." The officers were willing to let them go free, if Candice and the dealer told them where they had

concealed their drugs. She told them she had a small rock of crack on her, which they confiscated. But the dealer lied and told them he had nothing. The officers found the “two blows” Candice had attempted to buy and handcuffed them both. Candice and the dealer were taken to the police station. Candice recalls crying so much that the officers told her to shut up or they would make sure she was sent to prison. Candice said she never stopped crying so fast! According to Candice, the officers were preparing for a shift change so they decided to release either Candice or the dealer. The officers decided to release Candice. She was placed into a squad car and driven back to the alley where she was told to run in the opposite direction and not to look back.

We arrived at Candice’s mother’s home, which was located in a local housing project. There were a large number of young Black men and women outside in front of the building. Candice’s niece met her at the car with the money. They talked about her son’s case for a while, just as Candice’s middle daughter walked to my car window. This was the first time I met her daughter. I noticed she had a more outgoing personality in comparison to Candice’s older daughter. She told Candice to add her to the overnight guest list at the front desk of Candice’s apartment building because she was going to come and stay with her over the weekend. Candice seemed pleased that her daughter was coming to visit.

The next stop we made was to pick up money from her son’s friends, located in a high-crime neighborhood known for drug dealing. I waited in the car for Candice to retrieve the bond money. While waiting for Candice, I noticed a young man ride a bike up to a car window and speak to the man inside. The man then pulled away from the curb and began backing up to go down the one-way street Candice was on. Instead of continuing to back up down the street, he drove off quickly. I found his actions odd, but not too unusual. However, I noticed Candice

running back to the car and telling me to pull off quickly as she got in. According to Candice, the police were in the area and the guys were telling each other to “lock it down.” This was a code the young men used to warn one another to stop selling drugs because the police were coming. Candice was afraid of being stopped by the police with a large amount of money in her possession. She was obviously agitated with herself for not listening to her first instinct, which was to leave the money she received from her niece in the car with me, but she did not. Candice was terrified of being stopped and sent to jail again. She did not want to go back to jail, when she was clean and had done nothing illegal. As we were driving, Candice stated, “I am a Black woman in this neighborhood with all of this money on me. I was goin’ to jail if the police came and I’M NOT GOING TO JAIL CLEAN!” This instance was the first time I saw Candice show so much emotion. I had never seen her respond fearfully to anything. She asked if I had noticed that “Crown Vic” [Ford Crown Victoria police cruiser] that pulled up in front of where I was parked. The car I noticed backing up down the one-way street was a police officer. I responded that I thought it was someone trying to buy drugs.

Candice calmed down on the way to our next stop, which was the county jail to post bond for her son. As we approached the county jail, we instantly noticed that there were numerous people waiting for loved ones. People of all age ranges were standing or sitting on blankets, lawn chairs, or on the ground in the center island across the street from the jail. Others waited in their cars for their loved one to be released. The county jail does not allow individuals to take personal items into the jail, other than bond money and identification, so we put our belongings, except for identification, in Candice’s purse and then placed them in the trunk of my car. As we walked to the jail’s main gate, Candice and I were confused about the location of the entrance to the bonding facility. Candice commented that she was unsure of where to go because she had never

been into the jail through that entrance, only through the inmate's entrance when she had been arrested. An officer at the gate pointed to a large sign near the gate entrance, but also stated that only one person can go inside to post bond. I turned and walked back across the street to wait with the others in front of the jail. Candice returned a short time later and stated that the bond was actually \$350. Her son was right about the bond being higher. Candice explained that the \$250 was correct for one of her son's cases, but she also needed to pay \$100 for a fine he received for having a marijuana cigarette when he was arrested.

Initially, Candice was unsure of how to help her son because she had no extra money to pay the rest of the bond. So she started making phone calls to one of her son's friends to let him know about the increase. She hoped they would be able to collect more money to make up the difference and post his bond. Between Candice's niece and her son's friends, they were able to collect most of the money in cash. Candice's niece offered her Link card [public assistance debit card] to make up the difference, but we needed to go to an ATM to withdraw the cash. We went to a corner store to use the ATM but it was broken. Then we tried another convenience store. As I waited in the car for Candice to come out of the store, I noticed 8-10 young Black men hanging on the corner. A police car pulled up at a red light at the intersection behind me and stayed there for a while surveying the area. These officers continued on their way but at least three more police cars drove past while I was waiting for Candice to return. She returned to the car with the same results as the last store, the machine was broken. Finally, we found a currency exchange with a working ATM and Candice withdrew the money. After trips to three different locations, Candice withdrew the money and we drove back to the jail. By the time we arrived at the jail, the time was 8:00 p.m. Candice was anxious because she had to make it to the bond facility by 8:45pm in order to be allowed to post her son's bond that night. If she did not make it, he would

have to spend another night in jail. I dropped Candice off at the curb in front of the jail and went to look for parking. There still were a large number of people waiting on the center island for their loved ones to be processed out of the jail. I noticed some of the individuals waiting had been there earlier in the day when Candice and I were at the jail initially.

Candice was in the jail for nearly an hour, so I thought maybe they were able to process her son out faster than anticipated. When she returned to the car without her son, she said it would take 2-3 hours to get him out after processing. Initially, Candice said he would have to find his own way home because she did not have enough gas in her car to take him back over to the other side of town and make it back home. Once again, Candice was conflicted about her the level of support she should give her son because he had been in trouble. She started talking about her children. She commented that her oldest daughter was successful with a husband and her two children. Her middle daughter had gone to college, although she had recently dropped out while in her last year. The way she spoke of her daughters was with pride. Then, she commented in a disheartened tone that her son was a drug dealer and was conflicted about how to deal with him. She called his friend and her niece to tell them the bond was paid, but they needed to figure out how to pick him up from the jail. She asked if anyone would be able to go pick him up because she could not. Both her niece and her son's friend were unsure if someone would be able to pick him up. At this point, Candice was tired after such a long day. She also was worried about her son not having a ride home. Candice commented that she was afraid that he would have to walk home late at night and go through a Puerto Rican neighborhood, which could be dangerous for him. Candice resolved that she would have to come back to the jail and pick up "her baby" because she did not want anything to happen to him.

We arrived back to Candice's apartment at nearly 10 p.m. We did not get to finish her paperwork for the insurance payout because of the late hour, but planned meet again soon to finish it. As I was preparing to leave, Candice called her niece again to figure out if someone would be able to give her son a ride home. By this time, she seemed resigned to the fact that she probably would have to go get him, but was worried about not being awake when he called to say he was released. I suggested setting an alarm and taking a nap for about an hour and a half so she would be awake in case he called. Candice was worried about the "right thing to do" for her son. Before I left, Candice had agreed that I could accompany her to his court appearance that upcoming Friday. I wondered if she would call the following morning to give me the details for the court hearing. She did not.

I only saw Candice two other times after the night she posted bond for her son. We talked on the phone to check in with one another. I was able to ask how she was doing and if anything had changed for her. She mentioned that her birthday was approaching so I asked if she would let me take her to lunch to celebrate. She agreed and we set up a time to meet. When I arrived, I waited outside for Candice and her grandson to come downstairs, as Candice had suggested. She did not want me to have to walk up the four flights of stairs only to have to go directly back down to leave for lunch. When she and her grandson arrived at my car, I wished her a happy birthday and we left for the restaurant to have lunch and catch up on her life. Candice was dressed nicely for our lunch in a denim outfit. I felt underdressed next to her. I asked whether she had done anything to celebrate her birthday. She replied, "no" because her birthday is associated with her past and drug addiction. She stated, "It used to be all about getting high." Since Candice has been clean she does not celebrate her birthday because it is too overwhelming for her.

Candice also said she “had some feelings [negative]” about her boyfriend working on her birthday instead of spending it with her.

We had a good lunch at a local soul food restaurant. Next, I accompanied Candice to a Narcotics Anonymous meeting. This was the first time Candice had invited me to a meeting with her. I had previously seen her at a meeting I attended with Camille, prior to my observations with her, but had never attended with her. On the way to the meeting, she disclosed that she had taken a pregnancy test the night before because she had been late with her period and was fearful she was pregnant. The situation was further complicated because she had had sex with a man who was not her boyfriend. Candice explained that since her boyfriend is older, he does not have a sex drive that satisfies her. So she had sex with another guy who she felt could satisfy her. Candice was most concerned about how she would raise a baby at this point in her life. I asked Candice how she would handle finding out she was pregnant. She was forthright in her response that she “would have an abortion.” She said she has “no patience for little ones” although she is still learning with her grandchildren. As we walked into the building for her meeting, she mentioned that she liked to go to different meeting locations because “people be lyin’, puttin’ on a show, and actin’ like everything be all right.” Candice tried to be as authentic as possible and expected the same in others.

Over the time that I have spent with Candice, I observed that authenticity is important to who she is and how she lives her life. As we walked in to the meeting space, her grandson was immediately drawn to the images of President Obama on the interior walls of the building. The building had a large wall with hundreds of photos, magazine covers, and newspaper articles about President Obama and his family. Candice’s grandson seemed mesmerized by the images. The meeting was going to start, so we entered the room and sat near the back. Candice was

conscientious about the presence of her grandson being a disturbance in the meeting, so she wanted to sit near the back. All of the members in attendance were Black, except one White woman who came into the meeting about 20 minutes later than everyone else. During the meeting Candice acknowledged that she was “7 years clean.” When she said this, I instantly was reminded of how she stated during her stage one interview that for her, “even one day clean is a miracle”. I shared with her that she had been clean for more than 2,500 days.

In sum, Camille and Candice’s daily routines demonstrate the complexity involved in managing conflicts that arise in the embodiment of the maternal role, aspirations for the future, and social stigma associated with their involvement in illegal activities. For Camille, the embodiment of the maternal role meant becoming a first-time mother for a second time, while resuming her academic career in higher education, and starting a new relationship. Also, Camille struggles with managing relationships with those she loves that are still involved in illegal activities, particularly drug addiction, while attempting to maintain her sobriety. For Candice, the embodiment of the maternal role meant developing and maintaining a new role in the lives of her adult children, while assisting her daughter in mothering her grandchildren. Candice has struggled to find steady employment, which has limited her economic means, so her oldest daughter has stepped in to assist her financially. Candice also struggles with maintaining relationships with loved ones and her former community who are involved in illegal activities and pose a risk to her sobriety. Both of these women’s lives provided insight into the organization of motherhood and mothering for formerly incarcerated Black women. An analysis of the experiences of the women in this study in relation to the role, meaning, and embodiment of motherhood and the mothering process are discussed in the next chapter.

V. ANALYSIS

The purpose of this multi-case study was to explore the social organization of motherhood and mothering with a group of formerly incarcerated Black women who are mothers. This research was designed with the goal of providing a better understanding of the process of mothering and the meanings attributed to the motherhood status in the lives of a group of Black women who have faced tremendous social disadvantages. These disadvantages were associated with the interactions between their lived experiences with motherhood and mothering, involvement in illegal activities, and navigating the reintegration process.

This study used a two-stage research design to collect qualitative data by conducting semi-structured interviews during the initial stage and ethnographic data using participant observation techniques during stage two. The ethnographic data was collected from two participants from stage one to further explore the emergent themes from the semi-structured interviews. Participants in the study included 12 formerly incarcerated Black women who were mothers to at least one child under the age of 18 and had been released from correctional facilities within the 3 years prior to the stage one interview. The data were coded, analyzed, and synthesized using a process of within-case and cross-case analysis and drafting of analytic memos on emergent themes in relation to the Black feminist conceptual framework described in chapter 2.

The study was structured to explore the organization of motherhood and mothering for a group of formerly incarcerated Black women who are mothers. The use of semi-structured interviews and participant observation allowed for the exploration of the experiential knowledge, subjective meanings, and feelings found within and among the experiences of each participant from their own standpoint, in line with the Black feminist theoretical epistemology (Collins,

2000). Overall, the data indicated that the social organization for motherhood and mothering for this group of women involved managing the tension between their lived experiences and normative ideals of the maternal role, which I refer to as the duality of motherhood; managing the effects of a criminalized identity that overshadows the performance of tasks associated with the role of mother; and navigating an arduous reintegration process while attempting to remaining in compliance with systems of oversight that tended to exacerbate the long reach of punishment and disconnect them from the maternal role and mothering process.

This chapter analyzes, interprets, and synthesizes the central findings of the study. It is organized by the following analytic categories:

1. Embodying the maternal role
2. Managing a criminalized identity
3. Navigating reintegration

The first analytical category focused on the embodying the maternal role and mothering process for the women in this study. The category represents an analysis of the tension between the women's lived experiences as Black mothers and formerly incarcerated women and normative expectations of woman as mothers. This analytical category emerged from recurrent data concerning embodying the maternal role, given the women's criminalized identity and cumulative social disadvantage. The women described internalized normative expectations of motherhood placed on them by both formal and informal authorities. Included in the analysis of the embodiment of motherhood is a discussion of the onset of motherhood and the difficulties that arose for the women in this study when shifting into the mother role. The women's descriptions of maternal influences, particularly with primary maternal figures and their children, illuminate this analytical category further. The women's relationships were distinctive because

they highlighted the conflicts that arise from concurrent positive and negative influences on the women, which consequently foster both prosocial and antisocial outcomes.

The second analytical category emerged from the women's descriptions of their experiences managing a criminalized identity. Specifically, this analytical category demonstrates how the effects of the women's involvement in illegal activities had a more sustained and profound influence on their limitations as mothers than their incarceration. An analysis of the women's involvement in illegal activities indicated that their incarceration was an extended interruption in an already disrupted maternal process. This characterization was particularly poignant for the women dealing with drug addictions. This category emerged from the women's emphasis on the necessity of continuous and conscientious management of both the effects of the stigmatized identity and also their involvement in illegal activities and efforts to desist from further involvement.

The final analytical category emerged from the data focused on navigating the reentry and reintegration process. The women's lives following a period of incarceration indicated that the complications associated with navigating the reintegration process were intensified when viewed in relation to the larger social context in which they are positioned. The women in this study navigated a complex system of tenuous familial support, community resources, and formal and informal systems of oversight, which exacerbated the long reach of punishment. Also, the women's sense of personal responsibility for their reintegration indicated the use of an impression management strategy that minimized their vulnerability and increased their access to vital resources for their successful reintegration.

The analytic categories listed above align to describe the participants' experiences as formerly incarcerated Black women and mothers. These categories emerged from findings in

both the semi-structured interviews and in the ethnographic data. It should be noted that the findings categorized under the theme “Relationships with loved ones” were in accordance with the data in each of the analytical categories above therefore; it is not a standalone analytical category. The findings under this theme helped to illuminate the data within each of these analytical categories. This analysis expounds on connecting patterns between the analytic categories, conceptual framework, and the ethnographic data collected during the second stage. Relevant pre-existing theories and literature are connected to the analysis as a way to illuminate analytical patterns related to Black women, motherhood, and incarceration, brought about by this research.

In the previous chapter, the findings of this study were organized into categories that generated a narrative of the women’s experiences and the meanings they ascribe to their experiences as formerly incarcerated Black women and mothers. The purpose of this chapter is to interpret the findings using a conceptual framework grounded in the Black feminist theoretical tradition. Whereas the findings chapter was split into separate sections of data that were categorized by four overarching emergent themes, this chapter is an attempt to reconnect those sections to provide a holistic depiction of this group of Black women who are mothers and have a history of incarceration.

As this study uses a Black feminist analytical framework, the meanings and insights of the women in this study are privileged above all else in accordance with a Black feminist theoretical framework (Collins, 2000; Few, Stephens, and Rouse-Arnett, 2003). The analytical process was framed using elements derived from the findings that uphold this analytical tradition within this study (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2008). These elements included privileging the shared connections among the experiences of the women in the study and the manner in which they

explain and understand their experiences. Also, the analytical process in this study highlighted both unexpected as well as anticipated relationships and connections with pre-existing literature. Lastly, despite the lack of scholarly literature on the meanings of motherhood and mothering in the lives of formerly incarcerated Black women, the analysis was framed to demonstrate the ways in which the data go beyond the pre-existing literature on this topic.

A. **Analytical Categories**

1. **Embodying the maternal role**

The research findings related to the women's role as mothers to their children and the performance of that role indicated that motherhood and mothering for the formerly incarcerated Black women in this study represented a duality between their expectations of motherhood and their lived experiences at the intersection of interlocking forms of oppression. The women's criminalized identity further compounds this schism. Ideological narratives about Black women as mothers constructs their identity through a lens that emphasizes the historic and systematic elements of interlocking oppression because of their race, class, gender, and sexuality (Collins, 2000). These elements interact in such a way that Black mothers are viewed as a subordinate group and are systematically subjected to differential treatment that maintains their social status as such. Ideological narratives most relevant to the women in this study were those that relied on the controlling functions of stereotypical myths about Black mothers such as the welfare mother and the jezebel, while also maintaining expectations of the revered Black matriarch. However, the criminalized identity of the women in this study helped uphold their social position outside of the tenets of normative motherhood.

Motherhood represented a duality of roles with competing ideological representations for the women in this study. The women's experiences with early motherhood, multifaceted

instability, low educational attainment, underemployment, antisocial relationships, involvement in illegal activities, and incarceration were just a few of the life-altering occurrences that inhibited both their expected and actualized performance as mothers and complicated their embodiment of the mother role. The tension between normative expectations of mothers and the women's lived experiences leaves the women vulnerable to stigmatization. Examples of the duality of motherhood are evident in the dichotomous characterizations of mothers, such as good mothers and bad mothers (Kennedy, 2011) or fit and unfit mothers (Smith, 2006). The duality constructs situations in which not only are the women characterized as inadequate mothers, but also inadequate women (Allen, Flaherty, and Ely, 2010). Regardless of incarcerated women's social position, these negative perceptions are not unusual. For the Black women in this study, these perceptions only furthered the sustained stigmatization of their identity as Black women and as mothers.

These binary characterizations of the identities of the women in this study are byproducts of the duality of the maternal role and particularly troublesome when viewed in the context of cumulative disadvantage due to the effects of interlocking oppressions. Multidimensional levels of oppression characterize the context within which motherhood for the women in this study is constructed, and as such, they experience it as mothers, women, members of their families and communities, and women under surveillance of state and legal agencies (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1991; Russell-Brown, 2004). The women who participated in this study are Black women and mothers from disenfranchised and divested communities. These women live under increasing levels of surveillance as they come in contact with the child welfare system, their children's schools, police, housing authorities, public assistance, probation and parole, treatment facilities and support groups. As such, their lives become organized around managing these

systems, instead of focusing on the mothering process. Further, dominant narratives construct these women as “immoral” mothers of increasingly criminalized children and as partners of criminalized Black men (Richie, 1999). Not only is their own perceived criminality problematic but also that of their offspring and partners, regardless of their actual involvement in delinquency.

The findings indicated that the women’s pre-existing vulnerabilities were furthered by the early onset of motherhood. The women’s age at the onset of motherhood influenced their feelings about shifting into the mother role and their preparation for motherhood and mothering. The trepidation described by many of the women related to the onset of motherhood, especially those who were teen mothers, indicated the conflict between their expectations of their maternal role, the internalization of dominant narratives concerning Black teen motherhood, and the influence of the maternal figure in their lives related to their entrée into motherhood. These factors exacerbated their limitations to meet socio-cultural expectations of motherhood. For most of the women, the onset of motherhood signaled adult status and a significant life course transition. Their social position complicated the transition.

An analysis of the onset of motherhood for the women in this study indicated that age mattered most significantly to them when viewed in relation to the expectations they held about the maternal role. For the women who become mothers during their teenage years, their negative feelings about becoming mothers most frequently related to a sense of immaturity, instability, and the lack of autonomy over life choices—all issues linked to their youth. As normatively expected of mothers, the women were suddenly tasked with subverting their own self-interest for the sake of their children (Allen, Flaherty, and Ely, 2010; Arendell, 2000; Hays, 1996; Jones, 1982; Kennedy, 2011; Rich, 1986). For the women who became mothers in their teenage years,

this meant serious limitations on their normal routine and activities, such as involvement in school activities like cheerleading and “hanging out” with friends in the park. Essentially, their freedom to be *regular* teenagers was gone. In its place were expectations of self-sacrifice, commitment, and the investment of time for the care of a baby subverted their lifestyle as teenage girls. Although many of the women understood and accepted these expectations, embodying them conflicted with their lived experiences growing up as Black female teens in an urban environment fraught with impoverished families and divested communities. The context of lives of the Black women in this study is such that these conditions exacerbated pre-existing vulnerabilities by virtue of their social position as poor, Black women.

Surpassing concerns over the loss of their freedom, the onset of motherhood for these women within this context fostered an added layer of vulnerabilities, including challenges in their means of navigating their communities. Reality of life in an urban environment for the women who became mothers as teens meant having to simultaneously manage internal and external threats in order to protect oneself and later their child from violence prevalent in inner-city life with limited means to do so (Jones, 2004). Further, these women cannot (or should not) engage in physical violence when disrespected, cannot skip meals when hungry no matter their financial challenges, must have adequate access to healthcare, manage limitations on self-medicating tendencies despite the necessity of a mental escape, and circumvent involvement in relationships with men involved in a violent lifestyle. All of these challenges threatened the women’s abilities to fully embody the role of mother at the onset of motherhood. Within this context, the notion of losing freedom at the onset of motherhood can be conceptualized in broader terms than merely not being able to hang out with friends in the park. Suddenly, their

limited options because of their social position were further restricted beyond what they could foretell.

The significance of age at the onset of motherhood also held true for the women who become mothers while in their twenties and thirties. However, preparation for motherhood was tied to their feelings related to maturity and self-sufficiency, such that motherhood indicated a chance to achieve stability. In reality, motherhood did not increase their stability, mostly due to preexisting social conditions and relationships. All of the women in the study had histories of connections with male partners whose personal issues with substance abuse and infidelity threatened the sense of stability the women associated with motherhood. The heteronormative image of the married nuclear family unit significantly influenced the women's notions of motherhood and their identity as mothers because it symbolized normalcy, stability, and progress. Therefore, not achieving this ideal further marginalized the women and their family unit, as was evident in Alana's disappointment over her inability to marry her children's father. Alana desired the idealized nuclear family she saw on television sitcoms, like The Cosby Show. It appeared that attaining a husband and father for her children who embodied the iconic image of Bill Cosby's character symbolized progress and stability. In turn, Alana expected that her identity would shift to that of the idealized mother.

While attaining the idealized family unit and maternal role was an achievement desired by many of the women, some of the women seemed threatened by what embodying that role would mean to their sense of autonomy. This was a commonality most evident in Sonja, Paula, Geneva, and Alisha's response to shifting into the maternal role. Drug addiction significantly impacted the women's experiences as mothers, but equally significant was their rejection of normative motherhood and mothering. Alisha and Paula rejected the role outright, following a

reluctant attempt at mothering their children, while Sonja and Geneva attempted mothering, but abandoned the role shortly after. When they were young, Sonja, Geneva, and Paula married men far older than themselves. The women experienced expectations that compelled them to attempt to adopt normative mothering practices and embody an idealized maternal role. These expectations were antithetical to their sense of self, so the role was rejected and they relinquished custody of their children to their children's fathers. The rejection of normative motherhood and mothering suggests a level of alienation from the maternal role and the White, middle class lifestyle they symbolized. All of these circumstances influenced the onset of motherhood for the women in this study and their abilities to shift into the maternal role.

The shift into the maternal role was also deeply influenced by the women's relationship with the primary maternal figures in their lives. The phrase "primary maternal figure" is used to describe the individual the women identified as fulfilling the mother role in their lives because the primary maternal figure was not always their biological mother. At times, a biological mother, sister, or a grandparent fulfilled the role. For the women in this study, there was also a tension between the expectations of motherhood held by the primary maternal figure and the women's reality. In some cases, preexisting relationship strain between the women and their primary maternal figure was expected to dissipate upon their women's entrée into motherhood. That is to say, the women expected motherhood to bring them closer to their primary maternal figure. However, when this did not happen, the women were left not only without access to the support of a primary maternal figure that could model mothering for them, but also an even more fractured relationship with this figure.

The primary maternal figures were central to the women's shift into motherhood, both symbolically and concretely. This was demonstrated most keenly in the experiences of the

women who became mothers as teens. Symbolically, motherhood was expected to settle their daughters down, according to the primary maternal figure. This belief was evident in the primary maternal figures' rejection of their daughters' request to terminate their pregnancy. Although the primary maternal figures had been unable to prevent their daughters from engaging in sexual activity, they reclaimed power over the women's reproduction and their transition into the maternal role by asserting that the women would "accept responsibility" for their child and settle down. The stance of the maternal figures contrasted with sentiments espoused by daughters who were teen at the onset of motherhood. Kaplan's research with Black teenage mothers and their adult mothers found that while most of the adult mothers demanded their daughter have an abortion, the teen mothers rejected the demand as a way to affirm their role as mothers (Kaplan, 1996). Further, Dennis and Wood (2012) found that the teen mothers perceived latent negativity when referencing reproduction and sexuality with their mothers, which turned to overt warnings against engaging in sexual behaviors or becoming pregnant. Interestingly, when speaking about becoming mothers, many of the women in this study espoused similar ideas about reproductive choice and their sense of responsibility for completing their pregnancies despite their limitations and involvement in illegal activities. In effect, becoming mothers signaled their entrance into womanhood.

The findings indicated that overwhelmingly the women had strained relationships with primary maternal figures in their lives. For many of the women, the issues were rooted in past experiences in which they felt the primary maternal figure failed to love and protect them. For example, the women who disclosed experiencing sexual victimization as children linked it to their mother's failures to protect them. As the findings indicated, preexisting strain in their relationships with their mothers isolated them from a figure who should have been an ally in

assisting them to heal from their trauma. Instead, the women were alienated further from their mothers. For example, the persistent blame that Paula's mother placed on her made Paula believe she was liable for her own victimization by her mother's boyfriend. The women's perceptions of their mother's failures in her role were poignant because most frequently the outcome of these issues was manifested in the development of antisocial behaviors and replication of negative maternal approaches with their own children.

Interestingly, the effects of the outcomes associated with negative maternal influences were typically mitigated by a paternal figure in the women's lives. This was evident in some of the women's descriptions of the roles of grandfathers, uncles, and, at times, their children's fathers. These men compensated for the complications in the relationships with their primary maternal figure by intervening in the relationship. They also lessened the effects of the women's shortcomings in the maternal role by taking on the role of primary caregiver to their children. As described previously, the influence of the primary maternal figure was central to the women's maternal role. The findings indicated this was but one of the significant influences that illuminated the conflicts between their experiences and the expectations they held concerning motherhood. The duality of motherhood for the women in this study revealed relationships with concurrent positive and negative influences on the women, especially with primary maternal figures and their children. Therefore, it is not surprising that the women experienced complicated relationships with maternal figures and with their children.

The women's relationships with their children were also indicative of the duality of motherhood in that these relationships represented both a site of their shortcomings as mothers and a site of hopefulness to disrupt the effects of the negative maternal influences replicated with their children. The relationships they built with their children can be characterized as a series of

intermittent interruptions with deep challenges and moments of triumph in the maternal role. At the onset of motherhood, many of the women felt their babies would fill a void in their lives by providing them love and the opportunity to love. These aspects were missing from their relationships with others, particularly primary maternal figures. The women in this study experienced motherhood as a life course transition in which their involvement in illegal activities conflicted with internalized normative expectations of the maternal role.

The women in this study recognized the importance of mothering in alignment with practices that upheld normative ideals, especially concerning a nuclear familial arrangement and consistency of care, or what they termed “being there.” Normative ideals about motherhood and mothering are so engrained in the social context of women’s lives that the formerly incarcerated women in the study upheld normative ideals of motherhood and mothering despite profound social disadvantages that makes it nearly impossible for their maternal identity to be perceived positively (Allen, Flaherty, and Ely, 2010). The internalization of normative expectations of motherhood were in accordance with the results of studies conducted with women with criminalized identities, and even some without. However, they were also shown to be contradictory when viewed in relation to the women’s lived experiences due to the effects of their involvement in illegal activities, especially drug addiction (Allen, Flaherty, and Ely, 2010; Brown and Bloom, 2009; McGroder, 2000; McQuillan, Greil, Shreffler, and Tichenor, 2008). The contradictions were exacerbated by their incarceration and the interruption of the continual care edict associated with normative motherhood. These contradictions reinforce the duality of motherhood for the criminalized women in this study.

The women in this study were expected to meet socio-cultural and internalized expectations of motherhood while mitigating the effects of their individualized experiences with

illegal activities and the structural social disadvantages expressed by their families and communities. All of these factors position the women outside of normative expectations of women and mothers in US society. When the women's experiences were viewed within the context of interlocking racist, classist, and patriarchal oppressions, their ability to embody normative configurations of the mother role appear impossible. As the study's findings indicate, the duality of the maternal role for criminalized Black women obscured their social identity as mothers and perpetuates dominant narratives about the lives as Black women and mothers of Black children. It also illuminates the social context of cumulative disadvantage in which they are positioned. The women in this study endured profound stigmatization that imposed limitations on their performance as mothers and destabilized their attempts to counter the structural inequality they encountered. These factors, along with society's response to them in their maternal role maintain their subordinate social position and perpetuate the marginalization of their children, as well.

The women in this study also experienced conflicts between their involvement in illegal activities and performance of tasks associated with normative mothering. For example, participants recovering from drug addictions described the all-consuming nature of their addictions such that it "makes you forget you are even a mother" (Paula). While Paula's depiction of the effects of their drug addiction illustrates its overwhelming nature, it reiterates narratives about substance-abusing mothers, even if unintentionally. The other women with drug addictions repeated similar accounts of their addiction. Their internalization of prevailing narratives about themselves as mothers with drug addictions is similar to Baker and Carson's (1999) findings in their qualitative study of substance-abusing mothers living in a residential treatment facility. The women in that study considered themselves "bad" mothers when they

were inaccessible to their children, or the children were exposed to dangerous elements of the lifestyle, or if they lacked proper supervision (Baker and Carson, 1999). As the findings in this study show, the women felt likewise about their addiction, which prevented them from fulfilling these central tenets of normative expectations of the maternal role.

Narratives about “bad” or “unfit” mothers overshadow the lived experiences of the women in this study who were actively engaged in mothering practices, particularly those resuming the role. As evidenced in the ethnographic findings, the monitoring of mothering practices is ever-present in the women’s lives despite years of attempts at demonstrating rehabilitation and contrition. Camille worried constantly about whether she was making mistakes in mothering her young son. Camille’s extensive history of drug addiction and the loss of custody of her six children brought her under the surveillance of oversight authorities, like the Department of Children and Family Services. Resuming the mother role required assistance of both informal and formal networks, such as the women in her support groups, Narcotics Anonymous sponsors, mentors, housing authority officials, and child welfare caseworkers. The use of impression management strategies (Kaplan, 1996), an extensive support network, and an astute understanding of the effects of stigmatization positioned Camille at a site where she was able resume the maternal role and mothering practices in such a way that her criminalized identity appeared somewhat diminished. She was even able to pursue some of the goals she had prior to her 15-year drug addiction, like going to college.

The ethnographic findings suggest that negative scrutiny of the women’s maternal identity were an omnipresent force in their lives, however, they were able to demonstrate moments in which their mothering practices embodied normative and socially acceptable conceptions of motherhood, as they had desired. At times, the women in this study also engaged

in prosocial maternal practices, despite the limitations their addictions placed on them. In line with findings from research with formerly incarcerated mothers, the women in this study considered themselves “good” mothers when they were fulfilling their children’s practical needs, protecting them from harm, teaching them to care for themselves, and coping with stress so they could care for their children (Baker and Carson, 1999; Elliott, Powell, and Brenton, 2013).

A pressing concern for the women in this study was learning to cope with the challenges brought about by their shortcomings in the maternal role and in their relationships with their children. The women had to develop skills to move beyond the mistakes they had made with their children, including learning patience, nurturing, and dealing with their kids’ responses to their absence and involvement in illegal activities. The findings showed that the women endured a sustained sense of loss, guilt and shame when considering their transitions in the custody of their children, the effects of their criminality on their children, and their children’s perception of their involvement in illegal activities.

Relinquishing custody of the children, whether it was forced or voluntary, deeply affected the women’s sense of self as woman and mothers. Many of the women in this study linked the loss of their children to the exacerbation of their criminality, in that they used illicit substances to cope with the guilt and shame associated with the loss. Beverly’s perpetual sense of loss as a result of the removal of her children was illustrative of the emotional, psychological, and physical toll the removal of the children had for most of the other women as well. Nearly two decades later, she was still deeply affected by the loss of her children. While Beverly’s experience with losing her children was extreme in comparison to the other women in the study, many of them also expressed a longing to reunite with the children they lost.

The majority of the women in this study were mothers prior to their first incarceration experience. Incarceration, while a significant interruption in the maternal process, was an extension of a preexisting series of disruptions of the maternal process initiated by the circumstances surrounding the women's involvement in illegal activities. These events influenced the women's relationship with their children because they precipitated the introductions of other parental figures into the relationship. The women in this study managed a complicated system of custody transition and arrangements with their children, composed of caregivers from within the family and outside. For most of the women in this study, the custody arrangements exacerbated limitations in contact with their children, particularly when the women's parental rights had been legally terminated. As a result, access to their children became more complex as the women had to consider who had custody of their children, their legal status in relation to each of their children, whether the children were interested in resuming contact with their mothers, and whether the caregivers were willing to allow contact.

The interventions by caregivers and oversight authorities in the women's relationships with their children were deeply impactful for the women. Preexisting familial strain was a key factor in the relationships the women had with family members who had either removed the children themselves or had state authorities take custody of the children. For some of the women whose family members had custody of their children, tension would arise concerning how the children were being raised and whether the women had any authority over their children (Arditti and Few, 2006). Other sources of conflict came about when the children's custody arrangements shifted without the women's permission or notification. Another area of tension concerning the custody of the children involved the role of their father's female partner. Learning to manage a relationship with this particular caregiver was essential to being allowed to maintain contact with

their children for most of the women. Over half of the women in this study had relinquished custody of their children to the children's fathers, which meant they potentially had to interact with his wife or girlfriend. Many times this generated another layer of complications because they had to deal with the fact that another woman was raising their children.

The women in the study generally held positive opinions about the interventions by oversight authorities like DCFS. Most of them felt the caseworkers were helpful because they had the children's best interest at heart. They asserted their own responsibility for the initiation of the intervention and transition in custody. Many of the women stated it was not DCFS or the caseworker's fault they lost their custody of their children, but was an expected consequence of their involvement in illegal activities, particularly drug usage. Although the removal of custody by DCFS and oversight associated with their child welfare case was traumatic, most of the women felt it was a necessary consequence of their actions. In line with their understandings of their incarceration, the intervention by DCFS was a logical extension of their criminality.

The women's articulations of the effects of their involvement in illegal activities and incarceration on the children revealed a significant guilt and shame for how their actions had altered their children's lives. All of the women were remorseful about the negative consequences of their actions on their children, however they did not dwell on their negative feelings, but instead expressed sentiments that the past was behind them, could not be changed, and they had to keep moving forward. Generally, the women felt the effects of their involvement in illegal activities were manifested in three main forms in the lives of their children: a role reversal in which the children became the caregiver; the children became involved in illegal activities themselves; and the children experienced issues with their physical wellbeing, which the women linked to their involvement in illegal activities.

First, for most of the women, at least one of their children took on the role of caregiver for their siblings and their mother. The women who specifically disclosed this phenomenon in their relationships with their children typically expressed guilt about the role reversal, especially when a woman's children had to care for her as a result of her drug addiction. Other women did not specifically refer to a role reversal, *per se*, but spoke of instances in which their children took care of their siblings in her absence or performed tasks typically associated with mothering, such as cooking for the family or taking the younger siblings into their homes. At times, it appeared that the women were conflicted between pride that their children loved them and their siblings enough to take care of them and guilt that the child was compelled to take on the role.

Next, when the children became involved in illegal activities, the women linked their activities to their own criminality. Dominant narratives about Black mothers typically rendered her culpable for her children's delinquency, regardless of her involvement in illegal activities. Given, the backgrounds of the women in this study, these narratives are difficult to subvert because of their criminalized identity. They were damaging because they reinforced dominant ideologies about Black mothers, which the women in this study seemed to internalize. By internalizing these dominant narratives about their liability in their children's delinquency, the women in this study described feelings powerless to chastise their child about their delinquency because they blamed themselves for setting a negative example for their children. Most of the women whose children had been convicted of crimes and subsequently incarcerated turned to their religion to deal with their feelings about their children's delinquency. Repeatedly, the women said they could only pray for their children and try to encourage them to turn to religion themselves. The women believed their religiosity would function as a means for desistance and self-control. They also hoped religion would have the same influence on their children. Formerly

incarcerated women commonly used religion and faith-based recovery programs and transition homes in their reintegration and recovery.

Lastly, over half of the women expressed concerns that their drug addiction had affected their children's physical health and wellbeing. The women disclosed a number of their children's illnesses including, cerebral palsy, cardiac conditions, asthma, Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder, cognitive development delays, hearing impairments, and behavioral issues. The illnesses and disorders were linked to interpersonal issues, such as their substance abuse. Their drug addictions could have had an effect on their children's physical health, especially when they used illicit drugs while pregnant. However, environmental and structural problems present in the women's lives also could have affected their children's health. Living in impoverishment, disadvantaged neighborhoods, and cumulative effects of interlocking forms of oppressions severely limited the women's options to obtain proper medical care, especially prenatal care. These conditions culminated in an increased likelihood of pregnancy complications, including preterm births, low-birthweight deliveries, higher levels of depressive symptoms, and higher rates of gestational illnesses (Collins, et. al., 2004; Mustillo, et. al., 2004). When their involvement in illegal activities is considered within this context, it seems evident that their children experience an increased likelihood of adverse health conditions that go beyond solely their mother's influence.

For some of the women in this study, facing the effects of their involvement in illegal activities was too overwhelming and they were overcome with guilt. Further immersion in addiction or distancing themselves from their children so they were not faced with the constant reminder of the effects of their addiction were common strategies used to cope with their negative feelings of guilt and shame. For these women, it seemed that coming face-to-face with

the consequences of their drug addiction on their children was too much of a risk to their attempts to recover from the addiction and move forward.

While the women mostly felt guilt and shame concerning the effects of their illegal activities on the children, their perception of their children's responses to their involvement in illegal activities and history of incarceration varied. Some of the children felt relieved, curious, upset, and traumatized, according to their mothers. As expected, the women generally perceived their children's response negatively. That is to say, they believed their children had negative reactions to their incarceration and involvement in illegal activities. The findings indicated that this could be connected to the women's own feelings of guilt and shame about their mistakes that they may have projected onto their children. That does not mean the children did not have negative reactions, just that the women's perception may be influenced by their subjective feelings about their criminality and incarceration. The experience of explaining their separation to the children seemed difficult for the women because it meant they had to discuss actions that did not show them in a positive light with their children. Overall, speaking with their children was a powerful moment in the women's lives and required a great deal of humility and patience on their part.

The women's relationships with their children were complex because they represented sites of shortcomings both in their maternal role and in their mothering process. However, rebuilding a relationship with the children was viewed as a new opportunity to excel in the maternal role. The women were keenly aware of their mistakes with their children but they were just as aware of their proud moments in being mothers to them. The findings show that many of the women were most proud when their children had developed positive character traits, achieved educational and career milestones, and had desisted from illegal activities. All of these

areas illustrate the normative expectations that mothers tend to have for their children, however for the women in this study they also suggest a preoccupation with the effects of their involvement in illegal activities and incarceration. The guilt, anxiety, and fear that the women seemed to carry when disclosing their children's delinquency dissipated when discussing how proud they were that their children had not also engaged in illegal activities. They were proud that despite the challenges their children faced, both connected and not to the women's past mistakes, their children graduated from high school or college, were respectful, and had never been incarcerated. In the case of the women in this study, they were most proud that their children had not followed in their father or mother's footsteps by engaging in illegal activities.

In short, embodying the maternal role was challenging for the women in this study because it elucidated the tensions between internalized constructions of normative motherhood and the women's lived experiences as criminalized Black women who are mothers from disadvantaged backgrounds. Their expectations of motherhood were affected most profoundly by the influence of their involvement in illegal activities, particularly drug addiction. Also, concurrent prosocial and antisocial outcomes due to the effects of significant relationships with primary maternal figures and their children complicated their engagement in the mothering process.

2. **Managing a criminalized identity**

While the women in this study experience motherhood as a duality in which their attempts to meet normative expectations about motherhood conflicts with their lived experiences as Black mothers, they also must manage a criminalized identity that conflicts with their maternal role and performance of tasks associated with mothering. Many of the women in this study described having engaged in illegal activities for decades and in consequence, had been

incarcerated multiple times across their lifespan, this was especially true for those with drug addictions. Consequently, they experienced a series of both voluntary and involuntary interruptions that were detrimental to their mothering process and to their relationships with loved ones, particularly their children. However, the findings revealed that although the women's incarceration was a forced interruption of the mothering process, while the women acknowledged it was a costly interruption, it was merely another interruption in an already disrupted maternal process. In fact, incarceration seemed to be a logical extension of the intermittent interruptions in the mother role, which began earlier alongside their involvement of illegal activities.

The women were encumbered with managing a maternal identity shift in order to resume mothering following a series of interruptions derived from their involvement in illegal activities and subsequent incarceration. Meanwhile, simultaneous management of the effects of a criminalized identity overshadowed the performance of tasks associated with the role of mother. Instead of embodying the normative role of the ever-present, self-sacrificing, and nurturing mother, the women attempted to negotiate negative relationships with partners and other family members while surviving economic marginalization, and an all-consuming drug addiction. Sadly, it was as if incarceration was merely a subsequent, although influential, step in their life course.

The management of their criminalized identity overshadowed the performance of mothering and maintenance of the maternal role. This contention was best illustrated in the life histories of the women who were recovering from drug addictions. Ten of the twelve women in the study were recovering from drug addictions. The nature of their addiction was such that it “makes you do what you have to do for the sake of one more [high]” (Sonja). Addiction was so

pervasive that it subsumed the maternal identity and ability to mother their children. Therefore, their addictions required constant maintenance in order to desist from further drug usage, recover, and exit a lifestyle in which many had been a part of for decades.

Intense scrutiny and stigmatization of Black women's mothering practices are commonplace even without a criminalized identity. For the women in this study, the stigmatization is magnified due to perceptions of them as unfit or bad mothers. As such, these women and other Black mothers are vulnerable to excessive punitive measures disproportionately taken against them, especially for the use of illicit substances. Neoliberal policy reforms influenced by dominant narratives about Black mothers disproportionately target pregnant, addicted Black mothers with prosecution instead of treatment; these narratives lead to the passage of welfare legislation that unfairly furthers the economic marginalization of Black mothers and their children, and punitive processes that find Black mothers unfit to mother their children, thereby justifying their removal from their mothers' care (Gustafson, 2011; Richie, 2012; Roberts, 1997, 2002). These policies extend the long arm of punishment and they pit criminalized Black mothers needs against their children's instead of viewing them as linked.

Commonly, women's involvement in illegal activities is connected to their significant relationships, whether with partners, children, or other family members (Covington, 2005; O'Brien, 2001). As indicated by the findings, involvement in illegal activities for 11 of the 12 participants coordinated with challenging circumstances in their significant relationships, including maintaining intimate relationships with drug-addicted and/or drug-dealing partners or unfaithful partners. Their partner's drug usage and dealing served as a pathway to addiction and eventual incarceration for a number of women. First, their intimate relationships with drug dealers provided "easy access" (Candice) to a drug supply and a "downward spiral" (Camille). In

accordance with other studies on drug-addicted women, engaging in illicit drug use with their partner's sometimes serves as a method to intimately connect with their partner (Richie, 1996). These circumstances complicated the women's lives because their partner's drug addiction at times impeded their maternal role as the women had to focus on their partner's problem.

Once the relationship ended, the women had to go out of the home to maintain their addictions. In turn, they were vulnerable to arrest, increased risks to their wellbeing, and further immersion into the addiction lifestyle. Immersion into the drug addiction lifestyle directly influenced the women's maternal role and abilities to care for their children. The sustained and repeated absenteeism damaged their relationships with their children and by extension with other loved ones. The children's negative reactions to their mother's absences while in their addictions were regrettable and the participants understood their children's worries for their wellbeing while away from home during their addictions even if they were unable to assuage them. A number of the women perceived behavioral changes in their children, which they linked to their involvement in illegal activities. As a result, the children were further alienated from their mothers and often refused contact with them. Disruptions of the maternal process were prolonged and more frequent as their addiction intensified.

Reciprocally, the drug addiction intensified as their maternal process became more complicated. Immersion into the culture of drug addiction deepened with the loss of custody of their children. Although there had been prior intermittent physical, emotional, and mental interruptions in the maternal role and mothering process, many of the women described feeling a sense of loss and guilt concerning the removal of their children. Subsequently, further immersion into their drug addiction became an escape and coping mechanism for dealing with these feelings. The lifestyle of addiction was such that consideration of the loss of their children was

not a focal point. A number of the women in the study recalled feeling that they “had nothing left to do” with their children gone but to go deeper into their addiction. In fact, many of the women recalled feeling their children were better off in the care of others.

While the complications associated with the maternal role are easily identifiable for the women with drug addictions, the two participants without drug addictions also faced difficulties. The challenges they faced were directly related to their maternal role, given the illegal activities for which they were incarcerated, child battery and forgery. The forced interruption of their maternal process indicated a profound shift in their maternal identity because both had no prior contact with correctional agencies. For example, Alana linked her forgery conviction to a lack of economic means to give her children the materials they desired. While most women in this study were somehow involved in some form of illegal activities for financial gain, as is common for female offenders (Carson and Sabol, 2012; Department of Justice, 2011; Greenfield and Snell, 1999), Alana’s situation was unique among the other women because she utilized illegal means to express her love to her children via purchasing whatever they desired. This is the manner in which her grandfather showed his love for her. His example of affection was significant for her because he was the only parental figure that she identified as having truly loved her. Learning to manage her desire to express her love for her children in this manner while attempting not to engage in illegal activities any longer or return to prison, requires mitigating a level of the guilt associated with the absence from the children’s lives.

Coming to terms with the manner in which incarceration facilitated a disruption in their mothering process seemed easier for the women who had experienced multiple incarcerations. The women who had been incarcerated multiple times exuded less trepidation about the kinship care their children received. That is not to say that they did not care that about relinquishing

custody of their children or that multiple incarcerations made it easier to be away from their children, *per se*. However, it seemed that having had multiple interruptions in their maternal process made it easier to accept the arrangements in comparison to the first-timers. Again, they were dealing with long-term drug addictions that physically, mentally, and emotionally consumed their lives and required constant maintenance. Mothering their children was not conducive to this lifestyle, so other caregivers were relied upon to mother the children.

Managing their criminal identity while trying to manage relationships with loved ones proved most difficult for the women in this study. Kinship networks and kinship care historically have been a central component of Black familial arrangements (Collins, 2000), but preexisting familial strain usually connected with prior involvement in illegal activities complicated attempts to maintain or reestablish relationships with kin. For the women with drug addictions, the addiction facilitated family strain and detachment from family members. The women in this study linked the alienation from kin to the shame of having their family members witness the effects of their addiction.

The research findings indicate that the women employed a number of techniques of neutralization (Sykes and Matza, 1957) to cope with the guilt and shame felt when their families witnessed or were critical of their involvement in illegal activities, particularly drug usage. Despite acknowledgement of the illegality of their actions, the majority of the women in the study employed techniques of neutralization protect themselves from being overwhelmed by the guilt and shame they internalized from both themselves and their loved ones (Sykes and Matza, 1957). Keeping a distance from their families, hiding the visible effects of their drug addiction by making sure to “clean up before visiting” (Alisha) family members, and limiting their involvement with others not actively engaged in drug usage (Joyce and Sonja) are some of the

ways the women described keeping the criticisms at bay and minimizing the internal effects of the condemnation they receive from loved ones.

To reiterate, a central finding of this study is that managing the effects of a criminalized identity due to involvement in illegal activities requires constant maintenance that seems to overshadow all other aspects of the women's lives, including their maternal role. The women spoke of their incarceration as a logical extension and expected consequence of their involvement in illegal activities. However, the incarceration experience was still significant when considered in relation to the effects it had on the women's relationship with their children. The findings show a clear distinction between becoming a mother prior to incarceration and then having the maternal process interrupted by becoming involved in illegal activities and subsequent incarceration in comparison to being a mother after these events occurred. In the research sample, ten of the women were already mothers upon their first incarceration experience. As expected, they expressed guilt about having gone to prison and leaving their children behind. However, a number of the women's responses also indicated that being a mother prior to incarceration tapped into their internalized feelings and patterns related to their past experiences with family members. In particular, having children prior to the first incarceration and then going to prison brought forth feelings of abandonment by their own parents. These events represented a continuation of the cycle of absenteeism in the maternal role. The women who disclosed minimal contact with their mother during their childhood connected their own patterns of absenteeism with a "sense of abandonment" (Sonja) about their mother's absence.

When discussing becoming a mother prior to incarceration, the women's responses were self-reflective concerning their personal feelings of guilt and negative feelings about their own

mother's absenteeism. Conversely, the children's needs were the focus of the mothering process when asked about mothering following a period of incarceration. The children's experience of loss because of their mother's incarceration was a central concern, which required coming to terms with the consequences of their involvement in illegal activities on their children. To resume the maternal role after incarceration, repairing the relationship with their children was prioritized, in order to counter an increased likelihood of incarceration for their children (Western and Wildeman, 2008; Wildeman and Western, 2010). Therefore, while managing their own criminalized identity, the findings suggested that many of the women also focused on trying to manage their children's criminalized identity or potential involvement in illegal activities. Five of the women had children who had previously been incarcerated or were incarcerated during the course of the study. Further, the women understood that the chances of their children going to prison were increased by their or their children's father's incarceration experience. An example of this assertion was demonstrated during the ethnographic data collection with both Camille and Candice. Both women had sons who had been involved in illegal activities and who were subsequently incarcerated. Both women had been adamant that patience, understanding, and forthrightness in rebuilding the relationship with the children were key. Like many of the women in the study, they also shared the belief that providing emotional support and being forthcoming about the past was important because it could serve as a warning for the children and dissuade them from repeating the same mistakes.

Facing the consequences of past involvement in illegal activities was a central component of managing their criminalized identity and resuming the maternal role following incarceration. However, they were conflicted about the notion of "making amends." All of the women asserted the importance of being forthright but seemed to respond negatively to the idea of making up for

the past. They reiterated the idea that the past was unchangeable and therefore they were unable to fix what had happened in the past. In essence, the women were attempting to move forward and desired the same for their children. This notion suggested a subjective approach to move beyond the guilt they felt about their past mistakes, which was another method of managing their criminalized identity as they attempted to reintegrate back into society after their imprisonment.

In sum, the findings indicated the women were tasked with managing the effects of their criminalized identity and subsequent incarceration, which at times conflicted with their maternal role and the performance of mothering their children. The women in this study were insightful about the tasks they undertook in order to mitigate the effects of their involvement in illegal activities on their sense of self and their relationships with loved ones. This was especially true with for the women with drug addictions in regard to their immersion in their addiction, which was deepened by the effects of both internal and external influences.

3. **Navigating Reintegration**

This study sought to explore the social organization of motherhood and mothering for a group of Black women who are mothers and have a history of incarceration. As such, the third analytic category that emerged from the research data related to navigating an arduous reintegration process that extends the complications associated with embodying the maternal identity and engaging in the mothering process. The findings in this study indicated that navigating the reintegration process involved developing, maintaining, and demonstrating a sense of personal responsibility; negotiating access to a tenuous familial support system, and successfully negotiating risks associated with returning to their communities. Further, the women were tasked with navigating this system while remaining in compliance with systems of oversight that exacerbate the long reach of punishment.

Reintegration following periods of incarceration is a difficult ongoing process for most offenders returning to the community (Brown and Bloom, 2009; O'Brien, 2001; Petersilia, 2003; Richie, 2001; Travis, 2005). Reintegration is differentiated from reentry in that reintegration refers to an ever-changing longitudinal process of adaptation back into "free society" following incarceration. For most of the women in this study, reentry and reintegration following a period of incarceration involved a longitudinal process with intermittent disruptions of the maternal process caused by their involvement in illegal activities. As such they had to develop a set of skills that would minimize numerous social vulnerabilities, especially those that would increase the likelihood of recidivating.

Reintegration is challenging because most prisoners return to the community and face substantial stigma associated with being a formerly incarcerated individual (Travis, 2005). The effects of stigmatization, the process in which some discrediting characteristic becomes a significant aspect of one's social identity (Goffman, 1963), is essential to contextualizing the women's reintegration process. The majority of the women in this study had been involved in illegal activities and experienced multiple incarcerations for decades. Therefore, the effects of stigmatization on their reintegration process were multidimensional. The loss of familial support, over-surveillance of their behavior, denial of employment, housing, and public economic benefits were but a few of the consequences of stigmatization of their criminalized identity. Research on prisoner reintegration tends to focus on employment, housing, and health and wellbeing services for those returning to the community following incarceration as these areas are vital to reestablishing community ties and reducing recidivism among the formerly incarcerated (O'Brien, 2001; Travis & Waul, 2003; Petersilia, 2004). The stigmatization of the identity of the women in this study impeded their access to these resources.

To navigate reintegration the women had to learn to mitigate the effects of their criminalized background. The development of a sense of personal responsibility that demonstrated rehabilitation and compliance with benchmarks set by oversight authorities, including parole and probation, child welfare, housing authorities, and other public assistance programs, was strongly emphasized by the women. It appeared that the women employed impression management strategies to demonstrate contrition and compliance (Hackett, 2013; Kaplan, 1996). Impression management strategies were useful in distancing one's self from the stigmatized identity and, in turn, accentuating a more positively perceived social identity.

The findings suggest that personal responsibility was derived from the women's assertions about being accountable for their lives and the behaviors that influenced their life choices. Nearly all of the women were insistent that they must make a personal decision to desist no matter the level of support and services available to them. Assuming personal responsibility meant dealing with circumstances that led to their involvement in illegal activities and incarceration. Interestingly, narratives about personal responsibility began as statements about their own desistance and reintegration, and later shifted to conclusions drawn about themselves and other formerly incarcerated individuals, generally. This suggested the women's desire to demonstrate their knowledge of the necessary steps to successfully reintegrate and desist from further involvement in illegal activities, for both themselves and women in similar situations.

Developing and espousing a sense of personal responsibility is a key component to the gender-responsive models of reentry utilized by a number of treatment centers and transition homes (Hackett, 2013). The women advanced a neoliberal ideological frame in that their criminality was the result of individual "bad" decisions instead of being connected to structural inequalities and disadvantages, associated with poverty, racism, sexism, and community

disenfranchisement (Gustafson, 2011; Hackett, 2013; Richie, 2012). These neoliberal strategies of behavior regulation result in a reintegration process organized around adopting an edict that one is solely responsible for their involvement in illegal activities, regardless of the social context in which they reside. Further, the women must demonstrate their repentance by “doing the right things” in order to navigate the reintegration process successfully, particularly when under the surveillance of oversight authorities.

Indication of developing a sense of personal responsibility in attempt to minimize the stigma and demonstrate contrition to oversight authorities was evident when observing Camille’s daily experiences as a Black mother with a history of incarceration. Specifically, as described in the ethnographic findings Camille’s emphasis on “doing the right things” meant organizing her daily life around meeting the requirements set forth by the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), including home visits, regular drug screenings, remaining drug-free, attending parenting classes and support groups, attending Narcotics Anonymous meetings, counseling, and regular weekend visits with her son. While these requirements were in place to ensure Camille’s rehabilitation and fitness to regain custody of her son, they were disconnected from the performance of her maternal role. In essence, motherhood was disconnected from the reintegration process. For Camille and the other women in the study, motherhood was reconceptualized from a role they had a natural right to engage—to a privilege that could be revoked at any time (Brown and Bloom, 2009).

Reintegration is a longitudinal process in which many of the women in this study had engaged in multiple times across their lifespan. The length of time in which their reintegration process progressed depended upon learning to negotiate the risks associated with returning to communities and resuming past associations linked to their involvement in illegal activities. In

order to navigate the reintegration process, the women must cultivate micro-level interactions that minimize the effects of structural practices and policies that exacerbate the enduring challenges they encounter as a result of their involvement in illegal activities and incarceration. Their experiences with motherhood demonstrate the contentious interactions between macro and micro-level processes related to normative conceptions of the mother role and the social stigma of criminalization. These processes interact in such a way that societal responses to mothers with criminalized identities exacerbate the challenges already in place and inhibit positive reintegration experiences.

The interactions between normative conceptions of motherhood and the social stigma of criminalization results in the manifestation of micro-level interactions developed to counteract these effects, both legal and illegal. For instance, these micro-level interactions may include distancing one's self from one's children, preventing family members from witnessing the effects of addiction, or surrounding one's self with individuals engaged in similar activities. The interactions were most evident as the women sought access to familial support during their reintegration.

Access to familial support influenced the women's ability to desist. Reintegration for the women in this study suggests that familial support was available, but not unconditional. Familial support was deeply influenced by a history of sustaining familial strain, which limits access to support for reintegration. The findings also indicated that the family's perception of the women's desistance is correlated with access to support. If family members perceived the women were serious about desisting from further involvement in illegal activities, access to familial support increased. This correlation applies conversely as well, such that as family members perceive the

women to be less serious about desistance, access to familial support lessens (Arditti and Few, 2006).

The study findings also indicated that desistance and familial support were related to the perception of the women's rehabilitation and contrition. Criminal stigmatization affected their family's perception of them as being worthy of support. Stigmatization of individuals occurs as a dialectical process by which one has a spoiled social identity that in turn causes the individual, and, more specifically, their behavior, to be defined as deviant (Goffman, 1963; Schur, 1984). Deviance-defining is constructed through a process based on political and economic power in which those with significant political and economic power are able to label the identity of those with less power as a means of social control (Schur, 1984). In this case, power is not demonstrated solely structurally, but through micro-interactions the women have with formal and informal oversight authorities, including their family members, DCFS caseworkers, employers, public assistance agents, housing officials, and probation or parole officers. These entities maintain power and access to sorely needed resources for reintegration. In turn, the women's vulnerability is exacerbated as they attempt to appease those with the resources they need. Failure to appease these authorities means additional hardships, harsher policy implications, and imprisonment. Conversely, compliance eases oversight stipulations and limitations in attaining resources for reintegration.

The women in this study experienced a reintegration process in which they had to learn to navigate informal and formal systems of oversight. As described previously, their families were an informal oversight system where access to support was dependent upon the women's ability to assert a sense of personal responsibility for their involvement in illegal activities and a dedication to desistance from further criminality. The women in this study demonstrated these

traits through their involvement in support groups, counseling, substance abuse treatment, and job training. During the reintegration process, similar traits must be demonstrated with formal oversight authorities, like probation and parole and DCFS caseworkers. These two agencies were particularly influential in the women's reintegration in that they served as gatekeepers to the resources they needed to transition back into society successfully.

Managing a positive relationship with both the probation and parole officers and DCFS caseworkers could provide the women with access to stable economic resources, jobs, education, substance abuse treatment, and even mothering support. Again, a vast body of research on women's reentry and reintegration has demonstrated that these resources are imperative to women's transition from prison and successful reintegration into the larger society (Bloom, Owen, and Covington, 2005; Diaz-Cotto, 2006; Richie, 2001; O'Brien, 2001; Petersilia, 2004; Travis & Waul, 2003). The majority of the women in the study characterized their interactions with probation and parole officers as helpful to them specifically, when they were in compliance with the stipulations of their community supervision. Given that most of the women had been in contact with probation and parole officers previously, the women were cognizant of both their role and the officer's role during their community supervision. A clear understanding of the power dynamics in the relationship between officer and supervisee was essential to remaining in compliance and getting out of the system.

The relationship with the officer only became difficult or "unhelpful" when the women had relapsed into their drug addiction or other illegal activities. Similar to the relationships with family members, when the officer detected relapse, whether suspected or evidentiary, oversight increased. The penalties for recidivating could be life altering, including loss of housing, removal of children, and incarceration. Unlike the support the women attempted to access from their

family members, recidivating did not always necessitate an immediate denial of resources. The supervision stipulations might tighten, but many times the officers chose to refer the women to services that could help them desist once again. This approach was particularly useful with the women with drug addictions. The women expressed gratitude when the officers provided them with assistance when they relapsed instead of charging them with violating the terms of the oversight stipulations.

At times, the oversight systems worked in conjunction with one another to ensure the women's compliance with the stipulations of their supervision. This was evident with the women seeking to regain their parental rights with their children. Generally, DCFS caseworkers stipulated that family reunification was dependent upon successful completion of probation and parole and meeting benchmarks like providing adequate resources for the children. While the stipulations for community supervision and child welfare authorities were similar, there were subtle differences because the needs of the children must also be considered. Many times, oversight stipulations replicated normative narratives about motherhood and pitted the needs of their children ahead of their mother's needs during reintegration. For reunification to occur, certain benchmarks were stipulated, such as remaining drug-free, attending parenting classes, counseling, finding steady employment, and maintaining a stable living environment. However, meeting these benchmarks can impede the mothering process. The stipulations set forth by the authorities responsibility for the women's supervision can be challenging for most women criminalized backgrounds, but for the formerly incarcerated Black women in this study, they posed difficulties that at times seemed insurmountable, given the cumulative disadvantages associated with their social position and situational context.

The women's resiliency and hopefulness illustrated that they refused to allow an ill-fitting maternal role, a history of involvement in illegal activities, immense poverty and disadvantage, or a difficult reintegration process destroy their aspirations for the future. Despite the challenges the women faced, a sense of hopefulness about their future and their loved ones' future remained. The women in this study articulated hopes and dreams for the future that demonstrated a high level of insightfulness concerning the importance of successful reintegration and recovery. The women understood that reintegration not only affected them, but also their loved ones, especially their children. Although the women's aspirations were subjective to their life histories, there were commonalities found amongst the participants, including desiring ambitions that offered stability, seeking influences that fostered personality and lifestyle changes, and meeting expectations related to the maternal role.

The women's ambitions for stability is linked to the cumulative effects of interlocking oppressions and disadvantage they have experienced across the lifespan. Repeatedly, the women spoke of goals to attain employment, education, reliable transportation, and adequate housing. These educational, career, and material aspirations were symbolic of attainment of socially desirable capital, or the American dream. On a micro-level, attaining these forms of capital was central to counter the instability brought about by their involvement in illegal activities, addiction, and antisocial relationships. Structurally, attaining these forms of capital suggests an attempt to counteract the effects of interlocking oppressions linked to the stigmatization of their social identity as formerly incarcerated Black women who are mothers.

Aspirations for personality and lifestyle changes indicated a desire to achieve socially acceptable character traits that counteract dominant narratives about the women's social identity. During reintegration and recovery, the women were making efforts to "do the right things" and

“get better” by meeting education goals, utilizing available resources, attending support groups, and completing substance abuse treatment. Further, by improving themselves they were also improving their family unit as a whole. For example, the findings showed Paula’s dedication to her recovery and mental health treatment was a central aspect of her attempts to make amends for her son’s shortcoming with his children—her grandchildren. Paula felt a certain level of responsibility to make up for his mistakes, because she linked them to the mistakes in her own mothering process. Other women in the study expressed similar feelings concerning their children. They felt that addressing the problems created by their involvement in illegal activities, facilitated meeting the needs of the family as a whole.

Related to aspirations for personality and lifestyle changes, the women’s hopes and dreams for the future also were connected to expectations associated with the maternal role. Most of the women in this study aimed to maintain a continual presence in their children’s lives in order to disrupt the cycle of absenteeism their children had experienced while they were actively engaged in illegal activities. Further, the two women who regained custody of their young children, both two-year-old sons, hoped to raise their boys to adulthood. These women articulated aspirations that would typically be considered routine for most women who mother, yet for this subgroup of women raising a child to adulthood was seemingly unattainable at numerous points in their lives, given their life experiences.

Generally, the women in this study displayed a positive affect when considering the attainability of their hopes and dreams. Achieving the goals they set for themselves and their children were significant when considered within the larger context of navigating reintegration. Gaining a sense of interpersonal and socioeconomic stability, making changes in their personality and lifestyle, and meeting expectations connected to the maternal role can pose a set

of challenges that can appear to set the women up for failure, given the emphasis placed on the reintegration process they have to navigate. This study's findings indicate that navigating the reintegration process is complicated by tenuous family networks, by sparse community resources, and by systems of oversight that can exacerbate the long reach of punishment. Navigating this process may distract and discourage the women from working to attain their goals. However, when pressed about the attainability of their goals, the women affirmed their sense of personal responsibility for their life choices once again, even in relation to achieving their hopes and dreams.

In sum, findings from this multi-case study indicated that the social organization of motherhood and mothering for a group of formerly incarcerated Black women who are mothers involved managing the conflicts that arise because of the effects of the duality of motherhood. Further, this group of Black women had to learn to manage the effects of their criminalized identity that overshadowed their performance of tasks associated with the mothering process and subsumed their maternal identity. Lastly, the study suggests that navigating the reintegration process while also attempting to embody the maternal role, countering the effects of their involvement in illegal activities, and attempting to remain in compliance with systems of oversight tended to exacerbate the long reach of punishment and furthered the participants' marginalization as Black mothers with criminalized identities.

B. **Discussion**

The discussion section in this chapter extends the analysis of this study by considering the underlying assumptions of this study. These assumptions, presented in chapter 1 of this study, were based on reviewed literature on motherhood, mass incarceration, maternal incarceration, and Black feminist epistemology. In this section, the three research assumptions

underlying this study are discussed in relation to the analytical categories derived from the findings of this study. This section concludes with a short discussion of the effects of possible researcher bias in the interpretation of the study's findings.

The first assumption of this study is that upon release the formerly incarcerated women in this study would want to immediately regain custody of their children. This assumption was based on central tenets of normative constructions of motherhood, which include the notion of continual care or presence in the children's lives. The first assumption was partially true in that, theoretically, many of the women desired to be with their children since their release from incarceration. Realistically, they understood that the challenges of embodying the maternal role that they faced prior to their incarceration did not necessarily end upon release. Further, the challenges presented by navigating the reintegration process posed significant barriers to resuming the mothering process, including lack of adequate housing, income, and employment. This assumption illustrates the duality of motherhood for the criminalized women in this study (described in chapter 4) because it reveals the conflicts between the women's idealized expectations of motherhood and the realities of their lives.

A second assumption underlying this study was that resuming the mothering process would encourage desistance among the women in this study. Again, this assumption demonstrated the tension between the women's internalized expectations of motherhood and the reality of their lives as women involved in illegal activities. The children's dependency on their mothers was expected to compel their mothers from further involvement in illegal activities. The findings indicated that the majority of the women in this study have been engaged in illegal activities for decades and have experienced multiple incarcerations across their lifespan. As such,

these life events facilitated multiple disruptions of the maternal process and interruptions in their contact with their children.

The findings suggested that this assumption was untrue because, for the women in this study, dependency on the part of the children was an added stress with which the women had difficulty coping. Many of the women described a history of coping with the shortcomings in mothering their children using antisocial methods. A number of the women dealt with these challenges by engaging in illegal activities. This method of coping was particularly true of the women with drug addictions. Also, a few of the women described distancing themselves from their children so they would not have to face the consequences of their involvement in illegal activities. Lastly, the women in this study experienced substantial economic marginalization, which exacerbated their concerns about resuming the mothering role. As such, such some of the women disclosed using alternative means, including illegal measures, to meet their children's needs and overcome the economic marginalization they experienced.

The final assumption present at the onset of this study was that women's access to social supports would be negatively impacted by their status as women and mothers with criminalized backgrounds. Consequently, their stigmatization would inhibit their abilities to mother their children. The findings indicated that this assumption held true. The women in this study had been convicted of felony offenses that brought them in to conflict with legislative policies that severely restricted both their reintegration and maternal processes. The women encountered the long reach of punishment that barred some of them from access to certain types of employment, subsidized housing, adequate economic assistance, and educational aid. These resources are essential to the reintegration process; therefore policies that hindered the women from accessing them also complicated their ability to resume the mothering process.

C. **Summary of interpretation of findings**

The objective of the analysis was to demonstrate a multilayered and nuanced exploration of the lived experiences of this group of women, whose voices have been virtually removed from research on motherhood and incarceration. The challenge of undertaking a study of this nature lies in the data collection, analysis, and synthesis of a vast amount of data. This process was completed using both within-case and cross-case data analysis of the findings and expounding on the emergent analytical categories. The qualitative research techniques utilized in this study required the researcher to interpret subjective experiences and synthesize them to form a cohesive narrative about motherhood and mothering with a criminalized social identity.

Black feminist epistemology influenced both the study's methodology and analytical strategy. Using a Black feminist theoretical framework enabled the researcher to maintain the objective of centralizing the women's voices, experiences, and the meanings they gave their experiences. The researcher's interpretation of the findings is particular to the women in this study. As is typically the case with qualitative research, the findings and analysis were not meant to be generalizable to all formerly incarcerated Black women who are mothers. However, this analysis was conducted precisely so that implications drawn from the study may indicate future directions in research with this vastly overlooked subgroup of women.

While conducting this study, the researcher remained aware of her background and experiences as a Black woman whose life has been affected by parental incarceration. As such, she remained cognizant of the potential biases she would bring to the inquiry. The researcher acknowledges that while her background and experiences were valuable in fostering an interest in the topic, they could also serve as a liability and bias her interpretation of the findings. Therefore, in addition to making the assumptions previously outlined explicit at the outset of the

study, the researcher remained committed to critical self-reflection while conducting the research. This was done to ensure she was not allowing her judgments to bias the way she conducted the interviews, observations, and analyzed the data. In particular, the researcher was forthcoming with the women in disclosing her experiences and how they influenced her interest in the topic. Further, she engaged in dialogue with her dissertation advisor when concerns arose that personally affected her abilities to remain objective during the course of the study. Finally, to address issues related to subjectivity, the researcher triangulated the data both during the data collection and analysis processes in order to increase the credibility of the study.

Lastly, the researcher acknowledges that there may be multiple interpretations of the study's findings. As such, it is possible that other researchers may interpret the data differently. However, the analysis is essentially this researcher's exploration of the meanings and understandings this group of formerly incarcerated Black women who are mothers give to their experiences with motherhood and mothering.

VI. CONCLUSION

The lived experiences of the 12 formerly incarcerated Black women explored in this qualitative multi-case study demonstrated how they were mothering within a situational context of criminalized social identities, strained familial relationships, disenfranchised communities, and multiple levels of state surveillance and oversight. The backdrop of mass incarceration and interlocking race, class, and gender oppressions within U.S. social arrangements furthered their vulnerabilities. Despite the cumulative social disadvantages present within their lives, these women maintained a sense of hopefulness for themselves and their children, which served as a beacon during a demanding reintegration process.

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the social organization of motherhood and mothering for formerly incarcerated Black women who are mothers. As described in chapters 4 and 5, the findings illustrated that this process involves embodying an ill-fitting maternal role while managing a criminalized identity and navigating a daunting reintegration process. The study's conclusions address the contentions of the research findings, including: (a) embodying the maternal role represented a duality in which the women attempted to meet interpersonal and sociocultural expectations of motherhood, which conflicted with the realities of the women's lives as Black women with criminalized identities; (b) managing a criminalized identity overshadowed the women's maternal role and mothering process; (c) relationships with loved ones were central even when exhibiting concurrent prosocial and antisocial outcomes on the women's experiences in the maternal role; and (d) navigating the reintegration process was complicated by influences of tenuous familial support, inadequate community resources, and the presence of oversight systems that exacerbated the long reach of punishment. As described in the analysis (chapter 5), three analytical categories emerged from

the study's findings: embodying the maternal role, managing a criminalized identity, and navigating reintegration. These categories form the basis of the conclusions of this study. This study contributes the body of knowledge about the experiences of formerly incarcerated Black women by challenging prevailing narratives about the role of motherhood in women's lives when they have a history of involvement in illegal activities and incarceration. The following is a discussion of the major conclusions of the study. The chapter continues with pragmatic and research recommendations for future work with this subgroup of Black women, and it concludes with the researcher's reflections on conducting this study.

A. **Revisiting the Analytical Categories**

1. **Embodying the maternal role**

An analysis of the research findings highlighted the challenges embedded within the women's attempts at embodying the maternal role and their performance of tasks associated with mothering while desisting from further criminal involvement and reintegrating. The challenges these women encounter are enhanced when viewed within the context of their marginalization as Black women with multidimensional stigmatized social identities. The manifestation of their stigmatization was evident at both the individual and structural levels.

The women's individual stories revealed the internalization of normative expectations of mothers when shifting into the maternal role. At times, dominant narratives of the mother they should aspire to be in order to be perceived as a "good mother" were reiterated. The descriptions tended to be in accordance with the description of normative motherhood presented in chapter 2, which were constructed based on the experiences of White, middle class, heteronormative notions of motherhood. These expectations were in conflict with the women's lived experiences

as Black women from disadvantaged communities who have a history of involvement in illegal activities and incarceration.

The women's interactions with social institutions illustrated the ways in which these authorities reinforced normative conceptions of motherhood such that perceptions of the women's criminalized identity, along with their race, class, and gender, furthered their stigmatization. The institutions that the women interacted with include but are not limited to, correctional agencies and institutions, public assistance, schools, employment agencies, child welfare, health care agencies, housing authorities, treatment facilities, and religious institutions. In the broader context, the interaction between the women's criminalized identity and authorities within these social structures manifested in their social exclusion or limitations from the resources these institutions could provide, such as employment opportunities, economic assistance, and educational opportunities. Further, the women's interactions with these agencies highlight their vulnerability to the complex systems of surveillance, benchmarks, and oversight, which are a byproduct of their reality as Black women *and* mothers with a history of incarceration.

Another conclusion related to the women's abilities to embody the mother role relates to the resumption of the mothering process. Resuming the mothering process is rife with anxiety reminiscent of their experiences as first-time mothers. Therefore, resuming the mothering process following a period of incarceration constitutes a second, first time for the women in this study. Both internal and external perceptions of their abilities to mother their children again hinder their attempts to move beyond their past mistakes. The internalization of normative conceptions of motherhood only furthers their limitations. As a result, prevailing ideologies

about the women's maternal identity take precedence over their own sense of self as Black women and mothers.

It was expected that the women would have internalized many of the tenets of normative motherhood, given that they are reinforced and replicated in many of the institutions and social structures with which the women interacted. What is evident in the stories of the women in this study is that the challenges they encountered because of the effects of their involvement in illegal activities, in conjunction with interlocking oppressions, further their internalization of a number of the negative narratives about themselves as mothers. The women who were successful at mitigating the effects of the internalization of dominant narratives about criminalized Black women and mothers did so by creating a new narrative about them. The findings from the ethnographic data demonstrate Camille's reconceptualization of her maternal role and mothering process. Central to Camille's identity as a second first-time mother was incorporating the resumption of the mothering process with her recovery and reintegration efforts. This meant cultivating a support network of mentors, counselors, members of her support group, and oversight authorities who were invested in her successful resumption of mothering. Camille's experience is indicative of the integrated approach necessary in assisting formerly incarcerated Black women who are interested in resuming the mothering process with their children.

2. **Managing a criminalized identity**

The findings related to managing the criminalized identity suggested that the women were limited by their fears of an imminent relapse, re-arrest, or incarceration, which would highlight their shortcomings in the maternal role and mothering process once more. Sadly, many of the women recovering from drug addictions felt they were of little positive worth to their children and that the children were better off without them. The all-consuming nature of

drug addiction disrupted the maternal process while the women were engaged in mothering and seems to have continued during their recovery. Managing the criminalized identity meant they constantly had to work to maintain their recovery and desistance from further involvement in illegal activities. Therefore, the combination of the women's history of involvement in illegal activities, fears of relapse or recidivism, and the demands of managing internal and external perceptions of their criminalized identity further disconnected them from the mothering process, and, more specifically, their children. Understanding these circumstances is central for practitioners and scholars working with women from backgrounds similar to the women who participated in this study.

Additionally, the findings suggested that the incarceration experience was viewed as an expected consequence of the participants' involvement in illegal activities. Most of the women with drug addictions viewed their incarceration as a relief for their families, a chance to sit still and reflect upon their experiences, and an opportunity to recover from drug addiction. Therefore, while the incarceration was an interruption in their lives and maternal process, the women's characterization of their incarceration suggested that it also served as a type of "time out" for the women to gather themselves and possibly start over upon release. Given the women's immersion in the culture of drug addiction for decades of their lives, the women's perception of their incarceration suggested that although this was a forced interruption in their maternal process, they tended to view their imprisonment as an opportunity to access support services to meet needs that had been neglected while outside correctional institutions.

3. **Influence of prosocial and antisocial relationships**

The findings about the women's relationships indicated that they experienced relationships that tended to produce concurrent prosocial and antisocial influences in their lives.

In line with scholarship on relational theory and criminalized women, the relationships most central to the women's sense of self were also those that seemed to have a negative influence on their lives as women and mothers. Therefore, it can be concluded that given the significant impact of relationships on the women's lives, they had to learn to negotiate relationships in such a way that they can accentuate the prosocial influences while simultaneously mitigating the influences of antisocial relationships.

The negotiation of concurrent prosocial and antisocial relationship influences was most evident with the women's children and primary maternal figures. Many of the women were not content to completely cut off relationships that had an antisocial influence on them. The objective of cutting ties with negative influences was unrealistic, given that many times it would require the women to completely uproot themselves from their families and communities. While cutting ties may remove the antisocial influences, it may also deny them access to the prosocial and affirming aspects of these relationships, which may be tied to their support systems vital to their reintegration.

4. **Navigating Reintegration**

Stipulations within the women's reintegration process extended the disconnection from the mothering process. The formerly incarcerated Black mothers in this study had to decide if and when they would resume the maternal role once they returned to the community while the pressure of meeting numerous benchmarks of the reintegration process complicated the decision. The women also had to strategize how to meet the stipulations of reintegration, which included securing employment, desisting from criminal activities, remaining drug-free, maintaining adequate housing arrangements, attending support groups, completing substance abuse treatment and counseling, and meeting regularly with their probation or parole officer. For the women in

this study, these realities of reintegration extended their disconnection from the mothering process.

Reintegration is a complicated process with stipulations that are disengaged from the realities of being a Black mother raising minor children in an urban environment. This was a particularly acute reality for the women with drug addictions. Nonetheless, the women were faced with the choice of whether to prioritize mothering their children, recovering from addiction, or meeting other reintegration stipulations. It is nearly impossible for women to mother their children without recovering from their drug addiction—a core component of reintegrating successfully—so by default, recovery must take precedence over resuming mothering. Again, the duality of motherhood for the criminalized Black women in this study was evident. They are no longer criminal offenders, but are perceived to be deviant mothers nonetheless because they are violating normative conceptions of maternal roles by privileging their recovery and reintegration over their maternal role even though they have little choice in the matter. Paradoxically, they cannot resume mothering in a prosocial manner without recovering and reintegrating, two processes that are disconnected from their mothering process.

While this study stems from the researcher's interest in the influence of normative conceptions of motherhood, mass incarceration, and interlocking oppressions as experienced by formerly incarcerated Black women who are mothers, the contextual backdrop of the disproportionate effects of incarceration on the Black family unit and the lack of scholarly literature on formerly incarcerated Black women necessitates this research. This study was not intended to be an overarching narrative of the experiences of all formerly incarcerated Black women who are mothers. However, it was designed to offer four significant contributions to scholarship related to motherhood, incarceration, and interlocking oppressions. First, this study

provided an intersectional understanding of the effects of normative conceptualizations of motherhood in the larger society. Second, this research contributed a broader understanding of the construction of Black motherhood and mothering in an era of mass incarceration. Next, this study broadens criminological understandings of female incarceration and gender-specific approaches to reintegration. Lastly, this research contributed a pragmatic analysis of the far-reaching effects of mass incarceration for a subgroup of women who experience significant stigmatization because of their criminalized social identity.

B. **Implications and recommendations**

The analysis of the findings indicated a number of possible policy implications for legislators, oversight authorities, and criminal justice administrators. First, this study's findings suggested a need to minimize the effects of the erosion of socioeconomic safety nets for women who live in similar contexts as the Black women in this study. Next, child welfare agencies must move away from policies that further criminalize Black women and their families; and progress toward policies and practices that strengthen Black women who are mothers. Lastly, criminal justice policies and practices must be reconfigured such that social problems, like addiction, mental illness, and poverty, are not treated as criminal issues but as social issues that require a more therapeutic and restorative approach. The following discussion will provide an elaboration of these points.

1. **Social service implications**

As the findings indicated, many of the women in this study viewed their incarceration as a chance to recover from the harsh realities of their lives outside of the prison or jail. Although it is understandable, it is extremely troubling that imprisonment would serve as a valid form of access to social service interventions for these women. During the course of this

study, a number of the women characterized their incarceration, as well as that of various family members, as a “blessing in disguise” because they were no longer on the street and needed this “wake up call to get things together.” Imprisonment as a proxy for access to socioeconomic support services is disconcerting in that it is connected to broader social inequities related to the women’s sustained cumulative disadvantages, including a lack of access to physical and mental health care, housing, and substance abuse treatment. This is indicative of the status of disenfranchised residents in urban areas that continue to be divested of essential services that once functioned as safety nets for the most vulnerable of their communities. To address the erosion of socioeconomic safety nets, legislative bodies must reconsider policies barring individuals convicted of felonies from housing and economic assistance, educational financial aid, and employment opportunities, along with limitations on access to health care.

The results of these policies on the lives of those most vulnerable are dire and perpetuate their marginalization, especially for women from similar backgrounds as those in this study. For example, literature on the reintegration processes for women indicted that governmental policies, such as the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity and Reconciliation Act (aka: Welfare Reform Act of 1996), which restrict women’s access to essential social services have not only furthered the women’s economic challenges but these policies also perpetuate criminalized notions of their social identities (Abramovitz, 2006; Brown, 2010; Gustafson, 2009). For the formerly incarcerated Black women in this study, these policies also result in the ideological proliferation of controlling images and stereotypes of Black women and mothers as welfare queens and jezebels. When the women’s criminalization is added to these narratives, restrictive policies are hegemonically enforced as a means to control the behavior of these women.

While this theoretical understanding of the interaction between policies governing access to social services is useful, a pragmatic perspective is also essential. Stipulations in the Welfare Reform Act systematically exclude individuals convicted of felonies from accessing most resources like housing, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits, and medical health care. As a result of the disproportionate representation of Black women among incarcerated women and impoverished women, the women and their children experience the effects of poverty most profoundly. These women have to develop strategies to minimize the effects of their limitations or exclusion from attaining vital resources. These strategies may include actions that further their involvement in illegal activities. For example, policies governing access to public housing call for high levels of monitoring of household configurations, including restricting presence of other formerly incarcerated individuals in the household. Many of the women in this study were involved in relationships with partners who also have been convicted of felonies who may live with them at times, which is not unusual given their immersion in the addiction lifestyle. Stipulations such as these result in developing methods to subvert the restrictive policies, such as not disclosing their partner's presence in the home, which puts the women and their children at risk for eviction (Brown, 2010; Gustafson, 2009).

The reintegration efforts of the formerly incarcerated women in this study were severely impacted by restrictive policies like the Welfare Reform Act. Since its passage, the Welfare Reform Act has greatly decreased the welfare caseload (Abramovitz, 2006), however this reduction was not a result of less impoverished individuals in the U.S. Instead, these restrictions were shown to have furthered the women's economic marginalization, especially for Black women (Abramovitz, 2006; Gustafson, 2009). These policies complicated the women's

reintegration by limiting their access to housing and economic benefits, such as TANF. Reentry and reintegration scholarship shows that formerly incarcerated individuals are also barred from certain types of employment. Therefore, punitive restrictions placed on their access to economic assistance means the entire family unit is punished because the women are usually the head of the household and sole breadwinner.

The limitations placed on formerly incarcerated individuals through restrictive policies, such as those previously described, exacerbate the challenges reintegrating individuals face as a result of their criminality and social marginalization. As such, many of the elements discussed in this study related to the influences of involvement in illegal activities and subsequent incarceration were not unique to just the women in this study, but added to their counter narratives regarding Black women who have been incarcerated and are mothers. These narratives, derived from the women's own words, illustrate the importance of increased and sustained funding for community-based programming to meet the women's social service needs, such as substance abuse treatment, education, housing, mental and physical health care, and employment. Scholars repeatedly have shown these services to be vital to the women's survival as Black women, as formerly incarcerated individuals, and as mothers, yet the provisions have been eroded continuously and replaced by systems of surveillance and oversight.

Increased funding for social services, including the repeal of stipulations in the Welfare Reform Act that bar the women from access to housing, economic, and physical and mental health assistance is central to the women's transition back into society following incarceration. Further, access to safe and secure housing is also essential to the women's reintegration and possible resumption of the mothering process. As was demonstrated in Camille and Monique's experiences, attaining housing that is located in neighborhoods not associated with their

involvement in illegal activities was crucial to their abilities to resume the mothering process. Access to any available housing is not enough. But instead, social services agencies, like the housing authority, should be concerned that returning the women to disadvantaged communities associated with their involvement in illegal activities increases their vulnerability to recidivate. Also, when the only housing options available to formerly incarcerated Black women are those in low-income, high-crime areas, the women are faced with the decision of whether raising their children in that environment is in the children's best interest. Social service caseworkers must prioritize these issues when implementing social service interventions with formerly incarcerated Black women who are mothers.

2. **Child welfare implications**

As indicated by the findings in this study, custody arrangements and resuming custody of children following interruptions in the mothering process are greatly influenced by the interventions of and relationships with the child welfare caseworker. These oversight authorities have the power to help or hinder the women's efforts, which can either further desistance or foster subsequent involvement in illegal activities. For example, a number of the women reported that while they believed their child welfare caseworker was working in the best interest of their children, they also felt the removal of their children exacerbated their drug addictions. However, the disproportionate representation of Black children in the child welfare system has been well documented, as well as the factors contributing to disproportionality (Brown, 2010; 2012; Dettlaff and Rycraft, 2010; Roberts, 2002; White, 2006). The women in this study were affected by individual and family risk factors, but most significantly by cultural biases held by child welfare workers connected to the women's abilities to mother and the perceived risk to the child (Dettlaff and Rycraft, 2010). In the case of the formerly incarcerated

Black women in this study, the stigmatization of the women's maternal identity represented the interaction between the ideological function of images of the welfare queen, the immoral and irresponsible Black mother, and the controlling function represented by restrictive public policies. The stigmatization of their maternal identity leaves the women disproportionately vulnerable to having their parental rights terminated. These consequences are related to the women's criminalization just as much as it is connected to prevailing ideologies about the women's abilities to mother their children. As a result, there is a lack of family reunification for Black families (Roberts, 2002; White, 2006).

Restrictive and disruptive child welfare policies such the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA) exacerbated the separation of Black families, particularly when the primary caregiver, who is most likely the mother, has been incarcerated or has been away from the children for long periods of time. Definitions of mothers' "fitness" and the criteria for termination of parental rights need to be reconsidered in light of the increase in sentence length for women convicted of crimes. It is imperative that child welfare authorities and social services providers incorporate a reconceptualization of the maternal role for this subgroup of women that embraces the diverse configuration of the women's families. This is particularly true for women recovering from a long-term drug addiction. Reconceptualizing maternal roles for formerly incarcerated Black mothers means altering intervention approaches that focus on individual behavioral factors and focusing on addressing structural issues that influence individual behaviors. For instance, instead of terminating a mother's parental rights due to the effects of her substance abuse, primary approach should focus on addressing the underlying issues of her addiction, especially as they relate to her maternal role and mothering process.

As formerly incarcerated mothers, many who are not actively engaged in the mothering process, they still experienced the effects of the interaction of their criminalized identity with their maternal identity in relation to mothering. At times it is not in the best interest of the women or their children for the mother to resume primary custody. They may no longer be involved in illegal activities but the same dominant narratives about their maternal role, specifically related to the lack of continual presence in their children's lives, still apply and perpetuate their stigmatization. Further, they may be intermittently involved in mothering their children or planning on resuming the role. Child welfare workers should not penalize the women for this circumstance, but instead work to lessen the impact of policies that destroy Black families while emphasizing approaches focused on maternal support for reintegration and reunification if appropriate. At the same time, child welfare workers must move away from the implementation of stipulations in policies like ASFA that further criminalizes their maternal identity and accelerates the legal disruption of their mothering process in such dramatic ways.

3. **Criminal justice interventions**

Criminal justice policies and practices overlap, and at times subsume, social service and child welfare policies and practices. The women in this study experience the far-reaching effects of crime control policies and mass incarceration at multiple points in their progression through the system. Prior to their incarceration, many of the women lived in communities under continuous surveillance and oversight by numerous criminal justice agencies, such as police officers, probation and parole officers, and drug enforcement agents. They were constantly vulnerable to being “caught up” in law enforcement efforts, as was evident in ethnographic findings that described Candice's experience of returning to her community in order to help her son with bail money. Candice's feelings of vulnerability were connected to the

stigma she carries as a recovering addict. Policing policies that allow for indiscriminate stops and searches of individuals suspected of illegal activities intensify the vulnerable feelings brought about by the stigma of ex-offender, as experienced by the women in this study. These policies are particularly significant for Black men and women, whose bodies are vulnerable to state-sanctioned surveillance and oversight regardless of their experiences with criminal justice authorities.

Because criminal justice approaches to social problems have hastened the erosion of both social service interventions and family reunification efforts through child welfare interventions, they inhibit socially just approaches to address the issues that arise for formerly incarcerated populations. This evident in the reliance on criminal justice approaches to deal with drug addiction instead of using a therapeutic approach, which another agency may be better equipped to address. For example, the policies under the Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act (commonly referred to as the War on Drugs) disproportionately impact Blacks as individuals, families, and community members, especially related to sentencing guidelines and mandatory minimums. Black women who have crack cocaine addictions receive much longer prison sentences than their counterparts using powder cocaine (Brown, 2010a, 2010b). These policies affect the women's mothering process by lengthening the disruptions in their mothering process. Although these disproportionalities have been somewhat minimized, Black women are still overrepresented among incarcerated populations.

The experiences of the formerly incarcerated Black women in this study have pragmatic implications for criminal justice policies related to substance abuse. First, substance abuse arrests should primarily be deferred from the criminal justice system to therapeutic treatment programs that can better address addiction issues. More frequent usage of comprehensive diversion

programs and alternative sentencing should be normalized approaches used to treat not only the women's drug addictions but also other co-occurring disorders, like mental health issues, that inhibit the women's recovery and reintegration.

Second, criminal justice agencies responsible for oversight of formerly incarcerated Black women, such as probation and parole, generally are ill equipped to function in a therapeutic manner as a social worker or social service caseworker would. Therefore, issues related to reintegration and the mothering process should be taken out of the jurisdiction of corrections authorities. If this is not possible, oversight officials should be trained to focus on reintegration efforts that integrate intersectional maternal-focused approaches. This means that planning for community supervision should include treatment, access to housing, education, and employment opportunities that integrate interventions that address the disproportional effects of structural inequalities on criminalized women who also are mothering. This also means prioritizing approaches that address the needs of both the mother and her children, if they are still in contact, regardless of reunification possibilities.

Lastly, aftercare and supervision should focus on lessening the impacts of the "long arm of punishment" while enhancing support systems. Community supervision should focus on sustained and progressive reintegration, including desistance, substance abuse recovery, and prioritized mothering support. This approach can address the lack in continuity of care for drug addiction, physical and mental health-related issues, and mothering in the lives of women like those in this study.

In conclusion, a comprehensive and intersectional understanding of the ideological influences of dominant narratives about Black women's maternal role and mothering practices must be adopted in social service, child welfare, and criminal justice interventions to adequately

address the needs of formerly incarcerated Black women who are mothers. Further, decarceration efforts and alternative sentencing should be prioritized in addressing the non-violent offenses committed by Black women who are mothers. The women in this study were differentially affected by legal, gender-based, and family-focused social policies because of the effects of their criminalized social identity as mothers and Black women involved in illegal activities. Therefore, a broadening of gender-specific reintegration approaches to incorporate the nuances of social roles, contexts, and intersectional analytical paradigms when addressing the needs of these women. Thus, social services, child welfare, and oversight interventions must address these differences in both policy and practice.

C. **Directions for subsequent research**

Research on gender-specific approaches to prisoner reentry has been instrumental in centralizing the significance of gender constructions on female offenders' lived experiences and their post-incarceration experiences. However, the scholarship lacks a thorough analysis of the interactions of race, class, and gender constructions on the post-incarceration experiences of formerly incarcerated Black women, a group seriously understudied despite their sustained disproportionate rates of incarceration. The findings from this dissertation indicated that for the formerly incarcerated Black mothers in this study, the navigation of complex systems of surveillance, benchmarks, and oversight, conflicts with their reality as Black women, mothers, and partners with a history of incarceration.

While this study was focused specifically on the women's experiences as mothers, it suggests new research questions concerning the process of navigating a complex system comprised of interconnected social institutions, given their vulnerable social position as ex-offenders from impoverished communities of color. Specifically, the operationalization of

dimensions and indicators related to compliance with the benchmarks set forth by institutions such as the child welfare system, correctional agencies, and public assistance agencies would be worthy of further study. A further exploration of whether race and class have differential effects on compliance with benchmarks set forth by such institutions as part of the reintegration process also warrants further study.

This study also has research implications for study on the women's relationships with their children. There are a number of studies concerning parental incarceration, however few focus specifically on intergenerational cycles of incarceration for formerly incarcerated Black women who are mothers and their children. This lack of scholarship is especially significant when considering the prevalence of incarceration in Black families and the growing criminalization of Black youth. The correlation between the lack of continuity of care and delinquency among their minor children generates new research questions for further study. For example, researchers should explore the effects of criminalized mothers spending long periods of time away from their children and investigate how these periods of absence from their children affects their self-concept as mothers *and* women. This study also prompts questions about the coping mechanisms the women use to make sense of their children's delinquency.

Lastly, the findings suggest that future explorations of the duality of motherhood for criminalized Black women who are mothers is central to understanding the experiences of women mothering in the face of multiple levels of stigmatization. In fact, a keen understanding of the tension between the women's lived experiences and the internal and external expectations of them within a context of hegemonically enforced maternal roles will illuminate both interpersonal and structural limitations placed on them as women sitting in the margins of interlocking race, class, and gender forms of oppression. Interdisciplinary research designed to

test the effects of the tensions between normative expectations of mothers and the reality of their experiences as women with criminalized identity should be used to investigate the interactions between micro level processes, such as involvement in illegal activities, and structural barriers to mothering, reintegration, and desistance, such as limitations on access to vital resources post-incarceration. This approach would focus on illuminating triggers that compel the women onto a pathway to incarceration and the structural limitations on their abilities to desist and achieve their aspirations, as Black women and mothers.

In sum, this study suggests future directions in research that explore the experiences of formerly incarcerated Black women who are mothers. Increasing scholarship with this neglected subgroup of women is imperative to understanding the effects of criminalization of socialized identities and the long-term effects of stigmatization on the maternal role and mothering process. Further, this research centralizes intersectional analyses in the studies on incarcerated mothers, such that the needs of those differentially affected by social policies and criminal justice practices are met.

D. **Reflections**

“Yeah, so how many years is that held against you for your mistake because nobody’s perfect? How long is it held against you for the mistakes that you made, especially when you are trying to make up for the mistakes? I know I have a long road ahead of me. I didn’t get this way overnight so I’m not going to get back overnight. But give me some idea of how long! [laughs] You know!” (Camille)

Camille’s words provided the perfect summation of the overarching sentiments of the women in this study as they shared their stories during the course of this project. This statement had a profound effect on me because I had no response to her inquiry. After years of reading and

writing about this topic, I was speechless to provide an answer to a really simple set of questions. From that moment, Camille's words became a primary motivation to complete this study. During the 6 months I spent observing Camille and Candice, I witnessed their attempts to transcend the long reach of punishment. Like the women described in the initial stage of the study, both Camille and Candice prioritized "doing the right things" in order to minimize the far-reaching effects of their history of illegal activities and avoid further disruptions in their mothering process. They also wanted to demonstrate their rehabilitation in order to move on beyond their mistakes. I witnessed the frustrations they experienced when job opportunities did not materialize or the economic assistance they expected was hindered. I observed the fear and disappointment in Candice's eyes when returning to her former community in order to collect money to post bail for her son, yet returning also put herself at risk of re-arrest due to high levels of law enforcement surveillance of that space. I also observed their accomplishments when they met a goal set early in their reintegration. Accompanying Camille while she reenrolled in college was one such moment. Observing the strong bond between Candice and her grandchildren was another. Candice had spent nearly thirty years in her drug addiction, which destroyed her mothering process, therefore witnessing the love and care she shares with her grandchildren is especially poignant. Both women had lost hope of having these opportunities at numerous points in their lives due to the effects of their involvement in illegal activities and multiple incarcerations.

Once more, locating myself in this study was essential in conducting this research. Sharing pieces of my background of having been a child who had experienced parental incarceration enhanced the rapport generated with all of the women in this study, especially Camille and Candice. This little bit of information seemed to transform the tone of the interviews

and observations. The women became more forthright about their own experiences because I was no longer completely disconnected from the topics they discussed. As reiterated by Candice and Camille in multiple ways, my investment in their experiences was evident. Throughout the course of this study, I felt that disclosing my background balanced the limitations their perceptions of my role as a privileged researcher had on their willingness to share. My status as a Black woman researching other Black women and my education were not enough to develop the level of rapport necessary to be granted the access I was given to these women's lives. These circumstances alone were not enough for them to believe I could understand, demonstrate compassion, and tell their stories properly.

In closing, the importance of this research was not lost to me. I understand the responsibility that comes with telling these women's stories in ways that privilege their voices and their experiences. I use a Black feminist theoretical frame of analysis for that reason. It is not enough to abstractly research and write about the lives of socially marginalized women. Only through the embodiment of social justice praxis, in line with Black feminist epistemology, can Camille's questions of "how long" be addressed, such that she and the other women in this study will no longer have to endure the long reach of punishment. As a researcher, I acknowledge that this study is but a start of a conversation aimed at providing answers to Camille's questions.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A Institutional Review Board Approval Notice

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO

Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS)
Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research (MC 672)
203 Administrative Office Building
1737 West Polk Street
Chicago, Illinois 60612-7227

Approval Notice Continuing Review

September 26, 2013

LaTosha Traylor, MA
Department of Criminology, Law, and Justice
1007 W. Harrison Street,
Chicago, IL 60612
Phone: (312) 996-2383 / Fax: (312) 996-8355

RE: Protocol # 2010-0603
“The Organization of Motherhood and Mothering for Black Women Who are Mothers and have a History of Incarceration”

Dear Ms. Traylor:

Your Continuing Review was reviewed and approved by Members of IRB #2 by the Expedited review process on September 24, 2013. You may now continue your research.

Please note the following information about your approved research protocol:

<u>Protocol Approval Period:</u>	September 24, 2013 - September 24, 2014
<u>Approved Subject Enrollment #:</u>	20 (13 Subjects enrolled; enrollment closed)
<u>Additional Determinations for Research Involving Minors:</u>	These determinations have not been made for this study since it has not been approved for enrollment of minors.
<u>Performance Sites:</u>	UIC
<u>Sponsor:</u>	None
<u>Research Protocol(s):</u>	a) Motherhood and Incarceration for Black Women study; Version 2; 10/11/2010
<u>Recruitment Material(s):</u>	N/A – Research limited to data analysis only.
<u>Informed Consent(s):</u>	N/A – Research limited to data analysis only.

Your research continues to meet the criteria for expedited review as defined in 45 CFR 46.110(b)(1) under the following specific categories:

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(6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes., (7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including but not limited to research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Please note the Review History of this submission:

Receipt Date	Submission Type	Review Process	Review Date	Review Action
09/19/2013	Continuing Review	Expedited	09/24/2013	Approved

Please remember to:

→ Use your **research protocol number** (2010-0603) on any documents or correspondence with the IRB concerning your research protocol.

→ Review and comply with all requirements on the enclosure,
"UIC Investigator Responsibilities, Protection of Human Research Subjects"
[\(<http://tiger.uic.edu/depts/ovcr/research/protocolreview/irb/policies/0924.pdf>\)](http://tiger.uic.edu/depts/ovcr/research/protocolreview/irb/policies/0924.pdf)

Please note that the UIC IRB has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

Please be aware that if the scope of work in the grant/project changes, the protocol must be amended and approved by the UIC IRB before the initiation of the change.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research. If you have any questions or need further help, please contact OPRS at (312) 996-1711 or me at (312) 355-2939. Please send any correspondence about this protocol to OPRS at 203 AOB, M/C 672.

Sincerely,

Jewell Hamilton, MSW
 IRB Coordinator, IRB # 2
 Office for the Protection of Research

Subjects

Enclosure(s):

cc: Lisa G. Frohmann, Department of Criminology, Law, and Justice, M/C 141
 Beth Richie, Faculty Sponsor, Department of Criminology, Law, and Justice, M/C 347

APPENDIX B Eligibility screening form

Researcher: Hello. Thank you for calling about participating in the Motherhood and Incarceration Study. My name is LaTosha Traylor and I am a graduate student from the Department of Criminology, Law, and Justice at UIC. This research is a part of the requirements I need to complete to obtain my PhD.

First, I want to tell you a bit about the study. If you qualify and agree to take part in the study, we will set up a time to meet and talk in more detail.

You can participate in this study if you are a Black or African American woman, 18 years or older, have at least 1 child under 18, and have been in jail or prison.

If you qualify, by that I mean if this sounds like you, you can take part in the study.

Does this sound like you?

Potential Participant: Yes/No

If no—Researcher: Thank you for your time, but unfortunately I cannot include you in this study because it focuses on Black women's experiences as a mother who's been in jail or prison and has a child under 18. But thank you for your interest in my research.

If yes—Researcher: Now, I would like to tell you about the study. You are being asked to take part in a 1-2 hour interview where I will ask you questions about your life, family, community, and experiences as a mother. I will ask you to sign a form consenting to be interviewed and give you a copy of it. Then, I'll start asking you the interview questions. I will tape-record your answers and later type them up for my dissertation. Your name or anything else that can identify you will not be included and I will erase the tape after I've typed up your answers.

I do this to make sure you have as much privacy and confidentiality possible in answering my questions in the interview. And I want you to feel comfortable answering my questions.

Do you have any questions for me at this time? (*If yes, address them immediately. If no, continue*)

I want to make sure you know that taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You can decide if you want to participate or not. Also, if you decide not to take part in the study, it will not affect your current or future relationship with the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Researcher: Would you like to participate in an interview?

Potential Participant: Yes/No

If no—Researcher: Thanks for your interest in the study. Take care.

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If yes—Researcher: Great! Let's set the arrangements to meet for your interview.

When can you meet? _____

Where would you like to meet for the interview? _____

Lastly, you will be given a \$20 gift card for answering my interview questions. If you decide you do not want to be a part of the study after we begin, your pay will not be affected.

Do you have any questions at this time? If you have any questions later, feel free to contact me at 312-860-4458.

Thanks for calling. See you soon.

RESEARCHER: *This interview contains questions designed to explore the research issues of this study: **how motherhood and mothering are organized for Black women who have been incarcerated.** Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary and you may stop the interview at any time. Your responses will be completely anonymous and confidential. The audio-recordings will be deleted after the interview has been transcribed and all identifiers will be removed from the transcripts so your identity is kept confidential.*

I. BLACK WOMAN (BACKGROUND WITH INCARCERATION AND MOTHERHOOD)

1. When did you become a mother?
 - a. How did you feel about it?
 - b. Do you feel you were ready to be a mom?
2. How did you learn to be a mother to your children?
3. What did you think being a mother would feel/be like?
4. Has being incarcerated changed that for you?
 - a. If yes, how?
5. Were you a mom before or after your first time being incarcerated?
 - a. How do you feel about that now?
6. What do you think makes a “mother” a mother?
7. What do you think is most important about being a mom?
 - a. How has your incarceration affected that for you?
8. Describe what it takes to be a “mother” after you’ve been incarcerated?
9. Describe what has been most challenging for you about being a mom?
 - a. Has your incarceration affected that for you?
10. Who or what has influenced you **positively** about being a mother?
 - a. What about **negatively**?
11. Describe some of the hopes/dreams you have for your life.
 - a. How do you feel when you think about them?

II. FAMILY (CHILDREN, CAREGIVERS, PARTNERS, OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS)

1. What’s your relationship like with your family members?
 - a. Who do you consider to be your family?
2. Describe how your family has supported you since your release from jail/prison?
3. Describe some of the ways it’s hard to get support from your family?
 - a. Why?
4. **Now, I want to talk a bit about your child(ren).** Tell me about them.
5. Did you stay in touch with your child(ren) during your incarceration?
 - a. If so, was it easy/hard to stay in touch with them?
 - i. Why/Why not?
 - b. If not, how did you feel about keeping in touch (or not) with them while you were incarcerated?
6. Do your children live with you full time?
 - a. If so, how do you feel about them living with you?

APPENDIX C (continued)

- b. If NOT, where are they living?
 - c. If NOT, how do you feel about them NOT living with you?
- 7. Does someone help you take care of your child(ren)?
 - a. If so, who?
- 8. What makes it easy/hard to have your children live with you?
- 9. Have you (or someone else) talked to your child(ren) about your incarceration?
 - a. If so, what did you/they tell them?
 - b. How do **they** feel about it?
- 10. How did you feel about telling your child(ren) about your incarceration?
- 11. What are you proud of about your children?
- 12. What would you change about your child(ren's) lives?

III. COMMUNITY (NEIGHBORHOOD, COMMUNITY MEMBERS)

- 1. After your incarceration, did you return to the same community/neighborhood where you lived before the incarceration?
 - a. If so, how did/do you feel about coming back?
 - b. If not, why didn't you go back to that community/neighborhood?
- 2. (*If children live with her*) How do you feel about your children living in this community/neighborhood?
- 3. Do you feel like you had/have support in the community/neighborhood to stay out of prison?
 - a. If so, how has the community been supportive?
 - b. If not, why isn't the community/neighborhood supportive?
- 4. Do you feel like you had/have support in the community to be a mother to your children?
 - a. If so, how has the community been supportive?
 - b. If not, why isn't the community/neighborhood supportive?
- 5. Do people in the community know you have been incarcerated?
 - a. What do you think they think about your incarceration?
 - b. How do you feel about that?
- 6. Do you feel this community/neighborhood has the services to help you as a mother who's been incarcerated?
 - a. If so, how?
 - b. If not, why?

IV. INSTITUTIONS (SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCIES, SCHOOLS, CHURCH, EMPLOYER, ETC)

- 1. Have you been able to find a job to support yourself and/or your children?
 - a. If so, what do you do?
 - b. If not, why?
- 2. Do you think your incarceration affected being able to find/keep a job?
 - a. If so, how?
 - b. If not, why?
 - c. Are you involved with a church/religious organization?

APPENDIX C (continued)

- d. If so, describe how has this affected your life as a mother who's been incarcerated?
- 3. Are you involved with your child(ren)'s school?
 - a. If so, how do you feel about this?
 - b. If so, how has this affected your life as a mother who's been incarcerated?
 - c. If not involved, why?
- 4. Are you involved in any community groups/organizations that provide support for you as a mother who's been incarcerated?
 - a. If so, what groups/organizations?
 - b. If so, why?
 - c. If not, why?
- 5. Overall, do you think this community/neighborhood has been helpful/harmful to you as a mother who's been incarcerated?
 - a. If so, how
 - b. If not, what's missing?

V. STATE/LEGAL AGENCIES (PAROLE, CHILD WELFARE AGENCIES, PUBLIC ASSISTANCE)

- 1. Do you have to check in with a parole/probation officer?
 - a. If so, how do you feel about this?
 - b. If so, how has this affected your life as a mother?
- 2. Have you had to check in with child welfare or case/social workers since you've been out?
 - a. If so, why?
 - b. If so, how do you feel about this?
 - c. If so, how has this affected your life as a mother?
- 3. Describe how you feel about having contact with these State agencies.
 - a. Do you think they have been helpful/harmful to you as a mother who's been incarcerated?
 - i. If so, how
 - ii. If not, what's missing?

VI. FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

- 1. Is there anything else you think I should know about how motherhood/mothering has been organized for you as a woman who's both a mother and has been incarcerated?
 - a. If so, what else should I know?

RESEARCHER: *This is the end of our interview. Thanks for your participation in this study. Within 30 days, I will contact you for our final meeting session. Please feel free to contact me anytime at XXX-XXX-XXXX.*

APPENDIX D

Stage 1 consent form

University of Illinois at Chicago
Research Information and Consent for Participation in Social Behavioral Research
THE ORGANIZATION OF MOTHERHOOD AND MOTHERING FOR BLACK
WOMEN WHO ARE MOTHERS AND HAVE A HISTORY OF INCARCERATION

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Researchers are required to provide a consent form such as this one to tell you about the research, to explain that taking part is voluntary, to describe the risks and benefits of participation, and to help you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to ask any questions you may have.

Principal Investigator Name and Title: LaTosha Traylor

Department and Institution: Criminology, Law, and Justice, University of Illinois at Chicago

Address and Contact Information: 1007 W Harrison St. (m/c 141) Chicago, IL 60607

Why am I being asked?

This research project has two stages. You are being asked to be a participant in **Stage One** of this research study about the ways in which motherhood and mothering are organized for Black women who are both mothers and have been incarcerated because you are a Black/African American woman, at least 18 years old, the mother of at least 1 minor child, and have been formerly incarcerated and are believe to have information vital to the study of this subgroup of women.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future dealings with the University of Illinois at Chicago. **If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship. Withdrawal from the study will not affect your compensation for your time in the study, up to the point of withdrawal.**

Approximately 20 participants may be involved in Stage One of this research at UIC.

What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the lives and experiences of Black women who are both mothers and have been incarcerated. In particular, I am interested in how motherhood and mothering are organized for Black women who are both mothers and have been incarcerated.

What procedures are involved?

If you agree to participate in **Stage One** of this study, you will be interviewed for 1-2 hours in which you will be asked questions about your life, family, community, and experiences with motherhood and mothering. The interview will be audio-recorded, transcribed, and written up into a dissertation. All identifying information from the transcripts will be removed and locked away in order to maintain your confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity.

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You will be asked to consent to be contacted by the principal investigator within two months following the interview in order to continue in Stage Two of the study. If you agree to be contacted, your contact information will be recorded. All identifying information will be coded immediately in a manner such that all identifying information will be removed and stored in a locked area separate from the master list key that corresponds to the coded information. Please keep in mind that not all participants will be included in Stage Two of the study.

What are the potential risks and discomforts?

To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday life. The primary risk may be temporary or minor discomfort that adults feel while being observed in their daily lives and interviewed about their perceptions and opinions. There is a risk of a breach of privacy, in that others may find out personal information about you that has been collected or disclosed during the research project and/or may find out that you are participating in research. Also there is a risk of breach of confidentiality in that identifiable information may be accidentally disclosed. To minimize these risks, all interview data will be kept confidential and all identifiers will be deleted following transcription to ensure the highest level of privacy and confidentiality possible.

Are there benefits to taking part in the research?

Taking part in this research study may not benefit you personally, but we [researchers] may learn new things that will help others. For example, a better understanding of motherhood for Black/African American women in the US, better understanding of the affects incarceration on Black/African American women, and the creation policy recommendations for providing social support services to Black women who are mothers and have been incarcerated.

What about privacy and confidentiality?

Privacy and confidentiality are of the utmost importance. All identifiers will be removed from my notes and transcripts following analysis and the data will be stored in a locked file cabinet to prevent access by anyone other than authorized personnel. All digital audio-recordings will be deleted following transcription of the interviews and no later than 1 year following the interview. Any documents that include identifying information, such as recruitment documents for Stage Two of this study, will be coded immediately in a manner such that all identifying information will be removed and stored in a locked area separate from the master list key that corresponds to the coded information. When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your identity.

What are the costs for participating in this research?

There are no costs to you for participating in this research.

Will I be reimbursed for any of my expenses or paid for my participation in this research?

You will be compensated for your time in the study with a \$20 gift card for the interview session. Withdrawal from the study will not affect your compensation for your participation in the study, up to the time of withdrawal.

APPENDIX D (continued)

Can I withdraw or be removed from the study?

If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time. You have the right to leave a study at any time without penalty. Withdrawal from the study will not affect your compensation for your participation in the study, up to the time of withdrawal.

Who should I contact if I have questions?**Principal Investigator:**

LaTosha Traylor
312-860-4458
LTRAYL2@uic.edu

Faculty Research Sponsor:

Beth E. Richie, Ph.D.
312-413-1573
richie@uic.edu

What are my rights as a research subject?

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or if you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, including questions, concerns, complaints, or to offer input, you may call the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS) at 312-996-1711 or 1-866-789-6215 (toll-free) or e-mail OPRS at uicirb@uic.edu.

Remember:

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

Signature of Subject or Legally Authorized Representative

I have read (or someone has read to me) the above information. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research. I will be given a copy of this signed and dated form.

Signature

Date

Printed Name

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date (must be same as subject's)

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

APPENDIX D (continued)

Consent for future contact for Stage Two subject recruitment

You are being asked to consent to be contacted by me (the principal investigator) within two months following the interview in order to continue in Stage Two of the study. If you agree to be contacted, your contact information will be recorded. All identifying information will be coded immediately in a manner such that all identifying information will be removed and stored in a locked area separate from the master list key that corresponds to the coded information. Please keep in mind that not all participants will be included in Stage Two of the study.

In Stage Two of this study, I will spend approximately 4-6 months observing you during your daily activities. Each observation session will include casually spending time or “hanging out” with you and recording information on your daily routine and interactions with family, friends, community members, and community agencies in relation to your experiences with motherhood and mothering. Each observation session will last for at least 2 hours.

I may take written notes periodically on the demographics of you and the settings, descriptions of your daily routine and interactions with others, and my own analytic reactions to what I am observing. The notes taken during the observation sessions will be transcribed and analyzed for use in my dissertation. All identifying information from my notes will be removed and locked away in order to maintain your confidentiality. All notes and transcripts will be destroyed following transcription, but no later than 1 year following the conclusion of the observation sessions.

Stage Two of this study carries minimal risk. The primary risk may be temporary or minor discomfort that adults feel while being observed in their daily lives and interviewed about their perceptions and opinions. This risk is minimized because all observations and interview data will be confidential and conducted with written informed consent. In addition, no individual under correctional supervision will be included in the study.

Do you consent to be contacted by the principal investigator for Stage Two?

- ☐ **No.** Refusal to consent to future contact will not affect your compensation for your participation in the Stage One of this study or your relationship with the University.
- ☐ **Yes.** Please provide your current contact information below.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____

Email Address _____

APPENDIX E

Stage 2 consent form

University of Illinois at Chicago
Research Information and Consent for Participation in Social Behavioral Research
THE ORGANIZATION OF MOTHERHOOD AND MOTHERING FOR BLACK
WOMEN WHO ARE MOTHERS AND HAVE A HISTORY OF INCARCERATION

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Researchers are required to provide a consent form such as this one to tell you about the research, to explain that taking part is voluntary, to describe the risks and benefits of participation, and to help you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to ask any questions you may have.

Principal Investigator Name and Title: LaTosha Traylor

Department and Institution: Criminology, Law, and Justice, University of Illinois at Chicago

Address and Contact Information: 1007 W Harrison St. (m/c 141) Chicago, IL 60607

Why am I being asked?

This research project has two stages. During Stage One, you consented to be contacted for participation in Stage Two of this study. You are being asked to continue to be a participant in **Stage Two** of this research study about the ways in which motherhood and mothering are organized for Black women who are both mothers and have been incarcerated because you are a Black/African American woman, at least 18 years old, the mother of at least 1 minor child, and have been formerly incarcerated and are believe to have information vital to the study of this subgroup of women.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future dealings with the University of Illinois at Chicago. **If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship. Withdrawal from the study will not affect your compensation for your time in the study, up to the point of withdrawal.**

Approximately 8 participants may be involved in Stage Two of this research at UIC.

What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the lives and experiences of Black women who are both mothers and have been incarcerated. In particular, I am interested in how motherhood and mothering are organized for Black women who are both mothers and have been incarcerated.

What procedures are involved?

If you agree to participate in Stage Two of this study, I will spend approximately 4-6 months observing you during your daily activities. Each observation session will include casually spending time or “hanging out” with you and recording information on your daily routine and interactions with family, friends, community members, and community agencies in relation to your experiences with motherhood and mothering. Each observation session will last for at least 2 hours. I may take written notes periodically on the demographics of you and the settings,

APPENDIX E (continued)

descriptions of your daily routine and interactions with others, and my own analytic reactions to what I am observing. The notes taken during the observation sessions will be transcribed and analyzed for use in my dissertation. All identifying information from my notes will be removed and locked away in order to maintain your confidentiality. All notes and transcripts will be destroyed following transcription, but no later than 1 year following the conclusion of the observation sessions.

What are the potential risks and discomforts?

To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday life. The primary risk may be temporary or minor discomfort that adults feel while being observed in their daily lives and interviewed about their perceptions and opinions. There is a risk of a breach of privacy, in that others may find out personal information about you that has been collected or disclosed during the research project and/or may find out that you are participating in research. Also there is a risk of breach of confidentiality in that identifiable information may be accidentally disclosed. To minimize these risks, all observations data will be kept confidential and all identifiers will be deleted following transcription to ensure the highest level of privacy and confidentiality possible.

Are there benefits to taking part in the research?

Taking part in this research study may not benefit you personally, but we [researchers] may learn new things that will help others. For example, a better understanding of motherhood for Black/African American women in the US, better understanding of the affects incarceration on Black/African American women, and the creation policy recommendations for providing social support services to Black women who are mothers and have been incarcerated

What about privacy and confidentiality?

Privacy and confidentiality are of the utmost importance. All identifiers will be removed from my notes and transcripts following analysis and the data will be stored in a locked file cabinet to prevent access by anyone other than authorized personnel. All notes and transcripts will be destroyed following transcription, but no later than 1 year following the conclusion of the observation sessions. When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your identity.

What are the costs for participating in this research?

There are no costs to you for participating in this research.

Will I be reimbursed for any of my expenses or paid for my participation in this research?

You will be compensated for your time in the study with a \$80 gift card. Withdrawal from the study will not affect your compensation for your participation in the study, up to the time of withdrawal.

Can I withdraw or be removed from the study?

If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time. You have the right to leave a study at any time without penalty. Withdrawal from the

APPENDIX E (continued)

study will not affect your compensation for your participation in the study, up to the time of withdrawal.

Who should I contact if I have questions?

Principal Investigator:

LaTosha Traylor
312-860-4458
LTRAYL2@uic.edu

Faculty Research Sponsor:

Beth E. Richie, Ph.D.
312-413-1573
brichie@uic.edu

What are my rights as a research subject?

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or if you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, including questions, concerns, complaints, or to offer input, you may call the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS) at 312-996-1711 or 1-866-789-6215 (toll-free) or e-mail OPRS at uicirb@uic.edu.

Remember:

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

Signature of Subject or Legally Authorized Representative

I have read (or someone has read to me) the above information. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research. I will be given a copy of this signed and dated form.

Signature

Date

Printed Name

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date (must be same as subject's)

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

CITED LITERATURE

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- Young, V. D., & Reviere, R. (2006). *Women behind bars: Gender and race in US prisons*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

VITA

LaTosha Lynn-Marie Traylor

EDUCATION

Ph.D., 2014	University of Illinois at Chicago Chicago, IL Criminology, Law, and Justice
M.A., 2007	University of Illinois at Chicago Chicago, IL Criminal Justice
B.A., 2002	University of California, Santa Barbara Santa Barbara, CA Women's Studies

Academic Experience

Assistant Professor, Department of Criminal Justice, Temple University
2013-present

Instructor, Department of Criminology, Law, and Justice, University of Illinois at Chicago
2007-2008; 2010-2012

Adjunct Instructor, Justice Studies Department, Northeastern Illinois University
Fall 2010

Instructor, Department of Criminology, Law, and Justice, University of Illinois at Chicago
Summer 2010

Teaching Assistant, Department of African-American Studies, University of Illinois at Chicago
Spring 2009

Teaching Assistant, Department of Criminology, Law, and Justice, University of Illinois at Chicago
Fall 2008

Teaching Assistant, Department of Criminology, Law, and Justice, University of Illinois at Chicago
Fall 2007

Faculty Assistant, Summer Research Opportunity Program, University of Illinois at Chicago
Summer 2007

Teaching Assistant, Department of African-American Studies, University of Illinois at Chicago
Spring 2007

Teaching Assistant, Department of Criminology, Law, and Justice, University of Illinois at Chicago
Fall 2006

Teaching Assistant, Department of Sociology, University of Illinois at Chicago
2005-2006

Research interests

- Research Methods and Design
- Intergenerational Cycles of Incarceration
- Criminological Theory
- Social Justice and Inequality
- Deviance and Social Control
- Prisoner Reentry and Reintegration
- Intersectional Analyses of Incarceration
- Family and Incarceration

Research experience

Research Assistant, University of Illinois at Chicago, IL
2007 –2012

Assisted Dr. Beth Richie in editorial process of her manuscript *Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence and America's Prison Nation*; Duties included collecting and updating empirical data, manuscript editing and formatting

Intern, Goodwill Industries of Metropolitan Chicago, Chicago, IL
Summer 2008

Coordinated, facilitated, and managed logistical aspects of *Reframing Reentry Photo Exhibit* as part of the *Reframing Reentry: Workforce Development in an Uncertain Economy* symposium to raise awareness on issues with at-risk African American young men; served as liaison regarding the exhibit between all parties, including UIC departments and collaborators, Goodwill marketing, and Goodwill Director

Research Assistant, Chicago Metropolitan Battered Women's Network, Chicago, IL
Spring 2007

Assisted in data collection for the *All Faiths Against Domestic Violence project*. Duties included co-facilitating focus groups conducted with faith communities about responses to domestic violence

Intern, Chicago Legal Advocacy for Incarcerated Mothers, Chicago, IL
Summer 2006

Collected statistical data on incarcerated women in Illinois; Coordinated annual *Mothers in Prison, Children in Crisis Rally project* to raise awareness on issues related to maternal incarceration. Other duties included co-facilitating support group for formerly incarcerated

women residing in a local transition home, lobbying state legislators on behalf of incarcerated women, provided administrative support to organization

Publications

Richie, B., Davis, D., and Traylor, L. (2012). Feminist Politics, Racialized Imagery and Social Control: Reproductive Injustice in the Age of Obama. *Souls: A Critical Journal on Black Politics, Culture, and Society* 14(1-2), pp. 54-66.

Traylor, L. and Richie, B. (2012). Female Offenders and Women in Prison. In J. Petersilia & K. Reitz (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook on Sentencing and Corrections*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Teaching Competencies

University of Illinois at Chicago

- Research Methods I
- Criminological Theory
- Introduction to African American Studies
- Social Problems

Northeastern Illinois University

- Social Justice and Inequality

Teaching interests

- Theory
- Research Methods
- Corrections
- Prisoner Reentry and Reintegration
- Race, Class, Gender, and Crime/Corrections
- Women and Crime
- Parental Incarceration

Presentations

Traylor, L., (2011, November). “The Social Organization of Motherhood for Formerly Incarcerated Black Women,” 2011 Annual Meeting of the American Society of Criminology, Washington, DC.

Traylor, L., (2010, November). “Mass Incarceration and Motherhood for Black Women,” 2010 Annual Meeting of the American Society of Criminology, San Francisco, CA.

O’Brien, P., Traylor, L., (2011, May). “Going Too Far—The Perils and Possibilities of Teaching Prison Abolition,” Paper presentation at the Unsettling Feminism(s) Conference, Chicago, IL.

Traylor, L., (2007, October). “Women in Prison: Myths and Realities,” Guest lecture in Crime and Society course, Department of Criminal Justice, University of Illinois at Chicago.

Traylor, L., (2007, June). “Institutionalized Motherhood and the Criminalized Black Mother,” Paper presented at the National Women’s Studies Association annual conference, St. Charles, IL.

Traylor, L., (2006, October). "Institutionalized Motherhood and Female Offending," Paper presented at the 10th anniversary conference of the Association for Research on Mothering, Toronto, ON, Canada.

Traylor, L., (2005, October). "Feminist Criminology" Guest lecture in Criminological Theory seminar, Department of Criminal Justice, University of Illinois at Chicago.

AWARDS and SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Abraham Lincoln Fellowship, University of Illinois at Chicago, August 2012 (retention)

Michael D. Maltz Distinguished Graduate Student Award, Department of Criminology, Law, and Justice, University of Illinois at Chicago, April 2011

Departmental Service Award, Department of Criminology, Law, and Justice, University of Illinois at Chicago, April 2011

Ford Foundation Dissertation Fellowship, Honorable Mention, April 2011

Grace Holt Memorial Scholarship, Department of African American Studies, University of Illinois at Chicago, April 2010

Provost's Award for Graduate Research, University of Illinois at Chicago, April 2010

Al and Betty Brauner and Scott Brauner Fellowship, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, University of Illinois at Chicago, April 2010

ASC Graduate Fellowship for Ethnic Minorities, American Society of Criminology, June 2009

Kellogg Rainbow Merit Scholarship, Honorable Mention, University of Illinois at Chicago, October 2009

Diversifying Faculty in Illinois fellowship, Illinois Board of Higher Education, May 2009

Martin Luther King, Jr. Scholarship, University of Illinois at Chicago, August 2008

Ford Foundation Predoctoral Diversity Fellowship, Honorable Mention, April 2008

Abraham Lincoln Fellowship, University of Illinois at Chicago, August 2005 (recruitment)

University and Volunteer Service

Graduate Student Representative, Department of Criminology, Law, and Justice
University of Illinois at Chicago
2007-2010

Graduate Student Representative, Graduate Student Council
University of Illinois at Chicago
2007-2008

Advisory Board Member, Office of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Concerns
University of Illinois at Chicago
2006-2008

Committee Member, Chancellor's Committee on the Status of LGBT Issues
University of Illinois at Chicago
2006-2008

Volunteer, Summer Film Festival for Girls in Juvenile Temporary Detention Center, Cook
County, Chicago, IL
University of Illinois at Chicago
Summer 2006

Committee Member, Chancellor's Committee on the Status of Women,
University of California at Santa Barbara
2003-2004

Professional memberships

American Society of Criminology
Society for the Study of Social Problems
National Women's Studies Association