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Female Delinquency and Pathways to Crime

Pamela Lynn Smykal

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Female Delinquency and Pathways to Crime

by
Pamela Smykal

An Applied Dissertation Submitted to the
Abraham S. Fischler College of Education
and School of Criminal Justice in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Education

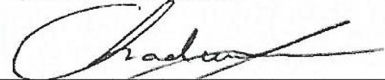
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Abstract

Female Delinquency and Pathways to Crime. Pamela Smykal, 2022: Applied Dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, Abraham S. Fischler College of Education and School of Criminal Justice. Keywords: *female offending, female criminality, gendered pathways, relationships, criminal motivation, qualitative research, intra-gender entrapment*

This applied dissertation investigated gendered relationships and their potential influence on women's criminal motivation. Historically, researchers attempted to understand criminal behavior using a male-oriented perspective which has dominated criminological literature. Criminologists have neglected to consider the role of gender as a significant predictor or pathway toward criminal behavior of either males or females. Within the last two decades, female criminality has become a spotlight for recognition and attention separate from male criminality. Traditional research on crime has been limited in understanding the pathways for female criminality and motivations for offending as individual predictors of male crime.

Analyzing the role of gender and relationships on the impact of female criminality, this study utilized life-history interviews to compare to previous research findings regarding the relationship between males and females and the effect of these gendered relationships on female crime.

Findings revealed negative maternal relationships and the lack of attachment between mothers and daughters played an essential role in the criminal propensity of female youth. Although romantic and familial relationships with men had an impact on women's criminal motivation, especially during adolescence, this study's findings concluded that the negative bonds with mother figures played a more critical role in the development of young women's pathways to crime.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Nature of the Research Problem

Traditionally, female criminal involvement was considered an anomaly in women's social identity and gender. The female deviant mystified both prominent theorists and researchers who struggled to find an explanation for the divergence from stereotypical female behavior. Various presumptions refused to understand female criminality as a separate entity from that of men. Early criminological theories were conceived utilizing a male-oriented perspective resulting in a biased tendency to categorize female crime or an inability to understand differences in offending patterns by gender (Messerschmidt, 1993; Zedner, 1991). Other theorists assumed female offending occurred because of male coercion (Richie, 1996). Several theories rationalized female delinquency as a separate entity that may be acted out exclusively. Only recently have researchers begun accepting the presumption that female deviancy may not be strikingly different from male criminal behavior and that males may serve as the catalyst for female attraction to and involvement in criminal behavior.

Dissertation Goal

The present study was devised as an extension of the author's former study (Smykal, 2009) titled *Good girls, Bad boys, and the Pathways to Deviant Behavior*. This study aimed to investigate the experiences of former adult women offenders and their relationships with males to understand better how these specific gendered relationships may have influenced women's pathways to crime. By personally interviewing former adult women offenders to access their voices about their own experiences, the data from this study was formulated to

inform correctional, legal systems, and policymakers as to why women act out criminal behavior.

The study also attempted to establish implications aimed at early intervention to help women, children, and the community better avoid criminal actions or consequences through strategic development focusing on responsive behavior.

Background & Significance

Over the last three decades, rising incarceration rates among women in the United States have reflected the overall political emphasis on reinforcing the fear of crime across the country and the need for more robust punitive measures across the correctional system. Official data analyzing criminal arrests from 1981 through 2000 indicate women's incarceration rates rose 108%, compared to a 78% increase in men's incarceration rates during the same period (Leddell & Martinovic, 2013). From 1990 through 2000, female arrests rose from a quarter to one-third among larceny-theft categories, and 15% up to 22% for aggravated assault crimes (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004). In 1980, boys were four times more likely to get arrested than girls; current literature finds boys are now only twice as likely (Cauffman, 2008). While these statistics may lead us to believe that women are becoming more criminally involved and violent, they also neglect to acknowledge the criminal justice system's role as a punitive response to crime in general, rather than considering the gendered influence previously reflected in arrest patterns over decades.

Steffensmeier and Steffensmeier (1980) analyzed gendered trends of male and female arrests from 1967 to 1977, concluding that while female criminal involvement increased in

every category during this period, male arrest rates also increased similarly. This finding remained steady into the 1990s (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004).

While attempting to understand females and crime, the criminal justice system has increasingly relied on stereotypical gender roles by sexualizing female delinquency and criminalizing female responses to situations (Smykal, 2009). These female reactions often respond to recalcitrant, toxic conditions, such as family dysfunction or financial strain leading to female criminality (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004). Criminological literature is limited in theories that do not undermine female adolescents and adults who deviate beyond their socially proscribed gender roles (Smykal, 2009). While males still carry out a higher number of criminal acts than females, research has shown arrest trends rather than statistics still tend to parallel one another (Rennison, 2009).

Analysts have determined that society continues to stereotype criminal acts classified by a specific gender, which leads to the profiling of the individual involved and of crime in general. If these patterns of involvement are similar for both genders, perhaps researchers should begin to understand that both females and males are susceptible to all types of crime and instead look at the pathways for the emergence of delinquency and criminal behavior.

Suppose women express their ability to carry out crime independently. In this vein, additional research may be consequential to examine the factors of influence that enable this behavior to understand relativity toward certain types of criminal behavior. Whether it be a rejection of traditional social roles, power by unique relationships, the balance of gender equality in society, or financial constraints; more explanation is needed to understand female

criminality and motivations for offending to investigate if they are related to or in response to, a relationship involving a male or males, and how the relationship plays a role.

The author's former study analyzed a specific male subtype, the defined "bad boy," exploring how this particular male and her relationship with him acted as a catalyst for delinquent behavior by the designated "good girl" (Smykal, 2009). The study examined the influence of the bad boy and the attraction of a good girl focusing on the oppositional identity of these adolescents. This analysis allowed for a new perspective in recognizing how females, particularly good girls, become involved in deviant behavior based on the attraction to and influence of the bad boy. Findings supported the notion that both bad boys and good girls utilized their gender and the unequal power structure of the relationship with one another to act out deviant behavior in different ways. However, the reasons for females acting out delinquency was not just due to coercion. Many females used the bond with the "bad boy" as a reason for acting out against their socially constructed gender roles while simultaneously reconstructing their own 'bad girl' femininity (Smykal, 2009). The overlying theme, even among the power differential between the two genders, was a fear of inadequacy leading both females and males to act out deviant behavior differently.

While the author's former study analyzed gendered relationships among adolescent girls and boys by emphasizing a power differential, less is known about adult female offenders, the potential effect of gender, and the impact of relationships on women's pathways to crime.

Barriers & Limitations

Challenges with conducting this study involved accessing the targeted sample population. Adult female offenders represent a spectrum of individuals and may emulate a transient population depending on their lifestyle and actions. While fully aware of this barrier, the author personally experienced potential participants who expressed interest in participating in the study but failed to respond to attempts to schedule interviews. As discussed further in the methodology chapter, utilizing the snowball sampling strategy allowed the author direct access to the purposive sample population.

Self-identifying as a former adult female offender also allowed the author to gain trust with sample participants not personally known. However, the author was forced to recognize the reality that some of the participants died unexpectedly during the construction of this dissertation. While the author is grateful to have secured their voices to remain active in the words of their former experiences to inspire others, the author encountered many personal stressors related to the knowledge of some participants' untimely deaths post-interview.

Definition of Terms

Pathways to Crime: This study defines pathways to crime as distinguished avenues or life-course experiences disproportionately associated with females (or those who identify as female) believed to have influenced one's criminal propensity. This study concentrated on the type of defined relationship with the identified male as the catalyst for female delinquency.

Female Offenders: For this study, female offenders will be defined as adult women (ages eighteen and over) who have been arrested for a misdemeanor or felony offense(s) which resulted in a criminal conviction.

Intra-gender entrapment: In this study, intra-gender entrapment is defined as the negative and weak emotional bonds between a mother or mother figure and the minor female child. This relationship is characterized by multiple types of abuse, including poor attachment bonds, supervision, maternal emotional neglect, and manipulation by the mother, often resulting in young females mirroring their mother's behavior and engaging in criminal activity.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Although males have traditionally engaged in criminal behavior at higher rates than females, statistics show that the gender gap has been steadily narrowing over the last few decades. From 1978 to 2014, female incarceration rates grew by nearly 800 percent compared to male incarceration rates (Bureau of Justice Statistics). Although the United States comprises four percent of the global female population, it also boasts nearly thirty percent of the world's incarcerated women (Kajstura, 2018).

While statistics have shown a recent increase in female incarceration rates, it is essential to consider whether females are engaging in higher rates of crime or whether the Criminal Justice System has begun to punish on a more evenly on the basis of gender, formerly relinquishing the stereotypical conceptions of females as the weak, powerless, and compliant gender (Smykal, 2009). Historically, women who diverged from their traditional gender roles were socially stigmatized and labeled deviant, specifically if their actions were typical male-oriented behavior such as criminal activity (Bottoms, 1996). Previous criminological theories were almost universally formulated to explain male criminality, seemingly ignoring masculine and feminine gendered behavioral traits demonstrated by social structural inequality.

One of the earliest theorists to explain female criminality was Caesar Lombroso. His classic text *Female Offender* (1895) defined evolutionary biological characteristics affiliated with criminals. Leaning heavily on Darwin, Lombroso asserted that physical and mental abnormalities differentiated criminals from 'regular' humans. Deviance was considered more than a character trait. An individual with a somewhat imperfect appearance or who was born

with specific physical attributes was relegated to criminal status and banished from the boundaries of normal society.

Lombroso also assumed the female criminal was less likely to stand out than males, so to explain female involvement in crime better, Lombroso relied on the use of femininity (Smykal, 2009). Sexual and psychological factors criminalized females who did not act under proper behavioral patterns. Lombroso deduced all criminals as exceptions among civilized humans, denigrating the female offender as the most deviant of all, comparable to a monster (Lombroso, 1895, p.152). Female delinquents were assumed to be the exception to criminal behavior. Therefore, their power of seduction or criminal behavior was socially repudiated compared to male criminals. Lombroso & Ferrero (1895) state:

In short, let a female delinquent be young, and we can overlook her degenerate type and even regard her as beautiful; the sexual instinct misleading us here as it makes us attribute to women more of the sensitiveness and passion than they possess. And in the same way, when she is being tried on a criminal charge, we are inclined to excuse, as noble impulses of passion, an act that arises from the most cynical calculations (p. 97).

The perception of women deviating from their proscribed gender roles admonished female criminals to be the worst type of criminal, grounded in the overt defiance of their socially constructed femininity. For a female to act out deviant behavior rationally was categorically more detrimental than males, entrenched in the assumption that she had to resist the fundamental biological and traditional roles to carry out this negligent behavior. From Lombroso's honest attempt to profile the female offender through her indifference to conform to her idealized femininity, many of the later criminological theories continued to sexualize

the female offender (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004) or otherwise labeled her incorrigible grounded in her lack of adherence to the expected female gender roles, ignoring any causal factors regarding female motivation for criminality.

Pollak (1950) attempted to explain female criminality by analyzing the female process of deception rather than inclination as it related to crime. Pollak hypothesized that women were not only aware of their gendered characteristics in society, but that they publicly emphasized their passive attributes while men acted out assertive behavior externally. Female crime was described as covert behavior compared to overt male criminality (Smykal, 2009). In this fashion, if women were accused of a violent crime, they were referred to as acting out masculine behavior, with their actions and behavior denying them any femininity by social standards.

Steffensmeier and Allan (1991) attempted to deconstruct the gendered components of crime by focusing on the moral development of male and female youth as a fundamental element of criminal desistance. Steffensmeier and Allan believed that an intrinsic female moral compass prevents aggressive or malicious conduct toward others (Messerschmitt, 1997). The authors acknowledged that female morality is conceived on gendered preconceptions underlying women's biological capabilities and their capacity for compassion as the core elements. Due to their inherent nurturing instincts and reproduction capabilities, women were more likely to maintain interpersonal relationships; therefore, their decisions to act out behavior were informed by their benevolence. It was assumed women's natural caring nature socially emphasized their nonviolent nature, whereas aggressive, violent behavior was believed to be beyond women's morality (Steffensmeier & Allan, 1991).

Among society and within the act of crime, there is a belief that males exemplify societal predators while females embody prey. When females personify the aggressor role, such as women who act out violence, they become socially stigmatized and ostracized by the inability to comply with socially constructed traditional gender roles. Questions have been raised, contemplating whether the female delinquent is a role that is truly devoid of gender.

Prior research on female criminality reduced delinquent females to acting out masculinity. Freda Adler (1975) proposed that the women's liberation movement four decades ago encouraged a masculinizing effect on female crime, enabling women to utilize violence to validate themselves as human beings, just as adequate and capable of violence as males. The field of criminology has struggled to explain female deviance and violent crime. Female violence was considered astonishing and unnatural (Shaw, 1995, p.122). Women who acted out violent behavior were assumed to be a defective model of the universal female-gendered paradigm.

Criminological literature lacks theories that do not undermine the female offender who deviates from the appropriated gendered roles. Further explanation is needed to understand and acknowledge the female offender and her criminal pathways without labeling her as a societal deviant whose criminal behavior forced her outside her gendered expectations. Delinquency research has historically excluded girls' behavior from research and theory as it was assumed that the act of crime was characteristically a male behavioral characteristic (Chesney-Mind, 1997).

Personality

Hereditary factors heavily influence the personality of a criminal offender. However, the unique social and environmental conditions the offender experiences during the life course, directly impact an individual's predisposition for offending behavior. Several theories of female criminality have highlighted antisocial orientation among offender personality characteristics. Almost 30% of convicted female offenders have some psychological impairment compared to male offenders (Dragomir, 2014).

Among the criminological research involving personality, it is essential to determine antisocial trait sources, forms, and development since these characteristics, along with environmental influence, can enhance criminal behavior (Dragomir, 2014). There exists a basis for understanding female criminal personalities. Looking at criminological, psychological, and social factors to identify mechanisms of personality structures of criminal offenders can better identify individual personality profiles (Dragomir, 2014). Forming these profiles may facilitate better treatment plans and reduce recidivism.

Theorists have relied on male contexts to understand female crime (Messerschmidt, 1997). Research has masculinized female criminal offenders rather than exploring the motives which may help explain differences in gender and behavioral responses, including race, class, age, and social influence. Theory alone cannot generalize female criminality as one indistinguishable behavior deriving from the same roots. Criminological research has lacked explanations for female criminal activity that do not condemn female offenders beyond their traditional gendered expectations. Steffensmeier and Allan's interpretation failed to consider a significant concept regarding gender and crime. When the focus pertains to gender differences

involving acts of corruption, similarities related to criminal behavior become obsolete (Messerschmidt, 1997). In this context, males and females may “do” crimes situationally or for similar reasons.

Recent literature has started to deviate from labeling crimes as primarily female or male-based offenses given situational frameworks. This shift illustrates that perhaps researchers have begun embracing contemporary theory, which argues that females may represent willing and active participants in criminal behavior (Smykal, 2009). Female criminal participation may also be an outward expression of modern femininity.

What matters more, the severity of the crime, the offender’s gender, the punishment for offending, or the circumstances surrounding the offense? While society and the criminal justice system are beginning to adapt to the notion that females can be just as capable of violence, several studies have discussed conflicted results related to the severity of treatment for female offenders.

Gender is a specific context that warrants differential treatment in the justice system (Richie, Tsenin, and Spatz Widom, 2000). Authors have overlooked the belief regarding the gravity of offenses female criminals were convicted of when comparing sentencing for offenders by gender (Saulters-Tubbs, 1993; Mallicoat, 2007). The rising rates of arrest and incarcerations for female offenders over the last few decades warrant attention for female offender treatment during and post-incarceration. Existing correctional programs have failed to identify or address specific issues such as abuse or trauma, which may correlate with their motivations for offending. Female juvenile and women offenders may be categorized as “abnormal” beings stigmatized by the general population. Many female offenders are

succinctly “ordinary individuals” who engage in erratic, impulsive criminal behavior (Gibbons, 1983).

It is essential to investigate potential motives which may compel women toward criminal behavior and how these motives may be related to gendered relationships and life experiences. Society is not alone in adjusting to the concept that females are just as capable as males of pulling the trigger. The more important question is *why*. It is essential to examine the underlying motives for female criminality to see if they are reciprocally related to or because of male criminal involvement.

Female Crime Statistics

Since the 1980s, the number of incarcerated women has increased twice that of men (The Sentencing Project, 2020). Between 1989-1993, female offenders involved in crimes under the Violent Crime Index increased by 17% (Scahill, 2000). Additionally, Property Crime Index offenses by females also increased during the same period while male convictions for property offenses decreased (Scahill, 2000). In the current day, women incarcerated across the United States constitute half of all adult incarcerated women (Subramanian, Henrichson, & Kang-Brown, 2015). Although the rates of women incarcerated in large counties decreased from 76 to 71% per 100 thousand women by 2014, the rates of women incarcerated in both rural and medium-sized county jails increased during this timeframe (Swavola, Riley, & Subramanian, 2016).

From 2009 to 2018, the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) statistics involving overall arrests for males and females have steadily decreased (U.S. Department of Justice, 2018). According to the Bureau of Justice

Statistics (2018) arrest data during this period, the only increase in male arrests involved motor vehicle theft compared to the rise in female arrest rates among nine criminal categories. The most significant increase in female arrest rate trends was found to be among motor vehicle theft (44.9%); violations involving drug abuse (39.7%); weapons (18.5%); vagrancy (14.6%); and stolen property (7.2%).

Females are more likely to be convicted and incarcerated for drug and property offenses. From 1986 to 2017, the percentage of female offenders convicted of drug offenses surged from 12% to 25% (The Sentencing Project, 2020). A more sobering proponent is found in the data, which exemplifies that women failing to meet scheduled probation appointments or mandatory meetings are one of the most common reasons for reintegration in Baltimore and Washington DC metropolitan areas (Walsh, 2011).

An examination of trends in arrest data between 2014-2018 indicates that male arrests for violent crimes increased by 2.6% compared to female arrests for the same offenses, which rose by 6.6% (U.S. Sentencing Commission, 2019). A comparison of juvenile arrest data from 2014 and 2018 revealed that juvenile male arrest rates decreased by 7.6%, while juvenile female arrest rates rose by 2.6% (Puzzanchera, 2021).

Adolescent females constitute a growing number of all teenage arrests.

Although women make up a small ratio of federal offenders, female incarceration rates have remained steady. From 2013 to 2017, females comprised approximately 13% of the U.S. national offender population. By 2019, female federal offender rates dropped slightly to 12.3% of all incarcerated federal offenders (U.S. Sentencing Commission, 2019). The most common crimes among federally incarcerated females have remained

stable since 2013 and were primarily comprised of drug trafficking, immigration, fraud, and general offenses (U.S. Sentencing Commission, 2019). Notably, almost 7% of female prisoners were convicted and sentenced for weapons-related crimes compared with 10.6% of incarcerated male offenders (U.S. Sentencing Commission, 2021).

Gender differences emerge when analyzing the level of violence used during criminal offenses. Women are more likely to engage in acts of simple assault than men's violent crimes, 72% vs. 55% (Carson, 2015; Federal Bureau of Justice Investigation, 2015). Triplett & Myers (1995) found males are more likely to use weapons or physically beat their victims. Females are more likely to resort to guns to commit crimes in the company of male offenders (Koons-Witt & Schram, 2003).

Statistics regarding criminal arrests are still used to determine policy measures. However, they seem to reflect less on the actuality of what is occurring in society, and more on current political agendas (cf. Simon, 1976; Noblit and Burcart, 1976; Steffensmeier and Jordan, 1978). Comparing offender data with National Crime Victimization (NCVS) responses from 1992-2001, Rennison's (2009) research suggests that there have been trivial differences within the gender gaps between male and female offending behaviors during that period. However, the NCVS data illustrates a different view on men & women's offending, especially when considering the dark figure of crime—crimes not reported to the police or offenses the police were not notified of. Findings suggest any differences in the gender gap result not from increases in female offending but rather from decreases in male offending rates for specific offenses, which

dropped at a more significant rate than the decrease in female offending rates during the corresponding time.

Several studies regarding the leniency or harshness of criminal sentencing compared to males remain mixed. Social control agencies such as law enforcement, courts, and the criminal justice system play a significant role in how the “crime problem” is being reinforced and labeled, especially among female criminals. Lombroso’s conception of female criminals utilizing their power of seduction and equating “tainted” women to witches or tramps has been bolstered over time. Public perception of female offenders was abided by the traditional gender roles emphasized by a patriarchal society (Chesney-Lind, 1997). It is essential to consider whether females are committing a more significant percentage of crimes or whether the criminal justice system has begun responding to female offending with a more punitive response.

Prior Research on Female Pathways to Crime

Men commit a vast majority of crimes, as evidenced by the gender gap in offending (Heimer, 2000). While official statistics support the claim that female involvement in crime has increased over the last four decades, these figures lack contextual information as to why offenders engage in specific types of crime or the factor of gender in the commission of the crime. Prior research has examined certain risk factors to understand why females become involved in crime and whether these risk factors are similar for males.

Former criminological theories attempted to explain the relationship between gender and crime through power-control theory, emphasizing that the power relationships

influenced by parental figures in the public sphere are reflected in their relationship at home. Various levels of patriarchy exist among different types of households, and as a result, differential socialization creates gender differences in crime among families (Sims Blackwell, & Piquero, 2005). The authors built off Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) generalized theory of crime and low self-control across all groups. Still, research has continued to lack in examining the link between low self-control both among and between genders. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) further theorized that parents needed to be aware and recognize a child's escalation to deviance and punish accordingly. Much of their recognizance centered on a lack of parental caretaking capabilities, the potential for caring, and proper supervision. What they found was a parental inability to recognize child deviancy. Even if parents did possess the overall willpower to punish a child's negative behavior, it would still cause ineffective socialization. While adverse parental monitoring or discipline has seemingly led to lower self-control behavior in youth, more substantial aspects of typical socialization measures still held more accountability, such as parental acceptance and involvement in their children's lives, psychological autonomy allowed toward the child, and use of non-physical disciplinary measures.

Results helped explain better male and female criminality and how parenting affects the development of low self-control, child-rearing, and criminal offending. Both male and female youth differentially responded to parental control (Sims Blackwell & Piquero, 2005). This study emphasized gender-based processes in developing self-control and crime, which needs further exploration on the means for the parental-child modes of transference.

Victimization, especially during childhood, has shown to be a significant indicator of future behavior among males and females, although females have shown a higher likelihood of negative consequences (Smykal, 2009). Uniform Crime Report data demonstrates that females are considerably more likely to be arrested for delinquent acts such as running away from home and prostitution, 59% vs. 69%, respectively (Cauffman, 2008). One assumption is that these offenses have been primarily affiliated with females who have experienced violence, neglect, or abuse during childhood. Often, young girls' attempts to escape dysfunctional homes during childhood or adolescence may have perpetuated specific pathways to crime from a young age. Motivation for offending, such as running and away or prostitution, may have influenced female offending in ways former theorists have previously neglected to understand.

Official data has confirmed that physical and sexual abuse during and after childhood disproportionately affects many female offenders (Wolf Harlow, 1999). Experiencing or witnessing abuse has also been linked to subsequent offending (Daly, 1992; Hubbard & Pratt, 2002; Owen & Bloom, 1995). One study investigating female juveniles in the California juvenile justice system found that over 90 percent of female adolescents witnessed or experienced abuse during childhood (Hoyt & Scherer, 1998). Using self-report data, Cauffman et al. (1998) concluded higher levels of victimization of females among incarcerated female offenders. However, the number of male victims is unknown due to the likelihood of males underreporting abuse or refusing to self-identify as victims. This study also identified differences in violence exposure and the impact of offending differences by gender. While male victims may become more violent

offenders, this may be done to exert control and maintain domination. Female victims, in turn, may offend more aggressively as a response to experiencing abuse during youth or react as an emotional response.

Feminist theories have attempted to examine the unique factors and variables women face that may lead them to the introduction of their deviant and subsequent criminal behavior. Salisbury & Van Voorhis (2009) claim this is due to the presumption that girls and women face differential exposure to crime or respond differently toward openness. Potential risk factors for females such as victimization, mental health, substance abuse, and poverty may play a more prominent role in female crime than male criminal offending (Breenan et al., 2012). Understanding the differential exposure perspective toward criminality has revealed gendered criminal development among and within female groups (Wattanporn & Holtfreter, 2014).

Mental Illness

The rapid cycling in and out of jails and prisons has severely impacted offenders with mental health illnesses, remaining one of the single-handed contributing factors leading to the presumption of the criminalization of mental illness (Liska, Markowitz, Whaley & Bellair, 1999; Lurigio, 2012). A study utilizing life history interviews with 115 women across the United States was developed by DeHart and colleagues (2014) to investigate how crime and delinquency varied based on mental health status and trauma exposure for women. According to the *American Psychological Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) fifth edition, incarcerated females overall showed considerably high rates of mental health disorders, with most of these

meeting a lifetime diagnostic criterion of ‘serious’ mental illness. Using a cox regression analysis to determine associations between life experiences and risk of engagement in specific criminalized behavior, DeHart et al. (2014) found that 51% of the women offender sample population met the criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or substance use disorder (85%). Severe mental illness was positively associated with substance use, as was identifying as a runaway teenager, and drug offending. Findings from the study also demonstrated the need for gender-responsive and trauma-informed approaches toward mental illness and victimization for identified women offenders.

The pathways perspective built off Chesney-Lind’s (1989) research highlighted the deficiency among prominent delinquency theories trying to explain female deviance. These illustrated the biological and psychological, and social differences among females. The combination of these factors created societal criminalization of survival tactics young females engaged in, such as running away, substance use, and prostitution, as a critical component for female entry into the justice system (Belknap, 2007; Dehart, 2018). Salisbury and Van Voorhis (2009) argued that female criminal motivation and subsequent recidivism are based on elements that are: (a) either not generally seen in men, (b) seen in men but have a greater frequency in women, or (c) parallel in frequency for both men and women but stem from decisive social and personal influence.

Gilfus (1992) examined the life histories of 20 incarcerated females demonstrating how female marginalization due to victimization & neglect in early childhood and adolescence shifted these women away from mainstream lives toward criminal or deviant subcultures. Gilfus’s research further highlighted the gendered component that paralleled

the question of female's options among these delinquent subcultures, representing differential pathways to crime for males & females.

Using court reports and transcripts to classify subgroups of victimization as possible pathways for female offending, Daly's (1992) quantitative research of 40 felony criminal cases discovered the most common pathway. More than one-third of the sample was defined as "harmed and harming women." These offenders consisted of females who endured significant trauma and abuse during childhood. Often, the role of victimization played a substantial factor in these types of females' inability to cope, leading to substance abuse and aggressive behavior.

This study's second-largest group of cases involved street women, characterized by runaways who escaped chaotic homes in childhood and were forced to survive on the streets through prostitution, drug dealing, and theft. Daly also found additional subgroups, including "battered women," who likely committed a crime because of experiencing intimate partner violence were drug-connected females who acted out criminal behavior in response to their relationships with romantic partners or family members, and the latter group, "economic others," whose illegal activity was committed in conjunction to economic desperation or because of financial greed.

Daly's (1992; 1994, pp. 43-61) conceptualization of the "street women" pathways framework is one of the most outstanding former representations to categorize varying conditions and circumstances which permeate violence and illicit methods of economic gain regarding females (Daly, 1992, p.21). This work illustrates how experiences of

abuse (emotional, physical, and sexual), substance addiction, familial or romantic relationships, and economic disparity are differentially associated with female offenders.

Beth Richie (1996) implemented a mixed-methods study analyzing the role of racial and female marginalization using 37 incarcerated African American and Caucasian female offenders, some of which included victims of intimate partner violence (IPV). Examining African American battered women's responses to criminal pathways, Richie discovered specific pathways of crime whereby females acted out criminal behavior. Their illicit pathways were identified as: (a) as a response to or in retaliation for a threat of potential harm; (b) that many of the crimes these women acted out represented an extension of the internalized gender roles as well as inherent racial identity; (c) the racial discrimination and economic marginalization of African American males historically among the U.S. culture enabled African American women to become protective of male partners or family members despite being physically battered or abused by these particular males; and (d) the psychological, emotional, and physical impact of abuse and trauma led some women to consciously turn themselves into police as a way to escape the cycle of abuse.

Family structure and contextual factors play a role in youth delinquency and propensity toward crime, yet gendered effects of parental incarceration on their offspring are still misunderstood. A significant unintended consequence of mass incarceration in the United States is seen among the rising numbers of incarcerated parents. Few studies have investigated maternal incarceration's effects on youth through qualitative methodology (Burgess-Proctor, Huebner, & Durso, 2016). Current research has found

almost 80 percent of incarcerated women are also mothers (McCampbell, 2005). Of those parents in the system, incarcerated women tend to be the primary caretaker or hands-on parents of minor children (Glaze & Maruschak, 2010). While gendered pathways to crime have become more popular among researchers, rarely has this approach been utilized in parental incarceration studies. Limited research exists comparing the effects of paternal and maternal incarceration on youth and the resulting behavior of offspring.

Previous studies have shown consistent themes of female victimization, economic marginalization, addiction, and lack of resources across time, populations, and methodologies. Collective findings have distinguished between three and eight specific female pathways to criminal behavior, emphasizing trauma, adversity, and addiction across all studies. However, there remain few guidelines for determining which types of female offenders may be identified and categorized into certain particular among specific pathways and just how superfluous grouping these pathways may encompass.

To challenge gender-neutral risk assessments for offenders, Brennan, Breitenbach, and Dieterich (2010) examined the pathways approach in corrections by focusing on female pathways to offending. Their approach evaluated person-centered classification methods using findings from a study on pathways to crime regarding female prisoners. Results support the existence of gendered pathways in at least six of eight defined pathways; however, the study assumed that only 75% of their population of female prisoners could be classified into the defined pathways.

Limitations of previous studies also included a narrow focus on serious female offenders (Brennan et al., 2012, Daly, 1992) and reliance on data from quantitative

studies only (Brennan et al., 2012; Daly, 1992; Salisbury & Van Voorhis, 2009). Former literature on female criminality has examined the consequences of male influence by coercion or harsh measures (Chesney-Lind and Shelden, 1998; Miller, 1998; Richie, 1996). While some females participate in crime due to a specific influence such as abuse or addiction, they will usually cease once the controlling mechanism becomes absent. Research continues to lack knowledge of why females may continue to engage in criminal behavior without the triggering variables present.

Arguing against the notion that many female offenders are simply victims of circumstances due to traditional gender roles within society and among family structures, Gaarder and Belknap (2002), attempted to challenge the polarization among many discussions analyzing female criminality. The authors developed an alternate theory of female offenders, hypothesizing that female offenders may represent rational and responsible perpetrators of crime, actively choosing to engage in criminal behavior. However, both theories in this dichotomy assume that the realm of women's criminality still exists among the structurally defined socio-cultural environment that is classified according to the limited options women have access to (Ajzenstadt, 2009).

Although certain crimes, such as theft, may be carried out similarly by gender, the motives behind criminal offenses may differ (Reisig, Holtfreter, & Morash, 2006). Extensive research by Chesney-Lind (1997, 2000; Chesney-Lind & Rodriguez, 1983; Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004) has long held the belief that female pathways toward offending differ from male pathways. It is unknown whether female offenders who begin offending in adulthood follow similar pathways to crime as those familiar among

adolescent female offenders (Nuytiens & Christiaens, 2016). Changes to the overall gender gap and type of offenses by females over time warrant further introspection into certain predictor variables and integration into female pathways to offending.

Five categories of crime have been identified regarding gendered assumptions of crime and offending: Drug addiction, women and property crime, prostitution and sex work, women within gang organizations, and women who engage in violent acts (Mallicoat, 2011).

Theoretical Framework of Study

No one theory can universalize female crime. To explain female crime, most theorists have looked through the male lens, rarely acknowledging the impact of gender on females and criminal behavior. Theories have primarily ignored the gendered construct of legitimate and illegitimate behavior (Messerschmidt, 1993, p.1). Scholars & the academy have continually ignored or minimized women's lives and social experiences when explaining behavior. Since the mid-1970s, feminist scholars in criminology have examined female crime, violence against girls & women, and social control of females, including women who work in the justice system (Daly & Chesney-Lind, 1988; Martin & Jurik, 1996; Naffine, 1995). Many feminist scholars reject the idea that the same type of theories can explain both male and female criminality (Belknap, 2007; Chesney-Lind, 1989; Simpson, 1989), arguing that male-centered approaches lack multiple elements specific to female criminal behavior, such as the impact of victimization during youth as well as intimate partner violence during adulthood (Daly, 1992). Gender patterns of crime have oscillated over the last several decades. When crime becomes correlated with

gender, it becomes essential to examine gender patterns of crime to understand the remarkably gendered crime rate among Western nations.

Social Bond Theory

The social bond theory presents a context explaining offenders' decisions, which can either promote or desist criminal behavior. Social bond theory evolved from understanding social ties to legitimate networks in society, such as employment, family, and religion, arguing that these formal networks provide pro-social incentives to follow law-abiding behavior and promote the desistance of crime (Hirschi, 1969). These ties magnify the consequences related to delinquency, such that individuals with weaker links to legitimate social networks will be more inclined to continue offending. These social bonds are dynamic and likely to grow and transform over time. Criminological literature has argued the need for legitimate, prosocial networks to reduce delinquent pathways but has acknowledged males and females are impacted by social bonds differently (Booth, Ferrell, & Varano, 2008). However, most research investigating factors of social control on delinquency previously focused on males exclusively.

Differing responses to social controls by males and females develop in response to gender role socialization. Therefore, differences in development and life course experiences by gender uniquely affect social control mechanisms and responses. Examining how the gendered reaction to social control impacts female and male pathways to crime helps develop particular risk factors and risk reduction programming.

Gender Entrapment

Beth Richie's (1996) *Compelled to Crime* research asserts gender entrapment occurs when the intersection of gender and racial inequality come into direct conflict, leading some females to become 'compelled' to criminal behavior. Richie's concept of gender entrapment exemplifies that some females are forced into deviance and crime due to their culturally expected gender roles, abuse and violence experienced in romantic relationships, and their overall social position. Several groups of women are vastly marginalized, such as African American women, women with low incomes, single, pregnant women, who have more difficult choices to make because of their race, income, or situation, which places them at the fringes of the hegemonic structure. The women in Richie's research represent females who go against the popular notion that violence against women has more to do with the psychological and moral inadequacies certain women encompass.

Richie focused on socially constructed problems women face and their reactions to predicaments based on limited options. Despite their desire to exist within the norms of society, these women are structurally and situationally unable to meet conflicting and competing demands of everyday life. Societal structure is designed in a hierarchal system causing the most impoverished women to fail consistently. Despite their best attempts, they cannot succeed socially or economically. This condemnation is a significant problem, and Richie proposes the need for the social arrangement to change.

Women who could not change their social position with limited or lack of access to legitimate resources to fix their social situation were blamed for it. The gender entrapment

paradigm seeks to clarify the connection between culturally constructed gender identity development, violence against women, especially in intimate relationships, and women's participation in illegal activity. Gender entrapment is the description of the socially constructed process. This helps to explain how women's involvement in criminal activity may be acted out as a response to violence.

Structured Action Theory

Feminism and social theory have become more appealing to contemporary criminologists considering gender and structural aspects of social settings as two of the strongest predictors of criminal behavior. Females who act out criminal behavior like males were assumed to be acting out masculinity. Messerschmidt (1997) concluded that this behavior corresponded with the unequal status structure of a larger society. Building off feminist theory, structured action theory focuses on how social networks such as race, class, and gender are influenced and strengthened through everyday interactions. Messerschmidt's beliefs were based on the presumption that race, class, and gender vary based on the social situation and circumstances. Therefore, how individuals "do" race, class, and gender depend entirely on each social status and interaction, and these concepts continually influence individual behavior. Crime is not simply an independent result but operates inconspicuously through a sophisticated series of gender, race, and class practices.

Messerschmidt's structured action theory centers on how discussions involving an individual's propensity to crime as a gendered expression of individuality among society have enabled individuals to construct their actions based on their social structure.

By using a theoretical lens combining social bond theory, gender entrapment, and structured action theory utilized in the original study, this researcher used a phenomenological perspective to expand how female criminality is understood in response to the shifting social structure of gender roles and the latent effects of this relationship among males. The mechanisms in which females become introduced to criminal pathways based on who and the type of relationship they had with a male who was described as the influencer for women's criminal offending is vital to examine further the evolution of female deviance and reasons for the types of crime they commit.

Research Questions

The following guiding questions posed to represent the essential questions asked in this study:

1. What are the most common female pathways to crime, and what role do men play in the process of offending?
2. How have relationships with males inspired female pathways to crime?
3. Has the relationship with a particular male influenced the female pathway to crime?

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter introduces the main elements for building the foundation of this qualitative study. This research aimed to examine former adult women offenders' pathways to criminal offending and how the type of relationship with an identified man or men was a catalyst for women's criminal offending.

A qualitative research design facilitated an in-depth, detailed investigation focusing on findings drawn from in-depth life history narratives, anecdotal data, official data, and personal journals from women participants, reinforcing specific themes arising from the interviews. The selection criteria instrument informed eligibility for participants in this study where respondents affirmed that they had a criminal history or history of offending and believed that their motivation for criminal offending was associated with a definitive male or men personally known.

This chapter also discusses the author's unique ability to act as both participant and observer regarding the execution of this study due to her ability to identify as a formerly incarcerated female offender. This information is incorporated into the methodology section of this study to notify readers how the author's account of former women offenders and their reported pathways to offending informed the research design and helped establish a level of trust between the author and female participants.

Qualitative Research Approach

Phenomenological Perspective

Unequivocally, Phenomenology is the philosophy behind an individual's descriptive, lived experience (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). The underlying justification for this research method is to invoke how individuals formulate reality.

The phenomenological approach is used when researchers are concerned with investigating the interpretation, distribution, and basis of an individual's lived experiences involving specific elements. The author examines these unique experiences through the individual's perspective to interpret their experiences and meaning in society. This research design is most helpful in obtaining data to explain a particular individual's real-world lived experiences (von Eckartsberg, 1997). Phenomenological research stressing a hermeneutic method is rooted in Martin Heidegger's philosophical concept that depiction is inevitably associated with reflective interpretation (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). Phenomenology captivates an underlying theory in qualitative research, arguing that all perceptions of human awareness can be recognized as interpretive such that the lived experiences of individuals become the significance of the study itself.

Qualitative Design

Qualitative-based semi-structured interviews are among social sciences' most prevailing and widespread data collection methods (Bradford & Cullen, 2012).

Qualitative research design enables researchers to examine experiences within a specific context without forcing an implication related to causality. The qualitative data collection has enabled researchers to obtain the in-depth, subjective experiences of the targeted

population to understand better how and why they are among human behavior (Flick, 2009).

Recent approaches to evaluating female offending pathways have relied on quantitative methods. Analyzing data from a risk-needs-based assessment, Salisbury and Van Voorhis (2009) found specific model pathways of female offending were indicative of recidivism. Specifically, childhood victimization impacted additional mental health concerns such as depression and substance abuse. Dysfunctionality among adult relationships enabled low self-esteem and bolstered adult female victimization. Finally, women who were categorized among the social capital method, including impoverished females lacking finances, support, or education, were more likely to have high employment rates, financial stressors, single parental responsibilities, and consequential imprisonment.

The author analyzed findings from life-history interviews using semi-structured, open-ended questions to understand better former adult women offenders' relationships and pathways to crime. The life-history process is beneficial in obtaining information from participants whose experiences tend to be traumatic, complex, or uncomfortable to disclose (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Life-history interviews enabled a more significant opportunity to gain insight into the subject's childhood backgrounds, perspectives, and feelings, enhancing the meaning derived from the events experienced by the participant and the role played in their lives.

Like Richie's (1996) study, the use of life-history interviews was a suitable and interactive approach to unravel the intricate intersection of events, environment, and

social processes occurring in the daily lives of former women offenders. Examining the complex aspects influencing women's gender-role development among relationships is essential to understand better the circumstances leading to their motivation for delinquency. This method also captured a gender-specific analysis revealing differences in life-course trajectory and consequential pathways for male and female offenders.

Participants

The selection criteria for subject participants in this study were purposeful. Participants were recruited using the snowball sampling strategy, which "identifies cases of interest from people who know what cases are information-rich" (Creswell, 2007, p.158). The author contacted former female offenders who were already personally known to her. Those participants often referred other former women offenders to contact the author for potential participation in this study. Because of the author's employment in the legal industry, the author had access to several former women offenders who agreed to participate in the study. The author contacted these participants requesting their participation in the study well after resolving their legal cases. Their participation in this study had no legal connection or bearing to the author or the firm where the author worked during the study's execution. Neither did a legal concern impact their eligibility for participation in the study. All measures to maintain confidentiality of subject participants were strictly abided by during the study.

Data Collection and Instruments

Part one of this instrument was a questionnaire comprised of open and closed-ended questions to obtain social demographic information about each respondent, including age, education level, number of arrests, types of convictions, length of

incarceration, family background, employment relationship history, and exposure to violence. The demographic data was utilized to link comparisons regarding the participant's backgrounds, socioeconomic status, education, and relationships with identified males to measure the significance of this connection and how it played a role in female motivations for offending. Due to the sample size of the respondents for this study, no significant correlations involving background information can be assumed as the sample population size is too small to be considered representative of the population.

The use of in-depth, semi-structured interviews was chosen as the preferred method for data collection. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with former adult women offenders to formulate themes among the participants and their relationships among the specified male or men they determined as their pathway into criminal offending. This method specifically allowed women's narratives and subjective voices to describe their lived experiences effectively. This approach aligned with previous feminist and epistemological research methods emphasizing this study and the recognition related to women's lived experiences from their individualized perspectives (Harding, 1981; Smith, 1987). This approach also enabled the author to follow up with participants regarding significant or developing themes divulged throughout their own or other participant's interviews (Smith, 2004), further revealing more conclusive and detailed patterns regarding former women's offenders' pathways.

The interview guide was designed to build the foundation between the male described by female participants as the attributed pathway to crime and better understand additional factors that may have contributed to women's offending motivation. The

interview guide was tailored to engage participants and allow their experiences to be the central perspective.

In addition to snowball sampling, the author posted flyers on social media platforms, such as the Convict Criminology Twitter platform, to recruit additional potential participants. All sample participants signed an informed consent form, were informed of their rights regarding the study, and provided a copy. Interviews were scheduled once the informed consent form was signed. All participants were compensated \$20.00 for their participation upon the interview's conclusion via the CashApp mobile application.

Procedures

This study was ethically approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and, the author's academic institution and utilized a multi-method qualitative research strategy using in-depth interviews with women participants, anecdotal data, and an examination of official criminal justice records. This method enabled the triangulation of qualitative data to assure the reliability of the findings (Marshall and Rossman, 1989). The research instrument developed for qualitative interviews of female offenders consisted of two parts.

Participants were advised of the purpose of the study and their rights as participants. They reviewed and signed an informed consent form per Institutional Review Board protocol, confirming their voluntary participation in the study. Participants' real names and identifying factors were recorded in a logbook which was stored in a locked cabinet to which only the author had access.

Social demographic information was completed with the participant by the author before the execution of the interview. All demographic information and field notes were assigned a randomized study ID number and alias. Documents were saved to a password-encrypted flash drive and stored in the locked filing cabinet in the author's home office will be kept for a period of three years in accordance with the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP).

Interviews were primarily conducted between March 2021 and March 2022 by telephone or zoom virtual conferencing platform due to the ongoing Coronavirus COVID-19 global pandemic, to ensure the safety of the participants and the author. Interviews were recorded to transcribe interview data. The informed consent form made all participants aware of recordings and safety protocols. Interviews with participants varied in length, but each discussion involved a detailed, personal conversation with the author. Overall, interviews lasted approximately 1 to 2 hours, with thirty (30) former women offenders and one (1) Criminal Justice Practitioner certified in Social Work. Results from the interviews were analyzed and coded corresponding to themes from the literature and informed by the participant's experiences. Discussions aligned with the life-history methodological approach.

Participants described their childhood, family background, history of relationships, stressors, and trauma leading to their eventual criminal justice involvement. Each participant was asked to define the male or men she acknowledged as her introduction to crime. The author remained interested in each former woman offender's unique experiences and illustrations during the interview.

While she never received a felony conviction, the author discloses that she was previously convicted of two counts of misdemeanor disorderly persons conduct and was incarcerated for eight (8) months in two separate jails in New Jersey. While the author remains aware that acknowledging her personal history and incarceration may create a research bias, the author applied the bracketing method, enabling her to utilize reductionism to nullify her own experience and evoke a natural approach regarding the perspective of the narrative phenomenon being investigated (Cresswell, 2007). Instead of bracketing her interpretation, the author relied on the pre-suppositions interpreted by participants' descriptions (Vagle, 2014).

Data Analysis

This research aimed to investigate further the characteristic of gender among relationships between men and former women offenders and how these relationships influenced female pathways to criminal behavior. This purposeful, qualitative study was designed to illuminate the women's voices, feelings, and experiences to understand better how their life histories and relationships may have impacted their criminal offending. It is unwise to assume that individuals can honestly know anything about a person based on their sex and criminal conviction(s). Human beings are complex organisms; human behavior often stems from a complicated accumulation of interrelated variables and experiences. This study intended to understand women's life experiences to minimize the stigma associated with the label of a formerly incarcerated female offender.

The data analysis process used in this study was based on the grounded theory perspective. First introduced by Barney Glasser and Ansel Strauss (1967), the grounded

theory perspective enabled the development of theory emerging as the data is collected instead and the process allowing emerging approach to be in a “constant comparative method,” with the unfolding data collection process (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). According to Strauss (1987), “the goal of grounded theory is to generate a theory that accounts for a pattern of behavior that is relevant and problematic for those involved.” The constructivist design of grounded theory emphasizes the role of the author as an active participant in the exploration of a study.

Data analysis was performed simultaneously with the collection of the data. Informed by the research questions, participants’ interview responses were transcribed and coded according to critical patterns and concepts from interviews describing female motivations for crime based on the relationship with the male or men identified. Field notes were simultaneously taken during interviews and reviewed to highlight specific quotes or “significant statements” (Creswell, 2007).

Responses from the social demographic instrument were coded using an excel spreadsheet. Individuals who responded affirmatively to questions were coded as ‘1’, and reactions as no were recorded as ‘2’. Additional descriptive statistics such as level of education, employment status, and exposure to trauma in childhood or adulthood were also coded numerically. Social demographic data was further analyzed to identify means and ranges for each sample participant’s background information.

Data collection analysis for this study was categorically divided into broad themes most often identified from participant interviews. Participants’ narratives were re-reviewed throughout the interview to obtain additional insight into the associations

between women's life experiences, relationships, and the onset of their criminal offending. Critical elements were identified, including trauma, significant life events, exposure to household and community surroundings that impacted women's emotional faculties, and co-occurring circumstances influencing women's responses. The significance of these interviews helped develop what Creswell (2007) refers to as the "essence of the phenomenon" regarding the life experiences of adult former women offenders and practitioners who assisted them.

The author concentrated on a handful of former women offenders whose life histories shared overlapping experiences leading to the development of several core themes derived from the type of individual life experience and relationship to the male identified as the pathway to female criminality. Repeatedly through several participants' stories, descriptive themes were determined to highlight significant interrelated factors associated with former adult female offenders' pathways to crime. The major themes were analyzed and re-examined from the highlighted interviews to increase the inter-reliability of findings (Reid, Flowers, and Larkin, 2005).

Major Themes Arising from the Study

The author identified four significant themes arising among female participants regardless of age, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or education level:

1. Significant childhood family dysfunction in childhood and abuse
2. Lack of maternal bond/attachment during childhood and abuse by mother
3. Economic marginalization and financial strain

4. Trauma exposure and perpetuation of cyclic abusive relationships and harmful coping mechanisms, including substance abuse.

The author continued to conduct interviews to further develop the significance of the significant themes illustrated among the initial sample participants and the role of the identified male as the pathway to crime. Defined articles were not exclusive; instead, the data suggested that several overlapping themes were more indicative of intersecting life experiences leading to criminal pathways of female offenders rather than one relationship or event with a male being the identifying factor leading to the subsequent outcome of female criminal offending. The author conducted interviews to layer individual participants' experiences, allowing their voices to describe their experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Data analysis continued to saturation, so findings from the interviews no longer produced any new information or additional themes for this study. Other techniques standard in qualitative research were introduced during the data analysis, such as theoretical notations to organize coding results, invoke hypotheses, and reinforce critical analysis of adverse childhood experiences, negative social attachments, and impact on female criminal pathways.

The concluding stage regarding data analysis and theory development sought to compare findings from the study with the more oversized sociological circumstances. The life history interviews' conclusions indicated the inherent social processes directly affecting groups of former women offenders. The author remained aware of the

possibility of a participant lying about their offending or pathway. The author confirmed criminal records by use of Lexis Nexis post-interview. Additionally, the author personally knowing several participants enabled the unique ability to confirm the validity of their criminal offending and lived experiences.

Because this study was designed to elicit personal responses from former women offenders regarding their relationship with a self-identified male as their acknowledged pathway to crime and their perceptions and evaluations of their lived experiences, participants were less inclined to present deceptive testimony about their criminal offending or stigma associated with the type of offense.

Limitations and steps to ensure rigor and trustworthiness of the Study

The author's own incarceration experiences and access to potential subject participants allowed for a more cohesive, intimate discussion of former life experiences, and encapsulated a large amount of trust during interviews. The combination and ability to engage women's experiences in the setting before the commencement of the research for this study enabled the author to develop familiarity and commonality with the daily lives of women involved in the criminal justice system. The author's unique experience of identifying as both a formerly incarcerated women offender and a researcher for this study allowed for the ability to relate to and encapsulate former women offenders' life experiences before incarceration. Given these nuances, it is imperative to discern that intimate knowledge of former women offenders' lives and understanding of the criminal justice system from a personal and academic standpoint was beneficial to the author. This observation allowed an integral ability to communicate with women, develop rapport,

and interpret the generalized social contextual factors that may have played a role in their offending.

The author's role and personal background influenced the data collection. Almost all the women the author spoke with expressed a verbal appreciation for an audience who would be interested in hearing their voices and the desire to understand better their stories and the relationships they experienced which influenced their pathways to offending and why these associations are essential to consider in criminological research. Furthermore, the author's ability to identify as a former female offender created a significant element of trust between participant and author where participants felt they could speak freely and minimized the participant's potential feeling of being misunderstood or judged that can readily exist in an imbalance of power-type relationships, such as among a research participant and researcher engagement in qualitative research. The ability to relate to the women helped establish depth and honesty in the interviews, which surprised and humbled the author. To minimize any external impact, interviews were done by phone according to the comfort and availability of the participants.

The author was aware of the difficulty of openly discussing sensitive topics with former female offenders, many of whom identified several traumatic experiences from childhood to adulthood. Re-living these experiences was not only a potentially triggering consequence for women themselves, but also for the author, who enforced a tedious routine of scheduling interviews spanning days from the previous one to allow for a sense of emotional decompression from particularly triggering and emotionally traumatic interviews of a vulnerable population (Worrall and Gelsthorpe, 2009).

The author also remained aware of her employment in the legal industry, and personal frustration at the treatment of individuals engaged in the legal system for non-criminal purposes and the bureaucratic obstacles women and men face at the hands of justice. Due to the purposive sampling design, the women who participated in this study in totality are not representative of the general population. The author was concerned that a potential limitation of this study would be many of the sample participants identifying as drug addicts because of the snowball sampling strategy. However, multiple sources to obtain female participants were utilized, minimizing the potential for overrepresentation of one variable or pathway regarding sample participants.

Because of the author's diverse roles in the study and related institutions (identifying as a former female offender, researcher, domestic violence survivor, and community resource advocate), the facilitation and production of contact information for additional community assistance was warranted. While the author received no monetary or beneficial compensation for this, she remained aware of ethical concerns regarding her primary role as a researcher and mechanism for additional assistance, should they be requested by participants. The author was informed of a participant's death shortly after conducting the interview. During the conversation, the participant described a recent incident where she was physically assaulted by a male acquaintance whom she had met in Narcotics Anonymous who was recently released from prison and struggled with sobriety. When the participant attempted to assist him with temporary housing, she discovered his relapse into drug addiction, and he was forced to leave her house. Two weeks later, the acquaintance brutally assaulted her while walking on a public greenway

with her three-year-old son, who witnessed the violence. She described him running toward her, with a machete sticking out of his black backpack. The participant obtained a police report. Immediately following the interview, the author asked the participant if she felt safe in her residence or if she needed information for community resources to assist her after the assault. The participant requested information about public agencies and was given the contact information for a large non-profit organization nearby that assisted female victims of violence and the local courthouse that could aid in her application for a restraining order. Shortly after, the author was made aware of the participant's death through a mutual acquaintance, unaware of the study or the deceased participant's potential participation.

While the manner of death remains undisclosed to the public and no overt link has been associated with the assailant of the recent physical attack, the author felt it necessary to articulate this unintentional consequence related to such a shocking and tragic situation not necessarily discussed even in the research standards protocol. The author included this personal account as a general disclaimer to emphasize the unintended consequences of undergoing qualitative research involving victims of violence.

Despite the author's protocol to ensure the participant's feeling of safety following the conclusion of the interview and the exchange of contact information for legal and community organizations to assist victims of crime when requested, the author remains aware of her emotional culpability following a sudden, unexpected tragedy and the humanistic feelings of whether they could have done more to save a participant's life.

A second limitation of the study is the underlying question of validity, which is often debated in qualitative research. Questioning the validity and reliability of self-reporting methods in social science research is expected. This becomes more complicated when sensitive elements such as violence, romantic relationships, abuse, and criminal behavior are involved. The inclusive subjectivity among self-reporting data is concurrent with cognitive dissonance and memory distortion or repression, complicating absolute reliability and validity (Arias & Beach, 1987). While the author remained aware of these constituents, she also remained acutely aware of the shame and humiliation that often accompany victims of trauma and violence, making female participants more likely to minimize the traumatic experiences rather than exaggerate for attention-related purposes.

A final limitation regarding the chosen methodological approach for this study is the scope in which its findings may be generalized. By the very nature of this qualitative study, the author remained aware that conclusions from the life-history narratives of former women offenders are not generalizable to the overall population. Further, issues involving replication of the current study would be complicated given the author's unique role and importance to the application and process of this study.

Acknowledging the study's limitations is offset by the findings of this study and their implications for future research. The research design served a comprehensive purpose by the immersive data obtained from life-history interviews conducted and reinforced reasoning for using a specific type of participants to understand better how the ultimate social trends involving female offender's life experiences and the consequences

regarding their identified pathways to crime or motivations for criminal offending can better inform both the general population and legal system.

Chapter 4: Findings

This qualitative, descriptive study was constructed to explain the role of men when examining female pathways to crime. Additionally, the author was interested in understanding the motivation for continued offending among former women offenders based on their own experiences. This chapter includes the results of the data analysis constructed to address the research questions and the themes from the interviews. Descriptive statistics are reported for the demographic characteristics of the sample. A summary of the results of the hypothesis testing is included with qualitative data.

The author conducted thirty-three (33) in-depth interviews with former adult women offenders; however, recruitment and data collection were challenged by the nature of the sample population, including increased likelihood of participant instability during the interview process, absences with following through with scheduled interviews, and failure to respond to additional requests in an appropriate timeframe post-recruitment. Therefore, three of the interview participants were discarded from the overall sample. Interviews were transcribed and analyzed to develop themes regarding the relationship with identified males to decipher what occurs before and within this relationship that may signify a catalyst for women's motivation toward criminal involvement.

The author focused on several women whose experiences were powerful and pivotal in developing the determining concepts related to this gendered relationship. Specific themes were established or repeated throughout the life experiences of former women sample participants to enlighten interrelating factors that accompanied the

identified relationship as a risk factor for women's propensity for delinquency and crime. Conclusions from this study were not intended to be about the statistical distribution of former adult women offenders' convictions; instead, they were aimed at examining the social-psychological processes at work that influence women to commit crimes.

Background information further provides introspection leading to the sequence of intersecting events in these women's lives affiliated with their criminal offending.

Descriptive Statistics

Frequencies and Percentages of Demographics

The final sample consisted of 30 adult former women offenders from several states on the east coast. Participants were between the ages of 26 and 54, with an average age of 35 at the time of the interview. The largest group of participants identified as White (60%; $n=18$), Hispanic (13%; $n=4$); Black or African American (0.6%; $n=2$); Native American Lumbee Indian (0.3%; $n=1$); Indian (0.3%; $n=1$) and biracial, including part Eskimo (0.3%; $n=4$).

Participants were primarily from middle and lower-class families, and urban and rural backgrounds. On average, the participants had either a high school diploma or completed a GED ($n=12$). 16% had less than a 12th-grade education; one participant had a 9th-grade education level, and three others completed 11th grade before dropping out. One woman completed a master's degree and was a teacher for eighteen years before incarceration, and only one other female graduated college with an undergraduate degree.

The cultural diversity of the participants prevented the author from cultivating an explanation informed by class, race, gender, or subculture. The number of arrests of

former sample women adult offenders ranged from at least two (2) to over twenty-five (25) during their offending lifespan, with an average of six (6) arrests per woman of this sample population.

Of the total women interviewed, 90% (n=27) had felony convictions. Only three women (10%;) were convicted of misdemeanor offenses; of these, each woman had more than one misdemeanor conviction. At the time of the study, 53% of participants (n=16) had children. Half of the women in this study faced homelessness at one point. A third of women reported being homeless during adulthood. Difficulty obtaining housing and homelessness were significant issues women met before and after incarceration and continue to be a critical issue among former offenders reintegrating into society.

Pathways

Among the sample participants, the initial male pathways to crime identified by the participants themselves were as follows: ex-boyfriend/boyfriend: sixteen (53%; n=16); father of their child/children: four (13%; n=4); biological father: three (10%; n=3); older brother/cousin/extended family member: two (.06%; n=2); ex-husband: two (0.6%; n=2); stepfather: one (0.3%; n=1); son: one (0.3%; n=1); and male friend or acquaintance: one (0.3%; n=1).

Identified pathways based on the relationships with the specific men were generally discussed. The participant who grew up watching substance use or criminal offending being acted out by the male deemed this the initial pathway, such as her father or older sibling. Other women who designated an ex-boyfriend or current partner as the pathway often discussed his criminal activity during adolescence as her motivation for

offending without accounting for her family dysfunction throughout childhood or the potential for this aspect to be what may have led her to seek out criminally experienced romantic partners later in life.

My first boyfriend was Carmelo in high school. He sold cocaine. He got it off Jerome Avenue in the Bronx. I had a 69 Camaro (my dad and I loved cars), and Carmelo used to make me pick it up in the Bronx. He used to sell to the kids in high school, and I would bring it to them. He was very aggressive. He held a gun to my head a few times. (Lisa, 52-year-old convicted of theft by deception, forgery, and child endangerment).

Original Research Question

The author's purpose of this study was to examine the role of men or males directly involved in former women offenders' lives to understand better how these gendered relationships identified by the women themselves as the catalyst toward their pathway to crime or otherwise served as women's motivation for offending. After further analysis of the data collection, it became apparent that a deeper resonance existed regardless of the type of relationship to the identified male. While participants recognized a particular male such as a stepfather, former romantic partner, or older brother/family member as their so-called introduction to criminal offending, this ideology overall lacked merit of the actual initial pathway upon the conclusion of the life-history interviews.

In many cases, women attributed this male as the designated pathway because they witnessed his criminal behavior, such as drug dealing, violence, or substance use. In some cases, such as Krystal, her father used drugs throughout her youth, and she began using alongside him. She considered him a drug buddy rather than a parent. During her teens, she began to buy and sell him crystal methamphetamine. Although both her mother

and father were substance users from when she was a young child, Krystal never spoke negatively of her relationship with her father or how his lack of parenting or drug addiction heavily influenced her to criminal offending. Long after Krystal left her family residence and her father passed away, she continued to act out criminal offending, eventually being sentenced to prison for aggravated assault on a former romantic partner.

Other women lacked a parental figure as part of their childhood family structure. They considered the absence of a father their reason for seeking out romantic relationships with boys and men who acted out abusive tendencies and engaged in delinquency.

The author noticed a different pattern emerging when considering the role of parental dysfunction during the former women offender's childhood development and its impact on subsequent offending.

Although the author's intentional research question was to symbolically compare the identified gendered relationships between men and women to examine this type of relationship as motivation for women's pathway into criminal behavior, further analysis of the data arising from the author's study concluded a more profound comprehension of probable relationships beyond the identified gendered relationship and women's future pathways to criminal behavior. The author continued to deconstruct maternal and paternal roles with other family figures among women's youth, reported events of childhood dysfunction, and the depth of the relationship, including attachment bonds among the participants.

What the author found was unanticipated and contrary to the initial hypothesis in this study. Several participants' life histories reflected not only a pattern of childhood dysfunction, but weak or abusive relationships or sudden loss of maternal bond between the female and her mother, which began from early childhood onward.

The author re-examined the strength of the relationship bond between daughter and mother during childhood and adolescence and the severity of childhood dysfunction as these two variables was shown to be highly influential factors for women eventually seeking out potentially harmful relationships with males during adolescence and adulthood, thereby leading to participant's identified gendered pathways to crime. Coping mechanisms related to trauma and childhood neglect, such as truancy or substance use, also identified risk factors leading to specific abusive romantic relationships, highlighting the same behavior as expected.

The author was wary of over-emphasizing an already known correlation between adolescent female drug use, childhood victimization, and future criminal offending of women often highlighted in criminological studies. While further investigating the strength and significance of the relationship between mother and participants during interviews, the author realized that not all participants described experiencing severely abusive relationships, particularly at the hands of their mothers, nor having a poor relationship with their mother from early-onset offending onward self-identified as addicts or substance abusers. Two participants described growing up in social environments ripe with drug-addicted parental and external family members. They were severely abused by their biological mothers repeatedly during adolescence, yet still admonished any peer

influence toward alcohol or substance use or desire to seek out external substances as a coping mechanism from their toxic familial relationships and surrounding environment.

Poor attachment bonds with female caretakers

Of significant importance, women who were raised primarily by mothers or primary maternal figures who were either emotionally, physically, or verbally abusive and neglectful toward the females during youth were more likely to act out more serious, aggressive crimes over a longer timeframe and less likely to desist from criminal behavior into adulthood. In this study, almost all participants were raised by women maternal figures as the primary caretakers, or multiple women. Only two participants discussed being raised by a paternal or male figure, primarily due to the early death of the biological mother. The cycle of violence perpetuated from childhood, specifically by a mother or motherly figure, onto her daughter(s) onward led to the development of emotionally unstable, traumatized girls who, during adolescence and adulthood, sought out similar abusive romantic relationships to those in which they witnessed their mother being victimized during childhood, often at the hands of a male abuser. Rather than create stronger, supportive affectionate bonds between mother and daughter, the mother's victimization seemed to destroy any potential to understand or establish positive bonds, even among their female offspring.

Participants in this study were more likely to dismiss paternal abuse or neglect. They discussed their father or paternal figure in either a neutral or potentially positive light despite the type of trauma bestowed upon the participant by the father figure. When talking about maternal bonds, most participants expressed strained or hostile emotional

attachment bonds toward their mother or maternal figures during childhood. If their relationship spanned into adulthood, it tended to be a controversial, often conflicted relationship. Whether the nuclear family structure was primarily maternal based, having consistent, negative communication and an overall abusive relationship with not only the mother but additional extended female figures such as a grandmother, aunt, or older sister played a considerable role in the subject participant's motivation toward criminal activity and subsequent incarceration.

The author recognized that the significant themes repeated throughout the study were also interconnected. While remaining mindful of the cross-sectional boundaries among the repeated patterns presented, the author's data analysis narrowed the focus to the primary attachment factors and resulting pathways. In this context, the author determined women's subsequent criminal offending was extrinsically correlated to weak attachment bonds and a strained relationship with their mother figure, as well as the association of trauma stemming from the sudden passing of a biological mother during early childhood or adolescence regardless of the amount of extended female family for stabilization and caretaking roles. Often, the women expressed conflicting emotions toward the mother or maternal figures during childhood, initially attempting to numb themselves against initial neglect or abusive behavior and then becoming very rebellious upon realizing their mother would not see them or care for them in an emotionally positive manner. This epiphany began to affect their responses and reactions toward others, especially in romantic relationships, during adolescence. The major intersecting themes reflect the

underlying correlation of the role of the attachment and the maternal figure in the former women offender's lives, as presented below:

My mother was raped when she was thirteen. She was fifteen when she met my dad. He was twenty-three years old. She became a heroin addict; she slept in cars. My father was terrible. Pimps severely abused her. They burned her feet if she tried to run away. I was raped by my stepfather when I was twelve years old. I lacked a father figure when I was growing up. My mother was always 'men motivated' when I was growing up. When I was thirteen, my grandmother dropped me off in Ft. Meyers, Florida. My mom tried to shoot my stepdad. I started a new school with no money or clothes. They put me on some heavy medication. I tried to OD [overdose] on it. I finally left home when I was fifteen years old. My mom would disappear for months. (Halsey, 39-year-old convicted of credit card fraud, burglary, grand theft auto, and shoplifting)

My mother and father separated when I was in 7th grade. My mom was neglectful toward my siblings and me when I was young. I had to be the "mother" to my five younger sisters and brothers. She made me who I am. I became openly defiant and challenged authority. I ended up living with my father when I was in high school. I attacked my mom with a bat in 2019, and she got me arrested. I stopped living with her and still don't. My grandmothers are the only women who try to care for me. (Katia, 24-year-old convicted of assault)

After her parents separated, Katia lived with her mother. In eleventh grade, Katia moved from her mother's house to her paternal grandparents and father. When asked why she moved out during that time, Katia stated that it was her mother's decision; her mother made her pack her belongings and dropped her off at her grandparent's house. Katia explained her mother wanted a daughter that would wait on her hand and foot. Over time,

Katia began to express her anger toward her mother and the resentment she felt trying to take care of her siblings while her mother failed to do essential parenting duties.

My mother was tough on me and my older sister Jyothi when we were young. My mother and father are from India and believe in traditional Indian culture, but Jyothi and I grew up in suburban New Jersey. We were very Americanized. My mother was strict with my sister and me, cold, and resentful toward us as females and firstborns. She expected us to be obedient and favored our younger brother once he came along. She was so dismissive of my sister and me. My sister became wild in her teen years, and I sought out drugs and anyone who would make me feel visible. My mom disowned my sister and me while we were teens. We spent time in jails together. We were the ultimate disappointment to traditional Indian families, I guess. But she never gave us a feeling that we were wanted, understood the differences in culture, or cared about how we felt. (Kuma, 30-year-old, convicted of burglary, grand theft auto, possession of controlled substance, credit card fraud, and receiving stolen property)

Kuma and her older sister led a deviant lifestyle throughout adolescence into adulthood.

The author remembers a distinct memory of being housed with Kuma in the drug rehabilitation unit of the local jail and, one day, her sister Jyothi passed by the door of the unit. The women in the unit could feel their exchange through the metal and glass confines separating their physical connection. We stirred and turned our heads, trying not to pay apparent attention and give the sisters the limited privacy we could offer. However, we were still unable to withdraw our eyes from their heated communication and Kuma's overt frustration. Jyothi was housed in another unit due to escalated criminal charges and detailed her recent court date, confirming her conviction and resulting prison sentence.

Watching Kuma's visible behavioral reactions, the author became aware that Jyothi's impending transfer to prison would set Kuma off on a very destructive emotional turmoil. Despite being in separate units, it was obvious Kuma felt more comfortable with her older sister sleeping on a metal bunk enclosed in the same structure as her, even if they could not physically see one another. Once she learned that her sister was going to prison and would remain in the local jail facing an unknown sentence and timeframe, Kuma began to deteriorate mentally. It was then that the author sadly realized Kuma unconsciously spent most of her childhood, adolescence, and adulthood emulating and idolizing older sister Jyothi's behavior and felt Jyothi represented more of a mother figure to Kuma than their biological mother.

The author believed Kuma committed crimes and refused bail attempts to remain in the same facility as her sister. Shortly after her sister was transferred to an outside prison, Kuma succumbed to "jailhouse insider information" and contacted a locally known pimp who would bail women out in exchange for prostitution. Suddenly, she was packing up her belongings and disengaging from the rehabilitation program against the pleas of the other women in the unit, program instructors, and correctional officers who equally shared concern for her safety and welfare on the outside, without her sister and confidante. The author is sad to confirm that both Kuma and Jyothi passed away by the time this study was written.

Dysfunctional childhood, including victimization

I met my daughter's father at a flea market in Florida. I call those days the 'crystal meth days.' He found out I was an escort selling my body to the guy I was renting a room with

then and brought me to New Jersey, but he needed a green card. (Halsey)

Halsey's childhood was ripe with parental alienation and a semblance of uncertainty daily. By the time she grew up, she had recognized how to use her gender to influence her benefit or even economic safety, such as marrying a male who desperately needed citizenship. Ultimately, Halsey was forced to return to Florida and endured continual abuse by her daughter's father.

Criminological literature continues to account for childhood victimization, exposure to early onset of violence, limited parental supervision, and economic disparity as systemic predictors for adult offending for both males and females. However, this study recognized a specific influential factor in most women's stories where they were unaware of the correlation between their childhood experiences and later offending. "I have been abused physically, sexually, verbally, and mentally most of my life, especially before the age of 18" (Renee, 43-year-old, convicted of credit card fraud, several DWIs, possession of controlled substances, and drug paraphernalia).

A noticeable pattern began to emerge from the stories of women's experiences and relationships with adults in the household and the vulnerability of women witnessing or experiencing abuse in childhood by parental figures. Distinct recognition of the gendered relationships among the female childhood roles and the type of attachment bond to the mother figure increased the likelihood of vulnerability, abuse, and risk-taking behaviors. This pattern was further increased once the abuse of the female child was

acted out or accepted by the mother, whether physically, emotionally, or mentally.

Childhood trauma

Trauma experienced during childhood and the need for economic survival goes hand in hand with substance abuse and addiction. Halsey admitted to becoming an escort during her teenage years as a survival mechanism, eventually leading to her drug addiction and additional trauma factors and resulting pathways. In this context, the author determined women's subsequent criminal offending was extrinsically linked to a poor attachment bond and weak relationship with their mother figure, as well as the association of trauma stemming from the sudden passing of a biological mother during early childhood or adolescence, regardless of the number of extended female family members available for caretaking roles.

Often, the women expressed conflicting emotions toward the mother or maternal figures during childhood, initially attempting to numb themselves against initial neglect or abusive behavior and then becoming very rebellious upon realizing their mother would not see them or care for them in an emotionally positive way manner. This epiphany began to affect their responses and reactions toward others, especially in romantic relationships during adolescence. The major intersecting themes reflect the underlying correlation of the role of the attachment and the maternal figure in the former women offender's lives are presented below:

My mother was raped when she was 13. She was 15 when she met my dad. He was 2 years old. She became a heroin addict; she slept in cars. My father was terrible. Pimps

severely abused her. They burned her feet. I was raped by my stepfather when I was 12 years old. I lacked a father figure when I was growing up. My mother was always 'men motivated' when I was growing up. When I was thirteen, my grandmother dropped me off in Ft. Meyers, Florida. My mom tried to shoot my stepdad. I started a new school with no money or clothes. They put me on some heavy medication. I tried to OD [overdose] on it. I finally left home when I was fifteen years old. My mom would disappear for months.

(Halsey)

Halsey's childhood seemed to mirror the dysfunction her mother engaged in from when Halsey was an infant onward. Her mother had brief periods of sobriety in between relapses and jail stints. Halsey grew up in an unstable environment, yearning for emotional attachment and acceptance but receiving a lack of safety as daily existence:

My mother and father separated when I was in seventh grade. My mom was neglectful toward my siblings and me when I was young. I had to be the "mother" to my five younger sisters and brothers. She made me who I am. I became openly defiant and challenged authority. I ended up living with my father when I was in high school. I attacked my mom with a bat in 2019, and she got me arrested. I stopped living with her and still don't. My grandmothers are the only women who try to care for me. (Katia, 24-year-old convicted of assault)

Katia spent most of her childhood relying on other family members to watch over her and her siblings. At the same time, she attempted to care for them as much as possible as her mother was neglectful and often failed at primary parenting duties. By the time she was a teenager, she had begun to rebel against her grandmothers, who attempted to keep Katia from delinquent behaviors by taking her to school and doctor's appointments and cooking

her meals. Katia tried to work at a local supermarket but was quickly fired because of her aggressive behavior after she attempted to attack her supervisor.

Katia often argued at the insistence of basic rules and began to flee at night, walking the main highway through her town, a known highway for truckers. She started doing this often, sometimes disappearing for days. When she would return, Katia would go to sleep. Her grandmothers noticed Katia would have cash or would purchase new clothing and items despite her lack of legitimate employment. She remained nondescriptive about how she earned money. During her interview, she relied heavily on the innuendo of truck stops and lonely male truckers, leading the author to assume that the exchange of sexual favors for money and illegal substances such as cocaine were the motivations behind her illegitimate economic opportunities.

Katia felt she did ‘what she had to do,’ since she struggled with bipolar depression and could not obtain and maintain legitimate employment due to a lack of medication adherence and continual mood swings combined with little motivation. Despite her initial denial of engaging in illegal substance use, Katia admitted to being involuntarily hospitalized for delusional behavior after assaulting her brother and tested positive for cocaine and amphetamines.

Katia remained resolute in her decision to partake in the potentially dangerous behaviors she continued to do as a young adult. Katia was also aware of human trafficking and the relative lack of concern for her safe-being as her town resides in a central hub for trafficking using interstate 95. Her grandmothers remain helpless and concerned for her,

but she is defiant about her behavior and decisions and will not stop for others.

My mother was tough on me and my older sister Jyothi when we were young. My mother and father are from India and believe in traditional Indian culture, but Jyothi and I grew up in suburban New Jersey. We were very Americanized. My mother was strict with my sister and me, cold, and resentful toward us as females and firstborns. She expected us to be obedient and favored our younger brother once he came along. She was so dismissive of my sister and me. My sister became wild in her teen years, and I sought out drugs and anyone who would make me feel visible. My mom disowned my sister and me while we were teens. We spent time in jails together. We were the ultimate disappointment to traditional Indian families, I guess. But she never gave us a feeling that we were wanted, understood the differences in culture, or cared about how we felt. (Kuma)

Kuma and her older sister led a deviant lifestyle throughout adolescence into adulthood.

The author distinctly remembers a memory of being housed with Kuma in the drug rehabilitation unit of a New Jersey jail. This unit was separated from the unit women's units, and women had to apply and were accepted into this program which only had eight beds. The women in this unit also wore maroon scrubs instead of the basic green or orange correctional jumpers. The author and Kuma met in the basic dorm after being processed, and the author used to save food for Kuma while she was withdrawing. The author was aware Kuma's sister was also incarcerated in the same jail but was unaware of her alleged offenses.

Abusive romantic relationships

The author often noticed when the participant described a toxic relationship with a romantic partner, usually in late teens and adulthood, the pattern was often related to either

witnessing her mother accept a similar type of relationship from a partner or having a cold, unloving maternal relationship where women would seek out affection from men who lured them in.

I met my daughter's father at a flea market in Florida. I call those days the 'crystal meth days.' He found out I was an escort selling my body to the guy I was renting a room with then and brought me to New Jersey, but he needed a green card. (Halsey)

Halsey's childhood was ripe with parental alienation and a semblance of daily uncertainty. By the time she grew up, she had recognized how to use her gender to influence her benefit or even economic safety, such as marrying a male who desperately needed citizenship and resorting to prostitution for survival.

I wish he would beat me to get through the bruises. I wish that sometimes. My daughter's father is grooming her to be scared to talk back to him. I grew up in a way keeping my mouth shut, but when I hit the streets and was told to speak out, I couldn't. Laws only exist for people with money. (Halsey)

Halsey believed that once she met her ex-husband in Florida, somehow, he would be able to rescue her from her occupation as an escort and the daily existence that came from selling her body to afford a motel room and the abuse endured daily.

When I started dating Mitch, his alcoholism was out of control, and he acted out. I couldn't get away from him. He threatened to kill my family if I attempted to leave him. I watched him punch a window in a car with children inside. I stayed with him because I was terrified and believed he would act out on his threats. (Lisa)

While Lisa identified men with whom she had romantic relationships as her pathway to criminal offending, she also discussed being a long-time gymnast and teacher who

herniated four discs in her cervical spine when she was in her mid-20s. Her neurologist prescribed her 360 Vicodin pills a month for pain management purposes. When she ran out of Vicodin, she failed to understand her physical withdrawal symptoms and reached out to her friend, who brought her something to make the withdrawals disappear.

Although Lisa developed an opiate addiction through a legal source, it was her girlfriend, Shari, who introduced her to the illegal street drug heroin because it was a cheaper remedy to regulate the disadvantage of a medical provider overprescribing a dangerous, addictive drug.

My boyfriend [at the time] convinced me to rob a local pizzeria for money because we were dope sick. He said it would be better if I were the one who carried out the act because I was female and pretty. We had made little robbery attempts before, and I used my looks. Nobody suspected me before. So, he dropped me off and told me he would be waiting nearby in his car. I wore a ski mask and had a toy gun. I walked in, locked the front door, and went up to the register, demanding all the money. I waved the fake weapon around. The owner grabbed the gun and held me down. I guess he somehow realized it wasn't a real one. I knew I was in serious trouble then. My ex-boyfriend convinced me to do this. It was such a stupid idea. I realized I was in serious trouble then. I ended up being locked up out of state. He never got in trouble.

My mom couldn't afford my bail. She was a single mom. I was her only child, and we had a very fractured relationship. My dad passed when I was young. My mom froze everyone out, including me. I learned to hide emotions and vulnerability from her. When I was in jail, I tried to get into drug court in the state [of the offense], but they fought me for years because I wasn't a state resident. I'm a victim, and I still believe the legal system is

rigged and stacked against drug offenders and women in abusive relationships or situations. Once you are in, you are in. They make it almost impossible to get out. (Casey, 36-year-old, convicted for weapons possession, robbery, reckless endangerment, retail theft, and harassment)

Although Casey admitted her criminal behavior stemmed from her ex-boyfriend, she was vehement at blaming the criminal justice and legal system for constituting unbiased behavior and failing to consider individual experiences regarding what may have aggravated female criminal behavior. While she could not go in-depth into her childhood experiences of growing up solely with her mother, a traveling nurse, she also had minimal positive things to reflect on. While incarcerated, many of her conversations were aggressive and hostile toward her mother. It is imperative to acknowledge that the women's experiences relating to the specified themes in this study and their motivation for criminal offending were not exclusive. It was overwhelmingly apparent that each participant's life-history experiences intersected with several significant themes from this study.

Ultimately, Halsey was forced to return to Florida and endured continual abuse by her daughter's father. She continues to fear for her thirteen-year-old daughter, whom she shares custody of with her ex-husband when she is in his custody.

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My boyfriend [at the time] convinced me to rob a local pizzeria for money because he and I were dope sick. He said it would be better if I were the one who carried out the act because I was female and pretty. We had made little robbery attempts before, and I used my looks. Nobody suspected me before. So, he dropped me off and told me he would be waiting nearby in his car. I wore a ski mask and had a toy gun. I walked in, locked the front door, and went up to the register, demanding all the money. I waved the fake weapon around. The owner grabbed the gun and held me down.

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fought me for years because I wasn't a state resident. I'm a victim, and I still believe the legal system is rigged and stacked against drug offenders and women in abusive relationships or situations. Once you are in, you are in. They make it almost impossible to get out. (Casey, 36-year-old, convicted for weapons possession, robbery, reckless endangerment, retail theft, and harassment.

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She was one of the women who detailed her frustration with obtaining housing post-incarceration and the failures of the correctional institution's requirement for parole without assisting offenders with access to basic needs, increasing the chances of women violating probation or parole and becoming reincarcerated.

It is imperative to acknowledge that the women's experiences relating to the specified themes in this study and their motivation for criminal offending were not exclusive. Each participant's life-history experiences intersected with several significant themes described in this study. Criminological literature continues to account for childhood victimization, exposure to early onset of violence, limited parental supervision, and economic disparity as systemic predictors for adult offending for both males and

females. However, this study recognized a specific influential factor in most women's stories where they were unaware of the correlation between their childhood experiences and later offending. *"I have been abused physically, sexually, verbally, and mentally most of my life, especially before the age of 18"* (Renee, 43-year-old, convicted of credit card fraud, several DWIs, possession of controlled substances, and drug paraphernalia).

A noticeable pattern began to emerge from the stories of women's experiences involving relationships with adults in the family household and the vulnerability of women witnessing or experiencing abuse in childhood by parental figures. Distinct recognition of the gendered relationships among the female childhood roles and the type of attachment bond to the mother figure increased the likelihood of vulnerability, abuse, and risk-taking behaviors. This pattern was further enhanced once the abuse of a female child was acted out or accepted by the mother, regardless of the type of abuse endured.

Chapter 5: Discussion

“It’s like they say, if the system fails you, you create your own system.”

-Michael K. Williams

In this chapter, the author discusses the pathways of women whose stories are included in this study which resulted in their arrests, identifying the most significant underlying category constituted to what the author refers to as ‘*intra-gender maternal entrapment*.’ The previous chapter introduced common pathways to criminality for women participating in this study. It emphasized interrelated variations in gender-identity development leading to perceptible themes of negative maternal attachment bonds, victimization, early childhood trauma, and abuse among young girls, which coerced them to act out subsequent criminal behavior.

This chapter focuses on women’s experiences before and the impact of incarceration on their adult lives. The pathways discussed here are formulated to devise a framework for analysis of distinct experiences involving former women offenders emphasizing the lack of emotional attachment bonds from primary caretakers such as parental figures and the effect of these bonds on their relationships and future offending behavior. The following commentary relates to the author’s incarcerated experience with women and mothers:

I can remember her voice but not her name. She had this whimsical, cheery, singsong pitch pushing a cart of food trays down the hallway of cells on the ‘K’ unit in the now-defunct county jail in South New Jersey. This happy woman wore

the same orange jumpsuit adorned on every other incarcerated female, pouring watered-down juice for the new inmates forced onto this 'detox/punishment unit.

Any newly incarcerated female arrested for a drug-related offense or who admitted to using alcohol or substance within the previous five days was remanded to the segregated unit before classification occurred. It was October of 2014, nuzzled softly in the middle of the massive opiate pandemic sweeping across the United States, forcing society to confront what the face of a heroin addict looks like; across race, class, gender, and socioeconomic status. Despite no recent substance use or current drug offense, I was admitted to this unit as a precautionary measure. The unit also served as a liability concern for a county jail ripe with drug offenders, bordering a county with one of the highest murder per capita rates in the United States and limited correctional staff or resources.

Locked in cells lining both sides of the dingy, fluorescent hallway were the disembodied chaos of women withdrawing on thin, blue gym mats harnessed in chipped, mint green metal cells 4x12 ft. wide. I could feel their anguish as they yelled for help to the correctional officers who never came. I slept little. Time became a construct.

And then I heard her voice bouncing off the cement blocks like tupelo honey. It was the only thing that sounded alive in this twilight zone of emptiness, vomit, and apathy. As she came to the cell door, I realized she was a fellow inmate. A correctional guard stoically stood beside her as she poured the red liquid into

white Styrofoam cups and waited for the guard to open each door. On the other side of the metal door, I stood to grab the desolate meal trays she passed inward as she greeted me heartily. I looked at her strangely. I had been locked in my cell for over 30 hours with no human interaction, shower, or phone call. I was not sure what meal she was serving, what day it was, or why she was so happy to be in this structure handing three slices of white bread and a mess of brown liquid onto a tray with a cup of watered-down Kool-Aid to other incarcerated women just as lost as I was.

Yet she approached the metal door thrice a day with the same cheerful voice for the next three days. I was then taken to classification and moved to the 'F' unit, the largest unit of the jail housing several other women convicted of low-level to medium-related offenses. I stopped seeing or hearing that one cheery inmate who so lovingly delivered stale food and watered-down Kool-Aid happily to women withdrawing or completely shell-shocked on the locked-down 'K'-unit. And then, one day, she showed up to the 'F' unit distributing bagged lunches in her jovial manner when the whole jail remained on lockdown due to limited correctional staff showing up for their shifts. It was mid-December. I asked my bunkmate if she knew who that happy inmate was and why she wasn't on this unit. My bunkmate looked at me and said: "Oh yeah. She's housed in the 'G' unit with the other inmates facing serious prison time. They aren't allowed to interact with us." Our unit was overcrowded and filled with women facing charges, including weapons possession and child endangerment offenses. This was the first I have

heard of this additional housing unit or women accused of serious, high-level crimes in this jail. My curiosity pushed me to inquire further, asking: "So, what's a serious offense that would classify her differently?" My bunkmate responded directly: "She sodomized her child with a broom."

The alleged offense was not exaggerated. The only condition was her defense, claiming that her husband had forced her to engage in this activity. Regardless of her potential victimization, child-related offenses often escalate an inmate's status to a high-risk level irrespective of the inmate's gender. Generally, inmates charged with a particularly heinous crime or who have captured media attention are housed separately from the general population for safety. With the advent of technology and telephones, incarcerated inmates can quickly find out about a newly incarcerated individual's charges or alleged offenses before they even arrived on the unit.

I would be bereft to say that this woman's charged offenses didn't jar me. Worse, during my time in that county jail, I failed to understand how her demeanor could be so cheerful, knowing the depravity of her charges and the psychological impact on children in general. I sat with those unsettling thoughts for months. I never saw her waver from her sweet demeanor among the roles the Department of Corrections bestowed upon her. It both scared and fascinated me. I studied criminology and motivation for criminal behavior, focusing on gender and criminal delinquency years before I spent eight months incarcerated with several female inmates who also identified as mothers.

While some inmates I encountered faced charges related to child endangerment offenses, they often explained that their offense was associated with an underlying substance abuse issue or a result of economic factors. Often, explanations were given, such as their child was sitting in their car seat in a vehicle or sleeping in a carrier in a hotel room at the time of the arrest because she [the inmate] was a single, full-time caretaker and could not afford to have someone care for the child. These mothers repeatedly claimed they cared for their children primarily, and their child-related offense was a secondary consequence of their afflictions. While most of the mothers charged with child endangerment offenses admitted to having underlying substance abuse issues or engaging in prostitution for financial purposes during their arrest, they also insisted that they would not have placed their child in a harmful or dangerous situation if they either had a support system to assist with childcare or the financial means to pay for a babysitter during the time of their offense. (Author's reflection, 2014)

The initial mother and incarcerated woman offender described above represents another caliber of female offenders. During the author's interviews with formerly incarcerated women, she began to identify themes related to similar experiences of traumatic childhoods, emphasizing the maternal role, relationship, and the impact on attachment bonds for the young female child.

The lack of emotional or negative attachment toward their mother was pivotal in the young female's motivation toward subsequent criminal behavior. The result of the girl's poor maternal attachment bond and lack of emotional attachment considerably

negatively affected the trajectory of future criminal offending for women and relationships in this study. It is important to note a few initial assumptions which guided this study. The underlying assumption is that individuals are a sum of the social experiences that have commenced in their lives.

Not all social experiences are equal in significance; most are fleeting and consequential. However, specific social experiences become unforgettable and impactful, resting in the caverns of an individual's memory for days, months, or years later by reinforcing a permanent tattoo-like existence upon those individuals regardless of their desire for such. This study shows how the strength and bond of early childhood relationships with certain parental figures such as mothers, can impact their children's propensity for future criminal offending.

The stories generated from participant interviews identified specific male relations and focused on this type of gendered relationship as a potential pathway to crime for the former adult woman offender. The types of pathways were continuously broken down, compared, and analyzed to develop overlapping themes participants experienced in their life histories and because of these relationships. It was initially assumed that residing in a dysfunctional childhood home with a lack of positive parenting may have increased a female's propensity for seeking out adverse gendered relationships toward men actively engaging in criminal activity.

As concluded in the author's former study of good girls, bad boys (Smykal, 2009), and the pathways to deviant behavior, the environment contributes to female delinquency during adolescence and adulthood. Females began to deviate from expected or prosocial

behavior because they were treated a certain way in romantic and intra-relationships from youth, where they began to internalize these projections.

Early childhood dysfunction and the adverse strength of the relationship between the participant and her mother or maternal figure were most significant in this study. While a relationship between women and their paternal figures was an essential factor for criminal propensity, residing in a dysfunctional childhood household and experiencing a significantly poor or emotionally damaging relationship with the identified maternal figure as the primary parental role specifically became an integral factor for participants who later sought out pathways to crime utilizing male-related paths toward delinquency.

Lack of positive maternal bond, maternal abuse, and neglect towards female youth

Many participants shared stories of growing up in a dysfunctional family environment with a neglectful and often emotionally abusive or dismissive mother regardless of the presence or attachment to a paternal figure.

My parents didn't care for me in my youth. When I was nine, a neighbor's teenage grandson raped me. I told my mother what happened, and she laughed at me. (Krystal, 36-year-old convicted of aggravated assault, possession, theft, conspiracy to commit robbery, several DUI's, shoplifting, and disorderly conduct offenses)

Krystal described growing up in a dysfunctional family with both parents consistently using drugs. Krystal's mother was an alcoholic and suffered from bipolar disorder, and her father was a cocaine and methamphetamine addict.

Krystal reported having a horrible relationship with her mother growing up. The lack of an emotionally supportive maternal relationship, abuse, and trauma she experienced significantly affected her into adulthood. Krystal's mother was emotionally

abusive and often allowed her brothers to abuse Krystal physically. Krystal's chaotic familial environment and lack of attachment to her mother helped reinforce her aggression in childhood.

Most participants who reported a history of drug and alcohol abuse began using substances on average at twelve years old. Most women reported using substances as a response to trauma and abuse experienced during early childhood combined with a lack of affection from an emotionally absent maternal relationship. In most cases described in this study, participants desperately sought a positive emotional connection with a mother who refused to engage their daughters. The continual cycle of being discarded and abused was reflected in their responsive behavior, which often included substance abuse, recklessness, impulsivity, and seeking attention through delinquency.

I went through extensive emotional abuse as a child, and I continue to experience it with my mother. My parents were druggies. They took care of us, but it was the things that were happening that we didn't understand. My parents never physically abused me, but my mom emotionally abused me from childhood. Our relationship, even now, it's very toxic. Very annoying. That's where a lot of my anger stems from. When my mother calls, it takes two days before I can be 'okay' after one phone call. (Krystal)

Krystal self-identified as a kleptomaniac. She was first arrested at 14 years old for shoplifting, stating that she never learned a lesson but never stole from friends or family. Krystal experienced extensive sexual, mental, and emotional abuse during childhood in a severely dysfunctional family home with a lack of maternal bonding leading to her eventually using drugs and alcohol to escape the mental anguish and seeking out relationships with abusive men during adulthood as a coping mechanism. Most

participants described suffering emotional and physical abuse at the hands of their mother.

My mother physically beat me throughout childhood and into my teen years. I still remember her hitting me in the face with a 2 x 4, drawing blood. I never understood why I was beaten nor why I was the only child beaten by her. I never felt attached to her. I feel like she's a big reason I don't socialize now and ended up the way I did. (Angelica, 54-year-old convicted of child endangerment and conspiracy)

Angelica described growing up in a very traumatic and unloving household during her youth. She grew up in Wyoming to parents who were distant and unloving. She always felt her mother favored her other siblings over her and took the abuse out on her.

Angelica grew up with two older brothers; one is an alcoholic, and the other committed suicide in 2015.

Angelica grew up with rampant alcoholism and drug abuse among close family members, including her father. However, unlike many other participants with similar family dysfunction, she refused to be part of that existence. Enduring extensive emotional and physical abuse by her mother during her childhood resulted in Angelica suffering from significant paranoia and seeking romantic partners who were also emotionally and physically abusive. During adulthood, she became convinced her male ex-partners were cheating on her, whether there was evidence to support this.

Growing up, my family life was chaotic. I have an older sister who our father adopted. I found out my mother was exploiting my sister, so my dad got full custody of her, and she was never allowed to return to my mother's custody. My parents were separated most of my life, yet I decided to get back together three years ago. I experienced homelessness in

both youth and adulthood. When I was 14, my mother slept with my 18-year-old boyfriend. I have been on my own since. Living back home with my mother is a trigger. (Bliss, 34-year-old convicted of trafficking, possession, and manufacturing with intent to sell, possession of a firearm, DWI, shoplifting, indecent exposure, and violation of probation)

Bliss has a criminal history including fifteen arrests with felony convictions and spent over four years in prison. She described having a strained relationship with her mother from childhood onward. While she reported her then-18-year-old boyfriend beating and raping her during their adolescent relationship, the discovery of her mother sleeping with her boyfriend behind her back compelled her to leave her mother's home when she was forced to begin fending for herself at only 14 years old.

Kira's mother allowed her to be raped by her boyfriends and drug dealers when Kira was just ten years old in exchange for drugs.

I come from the most dysfunctional family in the world. My mother was a drug addict. My father was an alcoholic. I was born addicted to heroin. I was born as a twin, but the boy twin died shortly after birth. My mother pimped me out for drugs when I was a child. When I was 12, my grandmother found me tied to a telephone pole. I ended up spending most of my childhood in foster care. One day I asked my mother who my father was. She told me, "one of three guys." I found out my birth father has sixteen kids. I am the only product of his and my mother's relationship. My mother walked into DSS [Department of Social Services] court with a guy who raped herself and me. She wouldn't even look me in the eye. (Kira, 41-year-old, convicted of conspiracy to commit murder, felony assault, arson, identity fraud, financial fraud, DUI, criminal menacing, communicating terroristic threats,

passing back checks, contempt for inability to pay child support, and multiple traffic infractions)

Kira became pregnant at 14 years old and gave birth when she was 15. The father of the child was one of her mother's dope dealers. "*Once they brought the baby into the [delivery] room for me to see him, I said this isn't my baby. I don't want him*" (Kira).

Because she was only 15 years old when she gave birth, the courts wouldn't suspend her parental rights. Since then, Kira has been incarcerated for failing to pay back child support and recently finished jail time for failing to pay. Her three biological children are now adults. Two of her children result from sexual assaults enforced by her mother, which remains emotionally challenging for Kira to deal with.

Kira's mother passed away in 2019, and she was the one who took care of her mother while on her deathbed. She was acutely aware she had to care for the same woman who sold her daughter for drugs and physically beat her. As an adult who was forced to be a caretaker for her dying mother, who both victimized and traumatized Kira during childhood, this experience became a significant emotional trigger, and she still suffers from occasional flashbacks.

Trauma, violence, and substance abuse

The author was surprised by the extensive trauma Bliss, and many other participants, described experiencing, often at the hand of male perpetrators. Still, women openly discussed hostility toward their mother figures and childhood experiences as a significant, recurring issue in their lives. They often blamed their mothers for the abuse propagated by men.

I was sexually assaulted by an older male friend I went to stay with after leaving my mother's house. I was homeless and living on the streets for two months before meeting him. It happened more than once. I felt like I had to stay there. I refused to return to my mother's house after what she did. I watched my best friend murdered. I got shot in the leg at the time. I've been in three serious car accidents and have chronic back pain.

When I was 21, I lived in a drug house. It got raided, and I ended up being charged with manufacturing with intent to sell. I did over a two-year stint in prison. By 24 years old, I was a polysubstance user. I think part of my drug use was based on whatever I could get and how bad my chronic pain was at the time. I became dependent on drugs to escape the physical pain. My mother also abused Xanax. (Bliss)

The severe trauma Bliss experienced from youth through adulthood enabled her to fall into abusive relationships and substance abuse. Bliss attempted to hide or minimize her behavior but felt trapped by her circumstances and lack of maternal support. From early adolescence, Bliss sought out dangerous and abusive relationships with males and engaged in criminal involvement so that she did not feel forced to return to her mother's home or the toxic maternal femininity stemming from her mother's sexually exploitative actions.

Early childhood trauma and substance use

"I'm going to die if I don't get help. Living back home with my mom was a trigger"
(Bliss).

Criminological literature has focused on correlations linking female victimization, especially during youth, substance abuse, and criminal offending. Findings from this study echo similar conclusions; however, this current research highlights the effects of distinct

parental roles and lack of maternal attachment toward female youth as the catalyst for women's perpetration toward addiction and delinquency. Although early childhood trauma includes victimization during adolescence, there were apparent factors for women's pathways into substance use and addiction. The early onset of drug use was suggestive of harmful coping mechanisms and responsive behavior because of their toxic maternal relationships and unstable family environment.

Participants openly discussed their dysfunctional childhoods but emphasized the lack of emotional attachment or bonding with their mother or maternal figure as a significant precursor toward their only onset of alcohol and substance use. Often, these women were unconsciously mirroring behavior. They watched their mothers act out with men. Many participants talked about their mothers' using drugs or engaging in criminal activity as part of a romantic relationship with a male partner. As a result, their mothers never developed positive bonds with their children, especially their daughters. Frequently, female youth felt their mothers targeted them to expel their experiences of abuse and victimization.

Kira never did drugs. She believed being born addicted to heroin and her childhood experiences with a neglectful, abusive, drug addict mother and alcoholic, and an absent father made her not even want to smoke cigarettes from a young age and never was influenced by peer pressure or the desire to escape the chaotic lifestyle she was forced to accept from a young age. Part of her believes she went into a survival mode early in life, and once she had her son, it changed how she felt about her life pathway. Suddenly she had something to live beyond the trauma influenced by her mother's lack of

parenting and socialization. Kira admitted to only drinking occasionally and will still get 'lit' during special occasions in the present day.

Bliss began using ecstasy from 16 through 22 years old before she went to prison for two years for manufacturing and trafficking ecstasy. She admitted to smoking marijuana at age 16 but reported stopping once she began using opiates.

I left home, dropped out of school, and started staying with a male friend who began raping me on and off. He got me into stripping so that I could make money. I was 16. He also turned me on to ecstasy, and I started selling and doing it. When I began using ecstasy, I got addicted and did as much as possible. I ended up dropping out of school once I started stripping. I was dancing at night and couldn't handle school during the day. I got fired from the strip club because I kept showing up with bruises and injuries. (Bliss)

While she was around illegal substances during her adolescent years, Bliss began using opiates, her actual drug of choice, at age twenty-four after being prescribed medication for an injury and seeking opiates on the street after her prescription ran out. She spent over nine years in an abusive relationship, and her then-boyfriend was a user and seller of opiates. Bliss also began using benzodiazepines by inhalation when she stole her mother's medication to self-medicate her anxiety. Bliss also admitted to experiencing multiple abusive relationships and identified as a domestic violence victim.

One of my exes-we were together from when I was 22 to when I was 30. He is incarcerated now. He beat me with an iron, stabbed me, locked me in the trunk of his car, and knocked my teeth out. He set the house on fire with me inside, sleeping. I honestly think I suffered from Stockholm syndrome. (Bliss)

Bliss struggled with maintaining sobriety without engaging in criminal behavior. Often, this was precipitated by being forced to live back home with her mother as an adult while they still maintained an extremely strained relationship during her periods of probation. Even after abstaining from drugs during adulthood, Bliss became the victim of a physical and sexual assault two years ago during a robbery attempt. Further victimization has led to a pattern of relapse and instability. Bliss finally decided to sever ties with her mother and moved to Port St. Lucie, Florida, to live, after receiving Social Security Disability benefits awarded for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Bliss realized that she would never maintain sobriety if she lived near her mother. She also mentioned her recent marriage to a woman she met shortly after her move stating *“She just gets me. She had a terrible childhood and struggles with dissociative personality disorder, but she doesn’t judge me. I met her after I moved to Florida, and she makes me feel safe”* (Bliss).

One of the most significant findings was Bliss’s realization that safety and stabilization is a key component for sobriety and finally came to an understanding that attempting to maintain any type of relationship with her mother was detrimental to her mental and physical well-being.

I was always angry as a child, rebelling and arguing with authority. I didn’t follow the rules. I got primarily physical when I was in a drunken, blacked-out state. I have a lot of rages built up, but I don’t perceive anger correctly. When I get angry, I drink and cause chaos and destruction. I was mad around age nine or ten. I grew up in a dysfunctional family, and my parents separated and divorced then. I was always rebellious and argued with authority. I didn’t follow the rules when I was young and often skipped school.

With cops, it's weird. When I'm drunk, I'll start hitting on them. I had an aggravated assault charge and went to prison. I engage in risky behaviors when I'm blackout drunk and getting involved with incredibly toxic people... lots of drugs and alcohol. (Krystal)

Like many female participants, Krystal also experienced a history of physical and sexual abuse from toxic relationships well into adulthood, and only in adulthood did she begin to understand the role of victimization during her youth and the continual impact these experiences have had on her behavior and emotional responses as an adult.

I'm just on autopilot. I'm missing huge chunks of every day. I'm constantly looking around, trying to keep my eye on everything. I'm continually watching doors. I'm distracted and don't notice anything, but I see everything simultaneously. It's tough to forget your life when you're catching everything at once, and it may or may not be accurate. I don't have flashbacks that screw with me every day, but I'll close my eyes and see flashes of where I've been. (Krystal)

Despite acknowledging her history of victimization, Krystal was acutely aware of the criminal activity she engaged in, especially one of the more significant offenses regarding her aggravated assault conviction stemming from 2009:

It should have been attempted murder. I was going to stab my live-in boyfriend to death. It was a meltdown. I was off my meds, drinking too much, and in an abusive relationship. I was going to kill myself and take him with me. He hid in the bathtub while I put kitchen knives through the bathroom door (Krystal).

Other researchers have come to similar conclusions based on stories shared with them. In the author's previous work, *Good Girls, Bad Boys, and the Pathways to Deviant Behavior* (Smykal, 2009), one of the respondents stated a similar experience to the

participant's stories related to childhood dysfunction, the desire to reinforce negative romantic relationships, and the attempt to overcome poor attachments and offending behavior by reinforcing their sexuality or emphasizing femininity as constructed in this current study.

Before heroin, I was addicted to pain. I welcomed and encouraged anything that qualified me to escape the present and any human next to me. I lived deep in the confines of my pain. I found pain to be the primary source of my pleasure principle. I was a functional teenager on the surface, hiding my demigod beneath. I hated myself with a deep resonating passion, never knowing who I indeed was. I lived multiple personalities within a single existence.

At 16, I went to parties with high school boys, watching their alcohol ingestion rise with each beer pong game they played foolishly. I found myself in closets, dark and closed off to the world, performing oral acts I had no idea how properly do, but felt a deviant rush with vodka building my confidence. Not only was my power a secret seduction, but I had learned early on how 'those' boys lie, and my sexuality was contained to the darkness and my ability to effectively own whatever behavior I engaged in yet keep my actual physical vulnerability intact socially. I relished my penchant for secrecy and lack of defining my confusing behavior into a relationship I secretly desired but knew I was incapable of. I was too insecure but emulated a depth that attracted deviance and men's lust for domination. Because I was a young girl acting out a woman's sexualized behavior, I became confused between my physical and mental confines. I was not supposed to sin this much or in this way. I was supposed to flow with emotional connectivity and softness. Nobody told me the consequences of the so-called domination I somehow found in my human detachment and made my power source acceptable or healthy, or even construed

by trauma. Yet, now I utilized it as a weapon. Nothing was safe. (Demi, 37-year-old, personal communication)

Demi's journal entry was an aspect that the author used in her prior study but recognized the complexity and depth of this participant's story, which matched the same constraints many current study participants echoed in their own life experiences. Many participants who admitted to being sexually and emotionally abused during childhood either refused to disclose the behavior to their mother or maternal figures or were ridiculed and shamed if they did so. This created significant mental anguish for many young women who began to blame themselves for actions forced upon them. The emotional significance was only heightened if their mother was aware of the abuse or promoted it.

Trauma creates a tenuous mechanism for criminal propensity regarding women, especially when considering the role of the maternal figure, the strength of the bond between the female youth and mother, and the abuse endured. Kira endured a significant amount of trauma as an infant and onward. She described a vivid memory of walking into court with the Department of Social Services: *"My mother walked I with the man who raped me, who had also raped my mother too, I'm sure. She was with him. She wouldn't even look me in the eye"* (Kira).

Young girls who are sexually abused in youth are further traumatized significantly by mothers who fail to either support them or make them feel ashamed of the actions forced upon them. The guilt, internalized shame, and outward confusion often not processed create a duplicitous female adolescent who is unsure and unable to process how their former victimization created a precarious imbalance of their sexuality and

acceptance. Many young women face additional years of victimization at the hands of romantic partners.

Still, other women may attempt to overcompensate for the unresolved trauma of early childhood victimization and sexual assault and instead try to regain control of their own lives by minimizing sexual acts and the emotional intimacy involved as an overt act of self-preservation.

It is as if they understand they cannot detract from the experiences they endured but look for a survival tactic with their limited mental weaponry. Sex becomes a commodity, an easy way to achieve economic gain. The more it becomes a routine behavior, the less emotional congruity is attached to the sexual act. For women whose mothers never show positive emotional bonds or support, this type of economic incentive becomes more integrally woven into their accessible and accepted forms of deviant behavior.

It is believed that unresolved trauma has created an emotional stagnation whereby suppressing one's feelings enables an individual to handle daily life responsibilities. It seems as if the existence of trauma switched a dimmer on human emotional responses, and over time these individuals became hard-wired to focus on how to thrive in the world over time. They became stymied by the concept of recognition of actual emotions (Van Der Kolk, 2014). Some women have relied on this type of responsive behavior as a valid reason for engaging in sexual acts for monetary compensation or exchanging illegal substances.

Romantic relationships, trauma, violence, support Systems, and the male gender

I started doing drugs at 13. I began using it with my best friend. I was stressed out, I think, from the rape the year before and neglect by my mother and her then-boyfriend. She always chose men over me and then disappeared for months. We still have a strained relationship. She recently overdosed and is hospitalized with liquid on her lungs. I'm currently not talking to her (Halsey).

Halsey's childhood with her mother was a visual representation of dysfunction. She knew of the tragedy that her mother was forced to endure at a young age. However, her mother failed to protect Halsey from experiencing it. One of the most significant experiences of Halsey's childhood that she relates to feeling the most unsafe was when she was raped by her then stepfather and her mother's failure to protect or emotionally support her daughter through the traumatic experience. This physical abuse of her daughter also failed to act as the proponent for Halsey's mother to leave the abusive marriage. Once Halsey realized her mother would not attempt to protect or support her, she began to unravel emotionally.

Bliss described experiencing severe abuse from youth through adulthood but also reported her father being a positive support system throughout her life who never turned his back on her. While she claims her mother eventually turned her life around, she also maintained difficulty with attempting to forgive and forget her mother's actions. Bliss also reported her father getting back together with her mother only three years ago, which may have led to her sudden desire to move away from her mother, the 'declared trigger,' and the positive emotional support system of her father, who also returned to a chaotic romantic relationship with her mother.

Krystal also mentioned a lack of a positive support system in her life, an absence of relationships with her full or half-siblings, and a history of her mother obtaining a restraining order against her. She also failed to communicate an understanding of her extensive familial abuse and neglect during childhood and the impact of these traumatic experiences on her mental health and criminal offending.

Angelica's most recent romantic relationship was with a male who she defined as an alcoholic. He was a painter and told her he was always working, occasionally not coming home for days, eventually spending all their rent money.

I would sit in the apartment and cry, wondering if he was alive or whether the rent would get paid. Trauma and abuse led me to become unable to handle working full-time, and I ended up living out of our car when my ex disappeared yet again. I have five adult children and am estranged from all of them. I have no relationship with my oldest, even though we live in the same state. My 23-year-old daughter lives back in Wyoming. I have another son currently in prison in North Carolina for sexual relations with a minor. My other daughter lives in North Carolina and helps me occasionally, but our relationship is strained. My youngest daughter lives in Texas, and we do not communicate. (Angelica)

Many participants' mothers were victims of violence and abuse themselves. How they chose to cope or deflect from their experiences often impacted their interactions with their daughters in youth.

Halsey often witnessed her mother be a victim at the hands of men. The author herself was incarcerated in the same jail as both Halsey and her mother simultaneously. During this period, Halsey's mother was housed in a separate unit which allowed Halsey, housed in the women's drug rehabilitation unit, the ability to work through much of the

impact of her mother's victimization and the role it played on her mother's responsive behavior toward her and how she viewed her relationships with males including the fear of how her own experiences could affect her current teenage daughter.

From fifteen to seventeen years old, child services placed Kira with her biological dad, who was married to another woman by then. While residing with him, he tried to have sex with Kira and his wife. Kira remains sexually cautious now and feels much of her trauma from sexual assaults have caused severe socialization issues. She also attributes this to why she cannot work in or around others, particularly male bosses or authoritative figures.

I didn't know my dad growing up. My mom was almost raped by a man when she was in college. She taught me how to self-protect. During middle and high school, I fought against bullies and anyone who thought I was a 'small, easy target.' My mother was also physically abused (Selia, 32-year-old convicted of felony possession of heroin, driving under the influence (DUI), paraphernalia, and violation of probation).

Selia never knew her biological father while growing up. Her mother was almost raped in college and was physically abused by a male partner from a previous relationship which she dated from when Selia was two to seven years old. It was the only romantic relationship Selia knew her mother to have engaged in during her youth. This male partner became intoxicated one night and slapped her mother. Her mother never dated again. Selia described her mother as abusive during childhood and adulthood. Her mother also served as an enabler for Selia's adolescent substance use. *"My mom was an enabler. She always wanted me home and would pick me up inebriated from people's driveways. She felt safer if I was at home and partying"* (Selia).

This led to Selia escalating her deviant behavior and becoming entwined in abusive relationships. The father of her first son cheated on her with a younger coworker. They knew one another from when she was fifteen years old. They were in an on/off relationship until she was twenty-three years old. She moved in with him. Once she discovered his cheating, she was too far along in her pregnancy; he told her to “*accept it or leave.*” He blamed her and gaslighted her trying to make her believe all his actions were her fault. “*He wanted to keep the baby because he never had a dad growing up. Neither did I. Guess I just believed in that dream we could create a stable environment with a parental unit despite not growing up with such*” (Selia).

After all his insidiousness, Selia stayed in the relationship simply for their child, but so much of his selfish behavior impacted her while she was pregnant. Selia attempted suicide by suffocation in his driveway using a plastic bag. He came outside and stopped her. She later found out the female he cheated with also became pregnant but aborted it. After learning of this and giving birth, Selia was in a negative mental and emotional state. She felt she could not live with her ex-partner and was forced to move back in with her mother, an avid alcoholic who verbally abused Selia consistently while intoxicated. This created a precarious situation for Selia as she was sober. Despite being young and a newly single mother of a newborn, Selia’s mother remained emotionally negligent and financially unsupportive.

Selia’s second father to her young child failed to contribute financially to the youngest child. He always expected her to figure out how to buy baby wipes and clothing without access to financial resources or support. Her second child was diagnosed with

speech, behavioral, and occupational issues. She cannot receive child support from her second child's father as he is a painter and is paid in cash.

Economic motivation

At seventeen years old, Kira gave birth to Jeremiah. She did not want him at first either until she heard his heartbeat. She suddenly wanted to change the lifestyle she was born into and lived among.

I wanted to love him, hug him, give him life. When he was two weeks old, I had to have heart surgery. I was terrified my mother would sell my child for drugs while hospitalized. My mother was still on drugs, so I had to drop out of school to care for him. Shortly after, I was kicked out of my mother's house and became homeless with an infant. (Kira)

Kira admitted to using people's checkbooks for money to pay for the basics: diapers, formula, and utilities. She also worked in fast food and any job she could to make ends meet. *"When I stole from people, it wasn't to go get perfume. I used it [stolen money] to get food, pay rent. I didn't get the money for anything else"* (Kira).

Kira began stripping at age 17. She also forged a high school diploma and was even admitted into community college with forged documents. She excelled at forging documents.

Since then, I've relied on selling pussy when I need money. I'm not ashamed. Whenever I have warrants for my arrest, I call my baby daddy and have sex with him. Call it rape; call it trafficking. I didn't do it for desire. I needed money to get bailed out. (Kira)

Once I got out of detox, a girl I knew introduced my boyfriend and me to dealers down in South Carolina where we were currently staying, and I ended up prostituting again. I

went back to what I knew. (Lara, 34-year-old convicted of theft, possession, and prostitution)

Although Lara admitted that her former drug addiction was a key motivating factor in her decision to engage in prostitution, she also was not ashamed of her decision to sell her body to pay for her drug habit and support her and her then-boyfriend. Lara also relied on prostitution when she was sober, as it was a quick and relatively simple way to earn cash during times of hardship. Like many other women who engaged in prostitution, Lara used this deviant behavior as an easy method of monetary compensation because of their gender. Still, it also coincided with their substance addiction. Instead of feeling ridiculed or forced into this lifestyle, several participants described some semblance of internal empowerment over utilizing this commodity.

Their ownership over their bodies and how they used this for economic gain seemed to minimize the former label of shame even when addiction was not a factor to play in desperation for quick money. Interestingly, women also seemed to feel more empowered simply by the ability to utilize their gender to profit in an industry targeted at male consumers.

We often view the constructs of sex and gender as symbiotic social interactions, which creates a disparity among our ideologies regarding socially acceptable gendered responses and how masculine females or feminine males often receive punishment.

Power and influence of the male relationship

Selia said her current restraining order ended in June 2021 against the father of her first child. She remained nervous and anxious about him contacting her again. She also believed their child was now traumatized after seeing several text messages on her cell

phone her ex sent to Selia, including a text message where he says he is ready to abandon “all” his children. Selia also stated that this male is dating a third woman who has birthed his child is a good mother, and takes care of his firstborn, whom he never attempted to even care for.

When Selia’s child was six months old, the father of her child discussed above became hostile and aggressive toward her. She relayed an incident when she once called the police and grabbed the knife after he became belligerent and started coming after her. He chased her, saying, “*I’m gonna fucking kill you, you dumb bitch, and nobody is gonna save you.*” This incident occurred in front of their infant child, who was strapped in his car seat, sitting atop their bed. When the police arrived, he ran outside with the knife telling the officer that it was her who had attacked him. The police took his side and believed she was the instigator. She had to file for emergency custody and Domestic Order of Violence Protection (DVPO) against him for her and their child’s safety.

Although being responsible for an infant made her clean from substances for some time, living in a toxic, abusive environment with her mother enabled her to relapse after suffering a snake bite, resulting in severe infection and a three-month supply of Dilaudid medication.

Selia then learned about heroin as a more robust, cheaper alternative. Within a week, Selia began sniffing and graduated to shooting heroin. From there, she was strung out for the next two years. She finally obtained a custody agreement between her and the father of her first child until he caught wind of her relapse, and then he tried to take the child from her. She obtained legitimate employment for this period. However, the father

of her first child became mentally unstable and started threatening her. He was arrested for violating the domestic violence order of protection (DVPO) and ultimately destroyed the custody arrangement.

Stigma from a felony conviction and post-incarceration reintegration

Many former women offenders can attest to the difficulty of being released to communities' post-incarceration and experiencing significant challenges with stable housing, financial support, transportation, child-care, employment, supportive relationships, and sobriety maintenance. Failure to gain even one of these essential factors often leads to the cyclic effect of probation violations and re-incarceration. The consequences of long-term penalties and stigma related to a drug conviction have endorsed a "second-class status for millions of Americans, including being banned from voting and significant difficulty obtaining legitimate employment. Hundreds of thousands of women across the United States are negatively affected by the lifetime ban on people with drug convictions" (Mauer and McCalmont, 2013).

Bliss is no exception. After a detailed description of her extensive trauma history into adulthood and subsequent drug use and offending, she discussed her difficulty obtaining and maintaining legitimate employment. By 33 years old, her employment history included mainly waitressing for short periods. She discussed her frustration with her inability to get a stable job due to her history of felony convictions associated with drug use despite periods of sobriety. She often failed to find stable housing and relied on her current romantic partners for housing and financial support.

Krystal also felt her criminal history and mental impairments scared her into believing she would never be a good mother for her child. She was honestly nervous that she would start drinking heavy liquor again and “go off the deep end,” discussing her deep-rooted history of dysfunctional relationships and lack of boundaries. She continues to fear that she will never stabilize and that she will harm her future child.

Angelica was raised only knowing abuse and violence. She met her ex-husband, who was physically abusive and beat his fourteen-year-old daughter to death. Like many women encapsulated in abusive relationships, Angelica could not protect his daughter. Angelica was convicted of manslaughter, serving a four-year sentence. In yet another familiar turn of fate, her ex, Josito, the perpetrator, spent one year in prison and was deported to Mexico. He never attempted to contact Angelica again. While incarcerated, Angelica became more depressed and disillusioned with her reality. She only had a 9th-grade education and five children. She knew once she was released that she would never be capable of obtaining an education or sustaining the ability to get on her own feet by herself. Angelica worked as a housekeeper before her incarceration.

Additionally, Angelica was diagnosed with major depressive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and bipolar disorder with episodes of psychosis secondary to her degenerative spinal impairments. She did not want to be labeled by her disorders but understood how her conditions impacted her ability to sustain legitimate employment. Angelica’s chronic medical conditions were minimized because of her status as a former adult woman offender. She has been unable to obtain public assistance, including Medicaid, and struggles to maintain any type of housing at 54 years old.

Halsey grew up with a formerly incarcerated mother who also did jail time simultaneously with her once she became an adult. Halsey experienced her mother as a victim of her environment. Still, her failure to either protect or support Halsey during childhood reinforced the belief that law only exists for individuals on the positive side of socioeconomic status.

The father of her firstborn physically attacked the father of Selia's second child:

We were at a gas station. He followed [Matt] baby daddy #2 and attacked him, dragging him out of the car and began bashing his head into the ground. This happened in front of police and my children. (Selia)

Despite the severity of the public offense, Selia's ex pleaded to a much lesser offense, regardless of having a recent conviction for assault on a female and a DVPO violation. Her oldest son is now seven years old and does not want to see his father. Selia had to live with her mother, who still drinks heavily despite being in poor health. She also contended that her mother remains drunk and abusive daily. While she preferred to raise her children in a better, positive environment, she lacked the financial resources to do so or the ability to maintain any legitimate full-time employment and was forced to rely on her abusive, alcoholic mother. "When you affect a woman or mother, you affect her whole family" (Selia).

Selia continued to be disproportionately affected by violent offenses, the criminal justice system, and men not being held accountable for those offenses. On March 13, 2021, Selia was physically assaulted by a male acquaintance while walking her oldest son on a greenway path.

The male acquaintance was a former addict she met in the meetings of Narcotics Anonymous. He was released from prison a few months earlier and reached out to her, stating he was clean but homeless. Selia attempted to help him by allowing him to stay with her on a short-term basis but noticed questionable behavior early on and realized he was relapsing in her residence.

Selia confronted him and told him he had to leave, but he continued to show up at her place, leaving her in fear. Since they never had a romantic relationship, Selia failed to report his harassing behavior to the police. On March 13, 2021, while walking her son home, she was confronted by this male. He had a backpack of alcohol and a machete sticking out. He called her a bitch. She tried to run away, but he chased her, threw her down, and began punching her repeatedly. As she attempted to defend herself, he became more enraged. She bit him in the leg to ‘leave evidence of dental records in case he murdered her.’ He then began to beat her with a flashlight. This attack occurred in daylight with her six-year-old son, screaming and pleading to the man to “*not her, my mommy.*” Cars continued to drive by with nobody stopping to help a victim of a brutal attack. Finally, a female stranger attempted to intervene, giving Selia enough time to get up, grab her son, and run. She ran to a friend’s house to call 911. They took photos and helped clean her up. Selia reported the incident to the local police the following day. They acted like it was no big deal and deferred her to the magistrate’s office.

Selia used the social media platform Facebook to report the brutal attack to a local mother’s public group, and they rallied support around her, contacting the police and eventually forcing a response from law enforcement. The male was apprehended, and

Selia then learned he had a criminal conviction for assault on a female in 2019, but that female later passed away. Her death was declared an overdose.

In Selia's case, social pressure forced police to charge the male attacker with assault on a female and assault with a deadly weapon. Before he was caught, he attempted to run away to drug rehabilitation to avoid incarcerated but tried to rob a dry cleaner and was finally apprehended. The courts ended up dropping the assault with a deadly weapon charge which further upset Selia. She felt victimized by a system designed to help victims of crime. As a former offender, Selia believed law enforcement and the courts were less likely to believe her or just minimize the severity of the abuse against her, as in the case of her ex.

Only weeks after participating in this study and becoming a victim of the violent attack discussed above, Selia suddenly passed away due to a blood clot. Nothing more was released regarding her cause of death.

"They called prison rehabilitation, but I was never rehabilitated. In prison, I learned how to cook crack and take numbers off checks. Jails and prisons make you harder" (Kira). Overall, Kira spent nine years in prison. Her traumatic childhood, lack of maternal support, and extensive criminal history have caused her to face significant problems obtaining employment due to her criminal record and mental and physical impairments. She deems herself branded for life, feeling that she is always judged because of the choices she made illegally and financially, but believes deep down she is a good person and dreams of working with children one day, wishing she could assist with kids in the juvenile system as she knows that lifestyle but wants to do something positive

Kira discussed having significant gaps in her employment record and resolved to sell her body because she had to make money and her criminal record made her ineligible for legitimate employment or government resources. Kira's current fiancé did five years in federal prison for selling drugs. He was selling drugs to make money for his child support payments. He continues to struggle post-incarcerated with obtaining legitimate employment due to his felon background. When asked about their relationship, Kira said: *"I get more pleasure from my fiancé just lying next to him."*

Kira met her current fiancé through Facebook's social media platform. When she first met him, she sold cocaine from North Carolina to Ohio and was honest with him. He helped her turn tricks for money. As a felon himself, he struggled to find gainful employment. Kira contends there is a stigma regarding being on probation and the justice system. *"You get put on probation but can't be on probation and be around felons. But you also can't get housing, a job, or Medicaid. Half my family members are felons."*

As a former actor and social activist, Michael K. Williams, best known for his role as 'Omar' in the critically acclaimed HBO series "The Wire," stated in his desire to bring his final docuseries titled *Black Market* forward, the goal of the series' show is *"just to simply show the world a window as to why people do the things they do. Where that desperation comes from."*

The documentary's ultimate intention was to highlight distinguished underground individuals in a society whose deviant behavior often occurs in response to abject poverty, marginalization, and lack of legitimate societal opportunities but is often labeled as

intrinsically criminal. Each episode manages to humanize many of the featured individuals and their descent into criminal behavior once the offender was able to recant their own life experiences and relate their ultimate struggle to survive with the odds stacked against them situationally and economically. The docuseries utilized a humanely social aspect in which Michael K. Williams, being so open about his own life experiences and addictions, was able to gain trust and access to populations not widely understood by the general population or otherwise feared in society, stigmatized by their associations. By accessing these people in their environment, Williams was able to reinforce and expel their own relatable stories of struggle or frustrations, emphasizing the lack of legitimate income or opportunities, histories of abandonment, neglect, and being forced into criminal activities by family due to financial strain.

Although some criminals acted out due to greed and ease of access, the stories of desperation in a criminal subculture were much more apparent. Regardless of gender, gang affiliation, or type of violence, their life experiences encompassed basic human vulnerabilities. The series *Black Market* captured individuals forcibly labeled among society as criminals yet personalized them and their motivations toward behavior labeled deviant simply by engaging them and letting their stories be heard.

The author conducted this study with the same underlying intentions; however, the themes developed from participants' responses diverted from the author's initial presumption regarding female delinquency and male pathways related to female offending. While it was initially assumed the role and relationship with an identified male was the catalyst for a female's pathways to criminal offending, the author's study

uncovered a more profound and more convoluting factor: the maternal role, style, and strength of attachment with their daughter during childhood directly affected the female child's eventual engagement to cyclic dysfunctional relationships and criminal offending during adolescence and adulthood. It is among the interpretation of an individual's experiences that we begin to acknowledge the difficulty of judging one's behavior without understanding the circumstances behind the offending type and the effects overall. Once these factors are known, an individual's reasoning for offending often takes a much more ideologically complicated and humanizing connotation.

The author remains aware that these significant social experiences which enable female delinquency and subsequent pathways to crime do not occur in unison during a specific moment or period in their lives but instead happen gradually over time. Early life stages of social experiences are not universal; however, early childhood experiences and how they are responded to often occur during later stages of social affairs, especially among gendered relationships. The role that trauma plays a vital role in women's offending. Women who were neglected or abused as children are twice as likely to offend and be arrested as adults (Widom, 2000). There remains a need for life experiences among women to be considered in conjunction with their criminal offending to understand better how the disparity of these experiences and behavioral responses create vastly different outcomes compared to male offenders.

The role of family, relationships, and female criminal propensity

The function of the family structure serves many roles for its members. Parental figures are the primary mechanism for providing their children with basic material and

emotional needs. This generally includes socialization skills and instilling norms and values in their offspring. In simplistic terms, a youth's identity is cultivated from their social and familial environment, shaping their personality by the strength of the social bonds they create through their life experiences.

Findings from the life-history interviews conducted with former adult women offenders exemplify how women were disproportionately influenced by the structure of their households and the lack of an attachment bond with their biological mother or mother figure. Criminological literature has long examined the impact of social bonds on criminal behavior. Hirschi's (1969) sample of participants to test his theory regarding social control and delinquency was comprised solely of young males, which has created interest in analyzing social control theory and its application to females (Alarid, Burton, & Cullen, 2000; Cernkovich & Giordano, 1992; Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004; Dornbusch et al., 2001; Huebner & Betts, 2002; Laundra et al., 2002). Questions remain regarding how social control mechanisms directly impact young women (Erickson, Crosnoe, & Dornbusch, 2000).

Research involving male and female samples has concluded gender categorization and patriarchal power elements within family structures and among communities enable gender-specific systems of and social control responses (Booth et al., 2008). Hagan, Hewitt, and Alwin (1979) determined that social control mechanisms are gendered. Females are commodities of informal institutions of social control, such as protective processes, while men generally exhibit formal social control mechanisms, including authority.

Roberts, Block, and Block's (1984) longitudinal research enhanced how parents tend to give boys more freedom to act under the standardized rules that promote masculine behavior that should be followed and define rules for punishment should be broken. Meanwhile, the girls were given much less space and reinforced traditional feminine behavior. This assumption concludes methods of social control constructed and carried out by families, communities, and schools differ for young men and women. Different types of control may also impact different development stages by gender (Huizinga, Thornberry, and Loeber, 1997).

Society tends to realize the significance of socialized gender norms in girls' and boys' lives as most insightful during adolescence, which is coincidentally the time adolescents are most at risk for deviancy (Roberts, Block & Block, 1984). Relationships among family members and peers tend to have a more substantial mediating influence on young female delinquency. During adolescence, young women tend to emphasize the significance of social relationships and are more inversely affected by the depth of these relationships (Giordano & Cernkovich, 1997). Under this premise, social control processes need to be understood in the framework of socialized gender roles, emphasizing the demand for gender-specific tests of social control regarding male and female delinquency. While research asserts a need for certain protective and aggravating factors regarding delinquency, there is little agreement in the literature concerning gendered procedures of different extensions and the influence of social control (Booth et al. 2008; p.428).

Parent-child relationships exist on a spectrum of dimensions, including behavioral supervision and levels of emotional attachment (Booth et al., 2008). These methods of social control applied by families, communities, and schools are different when comparing men and women in youth (Booth, Farrell, and Varano, 2008). Kelley, Huizinga, Thornberry, and Loeber (1997) theorized that these differences among gender might be related to differential developmental processes young women and men experience during different periods of their life. These differential responses to social control utilized by young men and women are assumed to derive from a reaction to gender role socialization instead of any innate differences between the sexes (Thorne, 1994). The effect of socialized gender norms on girls' and boys' lives is most significant during adolescence and increases the risk of delinquent behavior.

It is assumed that relationships with family members and peers substantially influence a young girl's risk for delinquency. Adolescent females are apt to place significant value on social and romantic relationships and, as a result, may be influenced more by the depth of these relationships compared to young adolescent men (Giordano & Cernkovich, 1997).

Informal social control is the basis of social existence and needs to be regarded when analyzing criminal and deviant behavior. Considering this, researchers should understand the means of social control within the framework of socialized gender role norms while emphasizing the need for gender-specific instruments of social control regarding male and female delinquency (Booth et al., 2008). Researchers continue to

debate gendered responses to different aspects of social control and differing opinions on what constitutes deviance.

Intra-Gender Entrapment

Young women's gender-identity development often begins in their households. Gender identity development among girls focuses on developing relationships with adults in the home and emphasizes trauma stressors such as experiencing or witnessing abuse. The themes generated from this study strongly correlated with women's vulnerability, feelings of safety, and propensity for risk-taking behavior.

Significant differences between the current study and Beth Richie's (1996) study involving battered African American women were demonstrated by a young female's status in their household. Findings from this study overwhelmingly support the perspective that women were adversely influenced by their relationship with their mothers and the structural function of their homes. Much of the resulting breakdown of the relationship between mother and daughter in this chapter highlights the victimization young girls faced at the hands of their mother, as well as learned behavior mirroring vulnerability among romantic relationships during adolescence, often with male partners.

Other findings from this study illustrate how young women's abuse by their mothers influenced their vulnerability toward what the author loosely defines as *intra-gender entrapment* and the development of romantic relationships that reinforced women's vulnerability to abusive situations, leading them to their distinct pathways to criminal activity and incarceration.

An exciting notion discovered in this study was that the racial and social class makeup of former female offenders did not play a prominent role in the potential for vulnerability or victimization in early childhood dysfunction and poor emotional bonds with mother figures. Additionally, whether they were oldest, middle, or youngest children also failed to play a significant role in their potential vulnerability. Regardless of the child's rank, most women in this study were not considered privileged children by either parents or extended family members. Young women who were the oldest siblings often faced dysfunctional childhoods with a lack of maternal attachment or understanding of primary caretaking responsibilities. These young girls repeatedly attempted to protect their younger siblings from the parental chaos as much as possible and reinforced a maternal commitment toward the younger children in the family.

Although many of the mother's former life experiences were unknown in this study, there was an inherent belief that they did not want their female children to succeed. Often, this became the penultimate unconscious acknowledgment of the intra-gender entrapment occurring with their mothers and their responses of attempting to overcompensate by taking over child-rearing for younger siblings even though they were still children. It became a survival mechanism and, for others, a way to instill hope that one day their mothers would see them as worthy, loving daughters and seek out a positive relationship.

Learning Theory

Edward Sutherland (1939) developed a theory of learned behavior by asserting crime and deviance are rarely construed inherently. Instead, most often, criminal behavior

is based on developed based on a definitive intellectual process. Sutherland described crime as a learned, socially normative process of face-to-face interaction, like how children learn to speak a language or drive a car (Goode, 2001). Sutherland's learning theory emphasized that criminal behavior is an interpersonal learned process. This interpersonal connection and shared experience are usually processed through personal relationships such as family or intimate partners. As such, the earlier an individual is exposed to conditions favorable to criminal behavior, the more likely the individual will be influenced. Even in the individuals who are not actively engaging in criminal behavior, the sheer belief that they do not openly disapprove of illegal activity renders an individual more likely to be susceptible to acting out criminal behavior.

In this study, young girls often resided with mothers who either engaged in substance use or otherwise allowed the illicit activity to occur in the household regardless of their participation. Even if their mothers were not actively involved in criminal behavior, they were often controlled or abused by romantic partners, leading to abusive tactics toward the young girls and other children in the household. The mother's failure to protect their young daughters from abuse or otherwise embody the perpetrator of abuse helped create conditions favorable for young girls to begin accepting and eventually engaging in crime themselves. All participants admitted to engaging in crime with a male accomplice; however, once their life histories were described, it was easier to understand how the lack of attachment or bond to their mother became the critical factor toward gendered pathways and belief of male motivation for female criminality.

Adverse Child Effects

The Adverse Childhood Effects (ACE) study was the first large-scale, longitudinal study undertaken by Kaiser Permanente, and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) remains an ongoing collaboration that has demonstrated how various types of traumas and family dysfunction experienced during childhood significantly increases the risk for physical and mental health-related diagnoses in adulthood. The higher an individual scores on the ACE study questionnaire, the more likely they are to develop or be predisposed to severe medical conditions, mental illness, and substance abuse disorders. The ACE Study was a first of its kind to exemplify the physical manifestations of unresolved childhood trauma. Untreated abuse can manifest into physical disease and mental impairments because of harmful coping mechanisms. In many cases, unresolved trauma was a significant underlying cause of an individual's eventual incarceration. The study has shown the need for early intervention in the juvenile justice and public health system (Cronholm et al., 2015).

This current study reflects the resounding conclusions from the ACE study. It reinforces the importance of understanding the profound effects of childhood dysfunction on young women and the dismal consequences of ignoring signs of household dysfunction or trauma.

To prevent the impact of adverse childhood effects in America, it is essential to look at past childhood and family history by using ACE screening tools to evaluate. Regarding the criminal justice system, therapeutic jurisprudence courts can be 'therapeutic agents' regarding procedural justice, offering the opportunity to relieve pain

through unique, beneficial solutions. Scientific research has proven more evidence-based finding and there has been a recommendation for justice agencies to screen juveniles who encounter the system, specifically brain screens for possible brain injuries as well as psychological and social trauma screening, as research has discovered behavioral responses to trauma may mimic delinquent youth responses and criminal behavior (Dams-O'Connor et al., 2014).

The stigma of the label: formerly incarcerated female

Every woman interviewed in this study faced dilemmas post-incarceration exacerbated by their offender status. For women charged with criminal offenses who were jailed for even a brief period, the stigma of identifying as a formerly incarcerated offender operated as a societal branding in which many women felt judged by the label of their criminal charge or arrest regardless of whether they were convicted. The outward demarcation formerly incarcerated women enveloped post-arrest became a reflection of their overall identity and outshined other positively associated labels, such as mother or caretaker they were previously identified as. The perception of deviance overshadowed circumstances that may have influenced their resulting behavior. Furthermore, many women admitted to criminal involvement because of financial desperation. Once charged with a criminal offense, most women could not hire private legal representation and lacked a basic understanding of their constitutional rights or potential alternatives to sentencing.

Women in this study who had custody of their children were often the primary caretakers. They repeatedly discussed the increased difficulties they encountered while

attempting to complete probation and parole requirements, such as limited social support or finances, housing, adequate transportation, and childcare costs with no governmental assistance. Being labeled a woman and a felon also decreased women's chances of obtaining legitimate employment opportunities and becoming financially independent. Women in this study who criminally offended along with their male romantic partners faced more criminal charges, longer sentences, and lacked the financial resources to make bail than their male co-defendants. These variables coincided with concern for their young children while they sat in jails on pending charges. Women began to recognize the changing nature of the criminal justice system as the justice system was designed to set them up for failure by hindering women's access to legitimate opportunities to handle the multiple responsibilities their gender was bound to.

A significant consequence of women's incarceration highlighted in this study was the effect of drug convictions and access to proper healthcare. Most female participants acknowledged being diagnosed with a mental health illness. Co-morbidity significantly resulted from offending behavior among those who admitted to drug and alcohol addictions. Former offenders convicted of a felony were stripped of their eligibility to receive Medicaid and health insurance. Almost every woman interviewed lacked health insurance or the ability to afford health coverage and relied on emergency room visits as their primary care provider. The inability to afford treatment for physical and mental health conditions directly impacted women's criminalization.

The author noticed a trend regarding medical providers and the inability to accurately assess or properly diagnose physical impairments if women reported a history

of drug or alcohol addiction and former incarceration. Halsey was recently diagnosed with Lymphoma and was on chemotherapy when this study was carried out. She described months of doctors failing to take her symptoms seriously based on her former drug use. She admitted to feeling stigmatized by society and medical institutions because she was a “*recovering junkie and felon.*” The underlying medical needs and access to primary medical care including medication for formerly incarcerated women remains a highly regarded issue compounded by their criminal status despite also being an underlying factor in their decision to offend.

There is an increased self-awareness about the stigma related to identifying as a formerly incarcerated woman. Being labeled as a felon by the legal system only serves to cause further strain for formerly incarcerated women by decreasing access to community services or programs aimed at assisting marginalized populations. While criminological literature has extensively discussed offender’s drug use and subsequent drug convictions as a coping mechanism for underlying mental health conditions or co-morbidity, the legal system continues to prosecute and incarcerate individuals struggling with drug and alcohol addiction as equitable to those convicted of violent crimes regardless of potential individualized drug addictions. Policy and healthcare agencies have attempted to facilitate additional options against incarceration for individuals struggling with harmful coping mechanisms and self-destructive tendencies, such as mental health courts. Yet, the correctional and legal systems remain overcrowded and more concerned with plea bargains instead of considering the consequences of incarcerating recognized addicts

such as full-time mothers, nor the impact of family structures or desistance upon community reintegration.

Therapeutic jurisprudence seeks to apply social science to examine the law's impact on the mental and physical health of the people it affects. Law functions as a therapeutic agent bringing therapeutic or nontherapeutic consequences. These decisions are made with a concern for future impact on people, relationships, and the community.

Inpatient civil commitment deprives individuals diagnosed with mental illness and tends to deprive people of their right to freedom and due process. The legal process often involves evaluations regarding the competency of standing trial, and these aberrations fail both the future of the individual and society.

Often, mental health courts and restorative justice policies have been designed to assist the most marginalized populations in counties that do not face the highest rates of at-risk offenders that would benefit from this program. Where mental health courts are instituted is highly influenced by politics and influential power in those communities. Re-traumatization can occur in all phases of the justice system. Creating less restrictive atmospheres, training officers with trauma-sensitive skills, and not placing juveniles in adult facilities can aid those affected within the justice system.

One community program known to assist young men growing up in marginalized or impoverished households has been boxing. The sport of boxing historically flourished in communities defined by impoverishment. Like baseball for Latin American youth, boxing has represented a possibility to succeed for young, diverse American men growing up in communities unable to support themselves. Perhaps we need to expand the

definition of at-risk youth to encompass both young boys and girls who show signs of childhood trauma, and begin to reach out to young females facing the same types of abuse and marginalization young men do. Suppose community leaders such as boxing coaches, or after-school programming could channel the mental effects of trauma into an advancement apparatus in which both the hands and mind are utilized. In that case, society may be able to effectively assist traumatized children and allow better opportunities, healing, and advancement.

Society struggles to strike a balance between public safety and individual civil liberties. It seems ironic to find strength in danger or opportunity. Crisis drives policy. Therefore, this study and criminological literature exist to push the political agendas forward for societal and community benefit.

Recommendations for change and future research

To better understand crime, we must discern how gender, race, and class relations coincide as elements of all social existence instead of seeing each element as a separate entity from one another. Crime occurs through an intricate weaving of gender, race, environment, and social class practices. In general, crime is more than a single causal activity. To understand the process, it would be more beneficial to know how "doing" gender, race, class, and crime is acted out situationally and how the environment impacts these mechanisms.

One of the most significant findings in this study uncovered a correlation between a mother and a female child specifically, and the impact of this relationship on the female's future criminal behavior. The more neglectful or abusive the mother acted

toward her female youth, the more likely the female would grow up to engage in unhealthy relationships with romantic partners, suffer from earlier onset of substance use and addiction, and engage in chronic involvement related to criminal offending well into adulthood without desistance. This recurrent effect has been described in literature analyzing intimate partner violence, yet the mechanisms and responsive behavior are similar when describing toxic relationships between mothers and young daughters. Research continues to support findings discussing early childhood dysfunction and subsequent criminal offending, and conclusions from this study highlighted a positive correlation for adult women offenders.

While much of the previous literature has focused on adverse child effects on both genders, it would be beneficial for future research to extend the findings from this study and investigate whether a negative relationship or emotional attachment bond with a mother may also serve as a primary factor for young male pathways to offending.

This study exemplified childhood experiences and their impact on future behavior, including criminal offending. This study further supports previous findings regarding the number of incarcerated women with a history of victimization. There is more of an awareness as to the duality of women based on their victimization experiences, internalizing behavior, and subsequent offending often found among those convicted of prostitution and drug-related offenses. Current research has often seen these factors go hand in hand, creating a cyclic effect leading to incarceration and away from programming or rehabilitation to assist women potentially in danger of sex trafficking.

Researchers must continue examining early intervention methods from these dangerous criminal trajectories.

One of the most significant issues facing youth, especially young women from dysfunctional families, is the overt notion that female children growing up in severely detached familial relationships have an unconscious desire for supportive emotional communication and attachment bonds that needs to be reinforced and further deconstructed. To emphasize the need for gendered responsive resources among incarcerated populations, we need to understand how we may be able to tackle further some of the potential issues young women face growing up in abusive and emotionally negligent childhoods. Child protective services have failed to assess properly those situations where young children are at risk simply because the mother is often the primary perpetrator of emotional and physical abuse that may not be visible or spoken about. An even more sinister factor is usually found among mentally ill mothers. While more gendered responsive training and resources are necessary among the female population, community resources are highly recommended during youth at the slightest hint that there may be emotionally negligent situations in a household.

During incarceration, the author observed a disturbing aspect spreading through the women's units in both New Jersey jails in which she was housed. The author was approached by a young woman incarcerated on minor charges. During the discussion, the author began to acknowledge that the woman was attempting to recruit her and other fellow female inmates for prostitution work in exchange for her male "friend" to bail the women out. All they had to do was pay off the bail amount that this seemingly generous

male, better known as a pimp, would graciously pay on behalf of this unknown to him, female offender. Women were told they could stop working once their bail was repaid.

This female offender was very casual in her recruitment strategy.

The author began to believe that this woman may have been a decoy, purposefully placed on simple charges with the goal instituted by the pimp for her to recruit other women desperate enough to get released on bail who do not have access to family or financial assets, and who likely have an underlying substance abuse addiction. Mugshots, arrest records, charged offenses, and bail amounts remain public information and are easily found on the internet, making targeting and recruitment of incarcerated women for sex trafficking and prostitution purposes effortless for any pimp with internet access.

Being a female imprisoned in an out-of-state jail also increases an offender's potential for recruitment. The author knew she was being directly targeted once the young woman offered to pay for the phone call on the author's behalf with the male "pimp" without asking for any reimbursement. What remains unknown is how much correctional staff or the criminal justice system are aware of these recruitment strategies occurring all over the United States, or who is behind the manipulation factors. Future research would benefit from investigating incarcerated women targeted by prostitution and sex work recruitment, risk factors, and potential safety measures that may be instilled to prevent further victimization of an already vulnerable population toward a more dangerous outcome.

Conclusion

Gender must be understood as both a proponent for and vulnerability of certain types of crime. As literature supports findings that most incarcerated women offenders have been victimized at some point in their lives, we must continue to further research into vulnerable elements of women's lives that may increase their propensity to crime through gendered relationships. This research attempted to investigate how gendered relationships may play a role in female pathways to crime and motivation for offending. The intent was to understand the dynamic behind these gendered elements to understand better the influence on women and crime from the voices of former adult women offenders. As this study discovered, the attachment bond and relationship to the mother or maternal figure in a young female's life was a stronger predictor for pathways to criminal offending.

By using personal experiences allowing the author to identify with the participant population and obtain in-depth information through this study which goes beyond statistical analysis, this research helps advance the literature on women and crime to inform policy and the justice system on how significant intra-gendered bonds are to desisting or engaging in delinquency.

To create change, society must dissect the intricate webs woven better to understand the human propensity for actions and reactions. For decades, criminological literature has attempted to understand crime by analyzing behavior after the occurrence. Historically, we as a population have failed to understand the impact of environment, economics, social relationships, and their effect on an individual's engagement in

lawlessness. Most criminal behavior is not acted on impulse. These stories help better recognize the impact of poor maternal bonds and subsequent offending in women.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Female Delinquency and Pathways to Crime Selection Criteria for Female Participants

To identify as a female participant eligible for this study, potential respondents must score yes to these questions. Please mark yes or no.

1. Do you have a criminal history?

Answer: _____

2. Has your criminal offending been associated with a male or men in your life?

Answer: _____

Appendix B: General Informed Consent Form

NSU Consent to be in a Research Study Entitled *Female Delinquency and Pathways to Crime*

Who is doing this research study?

College: Abraham S. Fischler College of Education and School of Criminal Justice

Principal Investigator: Pamela L. Smykal, B.A., M.A.

Faculty Advisor/Dissertation Chair: Dr. Grace A. Telesco, Ph.D.

Funding: Unfunded

What is this study about?

This is a research study designed to examine the type of relationships between men and women as a possible pathway and motivation for female criminal behavior to better understand female pathways of offending.

Why are you asking me to be in this research study?

You are being asked to be in this research study because you have indicated that you are a former female offender who has associated your relationship with a man or men with your criminal offending.

This study will include about 40 people.

What will I be doing if I agree to be in this research study?

To join the study is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete a sociodemographic questionnaire and participate in a one-time, semi-structured interview. This interview is designed to generate discussion regarding your experiences involving relationships with men and how these relationships may have served as motivation for your criminal offending. You may choose to end the study at any time with no penalty.

Research Study Procedures - as a participant, this is what you will be doing:

- You will be asked to answer the initial selection criteria to determine if you qualify to be a participant for this study.
- You will partake in a semi-structured narrative interview either by zoom online meeting portal or by telephone with the principal researcher regarding your relationships with men and the impact on your former criminal offending.

- The interview is expected to last approximate one hour and thirty minutes.
- A sociodemographic questionnaire will also be completed with the principal researcher prior to the beginning of the interview which will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Are there possible risks and discomforts to me?

This research study involves a minimal to moderate risk to you. To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would have in everyday life.

- There is a potential for some psychological distress because of discussing your experiences with previous relationships and their impact on you.

You may find some questions I ask you to be upsetting or stressful. If so, we can refer you to someone who may be able to help you with these feelings.

What happens if I do not want to be in this research study?

You have the right to leave this research study at any time, or not be in it. If you do decide to leave or you decide not to be in the study anymore, you will not get any penalty or lose any services you have a right to get. If you choose to stop being in the study, any information collected about you **before** the date you leave the study will be kept in the research records for 36 months from the end of the study, but you may request that it not be used.

What if there is new information learned during the study that may affect my decision to remain in the study?

If significant new information relating to the study becomes available, which may relate to whether you want to remain in this study, this information will be given to you by the investigators. You may be asked to sign a new Informed Consent Form, if the information is given to you after you have joined the study.

Are there any benefits for taking part in this research study?

There are no direct benefits from being in this research study. We hope the information learned from this study will include meaningful dialogues about the reasons for female motivation toward crime and how certain relationships with men influence female pathways to criminal behavior. It is also intended to give an unbiased view by understanding the perspective of the former female offender herself to describe her experience directly.

This perspective can further research by studying female offenders and crime from a different theoretical view not previously offered.

Will I be paid or be given compensation for being in the study?

You will receive \$20.00 cash for your voluntary participation in this study upon the conclusion of the study. Should you decide to end the interview early, you will still receive compensation for your time.

Will it cost me anything?

There are no costs to you for being in this research study.

How will you keep my information private?

Information we learn about you in this research study will be handled in a confidential manner, within the limits of the law and will be limited to people who have a need to review this information. The interview will be recorded. You may refuse to answer any question at any time. If the recording makes you feel uncomfortable in any way you can ask me to stop the interview at any time, and you may remove yourself from the interview without any penalty.

The primary researcher will have control over the recordings and resultant transcripts will be identified with a randomly assigned number to help maintain confidentiality.

This data will be available to the researcher, the Institutional Review Board, and other representatives of this institution. If we publish the results of the study in a scientific journal or book, we will not identify you. All confidential data (audio recordings, consent forms, and transcriptions) will be kept securely in separate, locked filing cabinets only the primary researcher has access to.

All data will be kept for 36 months from the end of the study and destroyed after that time by shredding of any paper documents along with any recordings being deleted from any electronic files or flash drives.

Will there be any Audio or Video Recording?

This research study involves audio and/or video recording. This recording will be available to the researcher, the Institutional Review Board, and other representatives of this institution. The recording will be kept, stored, and destroyed as stated in the section above. Because what is in the recording could be used to find out that it is you, it is not possible to be sure that the recording will always be kept confidential. The researcher will try to keep anyone not working on the research from listening to or viewing the recording.

Whom can I contact if I have questions, concerns, comments, or complaints?

If you have questions now, feel free to ask us. If you have more questions about the research, your research rights, or have a research-related injury, please contact:

Primary contact:

Pamela L. Smykal, B.A., M.A., can be reached at (919) 559-6467

Research Participants Rights

For questions/concerns regarding your research rights, please contact:

Institutional Review Board

Nova Southeastern University

(954) 262-5369 / Toll Free: 1-866-499-0790

IRB@nova.edu

You may also visit the NSU IRB website at www.nova.edu/irb/information-for-research-participants for further information regarding your rights as a research participant.

All space below was intentionally left blank.

Research Consent & Authorization Signature Section

Voluntary Participation - You are not required to participate in this study. In the event you do participate, you may leave this research study at any time. If you leave this research study before it is completed, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits to which you are entitled.

If you agree to participate in this research study, sign this section. You will be given a signed copy of this form to keep. You do not waive any of your legal rights by signing this form.

SIGN THIS FORM ONLY IF THE STATEMENTS LISTED BELOW ARE TRUE:

- You have read the above information.
- Your questions have been answered to your satisfaction about the research.

Adult Signature Section

I have voluntarily decided to take part in this research study.

Printed Name of Participant	Signature of Participant	Date
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent and Authorization	Signature of Person Obtaining Consent & Authorization	Date

Appendix C: Female Delinquency and Pathways to Crime Interview Instrument

ID Number: _____ Date Administered: _____

The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of men or males directly involved in the lives of female offenders to understand how these relationships may have influenced female pathways to crime and their motivations for offending. This research will examine the type of relationship between the male and female as a possible pathway for female criminality, and how the type of relationship regarding these men may influence females toward crime. I would like to speak to you and other individuals like yourself about what you think, about the reasons why females may feel compelled to act out criminal behavior based on the influence of a particular male or males, and what type of relationship they have with each other.

I would also like to hear your stories or past experiences related to this. The questions I will ask you will involve you talking about your experiences among family, educational, and personal relationships with females, and how these relationships may be the catalyst for possible pathways to female delinquency. In the first part of this interview, I will ask you a set of questions, and I will write down your answer. The second part of the interview will be more conversational. I will ask you to describe your experiences in more detail. You may choose not to answer any question if you wish. Feel free to ask any questions that you have. I appreciate your participation in this study.

Section A- Social Demographic Information

Please fill in the blank or check appropriate category.

A1. Year of birth (i.e., 1980) _____

A2. Gender Identity: _____

A3. What is your racial background? _____

A4. What is your ethnic background?

A5. What is the highest level of education you completed?

Incarceration:

A6. How many times have you been arrested? (Approximate number):

A7. How much jail time or prison time did you serve? (Approximate length of time incarcerated):

A8. Have you ever been convicted of a felony or plead guilty to a felony?

Yes _____ No _____

a. If YES, Identify felony conviction(s):

A9. Have you ever been convicted of a misdemeanor or plead guilty to a misdemeanor?

Yes _____ No _____

a. If YES, Identify misdemeanor conviction(s)

b. If YES, how long were you in confinement? (Specify approximate months/years):

A10. Are you currently under criminal justice supervision, probation, or parole?

Yes _____ No _____

a. If YES, for how long? _____

b. Are you drug tested? _____

A11. Were you motivated to commit criminal behavior by the male or men in your life?

Yes _____ No _____

a. If YES, what was the relationship of the male or men in your life? (Example: boyfriend, cousin, child)

A12. Are you still in contact with this male or men? Yes _____ No _____

A13. Have you ever used drugs? Yes _____ No _____

a. If YES, how old were you when you first used drugs or alcohol?

b. If YES, what type of substances/alcohol? (Please name & length of time using):

c. If YES, who introduced you to substances use? (Relationship of person)

A14. Did you ever misuse legally prescribed medication? Yes _____ No _____

a. If YES, did it lead you to using illegal substances? Yes _____ No _____

A15. Have you ever been in counseling for substance use related issues? Yes _____ No _____

A16. Have you ever received counseling for mental health related issues? Yes _____ No _____

A17. Have you ever been homeless? Yes _____ No _____

a. If YES, was this during childhood, adulthood, or both?

Section B- Family

B1. Have you ever been married? Yes _____ No _____

a. If YES: Are you currently married? Yes _____ No _____

b. If NO or NOT currently married, describe your marital status (single, separated):

B2. Do you have children? Yes _____ No _____

If NO, skip to Section D

B3. How many children? _____ What are their ages?

B4. Do you they live with you? Yes _____ No _____

B5. If yes, are you the primary care giver? Yes _____ No _____

B6. Do you and your children have a relationship with their biological father?

Yes _____ No _____

a. If only either of you, specify who: _____

B7. How many brothers and sisters do you have? _____

B8. In your family are you the:

Oldest child _____ Middle child _____

Youngest child _____ Only child _____

B9. Were your parents married when you were growing up? _____

B10. Were you born outside the United States? Yes _____ No _____

a. If YES, which country? _____

b. If YES, what brought you to the United States?

B11. What City/State did you spend most of the time growing up?

B12. What City, State, or Country do you currently live in?

B13. Did you grow up with your mother and father? Yes _____ No _____

a. If NO, who raised you? (Identify person/relationship)

B14. Who do you currently live with? (Please describe):

Section C- Employment

C1. Are you currently employed? Yes _____ No _____

a. If YES, what type of work do you do? (Occupation):

b. If YES, how many hours do you work per week? _____

C2. If you are not employed, do you receive any benefits? Yes _____ No _____

C3. If you are not currently employed, why not?

C4. If you are not currently employed, how do you pay your bills?

C5. Do you contribute towards household expenses? Yes _____ No _____

Section D- Exposure to Violence

These questions will be related to being exposed to incidents of violence and how long you witnessed these events.

D1. Have you ever directly experienced violence? Yes _____ No _____

a. If YES, were you exposed during childhood, adulthood, or both?

b. If YES, Type of exposure to violence: (physical, sexual)

c. If YES, how often/when?

d. What was your relationship to the perpetrator?

D2. Have you ever indirectly experienced violence? Yes _____ No _____

If NO to either, Skip this section

a. If YES, were you exposed during childhood, adulthood, or both?

b. If YES, Type of exposure to violence: (physical, sexual)

c. If YES, how often/when?

d. What was your relationship to the perpetrator?

Part II

Appendix D: Interview Guide

The questions you will be asked are related to your past and possible present relationship experience(s), and how this has affected you in a positive or negative way and became the motivation for criminal behavior. I would like us to now have a conversation about the things that may be relative to your experiences. Again, these responses will be recorded as part of your consent, but your identity will remain anonymous. Do I have your agreement to proceed?

General Prompts:

1. What crime(s) were you arrested for?
2. Why were you engaging in that criminal activity?
3. What was your intention in pursuing this male or defining him as the motivation for your criminal activity? (Were you in competition with another female? Economic reasoning?)
4. Did this type of engagement represent a type of power to yourself? Did it make you feel different about yourself?
5. Did you enjoy participating in criminal activity? If so, do you feel that it was because of the relationship with a male?

Drugs & Substance abuse -The focus here is on understanding the relationship between drugs and females and the men who became the catalyst for female drug addiction and offending.

Prompts

1. Have you ever used or sold drugs?
If YES, can you describe how you began and who influenced you? How did that relationship impact your drug use and offending?
2. Did your substance abuse ever become a problem or led to an addiction?
If YES, did you engage in criminal activity because of your addiction? What did you do?
3. How did your substance use affect your family, romantic, or peer relationships?
4. Have you ever received treatment for substance abuse?

Family Experience & Household Structure- The focus here is on determining the effect of the female's family structure and experiences at home and their association with outside relationships and experiences. How has the relationship at home affected your relationship with peers? With romantic partners

Prompts

1. Was the male part of your family? If so, what was the relationship to you? How did this relationship play a role in your criminal behavior?
2. How would you describe your relationship with your family during childhood?
Your parents?
3. Have you ever had a family member incarcerated? If so, did this impact you or your relationship with them?
4. Did any of your family members encourage your criminal behavior?
5. Did your family relationships impact your relationships with friends later in

- adolescence? With relationships to the opposite sex? Same sex?
6. When growing up, did you follow the rules? Were you punished? Do you believe any type of punishment played a role in future criminal motivation?
 7. Did your criminal participation help in financially supporting family?
 8. Do you have children? If so, are you the primary caregiver? Have you always been? If so, did this play a role in your motivation toward criminal activity?
 9. Do you feel that doing time in jail or prison has influenced your ability to parent or care for your children? If so, would you consider it better or worse?
 10. If you were already had children while you were incarcerated, have your children faced any difficulties while you were incarcerated? Have they ever been in trouble or faced any legal issues?

Financial, economic & community related experience-The focus here is on your community structure and the way people interact with you. Has your community or economic hardship influenced your experience toward criminal behavior?

General Prompts

1. Where did you grow up? (City and State)
2. Did you feel safe in your community?
3. Do you remember seeing visible drug or gang related crime in your neighborhood?
4. Did you feel like you had to either begin acting out crime or continue to do so due to economic hardship?

Relationship Experience & Opposite Sex Attraction-The focus here is on understanding your experiences and feelings in relationships and attractions to the opposite sex. What is it that is so appealing about the stereotypes of “good” versus “bad” girls and boys and does that play a role in attraction or toward deviant behavior? Have you felt an attraction for someone who was the total opposite? Was it that attraction that made you do things you never would expect? Do you still feel this way?

Prompts:

1. Have you ever committed a crime with your spouse, significant other, intimate partner?
2. Have you ever committed a crime **because of** the relationship with your spouse, significant other, or intimate partner **or for** them?

***If YES: Ask about victimization or the attraction to an oppositional identity (i.e.: good girl/bad boy)**

Additional Prompts:

- a. Did he introduce you to illegal behavior? If so, what?
- b. Were you aware of any criminal activity he engaged in? If not, when did you become aware?
- c. What attracted you to him or what made you more willing to act out criminal behavior?
- d. Did he teach you how to carry out any type of deviant behavior? If so, what type?
- e. Did you ever participate in crime together? Did you mostly engage in crime without him?
- f. Was there a difference in the type of criminal activity you acted out with him or alone?
- g. Were you ever arrested as a result of the relationship or the attraction to this individual?
- h. Were you attracted to breaking the rules? Admired those who did?
- i. How did you feel at the beginning of the relationship/pursuit? How do you feel now?
- j. What was the outcome of your relationship(s)? Do you still have any type of relationship with him (them)?
- k. How has the relationship(s) affected you?

3. Do you have a partner/spouse currently?

If YES, how did you meet?

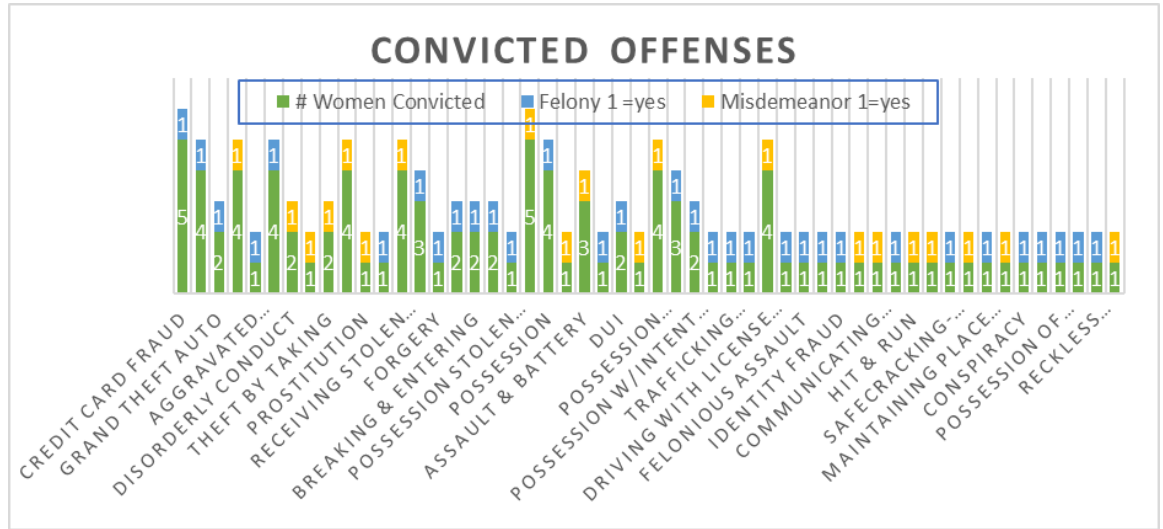
If YES, have they ever been incarcerated or in trouble with the law? Do they still engage in criminal behavior?

If NO, have you actively chosen not to get involved in a relationship? If so, why not

Aftermath/ Additional Questions

1. Have you been arrested or incarcerated after breaking off the relationship? (**If this applies**) If so, what type(s) of offense(s)? Were they similar or different from the ones in which you engaged in due to the male?

Appendix E: Women’s Range of Convicted Criminal Offenses



Appendix F: Highest Level of Education Achieved

