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Behind bars: Exploring the prison and post release experiences of minoritised mothers.

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Behind Bars: Exploring the prison and post release experiences of minoritised mothers.

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ABSTRACT

Academic literature concerning 'prisons and prisoners' generally appear to focus on solitary or at best two characteristics when exploring experiences i.e. either gender, race or class (Enos, 1998; Ginn, 2013; Mirza, 2003). It is often forgotten that individuals in fact occupy more than one social status which affects their life course. This thesis explored the prison and post release experiences of minoritised mothers in two separate studies. Study one consisted of semi structured interviews with eight women and study two was an autoethnography which was then woven into the narrative structures of study one. Using Hofstede (2011) and Crenshaw (1989) as foundational theoretical building blocks, as well as the findings from both the studies, the thesis re-conceptualised intersectionality in the form of a roundabout of oppression with numerous spokes flowing into it, but no exits. The minoritised are at the centre of the roundabout experiencing the increasing density and pressure of oppressive factors originating from each of the spurs that feed into their unique social location. The oppressive factors identified in this thesis were culture, race, ethnicity, religion, prisoner status, and motherhood. Consistent with the theoretical orientation, interpretative phenomenological analysis was utilised to gather individual biographies of women. General themes of oppressive mechanisms such as intimate partner violence, cultural and religious expectations of motherhood and womanhood, and prisoner status were identified through the narratives of the respondents in both studies. The thesis then provided empirically based recommendations for public policy for prison and probation operations. In addition, while the thesis exposed systems of oppression for minoritised women, it also generated more questions that need to be researched. Also, as a consequence of this thesis being conducted in the UK, researching women in social contexts that may eliminate one of the spokes of oppression is an important direction for further research.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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To my children, when you are old enough to comprehend what has happened and turn the pages of this PhD... I am deeply sorry for how this journey began. I promise you, mama is not a criminal - things just went awfully wrong in life. Regardless, I hope you are proud of how things turned out. I have tried my best and will continue to do my best, to provide you with the finest life possible. You are my favourite piglets... Adem and Yaren, I love you both to the moon and back!

Author's Declaration

I declare that all the material contained in this thesis is my own work.

To my dearest brother SEDAT BOZKURT
I hope I have made you proud
I LOVE YOU, fly high...

Sun rise: 15.05.1984 Sun set: 12.08.2019

ABBREVIATIONS

BAME – Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic

BME – Black and Minority Ethnic

ESP – HMP East Sutton Park

GBH – Grievous Bodily Harm

MBU – Mother and Baby Unit

PTSD – Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

ROTL – Release on Temporary Licence

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 RACE AND ETHNICITY: PROBLEMATISING TERMINOLOGY

The terms 'BAME' and 'BME' are generally used to refer to all racialised groups that are not White. Consequently, this implies that race is only for people of colour and therefore assuming that White is the only 'normal' identity that does not require explanation (Garner, 2017). Ultimately, it reinforces racial inequality by maintaining White ethnic identity as privileged (Gabriel, 2021). However, because it only applies to 'people of colour,' not every ethnic group with a distinct culture that is a minority, is depicted (Mason, 2003). For example, the terms exclude White minorities such as Gypsies, Roma, and Travellers, who are among society's most marginalised (Aspinall, 2020). It is critical to distinguish Travellers from Roma and Gypsies. Various groups in the UK, including Romany Gypsies, Irish Travellers, Scottish Gypsy Travellers, and Roma, 'have been identified – and identified themselves – as having different languages, beliefs, and certain different cultural traditions' (Van Cleemput, 2010, p. 316). The issue is the single unitary categorisation of Travellers and Gypsies. They are sometimes codified together as 'GRT' – Gypsy, Roma, or Traveller – for statistical purposes (Gavin, 2019), resulting in the set of diverse communities being grouped together.

Ultimately, although racialised groups mix in a variety of inconsistent ways, the terms in question homogenise them and so ignore significant differences like skin colour, ethnicity, and cultural backgrounds. For example, in 'BAME' and 'BME,' the category 'Asian' covers groups having origins in the far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent who are all distinct from one another, such as China, India, Japan, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Vietnam (Garner, 2017). In parallel, the term 'Black' is used to refer to everyone with a Black skin colour, ignoring the distinct ethnicities within, such as Black - Caribbean or Black - African.

In her book 'This is Why I Resist' Mos-Shogbamimu (2021, p. 1) identifies herself as 'Black British and an African from the roots of my hair to the soles of my feet.' Ultimately, when women are clustered together under the umbrella phrase 'BAME' women, important distinctions are lost. This overarching collective phrase can encompass a wide range of

identities, from recent refugees fleeing violence to third-generation African Caribbean migrants who have established job and cultural patterns in the UK. When delved further into the difficulties, multiple identities of the various minoritised women can be identified such as age, sexuality, disability, and religion. The women have a diverse range of experiences (Crenshaw, 1989).

A significant example is the religion of Islam. Although Muslims are considered as a homogeneous group, there are different branches of it such as Sunnis and Alevis[1] and ultimately, the way they practise Islam varies depending on which Islamic teachings they adhere to (Holtmann, 2012). Cetin (2015) adopts the term 'Alevism' in his ethnographic research of the young male suicide epidemic in the Alevi-Kurdish community in London. Alevi is an umbrella term for a separate religious/faith community mostly found in central Anatolia, Turkey, where its limits are set in contrast to Sunni Islam, the country's dominant religion. Although some Alevis may not object to the concept that there is only one God and that Mohammed is his messenger, according to Cetin (2015), most Alevis do not practise other key pillars of Islam such as fasting for 30 days, praying five times a day, or attending Mecca. Instead, they have their own religious principles and a place of worship called 'cemevi' (Holtmann, 2012).

As part of a special issue for Kurdish Studies, Cetin et al. (2020) have aimed to address the invisibility of the Kurdish Alevi community in both the UK and in Turkey, who have long been rendered invisible. According to Cetin and colleagues (2020), the late development of Alevi studies reflects the fact that the largest group of Alevis, those in Turkey, have been subjected to generations of assimilationist 'Turkification' and 'sunnification' policies, rendering them officially invisible, whereas in the UK, they are assumed to be Turkish and thus, Muslim. However, crucial distinctions have been lost as a result. They speak Kirmanci and Zaza languages and have a variety of religious rituals, customs, and behaviours. They come from distinct historical backgrounds, belong to numerous identities and have been at conflict with Sunni Muslims for over a century. However, public knowledge tends to be monolithic, and this has major policy and practice implications.

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[1] Alevi is a Turkish term that means Shi'a – a branch of Islam.

The terms BAME and BME are also exclusive of those from biracial backgrounds. Notably, the number of people who identify as biracial is constantly increasing, and they face a unique set of issues. Mixed heritage, according to Garner, (2010, p. 84) is a '...challenge to existing racial categories in which the State, groups, and individuals invest politically and emotionally.' Most people's notion of racialised boundaries is contradicted by the concept of people belonging to more than one group at the same time, or not, depending on the situation. Historically, this appears to have particularly been a problem for children who had both a Black and a White parent. Due to concerns over White purity, there were laws forbidding Black men from marrying White women. The assumption was that through mixing with others, the White race/colour could become impure, while other identities would not (Garner, 2010b). As a result, although marriages were acceptable for anyone from a minoritised background, such as Asian and Black or Chinese and Hungarian, the partnership of a Black man and White woman was viewed as a threat (ibid).

According to Garner (2010), during the mid-1800s, most race theorists claimed that biracial people were degenerate and more susceptible to the darker partner's assumed racial features, ultimately being more 'Black' than 'White.' He further states that the only mixed population who grew up freely were children born to enslaved women and fathered by the landowners or their employees as slave masters owned such children. Laws were instead targeted toward Black men and White women, since the other way around was economically advantageous. Nevertheless, those of biracial backgrounds have been, and continue to be, torn between being *too White to be Black and too Black to be White* and ultimately, do not fit in to either the 'White' or 'Black' categories.

Evidently, the terms BAME and BME condense a wide range of ethnic, socioeconomic, political, cultural, religious, and historical identities into a single, homogeneous abbreviation of lived experiences, while also creating a false sense of unity among all those who fall under the label (Adebisi, 2019). In addition, it masks the distinct forms of discrimination they experience (Gabriel, 2021), such as anti-Black racism, islamophobia, and antisemitism, which are all directed at different communities that are grouped under one umbrella term. This issue also extends to the Criminal Justice System. For example, prejudice and discrimination experienced by Traveller women in the Criminal Justice System are likely to differ from those experienced by Black women. Furthermore, the idea that most female prisoners are of 'BAME' ethnicity spans a wide spectrum of ethnicities that are not represented in the prison population.

For example, 27 per cent of all prisoners indicated that they came from a 'BAME' background in the years 2019/2020. However, whilst 16 percent of this group identified as Black or Black-British, only 0.2 percent were Jewish and 0.1 per cent Hindu (Ministry of Justice, 2020).

Language is important because it both shapes and reflects our understandings of our social environment (Wetherell et al., 2001). The common use of the term 'BAME' in certain institutional and political contexts has influenced how racialised identities are recognised and conceptualised within them. Because of the safety and security that the catch-all word appears to provide for individuals attempting to characterise groupings within society, individual identities have become invisible and, at worst, insignificant (Aspinall, 2020). Selvarajah et al. (2020, p. 2) emphasise how this homogenisation is 'embodied in the pronunciation of *baym*,' which 'flattens fundamental social and cultural disparities between groups, while obscuring the uneven power systems within which they are situated' through its simplistic and primitive tense. It enables the subtlety and complexity of racialised identities and experiences to be skimmed over or only discussed briefly.

As a result, minoritised women appear to fall into a 'blind spot' in both conventional thinking (Mirza, 2003) and in criminal justice related scholarly work. As women, they are frequently overlooked or marginalised in research that largely exemplifies and prioritises men's experiences (Aresti et al., 2016). As women who are not White, their racialised experiences are frequently lost or unexplored in female-centred research that attempts to be 'colour blind'; and as women viewed as 'BAME,' they are frequently misrepresented in research that seeks to depict a universal 'BAME' experience; and ultimately in class discourse, where race has no place (Mason, 2003). Beyond these forms of exclusion, there appears to be a further exclusion within female-centred criminological research in the United Kingdom, where female scholars from minoritised backgrounds appear to be underrepresented in a field dominated by White authorship, influencing the type of research produced and the conclusions reached.

Despite this apparent difference, minoritised groups are often perceived as having more in common with one another than the majority (White). As a result, diversity among these groups is very often ignored or downplayed, while their alleged distinctiveness from the majority is overstated (Mason, 2003). When women are categorised as BAME, BME, or ethnic minority, crucial differences are neglected. When the women's numerous identities and the life experiences they have brought into prison is considered, the challenges become much more

complicated. The homogenization of all non-White racialised identities under the title of 'BAME' is however, becoming increasingly problematic in relation to recognising the heterogeneity of female lived experiences inside the Criminal Justice System (Cardale et al., 2017; HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2020; Lord Farmer, 2019). Lord Farmer (2019, p. 21) acknowledges that women from various minoritised groups 'experience distinct and identifiable obstacles in the Criminal Justice system' in his most recent report.

Ultimately, I have opted to use the word 'minoritised' to refer to women who's racialised, genderised, and other social statuses and identities that are frequently positioned as 'other' within the Criminal Justice System and wider society. This term is more relevant since it encompasses multiple kinds of discrimination and emphasises the active processes involved in unequal power and resource distributions. (Selvarajah et al., 2020). Although the term 'racially minoritised' will also be used when the focus is specifically on the women's racial background, 'minoritised' will be the key term. This is also consistent with Crenshaw's (1989) concept of intersectionality that will be discussed later.

According to Gunaratnam (2003, p.15), the word 'gives some idea of the active processes of racialisation at work in classifying certain features of groups in particular situations as being in a minority.' It constantly reminds us of the link between racialisation and power (Gunaratnam, 2003; Milner and Jumbe, 2020), recognising that we are not 'minorities' in any natural or inherent sense, but rather 'minoritised' because of oppressive social constructions and processes surrounding race and identity. Notably, the word 'minoritised' refers to a process rather than an identity, and people will have various experiences with this process depending on their identities and/or social situations. To comprehend the specific situations in which people must manage their lives, we must 'name and recognise' the actual identities people hold for themselves (Selvarajah et al., 2020). Validating self-identification and personal experiences are consequently given priority.

Over the past few decades, the female prison population in England and Wales has witnessed a significant growth. Whilst the current population stands at 3,812, looking back to 1995, it was almost half of this, at 1,998. Overall, it is stated that females account for 5 per cent of the whole prison population (Baldwin, 2021). However, given the disproportionate number of short sentences served by the majority of women (Baldry, 2010), it is estimated that over 13,000 women are received into custody annually (Minson et al., 2015). The growth in the female prison population is explained not by the increase in the crimes committed by women, but in fact, the shift towards punitiveness in sentencing (Moore and Scraton, 2016). Importantly, over 80 percent of the women in custody are stated to have committed non-violent offences (Baldwin, 2017; Corston, 2007) and for over 25 per cent of these women, it is their first offence (Baldwin and Epstein, 2017). Given this, it is significant to note that according to the Criminal Justice Act 2003 SE - 79(2) (2019) 'a custodial sentence must only be imposed if the offence(s) is so serious that neither a fine or a community sentence would be adequate punishment for it.' Yet, women are still being imprisoned for, as noted, non-violent first offences such as shoplifting, fraud, and prostitution (Minson et al., 2015), which could instead be dealt with in the community.

Relative to this, (Caddle and Crisp, 1997) undertook a valuable research study on behalf of the Home Office. This research was carried out in response to a growing interest into the question of what happened to children when their mothers were incarcerated. The key objectives of the research were to gather demographic information and offence profiles of all women, identify the number of women that were mothers and explore their childcare arrangements before and during prison. Thus, sentencing information was extracted from prison records in all 12 women's prisons, screening interviews were performed to determine background characteristics and whether they were mothers with children under the age of 18 and finally, in-depth interviews were conducted, covering a broad range of topics to gain a detailed account of their life before prison and their childcare arrangements, as well as their plans for reuniting with their children post-release.

Essentially, the study found that 61 per cent of the women were mothers of children under the age of 18 and of this, a third were lone mothers prior to imprisonment. In addition, data in the

study revealed that for 85 per cent of the mothers, prison was the first time they had ever been separated from their children (Caddle and Crisp, 1997) and only 5 per cent of children of the mothers in prison were able to remain in their family homes. The other 95 per cent is a significantly distressing statistic, given that almost 18,000 children are separated from their mothers each year by imprisonment (Corston, 2007). Considering the evidence gathered, Caddle and Crisp (1997) concluded that imprisoned mothers were 'doubly penalised.' They were having to make provisions for childcare, whilst also serving their sentence. This was unlike fathers, who generally serve prison sentences with the comfort of knowing that their children are cared for by the mother. This, they stated, had severe consequences for both the mother and child. The mother had to rely on temporary caregivers to look after her children and the children were reported to have suffered from several behavioural and emotional problems as a result of this.

Craddle and Crisp's (1997) analysis, however, is substantially outdated. Despite this though, these figures are still relied on in the present as no other comparable studies have been carried out and figures may consequently be inaccurate in reflecting the women currently in prison, particularly given the rise in the female prison population since then. Regrettably, such data is not recorded upon entrance into prison so exact figures are not available. Given this, future research into this topic would be paramount. Furthermore, some mothers do not declare they have children (Baldwin, 2017) out of fear of state interference i.e. social care, hence figures of mothers with children could potentially be much higher.

For the children that are declared, the majority have to move in with other family members, relatives or family friends and some are taken into care. The distress caused by the forced separation of the mother from her child is amplified when considering that the disruption such sentences cause to the mothers and children's lives are hugely unnecessary (Moore and Scraton, 2016). This is particularly the case for women receiving short sentences, as these sentences, although short, remain long enough to cause damage equal to that of a long sentence. For example, many women entering prison lose their home and rearranging accommodation for when they are released, is a relatively lengthy process. This is especially problematic for those serving a short sentence, as their sentence would not provide enough time to prepare for release (Baldwin and Epstein, 2017). Additionally, for women that have mental health issues or drug/alcohol addiction, short sentences are too short for any practical assistance or intervention to address the issue, but long enough to make the problem deteriorate i.e. long

hours of being locked in a cell is significantly detrimental to the mental wellbeing of everyone experiencing it, but worse for someone that is already struggling with poor mental health.

Moreover, it is well documented that prisons are harsher for women, especially on the grounds that they are made to live in conditions designed for men. Nonetheless, when the woman is a mother who has had to leave her children behind, it becomes even more difficult. Corston (2007) who undertook a review of vulnerable women in the criminal justice system, also highlights this. She affirms that the experience of imprisonment is significantly worse for women in comparison to men, because women are more likely to be primary care givers of young children prior to imprisonment. Thus, most women in prison have to contend with not just the trauma of imprisonment, but also the emotions associated with mothering, whilst serving time (Baldwin, 2017). It is crucial to understand that motherhood is a major life changing experience in women's lives and becoming an incarcerated mother can be extremely distressing (Kutuk et al., 2018). In relation to this, Baldwin (2018, p. 51) notes that 'the maternal experience of mothers in prison is often at best disrupted, at worst destroyed, by the location.'

Importantly, for women who are from minoritised backgrounds, the burden of the situation will be further exacerbated. Such women are significantly overrepresented in prison because of the use of 'discriminatory decisions at sentencing' (Barnes and Stringer, 2014; Bowling and Phillips, 2002). In his review of discrimination within the policing and criminal justice system in the UK, Lammy (2017, p. 31) noted that 'the most important decisions in the justice system are made in our courts. They are where life-changing judgements are made about innocence or guilt.' The justice system has been built on the basis that the law will be impartial and applied fairly to all. However, in practice, it has been well documented that both gender (Gelsthorpe, 2007) and race (Uhrig, 2016) can have an impact on the sentence individuals receive. Whilst women are more likely than men to be remanded in custody and subsequently serve a custodial sentence, there are also racialised disparities in the types of sentences women receive.

According to Uhrig (2016), Black women presenting at Crown Court are 25 per cent more likely than White women to be sentenced to custody. Though, they concluded sentencing was proportionate for women belonging to other groups that are minoritised. Black women were also identified as being 2.3 times more likely to receive a custodial sentence for drug offences than White women. This is argued to be 'traced back to a combination of disproportionate

arrest and disproportionate custodial sentencing' (Uhrig 2016). However, statistical data depicting racialised sentencing outcomes does not capture the lived experiences of women who may face, or feel that they have faced, unfair and unjust treatment because of their observed racialised identities. Therefore, placing emphasis on hearing and validating personal lived experiences is vital for addressing the trauma that may stem from feelings of injustice.

Such women also have to deal with additional and unique challenges whilst in prison such as racial and cultural discrimination, language barriers and greater stigma in their community due to religious/cultural beliefs and values (Buncy and Ahmed, 2014; Corston, 2007; Cox and Sack-Jones, 2017). The prisons estate has long been recognised as a repressive institution which gives rise to new and exacerbates existing traumas. However, the distress is arguably amplified for women from minoritised cohorts who are also mothers. Although prison related research has traditionally been male dominated, women's imprisonment has been considered by academics more recently and some have concentrated more closely on the imprisonment of mothers (Joseph, 2006). However, what appears to be missing, is a culturally orientated perspective that considers incarcerated mothers from minoritised backgrounds.

Notably, minoritised mothers may be further ostracised by their family or community as a result of their imprisonment due to cultural pressures. Nevertheless, very little is known about minoritised mothers who serve prison sentences (Baldwin, 2021). Although some studies have focused on the ethnic or maternal aspect of women in prison, none have explicitly combined both. Therefore, this research is the first to explore the prison and post release experiences of minoritised mothers. The aim is to explore how they negotiate motherhood, as well as other significant identities (such as being female) from prison, and whether their culture plays a role in this. Their transition from prison back into the community is also of concern as given the cultural issues previously noted, the mothers' experiences of post-prison life may be very distinct and unique in comparison to White women and mothers.

This thesis is of great significance as given that little research has been conducted in this subject area, it will help develop academic knowledge in the field of women's prisons, be important for practitioners working with such women, and will have policy implications. Given that the majority of studies relating to prison/post prison experiences are on men, there is a greater need to privilege the voices of the often 'forgotten' women (Aresti, et al., 2016). Particularly minoritised mothers, who appear to have been neglected in empirical work. Therefore, the aim of this research is to gain an understanding of this complex phenomenon and provide an insight

into the experiences of minoritised mothers in prison and post-prison and how they negotiate motherhood. Moreover, the aim is to explore to what extent cultural beliefs/values play a role in how they experience the journey of imprisonment. These factors will be discussed in greater depth in the chapter to follow, which will draw on existing literature relating to the experiences of females and mothers in prison and their transition period post-release. Prior to this, some contextual background will be provided in relation to my interest and motivation in pursuing the research.

1.3 FROM PRISON TO ACADEMIA

In 2014, as a mother of two young children and the partner of a controlling, abusive man, I graduated from the University of Westminster with a BA (Hons) in Criminal Justice. Despite all the difficulties at home, I was determined to find work and eventually passed the assessments for a prison officer position. Whilst settling into the job and finding my feet, I also dealt with my partner's abuse at home. It was now getting worse because I was working with male prisoners and whilst his jealousy was becoming increasingly toxic, my partner was also seeing my job as a threat to his masculinity. Finding my voice, I was becoming reluctant to take the abuse, and as a prison officer in a position of power, I was now refusing to obey his orders.

Finally, a year into my career, I found the courage to say enough is enough and put an end to 10 years of abuse. However, this was not so simple because, coming from a Turkish background, separation is frowned upon and not tolerated, particularly if children are involved. Given this, my partner's abuse persisted from outside of the home. Whilst he was adamant that he would not leave me, he had financially brushed his hands off me. So, there I was with two young children, a pile of debt under my name and a fulltime job that I could no longer attend properly because of lack of childcare. I suffered enormously but did not speak to anyone about it or seek help. This again, was a cultural issue. If you are struggling as much as I did, the chances are, you would be expected to return to your partner/husband. This, though, I was not going to do!

Unable to find a way out, I confided in my duty governor at the prison and informed him of the situation. They reduced my hours at work and tried to help me fit it around the children. However, this made my financial situation become even worse and no other support was offered. As my mental state was deteriorating, I was also being deeply drawn into further debt. At this time, a prisoner was constantly approaching me and offering financial gain in exchange for me smuggling in illegal items. I initially refused, but his offer became appealing when I received a repossession order for my flat as I was behind on the rent payments. Having given into the offer once, I became heavily involved in smuggling items and had no way of going back as the prisoners took advantage my now 'corrupt' status. This lasted for approximately 6 months and I was eventually caught, arrested, and charged with conveying unauthorised articles into the prison.

I spent 10 months on bail and during this period, I signed up to study a master's degree in Criminology. I was a month away from graduating when I had my final court hearing and had been accepted on to a PhD programme, due to start that same year. With the presence of several news reporters and my investigating officers who were there to ensure justice was served, the court hearing was very intense. The Judge, however, was a very fair man. He considered my years of victimisation, the financial debt that left me in a very hopeless condition and the fact that I was both the primary caregiver of my two young children and the only source of support for my non-English speaking parents. He also considered my efforts to move on from the offence and change my life around via academic path. After an hour of deliberation, I was given a 2-year suspended sentence and 300 hours of community order[2].

Several newspapers reported this without delay. The headlines ranged from 'a mother of two, avoided jail after smuggling drugs' to 'corrupt prison officer smuggled drugs to fund her master's degree.' The news attracted the attention of Shipley MP (Member of Parliament) Philip Davis who considered my sentence to be 'unduly lenient.' He argued that an immediate custodial sentence could not be deferred merely because I am a woman and have children. Mr Davies was a firm believer of 'equality before the law' and felt that the same justice should be applied to both men and women. He contacted the Attorney General and demanded an appeal

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[2] A Community Order is a non-custodial sentence with one or more particular criterias that are tailored for punishment and/or to address the needs of a defendant in order to overcome problems and avoid recidivism. Such criterias include unpaid work and/or fines, as well as rehabilitation programs if required.

for this purpose. Thus, I was at the Court of Appeal within three weeks of the sentencing hearing. At this hearing, the three judges appeared to agree with Mr Davies and overturned my sentence to that of 32 months' imprisonment. As a result, I spent a total of 12 months in prison, 10 days at HMP Bronzefield and the remaining 11 and a half months at HMP East Sutton Park in open conditions.

During my time in prison, I was diagnosed with anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and was placed on medication. With the immense support of a forensic psychologist, I was able to address the PTSD to a degree. In addition to this, with the comprehensive support of my current director of studies and former undergraduate dissertation supervisor, Dr Andreas Aresti, I was able to remain academically engaged, taking up readings that helped keep me mentally stimulated. This is also the time I was introduced to Convict Criminology which is a strand of criminology formed by a group of ex-convict academics and non-convict academics that share the same philosophies. Towards the end of my sentence, with the approval of the prison governor, I attended University two days a week to do work experience with Andreas and get a taster of a career in academia. Whilst there, I also built on my knowledge of convict criminology which I found was privileging the voices of those with lived experiences of prisons by promoting the work of ex-convict academics (Jones et al., 2009) and enabling them to work for change through academia. It is here that I was inspired to pursue a PhD on a topic that would privilege the voices of women like me.

Importantly though, there were two factors in my case that influenced the way I have approached my thesis today. Firstly, Mr Davies, who in my opinion, used his right wing, sexist beliefs to orchestrate my year in custody without knowing any of the facts in the case and secondly, the case of a White female prison officer who was convicted about 6 months before I was. She was charged with 2 counts of misconduct, (as she had a relationship with a Category A prisoner serving life) and 3 counts of conveying unauthorised articles into the prison. She was given a 2-year suspended sentence and 300 hours community order. On the grounds that it was 'unduly lenient,' this was also appealed. However, the Court of Appeal Judges agreed with the initial Judge and permitted the sentence to stand. Their comments were:

"Youngman's mitigation justified the Crown Court Judges decision not to jail her. She was very young and had been left working alone on a category 'A' wing (high security wing) overnight after only six weeks of training. She was in a vulnerable position and having given

into his requests once, she was in a hopeless situation, trapped by a lifer with nothing more to lose." In defence of the Crown Court Judge, the appeal Judge went on to say that, "The result of his reasoning might be described by some as lenient, but it is equally describable as wise, long-sighted and brave" (Savva, 2016).

On the other hand, my judges concluded:

"The offending here was serious; it was done for venal motives. The offender should have thought about the consequences. With respect to the Judge (original sentencing judge), we are driven to the conclusion that the sentence was not only lenient, but also unduly lenient and cannot stand. While impact on children is important, parenthood cannot be used as a trump card to avoid jail" (Kirk, 2017).

Although some might argue otherwise, I have believed since the learning of this case, that my ethnic background, as an added dimension to my gender, has played an important role in my sentencing. Although the case of this young woman was cited in my hearing, the Appeal Judges did not take note of it and sentenced me to immediate custody. I have since wondered if the outcome would have been the same if I was to have been White British. Though, Mr Davies' involvement led me to think about feminism, the other officer's case had me contemplating the question of race. Although this is something I had been taught at both undergraduate and master's level, I had never realised how close to home the issue of race was. Nevertheless, whilst reading around traditional feminism, I found that their movement was mainly in the interests of White, middle-class women which did not apply to me. However, I then found another strand 'multiracial feminism.' In that, I felt I had found myself. This strand of feminism, which I have adopted as my theoretical framework, along with convict criminology, will be discussed in the Methodology chapter.

Chapter 2 provides a detailed evaluation of the current literature on women's imprisonment in four strands. It evaluates the existing state of play for women in prison as a starting point and highlights major challenges. The second strand examines literature on mothers in prison, especially how the identity of 'mother' is negotiated from behind prison walls. However, in order to have a better grasp of what this may imply, the concept of motherhood is initially considered. The third strand then investigates the racial and cultural experiences of the minoritised on a larger scale before focusing on the specific documented experiences of minoritised mothers. The fourth and final strand shifts the emphasis to current empirical studies on criminalised women's (including mothers') experiences of life after release and reintegration into the community.

Chapter 3 sets out the argument for the use of qualitative line of inquiry, utilising a range of diverse, complementary qualitative analytical frameworks, including a hermeneutic phenomenological approach from a convict criminology perspective. Incorporated within a feminist conceptual framework with the use of intersectionality as a tool for analysis in exploring the prison and post-prison experiences of minoritised mothers.

Chapter 4 addresses the methods used to conduct the research in study one. It provides an outline of the study design and sampling technique used, as well as details of the analytical framework adopted to examine the data and the research questions that the study will address.

Chapter 5 presents and discusses the findings from the first study. Here, four superordinate themes have emerged from the women's temporally structured narratives which are represented by vignettes from their transcribed interviews. The superordinate themes are '*Trapped in Abuse,' 'The Painful Journey,' 'Cultural Burden Magnified'* and '*The Permanent Stamp.*' Whilst these themes exist, there are subordinate themes that are identified within each one which highlights the complexity of issue.

Chapter 6 presents the theoretical context, study design and data collection for study two and forms an argument for the use of an autoethnography to augment study one.

Chapter 7 presents and discusses the findings from study two which includes five themes. These are *'Power[lessness],' 'Motherhood in Crisis,' 'The Stain,' 'Maintaining Family Ties,'* and *'(In)justice.'*

Chapter 8 provides a general review of the key findings from the empirical studies that were undertaken. A synthesis of both studies is analysed, and the most striking patterns are identified and thereby represent the current state of play for criminalised women. The chapter also introduces a reconceptualised model of intersectionality that was generated from the findings of study one and two. In keeping with the psychological orientation of the thesis, a cross-cultural psychological framework along with Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions theory is also applied. This framework is introduced and then applied to the discussion which is divided into three parts that address the women's pre prison, prison and post release experiences.

Chapter 9 assesses the validity of the methodology used in conjunction with the theoretical paradigms that were developed and used for analysis. The chapter concludes with personal reflections.

Chapter 10 provides the conclusions derived from this thesis. It begins with a summary of the research and then outlines implications for policy and practice, as well as future research directions.

CHAPTER 2 – A REVIEW OF THE FIELD

This chapter provides an overview of current literature relating to the imprisonment of women, highlighting some of the key conflicts and points of controversy. The literature that broadly considers and highlights female imprisonment is the first point of focus, followed by what it means to be a 'minoritised woman.' Before moving on to the experiences of imprisoned mothers, the notion of 'motherhood' is given due consideration. Following this, racial and ethnic discrimination in prisons is considered broadly before narrowing down to the specific experiences of minoritised mothers. The focus then shifts to the existing empirical work on female prisoners, (including mothers) experiences of life post release and their experiences of resettling back into the community. Each of these topics are treated independently as all are relevant for the epistemological focus of this thesis.

2.1 WOMEN BEHIND BARS

Imprisonment presents unique challenges that most often require physical and emotional readjustment for the prisoner (Enos, 2001). This experience has been shown to include the loss of liberty, self-esteem, privacy, and undoubtedly, lack of control and choice (Kutuk et al., 2018). These were voiced by Sykes (1958) several decades ago, who referred to it as 'the pains of imprisonment.' He identified five areas of pain which related to the loss of freedom, autonomy, personal security, heterosexual relationships, and goods and services (Corston, 2007). These factors, however, applied to men as prison studies have historically been dominated by and for males. The imprisonment of women has traditionally been a field overlooked in academic study (Berry and Smith-Mahdi, 2006; Moore and Scraton, 2016). Crime was ideologically coded as a form of 'masculine behaviour' and it was considered unnatural for women to engage in criminal activities (Player, 2005). As a result, women that committed crime were typically perceived as insignificant and not deserving of any consideration. Hence, almost all prison studies were based around male prisoners and as a result, privileged male voices and experiences (Aresti and Darke, 2016). There has, however, been a major shift in prison – related studies over the past few decades. The dramatic rise in the women's prison population in the early 1990s, despite no apparent rise in crimes committed

(Ginn, 2013) led to considerable concern and prompted a wide body of academic research. This rapid rise was explained by the increased use of short prison sentences for minor offences (Ginn, 2013).

Studies conducted in relation to imprisoned women found that the majority of women entering custody, did so with very complex needs (Baldwin and Quinlan, 2018). Most were believed to have come from disadvantaged backgrounds where severe hardships were likely to have existed (Barnes and Stringer, 2014). Many would have history of domestic violence, sexual abuse, poor mental health, substance misuse, and poverty (Baldwin and Quinlan, 2018; Berry and Smith-Mahdi, 2006; Easterling et al., 2018; Imber-Black, 2008; Siegel, 2011) along with poor life skills and little to no educational background (Barnes and Stringer, 2014; Burgess and Flynn, 2013; Corston, 2007). Consequently, involvement in criminal activity for most of the women, is often found to be linked closely with their political, social and financial positions (Arditti and Few, 2006; Beresford et al., 2020). The already disadvantaged, marginalised women are then rendered disposable in the eyes of society once they enter prison (Allen et al., 2010) and the pre – existing vulnerabilities are further compounded by experiences during the prison sentence (Burgess and Flynn, 2013). Allen et al. (2010, p. 161) argues 'these women, as vulnerable as they are, are often poorly served by the very system that should be helping them.'

These factors were illustrated by Corston (2007) who, as noted, conducted a review of women with vulnerabilities in the criminal justice system. This review was requested by the Home Office following the public inquiry into the deaths of 6 women in prison, within a period of 13 months. As part of the review, Baroness Corston conducted several consultation events, visited several women's prisons, and had meetings with a range of individuals which enabled her to draw conclusions and make significant recommendations. During the visits, Corston (2007), highlighted that female prisoners suffered disproportionately as they were serving time in prisons that are primarily designed and built for men (Corston, 2007; Minson et al., 2015; Roberts and Watson, 2017). She found that women were stripped of their dignity and any chance of having privacy as they were made to use shared facilities in the presence of others, which was humiliating, particularly during menstruation (Corston, 2007). Corston (2007) stated that women were treated as 'add ons' to a male model of prisons and were therefore, marginalised in these institutions that were not designed with them in mind. She also noted that women's prison estates were small in numbers and geographically spread, meaning women had to serve sentences further away from home than men. It is estimated that women serve

prison sentences approximately 66 miles away from home and this can be a detriment to maintaining family ties (Lockwood, 2018) as there may be challenges in having visits (Corston, 2007). Importantly, this factor would make the prison experience even more difficult for mothers who may not be able to see their children and maintain a relationship. Nevertheless, to enable a deeper understanding of minoritised mothers' experiences of prison and post-release, their position in society as 'women,' before their roles as 'mothers,' must be considered. This will be discussed in the next section.

2.2 MINORITISED WOMEN

'All the women are White, and all the Blacks are men, but some of us are brave.'

(Hull et al., 1982)

This statement is a metaphoric explanation of the invisibility of minoritised women. Specifically, gender is stated to be a White woman's issue, and when race becomes a concern, it is only a Black man's problem. Ultimately, minoritised women appear to 'fall into the cracks between the two' (Mirza, 2003, p. 121) and are therefore neglected in both categories. Significant examples of this metaphor include the death of George Floyd, a Black man killed by a police officer, whilst being restrained, in the USA (Barbot, 2020). This was then followed by the death of Sarah Everard in the UK, a White British female. She was kidnapped, raped, strangled, and then burned by a police officer. Both crimes sparked widespread outrage, with numerous global protests for George Floyd and vigils for Sarah Everard being held.

While the death of George Floyd was based on race, as the metaphor goes, 'all the blacks are men,' the second, Sarah Everard was gender 'all the women are White.' However, the death of the minoritised women at the hands of the authorities are almost unheard of. In support of this, the #sayhername campaign was launched in December 2014 by the African American Policy Forum and the Centre for Intersectionality and Social Policy Studies (AAPF, 2020). Their aim was, and still is, to raise awareness of the often-overlooked names and stories of Black women and girls who have been victims of racist police violence. These include Breonna Taylor (USA), Atatiana Jefferson (USA), Sarah Reed (UK), Ma'Khia Bryant (Columbia), Shukri Ali

Said (USA) and many more which are not heard about or acknowledged (AAPF, 2020). Ultimately, whilst the experiences of women from minoritised groups are varied in the context of the criminal justice system, one thing they all have in common, is the extent to which they have been neglected or misunderstood (Cardale et al., 2017) .

Current literature appears to focus on one characteristic when exploring experiences i.e. this would either be gender, race or class (Enos, 1998; Ginn, 2013; Mirza, 2003). It is often forgotten that individuals in fact acquire more than one identity which affects their life course. For example, it could be a Black woman of working-class background, rather than just being a woman or being Black. As noted, these are considered as separate spheres when exploring experiences of social, economic and political dynamics, although 'they can simultaneously interact with each other, creating complex intersections at which two, three or more of these axes may meet' (Joseph, 2006, p. 142).

Mirza (2003) has pioneering research that focuses on the intersectionality of gender, race, faith, and culture. She combines postcolonial and Black feminist theoretical frameworks to examine the 'invisibility' of minoritised women in Britain. Mirza (2003, p. 121) argues that such women are 'often invisible, occupying a blind spot in mainstream policy and research studies that talk about women on the one had or ethnic minorities on the other.' She claims that 'gender disparities cannot be addressed without first understanding that minoritised women are holistic individuals' with 'complex, multifaceted identities' that cannot be summed up under one umbrella phrase. She emphasises the fact that their daily lives, whether as employees, mothers, or wives, are all unique. For example, she compares a young Somali mother who is a doctor but is unable to work due to her refugee status with an Asian woman who may have worked in a family business and is widowed. Although they are both minoritised women, they have separate multiple identities and experience different equality concerns.

Mirza (2003, p. 124) emphasises that 'generalisations about the majority (White) female population do not hold true for different Black and minority ethnic women.' She claims that if there is not a genuine focus on the cultural differences women experience in their familial structures, stereotypes would be reinforced, such as young Muslim girls being forced into marriages or Black women dominating and marginalising their male partners. This is reinforced by Garner (2010) who also highlights the issues with universalist generalisations being based on White women. They have vastly different lifestyles and opportunities, for example,

Pakistani and Bangladeshi women are more likely than White women to have children in their early twenties, to be married, and to be unemployed. African-Caribbean women, on the other hand, are three times more likely than any other ethnicity to be employed in skilled manual labour and to be lone parents (Garner, 2010).

Further to this, Travellers, according to Spencer (2003), tend to adhere to well-defined gender roles, with both men and women required to engage in a set of fundamental behaviours that prioritise family and home in their value system. Men are generally responsible for financially and practically supporting their families, while women oversee the home and children. Women's obligations are reported to include pregnancy, personal care for elderly, and teaching suitable domestic and hygiene skills to daughters. As a result, women's roles in public are limited, but they are equally involved in household decision-making. Women are often expected to be submissive to men in public and to be faithful to their assigned roles, which they are visibly content with. They are also kept apart from their peers of the opposite gender. For example, Spencer (2003) states that, men and women are divided into their gender groups and seated separately at social events such as weddings and funerals. Overall, Traditional Travellers adhere to strict moral norms that govern men and women's relationships (Spencer, 2003). Such cultural differences influence their understanding, experience, and performance of motherhood. The next section broadly considers this, before bringing imprisoned mothers into the picture.

2.3 MOTHERHOOD

'Motherhood is a role many women expect and are expected to play in their lifetime, it is one that has a duality to it, in that often we are mothers alongside something else or someone else. It is a role that paradoxically invites celebration and heightened status for women who sometimes are perceived as superior because of their mother status.'
(Baldwin, 2015, p. 26)

Maternal studies have been an established academic field for several decades and has generated a large body of research over time (i.e . Notably, mothers carry additional layers of emotions, responsibilities and duties to what is expected of them as 'women' (Baldwin, 2015). This includes being the natural nurturers who maintain the physical care of their child/ren, alongside teaching, skill training, self-care, transmitting cultural and moral values, guiding and correcting. Relative to this, Baldwin (2017, p. 49) has argued that the 'relationship between motherhood and emotion is a powerful one,' and claimed that there 'are few ideals that elicit more emotion and arguably more judgement than that of mother and child' (ibid.) Indeed, motherhood, more so than anything else, brings with it mothering ideals and societal judgments. Although what it means to be a good mother is always debatable, there are certain images all mothers are expected to meet.

One image deeply embedded in society is that of a middle class, married, educated mother with access to various resources (Allen et al., 2010, p.162) who can ensure the child has a good and stable upbringing. This suggests that one's ability to be a good mother is measured by her access to time, money, health, and social support (Ferraro and Moe, 2003). The question to raise is, whether all women can fit this ideal image? Allen et al. (2010, p. 162) contends that 'poor and marginalised women […] do not fit the idealised portrayal of motherhood.' This could be due to a variety of issues such as poverty, poor mental health and/or substance misuse (Berry and Eigenberg, 2003) which could inhibit their 'mothering' duties. As a result, the idealised images of motherhood appear to disregard the socio-economic pressures of parenting faced by women in marginalised circumstances, who are often at increased risk of imprisonment (Easterling, et al., 2018), thus, unable to follow the traditional defined motherhood expectations and consequently viewed as inadequate mothers.

Specifically, O'Reilly, a professor at York University's School of Women's Studies and author of multiple books and articles on motherhood, brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to this field. In 1998, she founded the Association for Research on Mothering (ARM), which later became the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement (MIRCI). Through her extensive scholarly engagement in maternal studies, O'Reilly (2016) developed the concept of 'Matricentric-feminism.' The idea was for a mother-centered style of feminism that considers the context and challenges of mothers. Although she does not claim that motherhood is the only thing that matters, she does contend that it is impossible to comprehend women's lives without considering how motherhood influences

their sense of self and worldview (O'Reilly, 2016). Motherhood, according to O'Reilly (2019) is feminism's unfinished business. However, she emphasises that she is not advocating for a matricentric feminism to replace traditional feminist thought; rather, that the category of mother is distinct from that of woman, and that many of the issues mothers face, such as social, economic, political, cultural, psychological, and so on, are unique to women's roles and identities as mothers. She states that mothers are repressed as women and as mothers as a result of patriarchy.

Notably, patriarchy can have direct impact on motherhood. Rothman (2000) states that paternity is at the heart of social arrangements in patriarchal societies. The father's blood lines transmit along the family name, lineage, inheritance, and much more. The emphasis is not only on the patrilineal blood line, but also on the father as the 'seed' that allows for pregnancy. Rothman (2000) goes on to explain how, in a patriarchal society that prioritises man's seed, women are viewed as having a secondary function of carrying and caring for men's children. A woman's body serves as the vehicle or host for a man's child in this way. Women may be replaced, but a man's seed is regarded as irreplaceable. In such a society, genetics takes precedence over the behavioural act of mothering. Thus women are classed as inferior even with mothering.

'Mothers from diverse racial/ethnic and class backgrounds may embrace different ideals of what it means to be a good mother' (Aiello and Mcqueeney, 2016, p. 34). For example, whilst an educated, working mother may be the ideal mothering model in some cultures, some societal expectations may in effect be a full-time stay at home mother focused solely on the child's growth and development. The latter may predominantly be found in the South Asian and/or Muslim communities as well as in the Travelling community where gender inequality is hugely prevalent and women are expected to be homemakers (Buncy and Ahmed, 2014). There are also considerable variances in the parenting styles of mothers from various backgrounds. For example, Chigwada-Bailey (2003) argues that black mothers must raise their children in a racist society, which necessitates more work to prepare their children for society's challenges, whether acknowledged or not. However, Chigwada-Bailey (2003), along with the other authors, does not address the issue of mothers imprisoned. The next section will discuss this in greater detail.

2.4 MOTHERS LOCKED UP

'Surviving motherhood requires strength, surviving prison additional strength and resilience, and surviving both – which, it must be said, most women in this position do – is a testament to the strength.' (Baldwin, 2018, p. 55)

As motherhood is such a significant part of both the life of the mother and child (O'Reilly, 2016), it would mean that being an imprisoned mother is more than likely to cause considerable emotional harm to both. Several studies have focused on the impact of parental imprisonment on the child (Beresford et al., 2020; Cunningham, 2005; Minson, 2020; Minson and Condry, 2018; Siegel, 2011). However, the degree to which the mothers negotiate the prison experience with their mothering identity (Baldwin, 2017; Baldwin and Quinlan, 2018; Easterling et al., 2018; Lockwood, 2018) has recently attracted considerable scholarly attention. As noted, prison is significantly harsher for women than men (Corston, 2007; Minson et al., 2015). However, being a mother added to this is described as being 'double jeopardy' for such women (Easterling, 2014). The challenges are intensified for mothers who have to manage the physical, personal, and practical consequences of being imprisoned as well as the emotional burden of separation from their children (Mignon and Ransford, 2012).

Given the importance of the relationship and bond between the mother and child (Harris, 2017) the sudden separation is significantly traumatic. It could result in the mother's loss of influence in the child/ren's lives, the constant worry of their wellbeing and having to adjust to a life without them would contribute to extreme levels of stress (Halperin and Harris, 2004), particularly given the limited contact they will be able to have. This is specifically an issue for women who have children in care. It is stressed that having to depend on statutory care agencies to bring their children up for visits poses difficulties of its own (Corston, 2007), as relationships with carers, regardless of whether they are authorities or other family members, could be both supportive and inhibiting (Lockwood, 2018). This in turn means many mothers are forced to be almost completely absent in the lives of their child/ren. As previously stated, only 5 per cent of children are able to remain in their family home when the mother is imprisoned, which means whilst most remain in the care of other family members/friends, some are taken into social care (Minson et al., 2015).

Relatively, a study conducted by Easterling, et al. (2018) on incarcerated mothers in the United States (US), explored how they negotiated motherhood from prison. A total of 49 women were interviewed, 35 of theses were one to one interviews and the other 14 were interviewed in 2 groups of 7 participants. Easterling, et al. (2018) found that although all mothers in the study defended their status as mothers, they all suggested a substantial change in their mothering role. These self-constructed roles were segregated into three distinct typologies, that being, 'same mum, modified mum and suspended mum.' The former referred to mothers that viewed themselves as being the same mother as prior to custody, the second categorised mothers who saw themselves as a different mother and the latter described those who felt alienated from their positions and identities as mothers. Ultimately, Easterling et al. (2018) concluded that the mothering role was nevertheless a core and defining aspect of the life of a mother and maternal incarceration was therefore bound to have far-reaching effects. This included the loss of day-to-day interactions between mother and child which resulted in the mother being stripped of almost all power and ability to 'mother' and in some cases 'triggering termination of parental rights and contributing to mental illness' (Easterling et al., 2018, p. 4).

Accordingly, Mignon and Ransford (2012) published a research article as part of a larger study that was released by the Centre for Women in Politics and Public Policy (2008). This paper used the data obtained from the previous research that addressed a wide variety of subjects, including women in prison and their families, custody arrangements for children, preparation for release, and experiences of pregnant women in prison. Mignon and Ransford's (2012) focus were primarily on the relationships between mothers and their children. They highlighted the difficulties of mothering from prison, stating that women have to go through many obstacles to sustain a relationship with their children through prison walls. These obstacles in maintaining the maternal identity from prison were illustrated by Easterling et al. (2018) as being limited to phone calls (which can be expensive and unaffordable) and visitation (with family often many miles away).

Lockwood (2018) refers to the contact mothers in custody have with their children as the 'double edged sword.' She states that although visits reinforce the mothering identity and preserve the relationship between the mother and child, it is also disruptive as it can be emotionally exhausting, reinforcing feelings of guilt and shame. In addition to this, phone calls can also become difficult for a number of reasons. For example, drawing on from the research of Baldwin (2017) who has conducted substantial research in relation to criminalised mothers

(see Baldwin, 2018; Baldwin and Epstein, 2017; Baldwin and Quinlan, 2018), it is evident that many mothers in prison struggle to maintain contact with their children.

Baldwin (2021) conducted a qualitative study, based in the UK, interviewing 21 mothers post – release. The mothers in her study emphasized that they were unable to make contact with their children when they were in prison, as their time out of cells clashed with school hours and for some, phone calls were simply too expensive to be made regularly. Arguably, these struggles apply to all in custody who try to maintain contact with family, however, it presents distinct challenges for incarcerated mothers as maintaining contact with their children becomes logistically difficult, if not impossible. Consequently, this adds to the strain already felt by mothers. Nevertheless, it is vital to emphasise that even when visits and phone calls are positive, they are never a remedy for the enforced physical separation encountered by both mothers and their children (Baldwin, 2017). Easterling et al. (2018) refers to mothers' relationships with their children from prison as the 'ambiguous sense of loss' (p. 6). They argue that this sense of loss is significantly one of the reasons mothers struggle to negotiate parenting from prison and is a factor that is bound to cause acute distress.

Another important factor to consider is the problem of stigma. It is stated that all females in prison tend to suffer more from the stigma of imprisonment as they are believed to have broken not only the criminal law but also social norms too, and are additionally stigmatised for breaking gendered 'codes' of appropriate behaviour for women (Malloch and Mcivor, 2011, p. 331). However, it is documented that this stigma is amplified for women with children as there is the societal tendency to view them as unfit and indifferent mothers (Kauffman, 2001). This is because they have engaged in criminal behaviour which has resulted in a prison sentence and therefore, not prioritised their children. In other words, '…their criminality and resulting incarceration indicates that motherhood was not their top priority in life' (Berry and Eigenberg, 2003, p. 104). Hence, although many male offenders in prison are also parents, the burden and stigma of being a parent in prison, appears to fall on the mother (Aiello and Mcqueeney, 2016).

Allen et al. (2010) set out to explore the impact of imprisonment on the mother-child relationship. The study consisted of 26 interviews with drug-offending, imprisoned mothers in Kentucky, US. Their findings revealed that the mothers were ostracised, marginalised, powerless, and, therefore, considered 'throwaway moms,' (Allen et al., 2010, p. 162). The authors concluded that the mothers had 'complex stories of unfinished lives, of victimization

and abuse, of poverty and exploitation, of cyclical and generational obscurity, of classism and sexism, and of stigma and shame' (Allen et al., 2010, p. 170). The most striking and distressing aspects of the interviews, they claimed, were the maternal love these women continually demonstrated for their children, as well as the immense sense of guilt and staggering sorrow they all felt while describing the implications of their acts on their children. Overall, the mothers' drug addictions, as well as their involvement with the criminal justice system, were clear indicators of their difficult lives.

Whilst it is simple to judge and consequently stigmatise mothers who have taken part in illegal activity, the circumstances often surrounding their crimes must also be considered (Berry and Smith-Mahdi, 2006). For example, Berry and Eigenberg (2003) conducted a survey of 109 women to examine several factors that could adversely influence the maternal role strain of imprisoned mothers. They asserted that most mothers who commit crime (although not all), do so to be able to successfully carry out their motherly duties and responsibilities. This ties in hugely with the issue of poverty and marginalisation. They found that crimes such as prostitution, the sale of drugs and/or assisting others in criminal behaviour in return for financial gain were generally activities many mothers turned to, when all else failed. Hence, although many are typically 'dismissed as throw away moms' (Allen et al., 2010, p. 162), the majority are in fact, in a battle for survival.

The stigma attached to a mother in prison is far more detrimental than what their male counterparts would experience (Malloch and Mcivor, 2011). As previously noted, given the fact that criminality is accepted as a form of masculinity, men committing crime is accepted as the social norm. However, as for women and particularly mothers, this stigma is likely to cause additional layers of distress to the feelings of shame, guilt and pain that are already felt, most significantly for their children. The fact that they have committed an act that has consequently resulted in a prison sentence and thereby led to their children being removed from them (Baldwin, 2017) is something that causes significant levels of self-blame. To deal with societal stigma on top of these emotions, is considerably difficult to negotiate. Baldwin (2017) has asserted that many mothers enter prison 'already feeling they have failed as mothers, because of their lived experiences, their life chances and their life choices, which in turn has a significant impact on their self – esteem, maternal identity and maternal emotions' (Baldwin, 2017, p. 3). However, the situation is then amplified for minoritised mothers who also have to contend with experiences of racism and discrimination while imprisoned.

2.5 RACE, ETHNICITY, PRISONS AND DISCRIMINATION

As of June 2021, the UK prison population stands at 87,550. Of these, twenty-eight per cent were identified as being from minoritised groups, compared to thirteen per cent in the general population. Of the twenty-eight per cent, thirteen per cent were Black[3], eight per cent Asian and five per cent mixed. Furthermore, forty-five per cent identified as Christian, eighteen per cent Muslim and thirty one percent as not belonging to any religion (House of Commons, 2013). Given that race, ethnicity, religion, and gender are all recorded separately, determining the percentage of women's racial and religious backgrounds are difficult, if not impossible. Nevertheless, for all, the prison estate has long been recognised as a repressive space which gives rise to new, and exacerbates existing, traumas. For individuals from minoritised backgrounds, racial prejudice, discrimination, and subsequent racial trauma can be understood as an additional burden which may influence and impact on their experiences of imprisonment. Therefore, through the lens of racial trauma, the prison becomes understood as a site of 'chronic contextual stress'(Harrell, 2000). 'Chronic-contextual stress' refers to trauma which is triggered by having to adjust and survive within in an environment in which one's racialised identity is known or felt to be marginalised and oppressed (Harrell 2000). It is argued that these feelings are often exacerbated in environments where you are positioned as the racial minority (ibid).

In his inquiry on the death of Stephen Lawrence[4], Sir Macpherson (1999) defined racism, or more specifically, institutional racism as 'The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen and detected in processes, attitudes, and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness, and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people' (para 6:34). Although Macpherson examined institutional racism in relation to the police, the concept is potentially applicable to all public services.

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[3] The racialised categories used in this publication is 'BAME' and therefore does not represent all ethnicities. Given this, many remain invisible in the statistics for the prison population.

[4] On the night of 22nd April 1993, Stephen Lawrence was brutally murdered by a group of five or six White youths when he waiting at a bus stop to head home with his friend.

The first thorough study about racism in prisons, funded by the Home Office, was released by Genders and Player (1989). Through interviews, observations, and data analysis, an in-depth investigation of five prisons was conducted, revealing evidence of racism in the service. One example stated, was prison staff putting racist White prisoners in cells with Black prisoners to create conflict. The study also found that many prison officers did not see racism as a problem or believe that a race equality policy was necessary. Furthermore, Asian prisoners were viewed as deceitful, whereas African and/or Caribbean Black prisoners were described as boisterous and unintelligent with 'control' issues. This study was conducted a decade before the murder of Zahid Mubarek, the details of which were outlined by the Zahid Mubarek Trust:

> *'In January 2000, 19-year-old Zahid Mubarek was convicted of shoplifting £6 worth of goods from a supermarket and was sentenced to serve ninety days at Feltham Young Offender Institution. However, in the early hours of the morning of his scheduled release, Zahid was attacked by his racist cellmate, Robert Stewart. Using a broken-off table leg as a deadly weapon, Stewart hit Zahid eleven times, inflicting terrible injuries on Zahid as he slept. Zahid never recovered from the massive head injuries inflicted by Stewart and died a week later in hospital, in March 2000.*
>
> *Robert Stewart, also nineteen at the time of Zahid's murder, already had an extensive prison career which encompassed six custodial sentences. Previous convictions included the attempted murder of another inmate, stabbing a fellow inmate below the eye, and racial harassment. His prison records also suggested that he had a long history of mental illness and extreme racist views. A year before Zahid was murdered, one prison officer noted on Stewart's records: 'I do feel that this lad is a disaster waiting to happen, he cannot be trusted…' Another Prison officer described Stewart as a 'very disturbed young man' who should not have been sharing a cell with anyone.'*

A public inquiry was launched after the murder, and Mr Justice Keith was in charge of the investigation. Following his inquiry, he identified at least 19 members of the Prison Service whose professional failures contributed to the death of Zahid. At Feltham, he discovered a casual disrespect for race, with some officers in denial of its existence. Staff did not take racist comments or banter seriously, and several minoritised officers in the prison service claimed to have been victimised. Mr Justice Keith concluded that Stewart's tattoos, particularly RIP on his forehead, were a clear indicator of his prejudiced thinking if correctly interpreted (House of Commons, 2006).

The findings of Genders and Player (1989) were enhanced by HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2005) race relations review, which was based on an analysis of inspectorate survey responses

from 5,500 prisoners of all ethnic backgrounds; semi-structured individual interviews with 265 minoritised prisoners in 18 fieldwork prisons; semi-structured individual interviews with over 200 White and minoritised prison staff; analysis of race relations data in the fieldwork prisons, including ethnic monitoring and racist complaints. Approximately fourteen percent of minoritised prisoners were racially victimised by staff, and eleven percent were racially victimised by other prisoners, according to the research. The delayed response of staff to emergency cell call bells, the quality of healthcare, the poor quality and variety of food, inefficient complaints processes, unfair incentives and earned privileges (IEP)[5] schemes, and lack of respect from staff were all major sources of prisoner dissatisfaction. The conclusions of the review were broken down by ethnic group, and there were significant discrepancies between the experiences of Black, Asian, and mixed-heritage prisoners. Though they all had worse perceptions and experiences than White prisoners, Black adult men said they had been subjected to racist victimisation by staff and felt frightened, while Asian men said they had been subjected to slightly more racist bullying by other prisoners. Women had a similar overall pattern of experience, but they made up a significantly smaller fraction of the research, therefore the attention was mostly on the men.

The experience of Annabella Lansberg provides both recent and distressing evidence of the prison service's combination of racialized, gendered, and health-based discrimination, which resulted in a sequence of catastrophic failures in her treatment as well as acts of violence being committed against her. This case is especially crucial to this study because Annabella is a concrete example of intersecting identities present in an individual that are vulnerable to several forms of discrimination, and one that ended in a devastating way. Annabella was a 45-year-old Black mother of three who had relocated to England from Zimbabwe after surviving a gang rape. She was also HIV-positive. Her family noted her behaviour become more 'childlike' and 'difficult' after she sustained a brain damage from tuberculosis in 2007 (Inquest, 2019). Nonetheless, instead of receiving customised care from mental health or social services, she was subjected to police intervention. Annabella was sentenced to four years and six months in prison in February 2016, and after spending time in two different women's prisons, she was transferred to HMP Peterborough in May 2017.

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[5] Each prisoner is assigned a status within the institution depending on their behaviour under the Incentive and Earned Privileges (IEP) plan. This is divided into three categories: basic, standard, and enhanced. Those that are enhanced receive more visits, as well as other benefits related to the amount of money they may spend each week within the prison.

Anabella had also been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes by this time, but medical officials at HMP Peterborough had neglected to complete essential medical checks and therefore were unaware of her diagnosis (Inquest, 2019). Annabella was deemed challenging and anti-social by staff at HMP Peterborough and was placed in segregation on two separate occasions. Her brain damage, mental health issues, and past traumas do not appear to have been considered as probable explanations of her behaviour, and her history of attempting to overdose was not mentioned when evaluating if she was 'fit for isolation' (Prisons and Probation Ombudsman, 2018, p. 15). On September 2, 2017, while in segregation, officers used physical restraint on Annabella, who was then put on the floor of her cell and left there for 21 hours without the ability to get up to eat or drink. According to the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman's (2018, p. 12) investigation, staff did not thoroughly check on Annabella because they suspected she was staging her sickness and dismissed it as 'attention seeking.' On September 3rd, as Annabella was still on the floor, a nurse entered her cell and threw water over her, later telling authorities that she expected Annabella to stand up now that she had left the cell.

At 3.13 pm on the 3rd of September an ambulance was called for Annabella after a senior nurse was informed that no one had carried out the necessary clinical observations for her despite the use of restraint. The senior nurse reported that when entering the segregation unit, the atmosphere was 'jokey' and officers had remarked that Annabella was 'playing around' (Prisons and Probation Ombudsman 2018, p. 13). At the hospital, Annabella was found to be suffering from multiple organ failure and severe dehydration and tragically on the 6th of September 2017 she died from complications relating to diabetes. It has since been acknowledged that the 'delay in providing medical assistance inevitably impacted on her chances of survival, but that had signs of her having high levels of glucose been acted upon prior to midnight on the 2nd of September she would have survived' (Inquest 2019). Speaking on the death of Annabella, the Director of Inquest (2019, no page) stated:

> *'Annabella was a Black woman with multiple vulnerabilities. That she came to die a preventable death in such appalling circumstances is shameful. Distress of Black women in prison is too often disbelieved and viewed as a discipline and control problem. Annabella needed care and therapeutic support but instead suffered dehumanising, ill treatment.'*

It is crucial to recognise that the circumstances surrounding Annabella's death are strikingly similar to those of a number of other minoritised women who have died in prison custody in the past, revealing a systemic problem. Corston (2007), writing a decade before this incident and focusing solely on women's experiences, emphasised that, while women in prison are a minority, there are also smaller minority groups within this demographic with distinct needs and requirements. Racially minoritised women are an example of these smaller groups. According to recent statistics on the female prison population, 27 per cent have identified as racially minoritised, compared to 13 per cent in the general population (Sterge, 2019). This illustrates that minoritised women are overrepresented in the prison system (Joseph, 2006), which is parallel with their male counterparts (Cohen and Tufail, 2017). It does not, however, address the smaller minority groups mentioned by Corston (2007) which include other characteristics such as culture and religion.

The pre prison disadvantages faced by females such as poverty, low educational attainment, poor mental health etc, discussed earlier, are argued to be found more often in minoritised women (Cardale et al., 2017; Muslim Hands, 2018). It has been acknowledged that most imprisoned women are minorities who come from poorly educated, economically marginalised backgrounds, with some history of domestic violence, sexual abuse and/or rape (Arditti and Few, 2006; Barnes and Stringer, 2014; Corston, 2007). some of these hard-hitting issues are not generally addressed or even spoken of given the strong 'cultural stigma and dishonour of the failure of them as women' (Buncy and Ahmed, 2014, p. 10). Hence many women avoid seeking support out of fear of rejection or disbelief of their situation, particularly with experiences of domestic violence or sexual abuse.

The women are then further disadvantaged upon entry into prison. In addition to experiencing the difficulties of adjusting to prison as with other White women, they also have to cope with racial discrimination, stigma, isolation, cultural differences, language barriers and lack of employment skills (Corston, 2007). Individuals from minoritised backgrounds, females and prisoners/former prisoners are among groups vulnerable to discrimination (Owens, 2010) and minoritised women as prisoners are an intersection of all three. It is argued that 'the interplay of these identifiers affects groups who are faced with the greatest number of oppression and are generally marginalized in most societies' (Joseph, 2006, p. 142).

Mohammed and Nickolls (2020) conducted a study which set out to understand how the voluntary sector works within the prison system to meet the needs of Muslim prisoners. The subsequent report was based on a mixture of long interviews, focus groups, and observation conducted with those in custody and outside the prison estate. The interviews were with Muslim men and women who had experienced the criminal justice system as well as staff at Samaritans, Pact, The Prisoners' Education Trust, and Switchback. Several of the Muslim men they interviewed talked about becoming more religious during their time in prison. Islamic teachings and the daily routines of practising their faith provided a sense of stability, focus, and motivation — a way of reflecting and coming to terms with their experiences. Islam was spoken about as offering a source of comfort during what was a very difficult experience; it was a coping mechanism for managing prison life and a source of strength in periods of severe emotional and mental fragility and isolation.

According to Mohammed and Nickolls (2020), faith is particularly unique to everyone, yet it may also unite people together and give them a sense of belonging. They do, however, argue that an inadequate knowledge about religion, particularly Islam, can lead to discriminatory preconceptions and prejudices, whether conscious or not. Consequently, these feelings have an impact on how individuals react to and view Islam, which can further isolate Muslims in prison and make access to services and support more difficult. The writers go on to say that there has been a great deal of concern about prison radicalization, which has influenced prison regulations and how they interact with Muslims. As a result, Islam and its adherents have a negative reputation. They support this claim with their findings, which revealed that the men they spoke to felt the impact of negative perceptions, believing that they were viewed through the lens of terrorism and extremism by staff and non-Muslim prisoners, and that everything they did was viewed with suspicion. Moreover, they stated that Muslim women's experiences must be viewed in the context of gender discrimination, Islamophobia, and racism. However, in parallel with the review conducted by HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2005), given that women appeared to make up a lesser proportion of this study, the focus was on men's experiences.

Notably, islamophobia is stated to be caused partially by the Prevent programme (Murtuja and Tufail, 2017). This is a government anti-terrorist initiative that was launched in 2006 with the goal of 'preventing terrorism.' Those identified as at risk are referred to Channel, a multi-agency 'de-radicalisation' programme tasked with identifying and working with people who are suspected of being drawn into terrorism (Murtuja and Tufail 2017). While the guideline for

Prevent claims that it is designed to deal with all types of terrorist threats, Cohen and Tufail (2017) point out that it looks to be targeting Muslims. They note that, although the advice recognises the extreme right's persistent threat, it continues to place a special emphasis on Islamist extremists' dangerous ideology, which they allege leads to terrorism. According to Murtuja and Tufail (2017), various critiques by several different bodies have highlighted the Prevent strategy's opaque and misguided concept of 'radicalisation,' which focuses primarily on Muslims and Islam as proponents of violent and nonviolent extremism, ultimately reinforcing Islamophobia and promoting prejudice.

Relatively, HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2010) conducted a review, evaluating the experiences of Muslim prisoners in the UK. It included in-depth interviews with 164 Muslim prisoners at eight prisons, as well as an analysis of their wing history sheets and interviews with Muslim chaplains in the same facilities. In addition, evidence came from an examination of 85 inspection reports and 272 interviews with prisoners regarding their perceptions of safety during routine inspections. The results of nearly 9,000 prisoner surveys (12 percent of which were completed by Muslims) were also analysed. According to the review findings, Muslims had worse overall perceptions than non-Muslims, and were more likely to say they had been subjected to control and restraint, as well as unfair treatment. They were also more likely to report being victimised by both staff and prisoners, as well as feeling unsafe. The data also revealed evidence of psychological uneasiness, which was frequently linked to how Muslims in prison believed they were perceived. The single most prominent theme of the review was frustration with stereotypical depictions of Muslims and Islam and its consequences on their experiences in prison.

The results of the study also pointed to a link between religious identity and negative perceptions. They discovered that Muslims of all ethnic groups were more negative about prison life than non-Muslims in general, and that while there were smaller differences between Asian Muslims and non-Muslims in the crucial categories of safety and respect, Asian Muslims still responded more adversely. Importantly, Asian and especially White Muslim respondents tended to have better prison experiences in comparison to Black and mixed heritage Muslims who reported the worst. Relative to this, Bhui (2009) argues respect for people's individuality and diversity is an integral part of anti-racism. However, he claims, prisons do not do so since they are primarily concerned with security and effective prisoner management, rather than the individuality of each prisoner, consequently encouraging distrust and suspicion.

In addition, examining the experiences of Irish Travellers at risk in the prison system, Power (2004) shed light on both systemic racism and difficulties specific to Irish Travellers. Importantly, one prison officer he spoke with claimed that the Travellers were making things difficult for themselves by breaking the prison rules. The officer believed that Travellers, unlike most other prisoners, purposefully defied authorities and rejected the system. However, according to Power (2004), disruptive behaviour is typically reflective of Travellers not understanding 'how the prison system works and are not socialised into accepting any authority that comes from outside their extended family patriarchs' (Power, 2004, p. 97).

Relatively, a nationwide interest was sparked in relation to the experiences of minoritised individuals affected by the criminal justice system in 2017 (Cabinet Office, 2017; Cardale et al., 2017; Cox and Sack-Jones, 2017; Lammy, 2017). However, these were broad studies covering all areas of the criminal justice system, thus, lacked a more focused attempt to explore one particular aspect (Owens, 2010). Therefore, there has been little research focusing solely on the experiences of minoritised women in prison (Cardale et al., 2017; Owens, 2010) and none on them as mothers (Baldwin, 2021). Such women have generally been used as examples or consisted of smaller sections of more generalised studies. For example, most research concerning minoritised offenders in prison has focused on the broader experiences of the groups inclusive of both male and females (Jacobson et al., 2010; Joseph, 2006).

Of the literature available, what has been highlighted is the significant differences in the struggles and issues faced by minoritised women. An important example is the qualitative study conducted by Cox and Sack-Jones (2017). They set to explore the overall experiences of minoritised women in the Criminal Justice System, covering courts, sentencing, prisons, and rehabilitation. Twenty women from a range of ethnicities and backgrounds took part in 3 separate focus groups with one being conducted in a community-based service centre for women and the other two were with women in prison. The study aimed to capture the voices, experiences, and reflections of the women, which have often been neglected in academic research. The findings of this study highlighted a wide range of problems and issues faced by the women, including feeling silenced, encountering subconscious ethnic or racial bias during sentencing, language barriers, and discrimination. More crucially, some women in the focus groups discussed the stigma they suffered as minoritised women in prison in their communities.

They believed that the status of 'prisoner' was a cause of greater shame and humiliation for women in their societies than for men (Cox and Sacks-Jones, 2017).

Related research with parallel findings was one undertaken by Cardale et al. (2017). They conducted an analysis based on prisoner surveys devised and utilised in women's prisons and subsequently used in 7 HMIP reports. The research commissioned by Lammy (2017) was also used. The aim was to explore the distinct experiences of minoritised women in the criminal justice system in comparison to their White female counterparts and men from White and minoritised backgrounds. They noted that minoritised women in prison experienced racial and religious discrimination and therefore, felt less safe in custody. These were both broader studies covering the experiences of ethnic women across all aspects of the Criminal Justice System. Therefore, the women's time in custody has only been a small section of the studies.

A smaller, but more specific study was conducted by Buncy and Ahmed (2014) on behalf of the charity, Muslim Hands. This was narrow in focus as it precisely explored the needs and experiences of Muslim women in prison. The study, utilising an exploratory framework, involved 17 women in 2 prisons, who took part in several focus groups and one-to-one interviews. In parallel with the research findings of Cox and Sack-Jones (2017), stigma appeared to be the main theme that emerged. The study found that the Muslim community appeared to be more accepting of male prisoners, but females were marginalised and labelled as bringing 'shame and dishonour to the family and community' (Buncy and Ahmed, 2014, p. 10). As a result, incarcerated females of the Islamic faith, were found to face additional barriers and hurdles to that of their other female counterparts, due to cultural pressures within the Muslim community, where being ostracized for serving time in prison seems to be a social norm (Buncy and Ahmed, 2014). Furthermore, due to the perceived shame and embarrassment, the relationship most of these women have with their families are believed to be severely fractured and at times terminated (ibid). Consequently, many are further isolated within the prison and at times, beyond.

The findings of Buncy and Ahmed, (2014) were then strengthened with a 15-month, larger study pursued by Muslim Hands (2018). This study gathered data via interviews and focus groups with a total of 60 women across 7 prisons. Themes identified included dishonour and shame, which led to lack of family and community support, resulting in lack of visits which further isolated, causing them to suffer a 'second sentence.' In more extreme circumstances,

some women were completely disowned by family members during their imprisonment and post-release. Women in the study also spoke of feeling discriminated against and facing racist insults from both staff and other prisoners. Thus, Muslim Hands (2018) asserted that there needs to be more awareness of the complexity Muslim female prisoners face i.e. shame, isolation, discrimination, and cultural gender expectations, and called for more intersectional research focusing on female minoritised groups in prison.

The concept of honour, especially in South Asian Muslim cultures, relates to an individual's or family's social status and reputation and is inextricably linked to extended family. Buncy and Ahmed (2019) note that defamation of the family name, especially by a female in prison, may be the ultimate disaster for the family's good name, prestige, and social standing. This may lead to the family's marginalisation by others, with people no longer wishing to associate with them. People may not want to keep current or new marriage links within the family, sabotaging family goals. The authors also state that, for Muslim women in prison, the perceived infringement of the family honour code often leads to internalisation of shame. This contributes to the women's mental state prior to release due to fear and the uncertainty of the circumstances she would face after release. However, while the concept of honour is widespread throughout Muslim communities, its intensity varies. When discussing the notion of honour, Buncy and Ahmed (2019) make it clear that perceptions of honour vary depending on religious interpretations, cultural influences, tribal customs, and the Islamic readings followed. Such differences must be recognised as it is impossible to generalise across diverse Muslim cultural and ethnic groupings.

Contrary to the above, Enos (1998) conducted a qualitative study in US women's prisons focusing on the differences between Black and White female prisoners. They found that although Black women are more likely to have come from broken, single parent households (Bresler and Lewis, 1983), they appeared to have stronger ties with their families whilst in prison compared to other women. Through observations of the extended visiting programmes in prison and subsequent interviews with 13 imprisoned women, Enos (1998) contended that alongside having stronger family ties, the children of Black women were more likely to be cared for by family members and relatives. On the other hand, the children of White mothers were more often placed in the care of local authorities as their families felt no obligation in supporting the female in prison or their child outside.

Another noteworthy US based study was that of Easterling and Feldmeyer (2017). They set out to explore the intersection of imprisonment, motherhood and race, focusing specifically on White mothers living in rural areas. A total of 42 imprisoned White mothers from the rural areas of Kentucky took part in semi – structured interviews. The findings indicated that although all mothers experienced stigma from imprisonment, these experiences were distinctly contextualised by the mothers from rural and small towns and it reinforced their sense of spoiled identity. Given that the mothers were from small towns, imprisonment was extremely rare, which made families of an imprisoned mother 'highly visible and subject to particularly pronounced informal sanctions and stigma' (Easterling and Feldmeyer, 2017, p. 159). This can lead to higher levels of shame and guilt for the imprisoned mother.

In contrast to the findings of Enos (1998) where it was stated that White imprisoned women were less likely to have family ties, the rural White mothers in Easterling and Feldmeyer's (2017) study spoke of good and supportive relationships with their immediate family members. Nevertheless, stigma was amplified within the community, which as stated, was relatively homogenous and imprisonment of mothers was extremely uncommon (Easterling and Feldmeyer, 2017). Although not identical, this study has similarities with the findings of Buncy and Ahmed (2014) and Muslim Hands (2018) who, as mentioned, focused specifically on Muslim women, but not as mothers. Both studies highlighted the issue of amplified stigma in tight knit, fairly homogenous communities. Nevertheless, Muslim women appeared to be further disadvantaged by unsupportive family members, unlike the rural White mothers in concern. However, it is important to note that Easterling and Feldmeyer (2017, p. 160) also highlight that the stigma and sense of spoiled identity they discuss in the study, 'seems to stem, at least in part, from the characteristics of the mothers' home communities, which were not always disadvantaged or lacking social support.' It would therefore be difficult to compare such mothers with the more disadvantaged, minoritised ones, as well as their post release experiences.

2.6 LIFE AFTER PRISON

'Post release… refers to the period following release from prison, in which a person reconnects with the outside community… The post-release period may extend for some months to over a year depending on the range of material, psychological, legal and social adjustments and needs that a person has.'

(Baldry, 2010, p. 254)

In parallel with studies relating to prison, post prison research concerning women has also been largely derived from male-centric understandings (Baldry, 2010). Men's needs and experiences are found to be used to develop theoretical perspectives and understandings of women's post prison experiences (Enos, 2001). This is problematic, given the distinct needs and issues posed by women who have been released. Many of the pre-prison vulnerabilities discussed earlier, are generally not addressed in prison and, as a result, continue upon release. Hayes, (2008) identified multiple issues faced by women upon release including: housing, employment/financial difficulties, unresolved substance misuse, mental health issues, and trauma/abuse.

In addition to this, most women with children also have to return to mothering immediately upon release and this can pose difficulties of its own. Reintegration back into the mothering role can be an ongoing, lengthy process (Baldwin, 2017). However, the mother would need to readjust to having the responsibility of her child with, at times, little support or guidance. It has long been argued that 'the living and childcare arrangements that a woman must make for her children after her release, significantly affect both her financial needs and the time available to her to devote to studies or a job' (Bresler and Lewis, 1983), p. 22). This situation then begins to resemble their pre-prison lives (Hayes, 2008), particularly in the case of single parents, as they would struggle to maintain a financially stable home, while also taking on the fulltime care of their child. These are certainly factors that would affect their re-offending patterns (Hayes, 2008).

Release from prison can be particularly problematic for mothers who have limited access to community support services as a result of their stigmatised status, experience distress associated with family reunification and possibly have to deal with children's challenging

behaviour while readjusting to parenting and family life (Burgess and Flynn, 2013). The pain of the situation is amplified for mothers who have lost children to care authorities. Such unresolved issues which result in unstable situations lead to problems with reunification (Hayes, 2008). To have their child(ren) returned, they must prove they have the necessary emotional stability and physical resources to be the idealised mother discussed earlier (Allen et al., 2010). Ultimately, motherhood, under the watchful eye of the State, adds to the difficulties since women under the supervision of probation and child welfare services (for some), must negotiate reintegration into society whilst also dealing with several demands (Richie, 2001).

Minoritised mothers, along with other women and men from the same minoritised groups, endure discrimination on several levels. Following the killing of George Floyd in the United States, the global rise of the Black Lives Matter movement, and the Covid-19 pandemic, HM Inspectorate of Probation (2022) commissioned an investigation of the probation services to assess how far the service had progressed in addressing racial equality and racism. The inspection included interviews with staff and managers from the National Probation Service (NPS) and Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) in five different probation areas, as well as interviews with over 80 people who were under the service's supervision and an analysis of 100 cases and 51 pre-sentence reports. The findings were described as alarming. The inspectors found little indication that probation officers had talked to service users about their ethnicity, culture, religion, or discriminatory experiences, or that they had prepared interventions that were sensitive to these characteristics. Furthermore, many minoritised service users claimed that probation officers did not have a good grasp of their distinct identities and some stated that probation officers were hesitant to inquire about these distinct characteristics and experiences.

Thames Valley Probation commissioned 'Working with Gypsies and Travellers' research in 2012 to investigate the needs of Gypsy and Traveller individuals on probation. They discovered that most Traveller former prisoners were unwilling to disclose their ethnicity for monitoring purposes, out of fear that the information might be misused and lead to discrimination. They also showed a significant level of distrust with the services due to past experiences of discrimination. Relative to this, an earlier study by Power (2003) indicated that probation officers frequently constructed reports in such a way that Gypsy and Traveller former prisoners' ethnicity was clear, under the mistaken belief that this made them inherently 'dodgy'

(Power 2003, p. 260). Travellers were also found to have very poor literacy skills and the majority had no form of educational or professional qualification and their differing cultural perspectives on various things such as mental illness, education and problems associated with substance misuse appeared to prevent them from accessing the services they needed (Cottrell-Boyce, 2014). However, Traveller women were only a subset of the minoritised population considered.

It is important to note that minoritised women, as with their time in prison, are also suggested to have distinct post-release experiences and needs which has often been neglected. Jacobson et al. (2010), conducted a qualitative study with 113 minoritised individuals using semi-structured interviews and focus groups. It was found that in some communities (particularly Asian and Muslim), there is an added element of ostracism and shame, which makes the reintegration process much more difficult. However, this was a broad study that investigated the experiences of all minoritised prisoners (male and female) returning to their communities. In parallel, a narrower study by Owens (2010) explored the reintegration experiences of Black (African-Caribbean) women and to discover what role ethnic culture played in their reintegration. She conducted semi-structured interviews with 10 Black women service users and 3 service providers that offer reintegration support. When exploring the term ethnicity, one of the service providers responded that this was something they had never really thought about. Owens (2010) highlighted the implications of this unawareness as both worrying and operationally serious. All participants in the study stated that the post release experiences of minoritised women were more difficult because of discrimination throughout the criminal justice process, as well as family stigma.

Mitchell and Davis (2019) conducted a study exploring the post release experiences of Black mothers. Following interviews with 5 self-identified Black mothers with prison experience, they found that the mothers in the study were particularly concerned about raising and protecting their children, especially sons, from the 'unsavoury streets.' This appeared to be the result of living in ghettoized communities, where, as both poor, and single, Black mothers have the additional burden of worrying about the safety of their children in the face of drugs and violence. This is in addition to the strain of parenting their children alone in a racist society with minimal financial resources (Elliott et al., 2015). The challenging task of parenting in both a violent and racist society, is then intensified with the stigma of a criminal record (Gunn et al., 2018).

In parallel, Chigwada-Bailey (2003) emphasises the difficulties and requirements of minoritised women once they are released from jail in her final chapter. She states that the women face prejudice based on their ethnicity, gender, and social class, which is exacerbated by the stigma of having a criminal record. However, she concludes that 'the stigma of imprisonment is much stronger for Black women than it is for people of other groups, so that they may receive little or no support on the one hand whilst coping with discrimination in relation to employment, accommodation and possible fresh involvement with the criminal justice process on the other' (Chigwada-Bailey, 2003, p. 131). The author also mentions that Asian women face additional challenges post release too because they are perceived to have brought shame and dishonour to their family, as well as ruined their reputation. This has huge impact on their social status, and many ties are broken as a result.

Buncy and Ahmed (2019) identified numerous distinct difficulties that afflicted Muslim women through the gate. Fears of social and cultural expectations preventing them from returning to any sense of normality within their families. A lack of empathy around their Muslim identity, the dilemma of not being forgiven for bringing a bad name to their family and putting them in shame, and concerns about the rise in islamophobia and discrimination in the wider society were among the pressing issues described in the study. Based on the contribution of 8 Muslim women post release and analysis of case work and focus groups, Buncy and Ahmed (2019) found that the women felt tolerated, but not necessarily 'accepted' by the services due to a sense of subconscious racial and cultural bias. Some of the women also stated feelings of suffocation within the prism of counter terrorism and mentioned fears of approaching the Muslim community for help due to likelihood of rejection.

According to Middlemass (2017) all former prisoners would experience nervousness and anxiety during the transition phase back into mainstream society. As members of groups that are prone to various forms of discrimination, minoritised women who have served time in prison are likely to have a variety of reintegration experiences that are distinct from those of both men and women who have served time in prison more broadly (Owens, 2010). Ultimately, particular attention should be paid to criminalised mothers who not only confront both gendered and maternal problems post release, but also face additional stigma and discrimination because of their intersecting identities (Garcia, 2016; Gunn et al., 2018).

Given the unique challenges experienced by minoritised mothers in prison and post release, it is likely that they will experience additional challenges. However, to date, little is known about the experiences of this group of female prisoners. In line with the recommendations made by Baldwin (2021) and Muslim Hands, (2018), the aim of the proposed research is to explore post prison minoritised mothers' experiences of prison and motherhood from an intersectional position, that includes cultural definitions of motherhood and prisoner status. This unique research will provide an insight into an under researched group and will support novel understandings of the challenges faced by these mothers. This study will focus on the systems of oppression, all of which overlap one another including race, culture, gender, prisoner status and contributory parental factors.

2.7 SUMMARY

This chapter provided an overview of current literature relating to the imprisonment of women and mothers, highlighting some of the key conflicts and points of controversy. The literature that broadly considers and highlights female imprisonment was covered, followed by what it means to be a 'minoritised woman.' Before moving on to the experiences of imprisoned mothers, the notion of 'motherhood' and more specifically how the identity 'mother' is negotiated was given due consideration. Following this, racial and ethnic discrimination in prisons were considered broadly before narrowing down to the specific experiences of minoritised mothers. The focus then shifted to the existing empirical work on female prisoners, (including mothers) experiences of life post release.

CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY

This chapter sets out the argument for the use of qualitative line of inquiry, utilising a range of diverse, complimentary qualitative analytical frameworks, including a hermeneutic phenomenological approach from a convict criminology perspective. Incorporated within a feminist conceptual framework with the use of intersectionality as a tool for analysis in exploring the prison and post – prison experiences of minoritised mothers.

3.1 EPISTEMOLOGICAL POSITION

'Qualitative researchers are mainly concerned with meanings (…) in other words, they are more pre-occupied with the quality of experience, rather than causal relationships' (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014, p. 7). Considering that the imprisonment of minoritised mothers is a complex phenomenon, that has generally been neglected in research, reducing the phenomena to observable, quantifiable methods would not be beneficial. Qualitative approaches are particularly ideal in generating different, unanticipated findings that may lead to conflicting conclusions. Thus, this thesis employed a qualitative line of inquiry taking a hermeneutical and phenomenological epistemological position. Phenomenology is a type of qualitative research approach which explores the everyday life of individuals. It focuses on their experiences of a certain phenomenon and attempts to understand how they make sense of these experiences (Mohajan, 2018, p. 30).

Several feminists defended the use of quantitative methods until the 1980s (Maynard and Purvis, 1994). However, more recently, qualitative approach has gained a stronger position within feminist research (Kvale, 2011; Travers, 2001). Unlike quantitative research, which deals with numerical data and attempts to test theory or causal relationships and make predictions that are generalised over the wider population, qualitative research seeks to understand and interpret complex phenomena (Lichtman, 2017). It aims to understand the 'what, how, and why' of the social world (Lichtman, 2017; Mohajan, 2018), thus, focuses on the subject in question as a 'whole rather than isolate variables in a reductionist manner' (Lichtman, 2017, p. 44). Overall, although not generalisable, qualitative research is good for simplifying and managing data without destroying complexity and context (Gunn, et al., 2018).

Given that it is not designed to test theory, qualitative research is inductive in nature (Garcia, 2016). It is argued to be the most humanistic and person-centred approach to exploring behaviour (Lichtman, 2017). Therefore, qualitative research is exploratory in nature and especially good for subjects that are overlooked or under researched, concentrating primarily on meanings and understandings.

However, the epistemological diversity within the qualitative model, defined as the 'study of knowledge and the justification of belief' (Dancy, 1986, p. 1), raises the question of which qualitative methodology would be the most effective approach for such an investigation. Reicher (2000) differentiates between methods that are discursive and experiential. The former, he says, is concerned with the role of written and spoken language in the creation of reality and the latter focuses on lived experiences, understandings and actions. Experiential approaches like interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith et al., 2009) or grounded theory (Corbin and Strauss, 2012), adhering to critical realist epistemology, are argued to preserve the perception that language provides a fairly accurate description of people's experiences, understandings of their social world. Discursive methods (Edwards and Potter, 2005), on the other hand, conceptualise language as part of a collective practise that generates constructionist representations of reality.

This study advocated an experiential approach to the understanding and knowledge explored in this case, which was how minoritised mothers experience prison and post-prison. The emphasis was on a number of factors such as their mothering identity, their sense making of prison life, separation from their children, the post prison adjustment process and, most notably, how all these experiences were understood from a cultural perspective. These were areas that cannot be approached using methods that find patterns or correlation, but rather through social research that enables the subject to be fully examined and understood from the context of their social world. In other words, the study has focused on fewer factors on a deeper level, rather than looking at more aspects on the surface (Lichtman, 2017). The study was exploratory in nature and interested in human phenomena, interactions and discourse. The best approach was therefore considered to be an experiential qualitative approach.

3.2 ADOPTING AN INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is a type of qualitative research approach which has recently become one of the most commonly used methodologies in psychology (Smith and Osborn, 2008). It focuses on the detailed examination of lived experiences, but particularly on peoples' understandings and sense-making of these experiences. However, the term 'experience' is a relatively broad one. Specifically, IPA is concerned with experiences that are of a specific moment/event or of importance to the person (Smith, et al., 2009). It is good for topics that are of 'hot cognition' i.e. issues that are ongoing and emotionally charged. Ultimately, each case is privileged by IPA to provide new insights into difficult studies requiring thorough exploration (Smith, 2003). For this study, as it is a significant, life-changing event, prison and the post prison transition period is a subject of 'hot cognition.' The foundations of IPA are based within philosophy and are informed by three key areas; phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography (Smith et al., 2009). It is important to explore these in order to fully understand the focus and aims of IPA.

3.2.1 PHENOMENOLOGY

Phenomenology, a philosophical approach to studying lived experience (Smith et al., 2009), is not a unified body of thought. Rather, it was founded and adapted by several key figures such as Husserl and Heidegger (Davidsen, 2013). Although the specific perspectives of the authors differed, they were united in their emphasis on 'lived experience.' Husserl (1913/1982) believed that humans see the world with a natural attitude and ultimately, take their experiences for granted. He asserted that in order to fully focus on, and grasp the experiences, one must return to them and whilst doing so, any preconceptions or prior knowledge must be bracketed, to allow for a deeper understanding (Smith et al., 2009). In contrast, Heidegger (1927, 1962) advocated for a more existential approach to phenomenology, arguing that people cannot be detached from their context and for that reason, would not be able to suspend their preconceptions (Larkin *et al.,* 2011). This can, however, be achieved through a reflective and reflexive awareness during research (Smith et al., 2009).

Husserl's work is important for IPA in demonstrating the necessity and relevance of focusing on experience, whilst Heidegger's work is vital in recognising the subjectivity of the researcher, allowing a shift towards a more interpretive viewpoint. IPA employs an interpretive approach to examining people's relationships to the world and their major experiences, focusing specifically on their attempts to make sense of these experiences (Smith *et al*., 2009). This is important for the study since both prison and post-release experiences are unique to individuals in terms of both practical and emotional aspects and heavily influenced by larger structural and systemic factors. Given this, each person's perspective and sense making of the event(s) may differ, necessitating unique attention.

3.2.2 HERMENEUTICS

The next aspect of IPA is the 'interpretative endeavour.' This stage focuses on interpreting participants' accounts and is informed by hermeneutics, that being, 'the theory of interpretation' (Smith, *et al.*, 2009, p. 10). Three hermeneutic theorists have inspired the second stage of IPA: Heidegger (1927, 1962), Gadamer (1960, 1990) and Schleiermacher (1998). IPA recognises the researcher's impact on the analytic process, which is notably influenced by Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology, and one that bridges the gap between phenomenology (lived experience) and hermeneutics (interpretation of the experience). Gadamer (1960, 1990) takes the view that the sole aim of interpretation is to make sense of, and understand, the content of text. Schleiermacher's (1998) conception of phenomenology involves two levels; objective textual meaning and subjective individuality of the researcher. This enables for extensive interpretation, which may help uncover insights that the participants themselves are unaware of. Referring to the interpretation stage as an art or craft, Schleiermacher (1998) states that if a combination of skills are utilised, that being detailed, comprehensive and holistic engagement with the data, one can end up with 'an understanding of the utterer better than he understands himself' (Schleiermacher, 1998, p. 288).

The phenomenology of IPA takes on a dual process as whilst the participant is reflecting on and making sense of their experiences, the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants' sense making. Thus, IPA engages with double hermeneutics (Smith and Osborn, 2008) which allows the interpretation of experiences and events being on part of both the researcher and the

participant. IPA also involves different levels of interpretation with one being the hermeneutics of empathy and the other, hermeneutics of suspicion (Ricoeur, 1981). Whilst the first is concerned with trying to understand the participants and see things from their perspective (empathising, identifying, understanding). The latter takes a critical stance, looking for hidden meanings within their accounts (Smith *et al*., 2009). This is significant because an empathetic approach allows the researcher to step into the shoes of the subject, exploring their world view from their perspective (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014), whilst the critical approach helps generate new insights and rich data. While IPA incorporates the double hermeneutic, this thesis will focus exclusively on the hermeneutics of empathy and disregard the hermeneutic of suspicion which implies a level of doubting and disbelieving participants' accounts. This decision was taken in lieu of the feminist approach (discussed below) which treats the participants as experiential experts.

3.2.3 IDIOGRAPHY

The third aspect of IPA is idiography (Harre, 1998); the emphasis on the individual, 'with the specific' (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009 pp.29), and individuality rather than individualism. A single person case study (Bramley & Eatough, 2005) or studying an individual case before moving on to other instances is an idiographic strategy (stages in figure 3 below). IPA begins with a concentration on the individual and advances to the establishment of themes and categories, comparing and developing these as the research progresses (Smith & Dunsworth, 2003; Eatough & Smith, 2006). This is also relevant to the feminist research objective pursued in this study. Feminist research seeks to elevate the voices of 'silenced' women, privilege them and abolish their oppression (Maynard and Purvis, 1994). Given this, as well as the individuality of womanhood, each case/narrative deserves particular attention and in-depth investigation. In light of this, an adapted IPA, which does not utilise Ricoeur's (1970) hermeneutics of suspicion, was found to be the most suited approach to use in this thesis.

TABLE 1: STAGES OF IPA ANALYSIS.

The process of IPA analysis described in Smith et al., (2009) which allows for the privileging of each individual account. A more detailed explanation is given in chapter 4.

1. **Reading and rereading**	Immersing oneself in the data.
2. **Initial Note taking**	Noting anything of interest – descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual comments.
3. **Developing emergent themes**	Analysing the comments to identify emergent themes.
4. **Searching for connections across emergent themes**	Clustering of themes, looking for convergences and divergences and anything else of note.
5. **Moving on to the next case**	Stages 1 to 4 are repeated for each case before moving on to the next – to ensure each case is privileged and treated on its own terms and the themes emerging from the previous case are bracketed as much as possible.
6. **Looking for patterns across cases**	Iterative process of clustering related themes across cases until superordinate themes emerge from developing subthemes.

3.3 LIMITATIONS OF IPA

The aim of IPA is to acquire an insider's perspective on experience by listening to and analysing the language that participants use to describe their experiences. Consequently, it relies on the participants ability to communicate their thoughts and feelings, which may at times be very complex. Willig (2013) claims that communicating the precise details of experiences is difficult, especially when people are not used to speaking in this manner. Another problem, according to Smith et al., (2009), is that 'our interpretations of experience are always shaped, limited, and enabled by language' (p. 194). When we evaluate the role of language and whether it serves a descriptive or constructive function, we encounter further critiques. Many methodological approaches, such as discourse analysis, promote analysing language to learn how individuals build their 'reality.' As a result, Willig (2013) contends that researchers can

only obtain a comprehension of how people communicate about their experiences through their use of language, rather than focusing on understanding of the actual experience.

Smith and Osborn (2008), on the other hand, suggest that the way people talk about their experiences, their ideas and feelings are inextricably linked to how they experience it. As a result, the IPA researcher examines conversation to learn how people make sense of their experiences (Smith, 2011). This refutes Willig's criticism of IPA and its 'suitability of accounts,' since it reveals how participants use words, metaphors, and nonverbal communication to express the depth, intricacies, and nuances of their experiences. Furthermore, this demonstrates how things might be explained using IPA's creative, flexible, and interpretative approach.

IPA aims to gain a better understanding of how the world appears to participants through their perceptions. It makes no assertions about the nature of the world, and as a phenomenological study, it does not see 'the world' and 'the person' as independent entities. Instead, it focuses only on 'world experience' based on a relational unit of self/world. Willig (2013) states that while such research can produce extensive, complex descriptions of participants' perceptions of circumstances and events, it does not contribute to our knowledge of why such experiences occur and why there may be disparities in people's phenomenological representations. In context, IPA ignores the cause or origin of the event that is explored, which is a major drawback because perceptions of an experience are never a direct reflection of the conditions that gave rise to it.

Willig (2013) states that researchers must understand the circumstances in which the experiences originated to be able to explain them in considerable depth. In his view, such conditions exist way beyond the moment and location; they may be found in historical, social, and other structural aspects that shape experiences. Essentially, here is where the feminist perspective used in this study complements IPA. While IPA's emphasis on the "specific" is respected, the feminist perspective enables for the experiences and interpretations of these experiences to be applied to broader concerns. Feminist research recognises that experiences are never universal, and that they are entwined not just with personal interpretation, but also with cultural roots. It emphasises that, while individuals may share certain experiences or features of it, they are influenced by characteristics such as race, age, sexuality, and other structural, historical, and geographical distinctions (Letherby, 2003).

Another criticism levelled about IPA is that any insight acquired during the analysis stage are heavily reliant on the researcher's interpretation. Although the aim of IPA is to comprehend and make sense of participants' sense making of a phenomena, this is compromised by the researchers interpretation of the participants' narratives (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). Consequently, the analysis is both a reflection of the participants' worldview and reliant on the researcher's conceptions and interpretation. According to Willig (2013), while IPA recognises the researcher's active interaction with, or subjectivity of, the data, the fundamental difficulty is a lack of direction on how to incorporate this subjectivity into the research process other than to advocate the use of reflexivity.

This is where the hermeneutics of empathy comes into play (Smith and Osborn, 2008). Although the subjective and interpretative elements of IPA cannot be disregarded or minimised, the researcher seeks to understand and empathise with the participants to see what 'it is like' from their perspective, allowing for the reconstruction of the original experience (Smith et al., 2009). Subjectivity is also a factor that is welcomed in feminist research.   They advocate for research that is respectful to respondents while also acknowledging the researcher's subjective participation (Letherby, 2003).

3.4 A FEMINIST STANDPOINT

In the last few decades, there has been a significant growth in the use of feminism as a theoretical perspective (Travers, 2001). It has become a significant movement, having major influence on both social and political discourse (Travers, 2001). Kelly (1988) posits that the feminist perspective is both a theory and practice, a structure which advises our lives. Its motivation is to comprehend women's oppression so that it could be challenged and changed. Examples of some successes over the past few decades have been women's right to vote, the right to an abortion, and the acknowledgement of rape within marriage as a criminal offence (Travers, 2001). However, there is no single methodological approach specific to feminism (Maynard and Purvis, 1994). Rather, it is an approach to thinking about methodology. Within feminism, 'the term "feminist methodology" is sometimes used to describe an ideal approach to doing research – one which is respectful of the respondents and acknowledges the subjective involvement of the researcher'. Kelly (1988) refers to it as 'feminist research practice' arguing

that this concept is useful in signalling the broad spectrum of issues feminist research aims to address. She claims that feminist studies differ from others in the kind of questions asked and the way the researcher position themselves in the questions.

This 'research practice' is substantially similar to participatory action research (PAR), which breaks the distinction between the objective researcher and the research subject by ensuring that the participants have a more active role in the research process (Lichtman, 2017; Seale, 2018). It puts a contrasting focus on researcher-subject cooperation to identify and discuss practical issues of mutual concern (Reason and Riley, 2015). The purpose of PAR is to resolve perceived social inequality, mitigate discrimination or give the disenfranchised a voice (Seale, 2018). Arguably, it is not possible for researchers to completely detach themselves from their work or control the emotional involvement and it is for that reason, that, the subjective element of research is acknowledged and welcomed by both feminism and PAR (Letherby, 2003). They both aim to eliminate the power imbalance between the researcher and the participants. Feminist research, however, remains distinct in that the central point is that women pose questions to women. This is precisely what this thesis accomplishes throughout the data collecting stage, in that the female researcher asks questions to the female participants.

Feminist research stems from the presumption that 'the nature of reality in western society is unequal and hierarchal. Thus, it is grounded in both political and academic concerns' (Letherby, 2003) which enables the potential to bring change in women's lives (Maynard and Purvis, 1994). Notably, women's lives are very different to men's, both in the elements of their lives they prioritise and their patterns of behaviour. Therefore, 'adopting a feminist standpoint can reveal the existence of forms of human relationships which may not be visible from the position of the ruling gender' (Maynard and Purvis, 1994, p. 19). Taking such a standpoint means the researcher begins from the perspective of women rather than adding them within. Whilst other more extensive investigations incorporate women as a small part of the study, a feminist standpoint ensures women are at the core of the research. Thus, being summed up with the slogan of generating research that is 'on, by and for women' (Maynard and Purvis, 1994; Kvale, 1996).

Importantly, it has been found that women are at more comfort when sharing their experiences with other women, given that they share the same gender. This also enables them to openly express difficult or painful accounts without prejudice (Maynard and Purvis, 1994). This is

significant as the aim of feminist research is to 'challenge the passivity, subordination and silencing of women' (Maynard and Purvis, 1994, p. 23) and the most effective way of achieving this is by encouraging women to speak about their experiences (Oakley, 1981). Consequently, this has become the hallmark of feminist studies and becomes even more successful with the removal of the power imbalance.

Therefore, in-depth face-to-face interviews (Maynard and Purvis, 1994), have been widely used in feminist research as it claimed to 'convey a deeper feeling for or more emotional closeness to the persons studied' (Jayaratine, 1983, p.145). Until recently, traditional research methods books devised predominantly by men in academia, have advised that interviews be conducted with a clear distance between the researcher and participant to avoid revealing the thoughts and feelings of the researcher in relation to the topic and particularly not sharing any knowledge (Westmarland, 2001) to ensure objectivity (Ali and Kelly, 2015). On the contrary, feminists such as Oakley (1981) have argued that following such guidelines during face-to-face interviews would contradict the purpose of feminist research.

Qualitative research depends on the researcher, unlike quantitative research, where formal assessments, questionnaires or observations are used to collect data (Bryman, 2012). The phases of recruiting participants, conducting the interviews, and evaluating results, for example, are all handled through the researcher lens, making objectivity difficult. For the purposes of this research, the aim was to explore the experiences of women through their own accounts and Oakley (1981) states that to achieve such a thing, a close and equal relationship must be maintained throughout the interview. This, she claims, would lead to significant data which otherwise may not be obtained. Similarly, Mohajan (2018) asserts that such research empowers rather than objectifies the participants involved. Thus, adding 'flesh and blood to social research' (Mohajan, 2018, p. 39).

Notably, traditional feminist thought works with the assumption that all women suffer from the same kind of inequality and consequently, aims to highlight the oppression women face. However, they are criticised as being constructed primarily in the interests and lives of White, middle class, able-bodied, heterosexual women (Zinn and Dill, 1996). Women though, are not typically oppressed in the same way (Letherby, 2003) as there is no 'universalized singular identity among women' (Beasley, 1999, p. 104) i.e. differences in class, race, age, sexuality, etc. Thus, experiences are never universal, understandings and sense-making of experiences

are hugely dependent on personal interpretation and cultural embedment. It is therefore important to recognize that whilst gender inequality – specifically, dominance of men over women (Renzetti, 2013) may be common, particularly given that men have generally dominated in reasoning, knowledge, and science. The level of inequality and oppression one is subjected to is conditioned by factors such as race, age, sexuality and other structural, historical, and geographical differences between women (Letherby, 2003). Fundamentally, feminists have neglected the relationship between these factors, which can lead to further levels of inequality and oppression (Renzetti, 2013).

For example, it is argued that the concerns and experiences of White middle-class women are distinct to those of minoritised women and that these differences are likely to produce very different problems, responses, and outcomes even if the issue is the same (Beasley, 1999). Specifically, a black woman's experience of inequality may be more adverse than that of White women. For example, whilst White women may experience sexism, minoritised women will have sexism and racism as an extra layer. They are not only 'inferior' with men (particularly culturally), but are also racially profiled in society (Renzetti, 2013). Thus, in the hierarchy of power relations, minoritised women would be at the bottom, being oppressed in several ways. These are factors that need to be examined to build the bigger picture of the persecution and disparities women have to deal with (Maynard & Purvis, 1994). Fundamentally, the traditional feminist approach would fall short in exploring the lives and prison experiences of minoritised mothers and consequently, not an appropriate approach in addressing the focal point of this thesis.

To challenge this, multiracial feminism formed in the 1970s by women of colour (Zinn & Dill, 1996). They acknowledged that women face inequalities due to their sex, however, went beyond this to highlight the interlocking forms of oppression. Rather than focusing on race, class and gender as separate issues as is generally conducted in academia, multiracial feminists challenged both racist, classist and sexist barriers as interconnecting issues which constitutes either a privileged position or oppression (McCann, et al., 2016). Thus, the central point of this feminist perspective is to stress how various forms of domination i.e. race, racism, classist views, and the consequent struggles, influence the way certain women experience situations and events. Even though all feminist research differs from others, as it is said to have a political nature and the potential to change women's lives (Maynard and Purvis, 1994), multiracial feminists have arguably developed the research practice further. They have attempted 'to go

beyond a mere recognition of diversity and difference among women to examine structures of race in understanding the social construction of gender' (Zinn & Dill, 1996, p. 321). Whilst race and ethnicity are generally an afterthought in research, multiracial feminists have aimed to put those factors at the centre of the research. Thus, multiracial feminism differs from all other feminist perspectives as it explores how various individual and social factors i.e. gender, race, ethnicity, social class, sexuality (Renzetti, 2013) 'mutually construct one another as unjust systems of power' (Collins, 2012, p. 19).

As noted, individual and social factors are stated to be structured hierarchically. Renzetti (2013) argues that even though one or two of these factors may not have salience over the other at any given point, women are still both gendered, raced, and classed, leading to 'multiple marginality' (Richie and Richie, 2018). However, she also notes that the presence of these intersecting inequalities and/or hierarchies does not necessarily mean that people would be entirely determined by them or that they would share the same experiences with people from similar or the same backgrounds. For example, the experiences of prison may be completely different for, although both black, an African woman in comparison to a Jamaican one, particularly if one may choose not to be defined by either their gender, race or religion. This research privileges the perspective of the individual and how they identify themselves and make sense of their experiences.

Nevertheless, Renzetti (2013), moves on to highlight that such interlocking characteristics do shape the way individuals are, who they become and how they interact with others, depending specifically on their social groups and the level of both privileges and power being present within. Thus, none of the mentioned diversities and inequalities can be explored alone. Nor can they be added one after the other as interaction between all are interdependent and 'together they construct social locations that are oppressive because they result in multiple systems of domination' (Lorber, 2009, p. 198).

Feminism, at minimum, is argued to be inattentive to issues with race and ethnicity. It is viewed 'as being exclusionary and (either implicitly or explicitly) racist/ ethnocentric' (Beasley, 1999, p. 104) As a result, this study focuses on gender, class, ethnicity, and mothering as conflicting identities that would arguably have a significant impact on how women experience prison. Thus, from a multi-racial feminist standpoint, this thesis explores the prison and post prison

experiences of minoritised mothers and to expand the lens further the concept of intersectionality is also introduced.

3.5 INTERSECTIONALITY

Intersectionality is a theoretical framework and a prism for understanding how an individual's different identities can intensify one another, resulting in various forms of privilege or discrimination and inequality. Collins and Bilge (2020, p. 2) provides the following broad description of the term:

> *'Intersectionality investigates how intersecting power relations influence social relations across diverse societies as well as individual experiences in everyday life. As an analytic tool, intersectionality views categories of race, class, gender, sexuality, class, and mutually shaping one another. Intersectionality is a way of understanding and explaining complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences.'*

Essentially, the authors claim that intersectionality's core insight is that power relations of race, class, and gender are integral parts of a given society at any given time and are not distinct and mutually exclusive. Consequently, despite being invisible, these intersecting power relations affect every aspect of the social world. They discuss the challenges faced by African American women activists in the 1960s and 1970s in terms of jobs, education, employment, and healthcare, arguing that these issues simply fell through the cracks of anti-racist social movements, feminism, and labour unions organising for workers' rights. Each of these social movements prioritised one type of analysis and action over others, such as race in the civil rights movement, gender in feminism, and class in the labour movement. These single-focus axes on social inequity provided little room to address the numerous societal difficulties that African American women encounter since they were both Black, female, and workers. In response to these obstacles, black women began to employ intersectionality as an analytical tool (Collins and Bilge, 2020).

The term was also coined by Crenshaw (1989, 1991) who used it to describe the structural, political, and symbolic components of oppression in her studies of Black women's experiences

in employment and domestic violence and rape. According to Crenshaw (1989), her encounter with Emma DeGraffenreid, an African-American working woman and mother, was the catalyst for intersectionality. DeGraffenreid had filed a discrimination complaint against a local auto manufacturing plant for refusing to hire her because she was a Black woman. The Judge dismissed DeGraffenreid's lawsuit, claiming that the employer employed African Americans and employed women. The Judge, however, overlooked the fact that the African Americans hired were all men and the women hired were all White. Crenshaw (1989) claims that if the court could only see how these policies were brought together, he would be able to see DeGraffenreid's double discrimination. The court throwing the case out made the problem legally inconsequential. Crenshaw (1989) used the term 'intersectionality' to describe this phenomenon and to convey the scenario, she came up with the traffic analogy (see figure 1) and described it as follows:

'Consider an analogy to traffic in an intersection, coming and going in all four directions. Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars travelling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in an intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination... But it is not always easy to reconstruct an accident: Sometimes the skid marks and the injuries simply indicate that they occurred simultaneously, frustrating efforts to determine which driver caused the harm. In these cases the tendency seems to be that no driver is held responsible, no treatment is administered, and the involved parties simply get back in their cars and zoom away' (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 149).

FIGURE 1: TRAFFIC ANALOGY
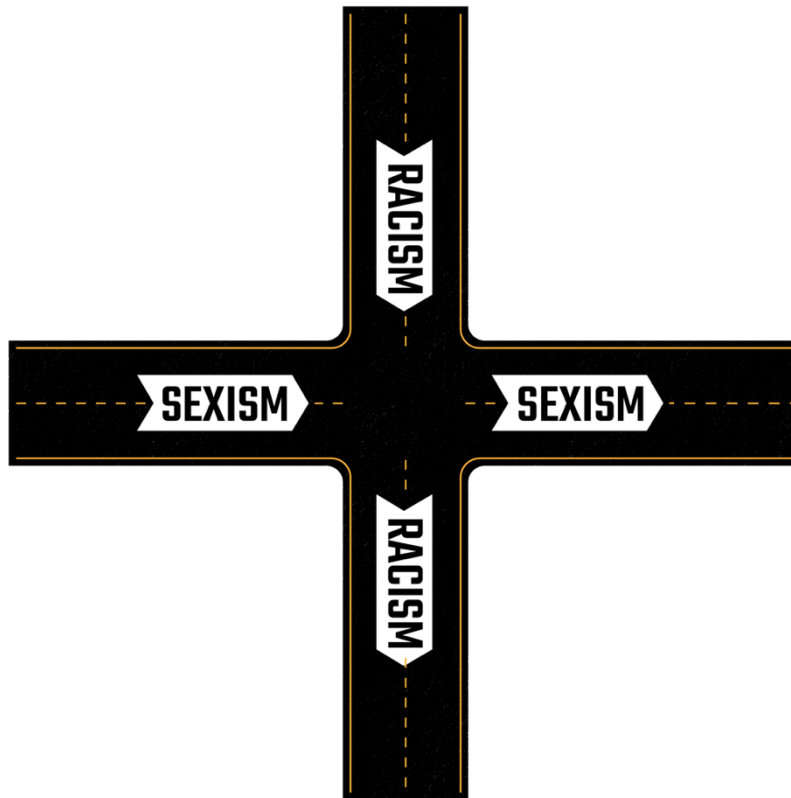
Crenshaw's (1989) intersectional opproach to discrimination. The roads are depicted as identities (race and gender), whilst the cars on the road are the policies affecting those identities

Crenshaw (1989) explains that the 'single-axis framework' marginalises Black women in questions of race and sex because the experiences of otherwise privileged individuals are the only ones evaluated. For example, while a Black man has the benefit of being a 'man', he must contend with the prejudice that comes with being Black, which is the road of racism in the analogy; on the other hand, White women, whilst also enjoying the privilege of being White, are nonetheless marginalised as women, and that, being the road of sexism. However, the experiences of those who face both racism and sexism, that being minoritised women, or Black women, in Crenshaw's (1989) case, meet at the intersection in the middle. She states that this emphasis on the most privileged members of a group marginalises those who are burdened in

multiple ways. Ultimately, Crenshaw (1989) claimed that Black women were most often invisible in both feminist theory and anti-racist policy debates, given that both are based on a limited set of experiences that do not always accurately reflect the intersection of race and gender. She argued that issues of exclusion cannot be remedied simply by incorporating Black women into a pre-existing analytical framework. Because the intersectional experience is more than the sum of racism and sexism, any study that ignores intersectionality will fall short of adequately addressing the specific ways in which Black women are oppressed.

Crenshaw, (1991) focused on violence against women of colour with the aim of highlighting the layers of disadvantage women of colour deal with. She argues that many women of colour[6], additionally to being victims of violence, also must deal with the burdens of poverty, mothering responsibilities and lack of education and job skills. These are, she states, 'the consequence of gender and class oppression' (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 2). Within the essay, discussing the intervention strategies used by shelters to support battered women, Crenshaw (1991) contends that 'strategies based solely on the experiences of women who do not share the same class or race backgrounds will be of limited utility for those whose lives are shaped by a different set of obstacles' (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 3). This is arguably analogous to the conventional feminist movement, which focuses solely on male dominance, disregarding socio-economic and cultural factors that further disempower minoritised women (Beasley, 1999).

Crenshaw (1991) also discusses concerns of political intersectionality in her research. Throughout her essay, she criticises antiracism and traditional feminism, pointing out that they fail to recognise that minoritised women suffer racism and sexism in ways that are distinct from Black men and White women. She argues that factors of inequality and oppression are confronted by White women and Black men and states that the experiences of these two groups both define and confine the interests of the rest. To elaborate, Crenshaw (1991) contends that while antiracist politics is geared toward the experiences of Black middle-class or Black men, feminist theory is tailored for White women's interests. When analysing patriarchy, sexuality, and many domains of ideology to characterise women's experiences, she highlights that feminist thought frequently neglects the additional layer of race. As a result, feminists overlook how their own race aids in the alleviation of some forms of sexism, as well as how it regularly benefits them over other women and enhances their power. As a result, feminist theory remains

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[6] Terminology used by Crenshaw (1989, 1991).

White and unfulfilled in its promise to include non-privileged women in its analysis and is therefore, inadequate in acknowledging the additional burden minoritised women bear. Crenshaw (1991) illustrates her point with the following example:

'Racism as experienced by people of colour who are of a particular gender – male – tends to determine the parameters of antiracist strategies, just as sexism as experienced by women who are of a particular race – White – tends to ground the women's movement'. Crenshaw (1991, p. 4)

Within academia, scholars have predominantly focused on one or two identities, such as gender and race or race and class (Garner, 2010b). However, such identities cannot be taken as independent variables, applied one after the other or simply nailed to one another. Considering this, Intersectionality combines them all as multiple identities and enables better access to the 'understanding and analysing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human interaction' (Collins and Bilge, 2016, p. 11). In parallel, Farrant (2009) emphasises the value of the concept of intersectionality in examining how multiple forms of oppression interact with one another to amplify discriminatory experiences and claims that applying intersectionality to minoritised women's experiences with the criminal justice system allows for entirely new perspectives. Concentrating on minoritised women through the lens of intersectionality, according to Farrant 'shatters the binary nature of much criminological theory and research, on which the criminal justice practice is based. Most research, theory and practice are reliant upon the binaries associated with men/women and Black/White but are thrown into disarray when the binaries collide into minority ethnic women' (2009, p. 10).

Thus, intersectionality was adopted as a tool in this thesis to guide data collection and analysis. This was to ensure all aspects of the women's lives are understood, and all their identities are considered equally. This was crucial, as it is in fact a combination of multiple identities that make each individual unique (Lind, 2010) and for the purposes of this thesis, the focus was on **'women'**, as **'racially minoritised', 'mothers'**, as **'prisoners'** in prison and **'former prisoners'** post release. These several identities were what made each woman in the study unique.

3.6 FROM AN INSIDER PERSPECTIVE: CONVICT CRIMINOLOGY

Reconsidering the hermeneutics of empathy, it is essential to note that my life experiences have played a major role in shaping the process of interpretation. As a minoritised mother with prison experience and a former prisoner status, I have been able to empathise with the women, bringing me close to an insider perspective (Conrad, 1987). Essentially, this perspective is of complementary nature to the concept of intersectionality, as whilst those who are marginalised in society because of their identities are integral to the work of intersectionality, the possibility of a prisoner and former prisoner status as an additional layer of oppression has not been considered. Given my experiences, I have had the benefit of gaining a deeper insight into lives and experiences of my participants and have been able to exchange understandings and meanings at several levels including their mothering identities, socio-economic backgrounds, cultural aspects and of course, prison and post-prison experiences.

These shared factors also helped remove the power imbalance between myself and the participants who felt comfortable in sharing their stories with me. Relatively, Newbold et al., (2014) state that past prison experience opens doors to study paths that would otherwise be closed. A researcher who has spent time in prison and understands the culture and language, sets him or her apart from others. Additionally, Newbold et al., (2014) suggest that both prisoners and former prisoners are more likely to be honest and forthcoming with an investigator with whom they are familiar. Thus, without discrediting the significant work of several scholars (Baldwin, 2018; Lockwood, 2018; O'Malley, 2018; Baldwin and Epstein, 2017; Enos, 2001) who have made significant contributions to the topic of incarcerated mothers, I would claim that my unique position has given me a significant advantage.

Convict criminology also benefits from this insider perspective. This is the study of crime and prisons conducted by several ex-convict academics that have substantial knowledge of the criminal justice system, alongside several non-convict academics who share the same ideologies (Aresti et al., 2016). In parallel with IPA, convict criminology privileges lived experiences, but from an insider perspective of those that are generally silenced. Jones, et al., (2009) posit that people in prisons and those with criminal convictions are one of the most marginalised and excluded cohorts who have been subject to legal and social prejudices for many decades, and it is therefore significant to give them voice. Taking a critical stance to the traditional studies of crime and criminal justice, Ross and Richards (2003) contend that such an approach, has predominantly resulted in disjointed research and analysis by academics with

no realistic knowledge of crime, punishment, and prisons. As an ex-convict academic, Aresti (2012) argues that mainstream criminological literature fails to depict the actual lived experiences of crime, imprisonment, and life afterward. As a result, he believes it is necessary for ex-convict academics and academics who share the same perspective to provide the groundwork for such a group and serve as a valuable resource in applying a critical lens to traditional approaches to crime and criminal justice.

However, although convict criminology has been successful in promoting the voice of those with first-hand experience, like most other mainstream studies, it has been predominately male-centric, privileging men's accounts and experiences of imprisonment (Aresti and Darke, 2016). Thus, the voices of the more marginalised cohorts, that being women and those of minoritised background, have been neglected (Belknap, 2015; Owen, 2003). Therefore, this study is of significance to addressing this specific gap as it has privileged the voices and accounts of 'racially minoritised' 'women.' In agreement with the values and ideals of intersectionality, the use of an insider perspective, through a multi-racial feminist prism, has all been complementary in this study, as all areas centralise different identities and the layers of inequality that it results in. Furthermore, for this relatively new field of study, the option to use qualitative methodology and IPA as the analytical framework for the operationalisation of the study, has been especially useful, given that it has privileged lived experiences and personal accounts of those that have been neglected in mainstream literature.

3.7 SUMMARY

This chapter presented an argument for adopting a qualitative line of inquiry to the study of minoritised mothers' prison and post prison experiences. The methodological, epistemological and ontological stance taken was outlined and debated. The chapter set out arguments for the use of multi racial feminism and intersectionality as conceptual frameworks and guides to data collection and analysis, as well as the use of a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to exploring lived experiences. The next chapter will provide details of the methods used to utilise the research.

CHAPTER 4 - METHODS

This chapter sets out the methods used to conduct the research in this thesis. It will provide an outline of the study design and sampling technique used and detail the analytical framework adopted to examine the data.

In general, the aim of this research is to develop and refine our understanding of how minoritised mothers experience imprisonment and post release. Specific focus is on how the women negotiate motherhood in prison and how they experience the journey from prisoner to ex-prisoner as ethnic minorities.

4.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Therefore, this study seeks to explore three broad research questions:

1. How do minoritised mothers in prison experience and make sense of incarceration and their mothering identity?

2. How do minoritised mothers experience and make sense of their transition back into conventional society and negotiate motherhood in their post-prison lives?

3. How is the relationship between ethnic identity and prisoner/ex-prisoner status experienced by minoritised mothers?

4.2 DESIGN

This study employed a qualitative line of enquiry, utilising a semi-structured interviewing format and an interpretative phenomenological analytical framework. The aim was to capture rich, quality in-depth data by exploring the prison and post-prison experiences of minoritised mothers.

4.3 SAMPLING

In total, eight females participated in the study. Although this is a relatively small sample, it is essential to note that with IPA, the aim is to explore and appreciate each participant's account on a case-by-case basis and for this reason, IPA studies are conducted with smaller sample sizes (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014; Smith, 2011). Thus, 'the issue is quality, not quantity, and given the complexity of most human phenomena, IPA studies usually benefit from a concentrated focus on a smaller number of cases' (Smith, et al. 2009, p. 51). On that note, Turpin, et al., (1997) suggests a sample size of 6-8 is sufficient, given that the focus is on depth rather than breadth. To achieve a level of homogeneity (Smith, 1996) purposive sampling was utilised. The aim of purposive sampling is to strategically select participants that would be relevant to the research questions being posed (Bryman, 2012) and is ideal for exploratory research that examines topics which little is known about (Neuman, 2006).

4.4 INCLUSION CRITERIA

The inclusion criteria required that all participants were mothers and from minoritised backgrounds. There were no minimums to how long the women would have served in prison as it is stated that regardless of the length, all sentences have a detrimental impact on the life of both mother and child given the separation (Baldwin and Epstein, 2017). In addition, they were all required to have been released from prison at least one year prior to the interviews. This was a measure taken to avoid the experience being too raw and causing significant distress during the reflections, also allowing women to transition back into the community and their mothering role.

4.5 PROCEDURE

Potential participants were recruited through the social media platform (Facebook) where there is currently a closed group used by women who have been released from HMP East Sutton Park (an open prison). Access to this closed group was enabled via a gate keeper (the group admin). A recruitment flyer was posted on the group page for all members to view (See appendix 1). Potential participants contacted the researcher who subsequently provided them with information sheets electronically. This provided details of the study and what participation would involve (See appendix 2). Participants that fulfilled the recruitment criteria were selected and informed of the nature of the study for further clarity. In line with the ethical guidelines, all participants gave written informed consent (see appendix 3) and were told that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice.

Of the eight participants, five were interviewed on University premises, two were interviewed at their places of work and one was interviewed at her local library. In all instances, the interviews were conducted in quiet rooms where privacy was ensured. Ethical procedures for researcher safety were followed throughout i.e. supervisor was aware of the researcher's whereabouts. Prior to the interviews, an informal discussion was conducted with the women to set them at ease and establish a rapport. To achieve this, the researcher informed them that she is also a minoritised mother with prison experience. No further personal information was provided until the end of the interview to avoid influencing their responses in any way. Nevertheless, this disclosure enabled them to build a strong rapport and it became evident during the interviews that the women were very comfortable in sharing their experiences. All interviews were digitally recorded using an encrypted audio device and transcribed verbatim.

All the women were reminded that the purpose of this study was to explore their experiences of prison and post-prison life as minoritised mothers and the fact that they could withdraw from the study at any time was reiterated. The women were then given the opportunity to ask any questions. A semi- structured interview schedule (See appendix 4) was utilised and a pilot study was initially conducted to assess the quality of the schedule with an acquaintance who fit the recruitment criteria, but no changes were subsequently made, as the schedule was deemed effective. The use of semi-structured interviews allowed the participants to freely express their views and experiences rather than have the schedule dictate the flow of the interview (Eatough

and Smith, 2006). Interviews of such help discover unanticipated findings as the participants are able to provide greater richness in detail (Neuman, 2006).

Four main themes were covered in the interview schedule, during the interviews. The first theme considered entry into prison. It covered the time from the women's initial arrest to their first night in custody. The second theme attended to the women's experiences of prison, such as the daily regime, significant events they could particularly recall, and how they negotiated motherhood within those experiences i.e. seeing their children on visits. The third theme considered the transition back into society post-release and the final theme was about identity, with the term's prisoner and ex-prisoner as minoritised mothers being explored.

4.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In line with ethical procedures, written informed consent was obtained from the women taking part in the study. They were fully briefed on the nature of the study and were advised that participation was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. In such an instance, all data held on that participant would have been destroyed. In addition, participants were advised that during the interview, they were not obliged to respond to any questions they felt uncomfortable answering. They were also told that if at any stage they felt distressed, the interview could be stopped and they would be given the opportunity to compose themselves and when ready, asked if they wanted to continue with the interview, reschedule for another day or withdraw from the study.

Given the sensitive nature of the topic, the women's emotional states were monitored throughout the interview. In the event of any signs of distress on the part of the women, the researcher was prepared to stop the interview and the recording. In line with sensitivity and duty of care, specific procedures were in place to deal with any possible distress that could arise, but no such procedures were necessary. All the women were treated with utmost respect throughout, and the duty of care was maintained.

Upon completion of the interviews, the women were fully debriefed and given a list of support services (counsellors) that could be contacted if felt necessary, as well as the details of the research supervisor. They were then given a further opportunity to ask questions, provide

feedback, or state any issues/concerns they may have had. All interviews were ended in a positive manner, emphasizing the participants' strength and courage in taking part. All the women stated that they felt comfortable talking throughout the interview and felt good about being able to share their experiences freely (Hutchinson, et al., 1994).

The digital data collected was transferred on to the University's encrypted server in the immediate aftermath of the interview. It was then transcribed (verbatim) by the researcher, and to preserve anonymity and confidentiality, all the women's personal/identifiable information were changed, and the transcripts were labelled using a number and pseudonym system. The digital files were then securely destroyed. All transcripts were locked away in a secure filing cabinet that was only accessible by the researcher.

4.7 WOMEN IN THE STUDY

All the women in the study, except one, were raised in the UK and all were convicted for the first time. Their sentence lengths ranged from two to twelve years. They all mentioned growing up in socially and economically deprived backgrounds where cultural and religious beliefs were highly valued and strictly followed. Despite various difficulties in terms of the prison and post prison experiences (which will be detailed in the findings), all women reported being at a relatively stable position in their current lives.

Zara is a 30-year-old from Turkish background. She grew up with her parents and younger sister. Her parents were very strict and abusive. She got married at the age of 18 and found herself in another abusive situation, this time in her marriage. She had a daughter and then was eventually convicted of GBH after a moment of outrage towards her husband.

Tanisha is a 42-year-old from a mixed heritage (Black-Caribbean and White-British) with two children. Growing up, she and her two brothers were raised by their mother, who struggled as a single parent and was very abusive to them at times. Tanisha was convicted of possessing class A drugs at the age of 19 and sentenced to 4 years in prison. She found out she was pregnant upon entry into custody and gave birth in prison.

Jubeda is a 44-year-old Pakistani woman who lived in Uganda during the early years of her life. Her mother had her when she was 16 and struggled to cope, she was consequently raised by her grandparents and did not reunite with her mother until she was 14. However, she found it difficult to build a bond with her mother and was put into care for a brief period. She was then forced into a marriage at 17 and had 6 children. Jubeda was convicted for her part in a drugs conspiracy and sentenced to 12 years.

Aisha is originally from Mauritius. She grew up there and came to England for an arranged marriage. She is now 50 years old, has 3 adult children and 2 grandchildren. Aisha was convicted of fraud after 4 years on bail, she was sentenced to 2 years 4 months custodial.

Paniyota, from Greek-Cypriot background, is 38 years old. She grew up with her single mother and alcoholic brother. Her White British father had never been around. Paniyota had a child outside of marriage at 16 which broke all family ties. Her partner was a violent and controlling man who she could not escape for many years. She was arrested for fraud when her daughter was 13 and following a 12-month period on bail, she was sentenced to 28 months in prison.

Sadia is a 27-year-old, British born but from a mixed heritage. Her mother is from an Afghan, Iranian, and Pakistani background. With little educational attainment, Sadia got married at aged 22 and had her child shortly after. When her child was 8 months old, she was charged with (alleged) robbery and sentenced to 4 years custodial. She spent 10 months with her son in the mother and baby unit and the remainder alone in open conditions.

Isabella is a 38-year-old from the traveller community. She has a brother and sister; her biological father passed away when she was 7 years old and she was consequently raised by her mother and step-father. She dropped out of school at 13 and was married at 18 and had 3 children. She was arrested and charged with GBH and after 2 years on bail, she was given a 6 year custodial sentence.

Dominique is a 49-year-old from a biracial background. Her biological mother is White-British and father is Caribbean-born. However, she was adopted at 6 days old to a family of similar heritage and has never met her biological parents. She has history of poor mental health, drug misuse, domestic violence, and has been sectioned under the Mental Health Act on two

occasions. She has 3 children who were taken into care prior to her imprisonment. Dominique was convicted of defrauding at age 44 and given a 6 year 7 month custodial term.

4.8 ANALYSIS

The analysis stage was guided by that set out in Smith, et al., (2009). The purpose was to make sense of the participants sense making of their experiences (Smith, et al., 2009*).* Therefore, the data collected was subjected to an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, 1996). This approach is used to 'explore people's everyday life experiences' (Mohajan, 2018, p. 29) and helps gain an in-depth understanding of the way in which people make sense of their personal and social world (Smith and Osborn, 2003). Data was considered on a case-by-case basis and transcripts were analysed individually. The data was approached with view that, when engaging with the data, the researcher's personal experiences as a minoritised mother would inevitably affect and bias the interpretations. Although it is unattainable to bracket or suspend preconceptions as the phenomenological approach posits (Heidegger, 1962, 1927), particularly when considering the researcher's close relation to the subject, the very awareness of the biases mitigates the effect of one's immediate engagement with the data (Spinelli, 2005). To manage the biases, a reflexive journal was kept throughout the stages of data collection and analysis (Smith et al., 2009).

Each transcript was read thoroughly several times to gain a comprehensive understanding of the data collected. First impressions and thoughts were noted on the left-hand margin. A more in-depth analysis was then conducted on the right column (see appendix 6). At this stage, all data was given equal weighting and caution was taken to ensure a connection between the women's accounts and the researcher's interpretation was maintained. The initial thoughts and the in-depth analysis were then transformed into specific themes and clustered accordingly. A table of superordinate themes and their constituent sub-themes, with brief illustrative verbatim extract from the interview was supplied (see appendix 7). This process was repeated for the other interview transcripts. At this point, the director of the studies undertook an independent audit (Smith et al., 2009) to assess the analytic process from beginning to end to confirm that all interpretations were based on the participants' accounts. This was done to strengthen the

research's validity. All findings were then compared to establish certain similarities and differences in the accounts given. Themes that exhibited a weak evidence base were subsequently dropped and clusters were given descriptive labels. This helped prioritise key patterns and significant issues that were consistent within the women's accounts. These have been presented in the chapter to follow.

4.9 SUMMARY

This chapter provided a description of the methods used to conduct the empirical investigation in this thesis. A detailed account of the research questions, study design, sampling, and data collection procedures have been presented, along with a set of guidelines for carrying out an IPA and the template analysis. Demographic details about each woman in the study was also presented. The next chapter presents the findings and discussion for the first empirical study.

CHAPTER 5 – FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION | STUDY 1

This chapter presents findings from study one, which explored the prison and post release experiences of minoritised mothers. Special attention was directed to the mothers' cultural experiences throughout their journey and how they made sense of it. An Interpretative Psychological Analysis revealed four superordinate themes (see table 2 below for themes), capturing the richness and complexity of the women's experiences and meaning making. The women's accounts exhibited an underlying narrative structure, apparent in the emergent superordinate themes following a salient temporal path.

The first superordinate theme, **Trapped in Abuse,** captures the women's struggles with life prior to imprisonment. **The Painful Journey** concentrates on the women's experiences upon entry into prison. **Cultural Burden Magnified** highlights their experiences of prison as minoritised women from a cultural perspective. The final superordinate theme, **A Permanent Stamp,** focuses on the women's post release experiences and their adjustment back into society. Whilst each superordinate theme was characteristic of all the women in the study, the constituent subordinate themes were not always applicable.

TABLE 1: SUPERORDINATE AND RELATED SUBTHEMES [STUDY 1]

Superordinate Theme	Subordinate Theme
Trapped In Abuse	Cultural Oppression Stuck: The Subordinated A Way Out
The Painful Journey	Motherhood in Crisis Invisible Victims The Road to Recovery
Cultural Burden Magnified	Cultural Burden of Imprisonment Negotiating Cultural Identity
A Permanent Stamp	Shame and Dishonour: The Painful Freedom A Life Sentence

THEME 1: TRAPPED IN ABUSE

Baldwin and Quinlan (2018, p. 26) state that '…women who enter prison bring with them all that they were before prison'. As a result, it is critical to consider their backgrounds, such as their upbringing and culture, which are likely to have an impact on how they experience imprisonment. It has been well documented that most imprisoned women are minorities who come from low-income, poor families, and have a history of domestic violence, sexual abuse, and/or rape (Arditti and Few, 2006; Barnes and Stringer, 2014; Corston, 2007; Muslim Hands, 2018). Some of these factors are reflected in the women's early lives and are presented in three interconnected subordinate themes: *cultural oppression, stuck – the subordinated* and *a way out*. Trapped in abuse spans a period of years, capturing the women's struggles to cope with experiences of abuse and the difficulties they encountered in escaping. Essentially, five of the women in the study had experienced cultural oppression in their early lives. They were bound by a set of cultural standards and were expected to follow traditional roles assigned to females. Most of them also experienced multiple forms of abuse such as domestic violence, by either their family members or husbands.

1.1 CULTURAL OPPRESSION

The women appear to have experienced cultural oppression at various times in their life course. For some it was later in life, but for a few, the problem of abuse started particularly early. Zara is a significant example of this. Coming from a Muslim background, she had a very strict upbringing where cultural oppression was highly prevalent, and she was forced to follow certain gender defined rules:

> *'My parents were very strict… I wasn't even allowed friends... I couldn't ever wear a skirt or a vest top because apparently it would attract men. I wasn't allowed to eat ice cream or lollipops in public because of how it's eaten. As in licking and sucking. These were things my mum was very particular with'.* **Zara**

Zara also highlights how she was silenced by her father who imposed his own beliefs and values on her:

> *'...he wouldn't let me talk in public or express my opinions anywhere. Especially if his male cousins, friends, or family members were around'.* **Zara**

Zara's behaviour was closely regulated, implying a strong patriarchal family structure. Patriarchy is a term that refers to male dominance and female submission (Hunnicutt, 2009), and it alludes predominantly to those who live in patriarchal societies. It 'evokes images of gender hierarchies, domination, and power structures' (Hunnicutt, 2009, p.554), in which men are in control at both the macro and micro levels. Governments, laws, and religions (patriarchal system at macro level) and people within society who hold ideas that favour men (patriarchal interactions at micro level) are examples of this (Hunnicutt, 2009). Yodanis (2004) maintains that a man's control over a woman will continue to be embodied and legitimised for as long as male dominance exists, whether within the household, on a political and economic level, or in other social institutions. This form of oppression is also demonstrated by Paniyota. She was born into a Greek orthodox family and in parallel with Zara, she also talks of having a strict upbringing and how clear cut the male female divide was within the culture:

> *'Erm, I got an older brother, he's a bit of a waste of space, erm, never really held down a job. He was an alcoholic and yet still seems to be the golden boy. I went to school and did well for myself, but yet I was still not good enough for my mum'.* **Paniyota**

However, this was not the only form of abuse suffered by the women. Jubeda was neglected by her mother at birth and consequently raised by her grandparents. She talks of the violence she encountered:

> *'My grandma was an alcoholic, she used to beat me, abuse me… She'd hit him [grandad] and me. Sometimes drag me out of bed and then she wouldn't remember anything the next day'.* **Jubeda**

Domestic violence or abuse, whilst difficult to define precisely, involves a wide variety of unwanted behaviour that occurs within the home and can include emotional, psychological, and/or physical assault. Furthermore, indirect violence such as threatening behaviour or humiliation can be just as harmful (Kelly, 1999). Domestic violence is defined by the United Nations (1993, p. 4) as 'any act of gender-based violence that causes or is likely to cause physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.' Since the early 1990s, it has also been recognised as a human rights violation and hence a public health risk (United Nations, 1995). It denies women the right to fundamental freedoms and is a major impediment to gender equality. According to the Council of Europe's (2008) report,

one-fifth to one-quarter of all women worldwide have suffered some form of violence at some point in their lives.

Although it is most often known to be committed by men against women (Walby and Allen, 2004), Thiara and Gill (2010) assert that domestic violence is also commonly perpetrated by family members for some women. Tanisha's extract also demonstrates this:

> *'I grew up just with my mum and I was really fearful of her, she was really strict. She used to beat me quite a bit'.* **Tanisha**

Coinciding with Tanisha, Zara also suffered from violence at the hands of her mother:

> *'It happened often, right from primary* [school]… *She would say if you tell anyone, I will beat you 10 times worse next time. I was only a kid, I was scared'.* **Zara**

Recalling a particular day, she states:

> *'...I stole top up cards from my dad's off licence to sell in school. I was doing this because they wouldn't give me any pocket money… and then my mum caught me. When we got back home, she started beating me with the metal part of a broken umbrella. I can never forget that day, I was bruised everywhere'.* **Zara**

Physical violence is normalised in certain cultures, particularly when it comes to child rearing (Gul, 2013). It is a sort of discipline as well as a component of the values and standards. The purpose is to exercise and maintain power over them, to manage their behaviour and conduct according to patriarchal traditions, and to preserve the family's honour in general. Notably, the term 'honour' is usually used to represent a woman's sexual purity or sexuality (Gursoy et al., 2016) and persists in patriarchal households. Men's ethical behaviour in such families require strict observation of women and their bodies (Ortabag et al., 2014). As a result, if women and girls do not obey their older family members, any punishment would be justified. According to Gursoy et al. (2014, p. 189) the term 'honour, while carrying various cultural connotations, is often considered a moral value and equated with sexual purity'. This would include not engaging in sexual behaviour prior to marriage, as well as dressing, speaking, and even walking in a manner that is acceptable. Zara evidently grew up in this environment with her parents who were both physically abusive and imposed rigid regulations on how she could behave.

Unlike the other women, Dominique's experience of culture was very different. She appears to have experienced an identity crisis, being stuck between two cultures from early childhood. She was the child of a White woman and Black man who abandoned her at birth:

> *'My mum was White and she was actually married to a White man and had 3 other children but then she had an affair with my dad who was Jamaican and bizarrely enough she was in a really abusive relationship and she had poor mental health. Very, very similar story to mine and erm she just felt there was no way she could take me home. My birth father, he said he couldn't have me because he was also married and had 4 children'.* **Dominique**

Dominique appeared to be the 'illegitimate' child who did not fit in with either side of her biological family. As discussed in chapter one, Garner (2010) states that biracial children, particularly those with a White and Black parent, have historically been viewed as a challenge to the existing and dominant racial categories due to the assumption that through mixing with others, the White race/colour could become impure. In line with this, Dominique appears to have been abandoned by her birth mother for being too Black, as well as by her father for being too White to fit in with his family. This was evident in her comment *'my birth mum felt that her family wouldn't accept me because I was biracial,* so *I wasn't the right colour for either of them'.* **Dominique**.

She also alluded to her mother's history of abuse and bad mental health, which she compared to her own, as if it were a cycle that had been passed down the generations. Nevertheless, the most prominent issue with Dominique throughout her early life, appeared to be the struggle to fit in:

> *'At a very early age, I understood the impact of being biracial … I was put in an orphanage and then adopted into a family who lived in a predominantly White area and just really, all of my life… building friendships, I had trust issues, erm, felt unaccepted'.* **Dominique**

This crisis then led to substance abuse where Dominique appeared to be looking for an escape:

> *'At the age of 15, I was introduced to alcohol… was just a vicious cycle of alcohol, poor mental health and recreational drugs'.* **Dominique**

Unlike the women discussed so far, Isabella stated having a good upbringing and a loving husband. Although she married young as is the norm in the Traveller community, she has not encountered any issues. Notably, Gypsy/Travellers are considered adults at the age of 14 and

expected to be ready for employment and marriage (Gul, 2013). Girls are encouraged to marry young and undertake household and childcare tasks, whilst boys are urged to learn their father's trade and gain financial independence in preparation to be the breadwinner (Derrington, 2016; Spencer, 2003) whilst also learning to exert control over the women's autonomy (Garner, 2017). Supporting this, research conducted by MacGabhann (2015) on the educational attainment of Traveller prisoners in England and Wales found 68 percent of interviewees either did not attend school or left before the age of 14. This also applied to Isabella. She mentioned leaving school, also at 14 to abide by the gender roles assigned to women in her community (Spencer, 2003) and did not appear to have any problems with it. However, she speaks about the sexual abuse she suffered:

> *'I was abused when I was younger, erm and it's something I've kept to myself up until prison'.* **Isabella**

Isabella did not speak to anyone about it and had to suffer in silence for many years for fear of no one believing or supporting her because it is seen to inflict great shame on the family, as expressed in her words *'...me family would have brushed it under the carpet'.* **Isabella.** Notably, more than half of women in prison in England are reported to have experienced emotional, physical, or sexual abuse as a child compared to 27 per cent of men (Ministry of Justice, 2012).

1.2 STUCK: THE SUBORDINATED

Leading on from the oppression discussed, some of the women appeared to feel inferior, significantly through the abuse they suffered and appeared to be stuck in a cycle of abuse.

After the abuse from her mother, Zara left home with her boyfriend at 18. They moved in together and married, but after what seemed like a honeymoon period, Zara realised she had fled the rain only to be caught in the storm. Unlike her parents, her husband's abuse was more subtle, consisting of belittlement and intimidation. This was evident in her comment *'...would break furniture, punch walls, and shout at me'.* **Zara**. He also had strong expectations of what she should do as a woman, and he was not afraid to be abusive if she did not meet them. Ultimately, Zara had to adhere to gender-defined rules. This was evident in her account:

'...if his clothes weren't ironed or the food wasn't ready bang on time, if the house was a little messy...' **Zara**

Gender is defined as a system that shapes the hierarchy and obligations allocated to men and women inside partnerships and marriages (Anderson and Umberson, 2001), and gender roles are taught suitable social and cultural behaviours for men and women. As a result, social influence plays a substantial role in children's adoption of gender-related characteristics. For example, according to Bussey and Bandura (1999, p. 698), 'if children routinely see women performing homemaking activities, and males only occasionally trying their hand at it, homemaking readily gets gender typed as a woman's role'. As a result, parents who support traditional gender roles are more likely to encourage gender-related behaviour in their children. Zara recalls a particular day of such gendered behaviour and explains how events unfolded:

'I think my daughter was around 10 months old. Erm, she was a little restless that day and I had to deal with her. Given that, it took me longer to prepare the food. As soon as he got in from work and noticed the cooker was still on, he started shouting at me saying things like I've been working all day, I'm hungry, what the fuck have you been doing? He continued shouting for a little while, punching the walls, and then eventually broke the coffee table'. **Zara**

Ultimately, gender performance makes male superiority and dominance appear natural and normal rather than socially constructed (Anderson and Umberson, 2001). Feminist researchers have fought the issue of domestic violence for decades. For example, Dobash and Dobash (1992) identified four key factors of conflict that lead to violence. The first is jealousy and possessiveness (where men view their wives as their property). The second is their expectations in terms of domestic work and household responsibilities. The final two are 'men's perception of the right to punish "their" women for perceived wrongdoing, and the importance of maintaining or exercising their position of power. Feeling significantly stuck in a marriage that was supposed to have been her saviour, Zara spoke of how things rapidly changed for the worse:

*'...he [*her husband*] started coming later than usual in the mornings and every time he came we were having very heated arguments because of that… I later found out that he was gambling and losing all his money. Things were obviously becoming difficult financially because he wasn't bringing any money home. We needed food, the fridge was always empty. I was really, really struggling. Financially [sighs] mentally. I was lost. Didn't know what to do, no one to turn to. I couldn't tell my parents. They would have said it's your fault. The biggest shame was running away from home, I couldn't have made it worse by going back with problems'.* **Zara**

The importance of family unity, along with the persistence of traditional gender roles, places tremendous pressure on women to stay in relationships, even if they are in danger of, or are already experiencing actual harm (Gill, 2004). As a result, a woman is expected to sacrifice herself for the benefit of her family or relationship (Khayyat, 1990). In Zara's account, the notion of shame is a factor that was most prominent. Even though no words had been spoken with her parents about this matter, Zara appears very self-conscious of the shame she feels she has brought to her family. Ultimately, the abuse becomes unbearable:

> *'We had nothing left, he started selling my jewellery. Like my chain and wedding ring. He would come home, already in a bad mood… He broke a few TVs, damaged many walls but most important than all, he scarred me mentally and my daughter had to witness all this...'* **Zara**

From Zara's account above, it is evident that her husband was displaying attributes associated with masculinity and communicating his frustration and possible guilt about causing financial hardships through his use of physical power. Especially when he has a habit of 'breaking things' to instil fear of violence in her. Although he does not hit Zara, it appears that his aim is to vent his rage and maintain his authority over her in other ways. This is in line with prior research, which emphasises the importance of a person's poor socioeconomic level when looking at risk factors for domestic violence, which can put people under stress and lead to family conflict (Akar et al., 2010; Gul, 2013; Guvenc et al., 2014).

It is claimed that violence plays a vital role in the development of masculinities among disenfranchised men (Anderson and Umberson, 2001). Boys learn to engage in violence through play or fist fights from an early age. For some, violence becomes the norm, and any injury is considered normal (Dobash and Dobash, 1998). Some people carry this into their relationships or marriages. This resembles Zara's husband. Although his early life is not known, his displays of masculinity to instil fear on her could indicate learned behaviour. He has also subjected her to verbal abuse which made her feel inferior, powerless, and completely worthless. This was evident in her extract *'...calling me fat, saying look at yourself...I hated myself...'* **Zara**

In the interviews, it was clear that several of the women were trapped in abusive marriages/ relationships. In most cultures, leaving home or getting divorced is considered a family dishonour and a source of shame in the community (Gill, 2004). In somewhat parallel with

Zara's account, Paniyota also speaks of a similar situation with her husband. However, with Paniyota, although she experienced the abuse from her partner, it was her mother that expected her to stay in the marriage despite physical violence as her family would not approve of a divorce. This made her feel particularly inferior as a woman:

> *'My daughter's dad was very violent, he put me in hospital. But when I tried to leave him my mum wasn't havin it. She said that I should work through it with him. Typical Cypriot thinking... He beat me all the time and although he broke my ribs once, I was still expected to put up with it'.* **Paniyota**

Jubeda's life was not much different within the strict cultural norms. She was forced into marriage at the age of 16 and only met her husband on the wedding night. She talks of the problematic situation she found herself in:

> *'The first day after the marriage he started beating me, you know. So I go [sighs] here we go again, I've just fallen into a deeper ditch. I stayed married for 13 years and had 4 children. It was a very abusive one'.* **Jubeda**

Having felt stuck in that marriage for an extended period, Jubeda explains that she finally managed to leave and after being single for 2 years, she married her second husband. This again, she states, proved to be problematic:

> *'Before long, that one became abusive too. I had 2 kids from him and it was another situation I was stuck in. he would beat me too. It just seemed to be never ending'.* **Jubeda**

Domestic violence or intimate partner violence in such cultures is arguably linked to the strong traditional and cultural views that disenfranchise the concept of equality, given the emphasis on visible gender disparities and roles. The males are clearly in a strong position, able to exercise their masculinity without fear of being judged. In many societies and cultures, masculinity is intrinsically linked to policing female behaviour and sexuality and is anchored by a sense of honour - of an individual man, a family, or a community (Brown et al., 2018, p. 538). This is presumably why Jubeda suffered from the violence in silence, in both her marriages. Aisha was also subjected to domestic violence in her marriage. She states that her husband was always abusive and that she had no way of escaping. Aisha highlights that this deteriorated during her time on bail:

'Ohh my husband was not good to me… I always got problem with him because of domestic violence. He always make me get stress. After I get taken by police, he get worse. He say you brought shame on me, I will always remind you'. **Aisha**

It appears here that Aisha was subject to not only physical violence, but also psychological abuse. She demonstrates how difficult her time on bail was, not only with her husband but the extended family too:

'The stress was very bad, I had to take tablets and always see doctor. My husband's family was bad… they always say look thief coming when they see me'. **Aisha**

It is claimed that men's violence towards women is 'rooted in patriarchal ideologies that motivate men to seek power and to exert control over women with the use of physical violence' (Brown et al., 2018, p. 538). According to Brown et al. (2018), reputation is everything for a man raised in a typical honour-based culture, and he is 'allowed to, or even expected to go to extreme lengths to maintain and defend his reputation from threats' (p. 539). This 'reputation' is almost always associated with women and therefore men's violence to exert control over the woman and maintain the 'good name' is culturally legitimised. This appeared to be the situation with Aisha as she had brought a bad name to her husband and family. Current literature illustrates the importance of honour within the culture and argues that women of this tradition who have 'dishonoured' themselves would have dishonoured the whole family, particularly being the male members and so would be deserving of violence and retribution (Gursoy et al., 2016; Isik and Sakalli, 2009).

The feeling of being stuck manifests in a different way for Isabella. She frequently refers to the sexual abuse she encountered as a child:

'I was suffering immensely from like PTSD… I didn't even know what it was growing up, like I'd 'ave flash backs and stuff but I didn't know'. **Isabella**

Evidently, Isabella had to live in silence with the damaging impact of sexual abuse until much later in life. She states that it was only during her time in prison that she started dealing with it:

Isabella: *'I couldn't talk about it outside* [sexual abuse]. *Like I wasn't the only child* [being abused] *and even with the other children* [victims], *we didn't discuss it, ever. And I was always distracted with a busy life, so... but inside* [prison] *there was no getting away from it, so I had to face it'.*
Sinem: *'Why couldn't you talk about it?*

> **Isabella:** *'Coz I think I was always in denial [pre-prison]. It was eating away at me but I didn't want to face it, I didn't want to so I just try to like live a different life really. Like mental health is bigger now, like people are more aware of it now so it doesn't have such a big stigma anymore, but I used to have to hide it before and never went counselling.'*

In societies where women and girls are marginalised and treated as inferior, sexual harassment is mostly endured in silence as it is shameful and may tarnish the family name (Gill, 2004). Honour and family prestige take precedence, and considering the attitude toward females, the victim is almost held responsible for the perpetrator's behaviour. During the interview, Isabella appeared to be in the process of reflecting and making sense of that experience:

> *'I often think what would I have been like if that hadn't happened to me. You know, would I have become a better person. I think it always made me an angry person'.* **Isabella**

Isabella did not want to discuss the specifics of her offence, but she did say the charge was (GBH) Section 18. Her script suggests an outburst of bottled anger resulting from the years of suffering in silence. Overall, the prevalence of childhood and domestic abuse among the women in this study corresponds with previous research on the prevalence of histories of abuse among women in the criminal justice system (Cardale et al., 2017; Ministry of Justice, 2018). In addition, minoritised women also endure the pain of cultural oppression.

1.3 A WAY OUT

Within their accounts, the women also showed signs of searching for ways to escape after being exposed to different forms of violence and feeling trapped in unfavourable circumstances. This search for escape manifested in different ways and at different times in their life course. For Paniyota, a way out involved her escaping her abusive partner. She speaks of the time she eventually had enough and built the courage to leave, despite her mother's pleas for her to stay with him:

> *'So we got together when I was 15 and the abuse started when I was 19 and I left him when I was 29. So that was 10 years of abuse and violence. I just couldn't take it anymore. One day I simply left at 3 o'clock in the morning with whatever I could get in my car'.* **Paniyota**

In parallel with Paniyota, Jubeda also recalls the time she escaped her husband:

> '*In the end, I just said enough is enough, you know, he had an affair and that gave me the strength to leave him. I left everything, I left the money, the houses, car, nothing, just the kids, I just took my kids*'. **Jubeda**

It appears with Jubeda that the affair carried more significance than the abuse itself did. Although she put up with the violence for 13 years, it was the presence of another woman that led her into walking away. That may have been the factor that ultimately gave her the strength. Another search for a way out was evident in Zara's script. She remembers the last time her mother was abusive, and how that was the final straw:

> '*The very last time she beat me, I was 18 years old… she beat me with a piece of wood. I'd had enough and I knew I had to go. So I ran away from home with my boyfriend*'. **Zara**

Zara's motivation for fleeing seems to have stemmed not just from the physical abuse she had been exposed to, but also from patriarchal cultural norms. She had made up her mind and was prepared to run for a potentially better life. Detailing that day, she states:

> '*After my mum beat me that day, she told me to go to our neighbour and get some sugar… that was my chance. I used her phone to call him [boyfriend] and tell him what happened and basically said come and get me. So the next morning, at 5 am, we ran away. I was basically running for my freedom*'. **Zara**

Zara seems to have turned to her boyfriend for the independence and protection she so desperately desired. However, given the norm in her culture, she was passing from the control of her father to her now-husband (Sen, 2005). Although he seemed to have been her saviour at the time, as stated, this was not to last long. Some of the women in the study seemed to have a pattern of fleeing one form of abuse only to be drawn into another. Dominique is one of them. Her cycle of drug abuse and violent relationships spiralled out of control, and she describes how things worsened when she was on bail, to the point that she felt her only way out was to end her life:

> '*…so I was on bail, kids in care, son's father dead… my mental health was on the floor. I was homeless and my substance misuse just went completely out of control. I tried to take my life which meant I was sectioned under the Mental Health Act on 2 occasions*'. **Dominique**

Evidently, Dominique has suffered through a period in her life where she experienced several significant losses. That being her loved ones, her home, her safety, and her privacy. Having been left with severe psychological damage, she claims that the final sentencing hearing in court had no effect on her after all these adverse experiences:

> *'...when you've lost everything, there's nothing much to take and I've been abused for 20 years, I have no fear. So when I was sentenced, I probably coped really well. It was almost like this is over, I now know what I've got to do. Let's get on with it. So for me, the sentencing was the beginning of the rest of my life'.* **Dominique**

Notably, Dominique felt relieved when her bail time came to an end and her prison sentence began. When she spoke of her admission to prison, she appeared more upbeat and although forced, she clearly viewed it as a more hopeful way out than the attempted suicide:

> *'I always say the day I was sentenced was the best day of my life, even though my experiences in there weren't great, I was no longer being abused. I was no longer using substance and for the first time in my life I felt real freedom'.* **Dominique**

Dominique's definition of freedom was fundamentally different from that of being physically free. She seems to be referring to her break free from the mental prison in which she was trapped by abusive relationships, drugs, and alcohol:

> *'For me, freedom didn't mean being able to come out of my room when I wanted, freedom was freedom of thought, freedom to be able to think and make positive choices, erm and that was the real meaning of the word'.* **Dominique**

This feeling of relief was shared by Isabella, who, despite not having attempted suicide, admits that it was something she thought about a lot until her prison sentence:

> *'Had I not gone to prison, I don't know what could ave appened. I could ave done something silly, hurt myself, committed suicide. You know coz I felt suicidal at times when I stopped and thought about what appened. I didn't want to be alive… I've always felt ashamed. Yeah so prison was a blessing in disguise. It was a painful one but you know when they say gracefully broken, that is basically what I felt'.* **Isabella**

So, though Isabella's way out manifested in the same way that Dominique's did at times, imprisonment, despite being a traumatic experience, became the best way out for both women. Isabella also provided details of why she felt gracefully broken:

'for the first time in prison I told someone about it [sexual abuse] *and then from there, it was just a orrible journey. The prison reported it for me and I had to do all police interview and stuff on mi own in secret and I was worried about when my family would hear about it. But anyway, in the end they said [Crown Prosecution Service] that there wasn't enough evidence to charge him. But I've had to come out to mi mum about it coz it was mi mums brother and I was worried about what I had to deal with when I come out of prison… But I was shocked with mi family's response. Like the family reputation was the only thing they cared about. You know in the travelling community, everyone was frowning upon them too for it, so I don't know how they thought they could just brush it under the carpet'.* **Isabella**

Although speaking about the abuse appeared to cause considerable problems with her family, Isabella clearly felt relieved to be able to share her trauma after bearing it for several years and was able to begin to address it. Research shows that when sexual abuse survivors disclose what happened to them, they are often met with negative reactions, such as victim blaming and disbelief, that exacerbate PTSD and prevent survivors from receiving the support they need to heal (Comphell, 2008; Kennedy et al., 2012). On the other hand, the situation was very different for Sadia. Her feeling of being trapped and seeking a way out manifested post release. Having separated from her husband whilst she was in prison, she explains that she had to move into her former mother-in-law's home after release because her son was in their care. However, being under their roof meant she was in the presence of her ex-husband who was willing to do anything to keep her under his control:

'He would hit me, there was arguments, accusations. I had a job when I left open prison, made me quit my job, cut everyone off, I wasn't allowed to talk to anybody. I wasn't allowed to go anywhere.' 'I'd tell my mother-in-law, your son's doing this, he would rape me and I would show her bruises, like look he's raped me and she would literally say at least your husband wants you'. **Sadia**

Dobash and Dobash (1998) assert that men use violence to punish female partners who fail to meet their unspoken physical, sexual or emotional needs. Although it is arguable that cultural roles assigned to women are mainly domestic duties, it appears the conflict situations are predominantly caused from lack of involvement or interest in sexual activity for the female. There seems pressure on females to make satisfying their husbands' sexual needs a priority. For example, this appears to be particularly prevalent in Sadia's recollections of her ex-husband. Especially when she is expected to fulfil his sexual desires without having any voice in the matter. She was evidently stuck in a toxic situation that she states she remained in only

for her son. Although divorced, she was still under the control of her ex-husband who was severely abusive.

Furthermore, the forced sexual intercourse that Sadia experienced with her former husband is recognised as marital rape under UK law (Sexual Offences Act, 2003). However, it does not appear to be recognised by all, given that it is assumed to be a private matter, some women continue to suffer in silence. Susila (2015) conducted a study in Indonesia, a primarily Muslim country, on the Islamic attitudes of marital rape. He discovered that the vast majority of Muslim jurists believe that forced sexual intercourse with one's wife is neither marital rape nor rape. He states that it was difficult to embrace the idea of marital rape as a sin or criminal act under both Islamic and legal laws because rape was widely viewed as a forcible penile penetration in a vagina belonging to a woman other than the man's wife. Additionally, Siddiqui (2005) notes that many legal jurisdictions fail to grant women control over their sexual lives, even with their husbands, by failing to criminalise (or even recognise) rape in marriage, based on the principle that once married, a woman is deemed to have consented to sexual relations with her husband in perpetuity and is thus unable to express desire or rejection of him.

Nevertheless, Sadia explains how things were about to take a turn for the worse with her ex-husband before her chance of a way out finally appeared:

> *'he wanted to keep control, he would say you still belong to me, you're mine…I will kill you to keep my* izzat *(*honour*), but I wasn't even doing anything wrong. He then decided to strangle me and to try and kill me...'* **Sadia**

Men from some minoritised groups utilise cultural defences to justify violence against women in the name of religion and culture. The definition of an honour crime is one of a variety of violent or abusive crimes perpetrated in the name of honour, including emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, as well as other controlling and coercive behaviours (Siddiqui, 2005). These forms of abuse are arguably generic; nonetheless, the distinguishing aspect is that in other circumstances, the motivating factor is never honour. Although all male perpetrators of domestic violence use nagging and shagging defences, Siddique (2005) points out that a stain on family honour is not a reason cited by White men, and hence is unique to particular minoritised populations. Nevertheless, the attempt to kill was evidently the final straw for Sadia:

'I called the police a day later, told them what happened...' **Sadia**

Sadia finally built the courage to seek help and look for a way out. However, this led to other issues. Seeking a way out appears to have left her dealing with rejection:

> *'...my mum and my sister turned against me. They all supported him [ex-husband], you know, you brought shame on the family, how could you divorce him and call the police on him. All of this stuff and I'm there by myself with my son with no support, with no family, nothing'.* **Sadia**

As stated, a man raised in a traditional honour-based culture values his reputation above all else, and this is invariably associated with the women in his family. As a result, the violence perpetrated by such men to exert control over the woman and protect their good name is culturally legitimised. Khayyat (1990) contends that in such cultures, not responding with violence to perceived female misbehaviour is viewed as a source of shame. Ultimately, men, too, are subjected to pressure. This is fundamentally the reason Sadia's mother and sister turned against her. By informing the police of the abuse, Sadia damaged her ex-husband's reputation, and this ultimately impacted her family. For certain South Asian women, conceptions of honour and shame are so important that discussing their abuse experiences is 'a violation of the social hierarchy and entails putting self above the family' (Gill, 2004, p. 474). Current literature illustrates the importance of honour within the culture and argues that women of this tradition who have 'dishonoured' themselves would have dishonoured the whole family, particularly being the male members and so would be deserving violence and retribution (Gursoy et al., 2016; Isik and Sakalli, 2009).

Slightly differing from Sadia, Zara, having already escaped her mother, committed a crime of liberation. Explaining the day that led up to the offence, Zara states:

> *'...and one day, I just exploded. We were in the kitchen. Whilst arguing, he grabbed the knife that was on the work top. So I quickly took one from the drawer and I stabbed him in the arm. It happened so quick. I couldn't process anything or control my actions. I had lost it. I was frightened, I was in shock and just, I dunno... All I know is there was blood pouring down his arm. So I called the ambulance and obviously the police arrived too. I was arrested straight away and he was taken to the hospital'.* **Zara**

It appears that Zara experienced a moment of explosion, predominantly a build up from the years of abuse she suffered at the hands of her mother and then husband. Her bottled rage was

now unravelling. Such situations are described by Johnson (2006) as 'violent resistance', in which the victimised partner utilises violence in retaliation and resistance against the aggressive and controlling partner. Similarly, Hester (2012) conducted a study on the differences between male and female victims and perpetrators and discovered that, in partner violence situations, women were much more likely than men to use a weapon, but this was most often to prevent further violence from their partners. Nevertheless, this action became Zara's way out. Her journey to the police station is where it begun:

> '*It was so surreal. I was sitting at the back of the police van, in cuffs. I couldn't think. When we arrived at the station they booked me in and put me in a cell…*' **Zara**

There is huge pressure on females within certain cultures. They are obliged to live by the rules already set by others and by what is socially set as appropriate behaviour, muting their voices. Except for Tanisha, who did not disclose any violence, it appears that all the women finally found a way out of the abusive situations in which they were trapped. However, most of them also appeared to have violated the code of honour, causing humiliation to their families. For example, Sadia broke the moral code of women being silent by turning to the police for help, Paniyota disgraced her mother's good name by divorcing her husband, Aisha offended her community with her crime, Zara fled her parents and then eventually stabbed her husband, both of which were layers of shame and embarrassment. As a result, the women were now due to serve layers of punishment. That is, the pains of 'imprisonment' as 'racially minoritised' 'mothers.'

THEME 2: THE PAINFUL JOURNEY

The second theme, *The Painful Journey,* captures the women's entry into prison. It depicts a variety of emotional pain experienced within three interrelated themes: *Motherhood in Crisis, Invisible Victims* and *The Road to Recovery.*

2.1 MOTHERHOOD IN CRISIS

Consistent with current literature (Baldwin, 2017; Easterling, 2014; Lockwood, 2018; Mignon and Ransford, 2012) almost all mothers in the study spoke of the excruciating pain they felt when they were separated from their child(ren) upon entry into prison. For example, leading on from her entry into the cell at the police station, Zara embarked on the painful journey that would lead to crisis:

> *'Fuck my life, I couldn't believe what was happening. The only thing on my mind was my daughter. She was gonna hate me, I knew she was. Who was going to pick her up from school? All these questions rolling in my head. Imagine that, you get picked up from school and suddenly, no mummy, she's gone'.* **Zara**

Zara appears to be consumed with guilt towards her daughter (Baldwin, 2021). She has several desperate questions circulating her mind, of which none are for herself and what she will experience in this unknown journey. Even whilst trying to make sense of her surroundings, Zara is quick to refer back to her worries relating to her daughter:

> *'Ahhh, that cell. I will never forget that. I wanted to die. I curled up in a little ball and sat in the corner of the bed… it was all metal, with a thin blue mattress on top and the toilet in the corner. Not that I cared about how the surroundings were. I was just worried about my daughter. I was fucked....'* **Zara**

From sentencing to entering prison, all the women appeared to be preoccupied with their child(ren). None of them recalled absorbing their surroundings or trying to make sense of what had just transpired. In line with the study of Halperin and Harris (2004) none of the mothers appeared to be worried about themselves; instead, they were anxious about how their child(ren) would manage and the impact the prison sentence would have on them.

In convergence with Zara's experience, Sadia recalls the time she was sentenced and taken down to the court's holding cell:

'...they had me in handcuffs and it was disgusting but I was crying and telling my barrister my son, I still breastfeed, my babe, where's my baby...' **Sadia**

It appears, with the trauma caused from that moment, Sadia was struggling to process the situation. She recalls asking 'where's my baby' although she knew exactly where he was:

'I remember specifically saying goodbye to my son. I kissed him and breastfed him in the morning. I had this horrible thought that this might be the last time I get to hold him'. **Sadia**

Moving on to her first night in prison, Sadia goes on to explain:

'I thought I was going to die, like physically the pain I felt... I remember my breast was filled up with milk, so I had to stand by the sink and literally milk myself and it was so painful, I was crying... this is all the milk that my baby should be drinking...' **Sadia**

Sadia appeared to be guilt ridden. Having to dispose the milk that was meant for her son was incredibly damaging to her. Given the close mother-child bond (Harris, 2017), particularly during the child's early years whilst breastfeeding, the 'forced separation' (Baldwin, 2017) can be significantly traumatic and physically agonising. These worries were also shared by Paniyota who had her daughter at the centre of her concerns:

'…obviously the only thing going through my head was my daughter and what was going to happen to her and how she was going to cope because we are close, incredibly close'. **Paniyota**

Jubeda, who had children of various ages, also shared the same emotional distress.

'I was just worried about my children. That was my biggest worry... I was so stressed, I was losing my mind. I thought about my youngest one. He didn't have a bond with anyone apart from me'. **Jubeda**

The feelings of shame, guilt, and pain experienced by imprisoned mothers are arguably felt most strongly in relation to their children. They believe they are the one who 'caused the mess and consequently, the separation' (Baldwin, 2017, p. 53). Isabella was equally concerned, and she seemed to be surrounded by a sense of emptiness and loss:

'It made me weak as a mum, I really struggled. I felt like I lost all confidence as a mum because when you go prison, you become a nobody. Like I remember the day I went prison, it felt strange, like I ad nothing to do. Because I ad 3 children, my eldest was

very energetic and it just felt, I felt a tremendous amount of guilt, thinking I'm just sitting ere doin nothing, you know where as I'm so used to be up every 5 minutes, I felt like I should be doing something. That is how I felt, guilty and lost'. **Isabella**

Overall, children appeared to be at the centre of all the mothers' concerns, regardless of age. Sadia's account of the incident, for example, alludes to her young child, that she was breastfeeding, but Paniyota's focus was her teenage daughter, with whom she had a close relationship. The mothers felt an immense sense of loss (Easterling et al., 2018) because of this forced separation from their child(ren) (Baldwin, 2017), which had severe emotional impact on them (Allen et al., 2010). It is undeniable that the maternal experience of mothers in prison is frequently interrupted, if not destroyed, by imprisonment (Baldwin, 2017). Although mothers use all means to maintain the relationship i.e. through phone calls (which are expensive and poor substitutes) and visits (that are limited) (Easterling et al., 2018), these are never a remedy for the physical separation (Baldwin, 2017). In line with Lockwood (2018) who refers to visits as being a 'double edged sword', the mothering identity is both reinforced and disrupted during visits. This was voiced by Aisha who stated that although visits were great, she did not feel like they had the mother child relationship and felt that her 'prisoner' identity was in fact reinforced in the visits hall:

'It is difficult because when they come visit [her children], it's not like you are children and mother. They were afraid to talk to me. They see me as prisoner. It was not a good thing when you get visit. When they come visit is good, but then when they going, everybody is sad. All have sad face'. **Aisha**

Consequently, visits are longed for but also bittersweet, due to the 'experience of a vast range of emotions in a single day; from excitement, anticipation and apprehension prior to the visits, joy, happiness and contentment during the visits, then profound sadness, grief and feelings of loss when the visit is over' (Baldwin, 2017, p. 52). This was evident in Isabella's account, when she noted that while the visits were enjoyable, her and her children were often in tears:

'I remember in [HMP] Send, if you didn't have enhanced, you could only have 3 visits a month. I never got enhanced and so the weekend I never had visits was so 'orrible. It really took it's toll, not being able to see the children and 'avin to wait another week. It felt like forever. Other than that, visits were good, but everytime they left, I used to have this big lump in mi throat and ahh [pauses] it was a 'orrible feeling'. **Isabella**

In addition to this, phone calls and visits are particularly difficult for mothers who have children in care. Relying on care authorities to arrange contact poses significant difficulties (Corston,

2007). This was fundamentally the issue Dominique had to deal with. She had already suffered from the separation when her children were taken to care. What happened she says, is with imprisonment, the distance between them widened and she consequently found her own ways of coping. She was only able to have letter contact with her children who were too young to engage and had to then wait for the authorities to schedule supervised visits 6 times a year which were always delayed.

> **Dominique:** *'I had no contact with them. They would write to me, but I had no phone contact for about 22 months. I went through an almost grieving process… I was grieving for the loss of that relationship'.*
> **Sinem:** *'Were you getting updates on how they were doing'?*
> **Dominique:** *'Oh no it was so difficult. Everything was done by letter and social services were always so slow and difficult… It was almost like I didn't exist'.*
> **Sinem:** *'How did you cope with this'?*
> **Dominique:** *'I started to learn, I feel so bad saying this, but it hurt less in time. I almost pulled myself away from being their mum. I didn't put much emotion, I didn't allow myself to'.*

Dominique felt that lack of contact with her children, she had no alternative but to block them out of her thoughts until sufficient contact could be made. Although she states that she did not put much emotion in to it, Dominique also describes it as a 'grieving process' which is normally a very painful and overwhelming feeling. Nonetheless, she appears to fit the 'suspended mum' typology (as outlined in chapter 3), that Easterling et al. (2018) used to describe women who felt alienated from their positions and identities as mothers while imprisoned. The 'modified mum' typology, on the other hand, resonated with most mothers who expressed a significant sense of powerlessness and loss of control over their children. Although they all defended their identity as mothers, they also highlighted a considerable shift. This was evident in comments such as '*my mothering side was definitely ruined…*' **Isabella**. and '*she* [her daughter] *would no longer listen to me…*' **Paniyota.**

Differing from the other women in the study, Tanisha had not experienced motherhood just yet. She found out she was pregnant with her first baby upon entry into prison and spoke of the slightly different form of crisis she had to deal with:

> *'I can say animals are treated better than pregnant women in there. I had horrible morning sickness, there was nothing to help with it… There were no mirrors, just a tiny one above the sink, so I never saw my body until I was in labour. Erm, I was growing, like my breasts, my belly and I didn't even know what I looked like. There were no opportunities to take photos, so I have no memories of that journey'.* **Tanisha**

After spending a very special and meaningful period locked in a prison cell, Tanisha described the night her contractions began and the humiliation and loneliness that came with it:

> *'I rang the bell and they were taking ages to come… I explained look I'm having contractions… she said when your mucus shows, I want you to tell me. So I put a pad on and then when the show came I pressed the buzzer and eventually she came and… said where is it? you have to show me. I felt like a piece of shit. I had to take the pad out of my knickers and hold it up to the flap and then she said you'll have to wait; we don't have any staff. I was in pain, having contractions. I was so frightened. I was 19 and this was my first baby. Eventually, a nurse came and measured my contractions and said yh you're in labour but you'll be fine for now and she went off. I was in the cell all night. They left me there until the morning, in severe pain… I was handcuffed and taken to the hospital… the officers were in my labour'.* **Tanisha**

Tanisha had a both horrific and degrading experience at the final stage of her pregnancy. Leaving her in a cell during the night was an act of blatant disregard (Abbott, 2018) by the staff, for the significant medical attention she urgently required. Unfortunately, Tanisha is not alone with this experience. On June 18, 2020, Louise Powell gave birth to her daughter Brooke Leigh Powell in her cell, alone, at HMP Styal. Because of the prison system's failures and lack of care, Louise was robbed not just of a positive birth experience, but also of her right to be the mother of baby Brooke, who died during her birth. This is in addition to the deaths of two newborns at HMP Bronzefield, one of whom died en route to the hospital in December 2017 and the other was stillborn in September 2019 (Webster, 2022).

The death of the stillborn infant prompted an investigation by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (2021). According to the subsequent report, which referred to the mother and baby as Ms A and Baby A, Ms A, a vulnerable young woman with a complex history, gave birth alone in her cell overnight without any medical assistance. The investigation found that the healthcare offered to Ms A in Bronzefield was not of the same quality as she could have expected in the community and that the Maternity services provided at Bronzefield were seriously outdated and inadequate (Prisons and Probation Ombudsman, 2021). In comparison to these cases, Tanisha was fortunate to be able to 'finally' welcome her healthy baby into the world without further complications.

On the other hand, after an initial 10-day separation upon entry into prison, Sadia had her child in with her at the mother and baby unit. However, this was a very bittersweet experience:

'I was so conflicted you know, am I a bad mum? Like I've got him in prison with me. Am I doing the right thing or is my breast milk not good enough because I'm stressed… so many conflicting thoughts'. **Sadia**

Sadia went from feeling the guilt of not being able to provide the milk for her son, to then questioning whether it is good enough when she was then able to. It appears that no matter how the situation worked out, Sadia could not escape the feeling of being an inadequate mum (Easterling et al., 2018). Once her baby was born, Tanisha also shared the same feelings and thoughts:

'…In some sense I was so happy that I had him [her son] *with me, but then in the other sense I just felt awful. I felt so shit as a mum. I fucked up. It was so much shame. Like I've got my first baby and he's in prison with me…'* **Tanisha**

Overall, in parallel with current literature (Baldwin, 2021; Easterling et al., 2018; Mignon and Ransford, 2012), the mothers addressed the hardships of mothering from prison, underlining the different obstacles they had to face to maintain a contact with their children. None were concerned about themselves, instead, all focus was on how their child(ren) would cope.

2.2 INVISIBLE VICTIMS

The mothers in the study were not the only ones that suffered from the prison sentence and emotional pain of separation. Their child(ren), as the invisible victims, appeared to pay the price of imprisonment and deal with the emotional trauma too. Mothers are the major caregivers for their children (Minson et al., 2015) and a significant part in their life (Harris, 2017; O'Reilly, 2016), their imprisonment has a particularly negative impact on them, influencing every area of their lives and causing a wide range of feelings, including loss, anguish and humiliation (Beresford et al., 2020). During the interviews, there were several notable cases of this. All the women spoke of how their children suffered in various ways:

'I knew that she wouldn't cope without me, she couldn't. She visited me twice and after the second time, he said [her partner] that he couldn't bring her up anymore because she just couldn't cope with it. She was also bullied in school whilst I was inside, because I was in jail. She had a really tough time. Erm and consequently, she actually took an overdose while I was in prison'. **Paniyota**

Paniyota's daughter struggled significantly with the separation and sought a permanent way out of the temporary situation. Aisha also speaks of the impact her imprisonment had on her children and the problems they faced:

> *'I have three children, one is married. My other daughter was married but my conviction affects her marriage life and then they separate and when he went to court for custody [of their child] he shout loud that I been to prison so the family is not good. So what I went through in prison, she went through behind outside'.* **Aisha**

Some of the mothers also discussed the impact of their imprisonment on their school-aged children. There appeared to be significant difficulties for the children, apparent in phrases like *'...my son, he was young, he couldn't study when I go... he didn't do his exams'* **Aisha** and *'...she never took a single exam'* **Paniyota**. Jubeda's children were also no different. Being at varying ages, they were in the care of Jubeda's family for a while before being left to fend for themselves. She talks of how difficult that period was:

> *'The kids were with my family, but they were treated bad. They were getting beats and being treated badly and being threatened not to tell me but I knew what was going on. It was terrible times. And my son, even being with family, I know my sister hit him and my nephew was horrible to him. He was only 7-8 and he was already going through this with you know, no mum around, no dad and he was facing abuse'.* **Jubeda**

Jubeda's extract is filled with guilt for the challenges and struggles she believes she has caused all her children. However, she emphasises her concerns for her daughter.:

> *'...coz I had a 15-year-old daughter at the time, I was worried about what people were going to say, what were they going to think, how she was going to be treated outside. You know, all these things, my life was ruined and so was theirs. Like in the community you know, one day she gets married what would the other family think'.* **Jubeda**

Given that honour extends to family, the staining of the family name begins with the mother and extends to the children (Buncy and Ahmed, 2019). This could cause social death for the family, with people no longer wishing to associate with them. In addition to the stigma attached to mothers in prison who are perceived as unfit and indifferent (Kauffman, 2001), Jubeda also emphasises the strong cultural stigma attached to the children of mothers in prison, but with particular reference to her daughter. In line with Aisha's daughters experience, this suggests that females in the families are more likely to be the ones that carry the burden of their mother's imprisonment. Notably, it is argued that behaviour that dishonours the family not only affect the women themselves but also their female children who would have to deal with the

consequences too (Gill, 2004). People may not want to keep current or new marriage links with the family (Buncy and Ahmed, 2019) as was the case for Aisha's daughter.

The accounts given by the other women were slightly different, but also painful. For Zara, although she was able to maintain a relationship with her daughter, the fact that she was too young to understand the situation, made things difficult:

> *'I remember when I used to call, I only had 10 minutes and she wouldn't let my mum on the phone and she would always ask why I wasn't coming home… I think we had a good relationship, but we were both broken, I knew she was finding it difficult to cope'.* **Zara**

Sadia's child being even younger led to a different type of experience. As stated she had her baby with her at the mother and baby unit. However, he was placed in the custody of her ex-husband's family once he reached 18 months. From this point onwards, Sadia entered her stage of grief and disconnection and became the 'suspended mum' (Easterling et al., 2018). She speaks of the emotional pain she encountered, particularly during visits:

> *'He wasn't calling me mama, he was calling my mother in law at the time mama which was very, very sad. She would tell him she's his mum, in that way she was pretty spiteful but I had to let it slide because she had my son and was his carer. But it was tough in itself, you know, your child, your first child is recognising another woman as his mum. That was heart breaking… He definitely forgot me'.* **Sadia**

Tanisha, on the other hand, faced a unique problem because she had her son with her during her prison sentence. Her son was terrified on their first ROTL[7] together, having never seen the world outside of prison:

> *'On my first home leave with my son, I was crossing the road with my son in my hands and he was frightened because of the noise of the traffic and I felt so bad, like I thought traffic is just normal but he was frightened. He was only familiar with prison'.* **Tanisha**

It was considerably different for Dominique. Her children had already suffered from the separation when they were taken into care which she explains was difficult for all three, but particularly damaging for her eldest daughter:

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[7] Release on Temporary Licence – once eligible, prisoners are allowed to go out for the day for specific purposes such as for work, education, family ties and/or medical treatment.

> '...at 14 she was put in a separate foster care from the other two and then she went into residential care and erm, she was just so Feral really. She had to bring herself up from 14. She went through 15 foster carers and then was put in 2 different residentials'. **Dominique**

Her daughter was eventually able to visit her twice in prison but this was a difficult experience for both given the physical barriers and emotional disconnection:

> 'She was brought up by social services. My daughter was very, very emotional. I think I was so far away from her, it was such a traumatic thing for her to want to get to me and not be able to…' **Dominique**

As previously stated, depending on the statutory authorities to arrange visits for children in care poses problems of its own (Corston, 2007). They can significantly hinder the mother-child relationship which would already be fragile due to the mother's imprisonment (Lockwood, 2018). As for her other children, Dominique states she was finally able to see them in a contact centre on day release from prison. The visit, however, was tough, after 22 months of no communication. This was evident in her remark *'...they were both very reserved'*. **Dominique.** Recalling the evening of that day she states:

> 'That was the first time I actually cried. I remember sitting on my bed [prison] and thinking, these [her children] are the victims in all this, not me, not the victims, but them. Children are the real victims'. **Dominique**

This was also emphasised in Jubeda's extract:

> '...It ruined my children's lives… the kids pay more for what the parent has done. They were punished for it, It's like they served the sentence… Taking the parent away ruins the future of the children'. **Jubeda**

All the children appear to have paid the price and served sentences alongside their mothers in some way. The women were deeply aware of the harm caused to the children and such an experience led to the mothers feeling further levels of guilt as well as a complete loss of confidence in their mothering abilities. Importantly, it is claimed that prisoners experience a shift 'from a whole and normal person to a tainted and discounted one' (Goffman, 1963, p. 3), and the loss of their most valued identity, mothering, exacerbates that shift.

2.3 THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

Following the painful journey, some of the women began a period of recovery. One form of recovery was the move to an open prison where restrictions are reduced. These conditions were described by several as being a more relaxed environment with a wider range of opportunities and greater support. Women are not confined to a cell and are given far more freedom to roam the prison grounds. There are no gates or high walls, which makes visits less intimidating for families and children. Fundamentally, such an atmosphere, while not identical, resembles the women's centres proposed by Corston (2007).

The women can also go on ROTLs to search for work, and prepare for their release but most importantly, reconnect with their family/loved ones through regular home visits. Girshick (1999) contends that 'the importance of contact with family and friends cannot be overstated. It not only provides emotional support for the incarcerated woman, but also allows some semblance of role maintenance, though redefined' (p. 105). Given that prisoners are no longer locked behind a closed door with dehumanising restrictions, they are welcomed to open doors that unbolt a wider range of coping mechanisms. Ultimately, there is more room for 'emotion zones' (Danks and Bradley, 2018, p. 13) in open prisons as there is greater freedom, allowing most women to reclaim part of their mothering identities. The other form of strength and recovery was the women's faith which they felt gave them the strength to get through their sentence. Their accounts of these stages were mainly positive, with them talking of mending relationships with their children and learning new skills in preparation for release, all while strengthening themselves through faith. For example, speaking of her move to open prison, Isabella highlights the immediate difference she felt:

> '...the minute we pulled up outside the big house [open prison], it felt so good, I ain't felt like this in so long. It was such a good feeling... especially not seeing any walls, the prison walls. It felt a little more normal in there'. **Isabella**

Isabella also speaks about her ROTLs, although bittersweet, she describes them as being an amazing experience:

> '...it was very emotional. Ahh it was emotional. They [the children] were overwhelmed and so was I, but it was the best... I'd be excited from before but then I'd start thinking about the part of coming back to prison and that sort of ruined it all. It was almost like

> *I didn't wana go [on ROTL] coz I didn't wana go through that feeling coming back. You know, it was obviously worth it though'.* **Isabella**

Isabella's bittersweet experience is described by Shammas (2014) as the 'pains of freedom' where freedom can be 'experienced as ambiguous, bittersweet or tainted' (p. 104). The move to open conditions was also a positive one for Paniyota. Moving from a strict regime and high security measures to a much more relaxed and welcoming environment appears to have made prison more tolerable:

> *'ESP* [open prison] *for me, was much better because obviously I was able to keep busy, you know, working at the farm. Erm, obviously the food was much better. It was a nicer environment. My daughter could come and visit me and it was more laid back and communicating with her was easier too because I could call anytime'.* **Paniyota**

Aisha also spoke of how it benefited her:

> *'When I'm in open [prison], I got good friends which always make me smile when I'm walking. I got good friends. They are happy when I helping everyone with that they need. The officers there was also good to me as well. And I loved the job I choose in the garden, I enjoying. And I got education over there which is level 1 in Maths and English, I got that and I'm so happy about it. I done freedom course and I done domestic violence [course] and it changed me about this one. Make me stronger and so I stand for myself now'.* **Aisha**

Statham et al. (2021) conducted a study in a category D Men's open prison in the UK. The study consisted of semi-structured interviews with 11 men that were serving in the open establishments at the time. Participants in the study described the various ways in which open conditions facilitated them to move away from being passive recipients of the prison service, towards being active citizens both inside and outside of the establishment. Statham et al. (2021) found that there was a stronger sense of togetherness amongst residents in the category D prison. Given the lengthy process and several risk assessments required to pass to make it to open prisons, the study found that the men were in their liminal states, reworking their criminal pasts through the encouragement of active citizenship in the prison. Although the 'criminal past' arguably does not apply to the majority of imprisoned women as most have broken the law for the first time (Corston, 2007). Whilst open conditions evidently gave Aisha the opportunity to develop herself and build confidence, for Dominique, it was being able to get back in contact with her children. A step towards reconnecting and rebuilding the relationship after no contact:

> *'When I went to open prison, I started seeing them* [her children]*, I was now allowed to see them 6 times a year'.* **Dominique**

On the other hand, for Sadia, it was being able to go out on day releases to see her child:

> *'...they were very understanding that you're a mother. I was given childcare ROTLs on top of the normal ROTLs so I got to see my son more. I was able to talk to him a lot on the phone as he was getting older. We definitely got to rebuild our relationship while I was at open [prison]. Open prison was definitely good'.* **Sadia**

Unlike some of the other women who felt 'free' in prison, the situation appeared to be otherwise for Sadia though. She talks about the problems her husband at the time caused on social visits at the prison and the negative impact this had on her:

> *'So he would be present on my day releases* [from open prison] *and on my licence conditions it stated that I can't have any contact with him coz he's a violent individual. He threw a tray at me once in Bronzefield on Christmas eve and there was a few problems that happened so open prison felt that it wasn't safe for me to go out unless these conditions are put in place to protect myself and my son'.* **Sadia**

Every prisoner leaving the prison on ROTL would have a set of conditions on their licence (Ministry of Justice, 2012). These would depend on their current situation and their prior offence. Any breach of these conditions would lead to a ban in ROTLs for that person and possibly a ship out back to a closed prison. Notably, the participants in the study of Statham et al. (2021) appeared to have a sense of unease due to the lack of physical security, but high risk of being sent back to closed conditions if they were not to remain within the invisible boundaries. The onus of resisting temptation ultimately felt difficult. Similarly, in their study on examining staff culture, use of authority and prisoner quality of life, Crewe et al. (2011) found that prisoners tend to dislike establishments which are over-permissive as they claim it is too easy to 'get into trouble' (p. 105).

In accordance, in an autoethnographic study conducted within an open establishment, Micklethwaite and Earle (2021) describe how witnessing so many residents transfer back to closed conditions daily 'served for a very insecure sense of environment' (p. 7). The fact that Sadia's ex-husband was present at her former mother-in-law's home every week without fail meant that she was trapped in a very difficult situation. If she were to make the prison aware of her ex-husband's presence, she would not be allowed the ROTL for her own safety. However, her not informing the prison meant that she was in breach of her licence and this could have resulted in a return to closed conditions:

'So throughout the 5 months of being able to come out and see my son, he would be at their property from the night before and I was forced to spend time with him. I had to accept the fact that he was there every week without fail and he would force me to act as a wife for him, which would, you know, he would want me to sleep with him although he knew I wouldn't want to and I had to shut up and accept it, because at the time they had my kid'. **Sadia**

Fundamentally, the primary purpose of open establishments is to assist residents in overcoming barriers to reintegration (Minson et al., 2015). Given that her ex-husband was her major barrier, Sadia's unwillingness to seek assistance from staff was troubling, but also suggestive of a lack of trust or confidence in the prison staff, as well as the prison environment feeling 'insecure.' Consequently, she chose to inform her former mother-in-law about the situation but was confronted with hostility and told to accept it. Importantly, 'if women speak out against the violence perpetrated against them, they are often blamed for its occurrence and forced to carry the burden of shame' (Gill, 2004, p. 479). Sadia was evidently caught in the centre of a double-edged sword situation. ROTLs also appeared to be problematic for Jubeda. She felt that her children were being emotionally reserved. This was apparent in her comment *'...so what is really in their hearts, they don't show you'.* **Jubeda**. She then compares that situation to unwrapping a present:

'*...it unwraps like a big present. Loads of sheets of paper until you reach the bottom'.* **Sinem:** *'What was at the bottom'?*
'ahh [pauses] *there was a lot of anger because of what happened, they were actually very hurt'.* **Jubeda**

On the other hand, Tanisha experienced open prison very differently to all the other women in the study. Being the only mother that did not separate from her child at any point during her sentence, her account of open prison was the most positive:

'*...open prison was much nicer in terms of the environment. I was able to take him* [her son] *for walks on the grounds of the prison at any time. I could be a mum, I didn't feel like that in closed prison. I could cook for him, erm... big play area for the kids and a proper nursery'.* **Tanisha**

According to Crewe (2011), the lack of physical boundaries puts pressure on individuals' personal resources, which can be intimidating for those who have become dependent on others. In parallel, Statham et al. (2021) state that open prison can be both worrying and overwhelming for exactly those reasons. However, both studies focused on men and would therefore not be

applicable to women. To date, there have not been any notable studies that focus on women's experience of open prisons. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to conclude that none of the women in this study were concerned about being within invisible boundaries, nor were they concerned about lack of physical security. Particularly given that women absconding from open prison is almost unheard of (Baldwin, 2018).

Another positive aspect that all the women spoke about was their faith. Their religion/belief appeared to be a major factor that helped them get through their sentence. It offered them a sense of belonging and provided them with internal resilience. Regardless of their religion or cultural background, all eight women acknowledged their faith in God and how that faith provided them with strength and support. Sadia, for example, does not question her imprisonment and appears to believe that everything happened for a reason:

> *'I believed harder than I ever have that God is going to get me out of this… I literally put all my faith and belief to God and I said what you have planned for me, I accept, I know you will protect me and my child and I know there is a greater reason this is happening'.* **Sadia**

Fundamentally, religion provides hope for those who are incarcerated (Ross, 2021). Prisoners are argued to need hope to keep prison bearable, give them purpose and help them remain optimistic about the future (O'Connor and Duncan, 2011). According to Dammer's (2002) findings from a year-long ethnographic study of two religious programmes in two large male prisons in the northeast United States, some prisoners believed that their imprisonment was 'what God wanted for them,' that being in prison was 'God's will,' and that full acceptance of that will was required for being truly sincere in one's faith. The participants believed that their incarceration was part of God's plan for them, and that it was their job to carry it out. In somewhat parallel with Sadia, Zara also highlighted the significance of her faith in God and how she believes it would get her through the period of imprisonment. This is evident in her comment *'I believed God will give me the strength to get through'* **Zara**. Aisha and Jubeda also found strength in their religion. This is apparent in their remarks, '*I get through it easier... it make me strong.'* **Aisha** and *'Prison brought me closer to my religion'* **Jubeda.**

Dammer (2002) distinguished between two types of prisoners in his study: the sincere and the insincere. The first were regarded to have more authentic religious beliefs and practises, and

they viewed religion as a driving force in their lives. In contrast, the latter were more likely to be interested in religion for the purpose of manipulation, and their behaviour did not reflect the norms or criteria of any formal religion. In parallel, Ross (2021) terms the 'insincere' prisoners discovered by Dammer (2002) as 'wolves in sheep's clothes'. Nevertheless, the findings of Dammer's (2002) study revealed a faithful response to the challenging circumstances of imprisonment and indicated that, among the prisoners who practiced religion while incarcerated and labelled as sincere, several positive factors were present, such as motivation, direction and meaning for life, hope for the future and positive self-esteem. As an individual who was not religious prior to her imprisonment, Isabella also speaks of turning to Church:

> *'I started going church every Sunday too so that helped me as well with dealing with what I was going through'.* **Isabella**

Isabella felt that going to church helped her get over her difficult time. On the other hand, Tanisha, who was also formerly non-religious, turned to the Church for a sense of belonging:

> *'I went to Church… I er... I grew up in church but was never really religious. But I remember in prison, I wanted to go* [to church]. *It gave me purpose, gave me a sense of belonging, it was a familiar environment and it felt good'.* **Tanisha**

The presence of Church was also significant for Dominique. It was the beginning of the road to her recovery:

> *'I went to church and I still do. After that I started the gym, wasn't smoking, no drinking… I couldn't be a better version of myself'.* **Dominique**

Religion helps prisoners in coping with the hardships of incarceration and gives a foundation for embracing their current situation, no matter how horrible it appears. Prisoners are better able to deal with the frustrations and day-to-day stresses of being incarcerated after obtaining the necessary strength. In parallel, Clear and Sumter (2002) suggest that the major role of religion in prisons is to buffer and prevent the further loss of dignity and humanity of people who are placed in the intrinsically dehumanising conditions of prison. Furthermore, Dammer (2002) claims that in the absence of religion, prisoners may choose to express their frustrations aggressively, either by harming themselves or others, and that religious engagement therefore provides psychological solace to prisoners while also giving meaning to their lives. He states that the prisoner can seek to address existential issues such as 'What is the purpose of my life?' and 'Why am I in prison?' with the guidance of religion and would ultimately have a hard time

dealing with the harsh realities of his situation if he/she did not have religion to turn to. Although this does not apply to all, as there are many non-religious prisoners who may find strength in anything other than religion, the argument that religion can be a substantial positive factor may be proven true.

Fundamentally, both the more relaxed environment (open prison) and their religious beliefs, as well as being around people who could understand them culturally, appeared to make the women's imprisonment experience slightly more bearable. Although most were subjected to cultural pressure from a young age, their faith certainly appeared to provide them with internal strength.

THEME 3: CULTURAL BURDEN MAGNIFIED

Alongside experiencing their faith as a source of strength in prison, the women also appeared to experience the hinderance as a continuation from their early lives. All eight women evidently struggled to negotiate their cultural backgrounds with their prisoner status. All the women attributed this to their ethnicity and the visibility of it, alongside their cultural requirements they felt were a burden on the prison staff. This appeared to lead to emotions of inadequacy, which had ramifications for their sense of self-worth. These are interrelated into two subordinate themes: *Cultural Pains of Imprisonment* and *Negotiating Cultural Identity.*

3.1 CULTURAL PAINS OF IMPRISONMENT

Culture manifested itself in a variety of ways for the women, ranging from isolation to feeling like a burden on the prison system. In line with current literature, all the women in this study detailed the diverse struggles and concerns they had to deal with, such as feeling silenced, encountering ethnic or racial bias, language barriers, isolation and discrimination (Cardale et al., 2017). More crucially, several women in the study mentioned the stigma they felt as women in prison in conjunction with their cultural/ethnic communities (Cox and Sack-Jones, 2017; Easterling and Feldmeyer, 2017). They believed that the status of 'prisoner' was the greatest source of shame. Sadia, for example, discusses how male and female prisoners are treated differently in the culture and how this has left her struggling:

'My experience was a disturbingly lonely one coz I had no support and it was like 98 percent because of the culture, because of the religion and the whole stigma around it and the same goes for my in-laws. They're Arabs, they would go see their sons who have been to prison, but they wouldn't come and see me coz I'm a female and I've brought shame and you know, so it was tough'. **Sadia**

Sadia clearly felt the challenge of being a female at its core and had to withstand a terribly lonely experience. In parallel with her, Paniyota also speaks about the same issue that existed in her culture. Having been disowned and left to serve her sentence without the support of her extended family, she compares her experience to that of her male cousin:

'My male cousin was actually prosecuted for rape, got 8 years and he was welcomed home like a hero. You know, none of the family disowned him. They all stood by him, they would go to visit him on the weekends and… and I just couldn't process how somebody who could physically harm another human being could be you know, treated completely different from somebody who, you know, didn't commit a crime that hurt anybody, that physically damaged anybody'. **Paniyota**

While female prisoners are marginalised and labelled as bringing shame and disgrace to the family and community, some societies, particularly being Muslim, seem to embrace male inmates more readily (Buncy and Ahmed, 2014; Cox and Sacks-Jones, 2017). Even though Sadia and Paniyota come from different ethnic backgrounds and cultures, the variations in gender treatment are the same. However, whilst commenting on how alienated she felt during her imprisonment, Paniyota also emphasised the variances visible within the same cultures, making culture a tough factor to disentangle:

'…there was one other Cypriot lady who had the same family background. But it was also difficult because her family were obviously very close but my family at this point, had disowned me. They completely disowned me from the day I was arrested'. **Paniyota**

Despite its declining dominance, the notion of personal honour and family reputation still exists in the Greek community (Siddiqui, 2005) and this is the reason Paniyota was disowned from the start. Coinciding with their experiences, Jubeda was also isolated during her prison sentence. Her extended family had not only shunned her but were also not allowing her children to be in touch:

'They weren't allowed to come and see me, you know or speak to me. I would call sometimes, and I could hear in the background there were arguments going on…' **Jubeda**

This was also voiced by Aisha:

> *'I be alone inside. My husband, my family don't want to know me. Just my kids. They always say I bring shame'.* **Aisha**

Four of the women, three of Muslim heritage and one Greek Orthodox, described the difficulties they faced because of the shame and stigma they had brought on their families due to their imprisonment. They were alienated and even disowned by their loved ones because of this. Although ostracism is experienced by others as well, it appears to be particularly prevalent among Muslim women. This reinforces the study conducted by Buncy and Ahmed (2014), who concluded that due to cultural constraints within the Muslim community, where being ostracised for serving time in prison appears to be the social norm, incarcerated women of the Islamic faith face greater difficulties and hurdles than their other female counterparts. However, rejection and isolation were not the only issues raised. The women in the research appeared to feel the weight of their culture in other ways too. For example, as Muslims, Jubeda and Aisha only eat food that are permitted within the religion (halal food). They both mentioned that food was a significant problem for them in prison:

> *'...like we didn't eat pork and stuff but it wasn't really taken into account much. I don't think we were really liked. It was like an extra burden for the officers, like the food requirements and cultural things, you know like fasting and praying'.* **Jubeda**

> *'...they gave something which I didn't know what it was and there was pork in there'.* **Aisha**

Buncy and Ahmed (2019, p. 27) note that 'faith for Muslims is central to their self-understanding and their identity. It governs all aspects of life from food, dress code, moral conduct to family life.' However, Jubeda felt that requiring these vital aspects that determine their lives as Muslim women, was a burden on the prison. In examining results of prisoner surveys conducted at every full inspection, HM Prison Inspectorate (2009) found that Muslim prisoners' responses were significantly worse than those of other prisoners. Forty percent of Muslims stated they had been mistreated by staff, compared to only 22 percent of non-Muslims. In comparison to other faiths though, prisons were found to be more sensitive to Muslim religious demands. All Islamic festivals were honoured, appropriate prayer areas were provided, and a regular, often full-time Muslim chaplain was present (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2009). This accessibility, however, does not appear to disguise the negative attitudes

of those (prison staff) that are facilitating it. Supporting this, Paniyota felt that other ethnic/religious groups were the only ones considered, particularly being Muslims:

> **Paniyota:** *'I felt that they tended to cater for the main ethnic group and they forgot about the Cypriots and maybe, erm, there was a Jewish girl in Peterborough, she was forgotten too'.*
> **Sinem**: *'When you say main ethnic group, who are you referring to'?*
> **Paniyota:** *'I think like you know, your Muslims they cater for very well, it sounds really bad but I think Muslims were catered for the most. I loved that they were [laughs]because it meant we got some nice food, like you know halal and what not. But I just felt that your main ethnic group, your Christians, your Catholics and your Muslims were catered for, but there was nothing for me being Greek Orthodox. I couldn't follow the traditions that I would have if I was at home.'*

Paniyota seemed to be frustrated with the prison system, emphasising the issue of food, implying that this was an important part of her religious upbringing. The fact that she refers to all other ethnic/religious groups as the 'main' suggests that she thinks of herself and her heritage as subordinated. Even though she initially stated that she did not fit in with the other prisoners because she was well dressed and 'normal', implying that she felt superior to them, her ethnicity and religious issues appeared to make her feel otherwise. Mason (2003) claims that a group of individuals must have a significant degree of difference to be classified as a minoritised – that being those whose skin colour is not White. He states that not every ethnic group with a distinct culture that is a minority in the British population is typically included. Given this, communities such as Cypriot, Italian, and Polish etc. are rarely considered as ethnic minorities. Contradicting this though, Garner (2010) argues that the 'Anglo Saxons White' is at the summit of the White race, while the remainder are regarded as 'a kind of White trash' (Shire, 2008, p. 75). Ultimately, the question for Paniyota could be whether the prison service did not in fact acknowledge her or that she almost fit in as 'White'.

In either case, some individuals of different cultures and nationalities are evidently made to feel invisible. On the other extreme, the women of biracial background appeared to feel too visible. They discussed the difficulties that come with being so visibly different. For example, as a Black woman, Tanisha perceived her skin colour to be troublesome. When she was informed that she would be transferred to a new prison, the location immediately worried her:

> *'…Winchester [prison] and I was frightened thinking oh my god I'm gonna go to this prison where everyone is White, no one is gonna be like me, so I was really frightened'.*
> **Tanisha**

She feels her fears were verified when she saw the judgemental gazes of community members on her way to college from prison. Tanisha's extract appears to have the interlocking vulnerabilities prone to discrimination at its core, that being a **'Black' 'woman'** and **'mother'** with her child, as well as having a **'prisoner status'**:

> *'I used to stand outside the prison and I had to wait for the local bus. I used to get on the bus and I was the only brown skin getting on and everyone would just stare at me coz one, I look different, two, I'm standing outside the prison so they know that I'm a prisoner and three, I've got a baby with me. So every week it was so embarrassing to make that journey'.* **Tanisha**

In addition to this experience, Tanisha also struggled with adhering to her cultural traditions out of fear of troubling the prison staff. This was evident in her comment:

> *'...if you request things you want because culturally that's a part of you then you're being a nuisance'.* **Tanisha**

Dominique also had a similar experience. Although she tried to blend in with her White peers, she felt burdened by her skin colour:

> *'...I tried to be White to fit in if that makes sense, but throughout prison you were definitely dealt with differently because of your colour. You were... you were just not treated fairly and nothing you need was ever provided. You know, like my hair texture is different, I can't just use any product. But mentioning this, you were seen as trouble'.* **Dominique**

Such issues coincide with the findings of HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2005) where, as stated, minoritised women had reported that their needs had been overlooked. Nevertheless, both Dominique and Tanisha reported that their skin colour was a factor that made them vulnerable to discrimination and 'othering'. Although women, particularly those of minoritised backgrounds, face many of similar issues in prison, Chigwada-Bailey (2003) argues that Black women deal with additional challenges such as the colour of their skin, which has an impact on their experiences and treatment. This is not only isolated within the prison system but also a factor at sentencing Dominique recalled a time when she felt this burden, or more specifically, racial discrimination:

'Erm, for example in my proceeds of crime case[8], there was 13 of us in the case and 3 of us were of ethnic origin. All the White people didn't get any extra time, but us ethnics, all got 15 months and a 30,000 pound bill. All exactly the same and none of the White people in the case got that. I mean that was the most extreme that I've seen that I was like there's just no other way or no other reason for this, it had to be our colour. The White people never got an extra day'. **Dominique**

Discrimination at courts is stated to be a 'racism-related life event' (S. P. Harrell, 2000) that can cause trauma and rage. Hardy (2013) states that this is a deep emotional reaction to feelings of devaluation and degradation. It is one that develops over time due to the build-up of suppressed emotions brought on by injustice and voicelessness. Dominique's contrasting experience was a significant example of this and she is not alone. Evidence has shown that Black women presenting at Crown Court are 25 percent more likely than White women to be sentenced to custody (Uhrig, 2016). They were also identified as being 2.3 times more likely to receive a custodial sentence for drug offences than White women. This is argued to be 'traced back to a combination of disproportionate arrest and disproportionate custodial sentencing' (Barnes and Stringer, 2014; Bowling and Phillips, 2002; Uhrig 2016).

Also feeling the discrimination as a Traveller woman, Isabella recalls a time where she had returned from her ROTL to the open prison:

'you know I was searched and then when I left to go to my room, they called me back and made me do the breathalysing thing and I just said what was this for? And that's when they told me they thought they could smell drink on me and I thought you're just thinkin the worst sort of thing because I'm a traveller. You know im not tryina say I'm perfect person but I feel like they just had a bad impression of me because of where I was from. Like I know they always think bad of us gypsies…' **Isabella**

Travellers are subjected to widespread inequality, prejudice, discrimination, and racism from a variety of agencies and services that are supposed to support them (Cemlyn et al., 2010). As a result, they are three times more likely to be anxious and just over twice as likely to be depressed than the general population, with women experiencing mental health issues twice as frequently as their male counterparts (Favril et al., 2020; Parry et al., 2007). Isabella was also trying to make sense of why there was so much in-direct/direct discrimination against the

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[8] The term 'proceeds of crime' refers to money or assets obtained by persons while engaging in illegal activities. The authorities, including the Crime Prosecution Service, have the power to pursue confiscation of these assets so that the offence has no reward. Such confiscation is addressed in a court hearing following sentencing and is known as proceeds of crime.

Traveller population. Isabella appeared to be very self-conscious of her background during the interview, and while she indicated that many Travellers did not exactly follow rules, she also had a reason for it:

> '...it all stems back from many years ago where travellers weren't even allowed in shops or given jobs so they had to break the rules to survive. You know, they used to have signs on doors saying no pikies and things like that and it all stems back from then really. So it's created a sort of stereo typical mind of travellers not following rules and causing trouble'. **Isabella**

Showing no signs of resentment or anger while speaking about their victimisation, Isabella appeared empathetic and understanding of her ancestors' suffering. However, her narrative was more upbeat when she spoke about being around other like-minded, cultural women during her sentence which she stated made her sentence easier to get through. She seemed to feel less judged and more accepted, as seen by her more positive remarks about the time she had a cellmate she could relate to:

> 'So I shared a cell with a Moroccan girl but that was good. I found that with people from different cultures we have a lot in common. Like I can relate more to cultural people from other countries than I would with a White British person who would be more stereotypical of us. You know, I didn't have any trouble mixing with people from different backgrounds who understood us as a community. Like they would also have strict families and reputation would matter and they would be clean and have their typical, you know, like wife and mother roles at home'. **Isabella**

Tanisha also mentioned turning to other women with similar cultural backgrounds, for possibly a sense connection and security:

> 'I tried to find people that were culturally similar to me, that made me feel safer in prison'. **Tanisha**

Culture manifested itself in a variety of ways for the women in the study. Whilst some felt isolated and like a burden on the prison for their cultural requirements, others looked for some sense of safety and security. For example, whilst Dominique states she tried to be White to fit in, Isabella and Tanisha turned to individuals with whom they felt more comfortable.

During their prison sentences, all the women had difficulty negotiating their cultural identities. These manifested in a variety of forms but were all interconnected. Sadia, for example, was imprisoned shortly after the terrorist attacks on the Manchester Arena in 2017. She described the impact this had on her:

> *'I was definitely racially profiled. It was during the Manchester bombings. When I was incarcerated, I used to wear a head scarf. Erm but I took it off whilst inside because like, I was being treated differently, worse than normal people'.* **Sadia**

Sadia's experience is consistent with the findings of the HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2010) review, which found indications of psychological distress, commonly tied to how Muslims in prison believed they were perceived. The review's single most common finding was the issue of stereotypical depictions of Muslims and Islam, which had impact on their prison experiences. As previously stated, this is due in part to the mistaken concept of radicalization (Mohammed and Nickolls, 2020), which encourages discrimination (Murtaj and Tufail, 2017), as well as Muslim prisoners' consequent self-consciousness. This was the reason Sadia felt the need to stop wearing her clothes that made her Muslim identity visible (Mohammed and Nickolls, 2020). Furthermore, having referred to all non-Muslims as 'normal people' Sadia's narrative reveals how marginalised she viewed herself and her religion. As a result, she felt the need to change her appearance to mix with others. However, this did not prevent her from encountering issues because of the bombings at the Manchester Arena:

> *'...I booked a family room... They [prison officers] weren't allowing me to close the door and there were constantly officers coming in and out and then they terminated my visit 10 minutes early. So the next day my case worker spoke to me and she said "So, I wanted to ask you, how do you feel that innocent people were killed by your people, by Muslims?". I said: has yesterday got anything to do with this? and she said yeah, they were monitoring you because of the bombings, we are on high alert now'.* **Sadia**

Since the 9/11 and 7/7 attacks, Muslims, particularly those of Asian appearance, have been increasingly targeted in prisons (Bhui, 2009; Dammer, 2002) and the Manchester bombings exacerbated this. As a result, Spalek et al. (2009) argue that Muslim populations, who are more likely to be stigmatised and associated with terrorists, are increasingly feeling threatened. The authors compare the situation of Muslims to that of Irish Catholics in the recent past, who

became a 'suspect community' during the provisional IRA's[9] long terrorist campaign and claim that the bombings put Muslim communities at the highest risk of being cast in the role of 'suspect communities'. This is particularly problematic for Muslim women, who encounter islamophobia in addition to religious oppression. Ultimately, for women like Sadia, the problem is both internal (family and community) and external (society).

A crucial concern in prisons is identifying and connecting with prisoners who may be prone to extremism. Officers are taught how to recognise and respond to indicators of radicalization through the Prevent programme. In a system where security is the most legitimate responsibility, Bhui (2009, p. 91) states that 'the identification of potentially radical Muslim prisoners is an easily understood security-driven objective'. However, if combating extremism is prioritised, the service's commitment to racial equality will be compromised and equal treatment would not be possible. Sadia also expresses this sense of inadequacy in her remarks regarding the other children in the mother and baby unit (MBU) and how her son was handled differently than them:

> *'They took him out on a day trip twice but all the other kids were always being taken out. Like the full English, upper class, mums gone to Oxford [University] kinda kids were going out once a week…'* **Sadia**

When referring to the other children in the mother and baby unit as '*mum's gone to Oxford kinda kids'*, Sadia appears to have a negative, two-dimensional perception of herself. The first is her ethnicity, which is not '*full English'*, and the other is her socioeconomic class, which is not '*upper'*. She evidently felt that these two factors were the reasons why her son was not taken out once a week. (Garfinkel, 1956) refers to this as the degradation ceremony, a transition to a lower status, which is arguably how she was made to feel about herself. It is also worth noting that the women's prison population is made up of people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Corston, 2007), making it exceedingly unlikely that the MBU's mothers were Oxford University graduates. As a result, Sadia clearly felt inferior among other mothers who were in similar situations. Given her remark of *'full* English', the only possible distinction could be that they were of White background.

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[9] Irish Republican Army

In contrast, whilst Sadia felt that both her and her son were treated differently because of her religious beliefs and ethnic origin, Aisha appeared to feel that their identity as Muslim women were never considered:

> *'They* [prison staff] *don't look at you like a Muslim, just, you are a prisoner'.* **Aisha**

However, in parallel with Sadia, Isabella felt the need to conceal her identity to blend in. Despite the absence of a direct threat of discrimination upon entry into prison, she appears to have been excessively self-conscious of her background and the difficulties it could bring:

> *'...when I first got to prison, they ask if you're a traveller or not and I said no I'm not. Although I know he [officer] didn't believe me coz he was like are you sure but I said yeah, Im not a traveller coz I didn't want it down on paper. I wanted to be treated the same and I knew I would have been treated differently if I said I'm a traveller'.* **Isabella**

In 2011 the Irish Chaplaincy examined the position of Irish Traveller prisoners in England and Wales (MacGabhann, 2011). The research found that upon entry into prison, many Travellers chose not to identify as Travellers out of fear of bullying and racism from prison officers and from other prisoners. MacGabhann (2011) also found that Irish Travellers suffer unequal hardship in prison because of 'poor levels of literacy, mental illness, limited access to services, discrimination, and prejudicial licence conditions for release' (p. 84). Travellers in prison encounter racism, discrimination, and bullying from other prisoners and staff. According to (Power, 2004), staff often have unchallenged prejudices about Travellers and nomads, either because of personal experiences, or more often due to social osmosis. Gypsy-Travellers have long been stigmatised as filthy, dangerous, and lazy thieves (Garner, 2017) and it appears that these stereotypes persist in prison too.

Although, making no attempt to adjust, Zara also appeared to believe that her ethnicity would prevent her from blending in with the rest of the prison population. This was apparent in her comment *'I knew I wouldn't fit in anyway coz I'm Turkish'.* **Zara.** In contrast to the three women, Paniyota appeared to feel superior with her appearance in comparison to other prisoners. For example, whilst Sadia felt that others were 'normal' Paniyota asserted that she was the normal one:

> *'...I didn't look like your typical criminal [laughs]. That sounds really bad doesn't it but you know, I was... I was dressed well, I was just normal'.* **Paniyota**

Dominique's experience with negotiating identity was different to all the other women. Although acutely aware of her ethnic origin and the difficulties she may encounter because of it, she was more concerned about the fact that her years of victimisation had gone unnoticed. She appeared to be making sense of what she should have been identified as:

> *'Even though I was in a very coercive relationship and there was evidence brought to court of the abuse I suffered. Even though I was a victim in that sense, I was still a perpetrator. I had poor mental health, drug use, everything that showed my vulnerabilities. It was ignored'.* **Dominique**

According to Allen et al. (2010), a definite correlation exists between trauma, substance misuse, and poor mental health. While trauma is a primary cause of mental illness, self-medication with drugs and alcohol is frequently used to cope with the pain. Imprisoned women are often found to have been victims of much more serious offences than those of which they have been convicted. According to the Ministry of Justice (2014), more than half of the women in England's prisons (53 percent) have experienced emotional, physical, or sexual abuse as children, and 57 percent have encountered domestic violence as adults. Given that many women do not provide such information, these statistics are likely to be underestimated (Gelsthorpe et al., 2007).

Additionally, it is stated that 79 percent of women who seek the assistance of the charity, Women in Prison, have experienced domestic violence or sexual abuse (House of Commons, 2013). These figures are also consistent with the findings of the Prison Reform Trust (2011), which indicated that 40 percent of young females in prison had experienced domestic violence and 30 percent had experienced sexual abuse at home. Through their surveys with the prisoners, Inspectorate reports on women's prisons confirmed high levels of prior victimisation. For example, they discovered that 58 percent of women surveyed in HMP Bronzefield, the UK's largest women's prison, had suffered domestic abuse, and 34 percent said they were experiencing it at the time they were sentenced (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2017).

Overall, most the women believed that their identity was problematic and that they also had to deal with discrimination because of it. This was also apparent in Zara's account:

> *'I remember I wanted to have a quick shower before bang up one day. I had been cleaning the wing and was feeling sweaty. So I said to the officer, I finished cleaning, I was to jump in the shower quickly and would you believe he said "Yeah and I want a nice doner kebab quickly". I just froze, like really? Only because I am Turkish'.* **Zara**

All the women experienced discrimination at some point during their sentence. This was evident in comments like *'...because I am Muslim, they not care',* **Aisha** and *'No matter how hard I tried, I am Black...'* **Dominique**. Isabella is another prime example. She believed that the Traveller community's bad reputation influenced how she was handled by prison officers when she was released on ROTLs from open prison.:

> *'So I used to get spot checked a lot compared to other girls and I used to get piss tests a lot and they would say it's random but I knew it was because I'm a traveller because we have a reputation of not following the rules and that's probably why I was picked all the time'.* **Isabella**

This reinforces the findings of Power (2004) who uncovered that the staff's attitudes towards Travellers were that they would not follow the rules. Apart from Sadia and Zara, none of the women mentioned outright discrimination. This could indicate that they were overly conscious of their ethnicity and anxious about potential inequalities in treatment. Although this is not to dismiss the presence of discrimination, it does suggest a high level of self-consciousness, possibly because of the disparities in treatment. In divergence, Jubeda felt the discrimination from her Muslim peers. She felt different amongst them and consequently, isolated even further:

> **Jubeda:** *'I don't wear a headscarf and I'm not a strict Muslim. The other Muslims didn't like me for that, I couldn't fit in'.*
> **Sinem:** *'How did this make you feel'?*
> **Jubeda:** *'I was just alone, you know, I think I got used to it. I was just alone'.*

Culture and ethnicity are evidently a complex phenomenon, and while it is simple to group all minoritised individuals together, the reality is that they are all incredibly diverse and mixed in a variety of ways, including skin colour, geographic origin, country or citizenship category, religious affiliation, and upbringing. In practise, the fact that they all capture the racial identity of people whose skin tone is considered non-White, is the only thing that unifies them (Garner, 2017). For example, without any mention of trying to fit in, Zara also highlights this difference, *'I'm Alevi... I'm different from the Sunni Muslims. We will never get a long or be the same'* **Zara.**

Three of the women in the study are Sunni, while the fourth is an Alevi. As stated, the way they practise Islam varies considerably (Cetin, 2015). Whilst two of the Sunni women practised

their religion, the third admitted to being less devout, and the Alevi was of a different tribe of Islam. These variations were a key source of tension for the women in the study, so it is crucial to understand the distinctions. For example, with reference to Zara's comment '*we will never get along'* it is essential to understand the differences and conflicts between Sunnis and Alevis, as covered in chapter one.

Zara's comment appeared to be of reference to the two massacres that had taken place in Turkey: one in Kahraman Maras (where Zara originates from) in 1978 which was referred to as a *bloodbath* (Gürel, 2020), where Alevi villages were raided and all residents, including women and children, were ruthlessly massacred by a huge group of Sunnis who believed that each death of an Alevi would open the gates of heaven to them (Sinclair-Webb, 2003). The second was an arson attack in Sivas in 1993. A group of 33 Alevi intellectuals, teachers, and other professionals had gathered in a hotel for a seminar and were set on fire by 6000 Sunni radicals chanting 'Allahuwakbar' while the Alevis burned (Sinclair-Webb, 2003). Due to the major divisions that have emerged since those events, the practice of placing Sunni and Alevi Muslims as a collective, creates unnecessary tension within the prison population.

This essentially emphasises the complexities of culture as well as the conflicts prevalent within. Although all the women in the study are from minoritised cultural backgrounds, some of which are extremely similar, they are also very different and have varied experiences. Consequently, their anxieties, priorities, and even focus were vastly different. For example, whilst the Muslim women discussed their religion as being the main source of tension/discrimination for them, the other three women focused on their ethnicities. Isabella, for example, felt she had to disguise her identity as a traveller woman to be treated fairly, whereas Zara felt she could not fit in because she was Turkish. The biracial women, on the other hand, faced a completely different situation. As previously stated, their greatest concern was the colour of their skin. This is supported by Chigwada-Bailey's (2003) conclusion that many Black women believe race, not their gender or religious background, is the most discriminatory factor in their dealings with the criminal justice system.

THEME 4: A PERMANENT STAMP

As previously stated, post-prison research on women is generally based on male-centric understandings (Baldry, 2010) which focus more on generic issues (Jacobson et al., 2010). However, minoritised women's needs and experiences differ greatly. In addition to the well-known challenges that women experience post release, such as housing, financial difficulties, poor mental health, unresolved substance misuse, and/or trauma (Hayes, 2008), minoritised women also endure significant levels of shame and stigma from their communities. The difficulties and pains of imprisonment unique to them are also 'stretched outside of the prison time, space and walls' (Baldwin, 2017, p. 54). The final superordinate theme captures the women's experiences post release. The permanent stamp appeared to have different dimensions to it, of which were interrelated in two superordinate themes; *Shame and Dishonour: The Painful Freedom* and *A life Sentence*.

4.1 SHAME AND DISHONOUR: THE PAINFUL FREEDOM

After experiencing cultural oppression in their early lives and having it accompany them into prison, the women appeared to sense the agony of their oppressive cultures continuing after they were released. The notion of shame appeared to be a common factor in most accounts, and the women's identities as mothers seemed to exacerbate this. This was apparent in Sadia's extract:

> '...coz in the culture it's like hush you can never talk about it, it's shameful... and because I had my kid in there, nobody talks about it. Till this day, I have not spoken to my mum or my sisters about the experience'. **Sadia**

Given that female honour is centred around the avoidance of shame, they are stated to have a significant role in shaping the family's reputation (Gill 2004). As a result, it appears that Sadia's family preferred to keep her prison experience silent to prevent any further detriment. It is argued that 'people pursue courses of action they believe will bring valued outcomes and refrain from those they believe will give rise to aversive conditions' (Bussey and Bandura, 1999, p. 689). The latter is likely to be the basis for the family's refusal to acknowledge or discuss the female member's imprisonment. In parallel with Sadia, Paniyota's account, in

which she refers to herself as the 'black sheep', also suggests that being an imprisoned mother is major taboo in her culture:

> *'I was now the black sheep of the family. Erm, you know… I think what was expected of women in the Cypriot culture is just erm [*pauses*]and you know being a mum… I mean they disowned me, but I didn't hurt anyone'.* **Paniyota**

The imprisonment of a woman was a cultural taboo in their communities and speaking about it forbidden. This is consistent with current literature, which claims that in honour-based cultures, women who deviate from traditional forms of acceptable behaviour, such as being a righteous, obedient, and devoted mother, wife, daughter, and daughter-in-law, bring shame and disgrace to the entire family, leading to condemnation (Sinclair-Webb, 2003). Zara felt this burden too. She completed her prison sentence but was now battling with the stigma that her community placed on her for deviating away from cultural norms and failing to meet the standards that were required of her as a woman, and a mother:

> *'This is unacceptable in my culture and good mothers don't go to prison. People, especially the ones in my society and from the same culture are very judgemental and their views of me have changed in a negative way'.* **Zara**

Going to prison as a 'mother' was the most humiliating aspect for Zara. This is in line with Corston's (2007) conclusion that imprisoned mothers were automatically labelled as 'bad mothers'. These findings are consistent with those of Jacobson et al. (2010), who stated that there appeared to be an added element of ostracism and shame in some communities, making the reintegration process considerably more difficult. In contrast to that study which claimed that this shame applied to both men and women, the mothers in this study emphasised the cultural divide that resulted in disparities in treatment between men and women. Sadia, for example, who felt the weight of her culture throughout her imprisonment, was critical of how the formerly imprisoned men in her society were treated:

> *'If I was a guy, in my own culture, I think everybody would come and visit me and I would probably get hi fived, like you're a G and all of that. But coz I'm a female…'* **Sadia**

Paniyota was no exception. She felt the burden of being a woman in her culture at her core, having experienced this division her entire life. Still struggling to come to terms with her family's rejection of her, she recalled the time her male cousin was released from prison:

> *'I just can't understand…prosecuted for rape, got 8 years and he was welcomed home like a hero. You know, none of the family disowned him. They all stood by him…'* **Paniyota**

Tanisha's immediate family did not want anyone to know about her imprisonment for the same reasons. While trying to make sense of why this may have been the case, she contrasted her circumstances to her son's father's prison experience and how he was treated after his release. Tanisha ultimately felt that being a female was the factor that made it shameful to talk about:

> *'Me going to prison was kept from everyone… I think it was a bit of like a shame, maybe because I'm a woman because, my oldest son's dad had been to prison and they [the families] know, but they couldn't speak about me, that I've been in prison'.* **Tanisha**

The clear division between the treatment of men and women was evident throughout the interviews. The women talked about how their male counterparts were not shunned, isolated, or felt the need to hide their prison sentence from anyone, whilst for the women, it was a taboo. Importantly, honour, described as 'virtuous behaviour, good moral character, integrity and altruism' (Gill, 2004, p. 475), applies to both men and women. However, whilst women's honour goes through themselves, men's honour passes through the women in their family (Wikan, 1984). Ultimately, such a man's honour is more likely to be tarnished by the women's wrongful behaviour than by their own (Sen, 2005). As a result, women wield both negative and positive power. That is, they can tarnish the family honour with their wrongful actions or enhance the reputation of the family by fulfilling the expected gender roles (Wikan, 1984). Consequently, although the notion of honour applies to both genders, the pressure to uphold it appears to be on the women. In parallel, Dominique also shared a similar experience. After being abandoned by her biological parents, she was now disowned by her adoptive family:

> *'The family that adopted me, washed their hands off me so for 4 years I never had a visit… the relationship was already breaking down because my life was so chaotic but when I was sentenced, they physically said you know, you're in this on your own'.* **Dominique**

Unlike the other women, Isabella had a very loving family who supported her both during her prison sentence and after she was released. She did, however, appear to feel the burden after speaking out about the sexual assault she suffered as a child. This experience being exposed to their community seemed to be a major source of stress for her family and was therefore met in silence:

'…I was shocked with the way my family responded… Like the family reputation was the only thing they cared about… they brushed it under the carpet'. **Isabella**

In cultures where the notion of honour and family reputation are highly valued, speaking out about abuse is stated to be 'a violation of the social hierarchy and entails putting self above the family' (Gill, 2004, p. 474). Such situations are frequently treated with silence. Nevertheless, other than Isabella, who felt the weight of her culture in a different way, all the women had the anguish of imprisonment persist into their cultural communities. The isolation they experienced, as well as the shame (Buncy and Ahmed, 2019) they felt from their surroundings, played a significant role throughout. Importantly, this appeared to be a component that resulted in the isolation they had to face as mothers from different cultural backgrounds post release. For example, there appeared to be a continuation of Sadia's loneliness in prison:

'...many of my friends who I grew up with, who have kids of their own now, will not mingle with me or talk to me because they know what happened. Erm, my old circle wouldn't want anything to do with me… they want absolutely nothing to do with me. They definitely view me as a different person, look down on me'. **Sadia**

Chigwada-Bailey, (2003) emphasised that Asian women face additional challenges post release because they are perceived to have brought shame and dishonour to their family and ruined the reputation. This has a huge impact on their social status, and many ties are broken as a result. Consequently, Sadia appeared to feel the humiliation and stigma of imprisonment at her core, but her narrative also revealed that her self-consciousness may have also been due to her own previous perceptions. This is exemplified in her comment *'They think oh she's a criminal… unfortunately because I was one of them'* **Sadia**. Zara's account also reflected this self-consciousness. She was already afraid of what she would face and how her community would perceive her when she walked out of prison:

'I was scared coming back out, what are people in my society going to say? How do I explain this...? I chose to not mix up with anyone at least for a while'. **Zara**

Jubeda made the decision to isolate herself from her community too. Zara and Jubeda, both non-strict Muslims, encountered the same type of stigma despite their diverse ethnic backgrounds:

'Coming out it's been hard though. I've been hiding away from people. Like I haven't been going to weddings or other community functions because I'm dreading the

appearance…people in my community are very judgemental, So since I've been out, I've been alone'. **Jubeda**

The experiences of Jubeda and Zara are consistent with the work of Buncy and Ahmed (2019), who concluded that many women were hesitant to join their communities for fear of rejection. Whilst honour is carried by the wider family (Thiara and Gill, 2010), the burden of shame lies on the individual. Both in this study and that of Buncy and Ahmed (2019), there appeared to be a significant amount of internalised guilt and shame that made the women a prisoner of their minds.

The notions of shame and honour, which stemmed mostly from the women's offence and subsequent prison term, seemed to apply more readily to the Muslim women in the study, as well as the Greek Orthodox woman. Notably, Siddiqui (2005) states that notions of shame and honour are both stronger and more influential, in tight-knit minority communities that are bolstered by orthodox and conservative cultural and religious norms. These communities are referred to as 'collectivist cultures' (Hofstede, 2011) whereby individuals are integrated into strong, cohesive groups from birth onwards, and given this collectivism, they value the 'we' over the 'I' in social interactions. Individual interests are viewed as less significant than links between and responsibilities to, collective entities such as family or community. In relationships with others, members of collectivist cultures are expected to be interdependent rather than independent (Hofstede, 2011).

The women in the study were rejected and ostracised by their communities because of the apparent embarrassment they caused their extended families and the community. This was particularly the case for Paniyota. She was also burdened by the weight of being a female in her culture and had to deal with the loneliness. She recalls a specific day and says:

> *'…I was isolated from my Greek community. Erm, the first thing I wanted to do was go to the Church and light a candle for my grandad [pauses] and erm, I walked in and erm, nobody greeted me, nobody even acknowledged me. And erm, these are all people that I've been brought up with all my life and they just shunned me basically'.* **Paniyota**

It appears Paniyota had no choice but to flee her former surroundings and start a new life. This is evident in her extract:

> *'I had to move as soon as I was out. I would never have been accepted back in the village'.* **Paniyota**

There was a collective decision that no one should affiliate with Paniyota. When she walked into the holy environment, which was supposed to be a community gathering, she clearly felt humiliated, stigmatised and was met with wall of silence. Even for those that were concerned with her wellbeing, contact was forbidden. This became evident as she described the conversation she had with her godfather '*...but he said im sorry, i cant talk to you...*' **Paniyota**. According to Buncy and Ahmed (2019), family members are also under pressure when the woman is released from prison. Many are said to be torn between what to do and how to do it for fear of jeopardising their social position and integrity and are afraid that helping a female former prisoner may be seen as approving her actions or criminality. Convergingly, Aisha's experience was equally difficult, if not more challenging. She made headlines at the time of her conviction, and her status as a devout Muslim mother appeared to have exacerbated the stigma. She was consequently shunned by her community:

> '*...It went on the newspaper thing, that's how everybody know. When I come back, they don't want to talk to me, they don't want to know me*'. **Aisha**

Dominique also spoke of the loneliness she encountered post release. Having already been disowned by her adoptive parents, she was now dealing with the rejection from other loved ones:

> '*My adoptive parents wont speak to me, my sisters won't speak to me. So I am very isolated and spend most days alone and erm... all my friends come away from me*'. **Dominique**

Isabella, on the other hand, had a more pleasant experience when she was released and returned to her family home. Despite her lack of confidence, she was able to reclaim her mothering position almost instantly:

> *I think I was able to snap back into it, like the mother instinct. But it was erm, I think I felt guilty so they got away with a lot more. It was also hard because they had nanny and grandad, which I'm very grateful for but everybody's got different ways so what I would have taught the kids may have been a little different so it was still a challenge. But yeah, I think the main thing was that I felt guilty and that really got in the way of my confidence*'. **Isabella**

Jubeda, on the other hand, seemed to be struggling to regain her maternal identity. As a result, she had to cope with problems at home, as well as shame and stigma from her community:

'It was hard, very hard. Rebuilding the relationship and being a family again. It was hard coz my eldest daughter was taking care of the house and my other children so I had to get them used to having me home again. Like they would listen to their sister and not me, they had set up a good routine so I had to sit back for a while and wait until they accepted me again. It took ages'. **Jubeda**

Baldwin (2017) highlights that reintegration back into the mothering role can be an ongoing, lengthy process. She argues that the mother would need to readjust to having the responsibility of her child(ren) with, at times, little support or guidance. This was the situation for Jubeda.

Isabella, however, faced other challenges. Having reported the abuse while in prison, her difficulties were with her extended family who did not want the situation exposed:

'With me mum, I didn't talk to her since I come out with it, but with me nan, I just put it down to shock. Coz she was staying with me after I come home and as time went on she was just getting worse with her response like it was my fault, so I cut her off too. Like they all believed me, none of them doubted me, but they kinda tried to switch it up. They were more concerned about their family reputation than him doing that to me'. **Isabella**

According to Kennedy et al. (2012), when women from disadvantaged groups disclose sexual abuse, they face increased societal stigma, including discrimination and prejudice, and they may also encounter stigma while seeking support from formal service providers. Overall, it is apparent from the interviews that all the women felt the burden of their culture post release. Whilst most felt it was because of their gender and the dishonour their imprisonment brought on their families, being a mother was the most damaging factor for others.

4.2 A LIFE SENTENCE

The women in the study appeared to face not only the stigma associated with imprisonment in general, but also an additional layer of shame from their ethnic communities for being both a female and a mother with prison experience. When asked what term ex-prisoner or ex-offender meant to them, some of the women instantly mentioned their cultural communities. This was especially noticeable in the Muslim women's narratives. Such as Sadia, who referred to it as *'A permanent stamp…'* and believed that the stigma would be with her for the rest of her life. This

highlighted in her comment, *'I can never fit in with Muslims again'* **Sadia.** Zara also emphasised this:

> *'...It's a label within my society that will forever stay with me'.* **Zara**

Jubeda felt very strongly the stigma was attached to her sentence. Interestingly, there was no mention of the conviction being eventually spent[10]. Instead, she felt that regardless of the sentence length, being a former prisoner was a label that could not be escaped:

> *'It definitely follows you, your sentence is never over. It's a part of your life. It never goes, it becomes a major part of your life whether you've done 10 days or 10 years. No matter how far you run from it, you would still bump into it. It's like a label stuck to your forehead, especially in the Asian Muslim community'.* **Jubeda**

Both Sadia and Jubeda also had the additional problem of being divorced. This was evident in their comments *'and I've been divorced twice...'* **Jubeda** and *'a divorced single mum...'* **Sadia**. Thus, given the great stigma attached to divorce (Gul, 2013), being a single mother, amplified the humiliation and stigma of being released from prison. In collectivist societies, a marriage is usually seen as a union of families rather than as one between individuals (Moghaddam et al., 1993). The divorce, therefore, destroys this union and leads to shame among divorced women (Welchman and Hossain, 2005). This shame is then exacerbated when such women must also deal with the stigma of being former prisoners. In addition to being ostracized by her community, Aisha had to contend with her husband, who bullies her, and serves as a daily reminder of her time in prison:

> *'He is still doing that now. I ask him why do you bring this up all the time and he say I will say it all your life, I will always bring it up so you don't forget what's happen, you bring shame on us'.* **Aisha**

Domestic violence and abuse, in all its forms, is primarily about the assertion of power and control over women. In this case, it appears that, Aisha's husband was trying to regain the control he previously had over her. Thiara and Gill (2010, p. 45) note that 'although differences often exist in the explanations used to justify acts of violence', such as notions of honour,

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[10] Criminal convictions can be considered 'spent' after a set period of time under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act of 1974. Basic disclosures do not include spent convictions. However, some must be mentioned on higher level disclosures.

shame, and reputation, 'these should not take precedence over an analysis of power and control'(ibid). As a result, Aisha's imprisonment may have served as justification for her husband's *'bullying'* of her. Coming from a Greek Orthodox family, Paniyota also felt the pain of her imprisonment post release. She appeared to have internalised the notion of shame, which as stated, falls on the individual (Buncy and Ahmed, 2019):

> *'...It sticks with me, I'm ashamed of it, I'd be completely honest, I am ashamed of it'.* **Paniyota**

Even when trying to move on and start a new life, Paniyota spoke about the kind of setbacks she had to deal with:

'I managed to secure work, but then whilst I was at work, somebody from the village I used to live in, came into my work and start throwing abuse at me in front of all the customers saying things like she's been to prison, she's an embarrassment to us'. **Paniyota**

Whilst Paniyota appeared to have no issues with finding a job, Tanisha stated that she felt the stigma more when she had to declare her conviction and seemed to feel the setback each time. Even though she came from a cultural background, this did not appear to carry a prolonged stigma in her narrative:

> *'Ahh it carries so much stigma. It's horrible because, everything you do especially as soon as you come out of prison, you have to declare what you've done. So even when I applied to uni, some places didn't accept me because of the conviction'.* **Tanisha**

This dimension was also shared by Dominique:

> *'I've applied to so many jobs and when they find out you've been to prison, you don't get the job. My life will never be the same again'.* **Dominique**

Dominique and Tanisha's experiences are consistent with the work of Chigwada-Bailey (2003) and Gunn et al. (2018), who state that the stigma of incarceration and a criminal record is exacerbated for Black women since they are more likely to face discrimination in employment and accommodation. This is also supported by Guy-Sheftal (1995) who highlight that Black women in society face both racism and sexism, with their conviction acting as a further disadvantage. Isabella also appeared to have layers of disadvantage. She believed that being a Traveller left her vulnerable to discrimination, and that this, combined with her gender, was a significant issue:

> **Isabella:** *'I get double disadvantage, 100 per cent. I mean when I did work experience from prison, I filled in the application form and they knew I was coming from prison and it was all fine. But when I went and she realised I'm a traveller, she changed her mind. I regretted the way I was dressed and done myself up, now I wish I'd tied mi hair back too though'.*
> **Sinem***: 'Why is that'?*
> **Isabella:** *'us travellers all ave very long hair and like you could just tell I'm a traveller. I stood out like a sore thumb'.*

Isabella experienced multiple disadvantages as a Traveller, a woman and as a person belonging to a socially disadvantaged group. Cemlyn et al. (2009) presented findings from a review undertaken on behalf of The Equality and Human Rights Commission Research Report, on the inequalities and human rights issues affecting Gypsies and Travellers in England, Scotland and Wales. The review considered a wide range of policy areas which included evidence on inequality relating to racism, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, and religion/belief. One core theme that emerged across all topics was the both continuous and damaging impact of experiencing racism and discrimination throughout an entire lifespan and in employment, social, and public contexts. The difficulties included being turned down for services or having employment offers withdrawn, as well as being harassed at work or being dismissed. Despite a wealth of legislation promoting equality and human rights and protecting against discrimination, Cemlyn et al. (2009) found it particularly astonishing that prejudice toward Gypsies and Travellers had persisted for generations. Overall, it appeared that all the women in the research faced some form of stigma and discrimination that they felt they could not escape. Whilst being a formerly imprisoned woman/mother within their communities brought the permanent label for some, having to declare this brought it for others.

4.3 SUMMARY

This chapter presented the findings and discussion from study one which provided evidence of the challenges experienced by minoritised mothers that are criminalised and imprisoned. To fully understand and appreciate their prison and post release experiences, the women's pre-prison lives were also contextualised. An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis revealed four superordinate themes that emerged along a temporal continuum. The first superordinate theme, *Trapped in Abuse,* represented systems of oppression that exist within patriarchy, socio-economic status, gender and religion. *The Painful Journey,* captured the maternal anguish of separation and the inability to perform motherhood. The gendered experience of motherhood existed within cultural, socio-economic, racial and religious contexts. Those contexts become

the evaluative frameworks by which the women in the study looked at themselves and experienced guilt in direct relation to their imprisonment.

The third theme, *Cultural Burden Magnified* highlighted the ignorance of the prison staff to the complexity of the socio-cultural and religious systems represented in the prison system. Women in the system were collapsed into single categories as exemplified by the treatment of all 'BAME' women as monolithic. The theme also captured the women's social location within their communities. The final theme, *A Permanent Stamp* covered the women's post release experiences which identified the connection of familial honour related to their incarceration that focuses specifically on women, as well as the complexity of the post release experiences for the participants of the study. All the four themes identified in this chapter exist within the larger oppressive context of intersectionality. Crenshaw (1989) articulates the different venues by which oppression is experienced by those of minoritised status. These facets of oppression are well represented within this chapter in the form of sexism, racism, culture, religion, expectations of motherhood as well as prisoner status.

CHAPTER 6 – NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US

This chapter presents the theoretical context for study 2. In keeping with the conceptual mode of inquiry for study 1, a detailed argument is formed for the use of Auto-ethnography.

6.1 RESEARCH FROM THE INSIDE: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

Autoethnography is a method of study and writing that aims to explain and evaluate personal experience to enable a better understanding of cultural experiences. It is defined as 'a form of self-narrative that places the self within a social context. It is both a method and a text' (Reed-Danahay, 1997, p. 6). It is essentially an approach that blends elements of autobiography and ethnography (Ettorre, 2005). When writing an autobiography, the author writes about previous events retrospectively and selectively. Typically, the author does not live through these events specifically to include them in a published text; rather, these events are pieced together with hindsight. Notably, 'epiphanies', which are recalled experiences that are supposed to have had a significant impact on a person's life, are commonly mentioned in autobiographies.

Relative to this, when ethnographers study a culture's relational behaviours, shared values, beliefs, and experiences, they hope to get a deeper understanding of the culture for both insiders (cultural members) and outsiders (cultural strangers). Ethnographers do this through becoming participant observers, which requires taking field notes on cultural events as well as their own and others' participation. As a result, auto-ethnographers write retrospectively and selectively about epiphanies that emerge from or are facilitated by being a part of a culture and/or bearing a particular cultural identity. However, auto-ethnographers do more than just report their experiences; they also analyse them. In other words, they look inward, via a biographical lens, revealing a vulnerable self and refracting cultural perceptions, and then outward, through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, on relevant societal aspects of human experience (Ellis and Bochner, 2000, p. 739).

This approach questions classical ways of conducting research and portraying others, and considers research to be a political, socially just, and socially conscious endeavour (Ellis et al., 2011). Although some academics believe that research should be conducted in a neutral,

impersonal, and objective manner, this is arguably not always the case. Charmaz and Mitchell, (1996, p. 285) highlight that 'scholarly writers have long been admonished to work silently on the sidelines, to keep their voices out of the reports they produce, to emulate Victorian children: be seen (in the credits) not heard (in the text)'. Consequently, by constructing themselves as important characters in their own work and foregrounding their own voices, auto ethnographers challenge these traditional beliefs about silent authorship and author-evacuated texts (Sparkes, 2000). As a result, autoethnography is one of the methodologies that recognises and accommodates subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher's influence on the study, rather than rejecting or dismissing these characteristics (Ellis et al., 2011). Such a method enables researchers to compile their data deliberately and scientifically in a non-linear, semi-structured, and academically acceptable manner. Given this, auto-ethnography allows researchers to be at the centre of their study, despite critics' claims that researchers' voices within the research are irrelevant (Hughes and Pennington, 2017).

Auto-ethnography has also been criticised as not being 'proper research' (Sparkes, 2000). Several academics have been sceptical of such research, believing it to be self-indulgent and narcissistic (Mykhalovskiy, 1996; Sparkes, 2002) and not a legitimate technique (Holt, 2003). For example, according to Boufoy-Bastick (2004, p. 10), utilising autoethnography as a method 'can, for many, result in nothing more than pointless self-absorbing introspective *navel gazing* excessive subjectivity and self-delusion.' Thus, critics question why any researcher would engage in such navel gazing that moves away from aiming to explore and understand the world of the 'other' (Ellis, 2002). However, what such scholars fail to acknowledge, is the power of lived experiences in broadening societal understandings. As Krizek (1998) has put it 'as ethnographers we experience life, but we write science' (p. 93). Thus, autoethnography is best described as a story turned into scholarship, that is more self-enhancing (Wahl, 1999) than navel gazing, and a type of significant research that not only applies meaning and purpose to a former prisoner's life (Connett, 1973), but also brings insider knowledge to the field of research.

In his work on desistance, Maruna (2017) emphasises the importance of former prisoners' involvement in research. He states that by drawing on their personal experiences, desisting former prisoners has proven to be helpful in supporting others in avoiding mistakes and being encouraged by their accomplishments. He claims that the next step in the desistance journey should be to move away from the Ivory Tower and professional bodies to communities where

desistance is experienced first-hand. Although Maruna (2017) does not claim to be suggesting that traditional criminological research on individual desistance trajectories has lost its relevance, he does emphasise the importance of including additional research subjects with lived experiences that can offer valuable insight. He states that, in the absence of this, research will continue to be filtered and refracted through the privileged lens of the Ivory Tower. Therefore, generating scholarly work that includes the 'prisoner voice' in data analysis and interpretation will result in commentary that is not just informed, but also shaped by and firmly rooted in lived experiences (Aresti et al., 2016). Autoethnography is fundamentally devoted to this purpose. It re-tells and re-performs lived experiences with respect to historical, political, and cultural context (Denzin, 2014).

Auto-ethnography is available in a variety of forms. Among these are indigenous/native ethnography, analytic autoethnography, co-constructed narrative, collaborative autoethnography, and personal narrative (see Hughes and Pennington, 2017). After careful consideration, I have chosen indigenous/native ethnography as the method for conducting my research because it is consistent with my biography and position as a feminist. This type of autoethnography is used to challenge power in research, specifically the authority of an outside researcher to study indigenous people. Historically, indigenous/native ethnographers were forced to serve White, masculine, heterosexual, middle/upper classed, Christian, able-bodied ethnographers. However, they are now taking the initiative to develop their own narratives and no longer accepting the forced servitude (Ellis et al., 2011).

6.2 TIME FOR US TO SPEAK FOR OURSELVES

In criminological study, there have been numerous compelling accounts of 'the self' (e.g. Ferrell, 2006; Liebling, 1999). Personal narratives among criminologists are still uncommon due to criminology's concern with methodology, objectivity, and restrained language (Sim, 2004), which inherently discourages any type of biographical or emotional involvement by researchers. Nonetheless, an autoethnographic investigation that keeps a strong focus on the researcher's biographic and emotional self has the potential to considerably expand the methodological repertoire of criminology. The central argument of such studies is that past involvement with crime, criminal/deviant cultures, and/or other criminal justice procedures

may give criminologists an enhanced experiential perspective on such phenomena that would be valuable (Wakeman, 2014). As noted by Ferrell and Hamm (1998, p. 10), 'a wealth of fieldwork has demonstrated... research methods which stand outside the lived experience of deviance or criminality can perhaps sketch a faint outline of it, but they can never fill that outline with essential dimensions of meaningful understanding'.

Much has been written in various social scientific domains on the blurring of professional and personal identities in the study setting, and a recognition that ethnography is always somewhat autobiographical has emerged. However, these arguments appear to come from the traditional criminology viewpoints which play a key role in maintaining dominant, mediated discourses by systematically preventing research that challenges the status quo (Aresti et al., 2016). Nevertheless, the importance of 'lived experience' in relation to prison and re-entry has recently been recognised by those working in the Criminal Justice System, and/or those with a stake in penal institutions, i.e. academics, service providers, (statutory/non-statutory/NGOs), and there has been a growing portfolio of research in the field. As covered in section 3.6, lived experiences of prison is a key tenet of convict criminology (CC). One of the goals of the CC network since its establishment has been to produce knowledge that prioritises the perspectives and situated experiences of prisoners and former prisoners. Their major objective is to present an ex-convict scholarly perspective on criminal justice issues within the criminological environment. Nevertheless, most work has been carried out by males, who have likewise dominated in most prison related studies, exemplifying and prioritising men's experiences (Aresti et al., 2016; Belknap, 2015; Larsen and Piché, 2012). Given this, although such studies do provide some basic understanding of women's experiences of prison and post release, they cannot capture the distinct complexities.

As illustrated in Chapter 2, there is a wealth of research that provides valuable insights into the experiences of women, mothers, and racially minoritised people in prison and after release. Despite this, an intersectional perspective that considers the three identities as interconnected is lacking. As a result, minoritised mothers appear to occupy a 'blind spot' in this field of thought (Mirza, 1997). This is emphasised by Baldwin (2021, p. 116) who states 'an examination of the intersectionality of motherhood and race would be an important contribution to the overall understanding of maternal imprisonment.' Furthermore, most of the empirical work is based on second-hand knowledge, and research on participants is specifically interpreted through the researcher's experiential and ideological lens. Given this, participants

are usually uninvolved in data processing/analysis and interpretation (Maruna, 2017), and hence play a mostly passive role in knowledge generation. While I do not doubt the veracity of this research, there remains a lack of first-hand accounts of prison and post release experiences (Newbold et al., 2014), particularly from women that have served time in prison and more specifically, none that are now established academics or criminologists in the academy.

6.3 RATIONALE

In this autoethnography, I reflect on my own experiences with the criminal justice system, fuelled by my anger towards the courts. I write this autoethnography as a form of resistance to the oppressive mechanisms that still exist (Crenshaw, 1989). By doing so, I disrupt the cycle of white and silent authorship (Charmaz and Mitchell, 1996; Sparkes, 2000) that is prevalent in most research studies. Furthermore, given that prison and post-release research privileges the first hand experiences of men (Aresti et al., 2016), and women-centred research ignores the racialised experiences of women who are not White (Renzetti, 2013), I break the cycle of both male-dominated prison studies and women-centred research by bringing in first-hand experience as a minoritised woman and paving the way for other women to embrace and share their own. Throughout my autoethnography, I explore my identity as a Turkish mother, highlight my cultural disadvantages and barriers, share my experiences of 'criminal conviction', and join the other 8 women in my study in giving a voice to minoritised women as mothers who have been silenced for far too long.

I do this through an educated lens, conducive with convict criminology and multi-racial feminism, utilising my research skills, and employing the ethnographic element of autoethnography in accordance with Ellis and Bochner (2000). By doing so, my purpose is to make my personal and cultural experiences meaningful and engaging, and by approaching it analytically, as Ellis et al. (2011, p. 5) has put it, I aim to produce 'accessible texts that can reach a wider and more diverse audience that traditional research usually disregards, a move that can make personal and social change possible for more people'. Furthermore, it is argued that in sticking to social scientific standards, auto ethnographers must not only analyse their own experiences using methodological tools and research literature, but also consider how others might have similar epiphanies (Ellis et al., 2011). This may be done through comparing

personal experience with available studies and conducting interviews with people who have had comparable experiences. Subsequently, to ensure this is achieved, the findings from Study one are used throughout. I utilise my story to refine and build on the narratives of the women in study one and bring a different, more positive perspective through the power of family connections (through my experiences with the criminal justice system).

6.4 DESIGN

In parallel with study one, this study employed a qualitative line of enquiry, utilising a semi-structured interviewing format and an interpretative phenomenological analytical framework.

6.5 DATA COLLECTION

The supervisor of this thesis, a former prisoner, Dr Andreas Aresti, interviewed me as part of the data collection process. This decision was influenced by several factors. Firstly, Dr Aresti has conducted several qualitative research studies and is an experienced interviewer. Given this, and the sensitivity of the topic, it was considered most appropriate for him to interview me in accordance with ethical guidelines and Kvale's (2011) interview techniques. Furthermore, as one of the founding members of Convict Criminology in Britain, Dr Aresti was able to relate to, and understand, some of my experiences of imprisonment and post release. Unlike the interviews I conducted in study one, where I was able to connect with the women on every level, this interview took a slightly different angle, as a male with prison experience, Dr Aresti was able to look through a different lens, a gendered one. Finally, coming from a racially minoritised background with a similar culture to mine, Dr Aresti was also able to comprehend my distinct cultural experiences that impact and shape my perceptions and experiences.

To ensure the flow of study one was retained, the interview schedule I utilised for the women was followed (see appendix 2). Two separate interviews were conducted in Dr Aresti's office at the University of Westminster. The interviews were conducted in parts due to its length (each interview lasted approximately 2 hours), depth of discussion, and emphasis on major events.

We also agreed that I should transcribe one interview so that we could go over it before doing the next one. This was deemed necessary to see if anything noteworthy arose that required additional investigation, as well as to ensure that all important issues were addressed.

During the first interview, we briefly discussed my life before prison, but then focused primarily on my period on bail and entry into prison and the second interview was based around my prison experience. Ellis et al. (2016) point out that researchers do not work in isolation. We live and work at universities and research centres and have a social network that includes friends and family, colleagues, and students. Therefore, as auto-ethnographers, using personal experience entails not only implicating ourselves in our work, but also involving our close, intimate companions. Essentially, given that my family and friends are a major part of all my experiences, not implicating them in this study, is impossible. However, as anonymity cannot be ensured for them and to protect their privacy as much as possible without affecting the precision of the data, my early life was not covered, rather the interview began with the events leading up to my offence and my post release experiences were also not covered. The interview was digitally recorded using an encrypted audio device and transcribed verbatim. The ethical considerations set out in ethical considerations (chapter 4.6) were followed closely here too.

6.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Autoethnography and thematic analysis (TA) were utilised as the analytical framework. These methods were complementary since autoethnography guides data collection and analysis, whilst TA is solely a method of analysis (Clark et al., 2021). TA was also implemented to ensure academic rigour. The data was analysed using auto-ethnographic coding (Hughes and Pennington, 2017), which entails searching for, and choosing relevant components in interview transcripts such as major events and metaphors (Boufoy-Bastick, 2004) that would align with the focus of the research. Thematic analysis was then used to identify and create themes, looking for recurring and distinctive features. Stages of analysis for TA provided by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Clarke and Braun (2013) were used here. They introduced a six-stage process of analysis that included familiarisation with the data, initial coding, identifying themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and evidencing themes. Given that familiarisation with the data was not necessary, this stage was bypassed but the rest were utilised. Once the

stages were complete, findings were presented in the form of dialogues from the data. This is covered in the next chapter.

6.7 SUMMARY

This chapter presented the theoretical context, study design and data collection for study two and formed an argument for the use of an autoethnography to supplement study one.

CHAPTER 7 – FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION | STUDY 2

This chapter presents findings from study two, which explored my experiences of the criminal justice system. The analysis revealed four themes, capturing the depth and complexity of my experiences. While the women's experiences in Study 1 had an underlying narrative structure from pre-prison to post-release that was conveyed in the superordinate themes as a conspicuous temporal path, the themes in this study followed a transitory path within each theme, apart from one, where specific notions recurred (see table 3 below).

TABLE 3: THEMES FOR STUDY 2

Pre Prison - Prison	Power[lessness]
Pre Prison – Prison	Motherhood in crisis
Pre Prison – Prison	The Stain
Pre Prison – Prison	Maintaining Family Ties
Pre Prison	(In)Justice

The first theme, **Power[lessness],** captures my struggles to acquire independence and escape abuse which comes with frequent setbacks. **Motherhood in Crisis** concentrates on my maternal identity and the struggles relating to my children. **The Stain** highlights the heightened shame and stigma attached to my criminalisation. The fourth theme, **Maintaining Family Ties,** focuses on my relationship with my family throughout my journey through the criminal justice system. The final theme **(In)justice,** which is the only one without a temporal path within, covers my experiences of the courts.

7.1 POWER[LESSNESS]

There seemed to be a pattern of both power and powerlessness throughout the interview. The first looked to be imposed by males and male-dominated authority, but it was also a concept that I seemed to be attempting to acquire. The latter was me in several scenarios, all of which were fraught with setbacks. The initial state of gaining power after a long period of powerlessness was the time I joined the prison service, whilst still with the father of my children:

Erm so at this point, I had been with my children's dad for eight years now. And I erm started the prison service in 2015, and obviously all the abuse and everything was still on-going with him, or by him actually. But it got even worse because now I was working in a male prison, I had a little more voice, I was now controlling people. I now had power. And he [former partner] *didn't like this because I was no longer obeying him. I was a busy person, I was now working, erm I wasn't the typical wife that I would have been before. It started getting out of hand and he was being very horrible, very jealous... Erm and I basically told him to fuck off. Obviously, he didn't, he stayed there, he refused to leave and got worse. He would come in the middle of the night drunk and try it on me. I'd wake up and my pyjamas are off, I'd wake up erm he's just trying to do things... have sex, like I'm a plastic doll. You know? No consent was required...*

My prison job, or position of authority, was clearly a threat to my former partner's masculinity. He was unable to retain the dominance and superiority he had over me (Anderson and Umberson, 2001). By refusing to leave and trying to perform sexual acts against my will, he was aiming to maintain or exercise the position of power he initially had (Dobash and Dobash, 1992). In resemblance of Sadia's former husband, my former partner's behaviour is recognised as rape under UK law (Sexual Offences Act, 2003). However, given the cultural pressure, informing the police is forbidden as it would tarnish both the man's name and the wider family's (Gill, 2004). Given this, women in such cultures are made to suffer in silence. Nevertheless, with the violence endured and the search for a way out, the above dialogue parallels the women in study one. I was clearly up against a man who was attempting to maintain control via the use of all kinds of masculinity and patriarchal authority. However, I was somewhat able to feel empowered through my job as an officer. Nevertheless, the abuse increased, and I was in search for an escape. My route away appeared to be my offence:

Anyway eventually it got even worse [the abuse] *so erm yeah, I finished it* [with former partner] *and whatever. But then I got debts piling up. So I can't even, I can no longer go into work properly because he* [former partner] *was refusing to look after the kids. We got tonnes*

of loans and everything which he is refusing to help me out with because he is saying "oh let's see that independent woman that you want to be". So then I went into work and told my governor erm they just reduced my hours at work and then they [the governor] *gave me a charity card and said call them see if they can help you. Obviously, no charity helped me. And although they knew mentally, I was now a mess, they put me back on the wing and they turned surveillance onto me. I-I obviously came to find out about this, how long the surveillance was in my court papers, that's when it made sense. Erm cause the dates just fitted in really well with the time that I told them about my issues. So they reduced me to 24 hours a week, which meant my money went down and I got piles of debt. I was very powerless deep down...very powerless, and yeah so at this point, I was also behind on my rent payments and eventually got a repossession order for my flat. I phoned him [former partner] and I said look I'm losing the flat, he just said "okay let's see you survive on your own, I got my own life I can't deal with you." So I went to the prison, I went straight to the door of the guy that was telling me you can make money and I said to him 'okay how are we doing this?' However, I said I need the money now... and yeah, that's how it started. It went on for about 5 or 6 months. Obviously, my kid's dad is getting even worse, he is stalking me, he is following me around, he still has keys you know... I could not even think about changing the lock because he would break my door down. He still had his clothes there, he would come and drop his bags of clothes and I'd wash it. I would still wash it. I was still petrified deep down. Erm but yeah those six months, what I liked about those six months was the power I felt... the guys in the prison, the prisoners weren't able to do anything without me. I was the key, I was the plug, it was me if you get what I mean... now I know there was actually no power at all. I was the most powerless, I was the naïve one, the one that was exploited because they all used my vulnerability of course.*

Studies have long suggested that crimes committed by lower working class women tend to be offences relating directly to their economic and financial situation (Arditti and Few, 2006; Beresford et al., 2020). According to Selmini (2020), women involved in organized criminal activities such as trafficking and/or smuggling, occupy both passive, subordinate roles and more active, powerful ones. However, in all kinds of organised crime, the lines between victims and perpetrators are frequently blurred due to a lack of deeper knowledge of women's roles, motives, and life experiences. The narrative above shows both a powerful position in which I appear to have strived to survive and acquire a level of independence through crime, but also victimisation on a deeper level by both my former partner's continuous abuse and the prisoners who were pressuring me to continue bringing contraband into the prison. The momentary power and independence gained through the criminal activity as well as the exploitation that I was unaware of, came to an end. The following account depicts the pressure I was under as well as the increasing number of prisoners that had become involved in criminal activity:

...this went from one prisoner to the other you know, one day I walk in that one knows what I've done and now he want me to take in stuff. I'd walk in the next day and this one also knows what I have done and he also wants me to take stuff in erm so it was really getting out

of hand. And now I remember the last time that I actually said erm I started calling in sick. To avoid it, I would call in sick. I would come into work and try to work on a different wing. Erm but I had no way of getting away from it. I literally had no way at all. Towards the end it was stress, it was purely just stress you know it was a huge weight on my shoulders, erm I ended up in a massive mess really. There was so many [prisoners] involved. I was on my own, what did I know about criminal activity or being a part of some organised crime as the courts put it. I had no idea. Erm I would be worried about paying a bill late.

I then explained the moment I was apprehended with contraband heading inside the prison and recalled how I felt once I was taken to the radio room following the search which revealed what I had on me:

I felt so ashamed, so embarrassed, erm as I said the way I was stripped off everything, all that power, all that authority, all that somebody that I had become, had gone. You know it has left me now. I wasn't an anybody again. It was horrible… Erm, so I was in that room and the Governor came in, I was sitting down, the Governor came in but obviously they have already taken my epaulettes off me, so what you have on your shoulders… They've taken that off me which was like that erm, it's crazy it's like I had the prison officer ceremony where I was given my epaulettes and I've had this, it's like a second ceremony where I have had it removed. The erm... the damning erm [laughs] damning ceremony… the only thing I could feel was powerlessness… I just wanted to get out of there, I wanted to get out of the world, I wanted to disappear.

The above narrative, as recounted in Bozkurt and Aresti (2019), depicts the transformation from a respected prison officer working for the State, to a 'criminal' for disobeying the law. Garfinkle (1956, p. 420) conceptualises this as follows: 'any communicative work between persons, whereby the public identity of an actor is transformed into something looked on as lower in the local scheme of social types, will be called a status degradation ceremony'. Reflecting on the experience, the moment of having the epaulettes removed, was a degradation ceremony. This, however, was not to be my most powerless moment. The most severe loss of all was the final entry into prison. With reference to Sykes (1958), who defined daily prison life by five essential deprivations: loss of liberty, desirable goods and services, heterosexual relationships, autonomy, and security. I was now going to experience these losses:

So I arrived at the prison after six hours in the sweatbox, serco van. The journey was so long because they stopped off at courts to get other women too... But yeah, we arrived at Bronzefield at night, so obviously everyone was already locked up after we was all you know, kind of processed at reception. I was put in a cell and now that was a weird feeling, it was a weird feeling because I've locked people in these cells, they were identical. I knew these cells. I used to look into these cells and think I could do a night in here. Particularly when I had my bad days with my ex. Sometimes I would wanna go and just hide away from the world in one of the cells. That night in prison though, my first night, that night was definitely the worst that I can recall in my life other than the morning of my brother's death. I couldn't breathe. I had to... I had to work on myself. I had to take it easy. I had to talk to myself like just take deep

breaths, you know. Just take deep breaths. I've never in my life felt the need to be so nice and gentle to myself and actually focus on my mental state because I was so scared of doing something to myself, because I couldn't see beyond that door. That room, that cell is so small you know and once the doors are closed, particularly your first night, it feels like your life is over. You know, you're done. You're so powerless you could, you could die in there and no one would know. No one checked on me that night. Now being an officer, I knew that on the induction wing they need to check on new arrivals every hour, at least on your first night, especially if this is your first time in prison because that is your most vulnerable time. No one checked on me, I could have done anything to myself.

According to a nationwide survey conducted by Shaw et al. (2004), a third of the self-inflicted deaths in custody between 1999 and 2000 happened within the first week of imprisonment, attributable to the distress and poor state of mind experienced upon entering prison (Liebling et al., 2005) and not much has changed since. Self-harm is thought to be a primary cause of morbidity in prison, with an annual prevalence of 5–6 percent in men and 20–24 percent in women, much above the less than 1 percent of individuals in the general population who self-harm each year (Favril et al., 2020). Furthermore, Hawton et al. (2014) discovered that women in prison were four times more likely than their male counter parts to engage in self-harm. Mitchell et al. (2019) also emphasised the prevalence, stating that while women make up fewer than 5% of the prison population, they account for more than 20 percent of all self-harm cases in penal settings. Given that distress is at its peak upon entering prison (Liebling et al., 2005), risk factors indicated by Favril et al. (2020) must be carefully evaluated. These range from prison-specific environmental factors including isolation, disciplinary violations, victimisation while imprisoned, and a lack of social support, which they claim are all linked to self-harm. However, a crucial component that has been overlooked by Favril et al. (2020) and one that demands special consideration is maternal pain, which can lead to both self-harm and suicide (Baldwin, 2021).

7.2 MOTHERHOOD IN CRISIS

In convergence with the women in study 1, the mothering emotions and struggles appear to be a theme here too. Throughout the journey, children appear to be at the forefront of all concerns and emotions. The beginning lies with my former partner. In contrast to Jubeda in study 1, who found the courage to walk away from her husband when he had a marital affair, my courage came from the abuse I witnessed my son suffer:

...he [former partner] was horrible to my children too. Very horrible, he was nasty, he would shout and be abusive. Erm he would silence my son, he would always put pressure on him you know 'don't cry. Be a man, be a man' I mean you're talking to a six-year-old child… So one day, erm my son was playing games on my laptop and I made the food. I put it on the table and my son said 'five minutes, ten minutes I'm coming' whatever he didn't want to leave his game. And this man went and smashed the laptop… he told my son to come to the table and sit down. Now we are all sitting at the table, I can see in my son's face he is going completely red because he is dying to cry but he can't because the dad's going to get angrier and that was the moment something snapped in me. Long story short I lost it, I threw the broken laptop at him and I... I just lost the plot and I said, 'You have done whatever you have done to me all these years but you are not doing it to my child. You are not doing that to my child ever'. That's the moment I truly finished it and there was no going back. Never.

This led to a battle for survival, which resulted in me resorting to unlawful activity (Berry and Eigenberg, 2003), when all else failed (Baldwin, 2017). Despite being 'dismissed as a throw away mum' (Allen et al., 2010, p. 162), I was attempting to successfully carry out my motherly obligations and responsibilities, which became difficult owing to poverty and voicelessness. This is detailed below:

I had to provide for my kids and I had to pay my rent and the other debts too. I was drowning. They also reduced my hours at work because I had no childcare and simply couldn't go in most days. Funnily enough with the rest of the money I got from the drugs, I took my kids out. I took them to Legoland, to the Disney store, to everywhere I couldn't before. I was never able to do anything and for that, I used to always blame myself. Also for ending up with a man who was their dad and you know obviously the things he put my son through… I'm trying to go back to that time. I just wanted them to be happy and especially where I grew up with nothing but restrictions…

In her analysis of domestic violence, crime, and poverty, Moore (2003) argues that women who are victims of domestic violence face a variety of challenges when trying to escape the abuse. They are refused shelter and, in some cases, custody of their children. They are also frequently unable to find or maintain steady employment because they are in or seeking to leave abusive

relationships. Moore (2003) notes that these women are frequently from low-income families. There has long been speculation that a woman's financial situation affects her ability to escape an abusive relationship (Jacobs, 1999). It's no surprise, therefore, that when all else fails, women who are fleeing or attempting to flee violent situations turn to crime. Many women are stated to be selling drugs to enable them out of the situation (Moore, 2003). Fundamentally, by acknowledging that some women commit nonviolent, financially motivated offences to flee abusive situations, the entire scope of the circumstances behind the offences they commit will be better understood.

SB: Yeah, she took me to the radio room and she said you should be ashamed of yourself, did you not think about your kids?
AA: How did you feel, what did you say?
SB: I didn't say a word. I did not say a word.
AA: How did you feel?
SB: ...completely powerless. I just wanted to be... I just wanted the ground to bury me.
AA: Was there anything running through your mind at that time? Apart from the ground?
SB: My children...my children. My parents and my children, but mostly my children. What the hell is going to happen now? I was so desperate to just... I don't know... I was losing my mind. It my was children, what the hell. I couldn't even think straight. It's crazy to say you know erm even when I was committing the crime, even when I had the stuff concealed on me it was always oh my god if anyone ever found out, if I ever lost my children. It was always just children. It was always my children.

I was consumed by guilt (Baldwin, 2017) in that moment, believing that I had shattered every image of the idealised mother (Berry and Eigenberg, 2003). Amplifying these vicarious moral emotions were the condemning words from the custodial manager. Women in such circumstances already believe they have failed as mothers due to their lived experiences, life opportunities, and life choices (Baldwin, 2017). Given this, no mother needs reminding as such and should not be made to feel any worse than they already do (Baldwin, 2021), as it can have grave implications on their sense of self (Tangney et al., 2007). From the moment of arrest until the final court hearing, my children were always at the forefront of all discussions. The next narrative depicts my sentencing hearing at the crown court:

SB: I never looked up. I was ashamed, I was so ashamed and every time they talked about my children, I just wanted to be buried somewhere.
AA: But why? So they're talking about your children, and what you've done...
SB: Because my barrister is saying 'She's got children and that needs to be taken into consideration' and the judge is saying' Well that was her duty, she hasn't considered her children, she hasn't cared about their welfare. It's not down to the court to do this'.
AA: So what did it make you feel?

SB: Made me feel shit, like the most worthless [pauses] I couldn't even call myself a mother in that moment. You just lose... you just completely lose it. It's almost like my children were in the dock with me because the conversations that went back and forth between the prosecutor, my barrister, and the judge was a lot to do with my children. Debates on what should happen and whether or not it should be the courts duty to care, I now had no power and it was up to these three people to decide what was going to happen to me and my children, I had no power at all. Mothering was stripped off me. My abilities and capabilities as a mother was questioned. You know, in court, the question was 'Why didn't you think about your children'? And every time someone hits you with that... I mean they are an extension of you, It's like you can't even separate them from what you've done. You know it's, it's kind of combined. I think, thinking back, yeah, they were probably in the dock with me, and they definitely paid the price too. Throughout the hearing I was frozen all the way through and my head was down. But then when he was going to sentence me and he made me stand up. As soon as he said go home to your children, I burst into tears. It's like I wasn't breathing until that moment. From the minute I walked into dock, till that moment I don't think I was breathing and the minute he said go home to your children, it was just the word children you know, it's crazy how that takes over everything else.
AA: So how did you feel when he said go to children?
SB: I burst into tears and I just wanted to do exactly that. Go home to my children!

Imprisonment of a parent involves the forcible separation of parent and child and ultimately interferes with the Article 8[11] rights of the child by depriving the child of parental care. When sentencing, the courts must acquire information about dependent children; and balance the Article 8 rights of the child against the seriousness of the mother's offence. In her study analysing the 75 cases of sentencing of mothers, Epstein (2011) sought to find out if this balancing exercise does take place. The 75 cases consisted of 5 in magistrates' courts, 31 in Crown Courts and 39 in the Court of Appeal. 3 of the cases resulted in Community Orders, 51 were sentences of immediate imprisonment and 19 suspended sentences.

In seven of the 51 cases of immediate custody, Epstein (2011) found that the sentencers made no mention of the defendant's dependent children at all. In other cases, judges acknowledged to the children's suffering and misery, but blamed the defendant. Overall, none of the cases that resulted in immediate custody appeared to have the balancing exercise carried out. In the

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[11] Article 8 of the ECHR states that everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life. Under Article 8 (2), any interference with this right, resulting from the forcible separation of a child from his or her mother or father caused by imprisonment of the parent, must be in accordance with the law, in pursuit of one of the legitimate aims provided for in Article 8 (2) and must be 'necessary in a democratic society'. Thus the court must conduct a balancing exercise weighing the seriousness of the offence against the Article 8 rights of the child. *Human Rights Act* (UK) 1988.

case of suspended terms of imprisonment, Epstein (2011) found that although the Article 8 rights of the child/ren were not directly mentioned, the welfare of the child/ren were weighed against the seriousness of the offence and consequently, a suspended term of imprisonment was ordered. Evidently, the judge in my case at the Crown Court took the welfare of my children into consideration, and although he did state that '*it should not be the courts duty to think about the welfare of the children,*' he passed a sentence that would allow me to return home. This was later appealed and I was now at the Court of Appeal. In line with the findings of Epstein (2011) in most cases that resulted in the imprisonment of the mother, the Court of Appeal judges referred to my children, but shifted the blame on to me:

SB: Yeah, they said that children should not be used as a trump card to avoid jail.
AA: How did that make you feel?
SB: Horrible right. I never used my children, if anything, I committed the crime for my children. But anyway, as I heard two years, eight months. That's when everything just hit me and straight away, I kinda poked my barrister and I said, 'My children. My children, what the fuck'? And then my barrister quickly said, 'You know her children are in school, there's no one to pick them up'.

Relative to the above dialogue, Minson and Condry (2018) analysed the sentencing transcripts of judges who sentenced mothers in the Crown Court and Court of Appeal. Their aims were to learn more about judges' thought processes throughout the sentencing process, as well as to see how much (if any) judges recognised the impact of the punishment on the children of mothers, and whether they regarded this as a mitigation. The researchers looked at 43 cases, 10 from the Crown Court and 33 from the Court of Appeal. In 19 of the cases, the children were mentioned in the sentencing remarks, whereas in two of the cases, they were not. The other cases remained unclear. They noted that in seven cases the Crown Court judge specifically said that the sentence was reduced because of the children. In 10 cases, the children were not considered to be a mitigating factor that should reduce the length of the sentence. The remainder of cases were unclear. Significantly, in twenty of the cases which were appealed, the Appeal Court found that the original sentencing Crown Court had given insufficient weight to the defendant's motherhood as a mitigating factor. This is contradictory with the remarks of the judges at my Court of Appeal hearing who stated that the initial sentencing judge had been unduly lenient because I had children. Consequently, the initial decision was overturned to that of 2 years 8 months custodial. I was however, allowed to return home for four days to sort out my childcare and had to surrender at my local police station on a given date and time:

SB: So I I dropped them off [my children]at the reception at the school. The school knew what was happening. Everyone was aware that I was going [to prison] and obviously I kissed them goodbye and I told them again that I have to go. They were tearful. They were crying. And when they were walking away, it felt like I was never going to see them again. I couldn't see beyond the sentence at the time. I couldn't see beyond it, for me, that was it. I just lost my children. That's how I saw it. I lost them.
AA: What was it like losing your children?
SB: I don't think I could describe that. You can't describe that. They are an extension of you. Anything that involves them destroys you. That was the end of me, you know, and it does become the end of you because they are physically removed from you. They are your world and your world just collapses and my world collapsed. When they walked off, when they entered the school and walked away, my world collapsed.

Conducive with current literature (Baldwin, 2017; Baldwin and Quinlan, 2018; Easterling, 2014; Lockwood, 2018; Mignon and Ransford, 2012) and with the women in study 1, I felt the excruciating pain of separating from my children. Given the significant bond (Harris, 2017) the moment of separation was significantly traumatic, leading to a sudden sense of loss (Easterling et al., 2018) that I clearly felt I could not re-establish. However, I was not the only mother feeling such pain. My mother, who was also on the verge of losing sight of her daughter, was feeling the same anguish:

AA: Who was with you when you were dropping the kids?
SB: My mum was there and my mum could feel the pain too because she was also about to let go of her daughter. Yeah, so we were both having the same kind of feelings of losing.

While mothers in prison are constantly concerned about their children's well-being(Halperin and Harris, 2004), the mother of a woman in prison is likely to be equally anxious about her child's well-being in a setting that is unknown to her. However, there is lack of research on the mothers of imprisoned women. Baldwin (2021) investigated the intersection of motherhood and criminality before, during, and after prison in her doctoral thesis. She also focused on grandmothers in prison and discovered that they experienced mothering emotions in ways that were very similar to the mothers in the study, but that the emotions were layered due to their separation from both their children and grandchildren. Not only did the grandmothers have to deal with imported beliefs about motherhood, but also about age and the grandmother role. Arguably, the situation for grandmothers in prison differs significantly from that of those outside who have a daughter in prison and grandchild/ren to care for. While the grandmothers in Baldwin's study were in prison and felt the pain of being separated from both their children and grandchildren, the grandmother in this context would feel a similar pain, given the

separation from their incarcerated adult child, but would also be responsible for their grandchildren, which, given the age factor mentioned by Baldwin (2021), could present its own set of challenges. Whilst my mother's way of coping at the time was unknown to me, my own strategy was to block my children out of my thoughts:

SB: But I immediately blocked them out. Because it's almost like... How can I put it? When you sense danger and you desperately try to find a way out of it, it was almost like my body, my brain just shut down completely. That was my coping mechanism. My brain just shut down and I had to block them out. I was trying my best not to think of them. Where it was at the back of my head, immediately from when I surrendered, I was always very fearful of bringing them to the front or to actually allow myself to think about them or even to process the situation. I was scared of what I was capable of doing to myself. This is something I've never ever felt before. I was so scared of what I could do to myself. The damage I could do to myself if I didn't block them out, I had to keep my sanity. To remain sane, really, because I could have lost it.
AA: So basically what you're saying is that your brain avoids the pain?
SB: Yes, yes avoids the pain and that was my way of avoiding the pain. I was able to control my brain and the way I was thinking I was able to control it, but what I was always thinking about is that not everyone is the same. I really can see why there was self-harming, why they were attempting suicide because it's crazy, you know, especially when you, when you have your children who you've, you know who you gave birth to, you've raised, you've been by their side through the nights you know. I mean, we all know how parenting is. I don't need to lay it out. To go from that within 5 minutes to nothing at all, not knowing what they're doing, what they are eating and where are they going to be. I mean, even though you know these things, you still don't know. You can't stop the anxiety. So yeah, my way was to block them out... My mind is 100 miles an hour. I've got like 10 boxes in my brain and I'm taking turns in checking each and trying to deal with them but the only box I'm not opening is the one with my children.

A vast range of emotions are expressed in the dialogue above, many of which represent incomprehensible maternal pain (Baldwin, 2021) as the major factor. With reference to *'boxes',* I talk about being able to think about, and comprehend, the situation I am in, apart from the thought of my children. I adopted a similar mechanism to Dominique in study 1, who regarded the separation from her children as a *'grieving process'* and felt that her only coping strategy was to distance herself from her mothering role and identity, keeping her children out of her thoughts. Although I was fearful of dealing with the intense grief as a result of the loss of my children, the situation made me understand why some mothers in that position self-harm.

7.3 THE STAIN

In parallel with the women in study one, shame and dishonour was also significant in my experience. The heightened cultural stigma of being a woman in prison (Cox and Sack-Jones, 2017; Easterling and Felmeyer, 2017) was a great source of shame for both the women in study one and myself. In the dialogue below, I recall my thoughts whilst with the investigating officers immediately after my arrest:

SB: ...and then as I said when they [the police officers] were in the car and I got out and I was smoking a cigarette, the officer was like, 'Listen don't worry you know some girl was caught doing this and now she works in rehabilitation doing this with offenders doing this, this person does that you know you'll be fine, you know. You haven't murdered anyone, you're going to be okay. We are just going to interview you and send you home, life goes on'. But I'm not thinking about I'll find another job, I'm just thinking about how am I going to face these people you know?
AA: The community?
SB: Yeah and I am thinking about the kid's dad. What is he going to do? His family, what are they going to do? I mean they use to go crazy on me if there wasn't enough salt in the food and to find out, what if they take the kids off me?
AA: Even though you are not with him?
SB: Yeah but I'm still his. I'm almost still belonging to him because he does not understand, it seems like no one around me understands I don't want him, I don't want him.
AA: So are you worried about what's going to happen with the kids?
SB: Yeah. I was really worried about what's going to happen to the kids…But also how am I going to live with this shame, how am I going to live with this very stain that my mum was always talking about, drilling it into my head. She would say, 'Don't leave permanent stains you can't get rid of' and this was definitely a permanent stain. How am I going to get back from this? How am I going to face people again? How am I going to be normal again? Erm and go into anything cultural? I couldn't see it happening. Within minutes this is all I am thinking about. It's crazy, I have been caught, I have been with investigating officers, taken to the police station and not at one point am I thinking what's going to happen to me. What's the system going to do to me? I don't care about the system, I'm not worried about the judge that I will have to face. I worry about going back home…
AA: To the community?
SB: To the community yeah. This wasn't family or community, this was wider than that, this was bigger than that, and I think that's what scared me even more. How am I going to face people? You know people are going to be hearing about this, I have taken in drugs, as a woman, as a mother of two kids you know fuck the public, it's the community, it's my people, it's the Turkish people you know. How's my dad going to keep his head up? It was the stain… I had a permanent stain. A criminal and separated. Single with two kids, a mess. That's how they saw it. I was now a lost cause, a hopeless case. I was just so cornered and so ashamed and so isolated.

In parallel with many other honour-based cultures (Gill, 2004), women and girls are regulated under patriarchal principles in traditional Turkish-Kurdish family contexts, notably in the form

of regulating and constraining autonomy (Yalcin, 2000). Given a mother's responsibility to raise her children, a daughter's misbehaviour is perceived to be the result of a mother's failure to properly nurture her child/ren (Abudi, 2010). Mothers are judged by both their community and extended family. The wrongdoing of the daughter, as well as the apparent inability of the mother in raising her child correctly, leads to the loss of both the family honour and reputation (Tas-Cifci, 2019). Although I show concern for my dad's honour and reputation during the interview, it is suggested that the effect of having a 'disgraced' daughter is usually very detrimental for the mothers (Tas-Cifci, 2019). Whilst the negative behaviour of a mother affects her female children (Gill, 2004), a daughter's wrongdoing tarnishes the mothers. Despite this, there appears strong cultural emphasis on maintaining the male honour, which runs through the female.

Furthermore, the distinction between men and women's treatment, which the women in study one emphasised, was a factor in my experience too. The women discussed how their male counterparts were not shunned, alienated, or felt the need to hide their prison sentences from anyone, yet it was a taboo subject for the women. My personal experience was remarkably similar:

I mean for years my brother was at…probably toured for years every police station in London and I remember when growing up me and mum was always bailing him out of everywhere. But that was never a big deal but obviously with me it was very different. Gender is a key factor, but it's not the only one. My brother has been to prison twice. He's never had to carry that shame or the extended stigma in the community. He's never had to keep his head down. It was openly spoken about and all more acceptable, but then when it's a woman, it's so shameful that people don't even ask you. I've been out in my community for five years and I don't think anyone has ever actually directly asked me about my prison experience. The word prison never comes up in our conversations. It wouldn't come up, so forbidden, so shameful. But there is the talks in the background of course.

Tas-Cifci (2019) examined the honour code from the standpoint of Turkish and Kurdish mothers and daughters. She highlighted that the daughters in the study frequently stated that the males in their families were treated differently and were more independent, but the girls were constantly monitored to protect the family's good name. Both the mothers and daughters also mentioned that the Turkish-Kurdish community played a significant role in judging families' reputation and honour and women were at the centre of the judgement, since honour is so closely associated with them. As discussed previously, although the notion of honour applies to both men and women in several cultures, men's honour is more likely to be tarnished by the wrongful behaviour of the women in their family rather than their own (Sen, 2005).

Ultimately, although myself and my brother shared a similar experience of imprisonment, the burden of shame laid on me.

7.4 MAINTAINING FAMILY TIES

People who are incarcerated are cut off from the rest of society, and their communication with family, friends, and others are limited. This not only has damaging impacts on the prisoner, but also on his or her family too (Gilani, 2021). Even though my family suffered as much as I did and lived in the shadow of the prison throughout my imprisonment, I was fortunate enough to be able to maintain strong ties with them throughout my whole criminal justice journey. This is detailed in the narrative below:

And then there was my parents. They came to the police station with me. They waited there, my dad was holding my bags. It was almost like they were sending me on holiday. They were so supportive, so caring. My mum was constantly saying, 'Keep your head up and take this as a small chapter in your life. Call us as soon as you're ready and take care of yourself. Eat, drink, sleep. Make the most of it'. And my dad. It's not often that dads in my culture would be the daughter's backbone, but he was mine. My dad was my rock. He was standing up very strong behind me and that way I didn't feel lonely. I didn't feel alone. Even when locked in the cell, I didn't feel alone. I also had my best friend there and at the station as well and she stayed with my parents for 2-3 days to support them, to support the children. Also because I was handing over the childcare and guardianship of the kids and my flat to my mum. So my friend was there sorting all the paperwork out. So I didn't lose my flat and my kids stayed at home. My mum lived there with my kids for the year so there was no disruption to my children in terms of location. They continued in their school. My mum looked after them beautifully. She done an amazing job. But what they did have was the language barrier. My kids can't speak much Turkish. My mom can't speak much English, but you know they kind of worked that out. So in that sense, with education and family connections, I was able to stay strong, they really kept me standing, helped me be resilient, you know.

Early research has shown that preserving family links benefits prisoners by providing emotional support, connection with children, parents, or significant others, and obtaining material things like canteen money and parcels (Braman, 2004; Fishman, 1990; Fishman and Cassin, 1981). These links have been suggested as aiding in the reduction of self-harm (Liebling, 1992) and the risk of a prisoner reoffending post release (Gilani, 2021; Hairston, 1998).

Lord Farmer (2017) highlighted this reality in his review of prisoners' family ties. He emphasised that supportive relationships with family members and significant others give meaning and motivation to other aspects of rehabilitation and reintegration, and that, as a result, ensuring family ties should be seen and referred to as 'the third leg of the stool that brings stability and structure to prisoners' lives, particularly when they leave prison' (Lord Farmer, 2017, p. 7). In his more recent review, Lord Farmer (2019) also acknowledged that some women in prison, particularly those from minoritised backgrounds, are unable to maintain positive relationships with their families due to a variety of factors, including a history of abuse, the shame of imprisonment, or having grown up in care, and he calls for cultural competence when assessing women's needs. However, he continues to suggest that strong family connections are the most important requirement for women, and that this has a significant impact on how they experience imprisonment and their risks of recidivism post release (Lord Farmer, 2019). The importance of such connections is exemplified in the dialogue below:

AA: So how did that make you feel? So you, you were saying that you had the support from your parents for the children?
SB: It made the prison experience a little more bearable. Knowing that they were doing okay. Although obviously you still have the thoughts at the back of your mind. You can never get rid of the constant anxiety with things like wondering how they are doing? Are they sleeping well? I knew my mum was doing an excellent job but yeah you still have the thoughts, although no immediate concerns for their wellbeing. I knew in my heart that they were okay. I didn't encounter what a lot of the women have to go through with concerns on what's going to happen to their children and where the hell they are going to go when they are released. I was lucky, in that kind of setting, I'd say I was privileged. Because I returned to my same setting, to my children, so my home was there, my children were there. My family was all around me so I didn't have all of these extra anxieties to deal with. That's probably one of the positives about my journey. I was privileged in that very bad situation. Yeah, I was very privileged.

The persistent concern and anxiety for the well-being of her children is arguably the most detrimental effect of imprisonment for a mother (Halperin and Harris, 2004). Given the minimal contact they have with their children (Baldwin and Quinlan, 2018; Easterling et al., 2018) and the relocation of most children from their family homes (Minson et al., 2015), adjusting to prison life is extremely difficult. Fortunately, I did not have to deal with these concerns or overcome additional obstacles to maintain a relationship with my children (Mignon and Ransford, 2012). This was due to my parents' immense support throughout my prison experience which made me feel *'privileged'* in an environment where I witnessed several mothers struggle. However, whilst I was comfortable in knowing that my children were in safe

hands, my mum had her anxieties about me and my wellbeing. Although she did not make it obvious throughout my sentence, she does reflect on it in our conversations now:

I talk to my mum about the prison experience sometimes and she would say I was worried that you wouldn't be able to see beyond the experience. She says I didn't ever want you to think that this means that you can't live on. She was basically worried that I'd do something to myself. Yeah, that's why she was, I mean, she would have been there regardless, but she made the extra effort to ensure I don't do anything harmful to myself. I mean the support was crazy. There come a point where the prison officers were taking the piss out of me for the amount of post I was receiving. They would say are you writing letters to yourself? It was my mum and my best friend. The letters were endless. But it all kept me going, it gave me something to look forward to. It was nice. It was my attachment to the outside world. My mum would always get the kids to draw pictures, write cards, and sometimes even maths tests. They would send it to me in the post, I would fill it in and send it back with my owns tests for them to fill in. I kept this bond with them throughout and I never lost it. Never lost it. My mum kept my routine so I didn't lose anything. She continued with my routine in terms of bedtime with the kids, schooling, food, and everything else. She done an even better job than what I would have done. So I never lost my mothering identity in that sense. My mum helped me maintain it. I would call them every day, read books over the phone sometimes, within the obviously 10 minutes permitted over the phone.

Considering the findings and typologies of Easterling, et al. (2018), it is reasonable to assert that, although redefined due to separation and distance, I was able to preserve my mothering status during my imprisonment. This is consistent with the 'same mum' typology, which defined mothers who viewed themselves as the same mother as prior to custody. Lord Farmer (2019) emphasises that although mothers are physically separated from their children during imprisonment, this should not mean they lose all responsibility of their children and not have a positive influence over them. This, however, would most often necessitate the involvement of the child caregiver, who would need to act as a go-between at times to help sustain the mother-child bond. Fundamentally, my mother helped me retain my mothering identity by enabling me to maintain constant contact with my children and providing me with the emotional support, as well as allowing me to continue important tasks like decision-making on factors that involved them. Regular visits were also a very significant part of maintaining the bond:

Yeah and every week, sometimes every fortnight without fail they would come to visit me. And every family day they were there with tonnes and tonnes of Turkish food. The kids would always be well dressed and presentable and very excited to see me of course, my mum and dad done an excellent job with them. So overall, within my own family they never let go of me. They held on really tight and my kids' innocence was protected, they never knew what

was going on. They thought I was at work, and they never questioned it, but that was thanks to open conditions because they don't get searched upon entry. They don't have these officers in tonnes of key chains and batons. Very relaxed environment. I mean on family days some of the officers were dressed up fancy. Like Christmas Family Day was amazing. One of the officers was Father Christmas and we were sent in presents from a charity to wrap up and give to our children. They really did make that day special for them. My son's birthday too. They allowed my parents to bring in a cake for him and we all sang songs for him and celebrated his birthday. Those two hours, you forgot you were in prison. There were always tears after visits and this massive hole in your heart, but I always knew it could have been worse if I was in closed conditions where none of these things would have been allowed. There was a lot of freedom, you were able to feel like a mum again in open conditions. You could take your child to the toilet, play games with them, run around in the garden, there were tonnes of toys for all ages and various activities. So it was such a relaxed environment. It was amazing, you know, in that, yeah, it was amazing. Obviously it was still tearful. It was still upsetting, but I think it was the best in that situation.

Several factors contributed to my ability to maintain a strong relationship with my children and family while imprisoned. One of the most important things, though, was the convenience of being in an open prison. Baldwin (2021) emphasised the tremendous benefits of open prison for women in general, but especially for mothers, who said that they were able to embrace motherhood more openly. The experience of open prison was far more humane, given the non-child-friendly setting and stringent restrictions in closed prisons.

7.5 (IN)JUSTICE

There appears to be a widespread belief that men and women who enter the criminal justice system should be treated equally. However, this is a major concern. Treating individuals equally does not imply treating them the same (Earle et al., 2014). The notion of equality was one held by Mr Philip Davies, who orchestrated my imprisonment because as discussed, he considered my sentence to be 'unduly lenient' and believed that an immediate custodial sentence could not be deferred merely because I am a woman and have children.

AA: Suppose I'm Philip Davies, what would you like to say to me?
SB: ...I would ask why? Why did you have to get involved? There is a judge there that has dealt with me, the Crown Court judge, who is perfectly qualified. Who has checked my files, has listened to the prosecution and barrister, has taken everything into account. Did you think he walked in and had a look at me and thought yeah, let's send her home. There was so much going on in that courtroom, but you undermined him as well. You made him look like an idiot. That very fair man. And then this is why others would be reluctant to give someone another chance because of idiots like you. I mean, why are you getting involved? You don't know what the mitigating factors were. All you know is that I'm a woman and all you are assuming from my name on the news is that I'm an Eastern European. That's all you care.

AA: So you believe that it was because you're a woman and because you're an ethnic minority?
SB: That goes without saying. He actually said that I shouldn't be given a lenient sentence just because I am a woman, he publicly said this.

In her Longford Trust Lecture, Baroness Hale (2005) emphasised the issue of equality. She stated:

> 'It is now well recognised that a misplaced conception of equality has resulted in some very unequal treatment for the women and girls who appear before the criminal justice system. Simply put, a male-ordered world has applied to them its perceptions of the appropriate treatment for male offenders.... The criminal justice system could ... ask itself whether it is indeed unjust to women'.

This was also addressed more recently in the Equal Treatment Bench Book (2021). It was stressed that true equality of treatment does not always imply treating everyone equally, and that properly treating individuals necessitates knowledge and understanding of their various circumstances to make appropriate efforts to correct any inequity resulting from difference or disadvantage. Women's earlier life experiences, reasons for committing crimes, and the impact of prison sentences on themselves and their dependents, as well as the long-term impacts of prison sentences, were argued to be different from men's (Equal Treatment Bench Book, 2021). Given this, equality of impact (Easterling, et al., 2018) is a concept that, if embraced, would be more just. Nevertheless, although the issue for Mr Davies in my case was my gender, when examining sentencing outcomes for similar cases, it has become apparent that race was an additional element:

SB: ...obviously I can never be sure, but the one thing that makes me slightly sure is that this white female prison officer that ended up in court just before me, she got two years suspended and community order. This was then also taken to the Court of Appeal. But the judges decided that the initial judge had been brave in his decision to not damage her future, but my future didn't matter. Clearly, you know, the damage done to my already damaged life was fine. Although this was mentioned in my court, they didn't pay attention and then the same year there was a black female officer who was caught with cannabis, so she only had one charge of cannabis. So less than mine, even more less than the white females but she got 3 years 4 months in prison, so there are unfortunately shades to sentencing too. The sentence you get can really depend on what colour you are. But in going back to Philip Davies, I think the number one thing was that I was a woman because that's what he made clear and I believe, and I probably could never prove this but my background did matter too because if I was a white female would he have made the same decision or got involved? The white female's case was also all over the news, why didn't he get involved in that? Because I mean

he's a Shipley MP, I wasn't his constitute or whatever they call that, I wasn't in his borough. I had nothing to do with him, so why did he get his name into mine but not the other females?
AA: Okay, so she was treated differently by the justice system?
SB: Absolutely and I can give you another example which isn't related to prison service, but a white female Oxford University student who stabbed her boyfriend and severely injured him was charged with GBH Section 18, so with intent. And the judge let her go home because he said shes too intelligent to go to prison and he didn't want to damage her future because she was an aspiring surgeon. So because she was studying medicine and was going to become a surgeon, you let her go home. Stabbing her boyfriend to then being able to become a surgeon, that is questionable and worrying. So you let her go home because she's too intelligent to go into prison and then you put me in prison because I'm too intelligent to avoid prison. My problem isn't that I, I shouldn't have been punished. My problem is that there is no consistency. Privilege screams, it really does. It really does and as I said, there's different shades of colours to this. But the system is forever in denial.

It was contended several decades ago that 'the criminal justice system has been in the past, and remains, racially discriminatory' (Kleck, 1981, p. 783) and has repeatedly failed to treat defendants without regard to ascribed personal characteristics such as race, ethnicity, and gender. Arguably, not much has changed since. The most recent published statistics on race and sentencing has revealed that racially minoritised individuals have a higher custody rate for indictable offences with the highest being 'Chinese or Other' and Asian (both categories 37%), followed by Black (35%), Mixed (34%) and then White offenders (33%) and a longer average custodial sentence length for all racially minoritised groups, but particularly those of Asian background (Ministry of Justice, 2019).

Such concerns have also been a source of debate in the United States. Squire and Newhouse (2003), for example, found that African American men were imprisoned at 27-57 times the rate of White men for drug offences, and that there were 13 African Americans for every one White sentenced for drug offences nationwide, even though drug use rates for the two races were similar. The authors conclude that there were clear prejudice in the determination of guilt and sentencing between African Americans and White defendants (Squire and Newhouse, 2003). Furthermore, when Viglione et al. (2011) examined Black women during sentencing, they discovered that women with lighter skin generally received shorter prison terms than women with darker skin, implying that punishment has shades. This is crucial in supporting my claim in the dialogue above, that three women from various backgrounds, committed three similar offences and received three different punishments in court, the longest of which was given to the Black woman.

7.6 SUMMARY

This chapter presented the findings and discussion from study two which provided evidence of the challenges I experienced during my journey of the criminal justice system. To avoid implicating my family as much as is possible, my early life and post release experiences were not covered. The analysis revealed five themes that emerged along a temporal continuum within each theme, apart from one.

CHAPTER 8 - GENERAL DISCUSSION

This chapter provides a general review of the key findings from the empirical studies that were undertaken. These studies concentrated on the prison and post-release experiences of minoritised mothers. A special emphasis was placed on how their ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds influenced their experiences. While summative discussions for each investigation have been provided, this chapter presents a synthesis of both investigations, analysing the most striking patterns and thereby presenting the current state of play. Using the developed intersectional model (described below), it addresses each element as spokes of oppression, and with equal weight, including race, religion, culture, gender, parental status, prisoner status (which captures the whole process of criminalisation) and sexuality. In keeping with the psychological orientation of the thesis, a cross-cultural psychological framework along with Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions theory is applied. This helps comprehend the complexity of the women's backgrounds, which influence their experiences and have an impact on their psychological and emotional states. This framework is introduced and then applied to the discussion which is divided into three parts that address the women's pre prison, prison and post release experiences.

8.1 THE ROUNDABOUT OF OPPRESSION

Following the findings of studies one and two and using Hofstede (2011) and Crenshaw (1989) as theoretical foundations, the thesis re-conceptualised intersectionality to incorporate the characteristics that are important to the women in this research. This is presented in the shape of a roundabout with multiple spokes feeding into it, but with no exits (see figure 2). Using Crenshaw's metaphor, vehicles would enter the roundabout from several directions. Each path indicates a unique oppressive system that leads to a series of concentric circles that surround the 'oppressed'. The minoritised are at the centre of this roundabout experiencing the increasing density and pressure of oppressive factors originating from each of the spurs that feed into their unique social location. While some individual resistance may be possible, the circle shrinks as more aspects of oppression increase. The model below represents the oppressive systems found in this thesis. However, it is not exhaustive in the systems of oppression.

FIGURE 2: THE ROUNDABOUT OF OPPRESSION
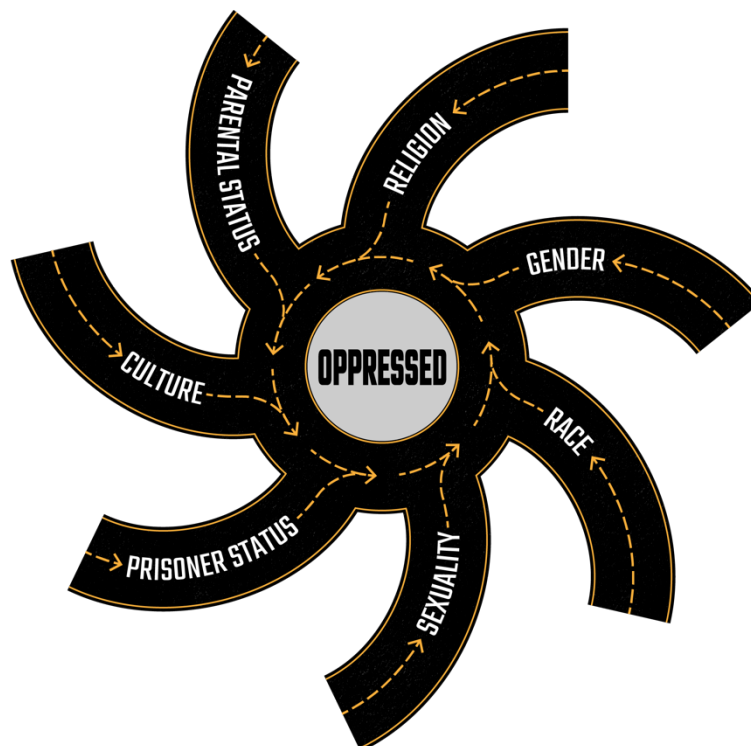
8.2 HOFSTEDE AND CROSS-CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY

'As we look around the globe, one fact becomes immediately apparent – humanity is marked by remarkable diversity as well as similarity' (Woolf and Hulsizer, 2019, p. 107). Culture, education, gender identity, race, age, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, language, ability status, job, socioeconomic position, and other factors all contribute to global population diversity. As a result, it is critical to evaluate not only one aspect of diversity, but also how that feature may differ among cultures and/or intersect and interact with other aspects of diversity. People from various nations will perceive people, and behaviour differently (Kite et al., 2019) since no two countries have the same cultural make up (Hofstede, 2001). People learn how to interpret events around them based on their parents' wishes, societal expectations, and ancestors' traditions. What people do is influenced by how they learn to relate to the world through feelings and thoughts. Their behaviours, in turn, influence their ideas, wishes and emotions (Shiraev and Levy, 2020). Cross-cultural psychology is concerned with the influence that such diversity has on human behaviour. This behaviour is conditioned by cultural systems that can empower or disempower individuals. For the participants in this study, their experience with these systems is experienced at the biographical level and it disempowers them, so much so that it is oppressive. The roundabout of oppression described above articulates the manifestations of the cultural value systems described by Hofstede (2001) as spokes of oppression that directly impact the minoritised. Even the concept of minoritised exists within a cultural value system and is blatantly obvious in heterogeneous societies, such as the UK.

Cross-cultural psychology is the critical and comparative study of cultural effects on human psychology. It is described as the 'study of similarities and differences in individual psychological and social functioning in various cultures and ethnic groups' (Kagitcibasi and Berry, 1989, p. 494). It explores the connections between cultural norms and behaviour, as well as how specific human behaviours are influenced by diverse, often dissimilar, social and cultural factors (Shiraev and Levy, 2020). To achieve this, researchers compare and contrast data collected across numerous cultures in an attempt to generate knowledge about universal and culturally specific phenomena, as well as to discover how different cultures impact behaviour (Keith, 2019).

Hofstede (1980), a social psychologist known for his ground-breaking research on cross-cultural groups and organisations, developed one of the first and most used frameworks for assessing cultural features in a global context. The best-known dimensions he identified as a

tool for assessing cultural impacts are *individualism-collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity-femininity.* While Hofstede identifies these dimensions as ways to compare and contrast cultural systems, these are within context deemed as preferential. Garfinkel (1956) discusses that in societies, there are designations of preference. He uses the systems of preference to articulate those behaviours or characteristics that are undesirable for a society. For those that do not fit within those confines, they are subject to degradation. In collectivist cultures, those that gravitate towards more individualistic behaviour or attitudes are more likely to be degraded or oppressed. The dimensions in Hofstede, through Garfinkel's preference lead to the roundabout of oppression as each spoke of the model exists not only within a cultural dimension, but also in a system of preference. That preference is used to oppress those that fall outside of the expectations of the society (Crenshaw, 1989) which are the minoritised.

Individualism - collectivism is concerned with how individuals in a society prioritise and manage their relationships. As previously stated, collectivism refers to cultures in which individuals are integrated into strong, cohesive groups and they emphasise the 'we' over the 'I' in social interactions. Individual interests are regarded as less important than ties to and duties to collective organisations such as family or community. Individualists, on the other hand, more common in Western nations (Triandis, 1996) focus on independence and personal success, giving them greater freedom and choice. Given this, individualists are preoccupied with oneself and their own point of view, whereas collectivists are concerned with others and ultimately focus on social situations with the perspective of an outsider looking in (Beins, 2019). Within those different cultural contexts, preference is evident (Garfinkel, 1956).

The second dimension, *power distance,* reflects inequality. It refers to how far less powerful members of organisations and institutions accept and expect unequal power distribution. Hofstede (2011) classified power distance into two extremes: small power distance and large power distance, claiming that inequality is more widespread in the latter. This is found in patriarchal, economic and racist systems that oppress all minoritised groups. The groups are the ones that experience the large power gap. The roundabout model is the manifestation of the power differentials upon which domination and oppression are exerted.

The third dimension, *uncertainty avoidance*, relates to how far a group will go to minimise uncertain and ambiguous situations. These may be novel, unexpected, startling, and out of the ordinary, yet they would bring considerable stress and worry to people involved. Such societies

would be intolerant of both deviant acts and deviant ideas, and they would strive to prevent the possibility of such events by imposing severe behavioural restrictions and standards (Hofstede, 1980, 2011). Finally, *masculinity-femininity* as a societal, rather than an individual characteristic, refers to the distribution of values in a society between the genders. According to Hofstede (2011), in masculine societies, the social role distinction of genders would be obvious and strict, men would be assertive, and fathers would make decisions as the head of households. Boys would learn aggression, while girls would be encouraged to be submissive, emotional, and compassionate. Feminine cultures, on the other hand, would ensure that differences in gender roles are minimal, that both parents are the head of the family, and that children of all genders are taught to care and respect. Hofstede (2011) presents these as value neutral, they are far from it. The typologies he identifies are utilised within cultural context for subordination, domination and oppression. With reference to Garfinkel (1956) these are not value neutral but instead systematised preferences within cultural contexts. They have historically been, and continue to be used at present, to oppress those that fall outside of the cultural expectations no matter how large or small (Crenshaw, 1989).

8.2.3 APPLYING THE FRAMEWORKS TO THE FINDINGS

While the findings of this study could be located in a variety of theoretical frameworks, they appear to be most meaningful to cross-cultural psychology, using Hofstede's (1980, 2011) cultural dimensions theory from an intersectional perspective. In essence, this approach considers culture to be a part of a social psychological system, with the aim of investigating how cultural elements impact human behaviour in the form of oppression. Given that the focus of this research was to explore the prison and post-release experiences of minoritised mothers and to gain a better understanding of how, and to what extent, cultural beliefs/values influence how they experience the journey of imprisonment, the mentioned approach would be significant. Whilst cross-cultural psychology allows for comparisons of experiences based on variations in the women's cultural backgrounds, Hofstede's (1980, 2011) theory allows for a better knowledge of the unique culture's norms and values. Furthermore, embracing an intersectional position guarantees that multiple identities are given equal weight. These frameworks are used in conjunction with the roundabout of oppression, which emphasises both cultural and institutional systems that oppress women.

8.3 PRIVILEGE AND POWER: IT'S A MAN'S WORLD

The findings focusing on the mothers' early lives have demonstrated issues of suffering, loss, unhappiness, and silence. In line with current literature that focuses on the demographics of women that enter prison, the mothers' appeared to be coming from difficult backgrounds that involved domestic violence, sexual abuse, poverty and lack of education (Baldwin and Quinlan, 2018; Barnes and Stringer, 2014; Berry and Smith-Mahdi, 2006; Burgess and Flynn, 2013; Corston, 2007; Easterling et al., 2018; Imber-Black, 2008; Siegel, 2011). Overall, all accounts appeared to be absent of the fundamental human right to freedom and choice. Although these characteristics were present in each individual story, there was evidence of patriarchal control on a macro level, which was especially entrenched in cultural and religious ideologies that accept and legitimise women's second-class citizenship position in society. Cross-cultural psychology contends that cultural norms that favour the attribution of greater power and significance to males have a major negative influence on women's roles, rights, and duties (Lips and Lawson, 2019).

Patriarchy is a social and ideological construct in which men are seen to be superior to women (Hunicutt, 2009). It is deeply ingrained in the norms, attitudes, and practices of several non-western countries, where women are often perceived and treated as less than equal to males, ultimately encouraging male leadership, dominance, and power. This was true for most women in Study one as well as the researcher in Study two. Their partners/husbands displayed toxic masculinity and used power and authority to oppress the women, which was, and still is, culturally acceptable. According to Hofstede (1980), it is a masculine society that forces women to economic dependency, abuse, and domestication. As a result, gender inequality and sexism are pervasive in such societies, having a significant influence on a variety of institutions, including marriage and family. Notably, 'man made' (Brownmiller, 1976) patriarchal systems are deeply embedded in several cultures and are arguably the prime obstacle to women's advancement (Sultana, 2012). It denotes that the male is the head of the family and is ultimately in charge of the household's ownership and earnings, as well as the decision making on the family's general affairs (Adisa et al., 2018). It reinforces masculine as the preferred and feminine as the non-preferred (Garfinkel, 1956). The gendered expectations in a masculine/patriarchal society impose specific obligations on women and subordinates them in the process. This was evident in the women's narratives of study 1 and 2 and was discussed in the findings chapter of both.

Men's ethical behaviour in families governed by patriarchal ideology include continuously policing women and their bodies (Ortabag et al., 2014). According to Brown et al. (2018), reputation is crucial for a man raised in a traditional honour-based society, and he is allowed, or perhaps expected, to go to extreme lengths to protect and defend his reputation against threats (Gursoy et al., 2016). This is particularly a factor in Muslim communities. Since this 'reputation' is almost always associated with women, men's violence to impose control over the woman and maintain the 'good name' is culturally legitimatised. This was the case for most of the women in this research, whose partners/husbands went to extreme lengths to keep them under control. Cross cultural psychology posits that violence against women becomes a public exhibition of gender hierarchy and male status in some cultures: an explicit assertion of men's ownership and authority over 'their' women (Lips and Lawson, 2019). This reaction is triggered by a range of behaviours displayed by women, including inappropriate clothing, going unescorted to specified locations, or being in the company of unrelated males, all of which are classified as transgressing cultural boundaries (ibid) and possibly leading to uncertainty (Hofstede, 1980). The women's accounts revealed such abuse and intense surveillance. They appeared to have been subjected to patriarchal beliefs and practises that overtly oppressed them, ranging from forced marriage and domestic violence to strict gender expectations.

Gender roles are taught social and cultural behaviours that are appropriate for men and women. Social influence has a significant role in children acquiring certain gender-related characteristics. Taking Hofstede's (1980) masculine vs feminine societies dimension into account, social and cultural upbringings have a considerable impact on children's understandings of gender roles based on the preference dictated by the society (Garfinkel, 1956). Bussey and Bandura (1999, p. 698), for example, claim that 'if children consistently observe women conducting homemaking duties, and boys only sometimes try their hand at it, homemaking rapidly gets gender coded as a woman's function'. As a result, parents who embrace conventional gender orientation tend to encourage gender-related behaviour. Although this does not imply that all children growing up in similar situations would behave accordingly, it may still be claimed that male gender performance is normalised rather than socially constructed (Anderson and Umberson, 2001). According to Gul (2013), women in such societies are assigned particular tasks, all of which are based within the home, such as being the caregiver of the children, and the elderly members of the family, fulfilling all domestic duties, and ensuring the family income is sufficient. As a result, failure to perform

these obligations is viewed as a justifiable reason for violence (Kocacık et al., 2007). As such, gender now becomes not only the location for social oppression but also abuse (Crenshaw, 1989) as was the case for the women in the study.

Violence against women is regarded as the most widespread of human rights violations, depriving women of equality, security, dignity, self-worth, and the right to fundamental freedoms (Kapoor, 2000). It is one of the key instruments used to oppress women (Ilkkaracan, 1998) and protect so-called family honour, and while the notion of honour appears to be linked to many elements of such cultures, the main and foremost appears to be female sexuality. In many poor and collectivist cultures (Hofstede, 1980) where such restrictions are prevalent, a man's greatest possession may be his honour (Lips and Lawson, 2019). As a result, a female member of the family who breaches cultural boundaries is regarded as bringing dishonour on her family and endangering the family's most important asset, their honour. This is in parallel with current research that has demonstrated the importance of honour within traditional cultures, stating that women who have 'dishonoured' themselves have dishonoured the entire family, and are therefore deserving of violence and punishment (Gursoy et al., 2016; Isik and Sakalli, 2009). These elements constitute three spokes of the oppression roundabout. While women are oppressed and regarded as second-class citizens by religion, their sexuality is policed through dress codes, sexual purity, and culturally appropriate behaviour. Culture is then utilised to legitimise gender-defined roles, violence, and abuse, exacerbating the oppression and contributing to the oppression encircling the women.

Although violence against women and rape within marriage are now crimes in developed nations, it is still considered a private family matter in many countries and cultures. The 'Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence', also known as the 'Istanbul Convention', is an important example of this. The agreement protects women from all forms of violence and requires nations to prevent, prosecute, and eradicate such abuse, which includes stalking, sexual harassment and assault (including rape), physical and psychological abuse, forced marriage, forced sterilisation, female genital mutilation, and forced abortion (Home Office, 2018). Importantly, the Council's Gender Equality and Violence Against Women Divisions organised an online conference in May 2021. One of the goals of the conference, which marked the 10th anniversary of the Istanbul Convention, was to celebrate the Istanbul Convention's international acceptance and the tangible influence it has had on national legislation and practises.

The subsequent conference report highlighted that the 34 Council of Europe member states who have signed on to the Istanbul Convention have agreed to a host of legal duties relating to the prevention, protection from, and prosecution of gender-based violence against women and girls, as well as domestic abuse, and have also pledged to implement gender-sensitive policies. Germany, for example, launched the 'Stronger than Violence Initiative' to promote public awareness and guarantee that women know where and how to get help when they need it. Portugal, on the other hand, established 24-hour helplines that are free of charge and have been extremely useful for women fleeing the violence that erupted during the pandemic. The convention has yet to be ratified by the United Kingdom.

The Convention, as a human rights instrument based on the lived experiences of women and girls, is believed to have given women across Europe hope that they would finally be protected from the violence and harassment that has wrecked so many lives. The convention, however, does not account for women and girls with roots in non-western countries and who come from households that strongly adhere to their traditions while resisting westernisation. The convention is also being criticized for encouraging 'gender ideology', which is said to be fuelled by religious extremism (Council of Europe, 2021). Such a criticism is motivated by a desire to maintain patriarchal supremacy and a readiness to use force, even violence, to achieve that goal.

One significant example is Turkey's departure from the Convention in March 2021. Elif Shafak, a Turkish writer and campaigner for women's rights, spoke at the conference of her worries about Turkey. She emphasised the significance of narrating stories to understand how confident, energetic young girls between the ages of six and seven become frightened teenagers throughout puberty. By that age, they have already learnt what is expected of them as females, that everything they say and do would be used to judge them. They have internalised patriarchy's suffocating gaze. She also emphasised that violence against women has resulted in the deaths of thousands of women in Turkey (Council of Europe, 2021). It is crucial to note that Zara and the researcher, both originate from Turkey and have lived under the patriarchal rules imposed by male members of their families who adhere to the Turkish traditions and cultural norms.

8.4 MULTIPLE DISADVANTAGE: MINORITISED MOTHERS IN PRISON

Current research shows that women face much worse conditions in prison than men (Corston 2007), because they are not only housed in facilities constructed by and for men (Minson et al., 2015) but also suffer more from the stigma of imprisonment. This is because they are believed to have broken not only the criminal law but also social norms too and are additionally stigmatised for breaking gendered 'codes' of appropriate behaviour for women (Malloch and Mcivor, 2011, p. 331). However, it is documented that this stigma is amplified for women with children as there is the societal tendency to view them as unfit and indifferent mothers (Allen et al., 2010; Kauffman, 2001), resulting in 'double jeopardy' (Easterling, 2014). Given that motherhood is such an important aspect of both the mother's and child's lives (O'Reilly, 2016), being an imprisoned mother is more than likely to inflict major emotional harm to both. Dealing with the forced separation (Baldwin, 2017) from their children while simultaneously attempting to keep what remains of the relationship, when and if feasible, would be extremely painful, since interactions with caregivers, whether authorities or other family members, may be both supporting and hindering (Lockwood, 2018).

Importantly, all the mothers in the research, with the exception of Tanisha, who had her baby in prison, spoke of the excruciating pain of separation and the sense of loss they felt (Baldwin, 2021; Easterling et al. 2018). The mothers all spoke about their own individual coping strategies, but the overall narratives were consistent with the self-constructed typologies established by Easterling et al. (2018), which were 'same mum, modified mum, and suspended mum'. Being the 'same mum' proved to be linked to the mother's positive interaction with family members or caregivers. This was visible in Isabella's narrative in study 1 and, more specifically, in the researcher's account, in study 2. On the other hand, the 'suspended mum' was evident in accounts of the mothers who, due to lack of/forbidden contact with children, felt alienated from their positions and identities as mothers.

However, for those from minoritised backgrounds, racial prejudice, discrimination, and resultant racial trauma can be viewed as an additional burden that can negatively affect their experiences of imprisonment and post release. This also contributes to the oppressive structures that already surround the women who have come from patriarchal backgrounds. In reference to the roundabout of oppression, although each spoke has a single entry into the roundabout,

its manifestations may differ. For example, while women are oppressed within their own communities by cultural and religious systems, they also struggle with oppressive systems from wider society, which manifest itself via forms of discrimination and 'othering'.

As previously indicated, Genders and Player (1989) published the first comprehensive research on racism in prisons, which revealed evidence of racism in the service. This was later supported by HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2005), which revealed that a high number of minoritised prisoners were racially victimised by staff and other prisoners. Such prejudice and racism were also discovered by HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2010), which focused on the treatment of Muslim prisoners, as well as Power (2004), who investigated discrimination suffered by Irish travellers in prison. However, all the studies were broad in scope and focused on both men and women in prison.

The racialised experiences of the women in this study are consistent with what has been discovered in other investigations. Racism, prejudice, and unjust treatment were prevalent themes in the narratives provided. However, comparable to the findings of HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2005), experiences of such discrimination appeared to range from one mother to the next. This was based on several factors such as race, ethnicity, culture, and religion, making the issue difficult to unravel. For example, Muslim mothers in the research commented more about the difficulties they faced because of their religion than they did about their Asian heritage, albeit this was also a factor. The concern for biracial mothers, on the other hand, was the colour of their skin, whilst the other mothers claimed that the unequal treatment was related to their ethnic origins, which were Greek, Traveller, and Turkish. This is critical since they would be culturally distinct but not so visibly different from White prisoners.

Minoritised women must deal with racism and prejudice on several levels, which may be both traumatising and harmful, possibly impeding normal growth and functioning in individuals who are subjected to it (Pierce, 1996). However, the trauma caused by such experiences is rarely discussed or acknowledged. According to Carter (2007), one of the key contributors to the problem of racism and its influence on the mental health of its targets is a failure to adequately appreciate the emotional, psychological, and physical effects of racism. According to Harrell (2000) in order to understand the link between racism and mental health, the various ways in which racism is experienced must be explored. She specifies six categories of racism-related stress: racism-related life events, vicarious racism experiences, daily racism micro stressors, chronic contextual stress, collective experiences of racism, and transgenerational

transmission of group traumas. These are all mechanisms of oppression and would flow into the roundabout from that spoke (Crenshaw, 1989).

The first racism related stress relates to individual acts of racism that have a clear beginning and end, yet have long-lasting effects (such as Sadia's conversation with her case worker). The second relates to friends, relatives, or strangers who observe or hear about racism or racist incidents that increase their anxiety, vulnerability, and sadness. The third form is daily racism micro stressors, which are recurring aggressions that remind an individual of the negative preconceptions and assumptions that surround their observed racialised identity (this was Isabella's experience). Chronic-contextual stress refers to the stress generated by having to adapt to, and cope with, a certain location, environment, or context that is characterised by structural or institutional racism (applying to all the women in the study). This may be exacerbated in environments where there are few persons of the same racialised origin as oneself (as Tanisha discovered when serving time in a predominantly White setting). Collective experiences of racism refer to individuals observing, feeling or being conscious of the cultural, social, and political impacts of racism on their own racialised group, and finally, transgenerational transmission of group trauma refers to historic trauma that is passed down generationally within families and communities (for example, Isabella's remembrance of her ancestors' suffering and Zara's mention of cultural oppression and massacre her cultural members experienced).

Exacerbating such traumas, minoritised women also face a layer of cultural stigma and dishonour from their communities because of their imprisonment (Buncy and Ahmed, 2014). This ties closely with the strict gender expectations in patriarchal cultures where, as stated, women are expected to be natural nurturers (LeFlore and Holston, 1989) raising children and taking care of the family (Gul, 2013; Kocacık et al., 2007), thus, remaining in the home (Buncy and Ahmed, 2014). Meeting these expectations is critical for women since they bear the weight of upholding family honour (Ortabag et al., 2014) and the male family members' reputations (Brown et al., 2018).

Ultimately, women that have committed an offence that has resulted in a prison sentence would have shattered these expectations. Studies have found that racially minoritised women are marginalised and labelled as bringing shame and dishonour to their families (Buncy and Ahmed, 2014), consequently dealing with a substantial layer of stigma (Cox and Sack-Jones, 2017). Given this, the women have little to no family and community support, and they receive

fewer visits (if any at all), further isolating them and making it feel like a 'second sentence' (Muslim Hands, 2018). As a result, the women experience the shame of dishonour at their core, which is devastating to their self-image and potentially tearing apart their entire being. The notion of having dishonoured their family members, as well as the lack of visits and isolation that occurred, was a particularly distressing factor to recall for the Muslim women in the study.

Although there is currently little to no research on the possibility of dishonour being traumatic, as the notions have been explored separately, there could arguably be a possible correlation between the two, as both incite strong emotional reactions and have the potential for long-term, damaging effects. For example, while incidents such as a danger to one's life, injury, sexual assault, rape, and abuse are traumatic, severe responses to dishonour such as violence, humiliation, shame, and ostracism would be extremely traumatic too. It is also important to note that honour killings are the most severe form of retaliation for dishonour. Such an excessive reaction is supported by cultural norms that link a man's honour and communal status to his ability to govern his wife and daughters (Lips and Lawson, 2019). Given this, the notion that dishonour is a form of trauma and oppression necessitates a separate investigation.

It is critical to recognise that the concept of honour is embedded in a complex network of extended family and generational networks. Defamation of the family name, particularly by a female in prison, might be the ultimate tragedy on the family's good reputation, position, and social standing (Buncy and Ahmed, 2014; Thiara and Gill, 2010). This has the potential to result in the family being marginalised by others, i.e. members of their community no longer wishing to associate with them. This is especially true in collectivist cultures (Hofstede 1980, 2011), where the 'we' is stronger than the 'I' and people perceive their self-image through the eyes of someone looking in from the outside, and they would therefore not want to be associated with a so-called 'dishonourable' family. Aisha's experience, in study one, was a concrete example of this. The findings of studies one and two suggest that the burden of shame falls not only on the imprisoned woman, but also on her mother and daughter. While the daughter of the woman in prison appears to be marginalised because of her mother's wrongdoing, the mother of the woman in prison bears the humiliation of failing to raise her daughter to meet the expected cultural standards. Ultimately, both mothers may be considered as failures who have tarnished their family's reputation. This often results in the internalisation of 'shame' for Muslim women prisoners and has an impact on their sense of self-worth, identity, and emotional and mental wellbeing (Buncy and Ahmed, 2019).

Such concerns do not apply to each individual account in the women's narratives, but instead stem from the oppressive patriarchal culture to which multiple women belong. As previously stated, culture is a highly complicated phenomena, making it impossible to generalise such diverse groups dealing with separate challenges (Gabriel, 2021). Gypsy, Roma, or Traveller (GRT) women in prison, for example, are more likely to face prejudice because of their ethnic origin and gender (HMIP 2020), whereas Black women encounter racial and gendered discrimination (Chigwada-Bailey, 2003). Muslim women, on the other hand, experience 'multiple disadvantages' as a result of several types of discrimination based on their gender, ethnicity, and faith (Buncy and Ahmed, 2019). However, given the individuality of each person, there is nothing to suggest that a Black woman cannot also be Muslim, putting her at a multiple disadvantage too. Consistent with the roundabout, religion (Muslim), race (Black), gender (woman) and others, constrain the autonomous action for the women in this study.

8.5 UNSETTLING REINTEGRATION

The women's pre-prison vulnerabilities, victimisations and oppressive environments discussed, as well as the variety of issues they deal with in prison, continues in the form of a post release continuum. The women must contend with the stigma of being a 'former prisoner' as well as reconcile relationships with their children and settle back into mothering (situation permitting). In addition to this, some continue to deal with the isolation, ostracism and significant level of shame imposed within their cultural, religious and/or racial community. Others must relocate and remain far away from what they would consider 'home' due to the dishonour they are accused of bringing. The findings in this study, reinforce current literature which contends that there is an added element of shame in some cultures (especially in minoritised populations), which makes the reintegration process much more difficult (Jacobson et al., 2010). Due to the perceived shame and dishonour, most women in such communities are shunned by their families in an attempt to safeguard 'what is left' of their reputation (Chigwada-Bailey, 2003), and are eventually ostracized. Fundamentally, there is a major link between loneliness, low self-esteem, and depression (Jackson and Cochran, 1991), which is exacerbated by a range of internalised challenges that the women encounter. Fears of social and cultural expectations prohibiting them from resuming any feeling of normality within their

families, and the issue of not being forgiven for bringing a bad name to their family and putting them to shame are among them (Buncy and Ahmed, 2019).

In terms of Hofstede's (1980, 2001) cultural dimensions, such communities would prefer collectivism, avoiding uncertainties, and fearful of any event that would be out of their social norm, possibly causing significant stress and concern to those involved. They would be anxious about other people's perceptions (Beins, 2019) and *'what others might say'* (**Sadia**). Given this, embracing, or forgiving a female family member who has recently been released from prison would be detrimental to families that belong to such communities. It would tarnish their reputation and would therefore be avoided. This results in a sense of alienation from the community which increases the oppression on the criminalised woman.

However, Hofstede (1980) highlights that the cultural dimensions are either extreme and circumstances may be found everywhere in between. The findings of studies one and two support this point. While most of the women talked about being rejected and abandoned by their families, eventually leading to isolation after release, the researcher in study two talked about considerable family support, which helped her have a more positive reintegration back into society. This resulted from the family's decision to reject larger community standards in favour of focusing on keeping the family unit together. Consequently, the researcher in study two was granted the removal of a singular aspect of cultural oppression as represented in the roundabout of oppression. This is critical because humans are believed to have a natural need to establish positive and long-term interpersonal relationships (Baumeister and Leary, 2007), which provides them with a sense of belonging (Chen et al., 2020). When this sense of belonging is challenged, people are likely to experience significant emotional pain (Kross et al., 2011), which is believed to be more intense and longer lasting than physical pain (Chen et al., 2020). According to Zadro et al. (2006), ostracism has major influence on an individual's perception of self. When someone's sense of belonging is broken, their lives lose meaning as they doubt their sense of purpose, self-worth, and value.

However, in line with a cross-cultural psychological perspective, it is vital to note that such factors may not be relevant to all individuals. Every culture has its own set of rules and values, as well as diverse priorities. Furthermore, people of various cultures, groups, and/or races encounter different forms of oppression and prejudice. For example, while Asian women and those from Muslim communities face greater shame and dishonour as a result of their imprisonment (Buncy and Ahmed, 2019), Black women tend to suffer more from the stigma

of a criminal record and experience hardship when seeking employment. The findings of this study are consistent with Chigwada-Bailey (2003), who suggests that the stigma of imprisonment is significantly worse for Black women since they face prejudice based on their race and gender, and having a criminal record exacerbates this. She claims that they then receive little or no help while dealing with employment and housing difficulties. This appears to be true for all minoritised women post release. Although the specifics of the discrimination and oppression they encounter may vary, it is clear that they all confront several types of oppression due to their multiple identities, which are all vulnerable to discriminatory practises, specifically being their race, ethnicity, gender, religion and past conviction(s). Each of these are represented as a spoke on the roundabout, as a source of an oppressive system experienced by not only the women in this study, but by minoritised individuals in total.

8.6 SUMMARY

This chapter provided a general review of the key findings from the empirical studies that were undertaken. It presented a synthesis of both investigations, analysing the most striking patterns and thereby presenting the current state of play. Using the developed intersectional model, it addressed each element as spokes of oppression, and with equal weight. In keeping with the psychological orientation of the thesis, a cross-cultural psychological framework along with Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions theory was applied. This allowed the comprehension of the complexity of the women's backgrounds, which influenced their experiences and psychological and emotional states. This framework was introduced and then applied to the discussion which was divided into three parts that addressed the women's pre-prison, prison, and post release experiences.

CHAPTER 9 - ASSESSING VALIDITY AND PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

This chapter evaluates the validity of the current study with reference to Yardley's (2000, 2008) guidelines for assessing the quality of psychological research, and with close consideration to feminist research principles. It also provides critical reflections of the study, acknowledging my position and contribution to shaping this research.

9.1 ASSESSING VALIDITY

Yardley (2000) contends that for a piece of research to be regarded 'valid', it must be acknowledged as sound, genuine, and authoritative by those who are interested in the study's findings. Establishing the validity of research requires assessing how effectively it was conducted and if the findings are reliable and relevant. Yardley (2000) developed a framework to aid this assessment, which allows for researcher flexibility and creativity and is particularly beneficial for assessing the quality of IPA investigations (Smith et al., 2009). While not a thorough review, the following study will be evaluated broadly in relation to Yardley's four key evaluation criteria outlined below:

TABLE 3: YARDLEY'S EVALUATION CRITERIA

1. *Sensitivity to context*	- Relevant theoretical and empirical literature - Socio-cultural setting - Participants' perspectives - Ethical issues - Empirical data
2. *Commitment and rigour*	- Thorough data collection - Depth/breadth of analysis - Methodological competence/skill - In-depth engagement with topic
3. *Coherence and transparency*	- Clarity and power of your argument - Fit between theory and method - Transparent methods and data presentation

	- Reflexivity
4. *Impact and importance*	- Practical/applied - Theoretical - Socio-cultural

9.1.1 SENSITIVITY TO CONTEXT

Yardley (2000) argues that a good qualitative research study will be one that can demonstrate sensitivity to context. This is achieved via the socio-cultural milieu in which the study is situated, the existing literature on the topic and the material obtained from the participants. Fundamentally, this study has demonstrated sensitivity to context by considering the existing theoretical and empirical work on the topic of interest. According to Yardley (2008), familiarity with the existing literature is required in order to develop a research topic that addresses gaps in our current understanding rather than rediscovering what is already known and allows for comparisons and explanations that may aid in the interpretation of findings. In line with this, after clarifying what is already known from current theory and research, the study identified a gap in existing knowledge and made the case for why this gap needs to be addressed. In correlation, the aims and research questions in this study were firmly rooted in current criminological understandings, employing an intersectional approach to analysing gender, race, motherhood, and imprisonment as interlocking factors from a multiracial feminist perspective.

Smith et al., (2009, p. 180) state that 'sometimes the very choice of IPA as a methodology, the rationale for its adoption, will be centred upon the perceived need for sensitivity to context through close engagement with the idiographic and the particular'. Given this, use of IPA as the primary analytic framework emphasises sensitivity to context, as the aim was to obtain an in-depth experiential account that would highlight similarities across experiences, while also highlighting individual complexities that would enable a better understanding of the prison and post release experiences of minoritised mothers. This also contributes to '*disconfirming cases*' which Yardley (2008) argues is a crucial component in ensuring all data has been presented rather than the researcher only selecting parts that are relevant to their viewpoint. Although systematic '*disconfirming cases*' were not used rigorously in this investigation, considerable

convergences in the data were presented. For example, while all the women in the research reported being ostracised by their families as a result of the humiliation and dishonour that came with their imprisonment, Isabella did not mention any such concerns and spoke very positively about her family's support.

Sensitivity to context is also a crucial part of data collection and interview process as rich data must be derived to enable a good analysis. This was achieved through awareness during the interview process, empathy, and a good rapport with the participants. The researcher must also be able to negotiate the imbalance where the research expert will be meeting the experiential expert (Smith et al., 2009). The negotiation of the power imbalance is also crucial to feminist research. Given that the aim of this approach is to 'challenge the passivity, subordination and silencing of women' (Maynard and Purvis, 1994, p. 23), it is suggested that the most effective way of achieving this is by encouraging women to speak about their experiences (Oakley, 1981). Ultimately the removal of the power imbalance is crucial in enabling women to openly express difficult or painful accounts without prejudice (Maynard and Purvis, 1994).

According to Oakley (1981), positive interaction is enabled when the connection between the interviewer and the interviewee is non-hierarchical and the interviewer is willing to engage his or her own personal identity in the relationship, facilitating mutuality. Oakley (1981) further states that this interaction is strengthened when membership of the same minority group is shared. Fundamentally, in this study, such sensitivity and positive interaction were obtained by immediately establishing rapport with the participants when the researcher revealed their ex-prisoner status, and as a racially minoritised mother with prison experience. This allowed for connected with the women on several levels. It also reduced barriers and participant/researcher power dynamics, particularly where the ex-prisoner status meant that both the participant and researcher were experiential experts.

Furthermore, Yardley (2008) emphasises that another important way in which qualitative research design can demonstrate sensitivity is via the use of open-ended questions that encourage participants to respond freely and talk about what is important to them, rather than being constrained by the researcher's interests. This is also at the heart of feminist research, which promotes the use of in-depth face-to-face interviews (Maynard and Purvis, 1994), as it claimed to 'convey a deeper feeling for or more emotional closeness to the persons studied' (Jayaratine, 1983, p.145). In line with this, in-depth face-to-face, semi-structured interviews were used in this study, and as a result, the mothers were able to address topics that were more

significant to them, assuring essential data richness. Overall, the mothers appeared to be more forthcoming with their responses, were emotionally expressive in most instances, giving honest and detailed experiential accounts. The mothers expressed the emotional and psychological dimensions of their lived experience, often re-living painful experiences and sometimes placing themselves in vulnerable positions i.e. an immoral self or the self as victim. This is evident in many of the verbatim extracts used in the written narrative accounts which is also said to be an important element to producing an IPA study (Smith et al., 2009). The extracts from the participants are used to support the arguments being made and more importantly, ensuring the participants voices are present in the study.

Finally, the researchers own experiences provided the critical and distinctive sensitivity to context. This allowed for the expression of empathy with the mothers during data collection and analysis. Given the unique position of the researcher as having both an experiential understanding and a practical awareness of the mothers' situations, it allowed her to come closer to their experiences. Consequently, when gathering data, she was able to ask the right questions and approach the study from a well-informed perspective.

9.1.2 COMMITMENT AND RIGOUR

The researchers position as a racially minoritised mother with prison experience, has orchestrated a high degree of self-interest. However, the aim to offer the mothers a 'voice' is also equally selfless and in line with the principles of feminist research (O'Reilly, 2016). Producing research that can help to make beneficial changes for individuals who are marginalised and sometimes overlooked in mainstream studies can only benefit society, and this is where the study purpose was largely focused. Notably, Yardley (2008) emphasises the importance of the depth and insight of the analysis. She states that unique insights can be obtained through the theoretical sophistication of the analysis or by an empathetic understanding of the viewpoints of participants as a result of substantial in-depth engagement with the subject matter. Relatively, the interest in this subject has undoubtedly made the researcher more attentive to the participants in a variety of ways. For example, sensitivity was demonstrated to both the mothers' individual and shared experiences, as well as dedication and rigour in both data collection and analysis.

Given the researchers inextricable link to the subject, she strived to be continuously rigorous throughout the study and handled the research with great care, paying close attention to all the

details. Sampling was specific to the aims and research questions, as were the interview schedules and concepts used to inform data collection in study 2. Homogeneity is significant to IPA as the researcher must recruit participants who share a particular lived experience. Ultimately, they may be more difficult to access (Smith et al., 2009). However, commitment was demonstrated through the recruitment of racially minoritised mothers with prison experience.

The interview schedule was piloted to assess the quality and as a means of self-assessment and each interview was approached with caution, trying not to influence the mothers' responses. In addition, personal experience and academic knowledge of the subject matter allowed the researcher to delve deeply into the issue at hand, while remaining sensitive to the participant's emotional state. Following up on especially intriguing new directions allowed for a more nuanced and in-depth knowledge of the dynamics that underpin the mothers' experiences. To avoid any ambiguity or misinterpretation in the later data analysis, the mothers were frequently prompted to clarify their responses.

A systematic and in-depth analysis of each case was conducted, prior to carrying out a cross case analysis. Each case was considered with an awareness of experiential biases and so all data was treated as equally important. In keeping with IPA, the current analysis is sufficiently interpretative whilst still grounded in the data. The depth and breadth of the analysis can be seen as developing across both empirical studies, with both studies logically and intellectually linking to one another. However, the second investigation also had a 'self-study' component which of course has several implications for rigour i.e. transparency and reflexivity which will be discussed shortly.

The rigour is also visible in the way the findings are presented. First and foremost, an authentic depiction of the mothers' stories was conveyed. Feminist research seeks to highlight and validate women's perspectives and experiences (Maynard and Purvis, 1994; Renzetti, 2013). Trusting participants' narratives and honest replication is therefore a vital component of feminist principles, regardless of whether such memories and experiences are recent or distant (Baldwin, 2021). Overall, feminist research is concerned with giving voice to women who have traditionally been neglected in research and who may lack social power (Doucet and Mauthner, 2007), specifically, populations that are typically marginalised on numerous levels, such as imprisoned women and mothers, from minoritised backgrounds. To ensure this is achieved, each story was given equal weight and privileging or substantiating one theme over another

was avoided. In short, the verbatim extracts are proportioned evenly to reflect each mother and theme. Furthermore, divergences in experience and the experiences shared by each group were depicted, demonstrating how both are critical to comprehending the occurrences.

9.1.3 COHERENCE AND TRANSPARENCY

According to Yardley (2000), a coherent study is one that makes sense as a whole. This would be judged by the clarity and strength of the study's argument, as well as the manner in which it is carried out. This, in turn, will be determined by the appropriateness between the theoretical approach used, the research question, the methodologies utilised, and the data interpretation. She states that the study must have a solid foundation in the methodology used and their theoretical underpinnings, as this will allow an informed assessment on the compatibility of the chosen approach.

In terms of coherence, a compelling case was made for employing a qualitative line of inquiry, utilising a range of diverse, complimentary qualitative analytical frameworks, including a hermeneutic phenomenological approach from a convict criminology perspective. Incorporated within a feminist analytical framework with the use of intersectionality as a tool for analysis, all of which are logically linked to the study aims and questions, data gathering procedures, and analysis. All of them are experiential in nature, with the aim of tapping into the mothers' life experiences and explicating relevant patterns related to the issue at hand. Furthermore, each empirical inquiry is logically linked to previous investigations, which will guide later studies. The purpose of the study has been consistent throughout: to explore the prison and post release experiences of minoritised mothers via the use of a phenomenological lens and a multi racial feminist framework.

Each inquiry reveals this consistency, which is reinforced in the general discussion, in which the data are synthesised and evaluated on a macro level, through an intersectional perspective with the use of cross-cultural psychology and Hofstede's (2011) dimensions. The discussion also contains contemporary theoretical viewpoints on the subject under consideration. Importantly, and in keeping with the interpretative nature of IPA, the perspective was made clear throughout the thesis, noting that the researchers understanding of the mothers' experiences and that their narratives are open to alternative, equally valid interpretations.

Despite this, the new findings are consistent with past theoretical and empirical studies, suggesting a degree of theoretical validity.

While a clear and logical argument helps to increase transparency, it is also vital to offer specifics of the procedures utilised, backed up by a paper trail (Yardley, 2000). Due to space constraints, this has only been done to a limited extent, as indicated by extensive explanations of sampling procedures, data collection, and analysis stages. Master tables of themes/conceptual diagrams and rich contextualised verbatim extracts, written up as a narrative account, demonstrate the analysis. Thus, to some extent, demonstrating how analytic interpretations were arrived at. Moreover, because qualitative research often anticipates that the researcher will influence the study (Yardley, 2000), reflexivity is an important part of the transparency process. This aligns with feminist research practise, which emphasises the necessity of increased and evidenced reflexivity in feminist research and states it is equally as important as the voices of research participants as reflected in the study process and outcomes (Maynard and Purvis, 1994). This is addressed in the next section.

Independent audit

The director of the thesis conducted an independent audit (Smith et al., 2009) to strengthen the legitimacy of the current research. While not a thorough audit, each empirical research study was evaluated using a systematic approach that included following the paper trial of the participants from beginning to end, i.e. transcript and associated notes/initial themes and table of themes. A further audit entailed evaluating the master table of topics and writing up narrative accounts.

9.1.4 IMPACT AND IMPORTANCE

'There is no point in carrying out research unless the findings have the potential to make a difference' (Yardley, 2000, p. 268). This study addressed the significant gap identified by Baldwin (2021) and, as a result, contributed significantly to our limited knowledge on the prison and post-release experiences of racially minoritised mothers. It has highlighted the several layers of oppression and disadvantage for mothers who must deal with the emotions associated with being a woman and a mother, along with their particular lifelong challenges pertaining to culture, religion, race, and imprisonment, as well as their former prisoner status. Furthermore, this research focused on the social structures or organisations that either support

or hinder such women's experiences in prison and after they are released. These findings are crucial for practitioners working with such women since a comprehensive understanding of their difficulties is necessary in order to provide support that is tailored to their specific needs.

9.2 PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

My own personal experience of the criminal justice system was the initial motivation for this research. In particular, I experienced prejudice and discrimination at the courts, so I undoubtedly come to this research with my own 'tainted lens'. I have acknowledged my experiential biases and demonstrated some of my pre-conceptions throughout this study. Naturally I have my own agenda, which as noted, underlies my motivation for doing this study. I see the world through stigmatised eyes in some contexts and I am unable to detach myself from this. I am angry and do feel a sense of injustice, aspects that were explicitly observable in the second study, which had a reflexive stance.

I felt the emotional struggles at the very early stages of my PhD. While conducting a literature review for an outside researcher would essentially be for the aim of acquiring a better grasp of the study undertaken, it was just pouring fuel to the fire for me. This is evident in a section of my reflexive diary:

'Reading current literature is proving to be quite difficult. It's making me re live my moments [of prison] *as I read and take notes. Things like the phone calls to the kids, the visits, my first few nights in custody. I really didn't know that there was so much research out there arguing against the imprisonment of mothers for non violent first time offences. I fucked up and the system fucked me even harder. I'm feeling the shame and pain all over again. I let my kids down, I fucked up.'* **(diary entry 27/01/2019)**

As a result, I have struggled with how this affects my perception of the mother's accounts, repeatedly asking myself, 'Am I imposing my world view on the mother's accounts and, as a result, wrongly representing their experiences'? Of course, as qualitative researchers, we are conscious of our inextricable connection to the data, but my concern is that, rather than guiding the study, I have tainted it with my own prejudices. This has been a persistent conflict throughout this research, as evidenced by the following passage from my reflective diary:

'I do wonder if the interviews I have with the women would have been different, had I not been to prison myself, or known exactly how it is to be "othered" by your community. I can't help but expect to hear certain responses to the questions I ask. How would an outsider be? I fully get what they mean and how they feel when they are talking, I just hope this would not have impact on my analysis. ' **(Diary entry, 06.03.20)**

And

'I don't feel like a researcher when I talk to them [the women]. *It's like the women are voicing my emotions and anger at some point in every interview.'* **(Dairy entry, 15.05.20)**

As is evident here, I was really anxious about being unable to restrict my own prejudices throughout the interviews. Given that we were both experiential experts (Smith et al., 2009), I appear to have perceived a blur between researcher and participant. I was able to empathise with the women as they discussed their lives and experiences, but I was also reminded of my own traumatic experiences, which were detrimental. At several points during the interview, I felt as though it was me speaking rather than my participants, as they would say something and an almost 'identical' experience would come into my mind. Considering this, the interview stage increased my self-awareness, particularly in terms of my previous experiences. I realised that I had never really processed many aspects of my life, notably my time in prison. In regards to the stage of analysis, I am aware that my daily mood impacted my interpretation of the data collected. If I was fatigued and feeling down, I was more sensitive to the mothers' negative experiences, which affected my mood further and led to my occasional difficulties with data analysis. This was especially evident for the sections that covered the emotional strain the mothers felt, being apart from their children. Given the damaging impact of the maternal pain encountered during imprisonment, I felt like I was reliving that separation in each interview transcript.

While as individuals, we must accept responsibility for our moral violations, society bears equal responsibility by labelling us and limiting our life, which has an influence on how we see and act in the world. This, of course, is consistent with the 'strengths-based viewpoint' (Doucet and Mauthner, 2007), which begins with the assumption that former prisoners are stigmatised, and that this has an influence on the desistance process. These theoretical orientations have had a tremendous impact on my thinking and helped create my expanding world view. Throughout my PhD, I had several setbacks, these concerned both my research and my personal life, as evident below:

'Been refused entry in a prison where I went to see my friend because I'm on licence. No matter how hard I try and how far I get in life, it still haunts me. That one horrible mistake is following me everywhere. And this visit resulted in my probation interrogating me. It apparently raised alarm bells. She questioned my intention and motive. Motive for visiting a friend who I know has no family and has had no visits? Fuck me, talk about being punitive! As for my PhD, she [probation officer] *told me I can't interview women in prison because I shouldn't be going near prisons, given my offence. She also told me that I can't interview women on licence as we would both be on licence and shouldn't be interacting – it would be a breach of licence! So what do I do? How do I move forward? BULLSHIT.'* [16/02/2019]

Above, I have outlined multiple setbacks in a very short time. These were hinderances to my attempt in moving forward in life and pursuing my research. The stigmatised status evidently followed me to every avenue and it was a factor that I could not escape. Given the restrictions set by my probation officer, I was unable to pursue my initial proposed method of conducting interviews with women in prison. This meant I had to move to plan B, which was to interview women post release. However, when I informed my probation officer of this, I was met with the response stated above. This delayed my research by a year as I had to wait to come off licence to begin field work.

Overall, this research has been a cathartic process, and to say it has been an emotional roller coaster is an understatement, but it has been a journey I am grateful to have taken. However, I have found it challenging on a daily basis, frequently comparing the PhD to pregnancy, the pain, the battle, and the anticipation of the due date. While throughout both of my pregnancies, I found the final month to be the hardest to get through, I had the same experience with the final write up stage of my PhD.

Throughout my PhD, another significant issue was my relationship with my children. Whilst in prison for the year, I was physically separated from them but I made sure I was emotionally available as much as was possible. In contrast, throughout my PhD, I felt that although I was physically present at home with them, I was emotionally inaccessible, unable to attend to their needs at times or spend meaningful time with them. Although very appreciative of my efforts, my children have often told me '*all you do is sit at your desk and type*'. On the other hand, they have also always been proud of my achievements, sharing it with their friends and frequently asking me when I will become a *'Doctor'*. Nonetheless, being emotionally absent from their lives has left me with a sense of guilt towards my children that is akin to, but not as intense as, the guilt I had in prison.

This guilt has also extended to my parents. Six months into my PhD, my beloved brother passed away. This was very sudden and undoubtedly traumatic for us all. However, given my dedication to my PhD and knowing how thrilled my brother was about me pursuing this, I did not take a break and continued with the study while taking anti-depressants. This, however, has meant that I have not been able to support my parents as much as I would have liked to whilst they have been grieving. My mum often told me *'please finish your PhD so we can finally have sometime together'*. Fundamentally, I am yet to go through the process of grieving.

9.3 SUMMARY

This chapter has assessed the quality of the research presented, by first evaluating the validity of the study with reference to Yardley's (2000, 2008) guidelines for assessing the quality of psychological research, with reference to feminist research principles. Second, it has provided a critical reflection of my role in the research, considering how I have contributed to shaping this research.

CHAPTER 10 - CONCLUSIONS

10.1 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH

This thesis explored the prison and post-release experiences of minoritised mothers from a multi-racial feminist perspective, employing IPA and intersectionality as a tool for analysis to ensure all aspects of the women's lived experiences were explored and understood, and their multiple identities were considered equally. The emphasis was on how they encountered, negotiated, and made sense of both cultural and wider structural, patriarchally driven notions that governed them, and how these systems influenced the way they experienced the journey of imprisonment. This study was significant because previous research has often concentrated on either/or one component of an individual's identity, overlooking that it is in fact a mix of numerous identities that distinguish each individual. Given this, little empirical attention has been devoted to how several identities may overlap to aggravate a person's already disadvantaged status. The thesis addressed this significant gap by assigning equal weight to prisoner status, race, culture, gender, parental status, and religion.

The study initially reconceptualised linguistic markers that ignore intersectionality and fail to see minoritisation as a contemporary progressive process, that can include historical roots, but is still experienced in the present. Based on the findings of both study one and two, Crenshaw's (1989) traffic model was reconfigured to incorporate the complexity and fluid nature of oppressive systems in the shape of a roundabout. Using Crenshaw's analogy, vehicles would enter the roundabout from several directions. Each path representing a distinct oppressive system, such as race, religion, or gender, which leads to multiple forms of oppression that continue to confine and constrain the oppressed at the centre of the roundabout. The vehicles symbolise the manifestation of the oppression from the stated forms of systems. For example, whilst micro aggressions represent one aspect of racial systems of oppression, cultural expectations of motherhood exist within the gendered, cultural and religious systems of oppression. The more traffic and congestion entering the roundabout, the more the oppressed is restricted in autonomous actions.

Four superordinate themes emerged from an Interpretative Psychological Analysis, encompassing the depth and complexity of the women's experiences and meaning making. The women's narratives revealed an underlying narrative structure, as evidenced in the superordinate themes that followed a clear temporal path. The women's pre-prison challenges was the first point of focus. It was vital to explore their cultural and familial backgrounds since this would have greatly influenced their prison experiences. This stage documented women's struggles to cope with abuse and the challenges they faced in escaping. They had been subjected to numerous types of oppression under both cultural, religious, and gendered oppressive systems in which they were silenced, victimised, and policed on several levels by the patriarchal power that governed them (male members of the families). Any sort of resistance led to multiple forms of abuse, including domestic violence, and all types of freedom, both physical and mental, were absent in all of the narratives.

After sharing their early lives, the women recounted their prison experiences which appeared to be liberating for some. Whilst there was the excruciating pain of separation from their children, the women also appeared to feel free, having fled the several types of oppression they had endured. Prison was liberating. Nevertheless, speaking of the prison experience, all the women had their children at the forefront of their concerns. The guilt of having caused the mess and leaving their children behind in the very oppressive family systems from which they had escaped was a major concern. Some of the mothers in the study appeared to be particularly concerned about their daughters. They spoke of the female child bearing the burden and shame of her mother's imprisonment, implying that male members of households have an advantage. Some women also described not seeing their children because of the perceived shame and dishonour their imprisonment had inflicted on the family, which meant contact was forbidden.

In addition to maternal pain, the women also appeared to bear the burden of their religion and culture, which accompanied them into prison and continued to serve as a form of oppression, manifesting in a variety of ways. All the women talked about the struggles of negotiating their cultural, religious and racial backgrounds with their prisoner status. Although they were all from cultural backgrounds, some of which are extremely similar, they are also very different and hence have varied experiences. Consequently, their anxieties, priorities, and even focus were vastly different. For example, whilst for some, the issue was attributable to their ethnicity and the visibility of it, for others, the colour of their skin was a factor which rendered them vulnerable to discrimination and 'othering'.

Furthermore, the intertwining of religion and culture was visible, adding to the complexity. Both manifested in a variety of ways for the women, ranging from isolation to feeling like a burden on the prison system. Some of the women described the difficulties they encountered because of the perceived shame and stigma they had brought on their families. They were alienated and even disowned by their loved ones as a result of their imprisonment. Some highlighted the lack of attention to food requirements, as it was an essential part of their religious upbringing, while others expressed difficulty within their own groups for not following religious rituals such as not wearing a headscarf. The women in the study also appeared to sense the agony of their cultural, religious and racial backgrounds continuing after they were released. Notably, the notion of shame appeared to be a common factor in most accounts, and the women's identities as mothers seemed to exacerbate this. In addition to dealing with the universal stigma associated with imprisonment in general such as having to declare their conviction, the women also encountered additional layers of stigma from their ethnic communities for being a female, a mother and a former prisoner, manifesting itself in different forms. Notably, some of the women had to return to the oppressive systems they had initially escaped by going to prison, perpetuating a cycle of oppression and abuse.

This study was then followed by an auto-ethnography, which included the researcher's own experience as a 'racially minoritised' 'mother' with '[former] prisoner status'. This second study had two aims. The first aim was to refine and expand on the stories of the women in study one, bringing a different, more positive perspective through the power of family connections, filtered through an educated lens, using research skills, and adhering to the principles of convict criminology and multi-racial feminism. The second aim was to break the pattern of both male-dominated prison studies that favour men's perspectives and women-centred research that overlook racialised experiences, and to join the eight women in the study in breaking the silence that has persisted for far too long. Overall, both the studies emphasised the complexities of culture and ethnicity, and confirmed that while it is easy to group all minoritised people together, the reality is that they are all incredibly diverse and mixed in a variety of ways, including skin colour, geographic origin, country or citizenship category, religious affiliation, and upbringing. It also found notions of power and oppression to be evident in all accounts throughout the life trajectories of all the women concerned.

10.2 IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

In considering the evidence from this study, the most fundamental, overarching recommendation is that criminal justice for women and how it is approached must be completely reviewed. There is certainly a considerable and continuous failure in meeting the needs of all women and mothers, but particularly those from minoritised backgrounds who face extra challenges. This study has shown that the effects of criminalisation and imprisonment are experienced in a wider context of patriarchy, oppression and discrimination. Women bring with them, all that they are into custody, and continue with it post - release. The journey begins, and ends, in layers of pain. Based on all the evidence presented in this study, the following recommendations are significant:

Courts: As far as feasible, courts should explore alternatives to custody for women. The blurring line between victim and perpetrator must be carefully considered, and by focusing on 'rehabilitation,' women must be steered to the suitable path that can customise services to their specific requirements. The negative impacts on family members, especially children, who often live in the shadows of prisons, must not be neglected. Prison should only be used as a last resort. Courts should also be held accountable in racially and culturally driven decisions. The visible difference or personal attributes of the individual such as colour of skin or religious clothing, should not take any part in decision making. Such accountability would begin with a comparison of similar cases and their outcomes.

Prisons: When no alternative to custody is possible, the prison service has a significant level of duty for providing proper support to the diverse group of women who enter their care. In accordance with 'The Roundabout of Oppression', the prison service must recognise the several forms of oppressive systems that the women come from and continue to bear the weight of while inside. Cultural and religious awareness will be essential for comprehending a number of difficulties that women face both externally in society and internally within their own families and communities. The trauma associated with this must not be overlooked or minimised. Such trauma must be detected, and when possible, following individualised therapy, next steps must be considered i.e., prosecution of perpetrator(s). Prisons must be aware at all times that they are detaining women who have been victims of oppressive systems that extend beyond the publicly recognised and listed ones. Furthermore, discriminatory behaviours within the prison, such as direct and/or indirect discrimination, stereotyping of groups,

'othering', and racial profiling, must be eliminated, and those who engage in such behaviour must be held accountable. Prisons must not lose sight of prisoners' rights, and while prison is a punishment, inflicting additional pain is both unnecessary and inhumane. It is also outside of the mandate of punishment. By not recognising their contribution to the oppressive systems, the prison service is increasing the punitiveness of the incarceration for women.

Trauma informed practise: Such practise, which is now being implemented in all prisons, must go beyond the more common types of trauma experienced by women, such as intimate partner violence and sexual abuse, and include and demonstrate fundamental sensitivity to racial trauma as experienced by racially minoritised individuals both inside and outside of prison. Furthermore, considerable knowledge and cultural awareness are essential. Trauma informed practise must consider conceptions of shame and dishonour, as well as the stigma that spreads to one's community, and recognise the trauma that will emerge. Women must be able to discuss and resolve, to the greatest extent possible, the concerns that they bring with them into prison and that will accompany them beyond release. Many women will also need to be informed of their rights. Several are unaware that what they have experienced, and what they continue to experience, must be addressed and is neither acceptable nor the norm. They must be provided with the correct language of the abuse so they can define and recognise their situations. Such women require ample time and space to process these issues with the assistance of specialists. Overall, the definition of trauma must extend beyond the commonly listed forms of victimisation and broaden to include the unrecognised forms of trauma.

Post release: The cultural and racial sensitivity demonstrated in prison, as well as the support provided for the women, must then extend post release. The identification of trauma must not switch totally to surveillance and risk management. That is not to say that surveillance should not be a component of reintegration, but it is the abolition of the therapeutic element that causes harm. If the goal of imprisonment is to reduce recidivism, why does it stop at the gate? Beyond this, gender specific services must be in place for women throughout their contact with the probation services. This is partially because it can be both humiliating and distressing for the minoritised to be in the presence of the primary locus of those that are representations of their minoritisation and oppression. In addition to this, the presence of gender specific services will ensure that women are not treated as 'add ons' and that their post release needs are given equal weight to that of their male counterparts.

10.3 FUTURE RESEARCH

Whilst this research has been fundamental in exposing the complex nature of oppressive systems that impact minoritised women, it has opened many other lines of inquiry that may more fully reveal these systems. First and foremost, a replication study of Caddle and Crisp (1997) must be conducted to identify the scope of the problem and offer a more accurate and current figure of the number of mothers entering prison and their children, as well as what happens to the children during their imprisonment. Studies that include broader sampling within UK to include other minoritised women to understand the scope of groups is also crucial. Narrowing the focus would then be essential to develop understanding of the uniqueness of systems of oppression for specific groups. In doing so, the roundabout of oppression should be utilised in discussing and recognising the types of oppression experienced by the distinct groups. Such studies must also focus on specific aspects of the criminal justice system to acquire a deeper understanding of how the oppression is magnified at each stage of the process. Finally, whilst it is important to focus on minoritised groups where they reside, it is also essential to consider culture in context, where the racial element would not be a factor, but other forms of oppression such as culture and religion may be evident.

10.4 SUMMARY

This chapter presented the conclusions derived from this thesis. It has summarised the key findings and discussed their implications for policy and practice. It has also provided recommendations for future research.

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UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER⌗

School of Social Sciences

University of Westminster

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH IN
minoritised mothers' experiences of prison and post release

We are looking for volunteers to take part in a study of exploring the emotional and psychological experiences of minoritised mothers in prison and post release.

As a participant in this study, you would be asked to take part in a recorded interview that will last between 60 – 90 minutes. You will be asked a series of questions, which will enable you to describe your experiences of the topic under investigation.

For more information, or to volunteer for this study,
please contact the researcher, Sinem Bozkurt on 07307677747 or
s.bozkurt1@westminster.ac.uk

This research is being supervised by Dr. Andreas Aresti who is contactable at
a.aresti@westminster.ac.uk or at The School of Social Sciences, University of Westminster, London, W1T 3UW.

This study has been reviewed by and received ethical clearance through the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Westminster.

If you would like to complain about any aspect of the study, please contact the Chair of the College Research Ethics Committee, Dr Aurora Voiculescu at **Westminster Law School Dept. 309 Regent Street, London, W1B 2HW Email: A.Voiculescu@westminster.ac.uk**

Participant Information sheet

'Behind bars: exploring the prison and post release experiences of minoritised mothers.'

This study is being conducted as part of a research degree (PhD) in Criminology at the University of Westminster.

You are invited to participate in this study, which is exploring the emotional and psychological experiences of mothers in prison and upon release. Participation will focus on your lived experiences of going into custody, the relationship you had with your children while there and your transition back out into the community.

Information concerning your involvement in the study

The study involves taking part in a recorded interview that will last between 60 – 90 minutes. You will be asked a series of questions, which will enable you to describe your experiences of the topic under investigation. However, you can choose not to answer any question/s you feel uncomfortable with.

On completion of the interview, the recorded conversation will be transcribed on to a secure system and subjected to a psychological analysis. Your contribution or parts of this will then be included in the completed research project report (doctoral thesis).

Your participation is voluntary, and you may stop or delay the interview at any time without having to give a reason. In this instance, any information held will be destroyed.
If you do participate, all data provided will be confidential and reported in a way that preserves your anonymity. In the event of this research being published, all identifiable personal data will be removed.

Contact information

If you have any questions regarding this study or the procedures you can contact the researcher, Sinem Bozkurt on 07307677747 or s.bozkurt1@westminster.ac.uk
This research is being supervised by Dr. Andreas Aresti who is contactable at
a.aresti@westminster.ac.uk or at The School of Social Sciences, University of Westminster, London, W1T 3UW.

CONSENT FORM

I have read the details in the information sheet provided. I understand that I will be taking part in a study investigating the emotional and psychological experiences of negotiating motherhood during imprisonment and the transition period back into the community.

The purpose of the study and my contribution to the study, have been fully explained. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the study and the procedures involved.

I have been informed that my participation is voluntary and that I am under no obligation to take part in this study. I also understand that;

- I can withdraw from this study at any stage.
- I will be free to ask questions at the end of the interview.
- I will be fully debriefed at the of the session.
- My identity will remain anonymous and all details held on me, will be kept confidential.
- My contribution or parts of it may appear in scientific publications. In this instance my anonymity is assured.

    I am over 18 years of age and willingly consent to participate in this study.
    Participants name..

    Participants signature..

    Investigator's name; **Sinem Bozkurt**

    Investigator's signature...

    This study is being supervised by Dr. Andreas Aresti, who may be contacted at the

    School of Social Sciences, University of Westminster, London, W1T 3UW.
    Email: a.aresti@westminster.ac.uk
    If you are dissatisfied and wish to raise a complaint, please contact the Chair of the

College Research Ethics Committee, Dr Aurora Voiculescu at **Westminster Law School Dept. 309 Regent Street, London, W1B 2HW Email: A.Voiculescu@westminster.ac.uk**

Interview Questions:

Demographics

1. Can you tell me about your background? Prompts: education/job/marital status

Entry into prison

2. Can you tell me about the time you were convicted and sent to prison?

   Follow on: Why did you go to prison and for how long?

3. Can you tell me about your first night in custody?

   Follow on: What were you feeling/thinking at the time?

   Prompt: children

Life in Prison

4. What was prison life like?

   Prompts: regime/daily routine/ visits

5. Do you have any particular unpleasant experiences you can recall?

    Prompts: of people/events/situation

6. How did you feel about this?

   Prompts: thoughts/feelings /views

   Follow on: How did you deal with this experience?

   Follow on if necessary: do you have any other examples?

7. What was it like being a mother in prison?

8. Can you tell me about your relationship with your children whilst in custody?

   Follow on: can you give me a specific positive/negative experience?

Transition

9. Can you tell me about your life after prison?

Follow on: What is it like being back in society?

   Prompts: feelings/thoughts

10. What was it like being back with your kids after prison?

Follow on: what was it like re-adjusting to being a mother outside of prison?

Identity

11. What does the term ex-prisoner or ex-offender mean to you?

Follow on: Does it have any bearing on your life?

12. Does that term make you feel any different as a mother?

Follow on: Has there been any events or situations where this had an influence on how you viewed yourself as a mother?

Follow on: how did this make you feel?

13. Do you feel there has been changes to the way people view you since your conviction and time in prison?

Prompt: as a mother

Transcript example for Isabella (09/10/2019)

1. **S:** So the day you were sentenced, how did you feel the moment you
2. heard the 6 years?
3. **I:** Erm, quite blury but I was sorry. I was gutted and I was very, very
4. sorry for the children. You know, I was angry as well, a bit of mixed
5. emotions but I was just sorry for my children. But then after that I just
6. wanted to go and get the time over and done with, because it was
7. going on for so long and hangin over me.
8. **S:** How did the time on bail go?
9. **I:** I tried to put it behind me coz in my heart I knew I was gonna get
10. time but I thought there's no point me getting upset or stressin now coz
11. you know, I've got limited time so I don't wana waste time dwellin on it.
12. I basically didn't wana feel like I was doin double time so I tried mi best
13. to push it at the back of mi head but you know, you know it's there and
14. you know its comin up so it aint very nice at all. So it was very stressful.
15. **S:** Yeah, and the day you was sentenced, did you have family with you?
16. **I:** Yeah so everything was sorted. I had their [the kids] nan and grandad
17. to take care of the kids for when I went away and it was actually them
18. who took me to the court because my mum, well mi sister was actually
19. in hospital avin a baby that same day and so my mum stayed there with
20. her, just because they couldn't face it anyway. So yeah. They were very
21. supportive but they couldn't come an face it.
22. **S:** And were your children old enough to know what was happening?
23. **I:** My eldest son was 8 at the time and he was quite mature for his age
24. so he knew but the other two were 5 and the youngest turned 4 the
25. next day [day after sentencing]. It was really, really awful me leaving
26. them.

Extract illustrating analysis of Zara's interview transcript.

32. forget that day, I was bruised everywhere. She didn't let me go school for a week
33. so that no one would see the state of me. It happened often, right from primary
34. and she would just keep me at home off school until I healed. She would say if
35. you tell anyone, I will beat you 10 times worse next time. I was only a kid, I was
36. scared. I never told anyone and I still respected her. Maybe it was the fear, I still
37. don't know. The very last time she beat me, I was 18 years old. She beat me
38. because my dad saw me erm, with my boyfriend, holding hands. This was seen as
39. me bringing shame on the family. So she beat me with a piece of wood. But yeah,
40. that was the last time. I'd had enough and I knew I had to go. So I ran away from
41. home with my boyfriend at the time.
42. S: How did that happen?
43. D: After my mum beat me that day, she told me to go to our neighbour and get
44. some sugar. Our neighbour was Turkish and she knew I had a boyfriend. So that
45. was my chance. I used her phone to call him and tell him what happened and
46. basically said come and get me. So the next morning, at 5 am, we ran away. I
47. basically running for freedom.
48. S: So moving on slightly, how was your relationship with your boyfriend?
49. D: Okay, so after two months of running away to him, we got married. It was all
50. really good, I was really happy. But when I got pregnant everything started
51. changing. He became very aggressive, he was never violent to me but he would
52. break furniture, punch walls and shout at me. He was very money orientated and
53. when was money was short, which was almost always because we were living on
54. minimum wage and paying full rent, he would get very aggressive and find little
55. excuses to cause problems.
56. S: Do you have any specific examples or a particular day you can recall?
57. D: So ermm, I think my daughter was around 10 months old. Erm, she was a little
58. restless that day and I had to deal with her. Given that, it took me longer to
59. prepare the food. As soon as he get in from work and noticed that the cooker
60. was still on, he started shouting at me saying things like ive been working all day,
61. im hungry, what the fuck have you been doing? He continued shouting for a little
62. while, punching the walls and then eventually broke the coffee table. And then

APPENDIX 7 TABLE OF THEMES FOR AN INDIVIDUAL CASE

Table of themes: Aisha (04/05/2020)

Overarching theme: *'Strive for freedom'*

<u>Cultural burden</u>

Cultural taboo
'They stop talking to me, they don't want to know me.'　　(1.27)

Language barrier
'I don't know what that mean, anything they say.'　　(2.22)

Bail: multiple punishment
'The stress was very bad, I had to take tablets…'　　(2.6)

<u>Maintaining motherhood</u>

Left in despair
'Crying, crying… my face was like big [swollen]…'　　(3.9)

Disruption to children
'It affect him a lot, his education, he can't study…'　　(3.16)

Visits: bittersweet
'They were afraid to talk to me…'　　(5.6)

Positive relationship
'They were always good. Always care for me and help me.'　　(5.29)

<u>The road to recovery: open prison</u>

In the same boat
'When I'm in open [prison], I got good friends.'　　(4.18)

New beginnings
'Job what I choose in the garden, I enjoying…education…'　　(4.21)

Gaining Strength
'freedom course and… other course for domestic violence.'　　(6.20)

Religion as strength
'I get through it easier with my religion.'　　(6.25)

A life sentence
'Will always bring it up so you don't forget whats happen.'　　(3.25)

Trapped in abuse

Cultural oppression

Zara	*wasn't even allowed friends*	(1.10)
Sadia	*shut up and accept it*	(13.19)
Paniyota	*I still wasn't good enough for my mum*	(1.15)
Jubeda	*She used to beat me, abuse me*	(1.22)
Isabella	N/A	
Dominique.	*predominantly white area, and I just struggled*	(1.8)
Aisha	*the stress was very bad, I had to take tablets*	(2.6)
Tanisha	*she used to beat me*	(3.15)

Stuck: The subordinated

Zara	*if his clothes weren't ironed or food wasn't ready*	(3.7)
Sadia	*I was forced to spend time with him*	(13.13)
Paniyota	*it's the whole male female divider.*	(1.10)
Jubeda	*That was a very abusive one too.*	(2.16)
Isabella	*was sexually abused*	(3.7)
Dominique	*vicious cycle of alcohol, abusive relationships*	(1.13)
Aisha	*they say look thief coming*	(6.23)
Tanisha	*he was addicted to crack*	(5.6)

A way out

Zara	*I knew I had to go*	(2.9)
Sadia	*one woman… she sheltered me*	(14.18)
Paniyota	*I left at 3 o'clock in the morning*	(2.18)
Jubeda	*I took my kids and left*	(5.16)
Isabella	*I thought about suicide*	(4.18)
Dominique	*I tried to take my own life*	(2.26)
Aisha	N/A	
Tanisha	N/A	

The Painful Journey

Motherhood in crisis

Zara	*Was gonna hate me, I knew she was*	(4.30)
Sadia	*Breastfeed… where's my baby… please help me*	(2.2)
Paniyota	*I really need to speak to my daughter*	(3.26)

Jubeda	*I was very stressed, I was losing my mind*	(4.15)
Isabella	*I was just sorry for my children*	(2.4)
Dominique	*I had to block them out to cope*	(5.23)
Aisha	*Crying, crying… my face was like big*	(3.9)
Tanisha	*I never saw my body until I was in labour*	(10.2)

Invisible victims

Zara	*we had a great relationship, though we were both broken*	(7.9)
Sadia	*Child is recognising another woman as his mum*	(12.9)
Paniyota	*didn't cope very well with it at all*	(3.16)
Jubeda	*Like did my mum really do this*	(5.12)
Isabella	*supportive but they couldn't come and face it.*	(2.20)
Dominique	*She didn't like seeing me in that environment.*	(4.20)
Aisha	*It affect him a lot, his education, he can't study*	(3.16)
Tanisha	*The guilt that they are having to come see me*	(12.6)

The road to recovery

Zara	*I believed in god*	(7.9)
Sadia	*Open prison was definitely good*	(11.17)
Paniyota	*ESP for me was better*	(5.22)
Jubeda	*ROTLs really helped*	(7.2)
Isabella	*that's when it eased up a little bit*	(4.7)
Dominique	*I went to church*	(6.10)
Aisha	*When I'm in open [prison], I got good friends*	(4.18)
Tanisha	*Open prison was much nicer*	(19.16)

Cultural Influences

Cultural pains of imprisonment

Zara	*My family looked down on me*	(8.5)
Sadia	*They're Arabs, they would go see their sons*	(18.19)
Paniyota	*Obviously very close but my family at this point*	(6.1)
Jubeda	*Weren't allowed to come and see me*	(6.13)
Isabella	*They always think bad of us Gypsies*	(12.6)
Dominique	*I tried to be white to fit in*	(9.1)
Aisha	*He is a bully.*	(3.19)
Tanisha	*Going to Winchester, I was frightened*	(9.2)

Negotiating cultural identity

Zara	*Being Turkish*	(6.9)
Sadia	*I used to wear a head scarf… but I took it off*	(4.9)
Paniyota	*I didn't look like you typical criminal*	(4.16)

Jubeda	*People didn't like Muslims.*	(9.17)
Isabella	*Us travellers ave very long hair*	(13.21)
Dominique	*Even though I was a victim in that sense.*	(7.12)
Aisha	*Don't look at you as Muslim*	(4.3)
Tanisha	*The church gave me a sense of belonging*	(21.14)

A Permanent Stamp

Shame and dishonour: the pains of freedom

Zara	*Good mothers don't go prison*	(8.17)
Sadia	*Coz in the culture, it's like hush… it's shameful*	(18.10)
Paniyota	*It's the whole male female divider*	(1.10)
Jubeda	*You know the Asian community is really bad*	(5.5)
Isabella	*Reputation was the only thing they cared about*	(10.19)
Dominique	*Very isolated and spend most days alone*	(7.18)
Aisha	*Prison made it worse*	(6.19)
Tanisha	*It was a bit like a shame because I'm a woman*	(29.24)

A life sentence

Zara	*will forever stay with me*	(8.7)
Sadia	*That's going to be with me for the rest of my life*	(16.24)
Paniyota	*But it sticks with me*	(12.2)
Jubeda	*I think you should know that I've been to prison*	(8.26)
Isabella	*I get double disadvantage*	(13.11)
Dominique	*My sentence will never be spent*	(7.15)
Aisha	*Will always bring it up so you don't forget whats happen*	(3.25)
Tanisha	*It carries so much stigma*	(26.1)