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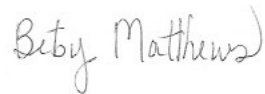
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FORGOTTEN IN LOCAL JAILS: A CARCERAL SYSTEM CREATED TO FAIL WOMEN

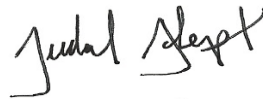
BY

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Date: 7/1/2021

FORGOTTEN IN LOCAL JAILS: A CARCERAL SYSTEM CREATED TO FAIL WOMEN.

BY

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Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
Eastern Kentucky University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

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ABSTRACT

The United States has seen an influx of incarcerated women since the 1980s with a 750% increase between 1980 and 2017. There is a substantial amount of literature about how women experience prison and the unique challenges they face as they reenter society such as motherhood, previous abuse, mental health, and housing. Conclusions drawn suggest that the current structure fails to prepare women for a society that denounces women who have been incarcerated. What is less known is how this research translates to the jail environment. For reasons to be discussed, it is likely that local jails are even less equipped to address women's needs. We used data from in-depth semi-structured interviews with 14 women housed in a local urban jail to explore perceptions of jail and reentry prospects. The overriding feeling was that the jail was indifferent toward women and failed to prepare them for successful integration into society. Recommendations for improved jail conditions and reentry programming for women housed in jail are discussed.

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Chapter I

Introduction

The 1970s Controlled Substance Act, also known as the War on Drugs, contributed to mass incarceration in the United States. By 2020, the United States locked up more people per capita than any other country, with 1, 291,000 individuals in state prison, 226,000 in Federal prisons, and 631,000 individuals in local jails (Sawyer & Wagner, 2020). Furthermore, the War on Drugs resulted in a significant increase in the incarceration of women, specifically Black and Brown women, (Belknap, Lynch, DeHart, 2016; Begun, Rose, & LeBel, 2018). The Sentencing Project (2020) reported a 700 percent increase in the number of incarcerated women between 1980 (26,378) and 2019 (225,455). Women now make up seven (7) percent of the prison population (Cowan, 2019). The growth in incarcerated women can be attributed to convictions for non-violent and drug-related offenses (Richie, 2018). Between 1986 and 2018, there was a 14 percent increase in women convicted for drug offenses. In 2018, 26 percent of women were in prison for drug charges compared to 13 percent of men, and 24 percent of women were incarcerated for property crime compared to 16 percent of men (The Sentencing Project, 2020).

What is not captured in prison statistics are the recent increases in the jail population. The increase in the incarceration rate for males and females led to severe overcrowding and strain in state-run prison systems. As a result, many offenders with non-violent drug or property charges are being housed in local jails (Alpert, 2010). State authorities pay a per diem to local jails to house their prisoners. There are

currently five states where more than 20% of state inmates are held in local jails rather than prisons (Sawyer & Wagner, 2019). Because they are more likely to be incarcerated for drug and property crimes, policies shifting state inmates to local jails has disproportionately impacted women (Swavola, Riley, Subramanian, 2016). According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), the female inmate population in our nation's jails grew by 15,400 (15%) from 2008 to year-end 2018 (BJS, 2019) with a significant portion of that growth coming from state prisoners.

According to Michell & Davis (2019, p.10) "mass incarceration is a system of social control and is responsible for the increasing representation of women in the correctional population, primarily through the criminalization of female poverty." Incarcerated women face many challenges including prior trauma, mental health challenges, substance use, and housing (Swavola, Riley, & Subramanian, 2016; Zaitzow, 2011). The literature suggests that, while women in jail have similar problems to those housed in prisons, these problems can be exacerbated by jails that are ill-equipped to address their gender-specific needs (Rose, LeBel, & Blakey, 2016; Belknap, Lynch, & DeHart, 2016). Women's programming and services in local jails are funded far less than their male counterparts, and the current funding primarily focuses on the confinements and punishment (Rose, LeBel, & Blakey, 2016). For many women housed in jails, continued harassment by male correctional staff triggers past trauma and abuse (Beall, 2018).

The following paper works to close the gap in research on women housed in local jails, while allowing the voices of overlooked women to be heard. Much of

the literature on women incarcerated predominately focuses on women in prisons, while failing to understand the experiences of women in jails. Due to the growing population of women in local jails, understanding the experience of women's incarceration works to assist women further down the line who may enter the carceral system. In addition, it works to improve the programming and treatments for the women housed in jails.

Chapter II

Literature Review

The growing population of imprisoned women gave rise to a large body of feminist scholarship that aimed to improve our understanding of women's criminality and their experiences in the carceral environment. Most of this literature is based on women in prisons, there is a growing body of research on women in jails.

Pathways to Jail

Much of the literature discusses the unique pathways that draw women into the criminal justice system. The "pathways model" that has been used to explain women's criminal behavior asserts that women engage in crime as a response to childhood maltreatment, economic marginalization, and dysfunctional or abusive relationships (Bloom, Owen, & Covington, 2004; Chesney-Lind and Pasko, 2004; Daly, 1992; Salisbury and Van Voorhis, 2009). Chesney-Lind and Pasko (2004) describe girls' pathway to delinquency as beginning with childhood victimization and leading to depression and substance abuse. To escape their adverse circumstances, girls often run away, exposing themselves to risky environments and more victimization. They begin engaging in "survival" crimes (e.g., theft, prostitution) and become embroiled in the juvenile justice system, and later, the adult criminal justice system. Although less likely to be adult-onset offenders than males (Gomez-Smith & Piquero, 2005), the criminal behavior of women often reflects an attempt to protect themselves or their children from intimate partner violence (Renzetti, Miller, & Gover, 2012; Ervin, Jagannath, Jones, Maskolunas, McCarty, & Agha, 2020). Other common precursors to adult-onset criminal behavior for

women are substance abuse and economic marginalization (Swavola, Riley, & Subramanian, 2016; Jessie, 2020).

Although most of the above-referenced research was conducted on populations of women in prisons, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that women in jail follow these same pathways. Swavola, Riley, & Subramanian (2016), for example, reported that 86% of women incarcerated in US jails experienced sexual violence, 77 percent experienced partner violence, and 60 percent experienced caregiver violence. Scott Lurigio, Dennis, & Funk (2016) research on 807 women in the Cook County Jail found that female detainees averaged 6.1 types of trauma in their lifetimes (e.g., natural disaster, serious accident or fire, physical assault, or rape, seeing another person killed) and that this victimization-offending link could be due to neglectful parents exposing their children to substance abuse and forcing them to take care of themselves. Later research on women incarcerated in jails across five states found that the observed victimization-offending link was mediated by mental health and substance use disorders that often resulted from the lifetime of trauma experienced (Lynch, Dehart, Belknap, Green, Dass-Brailsford, Johnson & Wong, 2017). Women who met the serious mental illness (SMI) standards were significantly more likely to report prior abuse and violence than women who did not meet the SMI standards.

Rates of mental illness, in general, are found to be high among women in jails. In their study of inmates in New York jails, Steadman, Osher, Clark-Robbins, Case, & Samuels' (2009) found that 31 percent of women presented with SMI compared to only 15 percent of men. Approximately 36 percent of the women in Green, Miranda, &

Siddique's (2005) Washington D.C. sample (N=100) at least one major mental health disorder. The mental health diagnoses among jailed women includes higher rates of "anxiety, depression, schizophrenia, bipolar, and antisocial and borderline personality disorders" (Rose, LeBel, Blakey, 2016, p. 6), as well as higher rates of PTSD (Scott et al., 2016; Belknap et al., 2016).

Prior trauma and mental health disorders often are the primary cause of substance addiction among incarcerated women (Belknap et al., 2016). In fact, women are more likely than their male counterparts to have co-occurring mental health and substance abuse disorders (Scott et al., 2016). Research has shown substance use as the predominant reason for women to be incarcerated in jails (McCampbell, 2005, Richie, 2008; Belknap et al., 2016; Begun, Rose, & LeBel, 2018; The Sentencing Project, 2020). According to Lynch et al. (2013), 82 percent of women in their study (N=500) reported drug or alcohol dependency in their lifetime. Furthermore, Green et al.'s (2005) study in Washington D.C. (N=100) found that 42 percent of women in jail's "biggest problem right now" was substance abuse. In a focus group conducted by Begun, Rose, & LeBel (2018) women were aware that substance use played a major role in their incarceration.

From this literature we can see that women in jail present with criminogenic needs equal to those of their counterparts in prisons. A key difference, however, is that prisons are much better equipped to address these needs. The next section of this paper reviews available literature that examines how women adjust to their incarceration in jail, and the degree to which these needs are met.

The Jail Experience for Women

After years of invisibility in the criminal justice system (Belknap, 2020), feminist scholars began to explore the rising population of women in prisons. In addition to uncovering women's unique pathways to prison, these scholars highlighted key differences in the ways that women responded to the harsh prison environment (e.g., Ginneken, 2015; Owen, 1998; Pollock, 2002) and inequities in the services available to male and female inmates (e.g., Butler, 1997; Morash & Harr, 1994; Price & Sokoloff, 2003; Rafter, 1990). Despite this, little is known about the experiences of women housed in local jails.

Prisons and jails are distinct institutions with different missions, inmate populations, and methods of operation. Most jails are run by elected officials, resulting in a continuous change of procedures, operations, and staffing (Lurigio, 2016). Jails serve a mixed population of inmates including pretrial detainees and those serving short-term sentences for misdemeanor or felony convictions. In most states, jails are used for sentences of up to one year, however due to court delays, jails in large jurisdictions often exceed the one-year detainment (Lurigio, 2016). According to Rose, LeBel & Blakey (2016), "access to mental health services in jails is limited in many areas and dependent on resources available through public funding and public perceptions of the need for such services" (p. 9). Nearly 64% of those in jail are not provided with treatment or counseling for their mental health disorders (Rose et al., 2016). Given these limitations, it is important to understand how women adjust to the jail

environment. Although limited, there are a handful of studies that explore how women experience their incarceration in local jails. Several themes emerge in the literature. The most predominate themes include the unmet physical and mental health needs, the treatment by correctional staff, and the loss of identity.

Research suggests that the physical and mental health needs of women in jail are not adequately addressed. Women entering jail addicted to substances are often forced to withdraw on their own or with the assistance of other incarcerated women (Krebs, Brady, & Laird, 2003). In their study on women in jails, Hoskins & Cobbina (2020) found that many women stressed the maltreatment and hardships when trying to take care of their mental and physical health. For example, medications for critical medical conditions were skipped for weeks in jail, as well as the request for mental health assessments (Hoskins & Cobbina, 2020). Swavola, Riley, & Subramanian, (2016) reported that in one county jail it took women 30 days to see a doctor, putting women at risk of infections and mental health crisis, amongst other life-threatening emergencies. Rodda and Beichner (2017) describe women housed in jails with a mental illness as the most invisible population in the criminal justice system. Due to the short-term sentencing in jails, and a lack of “gender awareness” by correctional staff, programming is either limited or not gender-inclusive for women (Bartlett & Hollins, 2018; Dobmeier, Korn, Brown-Smythe, Outland, Williams-McGahee, LaDelfa, & White 2021; Fogg, 2014). Moreover, Krebs, Brady, & Laird (2003) found that those who were unaware of how much time they would spend in jail were less likely to participate and invest in the jail-based treatments.

Women in jail frequently report negative treatment by correctional officers. Fogg (2014) found that although most staff members are aware of the different backgrounds for women, they manage women in the same manner as males. Swavola, Riley & Subramanian (2016) reported that women in jail feared correctional staff as a result of full-body searches, male correction staff watching women shower or undress, and staff-on-inmate sexual violence, all of which potentially triggers PTSD. Other studies suggested that women often feel unsafe and disrespected by corrections officers (Belknap et al., 2016; Slotboom, Kruttschnitt, Bijleveld, & Menting, 2011). Although the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) was enacted in 2003, this has not prevented correction officers victimizing women in jail, and women are less likely to report the abuse due to fear of solitary confinement (Swavola, Riley & Subramanian, 2016). These circumstances, Belknap et al. (2016) argue contribute to the “trauma of incarceration” that exacerbates existing mental health problems among women in jail.

Unmet needs and negative treatment by corrections officers led many women to question their identity as they adjusted to the “pains of imprisonment” (Hoskins & Cobbina, 2020). Women housed in jails want the opportunity and tools to learn to take care of themselves and their children (Fogg, 2014; Dobmeier et al., 2021). When not afforded that opportunity, women feel degraded, dehumanized, and unable to engage in “positive identity development” (Hoskins & Cobbina, 2020). In their study on women in jails and in substance abuse treatment centers (SAT)(N=118), Hoskins & Cobbina (2020), found that only 22 women, of the 118, were no longer interested in the criminal lifestyle, stating that it was embarrassing, and overwhelming. Hoskins and Cobbina

suggest that the lack of services and programming offered to women hinders their ability to self-identify with who they are outside of their trauma and incarceration. While we know a lot about women's experiences and programming in state and federal prisons, more research is needed on women serving their State time (i.e., longer-term sentences) in local jails. Women enter jail at higher rates than their male counterparts and experience unique challenges. Yet, women in jail are one of the most neglected populations in the criminal justice system. The current study attempts to fill the gap on women's research in jail, while discussing their unique experiences

Chapter III

Methods

The current research is from phase one of a larger longitudinal study of women's incarceration in urban and rural jails and their desistance from crime. Phase one of the study was conducted in seven local jails. Participants included 80 women who were serving State time and soon to be released to the community. This particular study focuses on 14 of the participants who were housed in one of the urban jails. During this phase participants reviewed and signed consent to participate forms and engaged in a semi-structured interview about their backgrounds, jail experiences and perceived likelihood of desistance from crime.

Sample

The current study reports on data collected from women in one jail in central Kentucky selected for its urban location. To be eligible for the study, women must have 1) been convicted of a felony offense and doing State time within the local jail, 2) served at least one year but less than five years in the institution for that conviction, 3) had one or more prior offenses on their record, and 4) been returning within six months to an urban community in Kentucky. Twenty-two women were identified as eligible for participation. Fourteen agreed to participate in the study.

The final sample included five (35.7%) Nonwhite and 9 (64.3%) White participants. They ranged in age from 21 to 53 with a mean age of 35.43. The majority (64.3%) of the sample was classified as moderate risk of recidivism. Participants' original sentences ranged from two to 14 years, with most (57%) serving a sentence of

five years or less. Comparisons of the women who chose not to participate with those who participated in the study revealed no significant differences in age or race. However, compared to non-participants, the participant group was higher risk and had, on average, received longer original sentences. (Table 1).

Table 1: Comparison of non-participants and final sample

Variable	Non-participant (N=8) N(%)	Participants (N=14) N(%)
<u>Race</u>		
Nonwhite	2 (25%)	5 (35.7%)
White	6 (75%)	9 (64.3%)
<u>Risk category</u>		
Low	0 (0%)	1 (7.1%)
Low/Moderate	4 (50%)	2 (14.3%)
Moderate	2 (25%)	9 (64.3%)
High	2 (25%)	2 (14.3%)
	X	X
Age	35.38	35.43
Length of original sentence in year	4.56	5.69

Data Collection

Participants engaged in a semi-structured interview about their backgrounds, jail experiences and their perceived likelihood of desistance from crime. The complete interview included 14 open-ended questions with appropriate prompts to encourage additional disclosure. The interviews took an average of 38 minutes to complete. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Although responses were pulled from many parts of the interview, I focused primarily on the responses to three key questions. 1) How do you feel about the punishment you received? 2) Describe the

programming in which you have participated during your incarceration. 3) What worries you most about returning home?

Data Analysis

Interview data were analyzed with the NVivo qualitative analysis software. I used an inductive method for organizing and developing codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Thomas (2006) refers to the inductive method as an “approach that primarily use detailed readings of raw data to derive concepts, themes, or model through interpretations made from the raw data by an evaluator or researcher (p.238). The inductive method allows prevalent and compelling themes to emerge easier than other methodologies (Thomas, 2006). Preliminary codes were used to categorize data broadly. Then subcodes were assigned to more refined concepts that emerged in the data. Additionally, during the coding process, I highlighted quotes that explicated specific concepts, language, or themes that emerged in the data.

Chapter IV

Results

The data highlights the many ways in which women feel betrayed by the criminal justice system. Their reported experiences, from sentencing to reentry, suggest systemic failure for women who are incarcerated in the local jail.

Overlooked by Courts

Several women expressed a sense of betrayal by the court system, and a general lack of compassion for their addiction or other factors driving their criminal behavior.

I need help with my addiction. I've never had help with it and they [attorneys] pleaded all the reasons why it would be beneficiary for me to go to rehab instead of prison. And a Judge told me that I belong in prison and that's where I was going to go. And as long as I continue to come in and out of here and do time, I learn nothing here, but how to commit more crimes and more people to get high with. I don't learn how to get sober and be sober and stay sober. This place has issues with that. (Case #52)

You know, I could see, too, because he [the Judge] told me, you know, I don't really want you to get out. You're an addict. He's like, I want you to get clear, clear headed. But it's not even a double [sentence], It's not double. It is a triple [sentence]. You know, I mean, like it's not just a regular one-year sentence cause the charge carries one to five. And he gave me three. And I think it's steep. (Case #51).

This and similar comments reflect the punitive response to the problem of addiction in the United States. This is particularly hard on women who are 13% more likely to be convicted for substance offenses compared to males. From 1986 to 2016, there was a 14% increase in the proportion of women incarcerated for drug offenses (The Sentencing Project, 2020). Some scholars suggest that these trends are due to harsh judgements of women who violated societies' gender norms by engaging in crimes (Beall, 2018).

The perceived lack of compassion extends beyond the problem of addiction.

Participants in this study talked about the many ways that sentencing decisions ignored their personal circumstances and needs:

I think that when people have been locked up for a long time, they lose things. A lot of things. And I think that the law or whatever should really look into helping people more. And really, know who they and what they're doing when they give people time and who they really are giving it to. Because a lot of people don't deserve it like the way they give it. It's almost like they gave it to the wrong ones a lot, you know. And I just think that they should try to help people more; there should be more help. You know, because you never know what nobody is going through or why and how. And I think they should really look into that stuff before they make a decision and realize what they're taking from people and realize what they're going to give people back or try to help people get back, because, you know, you take people's life from them, their freedom from them or whatever and then you just throw them back out there. (Case #48).

The concerns expressed by Case #48 are reflective of a larger pattern. As Cloud, Bassett, Graves, & Fullilove (2020) stated, “over the past 40 years, our society has deliberately divested from social and public goods designed to promote health and economic security while pumping resources into police, courts, and correctional systems that punish, impoverish and dehumanize people and communities” (p. 55). This dehumanization of individuals is especially evident in Black and Brown communities that suffer from higher rates of poverty, crime, and incarceration. According to Clear (2008), high incarceration rates are criminogenic; that is, by destabilizing families, and the economic and political infrastructures of communities, they exacerbate the very factors that contribute to crime in the first place.

The perspectives of women in this study are indicative of a judicial system that operates in an Ivory Tower, disconnected from the lives of those who appear before

them. The court's sanctions for these women are devoid of understanding and perpetuate their invisibility in the criminal justice system (Belknap, 2020).

Overlooked in County Jails

As stated earlier, participants in this study are state inmates serving their time in local jails. The women interviewed discussed the many negative effects of this arrangement, highlighting the fact that jails are not equipped to address the service needs of women. For example, several of the participants talked about the prevalence of mental health problems among women in the jail:

A lot of us that's up here we get put in segregated areas to be in isolation. We're left in there without being checked on. You have people who have mental health issues, women who have mental health issues who are lost in the system. It needs to be a serious thing about mental health, because if their mental, and a lot of us have mental health issues, I do, too. But theirs is more severe than me. Doesn't mean you have to be incarcerated. You know that they have mental issues. They shouldn't be in normal dorms with us to where people who don't know about mental issues is bringing them bodily harm, and a lot of it happens a lot. (Case #50).

Participants in the study also discussed the lack of response to mental health problems by the correction officers. For example, one interviewee discussed how the officers prevent them from seeing the mental health specialist:

It's not the mental health specialist who don't want to see us, it's the officers that don't let them know "hey we need you." They have to notify medical and say this person just pushed the button. It's an emergency button they put in the dorms and you push it and you tell the officer, "I need mental health [assistance]." You don't know what type of things you're thinking about doing, you know, and it takes them two or three hours before someone to get there to talk to you. It could be two, three hours later. (Case #43).

Although limited research has been conducted on women in jails, the information that is available suggests that the prevalence rates for mental health

problems mirror those found in women's prisons. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, in the past 12 months, 75 percent of women in jails have had symptoms of a mental health disorder (Swavola, Riley, & Subramanian, 2016). Furthermore, according to Swavola, Riley, & Subramanian (2016) "More than half of women in jails report having a current medical problem—compared to 35 percent of men. Approximately two-thirds of jailed women report having a chronic condition—compared to half of men in jails and 27 percent of people in the general population" (p. 9).

According to the website for the city in which these women were incarcerated, the current programming at the County Jail includes: Familiar Faces Action and Community Transition, Pathway Advocacy and Alliances for Community Treatment, Enough is Enough, GED Program, Religious Program, Batterers' Intervention Program, Court Monitoring, Home Incarceration Program, Day Reporting Program, and Goodwill Partnership. The women interviewed, however, stated that, for one reason or another, these programs were not readily available to them.

They stopped work [for] me because they said I'm a state inmate and they can't pay me and they can't, DOC can't, give me the credit for it because I'm a state inmate and they don't do it here. So, they stopped working me [in] the hallways and they don't have any type of classes here for me. So basically, I'm just, only thing I don't do is get in trouble. so basically, I probably get my couple of days off every month for not getting in trouble, that's it I can't do any classes or anything. They don't have it here. (Case #48)

They offer GED. And breaking chains or something like that. And that's it. But now they have the "Enough's Enough" program, which is for like a rehab program. But even in there, it's not even the real deal. They don't you don't have to have a sponsor and none of that. So, it's me. Yeah. You work your steps, but you don't have a sponsor to drop your steps with So what are you learning from that? (Case #47)

Many women discussed limited access to services, but none more powerfully than case #50. For example, she explains the men in jail are offered programming and opportunities that are never discussed for women.

They [men] get GED, they also get Enough is Enough. They have access to Tablet. They get longer gym time than we do. They have access to work in the kitchen, laundry. Honors, like they're supposed to go outside to do the cleaning around the facility. They can work in booking. Nothing is equal in here. We pretty much get treated like, I think we get treated worse than zoo animals here. (Case #50)

As the women are forced to see the men receive more programming and access to 'normal' everyday items to maintain sanity, they are also competing amongst themselves to gain access to the work/program dorm. The women, who are denied access to treatment, become idle and struggle to manage their time in jail. This idleness is ultimately detrimental to their physical and mental health.

Another source of discontent for several of the participants had to do with how they were being treated in the jail. One interviewee discussed the harassment she faced from a female officer while incarcerated.

I have been in here and been stabbed by an officer. The [video]tape was supposed to be rolled back. They were supposed to do some sort of investigation. That was September it's the end of October. Nothing has been done, I never even heard back from nobody. I filed grievances on the same officer because she deliberately, she's not even supposed to be working on this wing no more, comes down here and she always makes it around my pill call time, chow time. She's called out every pill that I get. "Oh, what's that pill for?" You know, I'm saying this, that and the other. She's present when I try to turn in my HSR (Health Special Risks) form, which is the medical form and the nurse might want to ask me something, it's like she wants to be right there. (Case #50)

Beall (2018), discusses the ways in which incarcerated women are disproportionately impacted by violence and sexual harassment, especially by male correction officers. Women are often expected to perform basic health care in front of

their male corrections officers, this may include “showering, dressing, and using the toilet” (Beall, 2018, p. 12). Here, the mistreatment, came at the hands of a female corrections officer. Another participant discussed the lack of respect that women received from female corrections officers.

One thing that definitely needs to be said about the department of corrections is that the women in this facility are mistreated and I mean seriously, and I don't mean by the men. Female correctional officers are more rude and more disrespectful to us than the men are. And like me, being in a detox dorm, we get talked to badly, you know, told that we're snitches. When we tell them, we need uniforms like all of, we don't expect our uniforms to be immaculate and stuff like that, but we are wearing the same uniform. We only get changed out twice a day, I mean twice a week and it's not a guarantee. Most of these uniforms have been bled in, bowel movements they don't get washed like that, so you wound up getting stinky uniforms. (Case #50)

The participants' voices clearly portrayed their feelings of neglect and mistreatment in the local jail. Several of the women stated that they would prefer to be in a state prison where they could work and participate in programming. They worried that, without proper treatment and services, they would be unprepared for release.

Overlooked when Reentering

In order to have a successful reentry, those incarcerated are in need of programs inside and once released, which are tailored to their specific needs. The concept of a “one-size-fits-all” and the lack of preparation (by the facilities) for reentry does not address the various needs of women. Participants in our study expressed frustration about the lack of attention to the reentry process in the local jail. One of their main concerns was that nobody seemed to be able to tell them anything about their case or likely release date.

When you're the state inmate, you're supposed to go to a facility where they have a state inmate counselor. They don't have that here and I've been here the whole time. Nobody can tell me anything about me because I'm a state inmate. So, if I were to make parole, I don't even know how I would know. I don't know if they'll just, I don't know anything. I know nothing. All I know is kind of what another inmate has told me and it drives me crazy. (Case #48)

I can't figure out what to do. They were supposed file shock for me, and I was going to shock out to a treatment program just to get my foot in the door and have a way, you know, process of a reentry type thing, you know, or whatever. But I mean, nobody's come to talk to me since. And if I don't get somebody to help me with get my classification, I'm eligible for HIP, which state HIP, which gets you out there and I could go to a halfway house or something and learn how to step out and do it by myself again. (Case #41)

The lack of planning and preparation by the administration attributes to the anxiety and overwhelming feeling, while undermining the chances of success for the women. One participant discusses the loneliness while preparing to reenter society.

Nobody's coming to talk to you about better thoughts, better feelings. What you're going to do better when you get out. No, you just sit in one room with nobody to talk to. Nobody to call. Nothing that makes you feel normal again. Nothing that says, hey, when I get out here, I can do this. Nothing, yeah, there should be a lot more. Yeah. Should be a lot more. (Case #48)

The lack of support and guidance expressed here may result in a lack of self-efficacy for these women. "Low self-efficacy, causes the defeat of one's hopes, and the resulting low mood further weakens self-efficacy, creating a vicious downward cycle" (Bandura, 1997, p.1). These feelings are exacerbated for women who fear that limited housing options and a lack of basic services will not allow for a positive outcome:

But as far as they just have nothing for females to come out and help with. Like every sober living or halfway house, you have down here, there is more dope in them than in the street. So, I mean it's just they're hit all the way around down here. As far as men may come out, they got all these programs that reintroduce them and we don't. You don't have nothing down here to help them, like as far as helping them get housing shelters. They just don't do that... [We need] somewhere like somewhere for females to go after they get out, whether

they're served out or on parole, that can slowly reintroduce them to society. Help them with everything they need, their food or shelter, clothes, shelter, the whole nine yards because a lot of these girls don't have that. I mean I've always got my mom if need be, if I had to go, but some of us don't have that right. (Case #49)

As women approached release, the idea of starting over was daunting. The women were overwhelmed and didn't know where to begin. They recognized that this lack of direction could contribute to a relapse.

It's scary, especially if, you know, if you've lost everything and you're starting all over. So that's really scary for some people. I hear that a lot, but there's no way to get that taken care of here before because you can't call anybody. You can't set up appointments and you're just getting pushed out. And that's where a lot of people relapse with no support. (Case #54)

The fear of having lost their previous lives and loved ones, especially their children, was expressed by several of the women interviewed.

Because like we've been here long enough, we lose a lot out there. You know, everybody moves on and they adapt with us not being around. And a lot of the sense of worthlessness and responsibility and the emotional health and all that. I mean, like it all takes a toll on us. You know, I mean, and we don't know how to integrate our lives with the other lives we've left behind. And I feel like there's going to be a lot of issues followed with that. I mean like using again and the families we've lost. (Case #51)

The women become discouraged about who they will become, or what they are capable of doing, once they are released due to the lack of assistance and planning. As discussed by the participants a lack of assistance and communication between the administration and the women prevents the possibility of a successful reentry.

Chapter V

Discussion

The carceral system was “created” to punish and rehabilitate. However, I argue that the carceral system was created to fail those who enter it, especially women. Our data indicates that women entered the criminal justice system with prior traumas, undiagnosed mental health disorders, and addictions. These problems were exacerbated by the indifference of system players, making the women feel invisible and forgotten. Judges and attorneys did not appear to understand the challenges women face prior to their arrest. They ignored requests for substance abuse treatment, favoring instead the more punitive response of incarceration. What the court system fails to consider is that many of the women they see in court will end up serving time in local jails ill-equipped to address their needs. The women in my sample reported going weeks or months without seeing medical professionals, causing further harm to their physical and mental health. In addition, unlike their male counterparts, the women were offered very few programming options due to their classification status or inability to pay. Finally, the women in my sample discussed the lack of communication between the administration and them. Many have discussed the lack of prerelease planning, resulting in additional stress and fear to know when they will be released and what their status may be.

Although this study contributes to the literature on women serving time in local jails, it is important to note its limitations. The small sample size limits the generalizability of the findings to the particular jail studied. Moreover, with only 14

participants, there was no opportunity to explore the ways in which age, race, and sexual identity influenced women's experiences in the jail environment. Furthermore, due to the methodology of open-ended questions, the women may not always feel reluctant to open up, further impacting the information obtained. Demographics and results were limited based on those interviewed. Despite women being held in jails more than prisons (Kajstura, 2019), the carceral system and reentry are not a one-size-fits all. Women, Black women, and LGBTQ incarcerated individuals have needs to succeed that cannot be met the same way that men's needs to succeed are met. Yet the system acts as though they are. The programming offered to women in jails is minimal and fails to meet the needs of the women. Further research would expand on the different needs in order to succeed, especially women, Black and Brown women, and those in the LGBTQ community.

The major benefit of this study is that it gives voice to an overlooked population of incarcerated women. While most of the earlier studies on women in jails included pretrial detainees and women serving short-term sentences, my study examines the perceptions of women serving one- to five- year sentences in jail. The results of this study show, that despite their lower level of security classification, these women have a high level of physical and mental health needs, that, if left unaddressed are likely to contribute to poor adjustment to incarceration and recidivism upon their release. It also highlights the perceptions of women about the ways in which various system players have ignored their needs. The programming offered to women in jails is minimal and fails to meet the needs of the women such as their mental health problems, the

continuation of motherhood while incarcerated, and the use of substances, and their desire to obtain an education and successfully return to society. In their quotes, you can hear the frustration they experienced due to limited opportunities for work and treatment within the jail setting compared to males and women in state prisons.

The carceral system's current policies and infrastructure as a whole deliberately works against anyone in the system, especially the women. Women housed in local jails experience maltreatment by correctional administration and a lack of programming offered, compared to their male counterparts. Unfortunately, most policy makers look to quantitative studies that count women as another statistic. Whereas, examining further qualitative research on women's experiences in jails will provide a better understanding of what the women need specifically. Cloud et al. states, "over the past 40 years, our society has deliberately divested from social and public goods designed to promote health and economic security while pumping resources into police, courts, and correctional systems that punish, impoverish and dehumanize people and communities." The current climate of defunding the police would allow the continued efforts to lower incarceration rates and protect communities from being targeted. In addition, it would allow proper funding to the communities, and additional funding to jails for gender-specific programming, education, and parenting classes for the women. Jails collectively result in further trauma and mental health challenges, while changing the trajectory of one's lives (Scott et al., 2016). Until the current system either becomes abolished or works to improve its short-term sentencing for women and their various demographics, the alternative for women may either be housed in prisons or other

treatment centers. Furthermore, the failure to offer programming to assist with substance abuse, mental health problems, education, or parenting—yet offering them to their male counterparts—reassures the women incarcerated that they will continue to be ignored by the system.

Current studies on women's experiences while incarcerated are growing, however research on women's experiences in jails are overlooked and understudied. Further research on their experiences compared to their male counterparts are required. Thus, expanding on the different experiences, treatments by correction staff, and the difference in programming offered. The current structure of jails and research view programming as a one-size-fits all concept that places focus on incarcerated men, failing to expand in dept experiences of women in jails. Research on race, gender, sexuality, and class must continue if policy makers expect to lower the recidivism rates. While the ambition to abolish the prison, system is a goal for many critical researchers, until this is met the need to understand and assist those incarcerated, specifically those housed in jails, and reentering is necessary. Ultimately, a further expansion on women's experiences in jail, with a focus on the different demographics of women should be studied in order to effectively assist the variety of women who enter the carceral system.

Chapter VI

Conclusion

In conclusion, women enter the carceral system with unique needs compared to their male counterparts. The current structure and implications of local jails in the United States, fails to effectively assist women who have been convicted and sentence to longer-term sentences. This is shown by the lack of programming and opportunities offered to women in the jails. As researchers and activists, we should push for decarceration of women convicted of low-level offenses. Short of that, we should demand gender-specific programming for women in jails as well as studies on the intersectionality among women in jails, including Black and Brown women and those within the LGBTQ community. Ultimately, the women housed in jails are intentionally neglected and invisible by a carceral system created to fail them, increasing their likelihood of recidivism once released and continuing their cycle of incarceration.

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