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Challenging the Carceral State: Incarceration, Families, and Resistance among Women of Color

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Sociology

by

Jessica Christine Moronez

December 2020

Dissertation Committee:
Dr. Ellen Reese, Chairperson
Dr. Randol Contreras
Dr. San Juanita García
Dr. Chioun Lee

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2020

The Dissertation of Jessica Christine Moronez is approved:

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Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

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DEDICATION

for all the women impacted by incarceration who long to reunite with their loved ones…
we will continue the fight.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Challenging the Carceral State: Incarceration, Families, and Resistance among Women of Color

by

Jessica Christine Moronez

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Sociology
University of California, Riverside, December 2020
Dr. Ellen Reese, Chairperson

Mass incarceration in the United States impacts the lives of incarcerated individuals and their families. Previous research on incarceration and families often focuses on child-parent relationships and the learning, behavioral, and psychological outcomes of children with incarcerated parent(s). Past research also provides insight on romantic relationships and how couples navigate intimacy, finances, and love amidst carceral separation. However, relatively few studies have examined the scope of familial relationships that goes beyond children/parents and romantic partners, such as the experiences of siblings or other relatives. What is even more understudied is how women of color who are marginalized by race, class, gender oppression, and incarceration create spaces for the strengthening of familial bonds and resist mainstream narratives about incarcerated people.

In this dissertation, I address the gap in the literature by interviewing women of color who have been incarcerated themselves and/or have an incarcerated loved one. As a feminist scholar, I was attentive to minimizing the power dynamics in the interviewer-participant relationship and actively sought to build rapport as I engaged in interviews

with women who have experienced the traumas associated with incarceration. These considerations also informed my decisions about what information to include in the interview transcripts and my analysis and built a rapport with participants by expressing affinity and emotional support for them during the interview.

In addition, this study highlights the caring labor that women of color engage in that I call "carceral familywork." The women in my sample performed three main types of caring labor amongst their families when their relatives were incarcerated: 1) care work through visitation, 2) care work through reunification, and 3) care work for connection and well-being of others. This type of work is not applicable to only parent-child relationships or spousal relationships but also extends to understudied family members, including ex-partners and siblings.

Lastly, this study identifies three main types of social change strategies among women of color who have been incarcerated and/or have an incarcerated loved one. I found that the women worked to create change and challenge the dominant narratives about incarcerated people through 1) involvement in the political sphere, 2) supporting others through service and educational occupations and advocacy 3) sharing their experiences with their loved ones. Through such acts, women of color challenged how others thought of incarcerated people by sharing their own stories and/or stories of loved ones as counternarratives and forewarnings about the criminal justice system.

This dissertation makes important methodological and empirical contributions to the research about women of color who have been impacted by their own incarceration. Methodologically, this research details how to use a feminist approach when interviewing

women impacted by incarceration. These lessons might also be useful for qualitative researchers interviewing other kinds of groups about traumatic experiences. Empirically, this research adds to emergent literature on the caring labor performed by families of color generally and those affected by incarceration. Finally, my findings expand our understanding of how women of color resist the mainstream and often stereotypical narratives about incarcerated individuals.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Women of Color, Family, and Incarceration 1
Researching Women of Color Impacted by Incarceration 33
Carceral Familywork and the Maintenance of Familial Bonds 54
Sharing Stories and Creating Change 81
Conclusion and Policy Improvements 109
References 120
Appendix A 134
Appendix B 136

Chapter I

Women of Color, Family, and Incarceration

Since the war on drugs campaign, the U.S. has moved toward a trend of mass imprisonment, leading to 2.2 million individuals incarcerated in local jails and state or federal prisons, juvenile correction facilities, immigration detention facilities, and Indian Country jails (Sawyer and Wagner 2020). In 2018, an estimated 6.7 million individuals (approximately 1 in 37 adults) were under some form of correctional supervision (Jones 2018). The alarming rate of incarceration and correctional supervision does not just affect those who are imprisoned or under correctional supervision; it also affects their family members and loved ones (Turney 2015; Comfort 2008). It is estimated that 45% of all Americans have had an immediate family member incarcerated in a jail or prison at some point in their lifetime (Enns et al. 2019). The percentage of women with incarcerated male partners ranges from the conservative estimate of 20% to upwards of 50% (Comfort 2008). This results in 2.5 million to 6.5 million women who maintain relationships with a male partner who is or has been incarcerated. The number is even more significant if we include women who maintain relationships with another woman or transgender partner. Millions of women, disproportionately women of color, are thus drastically impacted by incarceration in two ways: being incarcerated themselves and/or dealing with a loved one's incarceration, sometimes simultaneously.

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the experiences of women of color who have been impacted by incarceration and how they navigate their familial relationships. My research seeks to understand how race, class, and gender inequalities

interact and influence how women of color experience life on what many of them call "the inside" (i.e., state-sanctioned confinement/imprisonment) and/or "the outside" (i.e., life outside of state-sanctioned confinement/imprisonment which still may include state-sanctioned surveillance). Using a feminist methodological approach described more fully in Chapter Two, I conducted in-depth interviews with women who have been incarcerated and/or have an incarcerated loved one. The "and/or" denotes the reality that some women of color share the dual experience of being behind bars at one point of their lives and being in front of them at other time points. In Chapter Three, I argue that these experiences lead women to engage in "carceral familywork," a term I use to describe the ways in which women of color engage in the caring labor of maintaining familial bonds in the context of their own and/or their loved one's incarceration. In Chapter Four, I argue that these familial experiences are critical to women's resistance work in challenging the criminal justice system. Lastly, in Chapter Five, I incorporate suggestions from my respondents on what needs to be done for women who are involved with the criminal justice system.

I will explore the following three research questions in my dissertation, focusing on women of color, including Black, Latinx, and other non-White women:

1) How does one put into practice feminist research ethics and considerations when interviewing formerly incarcerated women and/or women with incarcerated loved ones?

2) How and why do formerly incarcerated women and/or women with incarcerated loved ones maintain their familial bonds and how does this caring labor impact their own lives and decisions?
3) Why and how do formerly incarcerated women and/or women with incarcerated loved ones promote social change and with what consequences?

In this chapter, I lay the foundation for these questions to be answered by reviewing the current literature on race, women, families, and the experiences and impacts of incarceration. I then provide a summary of my data and methods and give an overview of my subsequent dissertation chapters.

Significance of Research

In California and across the nation, prison inmates are disproportionately impoverished people of color due to the combined and myriad impacts of class and race oppression in U.S. society generally and the criminal justice system. Although Blacks and Latinxs make up only 24-27% of the U.S. population (12% Blacks and 16% Latinxs, respectively), state prisons comprise 35% White, 38% Black, and 21% Latinxs inmates (The Sentencing Project 2016). The vast disparity between imprisoned racial minorities and their White counterparts is also evident across gender lines. Thus, both women and men of color have higher rates of incarceration than Whites do. Women of color are disproportionately impacted by incarceration given that about two-thirds of those behind bars are Black or Latinx. Although men are more likely to be incarcerated than women, the war on drugs and mandatory minimum sentences has directly impacted women's

growing incarceration rates, which has outpaced men since the 1980s (Lawston 2008; Mallicoat 2015).

From 1980 to 2017, women's incarceration rates grew by 750% (The Sentencing Project 2019). One of its most significant spikes occurred between the periods of 1990 and 1998, where the rate increased by 88% (Van Wormer and Bartollas 2014). This rate reflects the 1980s and 1990s punitive policing and sentencing policies that addresses social order through law enforcement and drug usage (Delany et al. 2018). Vast proportions of incarcerated women are young, poor, and lived in low-income communities with high homeless populations before their arrests (Richie 2001). Latinas and Black women are significantly overrepresented in prison when compared to White women (Mallicoat 2015).

Nationally, Latinas' incarceration rate is 1.3 times the rate of White women, while Black women's imprisonment is 2 times the rate of White women (Sentencing Project 2019). In California, Latinas and Black women make up about 33% and 28% of all women inmates. However, these current percentages are changing with the passage of Proposition 57, which allows inmates who have committed nonviolent offenses (offenses that do not result in injury or force) to receive parole and early release opportunities. Because women are likely to be involved with non-violent crimes like drug-related or property crimes, many women will be eligible for parole. The Black and Latinxs inmate population in men's and women's prisons has risen within the past decade primarily due to policies that favor mass incarceration, such as three-strikes and other "tough on crime" policies, and increased police presence, which is especially pronounced within

communities of color, which heightens police contact. This hypercriminalization–the process in which an individual's everyday behaviors and lifestyles are deemed deviant, risky, threatening, or criminal– is experienced through constant punishment and surveillance in communities of color (Rios 2011: xiv). Partly because of over-policing and disproportionate state surveillance, impoverished communities experience high punishment rates in the form of citations, arrests, and incarceration.

The lasting effects of the criminal justice system extend beyond the actual prison sentence and transcend into the lives of formerly incarcerated people and their families during virtually all stages of their incarceration. Even after prisoners serve their time, the criminal justice system controls their opportunities, livelihoods, and life chances through surveillance and other methods of carceral control. For women of color who have been incarcerated themselves and/or have loved ones in prison, carceral control translates into stigmatization. Families of incarcerated individuals are significantly impacted by the stigmatization of their loved ones and experience the consequences of their familial association (Girshick 1996). Families "on the outside," of carceral walls essentially "do time" along with their loved one(s) (Comfort 2008). Through the loss of income and limited employment opportunities, families experience the burden and social costs of high unemployment among the formerly incarcerated population (Pager 2007).

Furthermore, unlike the families of crime victims, inmate families are not viewed with sympathy or compassion (Girshick 1996). These inmates and families are often negatively perceived as their loved ones' crimes figuratively extend to the family's identity and reputation. However, the perception of inmates and inmate families goes

beyond public opinion and seeps into public policy. Public policy shapes the experiences of the formerly incarcerated population in nearly every aspect of public life, including (but not limited to) housing, employment, education, income, and family structure. In conjunction with the ramifications of contact with the criminal justice system, state policies around welfare, housing, and family, strain relationships among the formerly incarcerated population by affecting children, current and/or former romantic partners, parents, siblings, loved ones, and the greater community. For the incarcerated population, limited physical contact and communication can strain family relationships while they serve their time. Upon release, firm social and family bonds serve as important factors for successful re-entry for released prisoners (Petersilia and Reitz 2012). For many formerly incarcerated people, family members provide support in two central ways: "material (housing, food, money, and clothing) and emotional support (encouragement, acceptance, a person to talk to, etc.)" (Nelson et al. 1999). With strong social and family support, as well as other social and economic factors, released prisoners have better chances of desistance, or avoiding future offenses.

Receiving familial support while incarcerated is crucial for inmates' well-being. However, incarceration can bring about strained or negative social support, particularly among families (Wallace et al. 2016). For female partners with incarcerated male partners, at-home family roles can become disrupted by marital dissolution (Turney 2015). In fact, couples with children often experience deleterious consequences that affect the quality of their relationships (Turney 2015). Still, approximately as many as three million women could be affected by their partner's incarceration. This estimate

includes inmates that may have more than one partner simultaneously or sequentially. (Comfort et al. 2005). Many hope that once their partner is released from prison, the quality of the relationship will improve.

Family Separation

Incarceration and forced separations among family members usually carry sudden shocks and are inherently crisis-inducing (Fishman 1990). Families accommodate or adjust to these new circumstances brought on by the stigmatization of incarceration. Across the nation, women have created advocacy groups to cope with the consequences of incarcerated children, parents, siblings, husbands, boyfriends, girlfriends, and romantic or domestic partners. Community organizers have also created online forums and message boards to help connect women across state borders. Face-to-face support meetings are also accessible among women with incarcerated loved ones. These groups serve to unite women with similar experiences and provide them advocacy and coping strategies.[1]

Incarceration also brings about the forced separation of parents and children. Though there are some opportunities to parent behind bars like facilities that have nurseries programs that help mothers and children bond (Craig 2009). However, many parents do not get access to such programs. Upon release, formerly incarcerated inmates may seek to regain contact with their children. Reconnecting with children and generative commitments — "the concern for, and commitment to, promoting the next generation"

[1] Examples of such organizations include Strong Prison Wives and Families (strongprisonwivesandfamilies.com), Prison Fellowship (prisonfellowship.org),Ten Toes In (tentoesin.org) and Essie Justice Group (essiejusticegroup.org)

(McAdams and de St. Aubrin 1998)— among formerly incarcerated populations also helps to reduce recidivism. However, (re)gaining parental contact and reunifying with children proves difficult for many people with criminal records but weighs heavily on formerly incarcerated Latina and Black mothers who hope to continue parenting when they return to their communities. With larger structural forces like racism, classism, and criminal record histories, mothers of color are faced with multiple challenges because of their failure to meet gender-based, raced-based, and class-based expectations. In fact, women who likely benefit from the hegemonic notions of womanhood and motherhood in the criminal justice system are those who are White, middle to upper class, and heterosexual (Belknap 2001). Like society at large, gender identities are informed by normative White womanhood even within the confines of the prison (Ocen 2013).

For formerly incarcerated mothers, strained bonds with their children continue after their release from prison. Some bonds with children can be nurtured if the child lives with a father, grandparent, or relative. In fact, 79% of children with an incarcerated parent live with a family member (Mallicoat 2015). However, for mothers who cannot arrange kinship care, the state assumes custody over the child and places the child in foster care. Many of these children are poor and/or racial minorities who come from the same disadvantaged communities impacted by the war on drugs (Hagan and Coleman 2001). Children of color, especially Black children, have higher rates of foster care guardianship than their White counterparts. Once the children of formerly incarcerated parents are placed in foster care, women are in danger of losing their parental rights.

The inability to resume child custody upon returning home can be devastating for formerly incarcerated mothers. However, some legal services and organizations exist for women in prison. Services in California, like Legal Services for Prisoners with Children (LSPC), aim to promote change in California's criminal justice system and have a special interest in child and parent reunification. The Mother-to-Mother Alliance, a group based out of Valley State Prison in Chowchilla, California, aims to give incarcerated mothers the tools they need to fight for their parental rights and maintain relationships with their children (Shain 2011). Though these programs are uncommon, they provide mothers with avenues of hope and action that may spark women's involvement with advocacy.

Advocacy, activism, and resistance to narratives and treatment among imprisoned women have gained scholarly interest and public awareness. In recent years, the grassroots organization, California Coalition for Women Prisoners (CCWP), challenged racial and gender injustices related to institutional violence by rallying against overcrowding in women's prisons (Ocen 2013). The CCWP "Freedom Rally" enabled women to share their stories of racism and sexism on the inside. However, little research looks at advocacy and activism among women on the outside. Because women of color are impacted by incarceration through their own imprisonment and/or imprisonment of a loved one, it is essential to study how race, class, and gender impact women's resistance to mass incarceration, which can take the form of social justice activism or policy advocacy as well as maintaining family bonds during periods of carceral separation.

My dissertation examines the impact of incarceration on family and romantic life among women of color who were formerly incarcerated and/or support incarcerated

loved ones, their preservation of familial bonds, and the ways they challenge the carceral system through their story-telling and other forms of resistance. In terms of family members on the outside, wives have gained the most public attention. Media representations of wives' affiliation with the criminal justice system have become more prevalent in recent years (Wallace 2018). While some media outlets feature women's storytelling, wives and romantic partners of prisoners are viewed as "guilty by association" and as pathological losers, weak, crazy, lonely, or desperate (Girshick 1996; Bandele 1999). Seldom does research and popular culture portray the structural forces that create the environment for women to be prison wives and partners. Few scholars and journalists highlight how women with incarcerated partners organize groups as active agents in shaping their own family structure. Many women who have a partner in prison see their participation in advocacy groups as addressing a more significant, systemic issue. Women who maintain relationships with their husbands or romantic partners and other family members view their connections to their incarcerated loved ones as challenging. Maintaining these bonds is emotionally and financially draining, time-consuming, and difficult to navigate but also a form of resistance against the mainstream criminal justice system that places obstacles in front of the families of inmates (Padilla and Santiago 1993: 208).

Maintaining family life with the absence of a partner is one component of how women experience the impacts of incarceration. However, some women may not only experience their partners' incarceration but may also have to navigate the challenges associated with their own incarceration. Family life can also be disrupted when women

are sent to serve time for crimes. The incarceration of women is most highly concentrated among Black, Latinx, and Native American women.

Formerly incarcerated women of color are likely to be stripped of their parental rights over their children, hindering both family reunification and re-entry into their families and communities (Simmons and Danker-Feldman 2010). In a study on formerly incarcerated mothers in San Francisco, Simmons and Danker-Feldman found that even though Blacks make up only 7% of the general population, "60% of mothers who had their [parental] rights terminated in 2007 were Black" (2010:23). This raises questions about how race and class affect who is considered to be suitable for "motherhood" and which mothers are seen by service providers, the judicial system, and general society to embody appropriate displays of maternalism. Furthermore, which mothers' rights and concerns are seen by policymakers and advocates as socially and politically important is also shaped by race and class, as well as the stigma surrounding criminal history.

Although motherhood is a central societal marker of femininity, White women's fertility (and motherhood) tends to be normative while Brown and Black women's entrances and practices of motherhood are viewed as deviant (Chavez 2004). Whereas White women have an average of 1.86 children and Blacks have 2.15 children, Latinas have about three children on average (Passel and Taylor 2010). Latinas' fertility rates are depicted as dangerous, pathological, and abnormal (Chavez 2004). Latina women have a higher fertility rate than non-Latina women and account for 84 births per 1,000 women. The fertility rate for non-Latinas is 63 births per 1,000 women. Young Latinas are often negatively portrayed as hyper-fertile and "always pregnant" (Lopez and Chesney-Lind

2014: 534). Latinas have the highest rate of teenage parenthood among all racial groups resulting in about one-in-four Latinas reaching motherhood by age 19 (Passel and Taylor 2010). Latinas' birthrates and the younger average age of the first child are viewed as inferior markers of motherhood in comparison with White mothers. Likewise, negative stereotypes of "welfare queens" who abuse the system by misusing welfare are highly racialized, drawing on longstanding racist stereotypes of Black and Latinx women (Reese 2005; Sparks 2003). This stereotype is even internalized by Latinas who "other" Latinas who have multiple children and receive government benefits (Lopez and Chesney-Lind 2014).

In terms of incarceration, women's incarceration is often seen as unnatural because of the gendered expectations of women. However, scholars often frame "women's incarceration" as a monolithic experience. In fact, the perceived "unnaturalness" of criminal women sparks intrigue because of overgeneralizations about women. "Women" is usually equated with White women and does not account for the experiences of women of color. Early criminological theorist, Lombroso, used racialized depictions to describe female offenders. Lombroso positioned women as biologically inferior to adult men, childlike, mentally impaired with small cranial capacities to house their small brains. More importantly, Lombroso theorized these women had "immensely thick, black hair… and exaggerated frontal angle…[like] savages and monkeys" (Lombroso and Ferrero 2004: 95). Hence, the incarceration of women of color was portrayed as normal, while White's women incarceration was portrayed as abnormal and

deviating from the common portrayal of White femininity in terms of innocence, purity, and in need of protection.

Women's Pathway to Crime

Much of women's criminality is a result from nonviolent offenses such as minor property crimes and drug or addiction-related crimes (Mallicoat 2015). Women's drug use is not a new phenomenon since women have long used drugs such as opiates, sedatives, and tranquilizers. Rising rates of incarceration related to low-level drug offenses are directly related to federal drug policies adopted in 1986 and 1988 (Bush-Baskette 2000). Still, White women and women of color have similar motives for drug use, including coping with economic pressures, depression, and low self-esteem, and personal traumas such as rape, incest, and other sexual abuse (Bush-Baskette 2000). Though the motives behind drug use among all women may be similar, the surveillance and punishment for women drug users vary by race and class and disproportionately impact low-income women of color.

An extensive body of literature suggests that interpersonal violence (domestic violence, family violence, childhood molestation, etc.) is correlated with women's criminalization. Hence, victimization is a common thread in the lives of many imprisoned women and although imprisoned women have agency, it is crucial to make these connections throughout the literature review and my research. Fine (1992) suggests that women's incarceration is portrayed as an "unsolved social problem" derived from drug use, prostitution, or retaliation against an abusive partner. These crimes are also portrayed as coping and survival strategies stemming from women's experiences with physical,

sexual, and psychological victimization (DeHart 2008). In fact, "incarcerated women have rates of abuse, 6 to 10 times that of women in the general population" (Pollock 2002).

Women are more likely than men to follow the "victimization to criminalization" pattern since men do not have the same rates of victimization as women. McDaniels-Wilson and Belknap (2008) state that about 70% of women prisoners have been raped and 50% have suffered from child sexual abuse prior to incarceration. Studies conducted in California by Owen and Bloom (1995) found that 80% of women experienced physical or sexual abuse, while studies in New York by Browne, Miller, and Maguin (1999) found that 60% of women experienced child or adolescent sexual abuse (Dirks 2004). Young women who have been abused as children are more likely than non-abused women to become juvenile delinquents or criminals (Widom 1989). Though child abuse occurs across race and class lines, prevention, intervention, and responses to abuse vary across socioeconomic groups. Socioeconomic and racial factors play a large role in whether children who have suffered from abuse and other maltreatment have access to treatment. In terms of race, Latino and Black children are less likely to receive mental health services when socioeconomic status is held constant. Families with higher socioeconomic statuses are likely to become aware of their child's problems and suggest and benefit from treatment options like counseling (Turner, Finkelhor and Ormrod 2007). With access to treatment, middle-class girls, mostly White, may have the means to decrease their likelihood of criminalization. However, children with lower socioeconomic statuses simply do not have the same access to the time, funds, and other resources such

as health insurance that are often needed to access treatment. For example, children with lower socioeconomic statuses face obstacles like unreliable transportation that can stand in the way of their treatment (Turner, Finkelhor and Ormrod 2007). For some survivors of sexual violence, they may take three or four buses to reach the nearest rape crisis center causing a type of "social services scavenger hunt" (Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape 2007).

Often, victimization is the root cause of women's criminality and creates a clear pathway to prison (Richie 1996). The "abuse-to-prison" pattern emerges when girls and young women engage in criminal activity and drug use to mentally escape or physically escape from previous traumas. Dehart (2008) found that the type of direct victimization that subsequently leads to criminalization that young women endure can be rooted in child corruption or perceived force, provocation, or pressure to commit a crime. Guardians and parents may force children to use alcohol or drugs, make them steal, or prostitute them. Often teenage runaways leave home in hopes of avoiding future abuse. However, runaways are at risk of engaging in prostitution, property crimes, and drug abuse as "a way of numbing and of making fast cash" (DeHart 2008: 1363). Runaways may also become pregnant at a young age and may enter relationships to prove to themselves and others that they can "do it right" by having a loving relationship with partners who are abusive (Wesley and Wright 2004). When these loving relationships become abusive, some women may engage in criminal acts that may involve assault as a form of retaliation to end abuse against themselves or family members (DeHart 2008). Other women prisoners are incarcerated because they were compelled or coerced into

committing criminal acts by their abusers. Still, others commit crimes purely based on their own decision-making without the coerced influence of another person but, for marginalized women, their crimes are viewed as pathological (or even biological) acts of deviance. Breaking the law has been viewed in different ways depending on a woman's crime, social class, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and other factors. Latinas who are convicted of crimes are seen as *tecatas* (drug users), criminals, and welfare reliant foreigners (Diaz-Cotto 1996). The dominant narrative for Black women who commit crime reflects socially constructed views of immorality, danger, and strength (Gross 2006).

Formerly and Currently Incarcerated Mothers

Ideologically, maternalism asserts that "mother knows best" through "ideas, beliefs, or experiences that reflect motherly knowledge and motherly strength… suggest[ing] that women are (and should be) the moral conscience of humanity," which legitimizes their investment in political affairs (Kutz- Flamenbaum 2010). However, for formerly incarcerated mothers, the "mother knows best" mantra is not entirely applicable. Formerly incarcerated women must prove themselves to be worthy of reuniting with their children and meeting the socially acceptable embodiment of motherhood. As Farrell (1998: 47) rightly points out "inmate mothers are not only seen to offend against society but also against their role as mothers." The social construction of women as mothers defines them as primary caregivers for children so when mothers offend, they "challenge society's vision of women as nurturing, responsive caregivers" through their anti-feminine behavior and break from the maternal role (Farrell 1998: 53). Incarcerated

mothers are held responsible for hurting their children through their prison sentences, which contradicts the societal expectations of mothers (Farrell 1998).

Incarcerated fathers, on the other hand, do not tend to equally share the work of family nurturing and caregiving. Because mothers are tasked with disproportionate childcare and childrearing, maternal imprisonment can create major disruptions in family life. In fact, children with incarcerated fathers may experience fewer attachment-disrupting separations than children with incarcerated mothers. Although fathers have greater risk of incarceration than mothers, fathers have lower rates of living with their children before incarceration. Mumola (2000) estimates that nearly half of fathers and 2/3 of mothers sent to prison lived with their children. Accordingly, about "60% to 80% of [incarcerated] women are mothers to about 200,000 dependent-aged children" (Barnes and Stringer 2014: 5). Thus, children with incarcerated mothers have increased by 131% since 1991 (Barnes and Stringer 2014).

Many incarcerated mothers are interested in continuing to parent during and after their imprisonment, seeing themselves as maternal figures, and longing for reunification with their children (Barnes and Stringer 2014). Many mothers are able to maintain family ties with loved ones even behind bars, which may help mothers to parent their children from afar. Maintaining bonds with relatives may allow mothers to arrange childcare for their children when they are in the care of relatives (Barnes and Stringer 2014). Relatives may work with incarcerated mothers to find ways to support them and create childcare strategies dependent on the mother's release date. However, relatives who assume caregiving responsibilities over children of incarcerated parents receive less financial aid

than foster caregivers who are non-relatives (Mallicoat 2015). Grandparents and other relatives frequently have trouble with the financial burden of bringing additional children into the household (Mallicoat 2015).

Over half of incarcerated mothers never see their children while serving their sentences (Golden 2005). Issues related to distance and visitation restrictions serve as the catalyst for shaping mother and child separation while imprisoned. Because children are unlikely to visit their mothers in prison (Van Wormer and Bartollas 2014), strained family ties may arise. Although some women are fortunate to have relatives care for their children, many children are taken under state custody. This makes family reunification nearly impossible, especially if their children are taken into foster care. The separation of children from their incarcerated mothers stems from the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA). In 1997, Congress passed ASFA in response to growing public concerns about children caught up in the foster care system with unstable living conditions and about children who get reunited with their parents only to be abused or neglected by them. ASFA aimed to provide children with stable, safe, and permanent housing. The push to create permanent housing was generated from the public outcry of children bouncing from foster home to foster home, often experiencing abuse and neglect from their foster caretakers. Yet, the good intentions of ASFA also created hurdles for biological parents to regain custody of their children and maintain their parental rights (Reich 2005). Prior to ASFA, federal laws specified that families should receive services to help children return to their natal families whenever possible. Although parents can still receive

services, ASFA focuses on placing children in permanent homes so they do not remain in foster care limbo.

ASFA mandates the termination of parental rights once a child has been placed in foster care for 15 or more consecutive months in the last 22 months, which has important consequences for incarcerated mothers (Mallicoat 2015). The average sentence for incarcerated mothers is 18 months, which is three months over the 15-month termination period; this leaves many incarcerated women who do not have relatives to care for their children stripped of their parental rights. Parents must receive reunification services to start the process of regaining custody of their children. During the process, mothers must prove they are mature, responsible adults who are capable of caring for their children. Based on interviews with mothers on parole, Mallicoat (2015) finds that mothers seeking reunification must complete drug and alcohol treatment programs, sustain employment, secure appropriate and permanent housing, and no longer participate in criminal activity.

While imprisoned, pregnant women have little time with their newborn infants. Infants and children without relatives to care for them are often taken by the state and placed into foster homes. If multiple children from the same family cannot be placed with relatives, they may become separated and live in different homes with different foster parents (Mallicoat 2015). In fact, siblings are rarely placed together in foster care so not only do they lose their mother during a crucial period of their lives, but they may also lose each other (Golden 2005). Placement issues among siblings is increasingly challenging for incarcerated mothers because they have little control of where their

children live. This creates another strain on family life, as mothers usually prefer their children to remain together.

Incarceration and Family and Romantic Life

Research suggests that 55% of the state and 63% of federal prison inmates have children under the age of 18, resulting in about 2.4 minor children who had parents incarcerated in state or federal prisons and local jails by the year-end of 2002 (Mumola 2000; Mumola 2006). Black and Latinx children are particularly vulnerable to experiencing parental incarceration. Black children are nine times more likely than White children to have an imprisoned parent while Spanish-speaking children (Latinxs) are three times more likely to face the same fate (Hagan and Coleman 2001: 364). For all children, contact and outcomes of children with incarcerated parents varies. Children with incarcerated parents have higher risks of poverty, mental illness, and substance abuse than children without incarcerated parents (Dallaire 2007). Children with an incarcerated parent also have higher rates of delinquency and, subsequently, incarceration. Inmate families bear the emotional and financial consequences of their family members' incarceration.

Once a loved one begins their sentence, family members may serve as the primary visitors, callers, letter writers, and financial providers for the prisoner. However, Comfort (2008) argues that visitations are far and few between because the correctional facilities are often far from family members' homes, have strict and inaccessible visiting hours, and the visiting experience is degrading and not family friendly. Furthermore, familial visitors face barriers that can prevent them from visiting their loved one(s). Issues such as

access to transportation, one's own criminal record, or improper or no identification card can play a role in preventing families from seeing one another.

For many women who maintain romantic relationships with someone in prison, they serve a sentence of their own through by proxy. Although women on the outside experience more freedom than their partners on the inside, they are not immune to the impact incarceration has on them or their families vis a vis their incarcerated loved ones. Women with imprisoned partners experience a form of "secondary prisonization" which positions them as "quasi-inmates" who negotiate two different spheres making them simultaneously captive and free (Comfort 2008). For these women, social control extends to correctional facilities when they visit their male partners, as well as at home when they engage in the work needed to maintain the relationship (Comfort et al. 2005). It is important to note that there are virtually no studies that apply this notion of social control and quasi-inmate status to men of incarcerated female partners.

Financial pressures also affect the family outcomes of incarceration. Prior to incarceration, most fathers are employed and provide financial support for their families (Bruns 2017). During incarceration, prisoners can make meager amounts of money doing prison work. However, due to doctor's fees and health and other services, prisoners end up keeping little money, if any at all. Therefore, inmates rely on their families to give them money or buy them much-needed resources and comforts through the prison commissaries, where companies profit off the services. Once released, many inmates remain unemployed because many employers do not hire people with prior convictions (Pager 2007). The stigma related to criminal history is founded on society's interpretation

of prisoners' lack of honesty and jeopardizes the family's reputation (Geller, Garfinkel and Western 2011).

According to Black (2010), women's willingness to pursue romantic relationships with inmates reflects the reproduction of gender boundaries and gender roles. Because of women's traditional roles as caregivers, women are more likely than men to visit loved ones in prison and maintain contact with them through letter writing and phone calls. Women are also likely to refrain from judging their loved one's criminal activity (Black 2010). In contrast, men on the outside are unlikely to continue their relationships with women on the inside. For men, the impracticality and impossibility of being with an imprisoned woman divert their interest to women who are also on the outside. Overall, men do not support women who are incarcerated, rarely visit, and are not expected to maintain family bonds (Girshick 1996).

Women with incarcerated partners experience stress related to the separation from their partners (Wildeman, Schnittker, and Turney 2012). They also experience guilt because they must adapt to multiple roles in the relationship (Christian 2005). Women are more likely than men to experience the stressors of integrating prison life by raising children alone, organizing trips to visit their partner, and performing work to better their relationships. Even when women's partners are released, women still experience many adversities related to stigma and reduced opportunities for income. Like women, upon release, formerly incarcerated men are subjected to the ramifications of their criminal histories through employment discrimination (Bruns 2017). Incarceration also brings

about the forced separation of partners who often have already diminished socioeconomic resources (Wildeman, Schnittker, and Turney 2012).

Although women of color are disproportionality overrepresented in the criminal justice system, they are understudied because little research on the incarcerated and formerly incarcerated considers the intersections of race, class, and gender (Johnson 2003). Some work has focused on parenting behind bars and differential educational outcomes for children of incarcerated parents (Haskins 2014). Yet, minimal research exists on the experiences of women whose familial and romantic relationships are disrupted by their own incarceration or that of their former or current partner, children, or sibling, and how they engage in maintaining bonds with their family members and how they resist the dominant narratives about currently and formerly incarcerated people.

This dissertation addresses these gaps in the literature by providing research on women with different types of family roles that are impacted by their own and/or a loved one's incarceration, providing a more holistic and inclusive view on this topic. Because of the multiple ways women of color are impacted by incarceration, it is essential to understand how they attempt to maintain their family structure despite carceral separations and the challenges of re-entry for the formerly incarcerated. Women often do indeed perform traditional socialized expectations based on women's orientation to other family members through emotional caretaking (Girshick 1996). However, even when women family members of currently or formerly incarcerated people engage in maintaining their familial bonds, their efforts are often "othered" (Anzaldua 1987), or treated as pathological, by society. As the women studied in this dissertation reveal, they

can resist the power that incarceration has over their lives by collectively engaging in shared work, goals, and experiences. Through both collective and individual forms of resistance, women challenge the looming criminal justice system and its cultural logic and negative impacts on their families and daily lives.

An Intersectional Theoretical and Methodological Approach

I use an intersectional feminist framework to examine formerly incarcerated women and women with incarcerated loved ones. Intersectional feminist theory posits that "gender, race, class, sexuality, age, ethnicity, ability, and similar phenomena cannot be analytically understood in isolation from one another" (Collins and Chepp 2013:59). Framing issues through an isolated single-axis lens limits legal thought, knowledge production, and social justice (Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall 2013:788). Intersectionality requires scholars to consider how multiple relations of domination interact to construct the social world and lead to unequal social outcomes (Crenshaw 1991). These intersecting realities create distinctive social experiences for individuals and groups positioned within them (Collins and Chepp 2013:59). Therefore, women's experiences with multiple systems of power cannot be separated by analyzing gender, race, class separately, but rather by considering how these combine and compound one another.

Incorporating an intersectional framework will allow me to examine marginal women's experiences by understanding the complexity of their lived realities. Because my work centers women of color, I expected to find differences between and among women based on their race/ethnicity, class, and criminal background as well other factors. I highlighted the experiences of women of color by comparing them to socially

appropriate and normative views of (White) gender roles and femininity. I did not actively recruit White women to participate in my study because my aim was to highlight the experiences of women of color rather than attempting to study women through the White/non-White binary. By concentrating on the inexplicable linkage of power and domination based on gender, race/ethnicity, class, and criminal background, I anticipated finding ways that socially disempowered women of color to maintain their family bonds and how they use their stories as a form of resistance.

My research is informed by my participation in several projects that serve currently or formerly incarcerated people, particularly women, through education and advocacy. In Spring 2017, I served as the lead instructor for the "Women's Empowerment" course at the California Institution for Women (CIW) state prison. With a team of four undergraduates, I constructed the course to include topics such as gender roles, body image, violence, and educational opportunities. This experience equipped me with knowledge and understanding of state prison policies, dynamics among incarcerated women, and the challenges women face after release.

From June 2017 through June 2018, I worked with a team of educators, graduate and undergraduate students, community leaders, and formerly incarcerated individuals as a Beyond the Bars Fellow at the University of California, Los Angeles. My fellowship enabled me to connect with formerly incarcerated women and women who have incarcerated loved ones through advocacy, organizing, and conference planning. Though none of the fellows I worked with became my informants, my interactions enabled me to

thoroughly and actively learn how formerly incarcerated women of color navigate the carceral state after release.

In order to strengthen my understanding of organizing and advocacy, I joined a community organization where I have worked with members on issues related to law, policy, and fundraising on behalf of formerly incarcerated people living in Riverside and San Bernardino counties. The organization has provided me with insight into on the ground grassroots organizing and community activism. My work has also allowed me to meet and establish rapport with formerly incarcerated women of color.

Furthermore, since April 2018, I served as an organizer for an empowerment and support group for women that had incarcerated loved ones. My participation in that group involved organizing and fundraising for their conference in October 2018. I have applied my knowledge and training to the conference preparations by focusing on the needs of families with incarcerated loved ones as the theme of the conference. Experiential insights derived from the women I have worked within these various applied settings informed my interview research and provided me access to women of color impacted by incarceration to interview.

My research is rooted in feminist epistemological and methodological approaches. Feminist epistemology challenges traditional sociological strategies by questioning the origin of knowledge production. For feminist epistemologists, science is derived from androcentric voices (belonging to the dominant class and race), resulting in the silencing of women (Harding 1987). Thus, androcentric science stresses value-neutral and objective "truths" free of political interests and goals (Harding 1987). This study does

not align with androcentric science and engages in three specific feminist goals consistent with feminist methodology: the inclusion of women's lives and concerns, the minimization of the harm often present in research, and the impetus to aid in the advancement and well-being of women (DeVault 1999). However, given the vulnerability of the participants and the content of the topic (incarceration and family life), and as a core feminist research principle, I have carefully considered ways to minimize harm in the participants' lives. Discussing the pain of forced separation and family bonds was often difficult for participants, but they did not have to answer questions if they felt uncomfortable. Part of my praxis was to incorporate feminist participatory action to invoke social change (Gatenby and Humphries 2000). As a feminist researcher, I seek to provide a space to listen (rather than give voice) to formerly incarcerated women and women with incarcerated loved ones by acknowledging them as "knowers" and "agents of knowledge" (Harding 1987:3; Fine 1994). As a feminist researcher with formerly incarcerated family members, I do not claim to have full experiential expertise of women's experiences with the carceral system or advocacy work. Therefore, "listening" rather than "giving voice" to participants enables me to defer to their knowledge while eliminating power differentials. Thus, I hope to minimize the Self/Other dichotomy present in social research by standing with rather than in opposition to the Other (Fine 1994; hooks 1990).

Madriz (1998) suggests that no one method prevents the "otherization" of research participants, yet some can be used to blur the lines between self and other. For this study, I will research formerly incarcerated women and women with incarcerated

loved ones by conducting in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews allow researchers to directly interact with their participants; however, Stacey (1988) questions whether the deep nature of qualitative methods (particularly ethnography) is exploitative. DeVault suggests that ethnographies and other qualitative methods (although favored by many feminist researchers) can be harmful if practiced in non-feminist ways that "reproduce the mainstream failure to notice women and their concern" (1999: 33). Therefore, understanding and recognizing the power of methodology in my study is central to my research design.

In-depth interviews enabled me to look at the "process" or "meanings" that women attach to incarceration in their own lives and in the lives of their loved ones. Interviews will also allow me to understand how these women experience the world (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011). Del Busso (2007) suggests that power dynamics exist in interview settings and can be communicated through verbal and bodily responses and reactions. Engaging in reflexivity as a methodological tool throughout all aspects of the interview helped to mitigate differences that exist. Therefore, I approached my research with a similar methodologically style as Patricia Zavella. Zavella documented Mexican American working-class cannery workers in the Santa Clara. She describes how deconstructing her own ethnic and political identity as a Chicana feminist led to the ability to "see" the cannery workers during the research process and during her interviews (1993: 57). I incorporated Zavella's approach as I navigated the "outsider within" framework during the interviews (Collins 1986). Therefore, as a Latina feminist researcher with a formerly incarcerated family member who interviewed women of color

impacted by incarceration, I did not assume that understanding, knowledge, or nuances are shared along gender, race/ethnicity, political, or other lines. Instead, I positioned myself to be able to "see" the participants in my study by maintaining feminist ethical approaches to interviewing.

I conducted interviews with 35 women residing in Southern California who are formerly incarcerated and/or have incarcerated loved ones between October 2018 and December 2019. I sought to recruit an interview sample that reflected the racial landscape of women who are directly impacted by incarceration and actively recruited Black and Latina women of color. My sample included twenty-two participants identified as Latina, six identified as Black, five identified as multiracial, and two identified as Middle Eastern. My racial identity as a Latina, may have contributed to the relatively high numbers of Latina participants in my sample as did my sampling in Southern California. I initially recruited women from the two organizations in which I am affiliated with: Solidarity for All and Women's Healing Circle (names of organizations are pseudonyms to maintain the anonymity of my informants). As an active member of Solidarity for All, I have invested in efforts related to ensuring the rights of formerly incarcerated individuals in Riverside County. My new membership role in Women's Healing Circle allowed me to connect with women who cope and advocate on behalf of themselves or their loved ones.

I snowball sampled from Solidarity for All and Women's Healing Circle and reached out to other organizations that were affiliated with them. My loose affiliations and networks with student-led groups in my community also assisted with recruiting

respondents. Furthermore, my commitment to working toward justice for formerly incarcerated people and their families enabled participants to see me as someone who was part of their community rather than an outsider who wanted to "study" them.

I used an interview guide throughout the study. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2007) describe the interview guide as a set of written questions that researchers must ask their participants during the interview. Although I used the guide, I deviated from the written questions to adapt to the flow of my conversations with interviewees. Since I conducted the interviews in a semi-structured format, I was not tied to only asking the questions on the interview guide. The interviews were conducted as "conversations with a purpose" (Burgess 1984:102). This format accounted for the flexible and fluid nature of interviews and allowed me to engage with the participants. With the consent of the participants, I audio-recorded all but one interview. The interviews lasted 35-75 minutes. I supervised an undergraduate research intern who received course credit for transcribing my interviews. However, the undergraduate intern did not code or analyze the data.

Dissertation Overview

Previous research in this field has focused on two primary types of relationships that women who have been impacted by incarceration maintain: relationships with children and relationships with romantic partners. For currently and formerly incarcerated mothers, maintaining connections with their children may be paramount to their own survival and well-being as well as their children while they are behind bars. Similarly, for women who have been impacted by their romantic partner's incarceration, connection with their partner may also serve their own well-being as well as that of their partner.

Although studying these two types of relationships are essential in understanding women's familial experiences, it is equally important to widen the scope. Continuing to study only these relationships without considering the full range of familial connections creates a bifurcated interpretation of women impacted by incarceration by identifying them as only romantic partners or mothers. Broadening the scope enables social scientists to explore how incarceration affects women's experiences as the siblings, aunts, grandmothers, and former partners of incarcerated people. Furthermore, considering how women's familial and romantic relationships with incarcerated people are shaped by race along with gender and class creates a more comprehensive analysis of women's lives.

In Chapter Two, I discuss how I used a feminist methodological approach as I carried out this study. I contribute to the field of feminist research methodology by reflecting on how I built a rapport with my research participants. I identify and discuss various strategies and techniques that I used to gain participants' trust and to minimize power inequalities between myself and them during the interview process.

In Chapter Three, I present the interview data that I collected from 35 women of color whose family life was impacted by incarceration. In this chapter, I define my concept of "familywork," a type of caring labor that women of color perform both inside and outside correctional facilities. The goal of familywork is to maintain familial bonds with their loved ones in various types of relationships including relationships as former or current partners, siblings, parents, and children. Within this chapter, I identify three types of familywork: visitation, reunification, and connections for well-being of others.

Chapter Four addresses how women's decision to share their stories of their own and/or their loved one's incarceration helps to create counternarratives that challenge society's dominant perceptions of the incarcerated population. These counternarratives are expressed when they publicly shared their stories for political purposes, when applying for jobs, or supported causes related to criminal justice. Counternarratives were also expressed when they disclosed their stories to loved ones in order warn them about the reality of the criminal justice system. In these macro and micro ways, women create social change and resist the dominant narratives about the criminal justice system and negative stereotypes about incarcerated people.

In Chapter Five, I conclude my dissertation by presenting my key findings and the recommendations that the research participants shared with me about creating a fairer criminal justice system for women and families. In this chapter, I review the main themes and ideas as women discussed policies and procedures that can help women who are currently incarcerated and women who have completed their sentences. I put their opinions into the context of relevant research as well as proposed policy changes related to incarceration.

Chapter II

Researching Women of Color Impacted by Incarceration

Studying women of color who are impacted by incarceration and engage in resistance efforts is a powerful yet delicate undertaking. In this chapter, I contribute to the discussion of feminist research methodology by reflecting on my preparations and execution of my study. This chapter is not a "how to" guide for feminist research. Instead, it provides a candid account of how I put into practice and grappled with my feminist training and perspective as I carried out my research. In this chapter, I discuss feminist methodological considerations and how my feminist perspective informed the design and implementation of this study. I explore issues such as power dynamics and rapport between the researcher and participants, prominent topics within feminist research. Using a feminist methodology, I discuss the various techniques that I used to try to build rapport with and to develop fair and transparent relationships with the women who participated in interviews for this study. I also discuss the social characteristics and the diversity of the women in my interview sample.

I begin this chapter by reviewing the literature on the tenets of feminist methodological research and discuss the importance of centering women of color in research. I then discuss my own positionality and relationship to the research topic and the research participants. Here, I also discuss my interview recruitment strategy which grew out of my initial fieldwork with support and advocacy organizations for formerly incarcerated people and the family members of incarcerated people. I then address the

issue of sensitivity of the topic, how I prepared the interview guide in light of such considerations, and in consultation with a leader of a support group for family members of incarcerated people. I then discuss the importance of recognizing how positionality and power dynamics shape the research process in general as well as in my study in particular. I also discuss how I built rapport with my research participants during their interviews. I conclude with a description of my interview sample and the social background characteristics of my research participants.

Literature Review

Feminist Methodology: The Basics

Conversations about feminist research are dynamic and ever evolving. There has been substantial work in feminist research that aims at distinguishing between epistemology, methodology, and method (Harding 1987). These distinctions have significantly added to feminist scholarship and have sparked much debate among feminist researchers. Within the context of feminist methodology, some feminists strongly argue for its legitimate place in the field of social science while others find that approach "untenable" (e.g., see Chafetz 2004). Proponents of feminist methodology argue against its perceived lack of empirical support and logical pitfalls. However, feminist methodology broadly encompasses theory and analysis of how research proceeds (Harding 1987) with particular attention to empowering women and other marginalized people (Sprague and Zimmerman 1993). When choosing to embark on feminist research, it is essential to consider how one's work can contribute to the goal of empowerment.

However, a few considerations should be taken into account before starting a research project with women and other oppressed groups.

Centering Women of Color

My research is inspired by the real experiences of women of color who have been impacted by incarceration face on a day-to-day basis. Issues related to forced separations from people they love, stigmatization based on their own or a loved one's criminal record, and the strength to resist the dominant narratives about incarcerated women and family members, grounds my research in uncovering subjugated knowledge about women. Feminist scholars and researchers have pointed out the historic "invisibility and misrepresentation of women in academic scholarship" (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2007:18). One of the most misrepresented and invisible subsets of women are women of color. As feminists of color have revealed, the privileged position that middle- and upper-class women and White feminist researchers occupy needs to be examined to acknowledge the power differentials of race and class. Early feminist thinkers focused on women as a monolithic category and did not consider the diversity of women's lives as they pertain to other identities and experiences (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2007:18). This reality is explained through hooks' critique of Friedan's *The Feminist Mystique*. As hooks (2015) points out, Friedan's "the problem that has no name" overgeneralizes the category of "women," which negates the plight of women of color and working-class women. For hooks, Friedan's theorizing encompasses "a select group of college-educated, middle-and-upper class married White women" (2015:20). The women Friedan discussed lacked

the diversity of identity, experience, and circumstance of women and implied that all women had a similar plight as her own.

Collins (1986) posits that Black women have been positioned on the outskirts of academia, which have created an "outsider within" status. Unlike White feminists who inhabit positions of racial power and denomination, Collins (1986) argues that Black women's standpoints allow them to draw on their marginalized status to produce academic insights and lived realities that are not accessible to scholars who do not share the "outsider within" status. Furthermore, it centers Black women by highlighting self-definition and valuation, redefining culture, and speaking to interlocking oppression through Black feminist thought (Collins 1986). hooks suggest that being part of marginalized communities allows one to be part of the whole but outside the main body (2015:17). For hooks, much feminist theory is derived from the center, a space in which the perspectives of privileged women are included, but the voices of those living on the margins are unheard. Thus, those in the margins can center their knowledge from their own positionality so that both sets of expertise can be heard.

Anzalúda (1987) also creates space for women of color to theorize about their own positionality as Chicana mestizas, an identity derived from the Chicana consciousness encompassing the uncertainty of the multilayered "borderlands." For Anzalúda, "borderlands" highlights the multiple "in-between" Chicana identities based on border life, indigeneity, nation, cultures, and more that contribute to their understanding of the social world. These borderlands are attributes of the physical, mental, political, and social spaces that Chicanas occupy. Anzalúda sees Chicanas'

experiences as a crossroads of "intersticios [intersections]…the spaces between the different worlds she [la chicana] inhabits" (1987: 20). These intersections are framed as a "battleground, where enemies are kin to each other; you are at home, a stranger" (1987:194). These intersections create multiple spaces of belonging and insecurity Chicanas face throughout their lives. Knowledge from the borderlands is vital for Chicana feminist scholars because it enables Chicanas to be the focus of methodology, epistemology, theory, and analysis.

Methodologically, Chicana feminisms distinguish itself from other women of color feminisms through its emphasis on history, culture, intersectionality, and political coalitions (Hurtado 2020:14). In terms of methods, Chicana feminists view writing, language, collaboration, and testimonio as valid methods of research inquiry (Hurtado 2020 paraphrased in Sanchez 2003). Chicanas are understudied, undertheorized, and often do not see their own experiences reflected in writing. Writing offers Chicanas legibility through knowledge production, self-discovery and the discovery in others while enabling them to document history. Through my writing, I strive to create legibility for myself and for the women I interviewed. Along with writing, creating testimonios about the women in this study uncovers the stories of those who are stigmatized for their connection to incarceration and are too often discarded because of it. Using testimonios enhances historical memory of women who have marginalized intersecting identities.

I identify as feminist scholar of color. In particular, I identify as Chicana and sometimes Mexican-American or Latina depending on the context. I attempt to center and accurately represent the Black, Latina, and mixed-race women in my study by

incorporating a feminist theoretical and methodological lens. For my project, concentrating on these populations is not merely a matter of filling in the gap of empirical research. My project is framed with political intent, a Chicana feminist principle that asserts that research is conducted for liberation of all those involved (participants *and* researcher). Listening, analyzing, and disseminating the stories of women of color in the realm of academia as well as outside of academia is an inherently political act as it challenges the power relations of knowledge production. Whereas early White feminists of the past have misrepresented women's diverse experiences, my project aims to not only draw them out but also highlight women of color as experts of knowledge, a strategy that is often questioned from dominant and orthodox epistemological approaches to sociological research. My interest in studying women of color and the devastation that incarceration has caused families, as well as how they resist carceral logics, stems from my ideas of justice, equality, and social change. Parts of my identity (Chicana) has helped me think about my project in both academic and real-life veins. Even so, I recognize that my life and the lives of my respondents do not run parallel, although we may engage in similar organizational and resistance work. Differences along educational and class status lines often exist; however, our shared concepts of resistance unite us over a shared feminist goal of contributing to the empowerment of marginalized women and communities. In this case, the empowerment of marginalized communities ranges from racial/ethnic, gender, and class marginalization to the marginalization of familial or self-incarceration.

Sensitivity of Topic and Method Selection

When constructing a project with marginalized populations, understanding the degree of participant sensitivity and safety throughout the study is paramount. Neglect to do so can be extremely dangerous not only to the participant but to the researcher themselves (Contreras 2019). It is ethical and necessary through a feminist lens. Though there is not an objective universally agreed upon definition or list that classifies studies as sensitive, general guidelines from funding agencies and institutional review boards suggest that social researchers may categorize sensitive topics as those which may expose participants or researchers to substantial threats or risks (Lee and Renzetti 1993). One threat apparent in my research included divulging deeply personal experiences that are emotionally charged, traumatic, and painful. It is an emotional risk for participants to discuss familial separation or factors that led to their own incarceration. Emotional expressions that were apparent in my interviews were feelings of sadness, anger, confusion, resentment, etc. Some of these feelings stemmed from the inability to interact with family members on a regular basis, treatment received from others who disapproved of the formerly incarcerated woman or their loved one, or social situations that led to incarceration. Based on the responses offered by the participants, I gathered that familial incarceration ranged from misdemeanors to felonies, but many of the women who were formerly incarcerated had histories of drug-use related to previous traumas they experienced.

Another potential threat involved in the research is discussing deviance and social control like incarceration. Through my preliminary interviews, many women described

the vulnerability they experienced with their own or their loved ones' offenses and incarceration. Lee and Renzetti (1993) suggest that participants may fear being identified, stigmatized, or incriminated when discussing deviance. My topic posed both threats to participants and I remained cognizant of this throughout all stages of the research process including the creation of the design, execution of the study, and dissemination of the results. For me, minimizing risks and threats as well as providing adequate resources for participants helped to reconcile my role as a researcher interested in knowing more about incarceration and resistance among women of color.

Like many feminist researchers, I chose semi-structured in-depth interviewing as my method. A basic view of interviewing as a method is that it simply involves talking with others. When using a feminist approach to interviewing, however, the interview becomes much more this simply a conversation. In-depth interviewing is shaped by social justice concerns and helps to reveal systematically silenced voices of marginalized groups of people (DeVault and Gross 2012). Feminist interviewing also confronts issues such as ethics, reflexivity, positionality, power dynamics, and rapport. I focus on the latter two themes in this chapter).

In thinking about the goals of feminist research and the potential for recreating trauma and pain, I realized that I needed to run my interview questions by someone who was an expert in the field and has hands-on experience with this population. I contacted the founder of the organization, Women's Healing Circle, and asked her to review and critique my questions. Marie, the founder of Women's Healing Circle, oversaw a women's empowerment group that offered peer support for women who were coping

with the incarceration of a loved one. She and I had an established working relationship because of our shared community work. Marie and I were part of a self-organized team of three women who created and executed a free community conference in the Inland Empire. The conference focused on raising awareness about the experiences of family members and romantic partners of incarcerated loved ones. The program also featured presenters, programs, and resources designed to give community members insight into the concerted efforts of our community partners. Marie was a vital person to get feedback from because she could help assess the sensitivity and appropriateness of the questions. Based on her experiences working with women who had incarcerated loved ones, she was instrumental in helping me to construct my interview guide. She also helped connect me with potential participants for my research, contributing to my success in recruiting participants and using snowball sampling.

None of the study participants were under formal state surveillance (i.e., parole or probation). However, I remained sensitive to their identity and experiences with the carceral state. During the Institutional Review Board (IRB) meeting at my institution, the socio-behavioral IRB team asked that I remind participants to withhold information they may have on pending criminal cases or information about illegal activities. They argued that participants could be at risk if my records were subpoenaed. Data collected for a research study is not exempt from search warrants or subpoenas (Pitts and Smith 2007), so there was a possibility that my research participants could come in contact with the legal or criminal justice systems if they revealed information that needed to be reported to the authorities. After considering this, I reworked my interview guide to include a

statement about pending criminal cases and anticipated redirecting interviews if I saw them beginning to discuss risky topics. Though none of the participants reviewed reportable information, I thought about how much responsibility, I, as a feminist researcher had over the narrative and safety of the study participants. Furthermore, knowing that information could possibly lead to a criminal or legal issue for the participants was unsettling since my work is focused on understanding how the carceral system impacts women of color and their families. My ethical responsibilities as a researcher, intent to contribute to the field, and desire to protect the women I interviewed felt at odds. However, to satisfy IRB and interview my respondents without fear that they would get into trouble from the very system that has devastated many of their families, I made sure to be as transparent as possible while discussing the subpoena information on the consent form and conducting the interview.

Positionality and Power Dynamics

In thinking about power, I was reminded of Diaz-Cotto's (2006) statement in the preface of *Chicana Lives and Criminal Justice*. She states, "the most difficult decision I had to make was how much of what the women revealed to me should I make public" (2006: xix). Diaz-Cotto was referring to her identity as a non-Chicana who researched Chicanas and grappled with her right to publish formerly incarcerated women's experiences with abuse and violence. I negotiated similar questions in my own research.

I shared some but not all of the social characteristics of the women who I interviewed for this dissertation. Regarding ethnic identity, I shared a similar racial identity with the Latinas in my sample, which represented about half of my interview

sample. However, I am not African American, multiracial, or any other racial identity and do not share that with the other half of my sample. Moreover, I am a light-skinned Chicana who is completing my doctoral studies, so I differed from many of the women I interviewed in terms of my skin color and my educational attainment. The women I interviewed had been incarcerated and/or supported an incarcerated loved one. I do not share the painful and visceral experiences that many women in my sample expressed during their own incarceration and/or their loved ones' incarceration.

Like Diaz-Cotto (2006), I have thought about my positionality and have been intentional about what I reveal about the study participants. Before beginning each interview, I told the participants who had incarcerated loved ones that I was interested in focusing on their stories rather than the criminal history of their loved one unless they felt it necessary to share that information with me. It was important for me to separate a loved one's criminal history from the history of the respondent. Part of my approach was grounded in conversations I engaged in while in the field. During a meeting with some of my respondents that focused on the community conference aimed at supporting incarcerated loved ones, some of the women expressed their experiences with community members inquiring about their loved ones' offenses (particularly with their currently or formerly incarcerated romantic partners). The women believed that questions about their loved ones were inappropriate and calculative techniques to get them to discuss the offense. Although some women stated that they were comfortable and willing to talk about their loved ones' crimes, others felt like these questions enabled community members to make negative assumptions about their family life. For women who

expressed loving and supporting their incarcerated family member, assumptions about their loved one can be hurtful and unsettling. These questions are also often laced with negative judgment not only of the incarcerated loved one but also of the woman herself. The harsh stigma that women experience by being "guilty by association" plays a part in women's desire to be seen as an individual who is experiencing separation from their loved one rather than as an accomplice in a crime. Furthermore, women expressed that questions about their familial life decentered their resistance work.

Participants' resistance work varied from promoting policies and bills, educating students about college resources, to counseling people with alcohol and drug addictions. Other forms of resistance were interpersonal and occurred within the family unit. Some women talked to their children about their life experiences and the sequence of events that led them to their imprisonments in hopes to prevent the same fate from occurring to their children. Some women shared strategies to avoid the criminal justice system with their children.

During the time of my fieldwork, I worked with the Women's Healing Circle[2], on a free community conference event. The community conference focused on educating the community on the struggles families who face on the outside. The conference featured a well-known formerly incarcerated activist who discussed her incarceration as well as her child's current imprisonment. The conference also included organizations all over the state who worked with different sectors of the formerly or currently incarcerated population. There was even a part of the program in which women from Women's

[2] Names of organizations are pseudonyms and do not reflect the actual names.

Healing Circle gave testimonies about how their loved one's incarceration adversely impacted them. However, even though the women wanted public exposure to raise awareness about families on the outside, they felt that revealing their loved one's past crimes were irrelevant to the purpose of the event and their place in the community. For them, the centrality of their advocacy organization's goals, and the curriculum was of the utmost importance and should be presented as such in public spaces. In private spaces, members of the advocacy organization spoke more openly about their loved ones' crimes, but part of those discussions was grounded in mutual support and healing rather than satisfying community members' curiosity.

Solidarity for All[1], another organization that I worked closely with had a similar pattern regarding revealing criminal history. Solidarity for All is an advocacy organization that works to gain rights for the formerly and currently incarcerated population through policy change. During meetings with women from that sample, many of them did not discuss their crimes because the content focused on structural issues and policies related to incarceration rather than making amends or the need for healing. Though some members offered that information freely if it related to policies or bills, it was not normative for members to talk about offenses in private meetings as if it was during the Women's Healing Circle. Because the nature, goals, and structure of these two groups were different, participants interacted with one another in different ways. However, the Solidarity for All group began and ended each meeting with a chant that acknowledged personal responsibility for acts they may have committed that could have been harmful to others.

Based on my experiences in the field and my understanding of power dynamics, I was cautious about how to approach the sensitivity of the questions on my interview guide. When thinking about the project, I did not want to join the legion of people who asked women about their crimes or the crimes of others. As a feminist methodologist, I structured my questions to avoid pressuring women or setting them up to answer questions that they explicitly stated that they do not want to answer. Though it never occurred to me to ask about their crimes, before beginning each interview with my respondents, I informed them that I was interested in their story and did not have a particular interest in their crimes or the crimes of others. I communicated this to prepare them for the content of the interview but also, to help gain rapport with my respondents so that they could feel comfortable, safe, and valued (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011). Those who said they did not mind sharing the crime or that the crime helped frame their story had the autonomy to do so without my restricting them.

As a methodological approach to address power dynamics, I informed participants that although I was recording the interview, they had control over what information will go into the transcription. All but one interview was audio recorded because one of the participants did not feel comfortable with her voice being recorded. During this interview, I took copious notes. Of course, I gave them the standard practice of letting them omit questions during the interview or stop the interview at any time, but I also stressed the option of contacting me at any time during the study if they wanted me to omit any part of their interview. It is my experience that when being asked questions, participants may feel pressured to respond without realizing how the question can be

harmful or simply not feel right. Though none of the participants thus far have contacted me for a retraction, I was intentional about making sure they knew that the interview was not viewed as the point of no return. In thinking about feminist methodology, it is essential for marginalized women not to be exploited or misrepresented. By emphasizing to women that they had autonomy to retract or include information and providing them with some control over how their stories were conveyed in the transcript, I implemented a feminist approach to the interview process. When I perceived discomfort from my respondents during the interview, I made mental notes about it and decided to omit that information from my interview. I would also ask the women who experienced discomfort if they were okay with the omission and nearly all of them thus far were relieved to have that option. During an interview with my respondent, Carina, I noticed some discomfort when I asked about the bullying that she received after her brother was sent to prison. I asked her "What types of things would people say?" Throughout the interview, Carina was careful about not disclosing her brother's offense, but the question caught her off guard and she ended up revealing the offense to me. Immediately, I could tell that she regretted revealing that information and could have possibly felt coerced. Picking up on Carina's body language, facial expression, and tone during her response, led me to remove the offense out of the transcript. I informed Carina that her brother's offense would not appear in the transcripts or dissertation.

Building Rapport

Part of using interviews as my method of inquiry leads to the discussion of building rapport with respondents. Some scholars who interviewed women impacted by

incarceration built rapport around shared experiences. Fishman (1990) and Girshick (1996) shared the experience of being married to incarcerated partners with their respondents during the time of their respective studies. Fishman (1990) states that her respondents regarded her "first, as the wife of a prisoner who wanted to know more about the experiences of other prisoners' wives" (15). They also saw her interest in writing about them important because wives of prisoners do not get much attention in the public sphere. Fishman's (1990) rapport with her respondents led them to share their private thoughts which are often hidden from the public. Girshick (1996) met some of her participants at the prison she used to frequent when she visited her incarcerated husband. These women were also visiting their partners and agreed to talk with Girshick because they trusted that she, a wife of a prisoner, would understand what they were experiencing. Like Fishman, Girshick's participants also wanted the public to better understand the lives and challenges of prisoners' wives and families.

Unlike Fishman and Girshick, I was unable to build rapport with the women I interviewed by having a shared experience regarding recent familial incarceration. My rapport building consisted of acknowledging both similarities and differences. It also consisted of engaging in prior volunteer work with Women's Healing Circle and Solidarity for All before sampling for respondents. It is important to note that I did not volunteer for all the women's organizations to which they belonged. Women's Healing Circle and Solidarity for All were the first organizations I sampled from and I felt that volunteering with these organizations granted me access and showed the women that I was genuinely invested in the same political goals as they were, consistent with my

feminist methodological goals of vying for social change for women. Not only did I meet new people through my volunteer involvement, but also, I gained insight into the resistance work of many of my respondents. As I continued volunteering, I learned more about the goals of the groups and the impact they have on the greater community. I worked on projects that interested me like a community conference and a backpack and school supply drive. I was one of three lead organizers for the community conference and a co-chair for the backpack drive. I also served in areas that fit my expertise as a researcher like conducting and analyzing the results of surveys and focus groups interviews and writing a successfully funded grant. Not only did these activities align with my perceptions of how to address the needs of families who have been impacted by incarceration, but it also allowed me to contribute my labor to help them meet their groups' goals and support their efforts.

Sometimes the work was not goal-oriented, such as contacting community members when an event could no longer be sponsored and meeting with city employees about a down payment for a venue. Sometimes the groups just needed someone to be physically present in a space, so in those cases, I would show up. Though these actions were not particularly exhilarating, they needed to be completed because they were necessary for the maintenance of the groups. Engaging in the mundane or exciting functions of groups allowed me to give more time, energy, and labor to reach common goals. The women in these groups later became my respondents and I felt that I needed to do more for them than compensate them with a gift card for their time.

After each interview, I asked the women of each organization if they wanted extra help in their organization. Some women asked if I could send out a digital flyer, others asked me to follow their organization on social media, and others asked if I could attend more of their events and bring others along. Some women expressed not needing much in an organizational capacity but felt like offering them a gift card of their choice as compensation for their time was exactly what they needed. Since I engaged in snowball sampling, I did not previously ask what women needed before advertising my study. However, I did use the monetary compensation I received from a fellowship focused on ending mass incarceration to compensate participants. Compensation does not equate to reciprocity or rapport building by any means. I felt like engaging in volunteer work before, during, and after the interviews enabled me to keep the rapport with my respondents who trusted me with their stories and allowed me into their private spaces like their homes and places of worship where some of the interviews were conducted.

During an interview, rapport can be built by reciprocating information about one's self to their participants in a give and take fashion. This may look like active listening, making eye contact, and nodding (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011). During interviews, I wholeheartedly tuned into my respondents and agreed with what they said when they needed emotional support. For example, one woman who was married to a man in prison wanted to read a text message aloud that was sent by her mother-in-law. My respondent clearly did not agree with the content of the message and said, "Isn't she crazy? She's wrong, isn't she? Don't you think she shouldn't have said that about my husband?" In thinking of how women who had incarcerated partners reported always having to defend

their relationships, I agreed with her. In times where my respondents cried and said they were weak, I reminded them of their strength when it was appropriate to do so and when I could tell they needed support and would not sway the interview. Expressing emotion in interviews that are focused on sensitive topics can lead to these types of responses. As a feminist researcher, it is my responsibility to provide them with resources and to support them when they need it.

Emotions and qualitative research have an interesting dynamic. On the one hand, qualitative researchers are told that emotions can hinder their work. On the other hand, they are told that understanding a participant better can occur if there is an attachment to them (Kleinman and Copp 1993). In my work, I felt like providing emotional support when needed was appropriate in my pursuit of producing feminist-orientated research. I also contend that attachment to the participants and concern about affirming their stances assisted me in understanding their lived experiences in a way that may not have come about if I was more detached or disagreed with them more. My perspective is based on the concept that in-depth interviewing is more of a conversation between two people constructing knowledge than a question and answer session (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2007). Based on my topic and sample, I felt that a question and answer session would produce masculinist undertones and would compromise my rapport with the women I interviewed. For me, building rapport during the interview meant having an emotional affinity toward the participants while recognizing their humanity as well as my own.

Sample Demographics

My interview sample included a diverse group of women of color in Southern California whose family and/or romantic life had been disrupted by incarceration. My interview sample consisted of 35 self-identified women of color from Riverside, Los Angeles, and Orange counties. Almost half of the women interviewed had been incarcerated (seventeen) while the other half (eighteen) had not been incarcerated. Twenty-two participants identified as Latina, six identified as Black, five identified as multiracial, and two identified as Middle Eastern. Thirty-three women identified as heterosexual or straight while one woman identified as bisexual and one woman declined to answer. The age range for the sample was 22 to 65 years of age with a mean age of 37.6 years of age. 45.7% of the participants were age 35 years or younger.

Recruitment from several advocacy groups linked to higher educational institutions contributed to some sampling biases, such as the relatively high percentage of participants in the interview sample with more than a high school degree. In terms of educational attainment, six participants had high school diplomas, fourteen had some college, five had associate's degrees, three had bachelor's degrees, and seven had graduate degrees. Likewise, there was a relatively high number of research participants identifying as "middle class" or "lower-middle class." Six participants identified as lower class, twelve as working class, ten as lower middle class, and seven identified as middle class.

Overall, I succeeded in recruiting a diverse sample of women of color in Southern California whose family and romantic relationships were affected by incarceration. The

women differed in socio-economic status, racial background, and educational attainment. This is consistent with my intersectional feminist approach in which I center women of color with varied experiences with privilege and discrimination.

Conclusion

This chapter examined how I engaged in a feminist research process and how previous literature on feminist methodology informed it. Though my perspective may not align with all feminist researchers, I paid careful attention to power dynamics and rapport building in the interview process, two themes that are significant in feminist scholarship on methodology. By being attentive to power dynamics in qualitative research, I recognize the power that the researchers have over the narrative of the respondents, so I attempted to give my respondents options regarding the treatment of their transcripts. I removed parts of the transcripts in which I felt that the study participants may have been uncomfortable and lacked power. In building rapport, I volunteered in spaces that provided a shared goal related to assisting families impacted by incarceration. I also provided affinity and emotional support to my research participants during difficult moments of the interview. By making explicit the techniques that I used to build rapport with and empower my research participants, women of color impacted by incarceration, I add to the conversation on feminist research and methodology.

Chapter III

Carceral Familywork and the Maintenance of Familial Bonds

With the highest rate of incarcerated individuals worldwide, the United States criminal justice system affects the lives of individuals and families nationwide. Through correctional facilities (e.g., jail, prisons, detention centers, juvenile halls) and surveillance (e.g., probation, parole), 6.7 million individuals in the United States directly interact with the criminal justice system through some form of correctional supervision (The Sentencing Project 2018). The consequences of correctional supervision can be felt by the imprisoned individual, their family, neighborhood, communities, and nation (Delgado 2001). Families and loved ones of those who are incarcerated experience the challenges and strains of the carceral system as they navigate familial relationships beyond bars. Families with an incarcerated loved one have limited physical contact as correctional facilities are often far from one's community, have incompatible visiting hours, and are not family-friendly (Comfort 2008). Additionally, heads of households with an incarcerated family member, receive more responsibilities, emotional stress, and financial strain when loved ones leave to serve their time (Nichols and Loper 2012). Children with an incarcerated parent are at higher risk of mental illness, substance abuse, poverty, and delinquency (Dallaire 2007).

For countless families of color, especially those working-class or poor, the looming threat of carceral punishment or surveillance is present in their everyday lives. In fact, very few families and communities of color in U.S. cities have been unaffected by

the imprisonment of a family member (Delgado 2001). In terms of incarceration rates, African Americans have incarcerated 5.8 times the rate of Whites, while Latinxs' incarceration rates are 1.8 times the rate of Whites (The Sentencing Project 2007). Understanding how families deal with incarceration is vital for preserving families of color in the United States. Furthermore, it helps reveal the type of labor that women of color perform that goes into connecting and supporting loved ones on the inside and on the outside.

This chapter examines how incarceration impacts the familial lives of women of color and how they connect and support those affiliated with criminal offenses during incarceration and afterward. Through my interviews, a common theme emerged, what I have coined: women's carceral familywork, or the work of maintaining family bonds in the face of imprisonment. The data presented in this chapter highlights women's decision-making and efforts in keeping the relationships between parents, siblings, partners, and children intact throughout their own and/or a loved one's incarceration. For the women, imprisonment challenges their familial bonds but does not break them (Codd 2008). Before presenting the findings, I will review the literature on families of color and caring labor. Building from Collins' (1994) concept of "motherwork," I introduce a new concept, "carceral familywork." I used this term to refer to the continued invisible labor women perform to keep families of the incarcerated connected during incarceration and well into their post-incarcerated lives.

Literature Review

Families of Color, Punishment, and the State

To examine the relationship between gender, family, and incarceration, it is necessary to understand the historical context of families in the U.S. In the U.S., women of color and their families have had precarious relationships with the state and have historically experienced disenfranchisements that extend to the present-day (Baca Zinn and Dill 1993). Families of color have disproportionately experienced war, disease, enslavement, separations, among other types of state-sanctioned violence that disrupted and annihilated their family bonds (Baca Zinn and Dill 1993). More recently, family bonds remain interrupted by forced separations such as the detainment of immigrants at the Mexico-United States border, deportation, and incarceration which causes much distress and despair for families (Stange and Stark 2019; Wood 2018). These modern forms of racialized punishment exemplify the current realities that families of color face.

The relationship between the state, punishment, and families of color can be traced to U.S. colonialism in which the law and criminal justice system were predicated on the supposed inferiority of indigenous peoples (Bosworth and Flavin 2007). Indigenous cultural practices, customs, language and everyday behaviors were criminalized in efforts to "civilize" or "advance" native peoples (Banks 2007; Ross 1998). Some of the policies of this "advancement" involved forcing native children to learn English, attend Anglo schools, and separating them from their parents. For Mexicans, their racialization and "Indian blood" constructed them as criminally inclined among other racist stereotypes (Urbina and Smith 2007). African American families also

suffered from presumptions of criminality and racist stereotypes at the hands of the state, beginning from enslavement into the present day (Wacquant 2002; Alexander 2010).

Caring Labor and Care Work among Women of Color

In the U.S., caring labor affiliated with the household and families is historically rooted in inequality. In terms of the labor market, women of color disproportionality provide caring labor and services to more privileged people in society. Historically, more privileged households split caring labor between women's family members who lived in the home and less-privileged women like women of color, immigrants, slaves, etc. (Nakano Glenn 2010; Colen 1986). Women in subordinate positions of disempowerment performed coercive reproductive caring labor in the domestic sphere while their male counterparts performed physical labor. However, according to Collins (1994), the separation between public and private spheres was non-existent for Black women. During slavery, Black women worked without pay in the public sphere and had virtually no private sphere. Thus, the caring labor done by Black women was performed only in the so-called public sphere. In more recent times, caring is still done by those with little power, respect, and status. Caring is often considered low skilled and often "dirty" work (Nakano Glenn 2000; Duffy 2007).

Care work differs from caring labor, yet women of color have historically performed both. Where caring labor involves paid or unpaid domestic labor, care work consists in assisting frail, dependent family members, communities, and societies through instrumental and emotional supports (Moen and DePasquale 2017). Women of color have unique histories and obstacles related to both caring labor and care work, both in

macro and micro capacities. On a macro scale, women of color have often performed both care work and caring labor outside of their own families and have cared for children, the ill, the elderly, and other vulnerable populations in communities. Historically, White women have also cared for such people, but because of their proximity to patriarchy, they were more likely to be rewarded and protected because their labor was recognized as maintaining the bonds of family life (Dill 1998). In contrast, the value of women of color was based on "their potential as workers, breeders, and entertainment of workers" (Dill 1998: 25). The caring skills of women of color are often referred to as "natural" and "cultural," which perpetuates the concept that women of color are suited for care work which diverts attention away from the exploitation they endure by privileged populations.

Based on the challenges women of color have faced, caring for their own families and maintaining family bonds outside of unpaid and paid labor has been difficult to uphold due to broader political, economic, and systemic oppression. However, for some women of color, particularly Black women, doing care work inside the home and for their own families is a form of resistance and solace (Roberts 1993). Arguably, performing work for one's family rather than another's family can be comforting and a form of survival for one's own kin. Families of color have experienced inferior living conditions, limited resources, and hostility in the United States (Dill 1998). Because of the climate of the United States, families have often forged strategies to stay together. African American families who have historically struggled with social and economic challenges have diverse and flexible family formations (Brown, Cohon, and Wheeler 2002; Stack 1974). Kinship care and greater reliance on the extended family are prominent features

practices by African American families, whereas Latinx families engage in compadrazgo (strong relationships between godparents, their godchild, and the god child's parents) to maintain family ties (Dill 1998).

The emphasis on maintaining familial ties among women is not new. However, in criminological and family literature (Gurusami 2017; Golden 2005), there is an emphasis on the maintenance of familial ties within the context of incarceration and punishment. Despite the adversities, women of color continuously find ways to maintain their family bonds even in the face of incarceration.

Motherwork and Carceral Familywork

Collins (1994) has helped make the mothering of women of color central to feminist theorizing through her concept and discussion of "motherwork." For Collins, motherwork involves challenging the rigid dichotomized notions of gender, work, and family. Additionally, motherwork encompasses ensuring one's biological child's and ethnic/racial group's survival, empowerment, and identity in a society with a historical lineage of racial exclusion and domination. Gurusami (2019) extends Collins' concepts of women's mothering to the carceral state by exploring how Black mothers engage in decarceral motherwork. Decarceral motherwork consists of the labor formerly incarcerated Black mothers do to take care, shield, and protect their children. Gurusami rightly points out that Black mothers reject what Collins calls "controlling images," or negative stereotypes, related to Black womanhood in favor of accurate portrayals of their intensive mothering.

Building on Collins and Gurusami, I use the term familywork to refer to the continued invisible unpaid care work performed by women (particularly women of color) to keep families connected within the carceral state as "carceral familywork." Through carceral familywork, family members reject the negative stereotypes associated with their loved ones' incarceration and continue to support them from inside and outside the prison walls. A distinct aspect of carceral familywork that differs from motherwork is that women who perform familywork may not be mothering at all. Although motherwork and m(other)work consist of work that extends beyond one's own children, familywork centers women's diverse family roles in relation to their incarcerated loved ones. The familial roles associated with familywork range from sisters, aunts, nieces, daughters, current partners, ex-partners, and mothers. Though this term applies to women who are formerly incarcerated, it also applies to those on the outside. As Comfort (2008:7) points out, women on the outside are also impacted by the criminal justice system on a daily basis because of female kin experience challenges related to restricted rights, limited resources, and social marginalization.

With familywork, women who identify as family members have a vested interest in maintaining familial bonds with those beyond bars despite stigmatization. Like motherwork, familywork involves survival and resistance to larger structures of domination, including the carceral state. Using carceral familywork, I explore the process that women of color engage in while keeping their families together despite offenses, societal judgment, and forced separation. Carceral familywork is highly gendered in which women disproportionately provide emotional and instrumental support to their

loved ones. Caring and supporting incarcerated loved ones is a highly gendered phenomenon in which women visit, accept phone calls, send care packages, etc., regardless of the gender of the incarcerated person. As Codd (2008) points out, women disproportionately take on the labor of caring outside of the prison walls compared to men. Though incarceration involves the separation of families and loved ones, women of color often perform the type of caring labor (re)produced within households on the outside.

Much of the current literature examines how women maintain familial and romantic relationships to incarcerated loved ones (Comfort 2008) and how formerly incarcerated women rebuild familial relations after leaving jails and prisons (Hairston 2003). The literature on mother-child bonds and current intimate partners are vital to the field but in this chapter, I broaden women's familial experiences by including ex-partners, siblings, and adult children. I further expand this literature by exploring how women of color maintain bonds with incarcerated siblings. Though there are support services for siblings such as community organizations and online forums, formal research on the experiences of the siblings of incarcerated people is limited. Much of what exists focuses on the characteristics of juvenile delinquency among siblings. In terms of birth order, gender, and family dynamics, multiple studies have examined how these factors contribute to shared sibling delinquency. Craine, Tanaka, Nishina, and Conger (2009) found that older sibling delinquency predicted the younger sibling's delinquency and that girls had heightened delinquency rates if they perceived their delinquent brothers as popular.

Although these works add to the body of literature about siblings, they do not examine the aftermath of sibling bond maintenance Lantigua- Williams (2016) published a six-part series of news articles about how young people cope with a sibling's imprisonment. The articles rightly point out the absence of research on this topic and explore how siblings experience grief related to the absence of their sibling, sibling bonds, and life experience on the inside and outside from the perspective of siblings. Though the literature on siblings is scarce, Hurtado and Sinha (2016) provide a detailed account of Hurtado's experience with the reintegration of her formerly incarcerated brother, Pepe. Hurtado and her sisters committed to assisting their brother upon release by teaching him how to use technology (email and iTunes), helping to find him a job through an organization that serves the Chicanx community, and including him in their larger social networks and extended family. This chapter seeks to build on Lantigua-Williams (2016) and Hurtado and Sinha (2016) and demonstrate how women of color impacted in various ways by their own or family members' incarceration engage in carceral familywork associated with incarceration.

Research Findings

My overall findings presented highlight three common aspects of carceral familywork: care work through visitation, care work through reunification, and connection and well-being for others on the outside.

Care work through Visitation

Planning visits is not restricted to romantic partners or mothers of incarcerated individuals. My findings suggest that siblings are also instrumental in organizing visits.

Carina, a 22-year-old Mexican American woman with multiple connections to incarceration through her cousins, uncle, and brother discussed her experience with her sibling's incarceration. Through her brother's incarceration, not only did Carina understand the depths of the impacts of incarceration, but she also experienced the stigma related to his offense. After the news came out about her brother's crime, Carina experienced dirty looks and stares from her classmates. Heaton (2014) suggests that non-offending siblings commonly experience bullying when their classmates discover their sibling's incarceration. On social media, classmates, adults, and community members publicly discussed her brother's crime and posted hateful and mean comments as well as false claims about the offense on their pages. Although Carina did not receive direct messages on social media, she and her family did receive face-to-face comments. She states, "there was a stigma. People would tell me and my sister stuff…about my brother's crime. My family was hiding us because we were getting threats. They didn't want us to go to school and we had to get out of sports." For Carina, receiving the treatment from people in her small town regarding her brother's crime took an emotional toll on her. Not only did she hide, drop out of sports, and receive threats from people who were connected to her brother's crime, she felt anger toward the community and people she once considered friends. Carina knows that her family will have to move from their small town to a new location because of safety issues and possible retaliation from people involved with her brother's offense when her brother is released.

Nonetheless, Carina organized some of her educational choices around the location of her brother's prison. In explaining her decision, she said:

> We heard that he was going to be here so it had an impact on where I wanted to go to school because I didn't want him to be 6 hours away and not have someone there to visit him. I think it's important for him to see that support…the most important thing to have at the least is family support. So, I make sure that he gets visits no matter what. If me or my mom can't make it, I'll call a tia and ask if she can visit my brother today.

Not only did Carina choose to attend a school in geographic proximity to her brother, but she also facilitates his visits, which is part of her carceral familywork. She engages in contacting women in her extended family (like her aunt) for her brother to receive family support. The familywork Carina engages in is also apparent in her immediate, nuclear family. When asked if her father visits her brother, Carina revealed that they do not have a good relationship; therefore, other members of the family like Carina and her mother must do the work.

Simone, a 38-year-old Black woman and the older sister of a formerly incarcerated brother, came from a family that was "big on support." When her brother was incarcerated, she visited him every week and made sure he had hundreds of dollars on his commissary as part of her carceral familywork so that he did not have to worry about anything. She states, "you want them to know that your loved one is supported. You want them to know that they are not going through it alone." As a young woman, Simone, who is the oldest of six children, often took care of her sisters and brothers. Her brother's involvement with the criminal justice system weighed heavily on her mind, Simone wanted her brother to know "your family loves you. We know who you are."

To show support to her brother, Simone organized a visit with her daughter, Leslie, and Simone's brother in jail. Simone initially felt conflicted about bringing her young daughter into the facility because "as a parent, you want to protect your kids from

any conditions that would harm them." The conditions of prison/jail environment can be frightening and traumatic for children for various reasons, including the physical structure of the facility and the interaction between staff and visitors (National Conference of State Legislatures 2009). However, Simone thought it was important for him to know that she did not want to shield Leslie from her uncle. He wanted to see his niece, Leslie, because of Simone's siblings' strong bonds with her daughter.

> I wanted her to love her uncle regardless. I didn't want her to start thinking 'oh he's a terrible person. He's so bad. My mom won't even take me around to see him.' I didn't want her to associate jail and correctional facilities with horrible people.

Simone stated that the law demonizes young Black men and that there are not a lot of resources or services for them. She suggests that the criminal justice system believes the solution to Black men's normative juvenile behavior (which gets judged more frequently and harshly than other young men's behavior) is to incarcerate them. Simone's understanding of the system informs her of the inequality that her family faced while her brother was incarcerated and continued to visit her brother with her daughter until his death.

The planning and organizing of family visits were one of the most common forms of carceral familywork even for ex-partners of incarcerated men. Esperanza, a 31-year-old formerly incarcerated Latina mother, believed in the benefits of maintaining her children's bond with their incarcerated father. She recalls her then four-year-old son asking to see his father after his imprisonment. Esperanza drove her son (and eventually her daughter) on her own for most of her ex-partner's sentence. However, she did have some access to limited familial support to aid in transportation toward the end of her ex-

partner's sentence. She took her children to the county jail and state and federal prisons and sometimes drove up to four hours to reach the facilities. Though she received much criticism from loved ones who thought it was not healthy to take her children to visit their father as frequently as she did, she continued to visit him three days out of the week while he was in the county jail and every other weekend or more when he was in state prison. During Esperanza's own incarceration or times when she was "doing bad," her mother took over the responsibility of transporting the children to federal visitations in order to "fill that void for [my] kids." In this aspect, Esperanza and her mother both proactively engaged in the carceral familywork needed to maintain a relationship with Esperanza's children's father. In speaking about her oldest, Esperanza states, "he really wanted to see his dad. A lot of the memories that he has of him were in prison. To this day, my son remembers playing Trouble [a boardgame] in there with his dad. He remembers all of that."

Like Esperanza, Marie and Belen also supported incarcerated romantic partners. Marie and Belen are both married to their respective husbands who are both serving life sentences. Marie, a 44-year-old Latina mother with generational incarceration ties, experienced the simultaneous incarceration of her son and husband. During this time, Marie remembers "going to juvenile hall to jail, [then] from one jail to the other jail," for visitations. After the sentencing hearing, Marie's son was sentenced to serve his term in prison outside California while her husband was sent to Northern California. Though Marie and her son talk on the phone and write letters, their communication is not as consistent as her communication with her husband.

For many incarcerated people, maintaining contact with one's family helps them cope and provides a space for history and hope beyond the prison (McDermott and King 2012). In terms of history, contact with loved ones contributes to a family's remembrance of togetherness prior to incarceration. Maintaining contact also helps families hope for a future together beyond the prison walls. Families of prisoners "stand by their men" through support and help maintain good order on the inside (McDermott and King 2012). Marie echoes a similar thought, "I'm part of his wellness just as much as he's a part of mine. So, for him to stay on the right track, do good, stay focused on what really matters. Visits are important to them." Prison visitations are important in terms of moral support to challenge the psychological issues related to imprisonment (Christian 2005). Marie further explains the importance of visiting prisoners:

> Your role is valuable and important in the life of your incarcerated family member so you're going to go and see them even when you don't want to- and a lot of times, even when you're sick. It can be tiring… there's other times where they're further so of course, it takes more planning…I've taken a plane, train, bus, a shuttle, a car. And even that takes planning. It's just part of the life.

As Marie illustrates, her familial obligations to her husband often supersede her own feelings of wanting to stay home or care for herself. As Christian (2005) points out, many families do not necessarily like all the complications associated with visiting, but they do it anyway. Such complications include transportation to jails or prisons, traveling long distances for hours at a time in some cases, and limited visitation hours, all of which create extra stress for families impacted by incarceration. Like Marie, Belen, a 53-year-old Latina woman, visits her husband frequently. Over the past year and a half of their

marriage, she has visited him every other week. During the interview, she was unable to see her husband for six weeks because the facility was on lockdown. She suggests:

> Right now, this is a test of our love. Are we going to make this? Are we going to survive? I've been hanging on. A lot of people think that us, women who are with people in prison are weak, I don't think so. I think we're one of the strongest women to stand by your husband or your boyfriend….to stand by someone in prison, I feel like you have to be very strong.

For Belen and Marie, maintaining the romantic bonds with their respective husbands comes with some profound sacrifices and difficulties. These women described their romantic situation with their husbands as challenging because of the lack of physical contact, unscheduled phone calls, and visitations dependent on good behavior or external forces out of their control (i.e., lockdown or safety protocols). Whether traveling while sick or waiting for a lockdown to be lifted, these women perform carceral familywork through organizing and planning visits.

Care work for Reunification

Another way women of color perform carceral familywork is through family reunification. Approximately 79% of children with an incarcerated parent, receive care from an extended family member upon their parent's incarceration (Women's Prison Association 2003). For many children with imprisoned mothers, one-third are cared for by the child's father, one-third are cared for by a grandparent (usually the maternal grandmother), and the remaining one-third are cared for by friends, relatives, or foster placements (Koban 1983; Pollock 2002). If mothers are in contact with kin, they may ask their siblings to care for their children. Olivia, a 37-year-old Latina woman, impacted by

multiple siblings' incarceration, expressed methods of maintaining her bonds with her siblings.

> Whatever happens to one member of the family happens to all of us…between myself and my other sister, we had to keep everything afloat. We were trying to be a provider for the kids they (our brother and other sister) left behind… When my brother came home, he came home to my sister's house who took in his wife and kids.

For Olivia, a single impact on one family member causes a ripple effect for all family members. Therefore, an event like multi-sibling incarceration involves all family members on the outside to work together to give care and shelter to their siblings' children and sister-in-law. By providing for their siblings' children, Olivia and her sister worked hard to keep the family together. As stated, the sisters not only cared for the children, but they also helped to maintain the marriage bond between their brother and sister-in-law. Olivia said that her brother felt it was best for his wife to move in with Olivia's other sister so that she could remain connected to his family. He did not want the relationship to deteriorate while he was away. This temporary living arrangement ensured the maintenance of his nuclear family. Through this type of familywork, Olivia's willingness to support her brother and make sure his family was intact upon his release.

However, not every incarcerated person had the availability of kinship care, as displayed in Olivia's family. For six out of the eight mothers who were interviewed, kinship care in the form of a female relative was viable while they served their sentences, however, some women did not have that option. Currently, more than half a million children who are taken from their parents are in foster care, and nearly half of those children are Black (Roberts 2002). Compared with Latinx and Asian American children,

Black children enter the foster care system at higher rates even in states like California, where there is a robust Latinx population (Roberts 2002). When Black children are taken from their homes, they experience more long-term state interference and have a higher chance of never returning with their families (Roberts 2002).

Two formerly incarcerated mothers had first-hand experience with the foster system. Angela, a 58-year-old Black mother, and Eliana, 33-year-old multiracial (White/Mexican) mother, were both placed in foster care while they were children. Because of her mother's mental health and drug and alcohol addiction, Angela was placed in foster care twice at a young age-once when she was four years old and again when she was eight years old. Eliana's mother was also addicted to alcohol. Unlike Angela, Eliana was placed in foster care as a teenager because her mother felt like Eliana was "defiant" and was also using drugs.

For Angela, her admittance to foster care elicited feelings of abandonment from her mother. "I didn't know where she was. There was no 'goodbye.' There was no 'hey, your mom is in this place and we can take you to see her.'" Because of the abrupt placement, Angela thought she "did something wrong because she [her mother] had left us." Children with incarcerated parents may feel shaken, panicked, and confused, especially when they are lied to or not given information about the reasons behind their parent's absence (Mazza 2002). This can result in anxiety or self-blame (Mazza 2002). The lack of information Angela was given as a young child, facilitated her feelings of abandonment and self-blame. When Angela was incarcerated herself, she left her children with their respective paternal grandmothers because she had access to kinship

care and did not want them "in the system" like she was. Angela's attempt to keep her children within their extended family is an aspect of carceral familywork as mothers often organize their children's living situations and aim to reunify with the children upon their release.

For Eliana, her desire to keep her daughter with family is rooted in her opinion of Child Protective Services and her own experience with the agency.

> "She didn't end up getting put into the system. When kids hit the system, sometimes they get lost in the system and they don't make their way out…I was put in the system… I was lucky enough that I was only put there for two weeks and had gotten out…There were kids in there for a long time. They didn't know what was going to happen to them. So that's something I never wanted to put my kids through."

Eliana's choice to leave her daughter with her mother was necessary to avoid becoming a ward of the state through foster care. Like Angela, Eliana's mother and Eliana engaged in carceral familywork by arranging living situations for children while they served their sentences. Eliana's opinion of children "getting lost in the system" is a common theme articulated by other interviewees who had access to kinship care. In a California study of a cohort of children in foster care from 1998 to 2001, researchers found that 54 percent of children who were placed in kinship care and 58 percent of those who were placed in nonkinship care were reunified with their parents over a four- and half-year period (Reich 2005).

Many mothers expect to be reunited with their children after completing their sentences and engage in preparations to do so. Christina, a 35-year-old formerly incarcerated multiracial (Mexican/White) mother describes her experience with placing her daughter, Isabelle, in the care of her sister after initially placing her with the family of

her child's father. Christina knew that she ultimately wanted Isabelle to remain under the care of her family.

> Before I went on the run, I left my daughter in the hands of my codefendant's [Isabelle's father] family, which was stupid because she barely even knew him. So even though I left her with them, I had wrote to the court that I had wanted my daughter to be with my sister who was kind of like the top of the totem pole of my family …it was just automatic pilot…I just said 'Dude, I'm involved with some shady shit you have to take Isabelle, I don't know what's going to happen.'

For Christina, leaving her daughter, Isabelle with her sister, was the most plausible situation for her family. Although she claims, "I have trust issues…I don't trust her either," she saw her sister as a capable caregiver. She always knew that keeping her daughter in her family would allow her to stay connected to her as she served her time. Preserving that connection assists with keeping families intact.

> I knew I never wanted to go to prison. I knew it would destroy the relationship with my daughter and I... I had to preserve the relationship with my daughter through letters and phone calls and all the efforts that I could muster up. It took two years to get actual custody. I went to the courts often; I had my daughter as often as I could. I tried everything I could to be worthy of getting my kid back.

Christina worked hard to get a job, enroll in school, and get housing to prepare for her child's return to her household. She described taking the bus for hours every week to present her case to the judge. She also took parenting classes and earned certificates of completion with the hopes of convincing the judge that she was ready to regain custody. Christina explains that she knew she deserved her daughter back and fought to rid her criminal label through her efforts to appear like a good mother. Thus, Christina saw herself as more than her offense. After two years, Christina was granted custody of her daughter.

Rebecca, a 50-year-old formerly incarcerated Black mother, also took parenting classes and earned certificates in hopes of regaining custody of her daughter, Emmy. Rebecca remembers, "I had an open CPS case… so I took parenting classes, leadership classes, and I took anger management…so I came out with over 50 classes I had taken." However, the regaining of custody of her daughter was unlike Christina's experience because Rebecca's daughter, Emmy, was placed in foster care. Though Rebecca prepared for her own release and reunification, she did not have the familial support that other mothers in my sample did which made childcare increasingly difficult because of the lack of kinship care. Without kinship care, reunification seemed uncertain to Rebecca.

Women whose children are placed in foster care often experience fear and frustration because they have little or no contact with their children and/or have any knowledge about what is happening in their children's lives or their current whereabouts (Pollock 2002: Kampfner 1995). This situation can worsen when the social services caseworker does not maintain timely communication with the mother (Kampfner 1995) or in some instances, the case moves into the possible termination of parental rights. For cases that aim for family reunification, social service caseworkers work with the parent on developing requirements for reunification (Reed and Reed 1997). For other cases like Rebecca's, caseworker-assisted reunification can seem nearly impossible.

Unlike Christina, Rebecca did not have access to kin care during her incarceration and had few family ties in the Southern California area before she was sentenced. This led to her daughter, Emmy's, placement in foster care. Rebecca remembers, "the social worker decided that she did not want to put any more effort into me or my case and

moved to dissolve my guardianship and adopt Emmy out. They placed her in an adopted home." For formerly incarcerated mothers, caseworkers may be opposed to family reunification, especially when previous welfare and/or drug history or highly stigmatized crimes like sex work comes into play (Reed and Reed 1997). Rebecca's old drug charges were discussed by Child Protective Services and child reunification was not recommended. According to Rebecca, the CPS workers were not interested in knowing about the new work Rebecca had done in the effort to regain custody of Emmy. She said CPS was set on dissolving her guardianship. Rebecca, on the other hand, was set on restoring her guardianship and prepared a portfolio for the judge to consider. Despite her lawyer's objections, Rebecca created a socio-bio document she learned about at her community organizing meeting, *Solidarity for All*. Rebecca described the socio-bio as a folder containing information provided by the families of incarcerated loved ones that enables the judge to see a different side of the offender that goes beyond the list of their charges. In a sense, a socio-bio folder is a tool that allows the creator of the folder and the recipient to view an incarcerated person through a different lens not associated with their crime. Furthermore, Rebecca proactively created the folder to keep her family together.

> I didn't let that stop me knowing that they were going to take my daughter and not give me a chance. I went around that. I wrote a letter to the judge, I responded to all the objectives on the case plan for CPS. I got character letters, I put work history, all the classes and certificates that I had earned, signed recovery weekly bulletins, legal stuff, I also made $2 payments [for filing fees] on all my cases. Because I didn't have pictures of me and Emmy anymore, I drew pictures of us and places that we like to go. I went to the post office and spent my last $15 and mailed it straight to the judge.

On the day of her court appearance to dissolve her guardianship, Rebecca waited for five hours for the results of the dissolution. Instead of news of dissolution, she

received news that she was allowed to have family maintenance with her daughter. In addition, Black children are in foster care longer and move more often than White children (Roberts 2002). Emmy spent one year in eight different foster homes and seven different schools before Rebecca was able to start the family maintenance program, a time-limited program designed to keep children in their own homes with their parent(s) with the help of child welfare staff.

For Rebecca, getting Emmy back was a difficult road, but she was very happy with the result as her efforts paid off and she was reunited with her daughter. The subject of CPS and foster care came up during my interview with Geri. Geri, a 65-year-old formerly incarcerated Latina mother of four, planned on adopting her cellmate's baby after she served her sentence. Geri and her cellmate, who became her good friend, were both frequently in and out of prison but devised a plan for Geri to take custody of her child.

> My good friend begged me to take [her] baby and I told her that I would. I knew if I took the baby, she'd be able to see her. I'd just raise the baby until she came home. If she did good, she'd be able to take the baby. I wanted to beat CPS [get] to her. After she had the baby, when I got out, they [CPS] took the baby right away. I told her to tell her mom to let me know (after she gave birth) and her mom said "yeah, that's great, another bastard child'.

As displayed, kin care is not guaranteed while a mother is incarcerated. Though a child's maternal grandparents often take care of children while their mothers are serving their sentences, not all grandparents take on childcare responsibilities. As Geri's conversation with the child's grandmother displays, the baby was not looked at fondly and was immediately moved to CPS services. To avoid CPS and adoption, Geri offered to care for her cellmate's child, which displays her willingness to attempt to keep her

friend's family together upon the release of Geri's cellmate. While Geri was serving her own sentence, her children were cared for by her own mother and her mother-in-law. She described her life in correctional facilities as "easy time" because she knew her children's whereabouts and that they were safe and available upon her release.

Care work for Connections and Well-being of Others

Another aspect of carceral familywork that emerged from the study was the experience of family members attempting to maintain the emotional well-being and safety of the children and other family members with incarcerated loved ones. Lizzy and Esperanza, who were formerly incarcerated women, worked to avoid interrupting their children's connection to their incarcerated fathers by allowing them to visit, talk, and write to their fathers. For Lizzy, a 40-year-old formerly incarcerated Latina mother, her son's visits with his imprisoned father was vital for her son's well-being. Lizzy was initially conflicted about allowing her son to visit his father in prison. Although she describes "it was hard to see my seven-year-old cry" she knew it was the best choice for her family as she proactively worked to keep their relationship intact through familywork. Lizzy states, "I definitely encourage the father-son relationship. He is no longer able to hold my son nor do we know if he'll ever be able to… I support their relationship. Sons need their fathers." Though Lizzy and her ex-partner were no longer together, she felt like she was providing her son with all she could as a mother by allowing him to visit with his father every week. She acknowledges, "he was a horrible partner to me, but he was a good father to the child... Although I was not with him

anymore, I know how strong their relationship was. Their bond is really strong. That change for my son was drastic."

Lizzy does not transport her son to the facility but allows her ex-partner's new girlfriend to pick up her son for the weekend. Lizzy also permits her son to stay over at the home of his father's relatives and engage in family time with them. She says, "I don't think his family should suffer or I should keep the child from his family for mistakes he [her son's father] made." According to Lizzy, she and her new partner constantly reassure her son that his imprisoned father loves him. They also tell him that they pray for his father and that they do not want anything to bad to happen to him. For Lizzy, creating a supportive environment for her son where he can freely talk about his feelings about his father is essential for his emotional health. However, Lizzy still performs carceral familywork when her son comes home from his weekly visitations. As a mother, she provides the emotional labor that mothers are expected to do. "There's times when he comes back really sad and we have to hug him. He doesn't have physical contact with his dad. He misses that male contact. I have to support him by comforting and soothing him."

Like Lizzy, Esperanza dealt with the aftermath of her children's prison visitations. She describes her experience as unpredictable in terms of her children's' emotions.

> It's time-consuming. And the emotion put into this whole little adventure to get from point A to point B. And even bringing your kid and knowing that last time they were pretty okay with it [visiting their father] but this time who knows? All they could talk about was 'I wish my daddy could come home with me.'

Esperanza remembers responding to her young son's questions about the reason behind his father's imprisonment, the food and sleeping accommodations, uniformity of

prison jumpsuits, and whether or not his father could come home for a weekend. Esperanza felt like she and her children had to emotionally endure a lot– her own incarceration, her ex-partner's incarceration, and eventually, her ex-partner's death. She asked herself, "What did I do to deserve this?" In addition, she also had to endure ending a romantic relationship with her ex-partner six months before he went to prison, but remained supportive, helpful, and "never left him alone." In this way, Esperanza not only engaged in the familywork for her children, but she also cared for her ex-partner. A limited amount of research explores the aftermath of mothers caring for children after parent-child visits. The experiences of Lizzy and Esperanza demonstrates the reality of the effects of parental incarceration and their attempts to soothe and comfort their children (Kruttschnitt 2010).

Conclusion

I examined how women of color and their families are impacted by incarceration and the criminal justice system at large. I focused on broader patterns of carceral familywork rather than one type of relationship (e.g., mother/child, romantic partners). I presented different types of familial relationships like siblings and ex-partners which are highly understudied. Furthermore, I created three types of carceral familywork: care work through visitation, care work for children, and care work through connection and well-being of others, which emerged from my study based on how women of color experience the ramifications of incarceration. In doing so, I help to expand research on how families of color relate to the state, how women of color carry out care work and motherwork. I

highlighted the ways in which the maintenance of sibling, parent, child, and past or present romantic bonds is central to carceral familywork among families of color.

Though my study highlights the proactive nature women of color intertwined. In Pyke's study, Asian American women resisted their oppression at the hands of Asian American men in favor of White men's oppression (which is framed as supposed egalitarianism). This form of resistance may not be resistance at all. However, the familywork performed in my sample often is related to gendered expressive and instrumental love among women who put family first and refused to forget about their families. Some women in my sample argued that the state penalizes people of color through hyper-criminalization and incarceration and that support directly challenges the power dynamics that exist between the carceral state and those who are incarcerated (Chapter Four extends this argument).

In terms of gender, Black (2010) argues that women on the outside who engage in letter writing, phone calls, and visitations are part of "doing gender" in carceral settings. I agree that the gendered nature of carceral familywork like letter writing, phone calls, and visitations reproduces masculine/feminine gender roles. However, I extend the discussion to include these elements as tools used for family survival among women of color in addition to framing them as components of "doing gender." I agree with Black's argument that women with incarcerated loved ones resist the carceral system that keeps loved ones apart. However, I do not necessarily think that resistance is a masculine expectation, mainly when intersectionality is applied to women's experiences. In the lives of women of color, especially Black women, dependency and docility are not associated

with them in the same way it is for White women. Therefore, resistance through family survival is part of many women of color's experiences as they are often at the front lines of social movements (e.g., civil rights, immigrant rights, etc.) aimed at achieving social change even though men often dominate the top leadership positions and serve as the face of many organizations (Milkman and Terriquez 2012).

Chapter IV

Sharing Stories and Creating Change

> "What can I do in my day-to-day life to help people while helping myself? I can't change the whole system by myself, but I can interact with people where we are rebellious in a good way." -Sandra, Latina, 25

The opening quotation from Sandra, a 25-year-old Latina highlights the crux of this chapter; what are women of color who have been incarcerated and/or have incarcerated loved ones doing to create social change for themselves and others? This chapter answers that question by examining the various ways in which women of color resist the carceral state and challenge the stigma associated with incarceration and criminal status through their interpersonal relationships, supporting others, and policy advocacy. I find that women share their stories about their personal and familial experiences with the criminal justice system in various settings, including the political sphere, support groups, and amongst their families and children. When telling their stories, they challenge the dominant narratives that contribute to the criminalization of people of color and the shame surrounding incarceration. They also disrupt the current criminal justice system through their policy advocacy and helping to deter crime among their loved ones and clients.

Scholars have understudied how incarcerated individuals and their families respond to their experiences with the criminal justice system and resist that system and its logic. I seek to address this research gap in this chapter. As I use this term, "resistance" I include storytelling as well as both individual and collective actions done in opposition to

social domination and existing institutions as well as the dominant culture. I examine resistance among women of color to the current criminal justice system and dominant narratives that help to sustain it. In particular, I analyze the forms of resistance that were discussed in my interviews with 35 women of color who personally experienced incarceration and/or had a loved one behind bars. I find that these women engage in telling their stories to spark change for themselves and others in various settings and through different types of interaction and engagement. I argue that women disrupt the criminal justice system and intervene in the lives of others by sharing their experiences, which is a way to resist the punitive carceral system. They share their stories in various ways, including through their political engagement, their employment in helping professions and voluntary roles, and in their family lives.

In the following literature review, I will identify areas of resistance for women, both on the inside and on the outside of carceral walls. First, I discuss how stigmatization negatively impacts individuals and families as well as how stigmatized identities became a catalyst for social action among the women I interviewed. Next, I discuss how gender serves as a key component for society's dismissal and misrepresentation of incarcerated women and their activism within correctional facilities. The common propensity to overlook women's criminality as not *real* prisoners coupled with the gendered expectations of womanhood conceals incarcerated women's acts of resistance against the carceral state and its logics. I then review previous research on how women have resisted their oppression within jails and prisons, an important literature upon which this chapter builds.

The second part of the literature review focuses on how women and families on the outside challenge dominant political discourse and the formation of their political attitudes. This is particularly relevant to my dissertation as it provides reasons and insight into the politicization of female family members on the outside. Lastly, I address how women of color challenge the stigmas associated with incarcerated individuals and their families which pervade their day-to-day life.

Literature Review

Challenging the Stigmas Associated with Incarceration

A barrier to engaging in resistance is rooted in the stigmatization formerly incarcerated women feel based on their status. Here, I draw upon Goffman's (1963) concept of stigma, which is useful for understanding how different forms of "otherness" impact members of society. For Goffman, those who commit offenses or have been imprisoned are stigmatized based on their perceived "blemishes of individual character" (1963:4). Those who are racial minorities are stigmatized by their "perceived tribal lineage and heredity." Individuals who carry "character blemishes" related to crime and deviance can sometimes conceal their infractions, rendering them discreditable. In contrast, individuals who have a visible stigma, such as race, are usually discredited (Goffman 1963). Coupling the stigma of imprisonment with the stigma of race creates harsh realities for people of color who have criminal records.

How the intersections of race and criminal record impact life chances is most studied regarding employment outcomes. Pager (2007) finds that the combination of race and criminal record drastically influences the ability to secure employment among young

Black men. Based on perceptions and stereotypes of Black men and criminality, employers apply the "two strikes and you're out" approach to applicants, which lessens young Black male ex-offenders' chances for a callback (Pager 2007). For Black women with criminal records, the state influences their postcarceral employment by constructing parameters around what is considered "appropriate" and "redemptive" work (Gurusami 2017). People of color with criminal records are stigmatized in the labor market. However, their stigmatized identity does not solely impact the everyday happenings of individuals because the formerly incarcerated population does not exist in a vacuum; they are part of families and communities. Therefore, the lack of employment opportunities impacts those who are connected to formerly incarcerated folks.

People with stigmatized identities may deal with their stigmatized status in different ways. For example, people with mental health illnesses may find ways to avoid or reduce the possibility of rejection through distancing, withdrawing, and/or keeping their mental health illness a secret. They may also engage in educating others about mental health illness or by challenging others by disagreeing with people who shame those with mental illness (Link et al. 2002). Since at least the 1970s, individual responses to stigma grew to include more significant collective responses from a variety of stigmatized populations far beyond mental health illness to include the formerly incarcerated population. Collective responses enable stigmatized groups to change public perceptions about them, create positive identities, and fight back against discrimination and harassment (LeBel 2009).

LeBel (2009) found that Black formerly incarcerated participants in their study engaged in advocacy more than their White and Latino counterparts in New York State. The study over-sampled women, who make up 6.4% of those released from New York carceral institutions, but 15% of the sample. However, there have been few studies that have incorporated women as the primary research participants in studies of carceral resistance. Indeed, few studies have examined how women of color with a primarily Latina racial make-up engage in carceral resistance. Therefore, research on the advocacy of those who are formerly and currently incarcerated and resistance against the criminal justice system by women of color is needed, especially because they are disproportionally affected by the carceral system (prisons, jails, detention centers, etc.) as prisoners and/or the loved ones of prisoners. This chapter seeks to address this gap in the literature by examining the ways that women impacted by incarceration challenge the stigmas associated with their own or their loved one's incarceration.

Women's Resistance in the Penal System

Movements centered on criminal justice have been longstanding. However, within the prison itself, acts of resistance have primarily been framed around the actions of prisoners who are men. Partially based on the proportion of the overall prison population, men's resistance movements, including prison rebellions, often capture the public's attention. Women prisoners have often been overlooked in society since the inception of the penal system because historically, they were not imprisoned in large numbers. Overall, the historical images of correctional institutions and criminal confinement is governed by monolithic images of male prisoners. Historians, film directors, novelists,

policymakers, etc. have generally paid little attention to women and have found male prisoners more worthy of their consideration (Rafter 2017). These monolithic images of male prisoners have led correctional facilities to assume men's prisons as the model. Prisons are not gender-neutral in terms of how they are viewed and operated. Britton (1997) found that women prisoners were viewed as excessively privileged because they possessed items such as knitting needles and curling irons, which would be forbidden in men's prisons due to the potential of those items being weaponized. Therefore, men's activities and issues within the penal system were well documented while women's experiences were not.

Early criminological studies and ideologies around women prisoners did not always discount or ignore women's criminality. Until the nineteenth-century reformatory movement, women prisoners were often viewed as exceptionally evil and even more deviant than men. Because of the relationship between criminality, deviance, and gender, women who committed a crime were often portrayed as going against their nature. This ideology shapes modern-day views of women offenders because crime is still usually affiliated with men. During the reformatory movement, reformers argued that women offenders were not evil but were merely misguided and strayed from their gender roles (Pollock 2002). Unlike Lombroso, who viewed women offenders as biologically inferior, reformers framed women offenders as in need of guidance on how to fulfill their gender prescriptions and live up to the cult of true womanhood.

Less educational and vocational training is available for women prisoners in comparison to their male counterparts. When training is available, it is often within

female-dominated and underpaid ("pink collar") fields like beautician work rather than higher-paid trades, which reflects dominant notions of traditional femininity (Lawston 2008; Bosworth 2017). Bosworth (2017) notes that prison classes focus on health and beauty while typical activities like sewing, cooking, cleaning, and "mothercraft" are performed by women prisoners to shape their identities and their presentation of self to conform to traditional notions of femininity. These classes, trainings, and activities are designed to instill feminine ideals while transforming prisoners and "criminals" into "good women."

This historical and modern view of women prisoners helps to explain how gender operates in prison and the proclivity to overlook women's organizing and resistance inside and outside of the prison. Diaz-Cotto (1996) argues that previous studies on women prisoners have followed the ideology that frames women prisoners as "passive" and "apolitical" but have not considered how gender influences women's prison movements. According to Diaz-Cotto (1996), one way women's gender affiliation has impeded women's organizing in prison is through the exertion of social control within correctional facilities. Rafter (2017) argues that women's prisons are spaces of social control where women not only comply with the prison rules but also internalize new values and means to supervise themselves. Thus, not just prison rules are imposed and accepted by women, but so are standards of femininity based on race and class that are shaped by White-middle class expectations and values.

In terms of physical control, women, like other prisoners, are physically restricted within the confines of correctional facilities. Threats of violence and acts of violence are

one of the most robust patriarchal modes of controlling women (Girshick 2003). Lawston (2008) argues that authorities, often men, exert their control over women through subordination efforts such as male guards physically overpowering women in prisons. Furthermore, control is also exercised by other means of abuse, including sexual abuse, rape, verbal harassment, and medical neglect that function as forms of assuring silence and complicity among women prisoners (Lawston 2008). In addition to physical control like inappropriate touching, Girshick (2003) finds that women are also controlled through sexually abusive and degrading language. Male guards engage in taunting, name-calling, sexual innuendos, and body-shaming women prisoners.

Though women prisoners have experienced a variety of obstacles that hinder their lives on the inside, women prisoners have also challenged the penal system by engaging in tactics that communicate their resistance, even if those efforts are overlooked. Bosworth (2017) states that despite restrictions, women's negotiations of power on the inside of correctional facilities allows them to maintain a sense of agency. Some acts of agency do invoke aspects of traditional forms of femininity, creating a contradictory experience for many women. While femininity is imposed on women, tapping into feminized expectations can often be a means to an end used to accomplish goals (Bosworth 2017).

As second-wave feminists have stated, the personal is political; however, within the confines of a prison, incarcerated women's concerns are often considered personal issues. During the 1960s and 1970s, incarcerated women did not engage in riots/rebellions, work strikes, and legal complaints in the scale or frequency as their male

counterparts (Diaz-Cotto 1996). Their collective actions were often ignored by authorities and muted by the mass media.

Unlike prisoners who are men, women prisoners have struggled for issues related to family rather than problems that are considered more public or political (Diaz-Cotto 1996). Because family life is relegated to women's traditional gendered labor and "women's work," calls for women-centric and family-centric change within carceral institutions has not been at the forefront of prisoner rights movements. Issues like pregnancy, childbirth/delivery, and family reunification are not discussed in the same contexts as publicly visible actions like the 1986 and the 2013 hunger strikes in Pelican Bay in which nearly 30,000 male inmates protested the solitary confinement practices also known as SHU (special housing units).

However, Diaz-Cotto (2006) points out that incarcerated women's disobedient acts like bartering goods stolen from work assignments, the selling and usage of drugs, and the assaults on guards and other inmates, are not often seen as acts of resistance because they are not traditionally discussed in male-centric prisoners' rights movements. Women have used common resistance tactics in correctional facilities that are also present in male facilities, such as hunger strikes, stand-outs (standing outside of one's cell door and refusing to go back in), advocacy from families, and using the assistance of jailhouse lawyers (fellow inmates that had knowledge or practice with the law) (Diaz-Cotto 2006). Additionally, lawsuits (many drafted with the intent of ending sexual violence in prison), self-help and empowerment groups for abused women prisoners, writing and publishing literary work, and creating bonds and friendships within the prison

walls are all acts of women's resistance (Lawston 2008). Understanding how women prisoners have navigated and challenged the penal system on the inside helps us to better understand women's lives after their release. For some of the formerly incarcerated women I interviewed, actions on the inside enabled them to have clearer visions of how to engage in resistance against the carceral state and its logics on the outside.

Women and Families on the Outside

Attitudes and actions against the criminal justice system are not confined to those who have served time in correctional institutions; they also extend to the family members of the incarcerated population often referred to as family members "on the outside." For family members with an incarcerated loved one, attitudes and orientation toward the government and involvement in political life can be traced to their experiences with familial incarceration (Lee, Porter, and Comfort 2014). Family members' civic and community engagement can be influenced by the transmission of the incarcerated loved one's opinions and attitudes. This type of transmission can be communicated through socializing children and families about attitudes toward topics like incarceration. Lee, Porter, and Comfort (2014) argue that transmission for families of the formerly incarcerated is particularly unique because, in addition to absorbing attitudes of imprisoned loved ones, family members also share in the incarceration experience when they maintain familial bonds with their incarcerated loved ones through visiting, correspondence, etc.

Family members often experience secondary prisonization, which positions loved ones as "quasi-inmates," so they are simultaneously captive and free (Comfort 2008).

Though family members are on the outside of the correctional facilities, the inner workings of correctional facilities can dictate their lives through restrictions on visitation, correspondence, and the consistent absence of family members. This often shapes family members' all-around opinion of the criminal justice system. For example, the visitation process for family members may be confusing and intimidating. In California, adults wishing to visit their loved one on the inside, must apply to be on an inmate's visitors list, go through a background check, and declare any previous convictions and arrests. In the visitation rooms in California, visitors have limited physical contact but brief kisses and hugs are allowed unless they are ordered to have non-contact visits (a partition is used to separate visitors and the inmate), have limitations on how long they can visit and which days they can visit, how many people can visit at a time, what can be brought into the visitation room, and what visitors' attire should look like (no denim, chambray, hunter green, tan, and orange in California prisons) (California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation 2020). Interactions with the guards and regulations surrounding prison visitation and the criminal justice system more generally can shape a loved one's views and politics.

For prisoners themselves, systematic barriers and legal restrictions prevent them from becoming active in voting and political engagement (Weaver, Hacker, and Wildeman 2014). Only some states (Vermont and Maine), allow currently and formerly incarcerated people to vote without restrictions or fulfillment of requirements for voting restoration (National Conference of State Legislatures). Moreover, the criminal justice system is disproportionately made up of low-income people of color, who tend to have

more limited exposure and knowledge of political processes compared to middle class and White people.

Not only can experience impact family members' attitudes about the criminal justice system, but it can also impact how family members engage in politics. For families of currently and formerly incarcerated loved ones, some may believe that efforts to influence the criminal justice system may be futile and that social change or justice may not be a viable outcome for them or their families (Comfort 2008; Lee, Porter, and Comfort 2014; Sugie 2015). Sugie (2015) finds that women with incarcerated male partners have reduced political participation and are likely to retreat from government processes based on their experiences of interacting with the criminal justice system. Women with partners who are incarcerated for more extended periods are less likely to engage in political processes. Furthermore, like incarcerated men, women who have incarcerated partners are more likely to need resources such as housing, employment, educational opportunities, etc. Sugie (2015) points out the stark political differences between women with incarcerated partners and women who gain resources from public assistance. Though both incarceration and welfare programs contain state supervisory processes and structures that are paternalistic, women who receive welfare benefits or participate in social programs have more positive interactions with the state. Public assistance and corrections are state controlled, yet corrections exert a type of involuntary power over women with incarcerated partners through the imprisonment of loved ones. Restrictions related to visitation, phone privileges, and the complete separation from partners reflect the price women pay for offenses that they are not responsible for.

Though some scholars find that some system-impacted women who have no history of incarceration themselves but support an incarcerated loved one, may not often participate politically active in terms of voting or engaging in institutionalized political processes, such women have sometimes participated in collective efforts to help their own survival as well as community survival. Richie (2011) outlines a few main ways women, particularly women of color from low-income backgrounds, have organized and rallied over issues related to incarceration and resisted the prison-industrial complex. In a more public way, women have held key leadership positions within organizations that focus on these issues. They have been active in grassroots mobilization through protesting local ordinances related to criminalization, challenging budget allocations that favor jails and prisons, or promoting the passage of protective legislation for the currently and formerly incarcerated and assisting prisoner reentry (Richie 2011: 148). Another vital form of resistance identified by Richie (2011) is building community. Like my discussion on carceral familywork in Chapter Three, women visit their loved ones and others at correctional facilities, take responsibility for the children of incarcerated family members or friends, and support formerly incarcerated community members. This daily and often unnoticed carceral familywork is crucial for the emotional and physical survival of families and communities. It is also vital for challenging the expansion of the carceral system and its negative impacts of loved ones and communities.

Research Findings

The following section on research findings is derived from my interview sample, which included 35 self-identified as women of color who were impacted by incarceration.

The results are separated into three typologies that encompassed women's experiences with resisting the effects of the criminal justice system on themselves and/or their loved ones. Through this section, I identify and describe various forms of resistance against the carceral system and its cultural logics: (1) publicly sharing their stories within political settings; (2) supporting and advocating for others through their employment or social causes, and (3) disclosing their stories of incarceration in small settings. Each form of resistance is based within the sharing of counter stories about incarcerated people and their families. They are outlined below.

Involvement in the Political Sphere –Resistance Type 1

Some women who were formerly incarcerated or had an incarcerated loved one had critical opinions about the criminal justice system. The women within this typology viewed the system as a "society [that] has shut us out" and called for just and fair lawmaking, bills, and policies that would address the issues that incarcerated women and their loved ones were experiencing. Some of these issues involved fairer treatment for prisoners in terms of reinstating their voting rights and access to public housing. These calls for just policies were more widespread and were communicated through state and local action. The women who aligned with this typology viewed themselves as organizers who could speak in the political sphere and voice their experience as the foundation for change.

Dorothy, a 60-year-old Black woman with an incarcerated son, started an organization in Orange County called “United to Fight” that focused on justice for parents with incarcerated children who wanted to plead their innocence. Dorothy viewed

Orange County as “so racist.” Throughout her life, Dorothy grew up thinking, “like everybody else, ‘you in jail, you did it.’” It was not until her son was falsely accused of a crime that he did not commit that (charges were dropped) Dorothy’s perception of the criminal justice system changed. She recognized the racial divide and decided that her organization would team up with national chapters of social justice-oriented organizations to help with her fight to bring her son home. Dorothy recalls

> We started having meetings at my house, at the park… the NAACP partner[ed] with us and we all started working together… We had public defenders from Santa Ana Superior Courts. They started coming to the NAACP meetings to get more insight about how African Americans are being treated.

After working with various organizations, Dorothy called for meetings with the Orange County Sheriff’s department about the subpar visitation accommodations, and the department eventually complied with her requests related to improving seating arrangements, wait times, and lines. She believes, “it just took somebody to bring out what they was doin’.” For Dorothy, her experiences with the criminal justice system and the correctional facilities lead her to resist the mistreatment she, her son, and the African American community received. Though her son is now deceased, she still attempts to push forward with improving policies and procedures by sharing her story about her son’s mistreatment and the policy and administrative victories she helped to win. Thus, her insights and activism have the potential to change the current way incarcerated people and their families are treated.

Formerly incarcerated women also use their stories to resist political issues. Nikki, a 50-year-old Black woman who served 25 years for a drug-related offense, said that she started organizing through an organization, Solidarity for All, a national

organization co-founded by her cellmate. Upon release, she realized that she had much internal knowledge about the treatment of women in the criminal justice system. When asked how she contributes to national political organizations, Nikki said that she uses her voice at events to push policies forward. After getting in touch with her former cellmate, Nikki thought, "'You know what, maybe I could help. Maybe I could speak on anything, so when women come out, they don't have to go through what I went through.'" Her goal is "that another woman does not have to go through what I went through in the future." Nikki explained that lack of resources both inside and outside of the prison made her vulnerable to incarceration. For her, as well as the other women in the sample, communicating her story to prevent others from a similar fate was paramount to why they share their stories.

Women involved in political organizations either entered an established organization or, in Dorothy's case, formed one of their own to realize their political goals. Maya, a 40-year-old mixed-race woman, was not initially accustomed to sharing her story with others until she got involved with the organization, Solidarity For All. Like Nikki, who also belongs to this organization, Maya began to articulate the problems women face in the criminal justice system, challenging the silence and shame surrounding incarceration. As she explained,

> I really didn't mention it [incarceration] that much…Now that I'm involved, I don't even hesitate to say it. I'm not ashamed whatsoever. I told my neighbors when I moved in here. I tell my story to a lot of people because I'm not ashamed. I'm going to keep talking about it and let people know that there's stuff that's not working right now for us. I think a problem with the formerly incarcerated population is that we are ashamed, so we don't talk about it and they [society] are not used to hearing us.

In this quote Maya describes the shame and stigma felt by the formerly incarcerated population and how she resists the cultural silence about incarceration by speaking on behalf of people and families personally affected by incarceration. To make sure her voice and the voice of others within her organization are heard, Maya has conducted large scale state and local projects that strive towards fair housing treatment for formerly incarcerated people like herself. One of her goals is to reduce homelessness among juveniles who are justice-involved. She has drafted and sent in policy initiatives on these issues to the housing authority in her city.

Furthermore, not only does Maya share her status as a formerly incarcerated person in an effort to change the "stuff that's not working right now," she also uses her position as a housing specialist in her city to advocate for those who are impacted by incarceration. Supporting those communities that are affected by imprisonment through one's job or social causes is another identifiable way to resist the carceral state. Seeking social change through one's job will be discussed more in detail in the next section.

Supporting Others- Resistance Type 2

The women used their own experiences, as a formerly incarcerated person or as someone who had an incarcerated loved one, as catalysts for encouraging and supporting others. For both groups, supporting their communities through their occupations or their advocacy work is important to help those who have been (or have the propensity to be) on the inside as well as helping those who are on the outside.

For women who were incarcerated for drug offenses, they supported others who were struggling with addiction by working as drug and alcohol counselors. For these

women, working in that field allowed them to help others live addiction-free and incarceration-free lives. Those respondents within this occupation believed that their unique perspectives could influence individuals and saw their occupation as an opportunity to give back to the community. This form of giving back to others is not unusual for populations that have experienced adversities.

Nichols (2013) found that formerly incarcerated women returned to facilities where they were once members. Her participants believed that they were the most suitable people to "get through" to others, particularly young women. In Nichols' research, as well as mine, women gravitated toward professions or opportunities that allowed them to interact with and help others in the community rather than in the realm of formal politics. I also found that many formerly incarcerated women discussed their desire to create non-profits or community centers where they felt they could make a difference one person at a time.

Lupe, a 38-year-old Latina, felt like she was in a prime position to communicate her story to current members of a drug rehabilitation center that she once attended. She believed that her impactful story could save others from imprisonment and that she could inspire others to rise above drug addiction (which led her to incarceration).

> I want to show people out there who are struggling that…you can be where you want to be. I want to be an example of that. I want them to see, hey, if you were to see my booking photo and see the photo of where I'm at now, you'd be blown away…. I want to take that and show people… this is who I was. I want them to know you can do whatever you want. It's never going to be too late.

Lupe's desire to positively impact others through her vast knowledge and story was helpful for those suffering from addiction.

Other formerly incarcerated women, like Lily, used their insights to help those in educational settings. Lily, a 39-year-old formerly incarcerated Mexican mother, and current community college student discussed how being a formerly incarcerated student helped her develop programs for her club, Formerly Incarcerated Student Association (FISA). Lily initially joined FISA because a current student who was also the former prisoner whom she served time with, announced information about the club in her class. With the addition of the courses she was taking at community college, Lily felt like her "stars were aligned now. I'm where I'm supposed to be. Having that club and that support made it for me because I felt comfortable." For Lily, she envisions the club expanding to become a more extensive program to support other Southern California students with similar stories.

One of the vital components for Lily to be able to thrive on campus life was not just feeling welcomed at the college through her organization; it was also learning how to be in collegiate spaces. Learning about the expectations of college students in terms of behaviors and interactions, made Lily feel more integrated with campus life. She argues that there are areas of college life that formerly incarcerated students simply do not know how to operate in. She states, "for somebody like me who doesn't know what the hell is going on… we don't know the proper language… How do we sit? How do we act? It's simple things like that…people need to know." As a member of FISA, Lily believed that communicating her feelings of discomfort in the classroom to group members can lead to connecting fellow formerly incarcerated students to resources that can help them in relatively all social settings.

Women who have not been incarcerated themselves relied on their own familial stories to advocate or challenge the familiar, negative narratives about incarcerated people. Becoming a member of a social cause that supports those who have been incarcerated was common. Unlike the women who engaged in promoting policies and bills on a larger political scale, those who worked on social causes focused on more immediate and smaller impactful actions. My sample yielded women who were involved with seeking to improve two institutions: families and higher education. Women who participated in these institutions connected their experiences with the experiences of those they advocate for, giving them unique insights into their social causes. Working with organizations in which women could help other system impacted people provided them with a supportive network for themselves as well as the people they served.

Jacquelyn, a 21-year-old Mexican woman who had an incarcerated stepfather and brother, joined Women's Healing Circle. It was one of the few local organizations that specifically addressed the needs of women with incarcerated family members. Because of her history of visiting her stepfather and brother in prison, she experienced depression and found comfort in the Women's Healing Circle where she met other women who were in similar situations. She also found areas where she can implement her insights. Jacquelyn states, "I know the harm, so I want to prevent it." Jacquelyn's history of familial incarceration gives her perspective on what types of items families need when visiting correctional facilities. She states that her organization "doesn't hand out coffee mugs. That's not going to do anything for families. We want to take care of their needs." Jacquelyn suggests that many families, including her own, have been turned away from

prisons for not having appropriate purses or carrying bags. For this reason, she is working on ordering clear plastic duffle bags for families so that they can have permissible items with them to help ease the visitation process.

Simone, a 38-year-old Black woman who was the sister of a deceased formerly incarcerated man, initially planned on working with an organization that focused on the population that is most at-risk for police interaction, arrests, and incarceration: Black men. Simone states, "when I first started grad school, my passion was non-profit organizations that focused on issues in inner-cities or urban communities. I was interested in Black males because of my brother." As a young woman, Simone witnessed how her brother was mistreated by correctional officers and the criminal justice system. She hoped to change other men's fates. Simone states that her brother got into legal trouble for trivial offenses. Using an intersectional lens to explain her brother's incarceration, she emphasized how the combination of race, age, gender, and incarceration work together to criminalize young Black men.

> It was minor things but in the eyes of the law, especially to be a young black male, they're like demonized for things that you would look at as being everyday occurrences or just typical behavior of juveniles but since he was a young black man…there was no resources that were offered and there was no services that anybody recommended to my mom, it was just like, 'Lock him up. He needs to be incarcerated.'

Though Simone experienced the incarceration and eventual death of her brother, she actively engages in helping others resist the narratives of incarcerated Black men. She decided to "switch trajectories" and not work for an organization that focused on inner cities and urban communities. Instead, Simone, is a community college professor who

teaches formerly incarcerated students and students with incarcerated loved ones. As a professor, Simone tells her family's story.

> Now I teach juvenile delinquency courses. A lot of the students I interact with now are formerly incarcerated students. In this particular position, I am able to remind them that even though we make choices in life, they cannot forget or take for granted how in our society, there are certain inequalities that are embedded. I like to teach all of my classes the social justice framework. I like to actively make sure my students understand how society has the ability to impact us and to be mindful about the actions that we partake in.

As this quotation displays, Simone's teaching within higher education is a form of resistance against the dominant narratives in society that demonize incarcerated people and fail to acknowledge how larger social inequalities constrain individuals' choices and strengthens the likelihood of arrest. Simone supports students who are formerly incarcerated in the classroom and presents material that reflects the embedded inequalities that lead to the incarceration of folks.

Through their support or advocacy work, women told their stories. Their stories often expressed opposition against the criminal justice system and the desire to help others. Each example in this section demonstrated how women used their personal insights within their occupation or organization, rather than in political domains or private one-on-one conversations. In comparison with the more openly political types of resistance, this type of resistance encompasses drawing upon one's story or the stories of their loved ones to enact change within smaller groups and communities rather than enacting change at the local or state levels. Whether the community setting is a classroom, church, or clinic, women are sparking change by sharing their stories within meso-level spaces.

Disclosing Experiences within Personal Relationships- Resistance Type 3

Beyond politics and supporting others through occupational and organizational settings, some women engage in resisting the dominant narratives about incarcerated people by disclosing their experiences to their loved ones in intimate settings. For both formerly incarcerated women and women with incarcerated loved ones, forewarning their children and other family members about the realities of being arrested and incarceration and/or living on the outside without their loved one means discussing their interactions and attitudes about the criminal justice system. Through disclosing their experiences to others, they helped to educate them about how to deal with stigma. It resembles aspects of the second type of resistance of challenging dominant narratives, but on a smaller, more intimate scale. In comparison to the previous section in which women have a particular role within an occupation or organization, disclosure to intimate friends or family members is a small-scale yet important way to spark change. This type of resistance does not involve joining a group or training for an occupation, neither does it involve an understanding of politics or bills. Rather than revealing one's experiences in broader settings to acquaintances or strangers for political reasons or to support others, some women opted to only disclose their story to people who are close to them. Disclosures intended as forewarnings and owning one's experiences provided a way for women to help prevent familial incarceration and reduce incarceration rates for people of color.

Maya, a 40-year-old mixed-race woman, was in and out of jail for years for drug-related offenses. During her years of intermittent incarceration, her three children lived

with her mother, but Maya would return and leave when she got "picked up [by law enforcement]." When asked if she was concerned about the correlation between parental incarceration and juvenile delinquency, Maya replied:

> I'm not worried about them [my kids]. I'm a living example. They lived it. They've seen first-hand because I'm their mother. Some kids that I've seen in different families, they go follow that path... I have two kids that went the opposite way. I've shown them that this not what they want to do. I'm very open. I talk to them a lot. I don't hide anything. If they have questions, they talk to me.

For Maya, being a living example for her children who have also lived through parental separation while she was in and out of jail, being open to her children's questions has influenced them to stay on the path free of criminal activity. Though Maya says her kids are "nerds," she talks about her experiences with them and provides them with insight into what not to do to avoid arrest and incarceration. Furthermore, by not hiding anything about her incarceration, Maya makes sure that her kids understand the differences in the paths they chose so that they can make well-informed decisions within their own lives.

Gloria, a 25-year-old former gang-affiliated Chicana mother, has had direct contact with the juvenile justice system throughout her teenage years. Additionally, her father was imprisoned while she was growing up, and her former partner and father of her children is currently incarcerated. Like Maya, Gloria stated that she was not concerned about her children having contact with the criminal justice system. As a graduate student, she believes her children's exposure to her academic and non-criminal lifestyle can help push them in the direction that she envisions for them. She says:

> They will witness everything I will do and they will come everywhere with me so they will see something different [than criminal activity] … because I have a lot

> of experience with it [criminal justice activity], I will know when they're starting to f- up. It's that cycle that's scary for me… yeah, they're exposed to an incarcerated father but then they have me 24/7.

With Gloria's ex-partner incarcerated, her children are connected to the criminal justice system and the separation that it entails. However, they are also involved in graduate school activities like "professors and conferences." Gloria believes her efforts in showing them her day-to-day life, will help break the cycle of generational incarceration. Furthermore, she also shifts her children's understanding of the carceral system to ensure that they see crime as not solely an individual action that has no relationship to society. Though she warns her children about gangs, she also informs them about social inequalities. She states:

> I want to raise critical boys… I try to tell them that the system is definitely broken and that's why there are so many people who shouldn't be in there, that's why we pray and advocate. Better things will come.

Through Gloria's views of the carceral system, she educates her children on how the brokenness of the system creates unjust outcomes for people who should not be there. She encourages them to pray for their father and to advocate for others. In this way, Gloria, like other women of color in my sample, ensure that others understand the criminal justice system to be unequal and broken.

Disclosing one's story in settings with children and family allows women to control the narratives by using their own voice and their own knowledge of the events that happened in their lives. When used as a forewarning to families and children, women choose to be transparent in hopes that their children or families can learn from them and be critical of the system at large. This type of resistance illustrates that social change does

not have to be on a grand scale; it can be small and international yet powerful for families to protect themselves against a predatory system of injustice.

Conclusion

This chapter centered the ways in which women use their narratives and voices to create counternarratives about incarcerated people and/or their families. The women in my sample participated in framing and communicating their stories as a powerful form of macro, meso, and micro resistance. Instead of allowing society's racist, sexist, and classist beliefs of incarcerated people to infiltrate politics, communities, and households, these women resisted mainstream narratives by refusing to be silent in spaces where minds and policies could be influenced. Their political endeavors, support of others, and forewarnings may ultimately lead to reducing the number of incarcerated people that enter the system and those who are released. These forms of resistance lead women to "talk-back" to the criminal justice system.

This chapter examines three types of resistance among women of color to the criminal justice system in the United States and the dominant ideologies, stigmas, and narratives surrounding incarceration that support, sustain, and contribute to it. The first typology of resistance that women of color engage in involves political means of resistance, which enabled them to voice their experiences to influence political processes, promote laws or bills that ranged from restoring the voting rights for formerly incarcerated people to guaranteeing in-person visitation instead of solely digital visitations. When vocalizing their experiences, women aimed to inform social policies and promote legislation that considered their struggles with the criminal justice system.

Whether they were advocating for better visitation rooms in county jails or for non-discriminatory employment and housing, women in this category drew upon their lived realities. Furthermore, women who engaged in policy advocacy grew comfortable with disclosing their status as a system impacted family member or formerly incarcerated person.

In the second type of resistance, women disclosed their experiences as either or both formerly incarcerated and/or loved ones of an incarcerated person to smaller groups within their occupational roles as social service providers or through their voluntary service activities. They also hoped to challenge the carceral system but did so in group settings.

In the third type of resistance, women who were both formerly incarcerated and/or had an incarcerated loved one disclosed their stories within intimate, private settings with their children and family members. They warned their loved ones to avoid activities that could lead to their arrest and incarceration. They also encouraged them to be mindful of the larger social inequalities that shape policing and the legal system.

Regardless of their type of resistance and whether women were directly incarcerated or impacted by a loved one's incarceration, women saw the criminal justice system as unfair and overly punitive, prompting them to challenge the dominant narratives about crime and the criminal justice system and misinformation about those who were/are incarcerated. Furthermore, nearly all women in the sample disclosed their stories to shed their stigma and help others in a meaningful way. Many believed that talking about their stories created avenues for social change.

It is important to note that women were not bound to the typologies that were presented in this chapter. Some women discussed using all three types of resistance in different phases of their lives or in different contexts. In some cases, both formerly incarcerated women and/or women with incarcerated loved ones describe moving from disclosing their stories in only intimate settings, then within organizations, and lastly, in the political sphere. However, disclosing one's story is not a sequential, step-by-step movement for women. In fact, some women decide not to tell their stories beyond their children or families and some hardly discuss it with their family member and only talk about it within organizations/occupations. Greater research is also needed to further explore the circumstances and relationships that encourage women to initially tell their stories about their experiences with the carceral system, and to do so in different types of social settings, and for different kinds of goals. More research is also needed to understand the impact of such stories on those who listen to them, such as children, family members, members of support groups, addicts in recovery, service recipients, students, policymakers, etc.

Chapter V

Conclusion and Policy Improvements

This dissertation helps us to better understand how women navigated familial relationships affected by incarceration and how their personal stories served as counternarratives to the portrayal of incarcerated people and their families. My research is based on an analysis of 35 in-depth interviews with women of color who were formerly incarcerated and/or impacted by a loved one's incarceration. It applies and extends insights from intersectional feminist theory and feminist and Chicanx feminist methodological approaches. I begin this final chapter by summarizing my findings through an overview of each chapter. I then present suggestions for policy improvements derived from participants that capture how incarceration has impacted their lives and what changes in the system are needed for just and fair treatment of incarcerated people and their families. I conclude my dissertation by discussing my contributions to the field and suggestions for directions for future research.

Overview of the Research

My research fills a gap in the current literature on formerly incarcerated women and women with incarcerated loved ones. In Chapter One, I address the trend of studying women impacted by incarceration as either partners of incarcerated men as or formerly or currently incarcerated mothers. In fact, my own study originated from this bifurcated view of family bonds through partnership and motherhood but now seeks to expand this view by examining how incarceration affects other types of familial relations. I discuss the dire problem of incarceration rates of low-income people of color (particularly Black

men and women), pathways to women's criminality, and barriers to maintaining familial bonds. I also present my three research questions that shape the body of the dissertation: 1) How does one put into practice feminist research ethics and considerations when interviewing formerly incarcerated women and women with incarcerated loved ones? 2) How and why do formerly incarcerated women and women with incarcerated loved ones maintain their familial bonds and how does this caring labor impact their own lives? 3) Why and how do formerly incarcerated women and women with incarcerated loved ones promote social change and with what consequences?

In Chapter Two, I answer my first research question by using a feminist methodological lens to center women of color who have been impacted by incarceration. I describe how I approached each part of the process from thinking about the project, engaging in just and equitable ways of interviewing, to editing the transcripts for places where participants felt uncomfortable. In this chapter, I concentrate on how power dynamics and building rapport are needed to interview women within this sensitive population. As researchers, we have power over how participants experience an interview as well as what content goes into our papers so by engaging in rapport and acknowledging power dynamics, we reduced the risk participants feeling discomfort.

In Chapter Three, I answer my second research question by categorizing the type of family bond maintenance and caring labor women engage in as "carceral familywork." I define carceral family work as the invisible an unpaid caring labor performed by women of color in the carceral state to keep families connected. This type of gendered labor takes on three different forms. The first is planning and organizing visits which consists of

making sure that they or their loved one is getting visitors despite the obstacles to get to correctional facilities. This second typology is reunification of family members. This process involves searching for ways to have smoother reentry which includes reuniting with family members and children after serving their sentences. The third type is connections for well-being of others. This type of emotional labor involves taking on responsibilities of emotional well-being and physical safety of others, sometimes at the cost of one's own well-being. This chapter also reveals that carceral familywork extends to members of the family who are women including siblings, daughters, and ex-partners.

Chapter Four answers my last research question on how women promote social change through sharing their counternarratives about incarcerated individuals. Women shared counter stories within three main ways: Publicly sharing their stories and political settings, sharing their stories in organizations such as volunteer groups and occupational settings, and lastly, sharing their story is with children and loved ones. In public settings, women shared their stories for the purpose of creating public awareness and policy change. In organizations, women shared their stories as a form of support or individual advocacy. Lastly, women shared their stories in intimate small settings with family and children to warn against the realities of incarceration and the behaviors/paths that they say got them there.

In addition to the data presented in the previous chapters, this dissertation would be incomplete without hearing what changes women want to see in the criminal justice system. This section touches on a few quotations from women who provided their insights on ways to improve the lives of women who are impacted by incarceration. Like

the points made in Chapter Three and Chapter Four, women were critical about the criminal justice system and identified the flaws within the system that prevent women and families from living healthier lives after incarceration. They identified lack of resources and lack of suitable rehabilitation as areas needed for improvement. Without an improvement in these areas and others, women felt like there was little hope for them or their family members to succeed. A common sentiment shared by the women was the notion that the system was against them and their loved ones because the system always needs a consistent supply of incarcerated people to make money from. Brianna, a 32-year-old Latina states,

> They are breaking up families…They don't care about giving people a second chance…especially the parents…the system is about making money more than it's about helping families. There has to be some support. There has to be some resources or else people aren't going to make it. They don't want you to make it. They need to see that.

Others echoed Brianna's statements by noting that not only is the criminal justice system set up for unsuccessful reentry (as it lacks resources for incarcerated folks), it is also not set up to for issues pertaining to women and reunification with their children and families. The criminal justice system and correctional facilities are founded on androcentric notions of punishment as noted in Chapter Four. For women who are behind bars, concerns go unrecognized and unattended. Jade, a 36-year-old Latina, acknowledges this issue is a major flaw that keeps women separated from children and compromises reunification efforts. Without resources that help women and loved ones reunite, many women lack knowledge about how to reunite with those on the outside.

Jade states,

> You are getting your parole plan and they give you your discharge papers and different things… [they don't ask] where are your children at? Is that something you want to look at? Reunification? Like they don't ask you those questions, they don't ask you none of that. Even when I would go to my parole officer, they wouldn't ask me any of that. It makes it very difficult when you don't have that platform that gives you resources.

With little to no resources given to women upon release, women must navigate reunification on their own. However, if incarcerated women were given an advocate who could help them prepare for release, develop links to the community, and reunite with their children, women could achieve a new and "normal" life (Greene, Haney, and Hurtado 2000).

Limitations for formerly incarcerated women and/or women with incarcerated loved ones continue to impact them throughout their lives. As for Geri, a formerly incarcerated woman and woman with incarcerated loved ones, her past prevents her from fostering her own grandchildren and other children of incarcerated women. Though she regularly submits for state pardon (the DA has approved it), she continually tries to get pardoned from the governor with the intent of ultimately fostering children. Geri states,

> I don't think that they [CPS] should be quick to give them [children of incarcerated parents] up for adoption right away. Give the person a chance to rehabilitate... I was gonna to foster kids…cause it's always been in my heart. I always wanted to because I know a lot of those kids are from women that are incarcerated. And so I've always had a heart for it, it's just something I've always wanted to do and never got the chance to…they won't let me because of my past.

Even though it has been decades since Geri's release, her past still limits her from new opportunities to care her grandchildren and other children who have incarcerated parents. Family members without criminal records agreed that the criminal justice system

does not rehabilitate their loved ones' chances to have a better life post-incarceration. For some family members, they continue to support their loved ones financially and emotionally with the few resources that they have. Clearly, there is a need for policies to reflect the needs of formerly incarcerated people including receiving resources and support not only from their family members, but also from the state and social services.

Contributions to Research on Women, Family, and Incarceration

This dissertation builds on prior research about women of color who have been impacted by their own incarceration and/or the incarceration of a family member. Although originally, my study was constructed to focus on partners of incarcerated people and formerly incarcerated mothers, I discovered the need to study women who have multiple familial connections to incarceration. The rationale behind this approach is rooted in the reality of how widespread mass incarceration is among communities of color in Southern California, particularly in Los Angeles, Orange, and Riverside counties. Consistent with Comfort (2008) themes around secondary prisonization emerged through the way the rules and regulations of correctional facilities and the criminal justice system shapes how women with incarcerated family members experience their own freedom. Women who support loved ones undergo social control but not to the extent of their incarcerated loved ones. Women comply with the rules and procedures set by the carceral state which includes visitations protocols and other forms of connection like phone calls, letter-writing, inability to experience physical touch, etc. Some women suggested that they were fine "doing their own thing" [living life] while others were counting down the days until the prospective date of their loved one's release.

For formerly incarcerated women, the state continues to punish them through various mechanisms including the inability for self-directed decision-making about their lives including decisions about children, employment, and housing. Consistent with Barnes and Stringer (2014), most formerly incarcerated mothers in my sample expressed wanting to continue parenting behind bars with the exception of one woman who said that her drug abuse emotionally scarred her child beyond repair. For that respondent, her mother was taking care of her child and she would still visit and talk with her.

For many of my respondents, their familial connections varied and extended to ex-partners, current partners, children, siblings, and parents. Therefore, in order to acknowledge the intricate web of incarcerated family members, I expanded my study so that I could examine the multiple relationships and roles that women occupied in a comprehensive way. This in turn, enabled me to add to the field because virtually no other study looks at the intricacies of multiple types of familial connections women of color have to incarceration as my dissertation does. In order to analyze such complexities, I develop the concept of "carceral familywork", a term rooted in Collins' (1994) concept of motherwork. I extend the concept of motherwork to include the ways in which women perform gendered work through their identity as family members of incarcerated people.

Another contribution to the field is the expansion on how resistance operates for women who are formerly incarcerated and/or women with incarcerated loved ones. Resistance can take on many forms including public displays of activism, smaller forms of support through service and educational occupations and advocacy, and finally, disclosing information to loved ones regarding their personal experiences with crime and

the carceral system in an effort to prevent incarceration among family members and loved ones.

Directions for Future Research

My dissertation provided a qualitative analysis of women, families, and incarceration. However, much more research is needed. Continued research within the area of carceral familywork and resistance among women of color should focus on the following topics that reflect the conversations that women and their families are having: 1) immigration and detention centers, 2) alternatives to visitations, and 3) expansion of kinship caregiving. Continued research should extend to studying the criminal justice system including law enforcement and the legal system. Incarceration is just one of the many factors that disenfranchises women of color and their families. Afterall, incarceration results from larger systems of oppression, including White supremacy, capitalism, heteropatriarchy, and other relations of domination that produce unfair sentencing policies, limited and unequal access to adequate legal representation, and the over-policing of low-income communities of color. Future studies should investigate how documentation status impacts familial bonds for undocumented Latinas who serve time in prisons, jails, and detention centers. Because of the nexus between criminal and immigration law (i.e., crimmigration), undocumented Latinas in detention centers may experience less access to family members than Latinas who are housed in jails and prisons. Furthermore, the difference between women who are citizens or documented compared to those who are not may further the discussion of how carceral familywork is constrained by border enforcement and I.C.E. Mixed status loved ones and those who are

restricted from performing carceral familywork because they are undocumented may find ways to maintain connected as they strive for their survival in a nativist county like the U.S. Furthermore, expanding research on carceral familywork will enable feminist researchers to engage in intracategorical complexity where they can address the range of diversity and difference within groups (McCall 2005:1782).

Another area that needs to be addressed is the consequences of alternatives to in-person visitation in California jails. As jails replace in person-visitation with video visitation (pre COVID-19), many families can connect with loved ones from their homes which may alleviate carceral familywork pressures related to travel time and scheduling visits. However, opponents of video visitation argue that visitation eliminates privacy, intimacy, and child/parent interactions like playing together (Goldstein 2016). Though video visitation may be necessary in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, further research should examine how carceral familywork operates when the inability to be mobile due to stay-at-home and shelter-in- place orders alters familial bonds. With over 27,590 prisoners testing positive for COVID-19, 96 COVID-19 related deaths, and visitation hours canceled in California since March 2020 (California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation 2020), it is crucial to understand the unique challenges women face in maintaining their familial bonds during these unprecedented times.

Finally, future research should examine the work that is being done by women of color who demand to have more decision-making power over choices related to kinship care. Mothers on the inside who arrange kinship care with their relatives (most often, the aunts or grandmothers of their children), have a better chance of remaining in contact

with them and can lead to families staying intact. However, women on the inside who did not have access to kinship care or if their relative has a criminal record themselves, were often uncertain about the potential for reunification because of laws related to background checks for potential kinship caregivers. Solidarity for All, Legal Services for Prisoners with Children (LSPC), and other organizations work diligently on creating legislation to expand the rights of incarcerated parents by broadening eligibility for kinship care in the state of California. They aim to widen the pool of familial kinship caregivers by extending kinship care to family members who may have been previously been denied this for prior minor offenses. With the expansion of kinship care, women of color, but particularly Black women (who have the highest rates of family separation), will be able to ensure that carceral familywork can continue within their families and prevent adoption and foster care (which my respondents viewed as children getting lost in the system).

Through continuous intersectional feminist research, women's experiences with the carceral system can be further revealed and add to the scholarly literature as well as impact social work, counseling, and other applied work with women of color impacted by incarceration. As society continues to disenfranchise formerly incarcerated people and their families, it is vital to recognize the areas of care work and women's resistance to dominant narratives women engage in. It is also critical to understand how researchers can approach studying formerly incarcerated women and women with incarcerated loved ones by using a feminist methodological lens. My dissertation represents only one study that aims to add to the growing literature on families, women, and incarceration.

Academic studies in this area must continue to be built to get fuller and accurate depictions of the full range of women's experiences with the carceral system in the United States and beyond. Furthermore, research does not exist in isolation from society. The Black Lives Matter movement has helped to push forward important demands for deep and long-term social justice while aiming to transform the carceral system. Thus, it is imperative that efforts and policies that unite families within the carceral state be recognized and supported.

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Appendix A

Interview Schedule for Formerly Incarcerated Mothers

*****Per IRB: Before I ask the following questions, I will remind participants that I am a mandated reporter and must report offenses to the authorities. I will tell the participants that if they or their loved ones have engaged in any criminal activity related to the child welfare, I will have to report it. I will also remind them that these records can be subpoenaed in a criminal investigation and that they are free to skip questions at any time. If they begin to divulge illegal activities, I will immediately remind them that they have the right to withdraw their responses to that question.*

What was your life like before becoming a mom?

How did your life change after becoming a mom?

How does incarceration affect how you see yourself as a mom?

How has incarceration impacted your family life? Children's lives?

Where does/do your child(ren) live? Where did they live while you were doing time?

Did you keep in contact with your child(ren) while you were doing time? If so, how?

Why is it hard for moms to reconnect with their children after they've done their time?

What do think is appropriate/fair strategies for women who want to reconnect with their children and families once they are on the outside?

What type of responses do you receive from people who know that you are a formerly incarcerated mom?

What made you join this group?

How has being part of this group impacted your life?

****PROBE: How has it impacted your parenting? Your family? Your interactions with others in your community?

What issues does this group address? What are their goals?

What issues do you hope to address in this group? What are your goals?

How can the work you do in this group affect mothers and women, more broadly who are on the inside and outside?

Appendix B

Interview Schedule for Women with Incarcerated Partners

**** *Per IRB: Before I ask the following highlighted questions, I will remind participants that these records can be subpoenaed in a criminal investigation and that they are free to skip questions at any time. If they begin to divulge illegal activities, I will immediately remind them that they have the right to withdraw their responses to that question.*

How/when did you meet your partner?

What is your relationship like with your partner?

Describe how you see yourself as a partner.

How your partner's sentence affects your family life?

What are the important issues that women with partners on the inside face?

How do you keep in contact with your partner? Why is it important to keep contact with your partner?

What type of responses do you receive from people who know that you have a partner on the inside?

What made you join this group?

What skills/insights have you learned from being in this group?

How has being part of this group impacted your life?

****PROBE: how has it impacted your parenting? Your family? Your interactions with others in your community?

What issues does this group address? What are their goals?

What issues do you hope to address in this group? What are your goals?

How can the work you do in this group affect partners and women, more broadly who are on the inside and outside?