

**The Motherhood Penalty – Exploring Mothering Experiences as a Pathway to**

**Crime for Women Incarcerated in the Johannesburg**

**Female Correctional Centre.**

By

**Bianca Parry**

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy**

In the subject

**Psychology**

At the

**University of South Africa**

Supervisor: **Professor Puleng Segalo**

**25 September 2018**

*The financial assistance of the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences, in collaboration with the South African Humanities Deans Association towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the NIHSS and SAHUDA.*

## Declaration

**Name:** Bianca Rochelle Parry

**Student Number:** 50776266

**Degree:** Doctor of Philosophy

I declare that **The Motherhood Penalty – Exploring Mothering Experiences as a Pathway to Crime for Women Incarcerated in the Johannesburg Female Correctional Centre** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used, or quoted, have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature**

25 September 2018  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

## Acknowledgements

Although I am the author of this dissertation, it would not have been possible to accomplish this academic endeavour without the assistance and support of many different people, who, in many different ways, contributed towards the completion of this paper.

Firstly, it is important that I acknowledge and express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Puleng Segalo. Since the early days of my Masters dissertation in 2012, your guidance and encouragement have sustained me on a journey that has lasted over six years. You are an inspiration to young, female academics like myself, to whom you reach out and elevate, towards heights we previously believed were beyond our reach.

To my family, your support, belief and love gave me the confidence to start, and finish this journey. The supreme effort and time it takes to raise a child should never go unrecognised, and it is through you that I have learnt compassion, strength and perseverance. Thank you, I love you, and I hope this work makes you proud.

To significant other, the most significant person in my life, thank you. Thank you for the late night reassurances and the everyday encouragers. Thank you for becoming a feminist on this journey with me. Thank you for the unpaid labour and the care giving. Your intelligence and kindnesses are my beacons of light, a light that fills up my heart. I love you so very much, and I also hope this work makes you proud.

An especially big thank you to the correctional officers of the Johannesburg Correctional Centre, who were generous with their time and spaces, and whose patience and dedication to their work is a daily inspiration.

Mbongiseni Mdakane, Tanya Pieterse and the team at Unisa Language Services, thank you for your considerate assistance that made sure that none of my participant's narratives were lost in translation.

To Anrica Mills, I thank you for your professionalism and thoughtfulness while editing this paper.

This research could not have been completed without the financial backing and academic mentorship of The National Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS). Their support is critical to the development of a new generation of academics who, guided by ethical principles espoused, will reproduce a vital, human knowledge base that is relevant to our country's milieu.

Finally, this thesis is dedicated to the courageous women who shared their stories with me. Their triumphs and tragedies are unclipped by the generosity of their spirit and the unconditional love they have for their families. This is what encourages me each and every day. It is the intent of this paper to accurately represent and share these women's lived experiences with others, in the hope that their stories and presence within our society will be rewarded with the recognition it is due...

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this paper to the memory of my grandmother, Estelle Wenda Darvall.

Although you never saw me complete this research, it would never have even started without you. You taught me, and your daughter, how to be strong, compassionate women and we miss you every day.

**Title:**

The Motherhood Penalty – Exploring Mothering Experiences as a Pathway to Crime for Women Incarcerated in the Johannesburg Female Correctional Centre.

**Abstract:**

Globally there has been a rise in the population of incarcerated women over recent decades. Yet, despite this increase, female offenders only represent about 5% of the total incarcerated population. South Africa is no different – female offenders on average total less than 3% of the incarcerated population in South Africa, one of the ten largest correctional systems in the world. This small representation of women in the correctional system often leads to the interpretation that their pathways to offending and experiences of incarceration are the same as those of male offenders, delegitimising any role that gender may play in offending behaviour.

The research topic of this doctoral study aims to investigate whether these women's symbolic or pragmatic status as mothers motivated their crimes and how this occurrence may argue that the socioeconomic challenges faced by these women play a role in their criminalisation. By utilising a feminist pathways research approach, the unlawful actions of seventeen women incarcerated in the Johannesburg Female Correctional Centre is contextualised and reveals conduits to women's incarceration that primarily involve victimisation and socially constructed "gendered vulnerabilities" that are indissolubly interconnected with poverty and oppression. As seen through their life history narratives, this confluence of factors, coupled with fulfilling the dual roles of provider and caregiver as a mother, contribute to their pathway to offending. Ultimately the research allows for a gender-sensitive analysis of the unique challenges incarcerated women in South Africa face, and the role agency and patriarchy has played in their pathways taken.

**Key themes:**

Department of Corrections, South Africa, female offender, feminist criminology, lived experiences, pathways to crime, life history interviews, psychology, gender, narrative

**Isihloko:**

Inhlawulo yokuba ngumama – ukuhlolisisa izimo zokuba ngomama okudlula kuzo abantu besifazane baseNingizimu Afrika ababoshiwe njengento ewumzila obaholela ekwephuleni umthetho.

**Isishayelelo ngokufingqiwe:**

Emhlabeni jikelele, kulawa mashuminyaka asanda kudlula sandile isibalo sabesifazane ababoshiwe. Yize kunalokho kwenyuka kwesibalo, abesifazane abasuke bephule umthetho bayingxenye ethi ayibe ngama-5% enani selilonke labantu ababoshiwe. NeNingizimu Afrika nayo akwehlukile kuyo, kubantu ababoshiwe lapha eNingizimu Afrika abesifazane balinganiselwa kuma-2.2% kuphela esamba sesisonke sabantu ababoshiwe, kanti futhi iNingizimu Afrika iyingxenye yalezo eziyishumi okuyizona ezinkulu kunazo zonke emhlabeni kwezokuqondisa izigwegwe. Lesi sibalo esincane sabesifazane abasezindaweni zokuhlumelelisa izimilo sivamise ukhunyushwa kuthiwe leyo mizila yempilo ebaholela ekuphuleni umthetho kanye nezimo abadlula kuzona ngenkathi beboshiwe iyefana neyabesilisa abasuke bephule umthetho, ngalokho bese lingashaywa ndiva noma iliphi iqhaza lezobulili kulezo zenzo zokwephula umthetho.

Okokuqala, lesi sihloko esihlongoziwe salolu cwaningo lweziqu zobudokotela sihlose ukucacisa ubunjalo bezimpawu zomuntu ngamunye futhi nalezo zinto ezihambelana ngokufanayo kubantu besifazane abasezindaweni zokuhlumelelisa izimilo eNingizimu Afrika. Okwesibili, kuhloswe ukucubungulisa ukuthi ngabe lesi simo abazithola bekusona njengabantu abangomama akusona yini noma cha esadala ukuthi benze lawo macala, kanye nokuthi ekwenzekeni kwalokho, zizathu zini ezingaba khona zokuthi izinselelo kwezenhlalo nezomnotho ezibhekana nalaba bantu besifazane yizona eziba negalelo lokuthi bazithole sebengene kwizenzo zokwephula umthetho.

Ngokusebenzisa indlela yokucwaninga evuna amalungelo nesimo sabesifazane, lolu cwaningo luhlose ukuthi ekugcineni kube nokuziqondisisa izinto ezenzeka kumuntu ngayedwana kanye nakumphakathi, okuyizona zinto ezidala ukuthi laba bantu besifazane bagcine sebeqe inqubo elandelwayo emphakathini. Ngokusebenzisa ingxoxo-mibuzo ecubungula umlando wempilo, ngalokho kubhekisiswa ukungena ezenzweni zokwephula umthetho kwabantu besifazane abayishumi nesikhombisa ababoshwe eSikhungweni Sabesifazane Sokuhlumelelisa Izimilo saseJohannesburg, ngokubheka ubunjalo besimo okwenzeka ngaphansi kwaso lokho kwephulwa komthetho. Lokhu kuveza ithuba lokuhlaziya ngokusebenzisa indlela ebhekela ezobulili mayelana nezinsalelo ezingefaniswe nalutho ababhekana nazo abesifazane ababoshiwe eNingizimu Afrika, futhi ngalokho-ke bese kunikwa laba bantu besifazane ulwazi lokuguqula izindlela abasuke sebehamba ngazo.

**Izindikimba ezingumongo:**

UMnyango Wezokuhlumelelisa Izimilo, iNingizimu Afrika, owesifazane ophule umthetho, isifundo sezobugebengu eseibhekelela ezobulili, izimo ophile kuzona, imizila eholela ekwephuleni umthetho, ingxoxomibuzo mayelana nomlando ngempilo, isayikholoji, ezobulili, indaba yezinto ezihambelanayo.

**Titel:**

Die straf van moederskap – verkenning van die moederskapervaring van vroue in gevangeskap in Suid-Afrika se ervaring as 'n pad tot midaad

**Abstrak:**

Daar was die afgelope dekades wêreldwyd 'n toename in die populasie van vroue in gevangeskap. Ten spyte van die toename, verteenwoordig vroue slegs omtrent 5% van die totale populasie in gevangeskap. Suid-Afrika is in geen opsig anders nie – vroue-oortreders verteenwoordig gemiddeld slegs 2.2% van die populasie in gevangeskap in Suid-Afrika met een van die tien grootste korrektiewe stelsels in die wêreld. Hierdie klein verteenwoordiging van vroue in die korrektiewe stelsel lei dikwels tot die verklaring dat hul pad na oortreding en ervaring van gevangeskap dieselfde as dié van manlike oortreders is, wat enige rol wat gender ook al mag speel ongegrond maak.

Die onderwerp van die navorsing wat vir die doktorsale studie voorgestel is, is eerstens daarop gemik om die individuele kenmerke en dit wat vroue in gevangeskap in Suid-Afrika se korrektiewe fasiliteite gemeen het, uit te stip. Dit is tweedens daarop gemik om te verken of hierdie vrouens se simboliese of pragmatiese status as moeders hul misdade motiveer het, en hoe daar as gevolg van die voorkoms geredeneer kan word dat die sosioekonomiese uitdagings wat deur die vroue in die gesig gestaar word 'n rol in kriminalisering speel.

Deur die feministiese benadering van navorsing te volg, word daar met dié studie daarop gemik om uiteindelik 'n begrip te vorm van individuele en sosiale prosesse wat daartoe lei dat hierdie vroue sosiale norme oortree. Deur lewensgeskiedenisonderhoude te gebruik, word die kriminalisering van die handeling van 17 vroue in gevangeskap in Johannesburg se korrektiewe sentrum vir vroue gekontekstualiseer. Dit bied geleentheid vir 'n gendersentitiewe ontleding van die unieke uitdagings wat vroue in gevangeskap in Suid-Afrika in die gesig staar, en voorsien vroue van die kennis om alternatiewe paaie te volg.

**Kerntemas:**

Departement van Korrektiewe Dienste, Suid-Afrika, vroueootreder, feministiese  
kriminologie, geleefde ervaring, pad na misdaad, lewensgeskiedenisonderhoude, sielkunde,  
gender, narratief

## **Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations:**

CSPRI - Civil Society Prison Reform Initiative.

CSVV - Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation.

Correctional Facility – A term used to refer to a jail, prison, or other place of incarceration.

Correctional Officer – The person responsible for the custody, safety, security, and supervision of offenders.

DCS - Department of Correctional Services.

Desistance - The cessation of offending or other antisocial behaviour by offenders after they have been released following time served at a correctional facility.

Domestic violence – The most common form of Gender Based Violence among partners that often involves physical violence or threats of violence.

Economic violence - This includes controlling a partner's assets, access to money and other economic resources.

Emotional violence - involves verbal abuse and belittling of the other with the intent to embarrass, humiliate and disrespect another.

Femicide – Murder of a female by an intimate male partner and is considered to be the most extreme outcome of Gender Based Violence.

GBH – Grievous Bodily Harm; an illegal act that involves serious physical injury inflicted on a person by the deliberate action of another.

GBV – Gender based violence; violence that is directed against a woman because of her identified gender or that affects women disproportionately.

IPV – Intimate partner violence; violence by a current or former partner in an intimate relationship against the other partner. IPV can take a number of forms, including physical, emotional, economic and sexual abuse.

JICS - Judicial Inspectorate for Correctional Services.

NICRO - National Institution of Crime Prevention and the Reintegration of Offenders.

Offender - A person who commits an illegal act and is held in a correctional facility after they are found guilty in a court of law.

Physical violence – Use of physical violence or weapons on a person through the deliberate intent to harm another.

Recidivism - The tendency of a sentenced offender to reoffend after they have been released following time served at a correctional facility.

REC – Research Ethics Committee; a body responsible for ensuring that human research is carried out in an ethical manner in accordance with national and international law.

Sexual violence - The most common form of GBV and may involve rape, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and trafficking for sexual purposes

UNICEF - The United Nations Children's Fund is a programme and member of the United Nations Development Group which is headquartered in New York City and provides humanitarian and developmental assistance to children and mothers in developing countries.

## Contents

<b>Declaration</b> .....	ii
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	iii
<b>Dedication</b> .....	v
<b>English Abstract</b> .....	vi
<b>Zulu Abstract</b> .....	viii
<b>Afrikaans Abstract</b> .....	x
<b>Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations</b> .....	xii
<b>Chapter 1</b> .....	1
<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
1. History of Incarcerated Women Worldwide .....	1
2. History of Incarcerated Women in South Africa .....	4
3. Situating the Study .....	6
4. Rationale and Research Aims .....	8
5. Thesis Overview .....	9
<b>Chapter 2</b> .....	11
<b>Literature review</b> .....	11
1. Worldwide Profile of Female offenders .....	11
2. Profile of Female Offenders in South Africa .....	20
3. Universal pathways to offending .....	24
3.1. <i>Victimisation and Violence</i> .....	24
3.2. <i>Feminisation of Poverty</i> .....	27
3.3. <i>Mental Illness and Offending</i> .....	29
3.4. <i>Motherhood and Crime</i> .....	31
4. <i>Female Offender Agency and the Victimisation Narrative</i> .....	33
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	35
<b>Chapter 3</b> .....	36
<b>Methodology</b> .....	36
1. Theoretical Perspective .....	36
2. Participant Selection and Sample Profile .....	40
3. Table 1. Demographic details of participants .....	42
4. Data Collection .....	42
5. The Research Context .....	44
6. Data Analysis .....	46
7. Ethical Considerations .....	48

<b>Conclusion</b> .....	50
<b>Chapter 4</b> .....	51
<b>Explication of Data</b> .....	51
<b>Introduction</b> .....	51
1. Victimization and Violence .....	52
1.1. <i>Childhood Abuse and Mistreatment</i> .....	52
1.2. <i>Acquaintance Rape and Assault</i> .....	53
1.3. <i>Intimate Partner Violence</i> .....	54
2. Feminisation of Poverty .....	59
2.1. <i>Early Motherhood</i> .....	59
2.2. <i>Pressure to Provide as Breadwinner</i> .....	61
2.3. <i>Gendered Roles of Unpaid Labour and Caregiving</i> .....	65
3. Mental Illness and Addiction .....	67
3.1. <i>Anger, Depression and Suicide</i> .....	67
3.2. <i>Gambling and Substance Abuse</i> .....	69
4. Experiences of Loss and Abandonment .....	73
4.1. <i>Death, Loss and Grief</i> .....	73
4.2. <i>Poor relationships with Mother</i> .....	75
4.3. <i>Absent Fathers</i> .....	77
5. Race and Language .....	80
5.1. <i>Race, Identity and Language</i> .....	80
6. The Role of Motherhood .....	83
6.1. <i>Disintegration of the Family Structure</i> .....	84
6.2. <i>Dislocation and Isolation</i> .....	88
6.3. <i>Freedoms Lost and Gained</i> .....	91
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	94
<b>Chapter 5</b> .....	95
<b>Discussion of Findings</b> .....	95
<b>Introduction</b> .....	95
1. Accountability and Agency .....	96
1.1. <i>Agency with Limited Options</i> .....	99
2. Patriarchy .....	100
2.1. <i>Gendered Roles and Contexts</i> .....	101
2.2. <i>Victimization and Isolation</i> .....	104
3. Feminisation of Poverty .....	107
3.1. <i>Female Breadwinners</i> .....	108
3.2. <i>Gendered Division of Labour</i> .....	110
4. Motherhood and Offending .....	112
4.1. <i>Maternal Role vs Paternal Role</i> .....	113
4.2. <i>The Motherhood Penalty</i> .....	114

<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>115</b>
<b>Chapter 6</b> .....	<b>117</b>
<b>Conclusions and Recommendations</b> .....	<b>117</b>
<b>Limitations and recommendations</b> .....	<b>121</b>
<b>References</b> .....	<b>124</b>
<b>Appendix A</b> .....	<b>139</b>
<b>Appendix B</b> .....	<b>141</b>
<b>Appendix C</b> .....	<b>142</b>
<b>Appendix D</b> .....	<b>143</b>
<b>Appendix E</b> .....	<b>144</b>

## CHAPTER 1:

### INTRODUCTION

When considering the world of incarceration and correctional environments, or endeavouring to comprehend the lives of its populace, it is necessary to understand the origins of a system that constitutes the context of a study (Luyt & du Preez, 2010). To this end, this introductory chapter first considers the historical perspective, providing an overview of the origin and development of female incarceration both locally, and abroad. From there, the lives of incarcerated women in South Africa are located and their experiences with specific issues and challenges are explored, specifically in the occurrence of incarcerated mothers.

#### **1. History of Incarcerated Women Worldwide**

Women have always represented only a small fraction of the correctional population in both prisons and jails, and the history of their experience with incarceration, as shaped by societal expectations of and for them, can be wholly different from that of men. As literal outsiders to what was the “norm” for inmates of prisons and jails, and as a group whose rights and abilities were legally and socially controlled on the outside more than that of men and boys, women’s experience in corrections history is worth studying... (Stohr & Walsh, 2016, p. 17).

Information regarding the history of incarcerated women is not readily available for most countries from around the world. The majority of the literature concerning the historical context of female offenders and their incarceration is discussed from historical examples in the United States or Europe. Indeed, it was not until the early 1970s that the lives and experiences of incarcerated women began to be recognised in part by historians, sociologists,

and justice specialists (Rafter, 1983). Before then, most scholars and researchers assumed that a women's experience of incarceration was comparable to those of men, and so female incarceration was not considered an area which called for separate investigation. It was only after the publication of Gibson's 1973 article regarding historical research on women in corrections, that it was recognised that historical correctional research from the male perspective had little understanding about the nature of female criminality (Rafter, 1983).

One of the most comprehensive texts concerning the history of female incarceration was written by Joanne Belknap in 2010. In this review of nineteen articles, which had been published over a period of time from 1913 to 1971 by the *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, Belknap addresses the histories, sentencing, housing health, and other characteristics of women offenders. One surprising finding uncovered in her research involved the documented instances of higher rates of female offenders who were incarcerated in the early part of the twentieth century, than those reported in the last few decades of this century. Reported incarceration rates where women represented 12% of those sentenced in the United States in 1910, alarmingly contradict the rates reported in 2017, where female offenders make up a total of 8.4% of their correctional system (Walmsley, 2017).

Explanations for these extraordinarily high proportions of incarcerated women, especially when considered relative to incarcerated men, are explained by Belknap as indicative of gender normative roles imposed on women at the time and sanctioned by their communities. During the earlier part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, women were largely incarcerated for immoral behaviours, as reflected in “data from the same institution from 1931 to 1933 [which] found that 48% of the women were in for “sex offenses” and 12% had been committed for being “idle and disorderly” (Belknap, 2010, p. 1069). Often, actions or behaviours classified as sex offenses during that period did not represent sexual abuses perpetrated against another, nor

coercion or forced sex, but rather “lewd and lascivious conduct, fornication, serial premarital pregnancies, adultery [and] venereal disease” (Mallicoat, 2015, 462).

The historical housing conditions of female offenders were also a reflection of the times and women’s positions within society:

Prior to the development of the all-female institution, women were housed in a separate unit within the male prison. Generally speaking, the conditions for women in these units were horrendous and were characterized by excessive use of solitary confinement and significant acts of physical and sexual abuse by both the male inmates and the male guards. Women in these facilities received few, if any, services (Mallicoat, 2015, p. 461).

In addition, although female offenders cost more to house, they reduced the operating costs of their own housing sections, as well as those of their neighbouring male offenders, through unpaid labour and domestic chores performed (Stohr & Walsh, 2016). Unfortunately, circumstances did not change much for incarcerated women, even after they were housed in their own female offender facilities which were staffed by women guards and administrations. Whereas these custodial institutions were the first to provide treatment for female offenders, their rehabilitative efforts have been criticised by feminist scholars as an example of “patriarchy at its finest, as women were punished for violating the socially proscribed norms of femininity. The reformatory became a place embodying attempts by society to control the autonomy of women” (Mallicoat, 2015, p. 462). They were also modelled after male facilities, both in design and philosophy, but recreational programmes tended to be even more impoverished as they were primarily focused on work programmes which were defined in gender-specific terms and domestic in labour, and so were deemed appropriate for what was considered women’s work. Female offenders produced clothing for

the rest of the country's facilities, and women frequently laboured eight or more hours a day, but their small numbers often led to these women being regarded as insignificant and unredeemable, and resulting respects for their wellbeing was in consequence inferior to that of their male counterparts (Rafter, 1983). Sadly, such gender preoccupations continue to affect the nature of incarceration today, and their marginal representation within the corrections environment mean that incarcerated women across the world continue to exist on the peripheries (Gehring, 2016). The current lived experiences of incarcerated female offenders will be discussed in more detail in the chapters to follow.

## **2. History of Incarcerated Women in South Africa**

Historically, in the South African context, institutional confinement was not employed as the customary practice of managing societal transgressors (Singh, 2005). Indeed, as with most other countries around the world, the South African correctional system originated from the European model of incarceration, through the arrival of Dutch colonists and later, during the British occupation of the country (Fine, 1991). Initially, as with the overseas example, “no consideration was paid to sanitary or moral welfare. There was no separation according to sex or age whatsoever, with the herding of men and women together into dayrooms” (Singh, 2005, p. 16). It was only in 1859, when the Roeland Street Jail was erected in Cape Town that proper separate facilities were provided for female offenders, and later, after the Prisons and Reformatories Act 13 of 1911, when all women with long term sentences were transferred to their own facility within the Pretoria Central Prison (Luyt & du Preez, 2010).

During the nearly 50 years of apartheid rule and oppression of the majority of the population in South Africa, the correctional system reflected the political climate of the regime, with corrections facilities accommodating races separately and segregation terms specified in the Prisons Act 8 of 1959 (Luyt, 2008a). During the apartheid years setting of

military custom, the South African corrections environment became depositories for anti-government protestors and during the 1985–1990 period, the number of women detained as political dissidents rapidly increased (Luyt & du Preez, 2010).

After 1994, the legitimacy of the previous correctional system came under scrutiny and the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) in South Africa underwent significant changes:

During the 1990s, the correctional system underwent extreme transformation. This included: becoming an independent department (1990); releasing political inmates (since 1990); implementing community corrections (1991); ending inmate separation on racial grounds (1993); incorporating five correctional systems into one (1993); allowing inmates to vote (1994); adapting to Constitutional dictates (dictated by the 1993 and 1996 Constitutions); addressing representivity (1995); demilitarisation (1996); implementing new legislation (1998, 2004 and 2008); introducing a judicial inspectorate (1998); opening super maximum correctional centres (1999); implementing unit management (2000 and various subsequent relaunches); and opening private correctional facilities (2001) (Luyt & du Preez, 2010, p. 88).

Unfortunately, despite these transformations, overcrowding has increased and remains a major challenge to the current administration. The small number of female offenders housed in correctional facilities, means that they are often a neglected population, in terms of programmes and service delivery, and access to newly built facilities as well (Luyt & du Preez, 2010). The current situation faced by incarcerated women in South African is discussed in more detail in the sections to follow.

### 3. Situating the Study

Globally, there has been a rise in the population of incarcerated women over recent decades, as reported by numerous research studies, (Bosworth, 2000; Liddell & Martinovic, 2013; Modie-Moroka, 2003; Moe & Ferraro, 2006; UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, 2013) however, despite this increase, female offenders only represent about 5% of the total incarcerated population (UNAIDS UNODC, 2008; Artz & Rotmann, 2015). South Africa is no different. Female offenders total on average only 2.6% of the incarcerated population in South Africa, a population that has previously been counted as one of the ten largest correctional systems in the world (Department of Correctional Services [DCS], 2016). Of concern is their negligible representation as a minority community within such a male dominated environment, which may ultimately end in extreme marginalisation (Luyt, 2010). Indeed, with the worldwide female population incarcerated in correctional facilities being so minute, society often views the existence of these women as “an anomaly” (Bosworth, 2000, p.278), neither recognising nor legitimising their needs or experiences in the criminal processing system, leaving them to function on the peripheries (Moe & Ferraro, 2006). This often leads to the interpretation of their pathways to offending, and experiences of incarceration, to be the same as those of male offenders, further delegitimising any role that gender may play in offending behaviour (Liddell & Martinovic, 2013).

In reality, studies show that incarcerated women around the globe follow “unique pathways into the criminal justice system” (Gehring, 2016, p. 18), that differ from those taken by male offenders. Research results indicate that childhood abuse, later victimisation and violence at the hands of intimate partners have a major impact on women’s offending behaviour and subsequent incarceration, both directly and indirectly through mental health and substance abuse variables (Gehring, 2016). Though these violent lived experiences were a primary pathway indicator of female offending, they were also often coupled with women’s

unemployment, poverty, lack of education, substance abuse and poor mental health (UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, 2013).

The literature concerning the profile and pathways of South African female offenders can only be described as comparable to their marginal population size, but the women of South Africa are only too familiar with violence and the socio-economic challenges outlined in the international literature concerning incarcerated women. A published report by Statistics South Africa, released in 2013 and titled “Social profile of vulnerable groups in South Africa, 2002–2012”, classified women in South Africa, along with children and the elderly, as a vulnerable group. With women constituting the majority of the South African population, (52% according to Statistics South Africa, 2013), this classification as a so called “powerless” populace speaks directly to the encumbering social and economic conditions that South African women are subjected to, simply on the basis of their gender. The importance of this report and its statistics lies in the gender-sensitive analysis of the unique challenges women in South Africa face, and the perpetuation of these challenges through gendered patterns of poverty pervaded by patriarchal societal restrictions. “Poverty patterns continue to be gendered and female-headed households were more likely to have low incomes, to be dependent on social grants, and less likely to have employed members” (Statistics South Africa, 2013, p. iii). These female-headed households were also predominantly responsible for all tasks related to domesticity, including provision for and the care of children and extended family members.

When considering these unwarranted social constraints placed on South African women in general, and female offenders in the country in particular, it is necessary to do so while also considering the high levels of violence perpetrated against women in South Africa. Even taking into account instances of under reporting, statistics show that 77% of women in Limpopo, 51% in Gauteng, 45% in the Western Cape and 36% in KwaZulu-Natal have

experienced some form of GBV or Gender Based Violence (Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, [CSVVR], 2016). With international literature identifying prior victimisation of women as a central pathway to offending, this risk factor, along with the structural inequalities experienced, place women in South African society in a very vulnerable position when considering their possible potential to engage in offending and unlawful activities.

#### **4. Rationale and Research Aims**

Incarcerated women in South Africa exemplify the discriminatory conditions faced by many women in South Africa. They are often poor, with few educational or employment opportunities and assume the burden of care and domestic work in the domestic setting (Ackermann, 2015). The South African Department of Correctional Services has recognised in the last White Paper (DCS, 2005) that encumbered families provide fertile ground for illegal behaviours, and incarcerated women and their children, as a minority group in the correctional system, epitomise the characteristics of encumbered families. The considerable challenges faced by mothers in South Africa, both inside and outside of the correctional system, compel serious academic consideration regarding the lives, experiences, and socio-economic realities of these women. Certainly, research conducted abroad regarding female offenders argues that their incarceration is largely attributable to the aforementioned social issues and has called for studies that connect the lived experience of these adversities to subsequent participation in offending activities (DeHart, 2008; Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2013; Ferraro & Moe, 2006).

To this end, my study endeavoured to conduct research which focuses on the lived experiences of women in South Africa, specifically our country's incarcerated female population who are mothers. Firstly, the research outlines the individual characteristics and

shared commonalities of mothers incarcerated in South African correctional facilities, and secondly, investigates whether or not the women's symbolic or pragmatic status as mothers motivated their crimes and how this occurrence may argue that the socioeconomic challenges faced by these women play a role in their criminalisation. It suggests that by understanding the existence of a particularly relegated segment of an already discriminated against group; contextualising their racial, gendered and classed experiences, may elucidate the challenges faced in the daily lives of South African women and the circumstances that impel their pathways to criminalisation.

By utilising the Feminist Pathways research approach, it was the aim of the research study to ultimately comprehend the individual and societal processes that lead to these women's transgressions of societal norms. Contextualising how the actions of seventeen women incarcerated in the Johannesburg Female Correctional Centre were criminalised, through the use of Life histories interviews, allowed for a gender-sensitive analysis of the unique challenges incarcerated women in South Africa face, and in turn provides these women with the knowledge to alter their pathways taken.

## **5. Thesis Overview**

These lived experiences will be expounded upon in the chapters to follow, starting with a comprehensive review of the literature in Chapter 2, concerning the current profile of female offenders, both locally and abroad, as well as a comprehension of the pathways to crime taken by female offenders as identified in research across the globe. Chapter 3 outlines the processes and methods involved in conducting the research study, including provision of the historical context of research conducted with incarcerated women, an overview of the research context and researcher experiences, and a final section on ethical considerations when conducting research with vulnerable populations. The elucidation of the information

collected from the life stories shared by the female offenders' during their interviews is revealed in Chapter 4, with the use of thick description to represent these narratives resulting in an emotive and informative text, where the participants' lived experiences are brought to the fore. In Chapter 5 these shared extracts are further analysed from the local towards the global perspective, situating the female offenders' experiences in both the public and private spheres of the South African socio-political milieu. Lastly, Chapter 6 concludes with a reflective stance on the research conducted, its limitations and recommendations for further research on the subject.

## CHAPTER 2:

### LITERATURE REVIEW

When considering the literature it becomes apparent that knowledge of the female offender profile is not sufficient when attempting to comprehend their transgression of societal norms. Understanding the life histories of incarcerated women and the discriminatory societal standards placed on them with regards to their gender, contextualises their behaviours within the gendered risk factors that characterise the vulnerabilities that these women experience within a number of life domains, including unemployment, substance abuse, victimisation, poor education and poverty. These vulnerabilities are explored in more detail from global and local perspectives, through research conducted with and across national and international borders.

#### **1. Worldwide Profile of Female offenders**

As already discussed, the 1970 era saw the rapid expansion of interest regarding female offenders. This has been attributed to a feminist resurgence and the increase of female criminologist researchers, whose concentrations in investigating and understanding incarcerated, marginalised groups experiences has established a profile of detained women and led to increased comprehensions of these women's issues, which were often disregarded by traditional incarceration histories (Rafter, 1983). A current and comprehensive overview of literature regarding female offenders from across the globe pinpoints shared commonalities and inimitable differences that constitute the profile of a modern day female offender, and their pathways to crime. One such inclusive document which reflects on the population of female offenders worldwide, is contained in the fourth edition of the *World Female Imprisonment List*, compiled by Roy Walmsley and published by the World Prison Brief and the Institute for Criminal Policy Research (ICPR) in 2017. The report states that the

number of women and girls incarcerated worldwide has increased by some 53% since the year 2000, reflecting a figure of more than 714,000 female offenders held in detention throughout the world, either as pre-trial detainees or as sentenced offenders, with only five countries not accounted for (Cuba, Eritrea, North Korea, Somalia and Uzbekistan) and figures reported as incomplete for China (Walmsley, 2017).

The female prison population has risen in all continents since 2000. In Africa the rise has been somewhat less than the increase in the general population of the continent and in Europe the increase in prisoner numbers has been similar to the general population increase. By contrast, rises in the female prison population in the Americas, in Asia and in Oceania have been respectively about three, four and five times the increases in the general population of those continents. This rise cannot be explained in terms of global population growth (United Nations figures indicate that the global population rose only by 21% between mid-2000 and mid-2016) or growth in the total number of prisoners (the worldwide male prison population has increased by around 20% since 2000). (Walmsley, 2017, p. 2)

The United States of America constitutes the largest percentage of that total, with an estimated 211,870 female offenders making up a total of 8.4% of their correctional system, while sub-Saharan African countries recorded the smallest female offender populace, totalling only 3.4% of their correctional populations (Walmsley, 2017). It is unsurprising then that literature pertaining to female offenders is, on the whole, related to research conducted in the United States (US). The National Resource Center on Justice Involved Women (NRCJIW) has amassed research relating to women offenders as a growing population in the US and attributes the increase in justice involved women to “changes in state and national drug policies that mandated prison terms for even relatively low-level drug offenses, changes in law enforcement practices (particularly those targeting minority neighbourhoods) and post-

conviction barriers to re-entry that uniquely affect women” (NRCJIW, 2016, p. 1). The NRCJIW *Fact Sheet on Justice Involved Women in 2016* also revealed that studies had uncovered important differences between male and female offenders in terms of risk factors and life circumstances when committing crime. These included augmented risks of abuse throughout their adolescent and adult lives; high instances of mental health disorder diagnoses and the subsequent development of substance abuse disorders as a result of self-medicating due to histories of trauma; an increased likelihood of having been the primary caretakers of children prior to incarceration; and a history of employment in low wage, entry-level positions (NRCJIW, 2016). To this end, they support a gender responsive approach to research conducted with offenders. “Gender responsiveness means understanding the differences in characteristics and life experiences that men and women bring to the criminal justice system and adjusting practices in ways that appropriately respond to those conditions” (NRCJIW, 2016, p. 9).

One such study that asserts the aetiology of crime is gendered was conducted in the US by Simpson, Yahner and Dugan (2008), with 351 women held in the Baltimore City Detention Center. The female offenders were predominantly unmarried, African American women with children, the majority of whom were incarcerated for drug-related offences and had been unemployed for three years prior to their current incarceration (Simpson, Yahner & Dugan, 2008). Nearly 87% of the women in their sample had experienced at least one partner or non-partner violent incident in the year preceding their arrest, incidents that included violent robbery, rape and physical attacks (Simpson, Yahner & Dugan, 2008). What distinguished the results from previous studies was the late age of onset for offending behaviour by the women. “More than half (54%) of the women in our sample reported committing their first crime in adulthood, while another third (36%) began offending in adolescence (ages 13 to 17) and the remaining 10% began in childhood (before age 13)”

(Simpson, Yahner & Dugan, 2008, p. 98). After conducting extensive in-person interviews with the women, the researchers determined that offending behaviours emerged at various points during the female offender's lifespan and remained relatively stable, coming into contact with the criminal justice system through fairly distinct routes, such as drugs, but predominantly featured a gendered pathway of defensive violence against male partners and childhood exposure to physical violence and/or sexual victimisation (Simpson, Yahner & Dugan, 2008).

As the gendered pathways perspective of female offenders was developed and tested primarily in the United States, researchers Nuytiens and Christiaens (2015) wanted to test the applicability of the model in a European context. Their findings were congruent with the aforementioned US studies, where the forty-one autobiographical interviews conducted with female offenders in Belgium also reflected a late-age onset of offending. This specific trait revealed that women's pathways to crime are characterised by an accumulation of gendered vulnerabilities through their life course, which plays a major role in pathways to offending (Nuytiens & Christiaens, 2015). These included financial need, addiction and abusive intimate relationships, but differed in relational importance when a later age of onset in offensive behaviour was identified (Nuytiens & Christiaens, 2015). Nuytiens and Christiaens' research found that relational vulnerability and the resulting isolation and limited choice possibilities experienced by the adult-onset female offenders, as a result of their abusive relationships, was a much greater predictor for committing criminal acts than economic motives or substance abuse (2015).

These vulnerabilities mutually influence and reinforce each other, potentially producing a chain reaction of vulnerabilities throughout the life course. Relational vulnerability appears to be the central theme in their life histories and the most common life experience is an abusive intimate relationship. Hence, relational

vulnerability appears to be the principal ‘motor’ in the life course (Nuytiens & Christiaens, 2015, p. 207).

Comparably, in Australia, researchers Segrave and Carlton (2010) utilised the *Surviving Outside* research project to interview twenty-five female former offenders from Victoria in order to develop an understanding of the long-term impact of women’s imprisonment. It was a qualitative research project which used semi-structured interviews to understand female offenders’ experiences of trauma and incarceration. The women were described as stemming from the most disadvantaged and marginalised communities, often “indigenous women and women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds” (Segrave & Carlton, 2010, p.288), who had low levels of education, experienced high rates of unemployment and abuse, and were mothers and sole caregivers of children (Segrave & Carlton, 2010).

Our research suggests that any analysis of women’s offending, imprisonment and survival (including desistance) must pay heed to women’s experiences of trauma, marginalisation and exclusion from the mainstream community. Our findings also highlight the importance of recognising that there are important emotional components to these experiences that are not quantifiable and which are difficult to neatly capture and articulate (for criminalised women, support workers and researchers alike), yet they are central to women’s post-prison support and survival (Segrave & Carlton, 2010, p. 289).

Once again, the findings of Segrave and Carlton reiterate that the profile of incarcerated women is gendered through the multiple roles and responsibilities they carry whilst coping with experiences of victimisation and trauma in a society that offers little in the way of support (2010).

Conducting research with female offenders while in the context of political instability, Erez and Berko's study of Arab/Palestinian women incarcerated in Israel exposed the stressors in the lives of women who reside in the areas of conflict (2010). The fear of the possible violation of women's purity in the context of the continuing hostilities means that family members take "special measures to protect their women and girls, frequently imposing early marriage on their daughters or forcing them to become religious and don the veil" (Erez & Berko, 2010, p. 161). Resultantly, the researchers needed to not only take their participants' gender, ethnicity and culture into consideration when exploring the female offenders pathways to crime, but had to understand the influence that conflict has had with regards to Palestinian patriarchy on women and the significant intersections of nationality and politics in researching Arab Palestinian women's offending (Erez & Berko, 2010). Erez and Berko's ten in-depth interviews revealed that their representatives mirrored the tiny incarcerated female population of the Israeli Prison Services (IPS). These women all came from large families, with absent fathers, who were mostly married (at one point or another) with children; the majority came from rural areas and only one of the women had worked outside of the home; more than half had committed violent offences (Erez & Berko, 2010).

Their victimization experiences were often associated with irreparable harm to an important personal (and social) capital in Palestinian society - woman's (and family) honour - weakening the women's self-image and worth. Coupled with absent or weak fathers/ protectors in their lives and strained relationships with family, they were more vulnerable to the pressure to engage in crime that often came from male influences, rendering them more likely to offend (Erez & Berko, 2010, p. 685).

In a similar study by Gueta and Chen, with eleven Israeli women offenders incarcerated in the sole female maximum-security correctional facility in Israel, the researchers found that the participants stemmed from the most disadvantaged and

economically marginalised sectors in Israeli society, where “most are survivors of multiple forms of abuse and suffer from acute physical and mental health conditions” (2016, p. 789). Gender ideals were also deeply entrenched in cultural norms, where the participants’ general perceptions regarding the connection of offending and gender relied on assumptions about male power and female weakness (Gueta & Chen, 2016). The participants’ narratives during their in-depth, semi-structured interviews, constructed the body as a critical site where masculine identities are established and tied to crime:

The accounts of the participants also indicated the importance of physical differences, especially body and physical strength, which place women at greater physical risk and in an inferior position in the crime world and render men as more powerful, able to “handle it” and free of risk (Gueta & Chen, 2016, p. 1464).

Historical trauma, commingled with strict adherence to hegemonic ideals of gender which reinforced the gender order of men’s superiority over women, scripts that were exercised by the female offenders when accounting for their past wrongdoings and in their conceptualizations of a female offender identity (Gueta & Chen, 2016).

During a critique of four Kenyan correctional facilities documentaries regarding the pathways to offending taken by young women of the country, Wafula Yenjela (2015) agreed with Nuytiens and Christiaens’ discussion of the economic and social disadvantages of women as a contributor to offending behaviour. Yenjela contributes the pathways to women’s incarceration “to being embedded in economic factors and the gender-specific vulnerabilities of girls/women to exploitation, sexual abuse and violation” (2015, p.136). In the four stories documented, Yenjela determined that the offences perpetrated by the young women were gendered due to the circumstances that led up to their incarceration, which included experiences of sexual abuse, early and forced marriage, polygamy, and unpaid labour

(Yenjela, 2015). By delving into the circumstances preceding their incarceration, Yenjela discovers the “often neglected link between young women’s criminality and patriarchy” (2015, p.137), describing the social inequalities of the female offenders in their communities to emphasise the interaction between patriarchy and poverty and how, together, they create conditions that eventually lead young women to incarceration:

Gender significantly contributes to young women’s incarceration since femininity is socially constructed as “less than fully human” (Diquinzio, 1993:2) through forced/indentured labour as house-girls, in the practices of child sexual abuse, polygamy, and forced marriage. Generally, these narratives are symbolic of the plight of the forgotten Kenyan village girl whose shackled voices return to society through prison documentaries to demand restructuring of gendered perceptions of humanity. Their shackled voices also return to the society demanding restoration of willpower, their very humanity. Indeed, these voices from different prisons serve as a condemnation of the pervasiveness of familial and state patriarchy in Kenya (Yenjela, 2015, p. 143).

Closer to South African borders, Modie-Moroka examined the pathways to crime of eighty female offenders at six correctional centres in Botswana, that included the Serowe, Lobatse, Tsabong, Maun, Gaborone and Francistown correctional facilities, with participants age ranging from 16 to 65 years of age. Uniquely, this pathways research utilised both qualitative and quantitative measures, with the first part of the study consisting mainly of demographic close-ended questions, and the second phase involving the same eighty participants and involved, in-depth interviews with open-ended questioning (Modie-Moroka, 2003). Quantitative evidence revealed that only 20% of the women had full time jobs and 60% stemmed from single parent households with their mothers as the primary breadwinner. Indeed, 85% of the women were mothers themselves, the majority of whom (70%) were

single parents and heads of the households like their mothers before them (Modie-Moroka, 2003). The study found that similarly to the other studies discussed, the women were dispossessed and marginalised, facing numerous social and economic challenges, all predictors that placed them at risk of victimisation. Modie-Moroka also explained how the role of sociocultural factors and a lifetime of self-sacrifice and compromise reflects their subordinate status and prepares them for a life in which they are more likely to be asked to serve their children, boyfriends or husbands, rather than be expected to serve themselves:

Gendered power relations at both distributive and relational levels designed to benefit men and perpetuate the fulfilment of their needs at the expense of women and their children, are push factors in women's criminality. Their economic impoverishment results in inadequate nutrition, health care problems, lack of and inadequate housing, the persistence and maintenance of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and lack of, or poor, housing in the household (Modie-Moroka, 2003, p. 172).

The United Nations (UN) second edition of the “Handbook on Women and Imprisonment”, released in 2014, recognises the failure of incarceration in addressing the underlying factors leading to offending behaviour by women and was created specifically to address the gender-specific needs of female offenders and increase awareness regarding the profile of female offenders. Although the document comprises of demographics relating to female offenders from many countries, developed and developing, across the globe, it identifies women as a vulnerable group, due to their gender, and states that despite “considerable variations in their situation in different countries, the reasons for and intensity of their vulnerability and corresponding needs, a number of factors are common to most” (UN Handbook on Women and Imprisonment, 2014, p.7). These factors, as outlined in the handbook, and also reflected in the already discussed research on the profile of the female offender from across the globe, include disproportionate experiences of domestic violence

and sexual or physical abuse prior to incarceration, with high levels of diagnosed mental health issues that are often as a result of the above-mentioned victimisation, as well as the consequential high levels of drug or alcohol dependency found in female offenders through attempts at self-medication (UN Handbook on Women and Imprisonment, 2014). The commonality of these factors faced by women is directly linked and further intensified by their prescription to the gendered role, standardised and sanctioned by the societies they live in. Female offenders worldwide are women from poor and marginalised sectors of communities, “from societies where the education of women is not the norm, due to role models imposed on the female gender, based on religion, custom or stereotypical perceptions of women’s position in society” (UN Handbook on Women and Imprisonment, 2014, p.8). These risk factors epitomise the profile of the South African female offender and, as will be discussed further, the enduring realities faced by these women in their everyday lives.

## **2. Profile of Female Offenders in South Africa**

According to statistics released at the end of October 2016 by the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) in South Africa, the total number of sentenced offenders during the 2015/16 period comprised of 158,948 men and 4,193 women, meaning that in South Africa, female offenders make up a total of 2.6% of the country’s incarcerated population. The classification of offences that women are most often incarcerated for are aggressive crimes (41%) and economic crimes (39%), followed by narcotics offences (8%) and other offences (13%) (Artz & Rotmann, 2015). These included sexual offences such as sex work. From the statistics listed above, we can conclude that the female offenders’ population in South Africa is very small, which is consistent with overseas literature, but what is also clear is that South African women generally commit more aggressive crimes than economic crimes when compared to their female counterparts in other countries, even though a large portion of the democratic population of our country is still economically marginalised (Luyt, 2008b).

This profile of South African female offenders has remained consistent since 2005, when a study conducted by Haffejee, Vetten and Greyling, surveyed 569 women in three correctional centres in Gauteng, South Africa. Their sample ranged in age from 16 years to 67 years, with a racial breakdown of the sample that was similar to that of the general female population demographics in South Africa (Haffejee, Vetten, & Greyling, 2005). Amongst these incarcerated women, murder was the most common crime, having been committed by 38% of the participants, who, by half, indicated that they had been breadwinners and single parents at the time of their incarceration (Haffejee, Vetten, & Greyling, 2005). During this survey, it was also found that the majority of the women in the sample had been subjected to high levels of violence and abuse. The study found that 38 % of the women reported instances of domestic violence in their families whilst growing up, 21% had been sexually assaulted before the age of 15, and 78% of the participants had experiences of some form of abuse, including emotional abuse, during their last relationship (Haffejee, Vetten, & Greyling, 2006). The characteristics these abuses embodied included:

Emotional abuse was the most prevalent form of abuse across both last and all previous relationships. Prevalent forms of emotional abuse included attempts at preventing women from talking to other men, insults and belittlement and intimidation and threats to hurt the women. The most common form of economic abuse was men's failure to provide money for household necessities and children, whilst having money for other things. Physical abuse in the form of slapping and throwing objects and pushing and shoving appeared to be most common. The two categories of sexual abuse, forced sex and engaging in sex out of fear of the consequences for not doing so, occurred with equal frequency (Haffejee, Vetten, & Greyling, 2006, p. 44).

This correlation of victimisation leading to further violence is clearly a very important topic within the context of female offenders in South Africa, and as such it is discussed in further detail later in this chapter.

A study by Pretorius and Botha in 2009, which accessed a smaller population of the South African female offender population, interviewed sixty women incarcerated in five correctional facilities across South Africa and included participants from different ethnic and language groups with an ethnic distribution of black African (53.3%), white (33.3%), coloured (10%), and Asian/Indian (1.7%) female offenders. Their research detailed how the majority of the sample had not graduated from secondary schooling, with thirteen of the women only having some form of primary schooling and four of the women having no formal schooling at all. In the South African context, issues of poor education are often due to historical, cultural and traditional constraints, causative factors in substantiating that “women in South Africa therefore may generally have a lower level of education than women in most western countries” (Pretorius & Botha, 2009, p. 246). A report released in the same year by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) concerning the progress of the Girls Education Movement (GEM) in South Africa, states that gender inequality as a result of the patriarchal nature of South African society remains one of the biggest challenges to the education of young girls and women in the country. “Girls are socialised to become home keepers and child-bearers, placing less value on their educational attainment” (UNICEF, 2006, p. 1). This assertion was corroborated by the pathways research study conducted by Artz, Hoffman-Wanderer and Moulton in two detention centres in the Western Cape Province of South Africa, with fifty-five female offenders. They found that within their sample of female offenders interviewed, 42 % had not graduated from secondary schooling, citing that often these “women had to sacrifice their education entirely, or had little time to devote to

their studies, because they had to help at home” (Artz, Hoffman-Wanderer & Moul, 2012, p. 6).

According to the Civil Society Prison Reform Initiative (CSPRI) report, like their overseas counterparts, female detainees in South Africa are overrepresented among the poor, have less access to education, employment and economic resources, and assume the principal burden of care and domestic unpaid labour, however, instances of criminal activity related to substance abuse is less common than in other parts of the world (Ackermann, 2014). Haffejee, Vetten and Greyling validate this statement with their participant sample, describing how 62% of women interviewed had stemmed from deprived economic backgrounds, with half of the sample having no income at all or earning less than R500.00 a month, and went on to explain that “women were least likely to be imprisoned for drug-related crimes” (2006, p. 2). Another local study that explored drug abuse in the South African context, the aforementioned study by Pretorius and Botha, found that nearly half of the participants interviewed did not consider themselves guilty of substance abuse, but thirteen of the female offenders had stated that alcohol or drug abuse had contributed to fights in their families and the majority of the women indicated that their partners had abused substances regularly (2009). These findings on substance abuse were challenged by the research of Artz, Hoffman-Wanderer and Moul in the Western Cape, which reported that 72% of their respondents had admitted to abusing alcohol and 30% admitted to the use of drugs (2012). Although these findings confirmed the conclusions found in international literature regarding substance abuse and female offenders where drug addiction is often the result of abuse, pointing to a cycle of abuse, substance abuse and crime, it may have been related specifically to the region. A report issued in 2008 by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) summarised findings from substance abuse research conducted in the Western Cape Province since 2000. Outlined in its report were the high levels of risky

drinking and the lifetime prevalence of substance abuse in the province. Compared to the other eight South African provinces, the Western Cape had the highest prevalence of risky drinking (16%) and the highest lifetime prevalence of substance use disorders (18.5%). The province has one of the highest rates of Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) in the world (Harker et al., 2008). These statistics would explain why the research findings of Artz et al. regarding substance abuse differed so significantly from the results of other South African female offender studies.

Despite the slight variations in their findings, local research supports international literature which recurrently describes the typical profile of the female detainee as a “woman who is likely to have a history of physical and/or sexual abuse, who is a mother, usually the primary caregiver of young children, and whose involvement with crime is often due to poverty or substance abuse” (Ackermann, 2014, p. 14). However, the elevated instances of violent offences committed by South African women is a disquieting discrepancy that speaks to the violent history of the country during the apartheid era, and the current climate of violence and victimisation faced by South Africans in general, and women in particular.

### **3. Universal pathways to offending**

#### ***3.1. Victimisation and Violence***

The high levels of trauma experienced by female offenders through instances of violence and abuse was a common discourse among the aforementioned studies, and was highlighted in a UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women. The document specifically highlights the strong link between violence against women and their incarceration, stating that “evidence from different countries suggests that incarcerated women have been victims of violence at a much higher rate prior to entering prison than is acknowledged by the legal system generally” (UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, 2013, p.4). Findings

from the report state that more research is needed to identify the pathways of female offenders but recognise that it is necessary to acknowledge these women's histories of victimisation and that abuse is central to the experience of incarcerated women.

This sentiment is shared by researchers Gunnison and McCartan who described their study concerning the life histories of 131 North American female offenders and their experiences of victimisation and abuse as “critical considering that women are increasing their involvement in criminality and are committing more crimes that have been traditionally thought of as “male crimes” such as aggravated assault and robbery” (2010, p. 1450). The resulting research findings outlined how sexual abuse was one of the most persistent predictors of female offending across the life course, with sexually abused women having lower self-images, experiencing difficulty in staying employed and more likely to associate with other offenders (Gunnison & McCartan, 2010). Correspondingly, Pollack's research conducted in 2007 with fifty-two women incarcerated in Canada stated that it is a well-documented fact that “the majority of imprisoned women in North America have histories of childhood abuse and have experienced violence in their intimate relationships with men” (Pollack, 2007, p. 159). The study drew on participants from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds, with varying offending histories, and found that these women's attempts to cope with victimisation experiences, such as childhood and domestic abuse, had propelled many of them into situations where there was a high risk of being criminalised (Pollack, 2007).

In her report “Women in pre-trial detention in Africa” for the CSPRI in 2014, Marilize Ackermann confirmed that despite popular opinion that women are less likely to commit violent and serious crimes than men, reports from recent years indicated that a significant number of female detainees in South Africa were held for murder. Furthermore, Ackermann reported that statistics from correctional facilities across Africa indicated that violent offences

perpetrated by women were most often in the context of a domestic relationship, and that “violent crime is commonly committed as a response to prolonged domestic abuse or victimisation directly preceding the crime” (Ackermann, 2014, p. 11).

The conclusions drawn from this report were sustained by DeHart’s research that examined the ways in which victimisation may contribute to criminal involvement among incarcerated women (2008). The study, conducted with sixty women incarcerated in a maximum-security facility in the US, indicated ways that victimisation relates directly to women’s crimes. DeHart found that most of the women had experienced polyvictimisation; or multiple traumas, such as rape, assault, loss of loved ones or medical problems, in simultaneous episodes that were described as “unrelenting trauma” (2008, p.1375). The research explains that the effect of such victimisations is that the women are diverted away from legitimate pathways, for example, school and work, via family and social networks that deviate to negative pathways through poverty, addiction or violence (DeHart, 2008). Yet regardless of these restricted options, violent female offenders are spoken of as choosing this pathway by society, rather than reacting to prolonged, numerous experiences of victimisation with an extreme act of unexpected violence.

Shechory, Perry and Addad, who interviewed sixty Israeli female offenders, substantiates DeHart’s conclusion as the majority of the group of twenty-three violent female offenders involved in the study had “been convicted of a single count of violence against a family member, spouse, or intimate partner”, and further state “that these women had experienced violence themselves and that their victimization related to their crime” (2011, p. 412). Commonalities in these findings validate and authenticate the little spoken of yet disturbingly common gendered experiences of abuse, victimisation and subsequent trauma experienced by women. A comprehension of the cause of the augmented occurrences of violent female

offenders in South African society is vital, as is a thorough understanding of the female offender's specific experiences within said society.

### ***3.2.Feminisation of Poverty***

According to Moe and Ferraro (2006) the gendered factors that have an impact on women's involvement in crime and for which women are arrested and incarcerated, are also those that are best explained by the worsening economic and social conditions faced by women. A report compiled by Townhead in 2007 for the United Nations' "Women in Prison and Children of Imprisoned Mothers" series, stated that typically, female offenders are young, unemployed mothers with low levels of education who stem from economically and socially disadvantaged segments of society. "Many have histories of alcohol and substance abuse. A disproportionate proportion of women offenders have experienced violence or sexual abuse" (Townhead, 2007, p. 16). Through qualitative, life-history interviews with thirty incarcerated women in a detention centre in the southwest of the United States of America, Moe and Ferraro (2006) corroborated the statistics found by the United Nations report. They found that most of the women in the criminal processing system were poor, single mothers and stated that the majority of their crimes were economically driven and gendered within the context of the illegitimate street market, for example prostitution, which in turn is highly correlated with drug related offenses (Moe & Ferraro, 2006). "...the feminisation of poverty... has contributed to women's increasing involvement in economically based crimes such as forgery, counterfeiting, fraud, and embezzlement" (Moe & Ferraro, 2006, p. 137). This statement is confirmed by Steffensmeier, Schwartz, and Rochea, whose study of female involvement in fraud in the US found that gendered focal concerns shaped said involvement (2013). Their findings reflect women's larger representation in subordinate employment positions where "gendered labor market

segmentation is strongly influenced by informal exclusionary practices that limit women's entry into some roles in the economy" (Steffensmeier, Schwartz & Rochea, 2013, p.78).

These discriminating economic factors are exacerbated when looking at female offenders' pathways in third world countries. A study conducted by Bailey with twelve participants housed at Her Majesty's Prison in Barbados, confirmed that gendered entrapment through poverty was the primary motivation cited by female offenders for their offending behaviour (2013). In a country which "has the highest rate of poverty in the Caribbean with seven out of every ten persons estimated to be living in poverty" (Bailey, 2013, p. 123), the higher rates of unemployment; gendered division of unpaid labour and unequal distribution of income faced by women, are life threatening vulnerabilities that provide limited responses, leading to illegitimate activity (Bailey, 2013). Indeed, the participating female offenders were described by Bailey as typically single mothers and breadwinners, the majority of whom had been raised themselves in female-headed single-parent homes that occupied marginal positions in society in desperate conditions, without access to basic amenities like running water (2013). Family obligations and economic need had often affected these women early on in life and they had dropped out of school to provide through the selling or transporting of drugs and/or prostitution (Bailey, 2013). This could explain why the majority of the participants had completed primary school only. The female offenders stated how they still faced financial pressures and now childrearing responsibilities in adulthood, that combined, formed their pathway to crime, which was seen as their only option, given the absence of alternatives (Bailey, 2013).

In her article that examines factors that have contributed to the growing rates of incarceration of women in Sierra Leone, Mahtani (2013) states that these share commonalities with international instances of women in corrections. Most of the female offenders in the country are "illiterate and poor, have a background of physical and emotional

abuse, have mental health problems, and have committed minor offenses” (Mahtani, 2013, p. 248). Poverty is described as a double burden for women as instances of female-headed households increase, compelling many women into commercial sex work, theft and drug peddling in order to support themselves and their families. Many young girls begin sex work at the age of thirteen or fourteen, as their families cannot afford to care for or educate them (Mahtani, 2013). The police crackdown on selling cannabis, or *jamba* as it is locally known, has resulted in a growing number of incarcerated female offenders who sell the drug to meet the subsistence needs of their families, “most women state that they decided to sell cannabis to raise money to feed their children, noting that it is far more lucrative than selling common market items” (Mahtani, 2013, p. 259). These harsh realities faced by the women in the war-torn country of Sierra Leone typify the disproportionately gendered impact that poverty has, and societal contributions to the feminisation of poverty.

This denigrated vulnerability, coupled with the numerous and onerous responsibilities generated through the gendered role of primary caregiver and often sole breadwinner, within a society that offers little recognition of these efforts, may result in offending behaviour when resources are scarce, and support is deficient.

### ***3.3.Mental Illness and Offending***

A not often discussed, but prevalent risk factor that may precede female incarceration is mental illness. A disproportionate number of women suffering from mental health issues are housed in correctional facilities, an occurrence that was investigated by DeHart, Lynch, Belknap Dass-Brailsford and Green. Life history interviews were conducted with 115 women incarcerated in the US, and explored the “increased vulnerability and overlapping pathways for women with substantial trauma histories for mental disorders such as PTSD, serious mental illness, and substance abuse or dependence” (DeHart et al., 2013, p. 140). The study’s

sample demonstrated high rates of mental disorders, with a majority of the participants meeting lifetime diagnostic criteria for serious mental illness and a higher risk across the life span for substance use and drug offending (DeHart et al., 2013). The women's experiences of interpersonal violence and traumas witnessed, such as a caregiver's use of drugs, is identified in pathways theory as a precursor to mental health issues, normalising such maladaptive behaviour and contributing to the onset of criminal offending (DeHart et al, 2013).

Research conducted by Völlm and Dolan with 638 female offenders from two prisons in the North-West of England agreed with the findings of DeHart, Lynch, Belknap Dass-Brailsford and Green. Of the 638 women interviewed, 45.9% had self-harmed or attempted suicide, the majority of whose onset preceded their incarceration (Völlm & Dolan, 2009). These female offenders had significantly higher rates of committing violent offences and substance abuse and tended to be of a younger age. The researchers identified associations between socio-demographic and psychopathological variables regarding incarcerated women, including various forms of victimisation, poverty and childhood nonvictim adversity (Völlm & Dolan, 2009).

Collier and Friedman's research study with 100 female offender participants, took place in the Auckland Region Women's Corrections Facility in New Zealand. This naturalistic exploratory study endeavoured to explore for the first time the characteristics of women incarcerated in New Zealand. Similar to the two studies already mentioned, their study reported that approximately half of the participants were detained for violent charges, with 54% of the women reporting a personal history of victimisation and 90% reporting substance abuse prior to incarceration (Collier and Friedman, 2016). Most of the women had a history of mental illness and a large majority had been previously admitted for psychiatric hospitalization (Collier and Friedman, 2016). As with profiles compiled on female offenders

worldwide, Collier and Friedman found that two-thirds of the women they interviewed had children but only 35% were currently partnered (2016).

It is necessary to highlight that all these studies found that the majority of the psychiatric disorders experienced by female offenders occur prior to incarceration. This is important as it demonstrates that mental health, and the various other risk factors that are particularly salient to female offender experienced vulnerabilities, contribute as a pathway to offending behaviours rather than simply surfacing as a result of the women's incarceration.

### ***3.4.Motherhood and Crime***

The single commonality that resonates throughout all the literature reviewed both locally and globally, is the prevalence of female detainees who are mothers. According to Townhead's report (2007), most incarcerated women are mothers. In fact, 80% of all women in correctional centres across the United States are mothers, and 66% of female offenders in the United Kingdom are mothers. These findings were corroborated by Glaze and Maruschak in a revised special report regarding incarcerated parents and their children for the US Department of Justice in 2010. This may be unsurprising as most women in general are mothers, however what the report found was that incarcerated mothers were three times more likely to be solely responsible as the single parent heading their households with their children, despite the fact that they were also more likely to report living on government financial aid, being homeless, experiencing past physical or sexual abuse, and medical and mental health problems (Glaze & Maruschak, 2010). These women were nearly twice as likely to be unemployed, compared to their male counterparts, yet they were equally likely to be the main financial support for their children (Kjellstrand, Cearley, Eddy, Foney and Martinez Jr., 2012).

Ackermann's report for the CSPRI in 2014 recognised that the literature from local studies indicate that the majority of female detainees in South Africa are mothers, and many are the primary or sole caretakers of their children. In the study conducted by Pretorius and Botha, 91% of participants indicated that they had children (2009). For Haffejee, Vetten and Greyling, nearly 83% of the women had at least one child, and almost half of the women (45%) reported that they were the breadwinners in their homes before they were detained (2006).

Despite this fact, the focus of present research pertaining to female incarceration is not concerned with the role of motherhood as it relates to female offenders, except when the incarcerated women are mothers of 'babies behind bars' and then it is arguably the baby who is of greater public interest (Haffejee, Vetten & Greyling, 2006; Ferraro & Moe, 2003). Regardless, the fact that many mothers are mentioned as their children's primary caretakers in studies concerning female offenders (Ackermann, 2014; Townhead, 2007; Glaze & Maruschak, 2010; Haffejee, Vetten & Greyling, 2006; Kjellstrand et. al., 2012) suggests that motherhood is central to their lives prior to their incarceration. A United States research study, conducted by Moe and Ferraro in 2006, focused on the position of motherhood in the lives of female detainees and related this role to these women's criminality. They found that the pragmatic obligation to provide for their children, a position often made untenable due to poverty, abuse, and drug use, was inextricably connected to their motivations for committing crime (Moe & Ferraro, 2006). Indeed, the United Nations specifies motherhood and the "high likelihood of having caring responsibilities for their children, families and others" (UN Handbook on Women and Imprisonment, 2014, p.7), as a major factor in contributing to female offenders' incarceration. Locally, the research of Artz, Hoffman-Wanderer and Moulton identified and highlighted that responsibilities of care assigned to the women of their study, impacted upon their pathways to criminality (2012). Of their sample, 75% were mothers who

stated that pregnancy and becoming a mother was a turning point in their lives, and “conceptualised their offending as a direct response to their responsibility to support their children, including children from their extended family who were in their care” (Artz, Hoffman-Wanderer & Moul, 2012, p. 15). Whether or not the responsibility of motherhood is a rationalisation for female offenders of their offending behaviour, it cannot be denied that the need to care for and protect children, in the context of poverty, poor education and abuse, acts as “both a constraint that limited women’s ability to make good choices as well as a catalyst for action with both positive and negative effects” (Artz, Hoffman-Wanderer & Moul, 2012, p. 16).

#### **4. Female Offender Agency and the Victimisation Narrative**

There is the danger, however, of over simplification when universalising the pathways women take towards unlawful behaviour. In her research conducted in three correctional facilities specifically designed to house female offenders in Greece, Fili identifies two narratives used to explain women’s imprisonment. The first, outlined in early descriptive writing’s regarding women’s incarceration, portray female offenders as “mad and dangerous”, while the later feminist studies from the 1980s onwards render incarcerated women to “passive victims of patriarchal oppression” (Fili, 2013, p.1). Fili describes this crisis of representation, where female offenders occupy dichotomous roles, either as mentally ill deviants or deferentially feminine victims, as an unhelpful binary that does nothing to further understandings of female offenders’ experiences of victimisation or agency (2013, p.2).

Therefore, it is of critical importance to this feminist research study that the women interviewed are not only made visible through their shared narratives, but that common androgynous frames of reference used to understand offenders’ pathways are discarded in

favour of understandings of specifically gendered experiences that situate female offenders as agentic subjects of their stories. Even though the pathways discussed do feature as commonalities in the female offender lived experience, viewing these as passive victim narratives alone does not do justice to the complex convergence of these women's internal experiences within their external world. Victimisation is indeed an important part of the annals of female offenders but is far from the total sum of their experience, and when viewed in isolation perpetuates the idea that women are helpless, needy and dependant on external forms of social control. Normative assumptions of the victimhood obscure the multifaceted and often hidden forms of women's agency, instead choosing to individualise agency as singular construction of the female offender's identity. This plays into the usual victim or resister construct of individual agency, however, if agency is no longer viewed as only individually constructed but rather also constituted through social and situational interactions, we can see how agency is also dependant on context. Campbell and Mannell describe this as "distributed agency", a multifaceted form of agency where individual actions within an interconnecting environment that contains various social, economic and cultural contexts, influence said individual behaviour (2015, p. 1).

It is with this idea of a socially constructed agency that the pathways of the female offenders interviewed for this study will be viewed. Experiences of poverty, mental illness, victimisation and the gendered role of motherhood, will be considered through an interactional approach to agency, situating the women's voices and pathways within larger social constructs occurring in our broader society. Hopefully this will allow for discussions that broaden understandings not only of female offender's victimisation experiences, but conceptualising their agency as well, to inform further research, theory development and policy interventions that influence the incarceration and reintegration of South African Female offenders.

## **Conclusion**

The female offender population may be marginal in size, but as the above research studies prove, they are exposed to compounded discrimination related to gender, and in its various manifestations, poverty as well. With the inferior socio-economic status of the general population of women in South Africa having been recognised at a Constitutional Court level (Sloth-Nielsen, 2005), its particular effect upon the psyche of female detainees is glaring, and extrapolated through the motherhood narrative, may be a pathway towards offending for these women. Uncovering and understanding the individual pathways these women took that led to their offences, the gendered roles they played out during the challenges faced in their daily lives, should provide new perspectives across their social group as offenders to expose prejudiced constructions of their social world and give voice to the familial and state patriarchy that regulate the lives of so many women. In the next chapter the processes and methods involved in conducting the research study are clarified.

## CHAPTER 3:

### METHODOLOGY

#### **1. Theoretical Perspective**

As established by the literature reviewed, women constitute a very small portion of the total incarcerated populations worldwide; a fact that may plausibly explain the scarcity of research concerning female offenders' relative to their male counterparts (Salisbury & Van Voorhis, 2009). It was only as late as the 20th century that feminist criminology began to challenge "the overall masculinist nature of theories of crime, deviance, and social control by calling attention to the repeated omission and misrepresentation of women in criminological theory and research" (Chesney-Lind, 2006, p. 7). The theories which related to the offenses perpetrated by female offenders were frequently developed through the study of male samples, and important contributors to female offending were often overlooked or excluded (Gehring, 2016). With the increasing number of girls and women entering the criminal justice system, the presence of this poorly represented and effectively absent populace asserted the need for further investigation to understand the reasoning behind these women's initial engagement in crime and subsequent offending behaviour, as the identification of a female offender aetiology encourages the establishment of interventions that ameliorate instances of incarcerated women's recidivism.

It was during the 1980s and 1990s that research which concerned itself with the lives of female offenders began to emerge, prompting studies that revealed the important role sexual and physical victimisation of women, intersected with challenges constructed from racial discrimination and disadvantaged socioeconomic status, determined women and girls' pathways to committing crimes (Chesney-Lind, 2006). Born from the need to challenge mainstream, masculine dominated perspectives of the female offender, Daly's 1992 research

took a narrative approach to understanding women's pathways to offending, an approach that was unique in that it challenged the idea that criminological theories were gender neutral (Wattanaporn & Holtfreter, 2014). From this research study, Daly identified five pathways women typically take when initially engaging in offending behaviour: (a) street woman, (b) battered woman, (c) harmed and harming woman, (d) drug-connected woman, and (e) economically motivated woman (Wattanaporn & Holtfreter, 2014). Although her pathways framework paved the way for theoretical development and methodological advancements in feminist criminology, and was a fundamental step towards recognising that unique, gendered, life circumstances lead women to commit offences, it was limited in that it was developed and tested primarily in the United States, leaving its applicability within the context of other cultures, societies and countries questionable (Nuytiens & Christiaens, 2015). This issue was resolved, however, in the decades following Daly's published results through the many research studies conducted in countries ranging from Portugal (Matos, 2008) and Peru (Boutron & Constant, 2013), to Sierra Leone (Mahtani, 2013), Israel (Erez & Berko, 2010) and Kenya (Yenjela, 2015). Some of these studies were discussed in the previous chapter's literature review, and each utilised the pathways approach successfully, with the result that many unique and varied perspectives and pathways were newly identified. While these were as diverse as the countries and women who participated in them, the familiar principles identified in Daly's founding research, that of victimisation, substance abuse, economic marginalisation and dysfunctional familial dynamics, were identified by feminist scholars using pathways-based analyses, which confirmed the unique, gendered nature of risk factors which lead to offending, and the overlap between these outcomes (Wattanaporn & Holtfreter, 2014).

So substantiated, female offending studies in the criminological research framework employ the Pathways perspective as an approach due to its suitability in investigating the

diverse lived experiences of female offenders, and to explore whether women have distinct pathways to initial offending behaviour and recidivism (Salisbury & Van Voorhis, 2009). Methodologically, pathways scholars take into consideration the historical context as well as the “broad life disadvantages and social circumstances that put women at risk of on-going criminal involvement, many of which are fundamentally gendered experiences” (Yingling, 2016, p. 181). Subsequently, the founding contribution to the pathways research framework has been followed by both qualitative and quantitative studies (DeHart, 2008; Simpson, Yahner, & Dugan, 2009; Shechory, Perry & Addad, 2011; Brennan, Breitenbach, Dieterich, Salisbury & Van Voorhis, 2012; Wright, Van Voorhis, Salisbury, & Bauman, 2012) which have advanced research findings relating gender as a key factor in shaping criminality (Yingling, 2016).

In furthering the feminist research influence on the criminology-based pathway perspective, this study aims to employ intersectionality to understand all dimensions of the South African female offender identity and lived context, incorporating aspects of gender, race, age, class as well as interrogating issues of oppression across differing social settings. Intersectionality has proven to be most beneficial to research studies concerned with specific inequalities of the multiply-marginalised, giving a voice to those previously excluded, whilst examining the interrelated foundations on which broader inequalities are established (Bose, 2012). In addition, intersectionality emphasises the feminist principle of interdisciplinary engagement, occurring within and across disciplines in reaction to the limitations of single-axis frameworks when understanding the social relations of power. The literature review for this study has drawn from a wide range of research projects that are not necessarily defined as intersectional, however, the explication of these studies relating to female offenders from the disciplines of law, criminology, psychology and sociology, has suggested ways to rethink conventional psychological research methods, resulting in an interdisciplinary method of

feminist pathways research that more broadly address the predilections in standard research practices regarding female offenders.

It is important to emphasise the inimitable and imperative nature of this South African based enquiry regarding female offenders, due to the global North domination of research in this area, which runs the risk of a homogenising and inaccurate depiction of the realities and conditions faced by women (in this case female offenders) from the global South (in this instance, South Africa). The intersectional variation occurring across issues and regions consolidates the feminist endeavour of pathways studies, in documenting gender-differentiated aspects of the research agenda (Carbado, Crenshaw, Mays & Tomlinson, 2013). The historical discrimination of the global North prototypical representation of female offenders speaks to the necessity to understand not only the intersects of individual characteristics of gender, race, class and more, but also to untangle the global dimensions of history and power. Importance lies in the causative role of the societal, macro-historical framework that South African female offenders encounter during their life course and suggests that understanding this behaviour within the micro-historical or individual context of the female offender's life course may provide an in-depth comprehension of said behaviour and its connected origins in their social world. Accordingly, this feminist pathways perspective has recognised that further examination is needed to include various factors contributing to the motives of female offenders' criminal actions (Berko, Erez & Globokar, 2010). As stated by DeHart "There is growing interest in the role that victimization may play among other factors such as poverty, family fragmentation, school failure, and physical and mental health problems in contributing to a developmental pathway to crime" (2008, p. 1362). Furthermore, feminist pathways research encourages not only the study of the differences in pathways to offensive behaviour between males and females but also within gender. It is for these reasons that this study's examination of pathways to offending with an

all-female sample, does not explore their pathways in relation to the women's male counterparts, or indeed to their unlawful acts, but rather endeavours to examine the life experiences of South African female offenders through intersectional agency, as well as through a motherhood identity in a society that demarcates unfair, gendered roles through patriarchal sanctions.

## **2. Participant Selection and Sample Profile**

According to the Department of Correctional Services' 2015/16 report, there are 232 active correctional centres in South Africa and nine of these are restricted to women only, with a further eighty-four correctional facilities housing primarily men but containing separate areas to accommodate women. This research study selected a group of seventeen sentenced female offenders, which, when considering the DCS 2015/2016 report recorded a total of 4,193 sentenced female detainees in the country, makes up a participant group that represents 0.4% of the total population. The women were housed in the biggest women's only correctional facility in the country, the Johannesburg Female Correctional Centre. The facility was one of the three sampled by Haffejee, Vetten, and Greyling in 2005, who stated in their study that demographic characteristics of their participants exhibited numerous similarities to women interviewed nationally by the Judicial Inspectorate for Correctional Services (then known as the Judicial Inspectorate of Prisons) in 2004, suggesting "that women imprisoned in Gauteng are not very different to those in prisons in other provinces and that findings from this study may be extrapolated to other South African female prisoners" (Haffejee, Vetten, & Greyling, 2006, p. 3). I found this to be true, as the participants I interviewed emanated from various parts of South Africa, and indeed, the world. The first woman who agreed to be interviewed, came from Bolivia in South America, and while the remaining participants were all South African, they came from various South

African provinces that ranged from Gauteng, to KwaZulu-Natal, the Eastern Cape and the Free State.

As is appropriate for qualitative sampling, female detainees of various ages, racial, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as various lengths of incarceration periods and convictions, were selected through purposive, stratified sampling to enable in-depth exploration of issues. The age of the selected, already sentenced female offenders interviewed ranged from 23 to 53 years old, with an average median age of 35 years of age, a finding that correlates with the National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Reintegration of Offenders' (NICRO) annual statistics report, which stated that female offenders aged between 18 to 35 years constitute 63.8% of female offenders (NICRO, 2017). With regards to race, the majority of the study's interviewees were black (n=6) and coloured South African women (n=5), totalling almost 65% of the participants, followed by 5 white South African participants and one participant who, before mentioned, was a foreign national from Bolivia. As stated by the Judicial Inspectorate for Correctional Services (JICS) in their 2016 report, 11,842 foreigners are being held in South African correctional facilities, a significant number that I felt deserved to be engaged with during the research process.

Each participant needed to fulfil a single homogeneous requirement, that they all be mothers before their sentencing and incarceration, as understanding how the motherhood role may, or may not, have influenced their pathway to offending is central to this research study's endeavour. Certainly, all seventeen women were mothers who, on average, had two children before they were arrested, and one participant who was pregnant with her third child at the time of her incarceration and interview. Furthermore, three of the women had taken in the children of their relatives or husband's previous marriages, to raise as their own. The vast majority (n=13) were the breadwinners for their children and most were single, with six women having never married, six were divorced, one separated and two widowed. Only two

of the women were still married. Since the study was concerned with the female offenders' pathways taken, reasons for their incarceration and convictions were not focused on, unless the women communicated these during their interviews as important to their pathways story.

*Table 1. Demographic details of participants*

<b>Pseudonym:</b>	<b>Age:</b>	<b>Race:</b>	<b>Children:</b>	<b>Marital Status:</b>	<b>Breadwinner:</b>
<b>Maria</b>	28	Bolivian	3	Separated	Yes
<b>Zindiwe</b>	28	Black	1	Single	Yes
<b>Gloria</b>	41	Black	1	Single	Yes
<b>Natalie</b>	34	White	4	Married	Yes
<b>Jackie</b>	35	White	2	Divorced	Yes
<b>Aneke</b>	54	White	3	Divorced	Yes
<b>Samantha</b>	23	White	2	Divorced	Yes
<b>Albie</b>	42	Coloured	2	Widow	Yes
<b>Noma</b>	29	Black	2	Single	No
<b>Gale</b>	32	White	1	Single	Yes
<b>Rowena</b>	53	Coloured	4	Married	No
<b>Teresa</b>	48	Coloured	2	Widow	Yes
<b>Palesa</b>	28	Black	1	Single	No
<b>Faith</b>	34	Black	2	Divorced	Yes
<b>Evelyn</b>	36	Coloured	3	Divorced	Yes
<b>Zaida</b>	25	Coloured	4	Single	No
<b>Lesedi</b>	39	Black	5	Divorced	Yes

### **3. Data Collection**

Since Feminist Pathways research is primarily concerned with individual life experiences, it is qualitative in nature, placing emphasis on capturing participants' voices to situate their lived experiences within their social circumstances. The qualitative nature of the research study, with its focus on understanding the pathways and shared experiences of motherhood

through the interviews with female offenders, necessitated the use of the Life History research method, also referred to as the Life Event research method. As a retrospective data collection tool, Life History interviews are typically researcher biographies of participants' shared experiences constructed through in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Each dialogue covered a number of moments significant to the participant that allowed for the researcher's understanding of what has happened and what is currently happening in participants' lives, as well as identifying greater social dynamic forces at work (Bird & Ojermark, 2011).

As discussed by Mayer (2009), the interdisciplinary study of individual internal dynamics across the human life course, and the interaction these psychological processes socially entrench within these life courses, has grown significantly over the last 30 years. By focusing on the processual development of each participant over their life time, while constantly relating these experiences to their cultural and social world, the interviews revealed the female offenders' pathways of adaption or maladaptation within socially transmitted codes of conduct (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). More than simply a historical account, each narrative collected through Life History interviews provided individualised meaning that then allowed for comprehensive understandings of the conduit role society and, more specifically, motherhood plays in the women's pathways to offending behaviour. As the qualitative data collection method of Life History interviews linked the past experiences of participants to their present, as well as relating the macro and micro, it is a method that provided a great amount of depth (Bird & Ojermark, 2011). Open-ended questions, shepherded by the DCS approved narrative interview guide (Appendix C), were asked during the semi-structured, audio recorded interviews, which were held at the correctional centre, with the presence of a translator whenever necessary. Though all of the participants were able to converse in English, which was the communal means of communication in the facility, this was with varying levels of proficiency. This meant that in order to elicit a transparent and true

understanding of the shared narrative, some (n=4) of the participants had their psychologist sit in on the interviews. The mother tongue language for most of the women was isiZulu and Afrikaans, and I was concerned that they may have to lapse back into these familiar languages when telling their stories and so their meanings might be missed by myself. To this end, the correctional psychologists were kind enough to perform the interpreter task when asked of them and greatly enriched the profundity of data collected. At first, I was concerned that the women who utilised this option of communication would defer to their therapist, but in reverse of my expectations, the women were emboldened by their presence, took ownership of their experiences and these were some of the most confident and detailed of the interviews I attended.

Instead of asking participants to share their stories in a chronological order, I asked each of them to recount specific turning points or moments within their experienced life course, particularly as a mother, that they identified as a catalyst to the inception of their offending behaviour. Through the sharing of these turning points, the women further revealed their lived experiences and adaptations to their life conditions. The abundance of information documented during Life History interviews necessitated the selection of a smaller sample group and required that I had the ability to securely store, manage and analytically reduce the substantial data collected, whilst analysing the data as soon as possible after the interviews were concluded to ensure that the context was clearly recollected.

#### **4. The Research Context**

The process of conducting face-to-face interviews while being present in the participants' lived setting can enrich internalisation and understanding of the contextual factors that frame their behaviour (Goldman, et al. 2003). When conducting research with offenders, the researcher has no choice but to insert themselves into the lived environment of the participants, a space that adheres to strict procedures and logistical processes. The corrections

setting initially confronted me with the challenges that one may expect when conducting research in correctional centres; searches of your vehicle and person, restrictions on what you may take with you into the facility, restrictions on the times when, and areas where, you have access, continuous noise as gates open and close and offenders and officers communicate with one another. However, my experience as a team member of Inside-Out Outside-In, a community engagement project that works in corrections, equipped me with the knowledge and experiences of the correctional environment, so that I was positively predisposed and prepared to conduct the interviews in the context of incarceration. I was welcomed by the correctional officials, who gave me a tour of the facility and sat with me to understand the aims and needs of my research study. They generously offered their time and resources, facilitating communication with interested participants and apportioning me office space to conduct one on one interviews in private. I was granted permission by security personnel to bring in one audio recording device and additional batteries, along with my pen and notepad for observational notation. As offenders return to their cells after lunch, I started interviews as early in the morning as allowed, and spoke with two or three women each day before they went to the canteen for lunch. On average, the initial briefing, interview and debriefing lasted for over an hour. For me, the process was rather fraught, as Life History interviews require empathetic, intense active listening and the women's stories were often traumatic.

Contrastingly, the women said that the interviews were a novel break from the often mundane routine of incarcerated life and many expressed a cathartic release and relief from sharing their stories. It may be argued that there is no role for emotion in research as it impedes objectivity, but I argue that it is not possible to exclude all emotion when conducting research in a setting as emotive as a correctional facility. As stated by Lučić-Ćatic, during her PhD research concerning the penitentiary system of Bosnia and Herzegovina, "Is it truly possible, however, to conduct research in any human environment without subjective feelings,

especially in prison? Ignoring emotions can have significant costs for analysis and for competence as researchers” (Lučid-Ćatic, 2011, p. 33). The intensity of data collection in correctional research affects the character of the interview, but the narrative style of Life History interviews allowed me to apply reflexivity and constantly adapt and re-evaluate the ways that I regarded myself and the participants, and, subsequently, break through formality and let the women talk freely (Lučid-Ćatic, 2011).

## **5. Data Analysis**

Through review of the initial observational field notes taken during the interview and the audio taped stories shared by the participants (as soon as possible after the interview was complete), it was possible to produce detailed analytical written memos to supplement the interview transcripts. As already stated, the analysis of the data began relatively early in the research process in order to create a coherent interpretation and identification of related concepts and themes. All of the interviews were transcribed, verbatim, by myself, as I felt that as the researcher and interviewer, I could best interpret the field notes and audio recordings, as well as recall the nuanced elucidations and accounts shared during the interviews, into a coherent interpretation of the data. For greater interpretation comprehensibility and validation, I did request that two colleagues, and polyglots of the aforementioned languages, consult with the anonymous transcriptions and audio recordings to ensure that those segments that had been translated, were indeed accurate.

This intimate engagement with the descriptive data resulted in certain of the theory-generated codes, proposed from the intensive literature review on female offenders’ pathways to crime, emerging in the real-life data and some new and wholly unique themes surfacing which revealed the inimitable South African context in which these women’s narratives were created, in turn reflecting clusters and sub-clusters of the female offender lived experiences. Through inductive analysis of the codes, salient themes and patterns were discovered which

exposed categories of meaning that offered integrative interpretations and alternative understandings of the participants' commonalities and differences, until theoretical sufficiency was reached.

Utilising narrative analysis formed part of the important recognition that the resulting text is the product of a collaborative relationship with the participants. The life history interview incorporates a focus on how the participants' stories are told, which is of course relevant to narrative analysis, but also how these stories relate to what has happened to them in their lives and how they have reacted towards these circumstances, an important facet of pathways research. Consequently, analysis of the interview elucidated the participants' views of reality, and, mediated by social context, the themes that emerged from each narrative allowed for a contextual understanding of the nature of female offenders' mothering realities. Hence, it also fulfilled an emancipatory purpose, focusing on participants' life events, in their own spoken words, as counter narratives for disregarded populations. To this end, utilising intersectionality as a critical lens enabled me to consider intersectional confluences throughout the narrative analysis process. Chadwick (2017) states that narrative analysis offers rich methodological tools for intersectionality, particularly in relation to its ability to accord validation to marginalised voices and trace the multiple and contradictory stories and experiences of research participants. This both challenged and extended the narratives of individual female offender experiences, whilst highlighting the importance of the structural and political realities that co-construct their lives. As the research study was primarily concerned with contextualising how the women's actions became criminalised, it was my responsibility to sincerely depict the voices of female offenders through their narratives and bring to the fore their stories. By using these individual narratives to formulate theoretical sense of common, generative themes within a greater social network, the research results in the next chapter intend to describe the meaning of experience of a specific group of people

through the exploration of narratives constructed by individuals (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

## **6. Ethical Considerations**

Conducting research inside correctional facilities is a challenging prospect, but not an impossible one if conducted through the correct channels with the appropriate support system. This study sought to gain access to a diverse group of incarcerated women with the assistance of the Inside-out Outside-in South African Corrections Interest Group. Founded in 2013 through the Department of Psychology at the University of South Africa, this formal community engagement project comprises of an interdisciplinary group of academics, postgraduate students, formerly incarcerated individuals, correctional services workers and others with an interest in the corrections community of South Africa (Inside-out Outside-in South African Corrections Interest Group, 2015). The group is “particularly focused on initiatives that cross the boundaries between the inside and outside of prisons and that deal with the connections and inter-dependencies between inside and out.” (du Plessis, 2013, p. 143). As studies that involve direct contact with offenders in correctional facilities are unique in their prerequisites, support from such a group proved to be invaluable. Said support allowed me, as a researcher, to increase my familiarity with the local correctional setting, in an autonomous manner and not as an employee of the facility, allowing the research to maintain its independence and ensure its credibility among the offender-participants (National Academy of Sciences, 2006).

For the research study to be truly ethical it needed to take into account the research setting, which presented its own unique challenges and concerns, the needs of those involved as well. The incarcerated population’s position is a vulnerable one when involved in research and required increased ethical considerations on the part of myself, as the researcher. By obtaining approval prior to conducting the research, from both the University of South

Africa's Ethics Review Committee and the Department of Correctional Services Research Ethics Committee (Appendix A and B), I was able to address all possible concerns regarding the ethical requirements of the study. This step was very important as explained by the second edition report of the "South African Good Clinical Practice Guidelines", released by the Department of Health [DoH] in 2006. The report states that research involving offenders must consider the "extent to which research facilitates the empowerment of prisoners as a vulnerable group." (DoH, 2006, p. 21). This includes taking cognisance of how their incarceration may affect their ability to make a decision to participate in the proposed research study without coercion. In order to avoid such an intimidation, the participants of the proposed study were informed as to the nature of the research through a briefing session at the correctional facility, which provided the women an opportunity to ask questions and consider whether or not they want to participate in the research. It was made clear during the consent process that participation will not necessarily place them in a favourable light with the authorities, nor that refusal to participate would be detrimental to them. All interviews were conducted on a voluntary basis with signed consent forms (Appendix D) and participants were asked to create their own pseudonyms that corresponded to their identity while ensuring their anonymity. In her experience in interviewing offenders, Jennifer A. Schlosser (2008) recommends taking cognisance of the average incarcerated population's level of literacy when constructing the written consent forms that they are required to sign, which I did, during its written construction and later explanations with the participants. The use of simple language with a clear statement of research intent is advised to prevent any doubt on the part of the participants. "Delivering and explaining the consent form is also the first chance to build rapport with the inmate, so this component of the interview process is particularly important." (Schlosser, 2008, p. 1507). Privacy of participants is of the utmost concern when conducting research in a correctional setting, as are the risks and benefits

posed to the participants (National Academy of Sciences, 2006). Through a collaborative process, the research study endeavoured to facilitate openness within the environment and create ethical conditions that were unfavourable for the exploitation of the already marginalised group of women, allowing their voices and experiences to come to the fore. Excerpts from selected transcripts are also used in the results section to validate, authenticate and give voice to the incarcerated women's mothering experiences, societal influences and their understandings thereof.

### **Conclusion**

It is the aim of this research study to ultimately comprehend the individual and societal processes that led to the current environment that these women find themselves in. Hopefully the exploration of these local and global circumstances will garner an understanding of the offending behaviour of the women in South Africa, which elucidates the communal challenges that women in our country face, and in turn provides these women with the knowledge to alter their pathways taken. In the next chapter, these shared stories are elucidated and grouped by the pathways followed.

## CHAPTER 4:

### EXPLICATION OF DATA

#### **Introduction:**

An authentic and transparent elucidation of the information collected from the life stories shared during the female offenders' interviews necessitated that the research acknowledged their voices. Comprehension of these important narratives revealed how motherhood, and the role's concurrence with the gendered nature of poverty, victimisation and caregiving, shape the life experiences of these women and influence their pathways taken towards crime and incarceration. The interaction of these individual accounts, particularly the language used, as well as gendered factors and subsequent behaviours, laid bare underlying socio-contextual conditions, both similar to and distinctive from the literature reviewed, and are discussed further in the sections below.

The first three pathways identified during the interviews are discussed in this chapter as follows: Victimisation and Violence, Feminisation of Poverty, and Mental Illness and Addiction. These were similarly identified through previous research overseas, yet have distinctly unique aspects attributable to the South African context. The next two pathways, Experiences of Loss and Abandonment, and the Role of Motherhood, are not pathways mentioned in previous research but were significant conduits that contributed to the participants offending behaviours. Finally, a further extrapolation reported on in this chapter is dedicated to an ancillary finding regarding the language used in correctional facilities, which emerged during the interviews and analysis, and although it does not fall in the scope of research for this study, is noteworthy and necessitates particular attention.

## 1. Victimisation and Violence

Concurring with the existing literature, the majority of the women (15 out of the 17) related instances in their lives where they had been survivors of abuse and victimisation, often by multiple perpetrators and over extended periods of time.

### *1.1. Childhood Abuse and Mistreatment*

For two of the women, the abuse and neglect they had experienced in childhood were defining moments in their lives, which had inextricably woven a path towards later dysfunctional behaviours. Rowena, one of the older participants at age 53 and a married mother of four, related the trauma of the ongoing abuse she experienced as a child at the hands of her school teacher, the memory of which she had kept suppressed for over three decades:

“... and something I didn’t deal with, and I only dealt with now... after thirty-three years, when I dealt with it I was still fifty-two so... I was molested when I was eight years old by a teacher at school. I spoke about it, but in those years, you didn’t know what you were talking about, it’s not something that you dealt with. You... it’s a teacher and he is an upstanding citizen in the community, but as a child, in that... I think when I look back, that’s when I started becoming a difficult child, I think, in a way. I was rebelling against things in life... I made sure that I didn’t stay with that teacher in his classroom, I was the first out and the last in, and he used to take us from sport, um, venues home... I mean, I used to... if I knew I was going to be last in the line I got off at my friend’s house, and I climbed over the wall to our house. I just made sure that... because it was like, was I right, or was I wrong? But you felt guilty because then he would give you an ice-cream. And you, I mean... you are seven-years-old, what do you know about that? Later, when I was in grade eight... I understood more and I knew more, so I was back in his class but then I was on a different level. I made sure, you know, it was still the same thing... last in the class, first out the class. And when he asked questions he walked around, and I make sure

that I don't answer that question. I sat between people, I always made sure that he didn't come near me..."

Albie, a mother of two and widow at age 42, was married off to an older man by her family when she was 16 years old, and explained that this was done in order to secure financial support for the whole family. However, this sacrifice of her education and childhood had not garnered her family support later in her adult life, when she had needed it:

"Um the one day I got a letter from her [mother] saying that you are getting engaged. I said what!? I don't, I don't even have a boyfriend, how? And then that December month, I went home and then I met [her fiancé]. And I told her [mother], but I can't marry this man, I want to finish my school, because there, I was first in the class, for the first time in my life, because I believed if I learn, the time will go faster and I can go back to my parents... But I was out of school when I was sixteen because I had to marry another man... She [her mother] said my brother is going to land up, both of my brothers is going to land up in, um, children's homes if I don't, um, get married... I was very upset because she let me marry so, so early. And it's not my children... And then I thought, I will do it for my brothers... then they will have a... they are men, they can finish school and do something out of their lives, I can still depend on them. And then they didn't even finish... nothing!"

### ***1.2. Acquaintance Rape and Assault***

In the same way, two of the women who were raped illustrated how the results of this aggressive violation of their bodies and minds affected their familial relationships and explained the pressure to keep the assault secret to protect others. Samantha, a 23-year-old mother of two, whose son was born after she was raped by a high school friend, described how the assault had affected her emotional development, her connection with her son and later relationships with men:

"And... I think that's about the time in my life when... stuff just got worse, because after I was raped at fifteen I just... I started not feeling anything. You know, emotion wise. Ja, I think that's when it started. And... like I said, I hated my son for two

months after [his] birth... But that got better... And the only feeling I have is for my son and my daughter. What happens around me, what it happens to, how it happens...? I couldn't care. So, I think that after I got raped I shut down because I didn't want to feel. And then, after my very abusive relationship I just... completely shut down.”

For Theresa, a widow at 48 years of age with two children, who, at age 18 was raped by a colleague who was in a relationship with her sister, the attack led to self-blame, denial, unemployment, and a decade long family secret:

“I resigned due to an unforeseen matter between my sister and myself... she got me the position at [company], and long story short, um, in that while, I became a victim of rape, by one of the workers in the company... and she [her sister] made things a bit difficult for me and I resigned... okay, the foreman didn't want me to leave. He said that they would rather let my sister go because they knew exactly what was going on. And I said to him that no, I could not do that. Um, my sister got me the position... I'm still young, I can find another job. And about six months, prior to being sentenced... I could only really start talking about what happened to me in the past. My mom and my elder sister knew, um, I don't know if my elder sister ever told family members... but um, it was a thing between my mom and my sister. My dad didn't know, even from the day he passed away, he didn't know what happened to his daughter. It was... we... I just couldn't do that to him.”

### ***1.3.Intimate Partner Violence***

Various violent behaviours were perpetrated against the women (n=11) by their husbands and boyfriends, which manifested in acts of physical, sexual, verbal, psychological and emotional abuse. Most of the women spoke dismissively of the victimisation and violence they experienced, as though it was a part of life to be endured, often from one generation of women to the next, like Jackie, a 35-year-old divorcée with two sons who said her father had “stabbed my mom with a garden fork in the head”, and described her relationship with her boyfriend as “I've always known that he is... that he hit women and things.” This cycle of

abuse, seemingly passed on from mother to daughter, was illustrated through Gloria's story, where the 41-year-old single mother to one son stated that "The father of my son was like my father... drinking, abusive, hitting me every weekend... he was like that." Some of the women, for example Lesedi, aged 39, believed they had no choice but to endure the abuse, as they had no one who could intervene on their behalf. As a mother of four boys and caregiver of her nephew, she described how "If you can go to punch in my ID number, check the offenses that have happened, that he has done to me... Family abuse, wife abuse... I used to report! At times my kids will pick up the phone to call [the police] ..."

This lack of support was often indicative of dysfunctional family dynamics, with members of the women's own families refusing or unable to help. Maria, a 28-year-old foreign national from South America, mother of two and stepmother to her husband's child from a previous relationship, described how her family reacted to the regular beatings she endured:

"My father is the person, he does not believe the marriage must break. By no reasons! He was forcing me to keep on...but once, my cousin come home and she find me with marks, in the face and [indicates arms and body] ... And my father say that maybe I deserve it. So, I am keeping on doing it... he [her husband] comes home, drinking, beating me..."

Natalie, 34-year-old married mother of four, elucidated her experience of years of escalating abuse at the hands of her now ex-husband, which, during her pregnancy with their child had deteriorated to the point where he attempted to rape her:

"So, things were not [good]... When I fell pregnant he told me that the baby was not his... he wanted me, and his mother wanted me, to have an abortion, I refused... So, then I wanted to go live with my parents... she [her mother] said no, that I must not worry, once the baby is here things will change... he will change. Um... then we had a major incident... He went out drinking and all that... Then he came back that

Sunday morning, early, about four o' clock in the morning... Drunk, drunk, drunk! Making a big performance so I opened the door... and... I went back in the room and he came after me... he was forcing me to... to have sex but I refused and so he hit me... when I say he hit me, he beat me up... he kicked me on the stomach... and everything... He realised what he did but by then I already had packed a bag and I went to go stay by my neighbour and friend, I called her to come fetch me. Then she took me to the police station and they took pictures... and so and so and so... I came back, I had phoned his parents and they said that they would keep him... away... the Sunday and the Monday. He came back Monday night. That night I went into labour... So [eldest son] was born on the Tuesday morning..."

Natalie then continued on to describe how she, and her child, had reluctantly returned to live with the abusive boyfriend and father as they had nowhere else to live after her parents turned them away:

"So, I came back and we moved in again, together, for... about a year. Just before [her son] started big school... Ja... and then I just couldn't take it... The drinking, the... the verbal and the emotional abuse, I think that was worse than the beatings... the beating you can forget about it, you know? I'd have a mark but... you know... you forget about it... it heals... the emotional abuse was bad."

Despite the detachment with which these abuses were described, the outcomes of such behaviour were often devastating. For Noma, a single mother of two, aged 29 years old, her experience of emotional abuse at the hands of her children's father, coupled with the pressure of motherhood, had pushed her to attempt suicide:

"To me my boyfriend was everything. When he told me, he loved me and everything, I felt very special and really loved... so when he started cheating on me and doing all those things... Eish! It was very hard for me, I couldn't cope. Even with the kids I couldn't cope... and, he was like, abusing me emotionally... like he will call me names and tell me I'm not good enough, I'm a baby maker, and all those things... because if I fight with him for being with another girl, he will start telling me "What am I gonna do with you? You only make babies." and all those things... So, I... my

life then, that time I couldn't take it anymore, it was very difficult for me then. I, I also saw myself as a failure. I also saw myself as someone who make bad choices, and I thought that there is nothing I can do to fix everything... So, I thought that is the end of my life..."

Palesa, a single mom aged 28, who was physically abused by the father of her only child, described how her ingress into an abusive relationship was almost a matter of inevitability, leading to a cycle of abuse and violence:

"Even before I fall in love with him, I was also afraid, every time when I see him I would run... so he would be more interested that I run. He proposed me that I always run when I see him, then I said okay, to stop this let me, uh... date this guy. Then we started dating. I was in love but I, I was afraid! I was very afraid of that guy. Yoh, that guy, he always had a gun! Right here [indicates hip]. I wouldn't argue... Even when I was pregnant, you know, he was beating me... so badly. For what? I was pregnant... I didn't know I was pregnant... he would maybe wake up and make food for me, make eggs... while I'm eating I say I feeling sick, I don't want this food... Yoh! He beat me so bad! I didn't not go to school that day! He says "I'm taking effort, making you food! You don't eat this food! You think I'm stupid". And then he beated me! Yoh! He beated me so badly I didn't even go to school! Then said to me "You are not going to your home, looking like this." I couldn't go home, and my grandmother was angry cause [she] knows, when I go at night, in the morning, I will go home. So that was what I was doing. That time, I [had] to stay a whole week [at boyfriend's house]. We even went to the chemist to buy things to remove [bruises]... I was afraid!"

And then, after he was arrested for murder, she met another man who was controlling and emotionally abusive:

"My boyfriend was a sweet guy but... he was kind of abusive. He didn't want me to work, he didn't even want me to go and leave home to look after my granny. He didn't even want me to go to the shop to buy something. He was overprotective, I don't know... insecure? Everything, like even when I am going to church... we come out eleven o'clock, he is there, waiting. I ask him "Why are you doing this?" He says "No, it's because I love you." If I got a job, he will just say "You know what, just

leave the job, I will pay you the money.” But he was dating outside, he was doing all these funny things... It was very... like it was very hard. I was wondering, and I always ask him “Why are you doing this? Because you are also dating! You are going with women around.” So, it end up... we end up... it end up one night he brings a girl, while I was in the house, and he knows that I was there inside the house! He brings the girl, who stays not far from my home...”

Palesa then went on to describe how his behaviour towards her preceded a series of devastating decisions and actions from her side, for which she had been incarcerated:

“So, they came at night... Ai! I ask him “Why are you doing this?” he says “I am a man.” That girl, like was... like, provoking me! Eish! So, as I said, they took the food, ate all the food that I made... And that woman says “Nice food!” you know... I couldn’t believe it. I was just sitting... they were very drunk! Then they went to... to the room, with me sitting like this in the dining room! And my child was sleeping in his room. I didn’t want to talk too much because I was thinking about the child... So while I sitting here, what’s happening in that room, I can hear it! So, I was listening to them having sex... so, it was very, very hard for me. I couldn’t take it... Eish, it was very hard... I didn’t know what to do! I didn’t know because I know, if I say “I’m going home”, tomorrow this guy will come! And he is a sweet talker, whatever he is going to say, “I am sorry baby” I will go back... I was very angry! So okay, at seven o clock I took my child, I went home [her grandmother’s house] and I put my child there. I said “I’m coming back.” Then I went there, to that house [her boyfriend’s house], and I... the devil, I don’t know, it just came in my mind. The devil just came! And it happened that... Eish, you know... Like, I was thinking about killing myself... I was thinking about killing myself with them so we can both kill our self... I took the Jik [bleach] and I drank it. That’s when I was vomiting... that’s when I think about it... let me threaten them. And I take that heater that you put that paraffin oil... I take the newspaper... then I turn the heater upside down so the paraffin just fill the newspaper and I put it under their door... it catch the bed... But my aim was not to kill people, just to threaten... I handed myself over because I regret it. So... that lady, didn’t die at the spot, she died at the hospital. And my boyfriend, he went out of the window, he burnt a little bit, but not too much.”

Gale, a 32-year-old single mother to one daughter, shared a similar story of abuse and control which led to violence and incarceration:

“I met him in 2012 at a bike rally. Six months later we got engaged, I moved to [city]... She [her daughter] never coped in the city quite well, so we decided for her to live with my mom, to go to school there... and then on holidays she would come home. I think when I moved to [city] with my fiancé, things started changing... Him introducing me to drugs, and then there was more time for drugs instead of anytime for my daughter or for my family. I’m here for a murder charge. I wasn’t directly involved in the murder, my fiancé and his mother had an argument... when I came in he asked me to go and see if she is breathing. I basically just entered the door and she was lying behind her bed on the floor. So, you could only see her feet sticking out from the end of the bed. I then turned around and said, “I’m not going to look.” He then said he is going to look and he went in and said, “She is not breathing.” So, he told me to drive with him to get rid of the body... So then, because he was... he was abusive...and controlling as well, I think I feared for my own life, and what could happen to me, and not just me, my daughter as well...”

## **2. Feminisation of Poverty**

Similarly, to the profile of female offenders outlined by United Nations research (UN Handbook on Women and Imprisonment, 2014), the incarcerated women I spoke with were young mothers who were single and working for minimum wage in the informal sector, to provide for their families. Gendered disparities in salary earned and unpaid labour augmented the pressures and responsibilities that are characteristic of the motherhood role, for a group of women who were already estranged from family and victimised by those they loved.

### ***2.1. Early Motherhood***

Of the women interviewed, 9 of the 17 had given birth to their first child when they were teenagers, while on average the rest of the women had their first child by 21 years of age. The experience of young motherhood was easier for some than for others. Evelyn, a 36-year-old

mother of three, spoke of the love and support she received as a teenage mother, stating “I stayed on with my grandparents, a happy childhood, got all the love that I had to get... um, with my first steady boyfriend I fell pregnant. I actually had two children, before I matriculated, but then I still... I didn’t miss the year, I still matriculated.” For others, like Jackie, who had no parental support, there was a duality to the experience she describes as “exciting, but I was scared because I was still a child myself... even though I was working... I didn’t know anything about raising a child...”

However, for Zaida, a 25-year-old mother of four, her teenage pregnancy and subsequent mothering experience was symptomatic of her poor relationship with her own mother, and of her own disrupted childhood:

“My dad’s mom, took me in, from social workers, because my mother could not take care of us... because of problems that my mother had. All of her children... was taken away from [her]... then, we were placed by the social workers and so things went, on and on, until we grown up. Because life got turned upside down and I found a boyfriend, when I was fifteen years old... then I stayed there and was expelled from school... for fighting. So, I had my first child, and um... he [her boyfriend] taught me to take drugs... and from then on, I did not focus on myself or my children. I only focused on that... it was that [drugs] which was only important for me... And I felt that, no, I have children, I cannot set an example like this in front of them. I used their money to buy it [drugs]... all four of my children, they are all now with the social workers. So, I visit with them through the social worker, but I don’t know, for the time that I am here, what is going on... the last time I was with them, we were with the social worker... and the social worker took them, from where they were living... I ask them, please, to give me a chance because I am their mother... you guys will see from now on... because, I mean, it’s not fair... me, I’m still alive... for them to go live in a home... I mean here is not nice for me, how is it going to be there for them? So, I told her so she must just give them a chance, to see how’s things like...”

## *2.2. Pressure to Provide as Breadwinner*

Of the participants interviewed, 13 of the 17 women described themselves as the primary breadwinner for their children, and often extended family members as well, on meagre salaries from low paid positions that could not cover even the barest of living expenses. Their positions frequently fell into gendered careers like a secretary, waitress, or cashier, where women are most often employed and paid less than male counterparts. Overall, the women (n=9) were indifferent to what the role entailed, as they had always performed said role, unthinkingly. This was true for Natalie and Theresa, both of whom had very little familial support structures in place, as seen in their earlier narratives regarding their experiences of violence and abuse. Natalie explained that she was a breadwinner because “I had to! I had no choice... nobody was supporting me so I had to support myself. Most of the things were on my shoulders... My husband, yes, he was also working... unfortunately he was not earning much... My salary covered everything...”. Theresa, who described herself as coming from a traditional, Christian home was even more dismissive, even denying her role by stating “the majority of the time I was the breadwinner, but he supported us... I just earned more than him...”

Albie, whose forced marriage at age 16 had ended in divorce, was more circumspect regarding the breadwinner role. Through her arranged, first marriage she had inadvertently become breadwinner to her parents and siblings, but after the death of her second husband, Albie described how the role was thrust upon her again:

“My husband believes wife is staying at home, looking after the kids... and that’s what I did... for the seventeen years, and, um... it wasn’t a good thing because when he passed away, he was the breadwinner, and he left me with nothing... I started to sell second hand clothing at taxi ranks and train stations... [to] makes ends meet...”

Conversely, for four of the women, the pressures of being the primary provider in the home was acknowledged as a major contributor to their pathways taken. Maria explained her path to becoming a drug mule, trafficking narcotics to South Africa “It was very difficult. Unfortunately, the choice I have done, was not a good thing, because my husband was not supportive... at all. I was the one taking care of everything...he was arrested, I had the debts.” Two of the women further revealed how this pressure directly linked to their actions which led to incarceration. Faith was the first participant to elucidate her experience as a breadwinner. At age 34, she had recently been incarcerated, while four months pregnant with her third child, and was engaged with divorce proceedings. Neither her first boyfriend, nor soon to be ex-husband, had provided financial support or caregiving for their children. This pressure as sole provider was compounded by her responsibility towards her other family members as well:

“Everything! Everything they had! That house depended on me, even dad would say “Oh, this month, I can’t make it”. He knew that, okay, she will... she will make a plan... but everyone eats, right? I had to do all the things, even though my mom is there... but um, she doesn’t work... So, I always had to make a plan... even though sometimes it costed me in the sense that... taking loans... and all those things. But, at the end of the day, I’ve always put other people first... before I put myself.”

This pressure resulted in her involvement in a money laundering scheme, which led to her arrest:

“So, there I was, just a clerk... Like an ordinary girl who is struggling... struggling from the [start]. And, this guy... um, came as a, uh, senior. So, of course, he did his own research and whatever, and then he approached me, and he said “I know you are struggling.” When I say research, he researched the company and he researched people... and then he approached me and he said, “You know what, you, I can help you only if you do this.” I asked questions... I said “This will get me into trouble.” And he said “No, it will never get you into trouble because it will come back to me.”

So, I thought okay. I trusted him, so I said okay. I mean, I was struggling, so... when that happened, when he did all the money laundering... um, I got that money. I had joy in it! I had joy in the sense that, I've never had so much money... And I was able to pay off all my debts. I paid everything! I even called people that I didn't... that I owed maybe, three years ago, and I was like "How much do I owe you? I will pay you." And then I tried to save money for the... for... at that time... And um, I did all of that! I had financial freedom! If my mom wanted money, I could help. So, in a main sense, I used all... my money was mainly used to help people. So, I never really got to enjoy it... I only enjoyed it because I was helping somebody else, right?"

Poignantly, the freedom and relief from fiscal responsibilities that her offending behaviour had afforded her, had also landed Faith in a situation where she could no longer provide for her family:

"So now I worry about that... it's like, what are they gonna do now? That means my mom... it means either she must go find a piece job or... um... that thing... the monthly child grant. Ja, she will have to do that... which would slightly assist but... It is just mainly the household [costs] that I'm worried about. I need to leave here in order to support, my children... and my family!"

This contradiction of experiencing pressure to provide for your family, and then the very breadwinning actions which provided safety, food and shelter for your family resulting in incarceration, was shared by Lesedi. As primary provider, she had turned to fraud in order to support her four sons and nephew:

"Yes, yes, so now... what happened is... so after realising that divorced stuff, and then I went back to my place, and then uh, with the kids, obviously. And then, um, it was, I felt like something big was on my shoulders... you, know, just... came down, like I was carrying a very heavy iron or stone... because I lost most of the stuff. He took everything... the cars went to his girlfriends, uh, the properties, the place I was staying in... it was in arrears, they wanted to take the property, you see... And the kids are all with me. So, this guy who took my companies, he said he is gonna use some monies during imports, and then, uh, with the imports, you know... you can't do

imports if you don't have importers code. Then he was doing exports to [country] and then uh... I gave him, I trusted him because we was introduced by someone that I know very well. You know I give him the companies. Then I got warned that I must be careful of the guy, and I was scared to use that company now... And then, eh, we use, we start the new companies, more than one company, we start the other companies and we work those companies. Only to find that... we realise only when... I think I was coming from, ja, [city], then I got a call from my niece, there are many cars by the gate, people are looking for me... they wanted to arrest me”

Anneke, a 54-year-old mother to three sons and stepmother to her ex-husband's two children from a previous marriage, shared a similar familiarity with the pressures to provide:

“I think it was stressful in a certain way... that you have to provide for them. And I... I made many mistakes..... If I look back at my life I can see the mistakes that I have made, I should never have married him and, ja... there is just no love, no care, no nothing... nothing, nothing, nothing... Ja, so I brought up his kids and our kids, he was just non- existing... he was just never there for me, in no way. And he was irresponsible financially as well. So even since then I battled with money and we were not... when we were children as well [her childhood], we battled with money as well. You had to go to school every year, the beginning of the year, and ask for clothes and shoes and stuff... there was no thing that we could go and buy our own clothes in a shop. In church as well, the people give us clothes... So, there was always this need of money. Ja, to provide... My youngest son is... he wasn't working... he only has grade ten, and I was also providing for him, helping him. And, the thing is, I think... I always... that's one of the things that [psychologist] is helping me with now is money boundaries. Because I always take care of... even my eldest son with his... with my two grandchildren, when they are in need of money I would just provide. If I see any need I will buy, I will drop off stuff, I will take the kids and buy clothes for them and it was, it is as if I could never say no... I wanted to provide... and, um, it's not that I bought nice stuff for myself or go on nice holidays or... it was day to day things to live. My parents wouldn't help me, I helped my parents. I paid them an amount every month to help them because they really battled. Every month I put money in and when my dad died I kept... I increased the amount and I still helped my mother.”

As a result, Anneke had turned to stealing money from her workplace and gambling to supplement her salary, which led to her incarceration. She then described how relieved, yet guilty, she felt, knowing that she could no longer fulfil the primary breadwinner role from behind bars:

“It was, in the beginning, it was... it was like a relief for me. That thing is just off from me... I don’t have to provide anymore... because the last two years, when I was working, um... I had a salary but about my whole salary just went for [her children] ... And, um... it was just... it feels as if you can’t breathe... that... there... it is just too much... I can’t provide for everything... it, it, it drives me crazy... really...”

### ***2.3. Gendered Roles of Unpaid Labour and Caregiving***

Comparably to the primary breadwinner role, the majority of the women (n=16) admitted that they were the principal caregiver towards their families and main caretakers of the home environment. Once again, these unpaid tasks were considered part of “women’s work” and were referred to in an offhand manner, as simply part of the role to be played as a woman. Gale felt the same way. Having fallen pregnant with her daughter at 19 years of age, after a one-night stand, she grew up quickly, becoming not only breadwinner but homemaker and caregiver to her daughter. She explained how “it was difficult... I worked half day... so I had time to spend with her in the afternoon from two...” leaving work early in order to take care of her daughter and their home. For Albie, the obligation of caring for her children and keeping the house in order was more than a responsibility, it was an embodiment of motherhood. She shared this by saying “this is the first time that I’ve been ever away from my children. I lived for my husband and my children. For me, um... my husband, and my children, they mustn’t be ashamed to bring their friends over or whatever... everything was clean, and neat.”

However, for four of the women, the unequitable division of unpaid labour and caregiving responsibilities were considered a burden that had deprived them of opportunities to thrive and grow. Noma explained how, after she gave birth, she was simply expected to know how to care for a child, and take care of the home.

“It was... so, it wasn't easy cause I was on my own. Um, no one was there for me, to tell how to raise a child, how to feed a child... And so, I was supposed to figure it out on my own, how to do things and handle things, it wasn't easy. And after the birth, taking the child to day-care and going to school, it wasn't easy. Then get back, do the washing, it wasn't easy...”

This gendered burden of unpaid labour and caregiving often went beyond only caring for their children, when the women were expected to care for elderly family members as well, as in Palesa's case:

“While my granny was sick, I was taking care of my granny... because her children have life, they have left and all of this. I was the one who was pampering her [refers to putting the Pampers brand of nappies on grandmother], like, I was washing my granny, I was feed my granny, everything... cause she, she turned to be a new-born baby. So, I could not take her to the clinic because sometimes it becomes hard, like I have to... she couldn't do anything, she would sit, just like this, if we were sitting like this she would just wee. So, going to the clinic, she was heavy... so I asked the people, the people working at the hospital, the caregivers, I said my grandmother needs medication and I can't bring her to hospital. Even if we... at first, I started to hire the car but it was not easy because I had to buy pampers, old people pampers, it's too much, they are very expensive. It was very difficult, because I also had a child... a life... so... I didn't finish school, because... you know the problem was my granny, at the time... yes, so I stayed there and I promised my grandmother that I will assist [her]. I always cried. I can't do this, it's too much for me, because I am still young. Even the neighbours were complaining “This child is very young to do whatever she is doing.” Every morning I would go to wash my granny, change my granny... it was like I was going to work. Every day in the morning I will take my child to the crèche, then look after my granny...”

### 3. Mental Illness and Addiction

Only 5 of the women stated that they had not ever struggled with addiction or mental illness. The remaining 12 shared experiences that included instances of violent outbursts, depression or thoughts of suicide. Others mentioned their battles with addiction, either gambling, drug abuse and/or alcohol abuse. Often instances of mental illness and addiction converged.

#### *3.1. Anger, Depression and Suicide*

As explained by 2 of the women, the intense feelings of anger that they had experienced, which had had explosive results, were the reason for their incarceration. Both of them attributed the episodes to long term experiences of victimisation and manipulation. Gloria said how “I was not okay, but I’m better now... I was not okay, I was angry...” when referring to her state of mind before her arrest. She had taken out a contract on her father’s life after years of abuse and abandonment:

“I... I... I was not okay... And I made the wrong decision... And that is why I am here today. I contracted two guys... to kill... my father. And they sentenced me to life, and that is why I am here today... Because I told myself... you know... to me, it seems as if I don’t have a father... at all! I was angry, I was so angry... to me it seemed as if I don’t have a father... at all... there is no difference...”

Samantha explained how, as a victim of rape and abuse herself, her anger had taken over when she found out that her children were being taken away from her by social workers because of the abuse they had endured at the hands of her boyfriend:

“I got mad... very mad... I remember beating him... cops had to arrest me.... I just lost it, just for a split second. Just lost it... I had enough. Lasted for a split second and... I’m here for assault GBH [Grievous Bodily Harm] ... ten years... the only

thing that I can remember is that I started beating him, my hands were painning like hell... there was blood on my hands... and that's all that I can remember... I can't remember the rest... I think I just... I didn't see anything, I just saw black... I don't know... I raged out or something... You don't lose your temper... you lose it for once in your life and you get a ten-year sentence for assault..."

On the contrary, other women described how they sank into depression as a result of their life circumstances, with 5 of the participants detailing their suicide attempts. Evelyn described how her depression had started after finding out her husband was having an affair:

"My husband started an affair in 2013, when I still had this case going. He was only there for a year, then he started his affair and I couldn't really concentrate on myself... because, I had to... think for my children. So, it was like, for a month, two months, then I said to myself "No, you have to pull yourself together." Um... I took overdose, twice... and um, ja... the psychiatrist put me on, on medication for like a month, actually a six months prescription. And I only used it for a month, but then I did not want to make myself depend on these things... I have to get myself together, because I have my children who depend on... [starts to cry]"

Similarly, Noma's third attempt at suicide was after living through the abuse and numerous infidelities on her boyfriend's part. She explained that "He started cheating on me, doing all these things... and then he... he even stopped to support us, now I have two kids... and then... I... yoh, I went through a lot that time... I decided that I want to commit suicide." For Gale, the depression had started during childhood, but through counselling and rehabilitative programmes offered in the correctional facility, she had been able to take back her life:

"Um, after school I started working... during school I started suffering from depression and I don't think my parents realised it early enough, um... I was on depression medication for... I think about fourteen years? Ja, it was difficult. Um, there had been a time when I tried taking my own life... the first year, going to high school, it was difficult to cope in high school as well. So, the first year, standard six, I failed. Here in prison I learnt to cope with my depression, there is not much you can do here without the medication. Um, so for now I don't use the medication at all. I've

learnt to cope and to deal with it... with problems. Um, I've done a course on self-esteem and that was actually quite nice. Um, just learning how to open up again... and talk if there is anything that bothers you. I've learnt how to speak about it... Um, ja and... the last couple of years [before] I haven't been a sociable person."

### ***3.2. Gambling and Substance Abuse***

The participants who struggled with gambling and substance abuse detailed how addiction and mental illness went hand in hand. Anneke explained how undiagnosed hyperactivity and anxiety disorders in childhood contributed towards her gambling addiction. Her feelings of worthlessness contributed to her belief that "I've never... been someone or something, or you know, I'm just... I wanted to provide... and until today I suffer with anxiety and bipolar. It's quite under control now with the medication, with the psychiatrist, but I realised that it was something that was coming from childhood..." Rowena shared a similar experience, relating her addiction to gambling to her traumatic childhood abuse, but stated how, during her second period of incarceration she realised much had changed in the correctional system and she started becoming involved in rehabilitative programmes. These helped her to realise that the start of her pathway had originated with her experience of sexual abuse in childhood:

"Ja... things have changed in here from years back. There's a lot of changes in the correctional system that help you to deal with things... Much, much more! I would say ninety percent more! I didn't gamble for ten years. And then the pressure got bad... but I... you know, you blame everyone. But you not blaming the root where it's coming from. And I've now, when we came in, I'm working on emotional wellness, I'm busy with forgiveness... there are things I want to, I need to deal with. I'm still very angry with things... that happened in my childhood. And only now have I dealt with the fact that I was molested. Yet again I wouldn't acknowledge what happened to me. I came here, was doing counselling and then one day it just popped out. And she [the correctional psychologist] was the first one I told this too. I mean we are talking now, forty-five years later! Because there was no one the first time..."

there was no things [courses]... In the same facility, and a lot of members know me and they say [surname]! [Laughing] And a lot are angry... I think they are starting, even some of my members say they can see the changing in me... from when I came in, from now. Even some of the inmates say they can see a change in me. I can feel the change in me. I'm becoming more confident. I'm not that... unconfident person I used to be. I don't want to buy people's love anymore. And, but I also know if, if I'm not fixed up by the time leave these doors, I'm going to come back. So, it's up to me... to, to, to participate in the programmes that they use... And to ask for help because if, because here it's the same, with all due respect to corrections, if you don't ask for help they aren't going to help you."

During my interactions with the participants, I was surprised by how many of the women were incarcerated for drug related offenses. The local research studies I had encountered during my literature review stated that among South African female offenders, narcotics offences were relatively rare, around 8%, compared to female counterparts in other countries (Artz & Rotmann, 2015; Haffejee, Vetten, & Greyling, 2005; Pretorius & Botha, 2009). However, 41.1% (n=7) of the women I interviewed confided that they personally had been addicted to drugs or alcohol. This higher number was similarly found by the research of Artz, Hoffman-Wanderer and Moults in the Western Cape, which reported that 72% of their respondents had admitted to abusing alcohol and 30% admitted to the use of drugs (2012). After considering commonalities among their study's participants, and the women I interviewed, it would seem that race played a major role. The racial profile of women involved in Artz, Hoffman-Wanderer and Moults's study revealed that the largest racial group in their sample comprised of coloured women at 46%, then white women at 24%, and black women at 19% (2012). Although this differs from the racial demographic of my participants, it must be noted that of the 7 participants I interviewed who confirmed their substance abuse, 3 were coloured, 2 were white, one was black and one was a foreign national.

Regardless of race, the women's accounts provided elements of commonality of experience with dependence on narcotics and alcohol. Both Zaida and Albie had started abusing substances as a result of abusive relationships. Zaida said of the father of her two youngest children that "He was teaching me how to smoke drugs and stuff... he was the... the second one... he was a little... lots abusive. He taught me to take drugs... and from then on I did not focus on myself or my children." This led to her incarceration and loss of contact with her children, who were now wards of the state.

Albie shared that at first, early on in her second marriage, she was "drinking a lot, every day and every night. My husband and I were always drinking... because of all the swearing and stuff when my husband is drunk... if you can't beat them, join them, you know? And, we were drinking every evening, every weekend and there was always trouble..." Zindiwe, a 28-year-old single mother to one daughter disclosed a strikingly similar sentiment:

"He became abusive when he started smoking drugs... I was in school with him... I was in grade ten... he was fine until he finished school and he went to find a job... he worked, then he started drugs when I was maybe a year after finishing my school... then after that he lost his job and that's when me, I find a job. So that boyfriend of mine he was abusive, always demanding money, beating me... always I must give him my money so that he can buy drugs... I was working at [restaurant chain], waitressing, there by [city]. He left his job, I don't know why or how ... for that time it [the drugs] was just only for him... until I got in and I said "What the hell, let me smoke drugs once"... and then that's when I started smoking... and he was so abusive to me, too much... and then I had to leave him... I went again to the streets and stayed there and smoked drugs... stealing and smoking and stealing... I went again to the streets to steal and smoke until I was arrested."

Not only had her drug use led to her arrest and incarceration, but Zindiwe's drug dependence had cost her the opportunity to be a mother to her daughter as well:

“I fell pregnant while we were staying on the streets, smoking drugs... then I [had] her at seven months. Her teeny tiny hands... it was so nice... I stayed with her for a week, because she was so small, they said I must come there every day and check in on her there by the incubator. There was a day when I couldn't go and visit the child [at the hospital], for two days, and they thought maybe that I ran away and left the baby... which I didn't, so they had to make a call and they called my family..... The social worker said that I won't be able to raise her on my own so they called the elders from my home and then, then my auntie came and take her away. So, me, I do not know my [child] because from that day she took her.”

Jackie's narrative, which accounted for her pathway, included abuse, addiction and isolation from her family, which were elements that were common to all the other women's shared stories:

“I was with my ex-husband since I was thirteen, until I was twenty-eight. We started taking drugs occasionally together, and then we took them behind each other backs, lying to each other... Then he had an affair and my life fell apart, basically. It's nobody's fault but my own fault because I started taking drugs, and I didn't stop. Obviously, I lost my kids... I fought very hard to get them back when they were taken away by the welfare. So, I stopped taking drugs for two years when I got them back, umm... then the boyfriend I was dating at the time was abusive. I loved him, but now I wouldn't say that I loved him, but at the time I loved him... but I think I more loved the idea of not being alone... so, and you don't really have your family... I wouldn't go to my family when I was high and I didn't want my kids to see me when I was high and things... And because I was high every day I hardly ever saw my kids. And with him, I didn't want him to be arrested so I told him I would do it [make fraudulent Identification Documents], thinking I was invincible. My standards lowered so much while I was on drugs that it just didn't matter anymore... and then I knew, as much as I was fighting to get my kids back at the time, I knew that they couldn't live with me because I could never subject my children to what I had growing up [seeing her mother abused]... So, I left him to go stay by their [sons] dad, but while I was staying with their dad I started smoking crystal meth and just didn't stop. I had stopped working so I started doing ID fraud to support my habit... I did it for a long time and I did it every day...”

#### **4. Experiences of Loss and Abandonment**

A pathway that was only briefly mentioned in one of the studies referred to in my literature review, was that of the experience of the loss of a loved one. Similarly, abandonment and poor relationships with parents were not common pathways portrayed in the local and international research. However, all 17 of the participants I spoke with communicated an experience of the grief and suffering of losing a loved one, or the pain and trauma of feeling abandoned by one or both parents. This important commonality could not be ignored as it was a related narrative that held great significance for the women and their paths taken to offending.

##### ***4.1. Death, Loss and Grief***

While listening to the life stories shared by the women, an all too common thread began to emerge, that of an episode that was a marker, a turning point, which irrevocably changed their life course. This was the experience of death, the loss of a loved one. For some, like Anneke, it exacerbated an already negative pathway taken:

“My dad was one of the most wonderful people that have ever lived on this earth..., he always used to laugh and he showed me a picture... they had a pram just for me and after I was out of the pram, because I was big enough, they had to throw it away because he had to rock it, all the time, because that’s the only time I kept quiet! He died four years ago... that was also terrible. Since he died, I must admit that the gambling get totally out of hand, ja...”

Furthermore, for most, the experience of losing a loved one often set off a chain reaction of events that, whether or not in the participants’ control, altered their pathways taken. As was the case with Zindiwe:

“Okay, my childhood was so nice... I grew up with both parents, my mother and my father and my brother and my younger sister so it was fine... We grew up well... but

my mother passed away and that's when things became, like, harsh... Sometimes I didn't want to accept that she had passed away... [I was] 15 years, ja, so that's when I wanted to give up and lost hope, but my grandmother was there to support us... she was always there for us... My mom's mother... so that [was] when I was okay, it was fine... but then the time came when she passed away... and then we were left with aunties, and they have their own children... so they didn't have that time for us... it was the time when my family, the ones who were telling me to go away, that is was not my home... I must go home to my father, but where is my father? So, I said okay, I will leave, and that's when I found a boyfriend and stayed with him and I continued working..."

And as we now know from Zindiwe's earlier excerpts, that boyfriend would go on to physically and mentally abuse her, introduce her to drugs, and led to her life on the streets.

For Theresa, the fear of losing her husband was the direct cause that led to her incarceration:

"At that stage all you think of is... I don't want to see my husband dead. I don't want to see my children without a father. And, I went to my company and explained to them what was wrong with my husband. He started showing signs of kidney failure, heart problems, everything went wrong with him... and I, after going to my company, they used to make empty promises to me, we'll do this next week, at the end of the month, and nothing happened. My husband's condition deteriorated and I just took the law in my own hands and I started taking money from my company for him to have hospital care, because we never had a medical aid, and it just got out of hand because eventually when I stopped six months down the line, they started picking up in the books what I had been doing and I admit it immediately. "Yes, I am guilty, this is the reasons why I did it." They were completely also aware of his health in the last period that time, and um... ja, that caused me to come here."

Albie shared a similar story of loss and grief that led to drug use and desperation to provide for her family:

"See, when my father passed away I was still nursing my husband, because for a year and eight months I was nursing him myself, and um, I just blocked my dad out and went on with [husband]. And when [husband] passed away, he passed away from

cancer, I just collapsed... Everyone told me you are a strong woman, a strong woman... But when [husband] died, my knees gave in, and no one was there to help me! Ja, and then, um, I was using the drugs. I hanged on there for another two years... we landed up [living] in a woman's front yard, in a caravan... and she just made life very, very difficult for us... so then I decided to do a trip, to take, um, something illegal out of South Africa but I didn't know at that stage what it was... but afterwards... it was dagga. It was to get another place to stay because I had to get the boys away from there... also at that stage my sister's husband, he, um, him, his two boys and my son were staying in the caravan because my sister passed away in 2013. Um... and then I wanted to do this trip to get another place to stay... and that's how I landed up here..."

#### ***4.2. Poor relationships with Mother***

For 8 of the women, a poor relationship with their mother was outlined as a significant life experience. Indeed, 6 of the women stated that they had been raised by their grandmothers instead. These unhappy ties varied when the women had still lived with, or had contact with, their mothers, such as Rowena saying "My mom and myself did not get on" and Anneke sharing that "Me and my mother never had a relationship. I always felt that she don't love me...", towards more maladaptive instances, as shared by Natalie. She had returned to South Africa, to live with her estranged parents, after growing up under the care of her grandparents, who lived overseas:

"Umm... My sister... At first, I was sharing a room with my sister but my sister did not want me in her room [starts to cry] so they built me a room outside... so I felt like I was a dog... chased outside... I was not given the opportunity to go study, and my English was not very good... [crying]... so I started working. Then my father [left] and things at home were financially not good because my father was putting all the money into [business there] and my mother was not working. So, I was helping out where I could... and it was just little things... my mother would go out on the weekend and they would not invite me... and they would lock the main house. So, I had to stay just in my room... and then I eventually just [left]... I didn't even tell

them, which I know it was wrong... she [her mother] knew where I was working... we were not even really speaking... so I just decide to find a place to rent, Ja, my mother used to do things to me that... if my father was there I was treated well, I would even get dinner... But if my father was not there I had to see to my own... everything!”

This dysfunctional dynamic was echoed in Rowena’s recollections of her estranged relationship with her mother, and its influence on her illegal actions later in life that led to her incarceration:

“So, um, my father passed away when I was in standard six and then I was forced to stay with my mom all the time. Ja, so it was not easy and I even asked God “Why my father and not my mother?” So, you can just understand, there was not that bond. Now, at this point in time... I will say, can say I was very difficult. I look back and I’m thinking “You were wrong.” Yes, they harmed me, but so? It didn’t... two wrongs don’t make a right. Then I moved out and I worked... Well, actually before I moved out, I was sixteen and my mom said to me “You pay me ninety-rand board and lodging.” And I had to pay ninety-rand board and lodging, that was it... And I think it was... my mom never did something for me without me having to repay what she’s done. There was always a condition. And she would always say “You are just like your bloody father!” So, there was always that friction between us. In later years I tried to win her love... What’s bringing me to this place is that I always tried to buy people’s love. I often wondered... if he was still alive... If I would have come this path... but you won’t know.”

Other women described how their mothers had never been a part of their lives to begin with. Noma portrayed this abandonment and the impact on her life as follows:

“My mother neglected me when I was only a few months, she had a fight with my father, and then she left home and then I’ve lived with my father, my whole life... And then, um, at school, I was... I couldn’t fit in because kids would talk about, my mom did this, my mom did that... so me, it was only my father.... And, so like, I will think that, I was not... like other kids. Maybe there is something different about me... So I couldn’t really make friends, so I was always on my own, and... I live also with

my grandmother, it was me and my grandmother. The person who was more involved in raising me was my grandmother.”

For Palesa, the estrangement had impacted her transition from childhood to womanhood:

“So, my mother, she was not... too much like... she was not part of my life for... a full-time mother to me. So, my mother was once arrested while I was fifteen years [old], I was very young... I was fourteen years old, she got arrested for theft, sentenced for one year. She spent one year in prison, and found a lover, here in prison. Then when she went out, they started dating and having kids together, so sometimes I feel like she didn't pay... she didn't give us time. When I started my period, my mother was not there. I was even afraid to tell my granny, now I am menstruating. I just saw the blood and then I just wrapped myself with, with the... something like a lappie [small piece of cloth]. I will wrap myself with it and then I will sleep because my stomach was painning and I was afraid... because they used to say when the blood is coming out, it means you sleep with boys. So, I was afraid my granny was strict. I was afraid of the gospel. I knew there was something called a period, but I was also afraid to open up with my granny because she would always say “Why do you got your period? You are dating, you are sleeping with boys.” So, my mother was not part of my life, she put her love life first. She was not putting us first, but my father was always there... but I could not share with [him]. Because, you see, my father, he loved us... you know he loves us, but he... if like, I want to talk, I can't talk to my father. If I want money I can talk to my father, say “Father please give me money, I want to buy something.” like for pads, he can give me. But, when it comes to... to talk, you know if you talk you become relieved... even if you did something [bad] but you talk about it... what is inside you, you feel that, that relief. So, my mother, even now, she is staying with her boyfriend, so it happened that there is too much difficult at home...”

#### ***4.3. Absent Fathers***

9 of the participants reported having absent fathers or, having fathers whom they knew, but who did not play a role in the familial life. It was often difficult to elicit any response from the participants when asking about their relationships with their fathers. Faith shared, in

a matter of fact manner, that “No, I didn’t have a father figure. So, I always had women around me. My grandmother and my mom.” Samantha explained, in a similarly indifferent demeanour, that:

“I have a dad... um... my mom and dad separated when I was eleven months [old]. Ja, so I really do not know him. Ah... I’ve tried making contact with him, but... he doesn’t want anything to do with me. I have no idea why. He’s never seen me, never spoken to me so I don’t know why...”

This casual acceptance of absent fathers, although a common attitude among the participants, was not universal. Four of the women confirmed that this absence and abandonment had a profound effect on their lives, such as Evelyn, who said that “I blame him because he was not there as a father.” Jackie shared how much her father’s absence had affected her life, and, without even knowing her father well, she had somehow followed a life path similar to his:

“My dad was never in the picture and my mom was always working, so I did my own thing... He is still a drug addict, at his age. I was born on his birthday, so... He was arrested after that [an assault on her mother], so he knows what prison is like... And I really didn’t have... When he came back to [city] and I was older he tried to have a relationship with me and I wasn’t interested. And then especially when I was doing the drugs, he tried to help me but I couldn’t really see how you can help me when you are doing the same thing... you know, tell me I’m not supposed to do this but you are doing exactly the same thing.”

Sadly, for Gloria, who earlier shared her experiences of abuse at the hands of her partner (as had her mother before her, at the hands of Gloria’s father) the poor relationship she had with her absent father, along with suffering the loss of both her siblings, led to family tragedy and her incarceration. She explained her thoughts leading up to her act of hiring of two men to kill her father:

“You know my mother, she was married... and then after she was married, her marriage was not okay.... My dad, he went out, to stay with another girlfriend... for

many years. So, at home we were three, but two of them, they are gone now, so it's only me left, me and my mom... my dad, he did not have kids outside [the marriage]. My mother, she was a domestic worker, for a long time... and then my father, he was working, in a right job but when I go to him, to ask for money; "Dad, I want to go to school, I want to do this... maybe I want to do computers, I want a uniform", something like that... He is going to promise me, then he is going to say you must come next week, on Friday or Saturday... and then the Friday is coming, or the Saturday is coming, and he will say "Gloria, I don't have money, for you". When I ask him why, he is going to tell me why... [Sighs] he is going to tell me... ja... he is going to say "Gloria, I don't have money, for you", I ask why? And then he is going to say I don't have money for you... I only have... I only have, I've only got money for my girlfriend's kids.... You see ... And then I... I... I don't feel okay. And then he, he is going to give me another date... and that date, it is coming again... and he is going to say again I don't have money... again, again, again... until... until that time I was going... Remember, my mother was a domestic worker... and I was growing up, I had a son... even now, the father of my son... he don't want to pay anything for my son. Then, I think I was eighteen years... ja, if I'm not mistaken, my brother.... He passed away... And then I went to him [her father] again, to say my brother, your son, he has passed away and we don't have money to bury him... And he, he is going to say; "I said, I don't have money! So, then my mother, she decided that no, we must leave here... we must leave here... so, it was not easy, it was not easy to leave him... because, he is our dad, he is our dad... it was not easy... and then, after five years again, my sister passed away... remember, I am left alone now. So, I went to my dad again. To tell him... to talk... to tell him, I don't have money... and my dad said again, "No, I don't have money", so I said okay, no problem, and I went to my boyfriend. So, then my boyfriend, he gave my mother seven thousand rand... to add to our money... and then we bury her, my sister... [Sighs]... After that, I think I was twenty-five, twenty-eight, or something like that... I went to my dad again, because, he is... my dad. I want to go to school, but I don't have money and, you know, my mother is not working. And he said, "No, your mother is working" and I said "No, she is not working!" because, she, she is a domestic worker. She can't pay... even five hundred rand... [Sighs] For years, for more than twenty years even... I was suffering. Then my mother, she was getting sick... it was cancer... and then, I went to him again, to tell him that my mother is sick... so what are we going to do now? I am

alone, I don't have support, I have no one near, by me... but he said no... and so I said "It is okay, I'm not going to bother you again... when I leave you." But then, in 20—or 20—I had to go to him again, because I wanted to go the hospital [to see her mother] and I was not working at the time. So, I decided to go to him again, because I needed money but he said no...

## **5. Race and Language**

As this study was narrative in nature, the language used in the participant's narration of their stories, was as telling as the life histories were themselves. Each woman was able, sometimes through the use of a translator, to share her story in a language that was familiar and comfortable to her, yet certain terms or words, none that I have ever encountered before in the general South African context, would crop up from time to time during the interviews. These seemed to be unique to the prison context, and in subsequent visits to the Johannesburg Female Correctional Centre, and indeed other correctional centres in Gauteng, I noticed that they were terms used by the correctional officers and officials as well. Despite these words' meanings not forming the focus of my pathways research on female offenders and motherhood, I never-the-less compiled a list (Appendix E) that, on later reflection, revealed some insights on the South African correctional environment.

### ***5.1. Race, Identity and Language***

Life history interviews were utilised during my research so that the discussions with the participants fulfilled the exacting purpose of encouraging the women to contemplate the sum of their life course so far, and the steps taken that led to their pathway towards incarceration. As a researcher, I expected certain themes to arise from these life history considerations, the majority of which have already been discussed in this chapter. However, the one subject that I did anticipate being mentioned by the women, that of their race, was never raised. I had expected discussions on race and ethnicity to become inevitably known during the course of

the interviews, and to form a central feature of the women's shared narrative. Any questions that related to race, put to the participants, were met with quizzical expressions and a dismissiveness, that similar to questions relating to gender, seemed to stem from its inherent feature in their lived experiences. This indifferent attitude towards race and its role in life pathways, had also been encountered by Artz, Hoffman-Wanderer and Moulton, who stated of the women they interviewed "that Black and Coloured women who grew up during and immediately after apartheid did not see issues of race as a central feature of their lived experiences." (2012, p. 221). This may be because, as Motsemme highlighted in her 2002 study on gendered experiences of South African women, female offenders, are, like many women on the outside "consumed by survival, motherhood and wifehood" (p.664). The everyday concerns and obligations as provider and caregiver, may mean that a woman's recollection of gender and race are so enmeshed within her all-consuming duties of paid and unpaid labour, that her narrations, and indubitably her own identity, is shaped by their envelopment in domestic and family life (Artz, Hoffman-Wanderer & Moulton, 2012).

The only participant who did, involuntarily, bring up the subject of race, was Maria, a foreign national from South America, and the subject was raised, not as a pathways marker, but in terms of her trying to adapt to life in a South African correctional facility:

"I am from South America... I was learning English, I finish it. I am learning Zulu... when I come here I was being bullying, forced to stay with other people. That's why I speak so nice English... my homegirls [other women from South America who are incarcerated with her], when they need my help, most of the time they talk to me to translate for them."

As stated by Kamwangamalu (2001), a result of the legacy of apartheid has meant "South African society has been divided rigidly along ethnic lines, with language and ethnicity being the main pillars of the apartheid divide-and-rule ideology." (p. 75). Interestingly, this

correlation between language use and ethnicity in post-apartheid South Africa, was seemingly blurred by the environment in which these women found themselves. Social interaction within an institutionalised multilingual society, such as in a South African correctional centre, had necessitated the development of a collective, common-property language that was context-dependent. This is revealed through unique terms used by offenders and officials, such as “Dankie Hek”, an Afrikaans term which literally translates to “Thank you Gate”, and are stridently stated whenever you find yourself in front of a gate or door and need it to be opened by an officer to allow access beyond its perimeter. Other context specific jargon, in vernaculars found across South Africa, included “Window visit” (interacting with a visitor from behind a glass division); “Ngamla” (refers to an offender who has visitors who bring them supplies) and “Folla” (roll call for offenders). These multilingual terms were used by all the female offenders, regardless of their mother tongue language. During their time conducting research in a correction centre in Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape in South Africa, de Klerk and Barkhuizen had also encountered practices which revealed a flexibility and mutual consideration in language use, which they proposed was developed in the interests of successful communication (2001). During their time spent interviewing staff and offenders, as well as observing day-to-day linguistic practice, the researchers stated that “Apparently this was not simply solved by mixing only within one's own linguistic community” as communications across ethnicity necessitated that individuals had to “get someone to explain or interpret informally. There appeared to be a general goodwill and determination to muddle through, with most prisoners willing to compromise” (de Klerk & Barkhuizen, 2001, p.111). It may be that the construction of social identities, including ethnicity and language, are not centrally fixed and only concerned with culture, but that specific settings may define an individual's communal identity that is most beneficial within said context, in this case, a correctional context.

This is a consideration that certainly warrants further research than was possible to complete within the individual expenditure constraints of a postgraduate student study. However, applying intersectional considerations to the topic of race in the lives in South African female offenders, helped to develop a partial and certainly incomplete comprehension which warrants furtherance of its geneses. If, as stated by Carbadó, Crenshaw, Mays and Tomlinson, the strength of intersectionality lies in its ability to acknowledge differences, applying an intersectional lens to the female offenders' perceptions of race and its impact of their previous pathways to crime, may reveal how a given issue of separate racial identity, is understood through experiences of marginalisation and victimhood (2013). These women's mutual acknowledgement of historical experiences of discrimination and social relegation, as told from behind the prison walls they now share, may create a connection and emphasis on shared commonalities, bolstering solidarity between female offenders and a related view of how their struggles are linked. Indeed, this solidarity may be further cemented by these women's direct and unobstructed view of the larger structures of suppression that monitor, regulate and enforce the normative patriarchal structures of our society.

## **6. The Role of Motherhood**

All of the above pathways were amplified by the role and the responsibilities of motherhood, with the majority of participants (n=13) being single mothers and breadwinners for their family from a young age. Gendered vulnerabilities imposed by a patriarchal society, plus pressures of motherhood that necessitated these women fulfilling the dual roles of provider and caregiver, often while victimised, without any support, can be seen as a contributing pathway to their subsequent offending actions. However, the effects of incarceration and subsequent absence from their families' lives caused further harm and contributed to the cycle of abandonment and loss.

### *6.1. Disintegration of the Family Structure*

Becoming a mother was a significant moment in all the women's lives, and for the most part was seen in a positive light, but with undeniable burdens placed on individuals who were often young, poor and lacking in support systems to carry the load. Maria, who married and became a mother at 17, explained the duality she experienced as a mother:

“It become better for me, I am becoming independent, because before I was holding... everything was him [her husband]! If he is angry, I get sad. Whatever he was doing, it was affecting me. So, when I have my son, he [her husband] becomes the second part of my life, which was good. It helped me. It was a change yes, but I was taking care of my son.”

However, being the primary breadwinner and caregiver had also led to her drug trafficking, subsequent incarceration and separation, across continents, from her children. For Theresa, now at an age and time in her life where she was able to look back on the pressure and responsibilities of motherhood, it was a question of whether or not she had done enough for her family:

“Adjusting a lot! But I enjoyed every moment, minute of it. Yes, you do complain... “I can't handle it anymore!” and the pressure is just too much on you, but the day you get incarcerated... believe me, you see life differently! And you think to yourself, had I just done more... had I told them just one more how much I love them... And, um, you just see things completely different when you [come here]. Ja...”

For most of the women and their families, the loss of the pivotal figure of support, both financial and emotional, was devastating. Lesedi, primary caregiver and provider for her sons and nephew, was very concerned as to who was taking care of their needs:

“And the kids are all with me... and then I have, uh, this child, also the fourth one, which is my cousin's child. Yes, the mother passed away, I took him when he was five years old. He is eleven now... he is going grade, uh, grade five. And then, there is

a small one who is four years old. That is the one that is worrying me most... you know, while I am here... my kids, my kids as well... they are home alone... [ex-husband] don't know what to do, seriously!"

Evelyn too became very emotional when explaining how her removal from her son's life may have negatively impacted on his emotional development:

"I mean when I was outside, my children was on medical aid, my children was my priority. A parent does everything for their children! You sacrifice everything for them... And it's like... you know what I'm sacred of, the most [starts crying] ... my son, the little one, he is in a fragile state now. He can easily get mixed up with the wrong children... because his mother is not there, his strong support. My mother has tried to get help but... she is struggling [financially] because she is not working and that... but it's like once you are in this place, you are cut off. And it's like, people don't really help [starts to cry again] and, like, when I got sentenced... no one can help her... what do we need to do? I'm one and a half year already here, still nothing... So, it's like, they sentence you and they... they say all these things [crying] but once you are in here, it's like... the family are on their own with the kids. So, it's like, when I got sentenced the whole stability got taken away from them..."

Others worried about their children's mental and physical health. Palesa explained how close a relationship she and her son had shared before her arrest, and how worried she was after seeing her son's appearance at a correctional family day:

"Too, too much! He lost weight, he lost too much weight. That one, he doesn't like to talk... He always watches movies... Sit inside the house, he does not like to play around. He likes watching movies and things... he is quiet the whole day... when he stops watching the movies, he will just wash the dishes. He can do everything, that child is very old... me and my child, we have a connection. You know, he will even remind me to drink medication... every day when [television show] starts he will say "Mama! Its time, its time. You want water?" For the ARV's [Antiretroviral]... He will say "Mama, you want water? Its eight-o'clock." [laughs] Ja, he will wash dishes. When he makes food, he will clean... the crumbs [mimics action of picking up each

crumb]. “Mama, its eight-o clock. Take your medication.” He even wants me to remind others...

This concern over their children’s welfare while they were incarcerated, also led to some of the women experiencing conflicting emotions towards those on the outside who were raising their children. Evelyn stated how her son was acting up after she was remanded, and how those taking care of him in her absence were not as attentive to his special needs as she had been:

“My son stays with my mother, but my mother is like... she says my son doesn’t want to listen and um... he is just aggressive and he talks back. His father has another... attitude towards him. I’m scared of that... the thing is this, they are currently not properly dealing with his ADHD [Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder]. And... I know my mother is trying her best, but I keep telling my mom that ADHD children... they can’t sit for like thirty minutes or an hour with their schoolwork. So, I said to his father “You have to take him.” I didn’t want him to at first because he stays with the girlfriend, he has a baby with the girlfriend, and she has her own children... but then, as time went on, like, what’s best for my child? Because his father can still keep him in control. So, at the moment, and I can’t think about myself, I need to think what is best for him. So now, I’m letting him stay with his father... during the week so at least he can take him to school because if he stays with my mother, some days he goes and some days not. So, he stays days during the week with the father, but the father, doesn’t know how to handle him also. It’s like, he has this controlling this over this child, it’s like I just explained to you about his school work now and the sitting. But that father doesn’t want to understand that... and he says the child doesn’t want to do his homework. And the more I tell him that it’s not how to raise a child, the more he says that I always have smart answers [starts to cry] and I keep telling him this child is gonna hurt! He’s damaging this child! And it’s like [crying harder] he just doesn’t want to listen! So, at the moment I am more worried about my twelve-year-old [crying]. I know they are trying, my mother and them but the child needs me! [crying] You know, he really needs me! And I don’t know what to do anymore...”

Palesa also felt that her child's needs were not being adequately taken care of by the members of her family during her absence:

“My child is... my sister is taking care of my child, but the problem... you know what is the problem? My child has lost too much weight. When they bring [him], I am not satisfied. He is not satisfied. Also, because when he misses me he will cry, he will hit other children, do funny things... and they ask him what's wrong... but if he doesn't feel to talk to you, he won't. He told them the truth that he miss his mother, and that's when they bring him to visit me... When I go out of prison he will be thirteen years old... It's not easy with me to be here, I understand my child too much... better than my sisters and everyone. That one is choosey with food and my sister is this person who is very strict. When she tells him he has to eat, my child does not eat. He does not eat...”

Out of the 17 women, 7 believed that their children were being well taken care of, on the most part by their mothers (n=5). 2 of these women's children were being cared for by their ex-husband's new wives, and they communicated the conflicting gratitude they felt for these women. Anneke explained the situation as follows:

“My ex-husband got married again and I must tell you that wife, she's really not a nice person in many ways, but there is one wonderful thing that she have, she is like a real grandmother to all the grandchildren. She... there is no difference between her kid's kids and my kid's kids. So, um... so she's ouma [name] and then it's me...”

Jackie explained her feelings regarding how her ex-husband's new wife, her best friend that he had an affair with, and left Jackie for, and who was now taking care of her sons:

“That's why I say as much as she has done me wrong, I can't say a bad word about her because she was there for my kids while I wasn't there, so... Even, like, if my kids want to come see me... especially the eldest one, he finds it very difficult because he, he remember the good times that we had because he was older... the little one can't really, he was too small and he was a baby... but [eldest son] remember it a lot and he cries often...”

## *6.2. Dislocation and Isolation*

Another unique finding from the interviews, was that of whether or not the mothers had truthfully shared with their children the events surrounding their incarceration. This was important as deception often led to the women becoming isolated and removed from their children, who did not visit. 10 of the women's children were not aware of where or why their mother was incarcerated, while 7 of the women had explained the situation to their children, in one way or another. For those mothers who had kept their children in the dark about the truth of their whereabouts, sparing their children's feelings led to separation within the lived lies. Zaida was one of those mothers that was adamant that her children must not know where she was:

“No! No! Oh my, I get so sad... because I didn't even wish my child... I went to the shops, without knowing what I would do [caught shoplifting], and I get... I just followed other people. So... I don't know my children are feeling at that stage because they don't know where I am, when am I coming home...”

Lesedi expounded on the story she had told her children concerning her current location:

“They just know that I am in China, and then, you see... So now, eh, my ex-husband told the young one, wanted to tell, wanted to bring them here... But how can you tell kids like that? So, I was here on the weekend, because we are allowed only to call on weekends, the world call... So now I must call again tomorrow because schools are opening and... you see... [start to cry]”

Faith had tried to communicate the situation to her children before being remanded, but then had become complicit in the false narrative her family and children had used to explain her absence:

“I explained to the big one. But the small one was too young at that time to understand. So, my mom said “No, I just told him that you work in Cape Town.” And I can see him every six months, or whatever the case. But the older one, I made it

clear to him, because he was already old enough to understand it. So, then I said to him “When you do something wrong, what happens?” and he said “Cops come.” And so, because he understands cops come, I said “Mom did something wrong, and cops will come, and mom will be away for a long time.” So, he said okay and I asked, “Would you visit mom?” and he said no, he doesn’t have a problem [visiting] and so I said, “How will you tell people in the neighbourhood?” and he said he will tell people that my mom is working somewhere, “I won’t tell them exactly where you are.” So, I was happy with that because he actually understands... but then, you can expect... by the time I come out he will be older now...”

Others, like Gloria, had told their children where they were, but not why they were incarcerated. Her son, now an adult, knew where she was but not why she had come to be there:

“Even my son, he is okay now... but I didn’t tell him why I am here... [he knows] maybe... rumours you see... but for me, it’s not easy to tell him... And he, he doesn’t have a problem to visit me... but the more he grows up, you see, the more... why his mother is here? ... Eish, I am worried for that! But I must tell him, and we must sit like this [indicates face to face] ...”

Samantha, whose children were placed in foster homes before her arrest, was not allowed to see her children at all, but was eager to explain her situation to them, one day in the future:

“I definitely want to see my kids. I’ve been trying with the social worker, all the social worker tells me is that there is nothing she can do for me. I want to see my kids... I want to see them with everything, I would give anything. I would sit my whole life in here if I can just see my kids once... They already have a reason to be furious with me and hate me for leaving them, and not being there, but... someday I will get to explain. I will get to correct what has been wronged. I won’t be able to take away the pain but... maybe they will be furious with me and want to murder me... and then... maybe we will be okay again.”

The minority of women, like Jackie, had explained to their children where they were and for what reason they had been committed to correctional custodianship, and felt that although it had been a very difficult thing to do, it was worthwhile in the end:

“I told them everything... and my son cried, [eldest son] took it a little bit hard with me being honest with him because he said “You always trying to hide things from us.” But now they understand better and the truth has actually helped. They’ve accepted it... The first time, after I had written the letter to my children, I was still at window visit... so it really upset me, the way they looked at me... the way they pitied me... and it was not what I wanted from them. They should have pitied me before I came to prison. So... I didn’t want them to feel sorry for me being in here because the way I lived my life outside was a lot worse than in here... but also, they... they weren’t... they didn’t say anything but the way they looked at me was... they weren’t sure that they could still trust me, because now I am a criminal... You understand? Because they never knew that before... So now, because I’ve been here awhile, they... we speak more openly about the things and I’ve told them about my crimes and how I ended up with the drugs... and how easy it is to get caught up in it. But in the beginning, my concern was just that my children would be ashamed of me...”

When asked if that had happened, Jackie replied:

“They definitely are not, cause I can say that my son even posted on Facebook [laughs]... I don’t actually want people to know I’m in prison, but he posts something on Facebook about Oscar Pistorius is out of prison before his mother [laughs] and she doesn’t deserve to be in there [laughs] and I was like “Oh my God!” but thanks for the vote of confidence [laughs]”

Natalie, explained that her children did know, but that it had been difficult to explain:

“They all know where I am and they have come to see me here. So... they know. Like [her daughter], last week, the time she was here she asked me when am I coming home. I said when my time is right, and she said to me what did I do and I told her... And she said, “Okay mommy” [starts crying] ... So, they understand... but not when they are sick! Cause I phone and they then they say why am I not home...”

And this was not without its consequences as her family had become separated:

“[Eldest son] is becoming a very responsible young man, I sat down and spoke to him on Saturday... He wants to study further... he wants to be a computer programmer, but... he is also under a lot of pressure because he has lost... a lot of physical contact with [his stepfather] and the little ones, he’s living with them [grandparents] in Cape Town... it’s a big mess, he wants to come back but he can’t come back at the moment because my husband is staying with his sister. Um, I push him a lot to not break contact with [his siblings] ... but [her husband] as the parent must still keep sending him messages, even if he doesn’t reply, at least he still knows that... like I said to him, my door will always be open. At the moment it is here, so it’s not very open but he can always... whatever he does... whatever, I will always be there, I get might get cross, at the moment but we will always find a solution. I will never close the door on him, on any of my children. My biggest fear is that they are going to forget me! I’ve missed so much. I’ve missed [eldest son] eighteen birthday, his first girlfriend... I’ve missed [youngest son and daughter] losing their baby teeth... his first day at school, hers next year... she is going to be the following year... I’ve missed so much... from her being a toddler to a little girl, you know... I’ve missed... [cries harder] but you know I can’t sit and think of what I’m missing, I have to look at the future... there will be other memories...”

### ***6.3.Freedoms Lost and Gained***

For the most part (n=15) the women believed that, as mothers who were sole providers and primary caregivers to their children, alternative arrangements should have been set up by the DCS which would have allowed them to repay their communities and society for their transgressions committed, but not penalised innocent children by separating them from their mothers and dividing their families. Evelyn elaborated:

“So, it’s like... DCS, I feel that they are not doing enough for the inmates... Although they are putting out there, that they are there to rehabilitate them, in this place... I think, what they don’t understand is... they think they are helping people but they are actually damaging them more. And... especially with the children! They don’t see the

circumstances, like, we have to pay for your crime which you did, yes! But then also look at the circumstances... like now, I'm busy, I'm fighting for an appeal... to go out, for them to look at my sentence again and to go out... but it takes time. And then in the meantime you have to fight for what is right... you have to lose the bond with your children which is difficult because you only see them once a week... and my mom tries to come in, but I tell her she mustn't come every weekend cause its money and stuff like that... So, ja... I, I personally say that... if they can look at us, where we could rather give back to the community..."

Faith also suggested alternatives to incarceration where she could pay her dues to society but remain as provider and caregiver for her children:

"Physically and emotionally, I'm happy... because no one can tell me otherwise when I come out. No one can say you've got a court date and no one can come and tell me that I was still investigated or whatever the case may be... So, I am happy with that. So, um, but it's just that it happened behind closed gates. I would've loved it to happen, maybe if, like...um.... The way they explained it was house arrest or something like that. So... it's okay... I'm okay with it, it's just that you find moments where you like... I just miss them [her children]! More than anything! And it's not really freedom [I miss] because I never really had freedom [before]. It's like the same thing, like I am in my house. Like I'm in my room..."

For some of the women, like Faith, their lives in a correctional facility were not that different from before, as they had never really been free. This was true for Zindiwe, whose experiences of losing her mother at an early age, abandonment by her family, abuse from her boyfriend and his introducing her to drugs and life on the streets, had all culminated in her losing her daughter and subsequent arrest. Finally, while in prison, she had a chance to break free of her past:

"I'm happy cause I'm here... God give me a chance to change my life, there is a purpose why I am here... and I thank God, I'm so grateful, cause God is great... if it wasn't for him, I was... I don't know maybe I would have been dead by now because staying on the streets is risky, it's dangerous... and I'm a woman, you see, so there's

lots of things that might happen to me. On the other way, I'm telling myself this place... for now... it's fine, until I learn my lesson, to change my ways..."

A similar sentiment was shared by Anneke, who said "It was so strange, when I got in here... it was that relief, in a certain way, of, of... I don't have to provide for anybody, anything, anymore..." Her pathway to gambling and fraud had stemmed from a pressure to provide as the only household breadwinner and caregiver, coupled with experiences of loss, abandonment and mental illness. In Noma's narrative, the pathways included poverty, domestic violence, abandonment by her mother, overwhelming caregiving responsibilities and her own mental illness, all of which had played a role in her final act of abandoning motherhood and led to her incarceration:

"I don't fit in. I would see myself as if there is something wrong with me because I live with my grandmother and father. The other kids have got mothers and fathers, both their parents, and I, it's only my grandmother and father. And then, okay like, my background, it wasn't, the financial, they weren't like... you could say we were poor. So, other kids will have things and my family doesn't. And because I see myself as somebody who doesn't have any and they have, like even food for school... maybe sometimes I don't have. I grew up without my mother so I always, um, had this space in my heart that I've... you know like I told you I grew up with my grandmother and father, so I've never, like... okay, they tried to give me love, but I never had that motherly love. So, like, to me my boyfriend was everything... but he left... and I decided... it's going to be me, me and my kids... because I thought, okay, I did not have a mother, I don't have anyone. So, if I just kill myself, what will happen to my kids... and I think of street kids... I see street kids, I don't want to see my kids going through that. And then, I decided that... I'm gonna kill myself with my kids. I wanted to kill myself, but... when I thought of my mother also, like, I had that picture that my mother left me when I was young and everything... So, in me, in my mind, I thought no, I don't want to be like my mother. I won't leave my children alone. I won't leave them to suffer... So, I took the, um, poison, the poison for rats, and then I mixed it with some milk... and then start by giving [to] my two kids, and then I gave myself..."

Noma's decision to take her children's lives was the heart-breaking culmination of her reflections on the life she had lived, and, in an ambiguous action of autonomy, how she chose to break the vicious cycle of poverty, loss and maternal sacrifice.

## **Conclusion**

The recorded considerations conveyed by the female offenders' life histories, documented here, in their own words, express value regarding the intersectionality of the social disparities these women face, and how these oppressive conventions have intertwined with their lived experiences to shape the collective pathway they tread towards incarceration. Victimisation, gendered norms, relegation of the mentally ill, feminisation of poverty... All these form multiple threats of discrimination whose intersecting, multidimensional marginalisations have encumbered any agency these women may have had. This has subsequently led to a situation faced by the women whereby the very society whose patriarchal conventions and moral authority have persecuted them, forces their exclusion from their communities and compounds the vicious cycle of marginalisation and oppression that will shape the pathways of their children to come.

The overarching themes of agency; patriarchy; poverty and motherhood will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, locating the stories shared here, and the subsequent pathways to offending, within this context of patriarchal power. This will include understandings of female offender agency and autonomy, their experiences of violence and gendered roles, feminisation of poverty and, finally, motherhood, the thread of unanimity that links these inside narratives in concert with the experiences of women on the outside.

## CHAPTER 5:

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

#### **Introduction:**

Elucidation of the narratives shared in the previous chapter revealed a pathways convergence and a manifold-identity dynamic among the women that needs to be understood within the broader social context in which they were produced. Through emphasis on the interactions between the local and the global, feminist scholars have investigated growing gendered inequality in the global context of patriarchy and poverty, linking this to individual instances of victimisation (Sudbury, 2005), and for the specific setting of this research study, to the role of motherhood.

As will be clarified through the discussions to follow, the patriarchal nature of South African society is reflected in the individual embodiments and social constructions of masculinity and femininity, where the feminine is believed to be inextricably linked to motherhood and dependence on men, whereas the masculine is marked through sexual activity and conquest (Bower, 2014). This patriarchal and traditional view of women, coupled with men more often occupying positions of power and influence than women, leaves these women, particularly those in rural areas, vulnerable and marginalised (Statistics South Africa, 2013). Despite the South African Constitution and legislation legitimising the equality of all the country's citizens, the patriarchal nature of our society has an enormous impact on the lives of women, contributing significantly to perceptions of the roles and rights of women, and to the high levels of sexual violence, as well as to the poverty and inequality that characterise their lives (Bower, 2014).

This chapter endeavours to situate these women's shared stories and pathways to offending in this context of patriarchal power, as a failure to "demystify the dynamics of patriarchy" within our society ultimately sanctions the "normalizing or excusing the oppression" of women, instead of recognising that, for all women, "this normalization of subjugation more generally occurs every day and at all levels of social reality – personal, familial, institutional, national and international." (Mama, 2011, p. 19). To this end, the discussions here include understandings of agency and autonomy, violence and gendered roles, feminisation of poverty and motherhood, all of which lead to a re-examination of the antecedents of the offences perpetrated by these South African women, who are mothers to the next generation.

### **1. Accountability and Agency**

One of the issues Gueta and Chen identify in the feminist pathways perspective is that its application may unintentionally reproduce traditional ideas of passive femininity, presenting women as victims who are propelled towards a life course, possessing little control or choice over their actions, and in so doing fails to regard women as active subjects, ignoring any sense of agency they may experience within the pathway to offending (2016). They argue that this discourse does not reflect the multiple, contradictory pathways to offending taken by incarcerated women, and suggest that female offender agency and autonomy over their behaviour indicates that their actions of pointedly targeting a goal and achieving said goal, is based on the assumption that they have a choice to do so within the construct of their cultural and social world. Furthermore, they explain that the agency discourse may be absent from literature regarding women's pathways to crime because women who experience agency with reference to committing offences "are viewed as doubly deviant, as they risk their normative gender roles as well as their reproductive capacity. They are therefore construed as "unfeminine" (Gueta and Chen, 2016, p.791).

In order to prevent such narrative distortions, feminist scholars (Anderson, 2008; Ettore, 2004) explicate the importance of the comprehension of incarcerated women's accounts of their pathways to crime, in their own words, and then intersecting between these an understanding of the dynamics of victimisation, agency and gender, as well as broader contextual issues, in order to create a holistic account. In this research study, when reflecting on the narratives that the women communicated during their interviews, careful consideration was given to those discourses which indicated agency and autonomy within pathways taken. It was through these chronicles of their life histories that participants revealed a dual use of discourses. These consisted of varying degrees of recognition of individual accountability and agency when committing illegal acts, which were, regardless, accompanied by a contextual explanation of interpersonal or sociostructural influences on these decisions (Bandura, 2001).

For those few participants who arbitrated their personal agency in the events that led to their incarceration, these actions were usually expressed through an explanation of the influence exerted by the dysfunctional dynamics in their lives. These women communicated their narratives most often within victimisation pathways, through differing levels of agency. Some of the women, like Gale, explained their actions through the fear they endured living with a violent and abusive partner: "I wasn't directly involved in the murder... My fiancé... he told me to drive with him to get rid of the body... and... because he was abusive and controlling as well, I think I feared for my own life". Others, including Samantha, communicated a narrative where they 'snapped' or 'lost control' after surviving years of abuse. After Social Services arrived to take away her children because her boyfriend was abusing them, she explained how she retaliated against him, resulting in her incarceration for Grievous Bodily Harm (GBH); "I'm trying to deny it, cause he is standing right next to me, I say something I know I'm gonna get it when they are gone... But uh, they took my son... I got mad... I just lost it..."

Alternatively, dysfunctional familial relationships were interconnected in these narratives, as in the case of Noma, who said of her pathway to crime: “I’m gonna kill myself with my kids... when I thought that my mother left me when I was young”. Here, she communicated her capacity to exercise control over her own life, as well as the lives of her children, while explaining that her behaviour was a direct result of the abandonment she had suffered through as a child when her mother had rejected her. Sometimes the women’s fear of the destitution they faced when raising their children explained how their own particular choices came to be made. This was the case for Anneke, who elucidated her participation in stealing and fraudulent activities with “it was because I had three boys, and my ex-husband, never paid maintenance, never...” and who also expressed agency when she said “It’s not an excuse, it’s just... an explanation of how it be...” The small number of women who had considered their personal agency within its context, had come to the conclusion that the dysfunctional dynamics of their context had played a major role in their behaviour. Only one woman who was interviewed, Jackie, had a differing discourse which promoted sole, personal responsibility in considering her incarceration: “It’s nobody’s fault but my own fault because I started taking drugs, and I didn’t stop.”

The majority of the women had not considered their agency within their lived circumstances but constructed accounts in which they positioned themselves as occupying roles on both sides of the general moral order, that of victim and wrongdoer. This formed part of the narrative of Albie, who said that desperation to provide for her family led her to traffic drugs, but that “I decided to do a trip, to take, um, something illegal out of South Africa.”, and Zindiwe, who attributed her drug abuse to escape from the violence she experienced, but expressed agency in her statement “I went again to the streets to steal and smoke until I was arrested.” Theresa had also expressed this contradiction when explaining how she had stolen money from her employer to pay for her husband’s medical bills “Yes, I am guilty, this is the

reasons why I did it”, but then blamed the company for not assisting her when they knew she could not afford to do so; “They were completely also aware of his health in the last period that time, and um... ja, that caused me to come here.”

These were all important indicators of the participants’ individual autonomy in their subjectivity and identity, as well as of their thoughts and attitudes, which further inform the moral positions inherent in these constructions. However, though every position divulged varying degrees of the acceptance of responsibility or the assignment of blame, assigning individual agency on basis of narratives influenced by socially and culturally constructed discourses, is problematic. It assumes that these women’s life circumstances afforded them complete freedom of choice when it can be argued that agency moves only within the resources available in a person’s particular social world (Sewell, 1992). If that is so, then the limited resources available to, and numerous challenges faced by, the female offenders interviewed, promulgates agency only through a “path of narrowing options” (Worrall, 1999, p. 46).

### ***1.1. Agency with Limited Options***

If agency in action is considered to be the ability of an individual to act on their own behalf and reveal their “self” in decisions they make and actions they take (Caputo and King, 2015), then this meaning is apparent in the words the women used during the research interviews when disclosing their life histories. However, as discussed by Nuytiens and Christiaens, “Limited options” and “Making choices in gendered life contexts” (p. 206), complicate women’s agency, to reveal more than a simple identity-action construct (2015). Numerous studies (Daly, 1992; Modie-Moroka, 2003; Ferraro & Moe, 2006; Pollack, 2007; DeHart, 2008; Gehring, 2016; Yingling, 2016) have demonstrated that victimisation and multi-layered vulnerabilities, including poverty, mental illness and experiences of loss and

abandonment, are prerequisites when understanding the female offender's pathways to crime. Indeed, this study's preceding chapter confirms as much, through the words spoken by the participants. Yet, it also can be seen from these discourses that the boundaries between what constitutes a 'victim' and an 'offender' are often co-mingled and imprecise, which further complicates the important question of agency (Nuytiens & Christiaens, 2015). The women are not without agency and merely passive victims of their life circumstances who are 'forced' or 'compelled' into crime (Richie, 1996). Beyond the tragedies, cruelties, challenges and limitations they have experienced in their daily lives, these women acknowledged, even in some small part, that they were active agents, having agency and making choices (Nuytiens & Christiaens, 2015). What the results of this research study hope to convey in the contextual discussions to follow, is an understanding of why these women made these life choices and through the collected life histories, reveal their agency within the cumulative impact of their gendered life context. This 'path of narrowing options' is undeniably shaped by agency, a fluid measure of human decision-making, but it does so by negotiating in a society that is patriarchal, violent and poverty stricken, as an expression of identity situated in the social and cultural world (Caputo and King, 2015).

## **2. Patriarchy**

To understand this world that South African female offenders (and the general female population) find themselves in, requires comprehension of tradition, culture and gender in our country, "concepts that are strongly influenced by the historical impact of apartheid, post-apartheid and globalised influences" (Mayer & Barnard, 2015, p. 342). Since the cession of power by the apartheid regime in 1994, South Africa has made significant strides towards protecting and enhancing the rights of women. The new democratic government moved swiftly to ensure the realisation of these rights and ratified, at an international level, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in

1995, and, at the regional level, signed the SADC (Southern African Development Community) Protocol on Gender and Development; the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and the Maputo Declaration on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (Bower, 2014). Yet beyond these powerful executions, the disparity between these edicts espoused on paper and the lived experiences and position of women in our society is profound. As stated by Bower in her paper entitled *The Plight of Women and Children: Advancing South Africa's Least Privileged*; "to be a woman is, for far too many, to be poor, disempowered, and vulnerable to appallingly high levels of sexual violence" (2014, p. 107).

Of even more concern is that often, the advancement of women's rights is viewed by men to be employed at the cost of their own rights. In her ethnographic research conducted in rural villages in the Eastern Cape Province in South Africa, Kathleen Rice found that many young men felt that they had been wronged, and their rights marginalised as a result of the development of rights towards gender equality (2016). In order to better understand these cultural circumstances and societal perceptions, and how these influence the lives of female offenders in South Africa, we need to take a closer look at the contemporary, gendered conflicts in the context of our fledgling democracy.

### ***2.1. Gendered Roles and Contexts***

Traditional gender roles and cultural stereotypes, it would then seem, have remained ingrained in our society beyond our democratisation and continue to perpetuate role-bound expectations and identities of women. It is an externally perpetuated and self-established patriarchal hierarchy, where men are seen in the public domain, working on the 'outside' as the providers and are, therefore, head of the house, meaning that the authority and power still lies with them, while the more submissive, less visible and recognised care-giver and emotional support roles are associated with women, 'inside' the private domain of the home

(Mayer & Barnard, 2015). Tamale describes how gender roles and power relations are historically and culturally linked to the ideology of domesticity, and closely interconnected with patriarchy, which defines women in such a way that “their full and wholesome existence depends on getting married, producing children and caring for her family” (2004, p. 51). These domesticated, gendered roles of wife, daughter, mother and homemaker are problematic when they become synonymous with womanhood, as key constructs of a woman’s identity, confining her to the home and refusing to register her participation in non-domestic spaces (Tamale, 2004).

This impact of gender and cultural dynamics can be seen to manifest themselves through the declarations of the female offenders interviewed, when they reiterated hegemonic gendered constructions within their own lived experiences. This was especially evident with the reproduction of stereotypical male-female gender roles in the family and home. Albie said of her marital relationship “My husband believes wife is staying at home, looking after the kids and everything...” This was a gendered role that she had agreed with and subscribed to, but which had later proven to play a role in her pathway to trafficking drugs for money to provide for her children; “It wasn’t a good thing, because when he passed away, he was the breadwinner, and he left me with nothing...” Until she had found herself alone, having to fend for herself and her children ‘outside’ the home, Albie had not argued with her husband’s idea of rigid masculine and feminine roles during their seventeen-year marriage. These had been entrenched in her identity during her childhood, as she disclosed when she explained that her parents had decided to remove her from school so that she could marry an older man she had never met, enabling her younger brothers to complete their education; “They are men, they can finish school and do something out of their lives, I can still depend on them.”

She was by no means alone in this understanding of gendered roles in the home and familial domain. Sadly, many of the women had based their roles and that of their partners on

the same dysfunctional, violent and patriarchal family dynamics they had experienced as children. The migrant labour system of the apartheid government not only divided families by uprooting fathers and sending them to work far from home, but it also set up a society where the absence of fathers meant that they could only be present to their families through the gendered role of financial provider (van den Berg, 2017). This stereotypical gender role and expectation, as enforced through an apartheid legacy of public sphere governmental control and discrimination, contextualises not only the private sphere of familial devastation regarding the absent father narratives, as shared by many of the female offenders, but it also elucidates the rigid belief in a gendered ideal of men as responsible for fiscal provision in the fatherhood role, but not caregiving responsibilities. As Palesa said of her relationship with her father “he loves us, but... if I want to talk, I can’t talk to my father... I can’t share with him. [Only] If I want money, I can talk to my father, he can give me [money].” The detrimental influence of these prescriptive, gendered norms revealed itself later in her life, where Palesa espoused this monetised ideal of relationships with men. She rationalised the controlling, promiscuous and abusive behaviour of her boyfriend and child’s father, which led to her violent retaliation and incarceration, with statements like “My boyfriend was a sweet guy, he didn’t want me to work... he was a gangster, he said he will pay me everything” or “He was very... very over protective. If I got a job, he will just say “You know what, just leave the job, I will pay you the money.”

Here we see examples of the patriarchal nature of South Africa where the participants’ standards and epitomes of men and women originate in the public spaces they encounter, the society that surrounds them, and the laws that govern them, which are then sustained in the private, home environment. These women create meaning in their relationships by drawing on the gendered discourses available to them, as provided by patriarchal stereotypes, and which, in turn, influence their own individual narratives that are socially produced and

sanctioned narratives of gender. The narrative analysis reveals how, for many of the women, ‘acceptable’ forms of identity involved the appropriation of the ‘femininity’ narrative, that of being passive and accepting a social script which insists on particular feminine roles for women and masculine roles for men (Boonzaier, 2008). As explained by Pumla Dineo Gqola, belied patterns of such gendered thought and complicity sanction “that women must adhere to very limiting notions of femininity” (2007, p.116). Gqola calls this a “cult of femininity”, where women participate by modifying their behaviour and adjusting all aspects of their life to fit the patriarchal norm (2007, p.121). Beyond the historical antecedents of the subjugation of women, the female offenders in this study continued to support the persistence of particular gender roles in society and in their own homes (Bower, 2014), even when it threatened their own well-being and safety.

## ***2.2. Victimisation and Isolation***

The victimisation narrative is a prominent predictor in feminist pathways research, and this was also true for the incarcerated women I spoke with. Much like the statistics reported by Gender Links in 2012, where 77% of women in Limpopo, 51% in Gauteng, 45% in the Western Cape and 36% of women in KwaZulu-Natal had experienced some form of gender-based violence (GBV), nearly all the participants interviewed for this study had shared stories of abuse and victimisation. It is unsurprising then that the high rates of femicide and GBV perpetrated in South African society should be telling of the higher numbers of South African female offenders being incarcerated for violent offences, rather than economic or drug related offences, as compared to statistics of incarcerated women worldwide discussed in the literature review (Luyt, 2008b; Ackermann, 2014). Research has found that when violent crimes are committed by women, they are often related to retaliation, self-defence or defence of their children (DeHart, 2008; Boonzaier, 2008; Shechory, Perry and Addad, 2011) rather than for economic gain, in cases of armed robbery and related crimes. This was evident in

some of the narratives shared by the women who had been incarcerated for violent offenses, including Noma, Gale, Palesa and Samantha. In her shared story, Palesa explained how she had endured years of abuse at the hands of her partner and had been arrested for murder and attempted murder after setting fire to her bedroom where her boyfriend and his mistress were sleeping; “Then they went... to the room, with me sitting like this in the dining room! I take the newspaper... then I turn the heater upside down so the paraffin just fill the newspaper and I put it under their door...”

Research from South Africa (Boonzaier, 2008; Bower, 2014; Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation [CSVR], 2016) cements a setting characterised by high levels of GBV and gender inequality and found that patriarchal attitudes, which often favour men over women, create an imbalance of power that results in gender inequality and discriminatory patriarchal practices against women, both regarded to be root causes of GBV. These reports confirm that the deeply patriarchal nature of South African society is not only reflected in the social constructions of masculinity and femininity, but also feeds directly into the high levels of intimate partner violence (IPV) and GBV experienced by the female offenders. The women spoke of the intergenerational violence they experienced, from their fathers towards their mothers, which was then passed on to them through the abuse they experienced at the hands of their husbands and boyfriends. What was most disquieting was the ambivalence the female offenders expressed regarding their rights and position within gendered sociality. Similarly to Rice’s research, the participants in this study all claimed to approve of equal rights for women, but conversely most admitted that in the past they had not exercised these rights whenever they had been physically and sexually assaulted (2016). For Jackie, this reluctance had cost her a relationship with her children “Having to let go of them again when he hit me, because he did hit me in front of them... was the end me for... I used [crystal meth] every single day for three years straight.”

For the women in this study, it seemed that femininity was still seen to be indistinguishably part of being a self-sacrificing mother, most often emotionally dependant on a man, while masculinity seemed to be epitomised via a need for sexual activity and conquest. Infidelity apportioned to their partners was made known through a dull sense of inevitability by nearly all the women. This was painfully demonstrated in the case of Maria, who even as a breadwinner and mother, had sacrificed her life and home to follow her husband to South Africa, where she discovered he was living with another woman: “I found out he never come alone here. He come with his girlfriend... I find out when I ask my lawyer why he is charging me six thousand dollar, when for my husband I pay nine thousand? And he said to me I pay for [her husband] and his accused, they come together.”

The reluctance of the women interviewed to pursue rights-based justice, even when legally justified to do so, often resulted from a lack of support. This is an important and helpful aspect to consider when trying to understand narratives of such violence and emotional abuse. In the women’s own families, gender violence was widespread and widely overlooked, forming part of the way that masculinities and femininities were experienced, and conceptualised in their childhood. This lack of support forms the start of a vicious circle, where the abuser further controls and isolates the victim from family members, friends and colleagues through threats and violence. These shared narratives evidenced how social constructions of masculinity do not only approve masculine ideals of heterosexual performance, strength and an ability to ‘control’ women, but more concernedly, legitimise unequal and violent relationships with women (Bower, 2014). It then becomes clear that GBV is caused by an interplay of individual, community and cultural factors interacting at different levels of society (CSV, 2016). Historically and culturally, men have been ascribed the roles of head of household, protector and provider. Equality between the sexes may

represent a loss of power and authority for some men, and, in the resulting crisis of male identity, violence is sanctioned as a tool to try to maintain patriarchal power.

### **3. Feminisation of Poverty**

The poverty pathway figures prominently in any adequate explanation of the dramatic increases in the male and female incarcerated population (Sudbury, 2005; Kjellstrand et al., 2012; NICRO, 2017), both in South Africa and abroad. Coupled with the country's high level of unemployment in the insecure and informal sectors, of which South African women make up the majority, the daily life of women in our country is a perpetual struggle. The United Nations 2013 Human Development Report stated that the unemployment rate for women is higher than the national average, with only four out of ten South African women employed, and for black South African women the figure escalates to 50%. For the thousands of women living in the country's rural areas, the situation is direr. Crippled by the growing unemployment and a lack of adequate social security, the denial of basic services has seen many of these women forced to shoulder the burden of survival through the responsibility of taking care of the household (Statistics South Africa, 2013). In a society structured under the notions of patriarchy, it is therefore a woman's social responsibility to take care of all things relating to the home and the welfare of her family, a gendered, homemaking role that antiquated forms of patriarchy in capitalist economies have ensured is never valued (Benjamin, 2007). As discerned in the previous chapter, some of these women view relationships or marriage as having the potential to alleviate their destitution, only to find that the men they turned to as saviours become abusive and violent, wanting to control them. In certain instances, this survival mode is criminalised when it takes the form of revolutions of debt, theft, fraud and substance abuse or trafficking.

Yet, despite the fact that it cannot be disputed that women who are on the lower rungs of the economic ladder find it increasingly difficult to free themselves from the feminisation of poverty, Boutron and Constant caution against feminist scholars' singular use of the narrative of poverty producing desperation and leading women to violate social and legal norms (2013). They assert that this motivation of mothers seeking to support their children is altogether consonant with traditional expectations for 'good' women, suggesting that the feminisation of poverty and transnational criminality is a far more complex configuration, which "must be analysed in relation to continuing attempts to domesticate women's bodies." (Boutron & Constant, 2013, p.178).

### ***3.1. Female Breadwinners***

The majority of the incarcerated women who contributed towards this research study were primary breadwinners in their homes. They shared stories of being young, single mothers earning their wage in gendered, low paid work to support their children born out of wedlock. On the whole, the women agreed that they had taken on this provider role through securing paid employment, not by choice, but as a matter of survival. Phrases such as "I had to! I had no choice... nobody was supporting me so I had to support myself. Most of the things were on my shoulders..." shared by Natalie, and "Everything! Everything they had! That house depended on me..." as proclaimed by Faith, convey the enormous pressure these women felt as the sole providers for their children and extended families. Though Boutron and Constant (2013) advise against the use of the poverty narrative, the agency expressed through the women's assertion of poverty and pressure to provide as a pathways provenance cannot be repudiated. The *2015 Report on the Status of Women in the South African Economy* stated that: "While poverty has declined since the end of apartheid, females remain more likely to be poor than males. Additionally, poor females tend to live further below the poverty line than their male counterparts, suggesting greater vulnerability." (p. 10). These differences

are larger in female-headed households, with South African women dominating the informal sector, part-time employment and domestic work, the most exploitative categories of work (Bower, 2014). It is not surprising then, to learn, that Statistics South Africa stated in their *Labour market dynamics in South Africa* report in 2015 that on average women earned 23% less than men. They estimated that men earned a median income of R3, 500.00 per month while women earned R2, 700.00 per month (Stats SA, 2015). This fiscal disparity is then particularly onerous for female-headed households, which are, therefore, by their very nature, more likely to exist as lower-income households and be more vulnerable to extreme poverty. This lack of adequate income may also compromise the health of these women and their children, as well as their access to services, forsaking them to situations where their physical safety may be threatened (Hall, 2012). Furthermore, female-headed households do not only on average contain a larger proportion of children, but the burden of support for extended family members is also larger in these households (Stats SA, 2013). What is also of concern is that the disruption of traditional gender norms that occurs in the homes of female breadwinners, often results in violence and abuse (Parry & Segalo, 2017). Research conducted on the lived experiences of South African female breadwinners revealed a combative environment where male partners of these women, who are fulfilling the non-traditional gender role, feel justified to commit acts of violence against them as their masculine identity is threatened (Parry & Segalo, 2017).

It is apt then, without removing agency or autonomy from the women of South Africa, incarcerated or not, that they were included in the aforementioned article *Social profile of vulnerable groups in South Africa, 2002–2012* by Statistics South Africa. It is already established that our patriarchal society denotes that women are faced with a wide range of serious obstacles that prevent them from attaining complete equality. It is now also clear that victimisation and poverty patterns are inherently influenced by gender. The feminisation of

poverty means that women, particularly those running female-headed households, are generally much poorer than men and that women are over-represented in low-skilled, low-paying jobs and the wage gap between male and female earnings persists, particularly in these low and semi-skilled occupations (Bhorat, van der Westhuizen & Jacobs, 2009). Sadly, in addition to these challenges thrust upon the female offenders who assumed the ‘traditionally male role’ of primary provider, research has revealed that the position had not led to more egalitarian gender relations either. Rather it predisposes a woman to resistance and aggression regarding their defiance of male authority when men were perceived to no longer be upholding their share of the patriarchal bargain, and women feeling that their roles were underrated in economic terms and their work demoted to being domestic and unpaid (Rice, 2016).

### ***3.2. Gendered Division of Labour***

Evident in the literature above, women are still over-represented among the discriminated work force, as underpaid and undervalued workers across the globe. Despite South African women’s contributions towards the country’s economy, research (Hall, 2012; Stats SA, 2013; Boutron & Constant, 2013) evidences that for these women, returns to education are lower, the gender-based wage gap endures and occupational exclusion positioning them in gendered trades further exacerbate the existing inequalities. Here, the undervaluation of the female labour force contributions go hand in hand with society’s lack of recognition of unpaid work, which is viewed as an inclination naturally arising in the female disposition and not requiring any skills. This unpaid work includes all non-remunerated work activities occurring in the household, as well as unpaid care work, which is any activity devoted to those who cannot care for themselves (Antonopoulos, 2009).

This deficiency in society's recognition of so called 'women's work' is demonstrated in the 2015 *Report on the Status of Women in the South African Economy*, which states that "women are responsible for the lion's share of unpaid work, with women bearing a particularly large burden in terms of care work." (p.10). The report outlines, in detail, how rural, black women between the ages of 30 and 45 face particularly strong demands on their time, spending more than eight hours on average per day in productive activities when access to basic services like electricity and running water, are not available (2015). In her research study conducted for the International Labour Office (ILO), Rania Antonopoulos presented similar findings, which revealed that disparities in the division of labour, along gendered lines and between paid and unpaid work, had persisted, with men spending more of their work time in remunerative employment and women performing the majority of unpaid work (2009). This societal imposition of an illogical time-tax on women throughout their daily lives, especially in terms of care work, have significant and detrimental implications for their participation in the paid reproduction of labour. Palesa's narrative typified this outcome, when she shared that "Every morning I would go to wash my granny, change my granny... it was like I was going to work. Every day in the morning I will take my child to the crèche, then look after my granny..."

For mothers in particular, feelings of obligation and commitment to others' well-being compels them to perform the unpaid work that forms part of their normative gendered narrative. This was apparent in Teresa's relation of a traditional, Christian-like home where "after work your hours is not your own" and when Natalie spoke of how her children phone her, in the correctional facility, asking "why am I not home, daddy can't do this, daddy can't cut my nails... he can't brush my hair..." This motherhood role, so inextricably interrelated with the unpaid reproduction of labour, which "provides a sanitary and healthy environment for everyone in the family, irrespective of age and health status, that transforms raw

ingredients to consumable cooked food, and provides for clean and ironed clothing for all members of the household” (Antonopoulos, 2009, p.5) is not considered work worthy of recognition or reparation. Calling it anything but unremunerated labour deceives and placates women into believing that the answerability they pay penance for in the primary, daily, generational reproduction and upbringing of children, essentially the social reproduction of all members of our society, is insignificant ‘women’s work’. Unpaid work is therefore embedded in patriarchal structures that sustain a ‘gendering’ status quo, which falsifies and confines a woman’s potential by proclaiming that it is ‘normal’ and ‘natural’ for her to be performing most of the unpaid labour, further restricting the lived experiences of a group of women who are already conveyed along this current, journeying along a path of narrowing options.

#### **4. Motherhood and Offending**

As seen through the women’s narratives, a confluence of factors, which included gendered vulnerabilities imposed by a patriarchal society, coupled with fulfilling the dual roles of provider and caregiver as a mother, contributed to their pathway to offending. Despite social perceptions of femininity as, at best ‘the gentler sex’ and at worst ‘the weaker sex’, which would have most believe that the self-sacrificing ideal of motherhood operates as a motivation to remain crime free, these women have confirmed otherwise. Similarly, in their 2016 research study, Rodermond, Kruttschnitt, Slotboom and Bijleveld found that when a mother felt incapable of taking care of her children and was overwhelmed and stressed by the demands of the role, motherhood was seen as a contributing factor towards female offending. It would then seem that despite the importance of the maternal function, the stresses that accompanied the position often led to a restricting pathway, towards failed desistance.

#### ***4.1. Maternal Role vs Paternal Role***

The expectations placed on the roles played by the mothers and fathers in the participants' lives varied considerably. Many of the women may have had volatile or estranged relationships with their mothers, but on the whole, they had had some form of contact with them, whereas the majority had never had contact with a father who could participate in or contribute to their day-to-day existence. This absent father position had often repeated itself in the form of absent husbands or partners in the lives of the women, and absent fathers in their children's lives. The perpetuation of this paternal nonexistence may lie in the gendered nature of parental roles. Rodermond et al. found that formally having a parental role and actually being concerned with, and caring for your child were not mutually exclusive (2016). The gendered effect was that, for fathers, becoming a parent does not automatically mean that they are involved with the child (Rodermond et al., 2016). Earlier, it was discussed how daughters only saw their fathers' obligations towards them as fiscal, but largely, for most of the women, even this responsibility was deficient in both their fathers', and their children's fathers', contributions. These women, like their mothers, had taken responsibility for the care and well-being of their children, all the while being sole breadwinners who were paid less than male counterparts to occupy low-level positions, which were often not sufficient to provide for them and their dependants. Provision for, and care of, children is yet another gendered assignment that places women in an inequitable position as 'natural caregivers' with an intolerable burden to shoulder.

Despairingly, it would seem that motherhood plays a critical role in women's subordination and pathways to offending. Motherhood is a socially constructed concept that, in its current presentation is a woman's major social role to fulfil, with women seen as either mothers or potential mothers. "Society, at one level or another, exerts structural and ideological pressures upon women to become mothers." (Roberts, 1993, p.96). Furthermore

Roberts argues that “society considers a woman’s refusal to bear a child an unnatural act, a rebellion against her essential role.” (1993, p. 99). This means that fathers who abandon their children can escape societal discrimination when negating all parental responsibilities simply by leaving the children with their mother, escaping responsibility when his failure to provide harms the child. Mothers, conversely, have an immediate and socially sanctioned duty to care for their children, a patriarchal use of child care to secure women's obedience. Yet when the overwhelming obligations of this role lead to illegal behaviour, they become, in the eyes of a moral society, ‘Bad Mothers’, not thinking of how their incarceration will affect their children, as active agents in the disintegration of their family structure. This inescapable, inevitable failure to meet society’s standards of a gendered parenthood means that in the case of female offenders, the effects of incarceration and subsequent absence of the pivotal, sole support and nurturing structure from their children’s lives, causes further harm and contributes to a domestic cycle of abandonment and loss.

#### ***4.2. The Motherhood Penalty***

It is not so confounding then, that some mothers should fail to fulfil their maternal obligations, rather what is confounding is that so many women continue to be good mothers despite the onerous hardships they face (Roberts, 1993). The self-sacrificing women interviewed for this study spent their fraudulent gains thoughtfully, on their children and debts. They lived in desperate circumstances, under the threat of violence and death, because they refuse to give up being a ‘Good’ mother. One would have expected their frustrations and vulnerabilities to manifest in transgressions levelled towards their children, however, most of the women focused their frustration into self-destructive behaviours like depression, addiction, and attempts at suicide. Beyond the correctional facility walls, these female offenders continued to express feelings of guilt at failing in their maternal responsibility and their inability to provide for their children's needs while incarcerated.

The ultimate motherhood penalty is then the price these women pay for the institutional patriarchy they were trapped in, which endorses a woman's self[less]hood. Isolated and removed from their families, able only to view, from afar, their domestic fragmentation and disillusion, it is these 'deviant' mothers, not the compliant ones, who reveal the mechanisms by which gendered conventions confine women, and its recompense. Their narratives force us to face the value and devaluation of motherhood from the confines of corrections, to confront the complexity of women's subordination and to assess their offenses in relation to women's struggles against the social tensions and divisions that distinguish society. The needs of mothers incarcerated on the inside, and those of their children on the outside, who are most often losing their only parent and provider, have to be considered. Instead of condemning them, forgetting about them or criminalising them, we have to look at their role in raising our next generation, and, instead of blaming them for breeding further criminality, understand what must be done through changed social norms to create an equitable society.

## **5. Conclusion**

The importance of this research study lies within the particularities of the lived experiences of South African female offenders. Although many of the pathways identified; violence, victimisation, poverty, gendered roles and motherhood, correspond with the pathways of incarcerated women worldwide, the unique narratives of the women interviewed separate themselves from research conducted in the global North. When viewed through a lens of intersectional agency, within a context as complex as South African society, the still present influence of apartheid as a racist, patriarchal structure, and the country's reality within the broader global existence of patriarchy, present themselves. Constructions of femininity dictate that "good" mothers feel most "at home" when sacrificing themselves for their families, engaging in self-silenced justifications to conform to the patriarchal ideal of motherhood. But how do the women of South Africa meet this ideal when racist historical

legacies of gendered poverty, familial separation and violence form part of their day-to-day lives? “Idealised expectations of motherhood obscure the possibility that mothering, especially under conditions of deprivation, is simply a depressing experience” (Kruger, 2014, p. 1) As explained by Kruger (2014), these unrealistic social and gendered expectations can feed into mothers’ anger and despair as they focus on their in their own inability to live up to the ideals of motherhood in impossible situations, resulting in frustrations turned inward through self-harm and addiction, or expressed outwardly through unlawful and violent behaviour. Understanding the lived contexts of female offenders reveals the sanctions placed on these “deviant” women, especially when poor, and serves to disrupt the public perceptions that pathologizes their behaviours and denies their agency, in order to undermine the “cult of femininity”. Expanded conclusions drawn from the research, as well as limitations and possible further research developments, are discussed in the chapter to follow.

## CHAPTER 6:

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

*“This highly circulated ‘cult of femininity’ is not unconnected to the experiences of many women. The Republic of South Africa, therefore, has the contradictory situation where women are legislatively empowered, and yet we do not feel safe in our streets or homes. Truly empowered women do not live with the haunting fear of rape, sexual harassment, smash and grabs and other violent intrusions into their spaces, bodies and psyches. A country that empowers women would grant us our entitlement of freedom of movement, sexual autonomy, bodily integrity and safety. A genuinely gender-progressive country is without the gender based violence statistics that South Africa has, making South African women collectively a majority (at 52 per cent) under siege.”*

(Pumla Dineo Gqola, 2007, p. 116)

*“No one truly knows a nation until one has been inside its jails. A nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens but its lowest ones.”*

(Nelson Mandela, 1995, p.234)

Historically, female offenders from most countries across the globe were held in an institutionalised silence, with their experiences relegated as insignificant instances that were assumed to be the equivalent of their male counterparts. Nthabiseng Motsemme says that “moments of silence form part of a collective ‘narrative’” (2004, p. 910), and this has been the accumulative outcome of the modicum of research produced since the 1970s regarding this silenced population. More recently, pathways research has reinterpreted this absence of a presence to comprehend a pathway to incarceration, as journeyed by women, through their lived circumstances. The feminist pathways perspective has revealed conduits to women’s

incarceration that primarily involve victimisation, from early experiences of abuse as a child, most often followed by violence wreaked upon them by the hands of an intimate partner, as well as surviving traumas of rape and assault. These socially constructed “gendered vulnerabilities” are indissolubly interconnected with poverty; economic poverty through gendered labour, wage gaps and unemployment; the physical poverty of harsh living and working conditions as well as poor healthcare and a poverty of support that comes from broken families and disengaged communities (Potters House, n.d.). As a marginalised population that exists in the minority, female offenders have also experienced the poverty of power, where voicelessness and social stigmatisation subject them to exploitation, in a seemingly never-ending cycle of victimisation (World Bank, World Development Report 2012).

As the number of women housed in correctional facilities worldwide continues its steady growth, female offenders’ conduct and pathways taken are of growing interest to researchers in diverse fields, including criminology, law, sociology and psychology amongst them. As an interdisciplinary method, pathways research seeks insight into the construction of women’s identities and offending, as well as into the point where these two constructs converge. In this research study, feminism and psychology both necessitated the comprehension of an innate undertaking of women, that of motherhood and its role in the path taken to incarceration. The role of motherhood was another significant experience that had been identified in my review of the literature of previous pathways research, with most female offenders subsisting as single mothers and primary breadwinners in their homes. Motherhood is most emphatically considered by general society to be a major role to be implemented and fulfilled by women, and, as explained by Roberts: “Motherhood contains this fascinating paradox: Although it is devalued, exhausting, confining, and a principal way that women are shackled to an inferior status, motherhood is for many women life’s greatest

joy.” (1993, p. 101). Certainly, the participants in this research study communicated a duality of encounter in their role as a mother, both in the events leading up to their detention and from behind the bars of their correctional custody.

For this reason, understanding female offenders’ pathways to crime within the South African context and as observed through the lens of motherhood, required an understanding of the country’s association with patriarchal customs and societal heritages, and their role in the creation of stereotypical gender roles and expectations for men and women. The research of Mayer and Barnard (2015) highlights that despite socio-political transformation in South Africa, which advocates advances in the basic human rights of all its inhabitants, the dynamics of power, identity, social acknowledgement and distribution of resources consistently reproduce a distinctively patriarchal and hierarchical societal strata. “They establish a patriarchal hierarchy where men are seen as the head of the house and authority and power are still, subconsciously, more strongly associated with men. At the same time, the submissive care-giver and emotional support roles in the family are associated with women.” (Mayer & Barnard, 2015, p.334).

Though the incarcerated women who participated in this study theoretically retain the basic human rights of a South African citizenship, their gendered subjugation as a precluded population spoke volumes regarding the lives of the majority of women in our country, both within and beyond the walls of corrections. The life histories shared by the female offenders, as well as their narratives charting their pathways to crime, indicates that although past experiences of victimization and abuse are the fundamental causes of internment, when considered singly it is an improvident and overly simplistic causal link which fails to take cognisance of the complex factors that result in the social and political legitimization of violence against women, emphasising domestic violence at the expense of an understanding of societal violence (Davis & Shaylor, 2001). The violations of women’s human rights

pervade all areas of a woman's life, in both public and private spheres, and take on many different forms, where violations occurring in the private sphere, such as the prescriptive roles of unpaid labour and care, limit the autonomy of women and their access to the public sphere. The hidden patriarchal subsidies of GBV, gendered roles, feminisation of poverty and unpaid labour and care, as experienced by the female offenders' and revealed in their lived accounts, are signs of the existence of unequal power relations between men and women. They also bring to light the exploitive ways patriarchy infiltrates both the private worlds of households and families, and the public spheres of markets and the state (Antonopoulos, 2009). Because these women, and indeed a large number of women in South Africa, are the country's primary caretakers of the next generation, the intersections of the lived experiences of female offenders who are mothers from "inside" correctional facilities, and those of women mothering on the "outside", expose how women in general are disenfranchised on various cultural and socio-economic levels (Billone, 2009). For the children and families they leave behind, these women's incarceration has an undoubtedly devastating impact, contributing to further dislodging of the family unit, increased poor socioeconomic circumstances, challenging living conditions and a cycle of family-related violence, abuse and suffering (Mayer & Barnard, 2015).

To this end, researchers have a distinct responsibility to make known the circumstances and perspectives of South African women, in their own voices, through their own words (Morrell, 2016). The female offenders in this study typify the experiences of many South African women, unmarried with a past of victimisation and abuse, living in poor households which are isolated, often unemployed with poor education, bearing the brunt of unpaid labour and exclusion. That these lived circumstances form part of day to day existences does not need to be debated, rather it calls for action, motivating public dialogue

and prioritising the development of new pathways for women that exemplify social equity, cohesion as well as gender justice and equality.

### **Limitations and recommendations:**

The narratives produced in this study should be understood in within the context of a doctoral research study, considering the time and financial restraints of this type of research which influence sample size, as well as in relation to the contrasting positioning of the student researcher. The research participants and I were different in a number of ways including age, education and class. As a result, the complexity of being located at intersections of various individual, social, cultural and economic lived experiences diversifies the way the women make meaning of their situation, and accounts for their switching of social codes and concurrent employment of opposing discourses. For some participants, racial identities may have been salient and, for others, their identities as mothers or wives may have been more important. Regardless of the variations, commonalities of experience representing gendered experiences and victimization discourses locate the narratives as rooted in problematisation in their social environment. It was not the aim of this qualitative research study to quantify the experiences into a universal pathway to offending, as taken by incarcerated South African mothers. Rather, it meant to make known the pre-detention life circumstances of these women, to broaden our understanding of possible pathways taken and inserting their regulated and peripheral voices into the small body of literature that exists on the lives of incarcerated women in South Africa.

The life history narratives of the seventeen participants reveal, through their related accounts of agency and motivation, that the pathways of women to crime are gendered, as per their pre-incarcerated lived experiences. This finding has significant implications, specifically when considering the importance of developing effective, gender-specific programmes for

reducing instances of female offending. Through a thorough understanding of pathways taken, a comprehensive profile of female offending can be developed that encourages desistance by way of female specific interventions. As stated by Hesselink and Dastile, correctional rehabilitative practices cannot be based on male experiences or male focused research findings, even though they make up the vast majority of the incarcerated population of South Africa (2015). Rather, there needs to be a focus on compiling a comprehensive understanding of that which epitomises female offenders' distinct and unique needs, as was attempted through this pathways research study. Understanding the cultural and historical oppressive personal histories of female offenders, through explorations of "inequality, injustices (in terms of gender, class, race and sexuality), social disadvantage (insensitive gender views and stereotypes), and pathways in criminality" encourages correctional rehabilitative practice which will "account for constructive, gender-sensitive and individualised rehabilitation efforts for female offenders" (Hesselink & Dastile, 2015, p. 343).

As women's living conditions are directly affected by the basic services their households receive, with mothers often bearing the responsibility to secure the basic needs of their family while acting as the primary caregivers of children and infirm or extended family members, improved access to basic services and social grants may assist these households with secondary sources of income. Improved comprehension of female-headed households is therefore vital to address issues of poverty and its link to women's participation in illegal activities.

If women remain the primary agents for the socialisation and provision of children, then the importance of the role performed by women in raising their children needs to be stressed when considering the impact of their existence when lost to a domestic setting after their incarceration. The development of short-term, gender-specific restorative-based therapy

as an alternative to incarceration may be an important option to consider in order to provide female offenders with the possibility of contributing successfully to society as mothers, as workers and as constructive citizens, instead of long term sentencing that leads to dislocation and fragmentation of the family unit.

Finally, the overwhelming and devastating narratives of victimisation need to be urgently addressed. The women interviewed here gave a voice and face to the majority of South African women who continue to be subjected to substantial victimisation on a recurring basis. Acknowledging that GBV is a major human rights violation issue in South Africa is critical when realising that an egalitarian legislation is not enough to turn the tide of violence perpetrated against women in our country. Increased research, which does not pathologise or deny agency to female offenders, needs to be conducted and understood in order to develop evidence-based interventions that can be implemented as a more effective response to the manifestations of GBV and femicide that are executed upon women in South African society, day after day, hour after hour.

REFERENCES:

- Ackermann, M. (2014). Women in pre-trial detention in Africa. *Civil Society Prison Reform Initiative*. Cape Town: CSPRI, University of the Western Cape.
- Ackermann, M. (2015). Women in detention in Africa: A review of the literature. *Agenda*, 29(4), 80-91.
- Adriansen, H., K. (2012). Timeline interviews: A tool for conducting life history research, *Qualitative Studies*, 3(1), 40-55.
- Anderson, M., L. (2008). Multiple inference and gender differences in the effects of early intervention: A re-evaluation of the Abecedarian, Perry Preschool, and Early Training Projects. *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 103(484), 1481-1495.
- Antonopoulos, R. (2009). The unpaid care work - paid work connection. *Policy Integration and Statistics Department International Labour Office*. Geneva: ILO.
- Artz, L., Hoffman-Wanderer, Y., & Moul, K. (2012). Hard time(s): Women's pathways to crime and incarceration. *The Gender, Health and Justice Research Unit*. Cape Town: GHJRU, University of Cape Town.
- Artz, L., Hoffman-Wanderer, Y., & Moul, K. (2012). Women, crime and incarceration: Exploring pathways of women in conflict with the law. *The Gender, Health and Justice Research Unit*. Cape Town: GHJRU, University of Cape Town.
- Artz, L., & Rotmann, B. (2015). Taking 'A Count' of women in prison. *Agenda*, 29(4), 3-13.
- Bailey, C. (2013). Exploring female motivations for drug smuggling on the island of Barbados: Evidence from Her Majesty's Prison, Barbados. *Feminist Criminology*, 8(2), 117-141.

- Bandura, A. (2001). Social cognitive theory: An agentic perspective. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52, 1-26.
- Belknap, J. (2010). Offending women: A double entendre. *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, 100(3), 1061-1098.
- Benjamin, S. (2007). The Feminization of poverty in Post-Apartheid South Africa: A story told by the women of Bayview, Chatsworth. *Journal of Developing Societies*, 23(1-2), 175-206.
- Berko, A., Erez, E., & Globokar, J.L. (2010). Gender, crime and terrorism: The case of Arab/Palestinian women in Israel *British Journal of Criminology*, 50(4), 670-689.
- Bhorat, H., van der Westhuizen, C. & Jacobs, T. (2009). *Income and non-income inequality in post-apartheid South Africa: What are the drivers and possible policy interventions?* Pretoria, South Africa: Trade & Industrial Policy Strategies
- Billone, N. (2009). Performing Civil Death: The Medea Project and Theater for Incarcerated Women. *Text and Performance Quarterly*, 29(3), 260-275.
- Bird, K., & Ojermark, A. (2011). Issues in collecting (and recording) data from life histories, life stories, oral testimonies and family histories. *Chronic Poverty Research Centre*, London: CPRC.
- Boonzaier, F. (2008). 'If the man says you must sit, then you must sit': The relational construction of woman abuse: Gender, subjectivity and violence. *Feminism & Psychology*, 18(2), 183-206.
- Bose, C.E. (2012). Intersectionality and global gender inequality. *Gender & Society*, 26(1), 67-72

- Bosworth, M. (2000). Confining femininity: A history of gender, power and imprisonment. *Theoretical Criminology*, 4(3), 265-284.
- Boutron, C., & Constant, C. (2013). Gendering transnational criminality: The case of women's imprisonment in Peru. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 39(11), 177-195.
- Bower, C. (2014). The plight of women and children: Advancing South Africa's least privileged. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 652(1), 106-126.
- Brennan, T., Breitenbach, M., Dieterich, W., Salisbury, E., & Van Voorhis, P. (2012). Women's pathways to serious and habitual crime: A Person-Centered analysis incorporating gender responsive factors. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 39(11), 1481-1508.
- Campbell, C. & Mannell, J. (2015). Conceptualising the agency of highly marginalised women: Intimate partner violence in extreme settings. *Global Public Health: An International Journal for Research, Policy and Practice*, 11(2), 1-16.
- Caputo, G. A., & King, A. (2015). Shoplifting by male and female drug users: Gender, agency, and work. *Criminal Justice Review*, 40(1), 47-66.
- Carbado, D. W., Crenshaw, K. W., Mays, V. M., & Tomlinson, B. (2013). Intersectionality: Mapping the Movements of a Theory. *Du Bois review: Social science research on race*, 10(2), 303-312.
- Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation. (2016). *Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in South Africa: A Brief Review*. Braamfontein, South Africa: Author.

- Chadwick, R. (2017). Thinking intersectionally with/through narrative methodologies, *Agenda*, 31(1), 5-16.
- Chesney-Lind, M. (2006). Patriarchy, crime, and justice: Feminist Criminology in an era of backlash. *Feminist Criminology*, 1(1), 6-26.
- Chesney-Lind, M., & Pasko, L. (2013). *The Female Offender: Girls, Women, and Crime* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Collier, S., & Friedman, S., H. (2016). Mental illness among women referred for psychiatric services in a New Zealand women's prison. *Behavioral Sciences & the Law*, 34, 539-550.
- Daly, K. (1992). Women's pathways to felony court: Feminist theories of lawbreaking and problems of representation. *Southern California Review of Law and Women's Studies*, 2, 11-52.
- Davis, A.Y., & Shaylor, C. (2001). Race, gender, and the prison industrial complex: California and beyond. *Meridians: feminism, race, transnationalism*, 2(1), 1-25.
- DeHart, D. D. (2008). Pathways to prison: Impact of victimization in the lives of incarcerated women. *Violence Against Women*, 14(12), 1362-1381.
- DeHart, D.D., Lynch, S., Belknap, J., Dass-Brailsford, P., & Green, B. (2013). Life History models of female offending: The roles of serious mental illness and trauma in women's pathways to jail. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 38(1), 138-151
- de Klerk, V., & Barkhuizen, G. (2001). Language usage and attitudes in a South African prison. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 152, 97-115.

Department of Correctional Services. (2005). White Paper on Corrections in South Africa.

Pretoria: Department of Correctional Services.

Department of Correctional Services. (2016). *Annual report for the 2015/2016 financial*

*year*. Department of Correctional Services: Pretoria, South Africa.

Department of Health. (2006). *Guidelines for good practice in the conduct of clinical trials*

*with human participants in South Africa*. Department of Health: Pretoria, South Africa.

Department of Women. (2015). *Report on the Status of Women in the South African*

*Economy*. Department of Women: Pretoria, South Africa.

du Plessis, C. (2013). Introducing an interest group: Inside-out outside-in prison experiences

and communities. *New Voices in Psychology*, 9, 142-145.

Eerola, M., & Helske, S. (2012). Statistical analysis of life history calendar data. *Statistical*

*Methods in Medical Research*, 25(2), 571-597.

Ettorre, E. (2004). Revisioning women and drug use: gender sensitivity, embodiment and

reducing harm. *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 15(5), 327-335.

Erez, E., & Berko, A. (2010). Pathways of Arab/Palestinian women in Israel to crime and

imprisonment: An Intersectional Approach. *Feminist Criminology*, 5(2) 156–194.

Ferraro, K. J., & Moe, A. M. (2003). Mothering, crime and incarceration. *The Journal of*

*Contemporary Ethnography*, 32(1), 9-40.

Ferraro, K. J., & Moe, A. M. (2006). *Neither angels nor demons: Women, crime and*

*victimization*. Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press.

- Fili, A. (2013). Women in Prison: Victims or Resisters? Representations of Agency in Women's Prisons in Greece. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 39(1), 1-26.
- Fine, H.G. (1991). *The administration of Criminal justice at the Cape of Good Hope 1795-1828*. (Doctoral Thesis). University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa.
- Glaze, L.E., & Maruschak, L. M. (2010). Parents in prison and their minor children. U.S. Department of Justice Washington. DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice.
- Gehring, K.S. (2016). A direct test of Pathways Theory. *Feminist Criminology*, 13(2), 1-23.
- Gender Links. (2012). *Gender Links Annual Report*. Johannesburg, South Africa: Author.
- Gibson, H. (1973). Women's Prisons: Laboratories for Penal Reform. *Wisconsin Law Review*, 1, 210-33.
- Goldman, R., Hunt, M.K., Allen, J.D., Hauser, S., Emmons, K., Maeda, M. et.al. (2003). The Life History interview method: Applications to intervention development. *Health Education & Behavior*, 30(5), 564-581.
- Gqola, P. D. (2007). How the 'cult of femininity' and violent masculinities support endemic gender-based violence in contemporary South Africa. *African Identities*, 5(1), 111-124.
- Gueta, K., & Chen, G. (2016). "I wanted to rebel, but there they hit me even harder": Discourse analysis of Israeli women offenders' accounts of their pathways to substance abuse and crime. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 60(7) 787–807.

- Gueta, K., & Chen, G. (2016). Men and women inmates' accounts of their pathways to crime: A gender analysis. *Deviant Behavior, 37*(12), 1459-1472.
- Gunnison, E., & McCartan, L.M. (2010). Persistent versus late onset among female offenders: A test of state dependent and population heterogeneity interpretations. *Western Criminology Review, 11*(3), 45-62.
- Haffejee, S., Vetten, L., & Greyling, M. (2005). Exploring violence in the lives of women and girls incarcerated at three prisons in Gauteng province, South Africa. *Agenda, 19*(66), 40-47.
- Haffejee, S., Vetten, L., & Greyling, M. (2006). Minority Report: The imprisonment of women and girls in Gauteng. *Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation*. Johannesburg: CSVR
- Hall, R. (2012). The feminization of social welfare: Implications of cultural tradition vis-à-vis male victims of domestic violence, *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare, 39*(3), 7-27.
- Harker, N., Kader, R., Myers, B., Fakier, N., Parry, C., Flisher, ... Davids, A. (2008). *Substance abuse trends in the Western Cape: A review of studies conducted since 2000*. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.hsrc.ac.za/en/search?search=substance+abuse+western+cape&x=8&y=8&section=#sthash.3pIfGxNS.dpuf>
- Hesselink, A., & Pearl, D. (2015). A criminological assessment on South African women who murdered their intimate male partners. *Journal of Psychology in Africa, 25*(4), 335-344.

Inside-out Outside-in South African Corrections Interest Group. (2015). *Annual Report 2015*.

Retrieved from <http://www.unisa.ac.za/contents/community/docs/2015%20Annual%20Report%20of%20the%20Insideout%20SA%20Corrections%20Interest%20Group>

Judicial Inspectorate for Correctional Services. (2016). *Annual Report for the period April 2015 to March 2016: People are living there*. Cape Town, Western Cape: JICS.

Kamwangamalu, N.M. (2001). Ethnicity and language crossing in post-apartheid South Africa. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 152, 75-95.

Kjellstrand, J., Cearley, J., Eddy, J.M., Foney, D., & Martinez Jr., C.R. (2012).

Characteristics of incarcerated fathers and mothers: Implications for preventive interventions targeting children and families. *Child Youth Services Review*, 34(12), 2409-2415.

Kruger, M. (2014, October 31). Why do women become violent? Daily Maverick. Retrieved from <https://mg.co.za/article/2014-10-31-rage-in-the-belly-of-motherhood>

Liddell, M., & Martinovic, M. (2013). Women's offending: Trends, issues and theoretical explanations. *International Journal of Social Inquiry*, 6(1), 127-142.

Lučić-Ćatić, M. (2011). Challenges in conducting prison research. *Criminal Justice Issues* 5(6), 31-45.

Luyt, W.F.M. (2008a). Contemporary corrections in South Africa after more than a decade of transformation. *Southern African Journal of Criminology*, 21(2), 176-195.

Luyt, W. F. M. (2008b). Imprisoned mothers in South African prisons with children outside of the institution. *European Journal of Crime, Criminal Law and Criminal Justice*, 16, 299-323.

- Luyt, W. F. M., & du Preez, N. (2010). A case study of female incarceration in South Africa. *Acta Criminologica*, 23(3), 88-114.
- Mahtani, S. (2013). Women and the criminalization of poverty: Perspectives from Sierra Leone. *Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 39(1), 243-264.
- Mallicoat, S. L. (2015). *Women and crime: A text/reader* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mandela, N. R. (1995). *Long Walk to Freedom*. London, UK: Hachette Digital
- Mama, A. (2011). The Challenges of Feminism: Gender, Ethics and Responsible Academic Freedom in African Universities. *The Journal of Higher Education in Africa (JHEA) La Revue de l'enseignement supérieur en Afrique (RESA)*, 9(1), 1-23.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2011). *Designing qualitative research*. (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Matos, R. (2008). Trajectories and identities of foreign national women: Rethinking prison through the lens of gender and citizenship. *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, 16(3) 350-365.
- Mayer, C. H., & Barnard, H. A. (2015). Balancing the scales of gender and culture in contemporary South Africa. In S. Safdar & N. Kosakowska-Berezecka (Eds.), *Psychology of gender and culture* (pp. 327-352). New York, NY: Springer.
- Mayer, K. U. (2009). New Directions in Life Course Research. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 35, 413-433.

- Modie-Moroka, T. (2003). Vulnerability across a life course: an empirical study: women and criminality in Botswana prisons. *Journal of Social Development in Africa*, 18(1), 145-179.
- Moe, A. M., & Ferraro, K. J. (2006). Criminalized mothers: The value and devaluation of parenthood from behind bars. *Women and Therapy*, 29(3-4), 135-164.
- Morrell, R. (2016). Making southern theory? Gender researchers in South Africa. *Feminist Theory*, 17(2), 191-209.
- Motsemme, N. (2002). Gendered experiences of blackness in Post-Apartheid South Africa. *Social Identities*, 8(4), 647-673.
- Motsemme, N. (2004). The Mute Always Speak: On Women's Silences at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *Current Sociology*, 52(5), 909-932.
- National Academy of Sciences. (2006). *Ethical considerations for research involving prisoners*. Washington, Washington, D.C: National Academy of Sciences.
- National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Reintegration of Offenders. (2017). *Annual Report*. Cape Town, Western Cape: NICRO.
- National Resource Center on Justice Involved Women. (2016). Fact Sheet on Justice Involved Women in 2016. Santa Clara, California, CA: NRCJIW
- Nuytiens, A. & Christiaens, J. (2015). Female pathways to crime and prison: Challenging the (US) gendered pathways perspective. *European Journal of Criminology*, 13(2), 195–213.

- Parry, B. R., & Segalo, P. (2017). Eating burnt toast: The lived experiences of female breadwinners in South Africa. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 18(4), 182-196.
- Pollack, S. (2007). "I'm Just Not Good in Relationships": Victimisation discourses and the gendered regulation of criminalised women. *Feminist Criminology*, 2(2), 158-174.
- Potters House. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://pottershouse.org.gt/understanding-poverty/>
- Pretorius, H. G., & Botha, S. (2009). The cycle of violence and abuse in women who kill an intimate partner: A biographic profile. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 3(2), 242-252.
- Rafter, N., H. (1983). Prisons for women, 1790-1980. *Crime and Justice*, 5, 129-181.
- Rice, K. (2016). Rights and responsibilities in rural South Africa: Implications for gender, generation, and personhood. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 23, 28-41.
- Richie, B. E. (1996). *Compelled to crime: The gender entrapment of battered black women*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Roberts, D. E. (1993). Motherhood and Crime. *Social Text*, 42, 99-123.
- Rodermond, E., Kruttschnitt, C., Slotboom, A., & Bijleveld, C.J.H. (2016). Female desistance: A review of the literature. *European Journal of Criminology*, 13(1), 3 - 28
- Salisbury, E. J., & Van Voorhis, P. (2009). Gendered Pathways: A quantitative investigation of women probationers' paths to incarceration. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 36(6), 541-566.

- Schlosser, J.A. (2008). Issues in interviewing inmates: Navigating the methodological landmines of prison research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 14(8), 1500-1525.
- Segrave, S., & Carlton, B. (2010). Women, trauma, criminalisation and imprisonment... *Current Issues in Criminal Justice*, 22(2), 287-305.
- Sewell Jr, W., H. (1992). A theory of structure: Duality, agency, and transformation. *American Journal of Sociology*, 98(1), 1-29.
- Shechory, M., Perry, G., & Addad, M. (2011). Pathways to Women's Crime: Differences Among Women Convicted of Drug, Violence and Fraud Offenses. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 151(4), 399-416.
- Sloth-Nielsen, J. (2005). Women and prisons in South Africa. *Civil Society Prison Reform Initiative*. Cape Town: CSPRI, University of the Western Cape.
- Simpson, S., Yahner, J., & Dugan, L. (2008). Understanding women's pathways to jail: Analysing the lives of incarcerated women. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, 41(1), 84-108.
- Singh, S. (2005). The historical development of prisons in South Africa: A penological perspective. *New Contree*, 50, 15-38.
- Statistics South Africa. (2013). *Social profile of vulnerable groups in South Africa, 2002-2012*. Pretoria, South Africa: Author.
- Statistics South Africa. (2015). *Labour market dynamics in South Africa, 2015*. Pretoria, South Africa: Author.

- Steffensmeier, D.J., S., Schwartz, J., & Rochea, M. (2013). Gender and Twenty-First-Century corporate crime: Female involvement and the gender gap in Enron-Era corporate frauds. *American Sociological Review*, 78(3), 448-476.
- Stohr, M., K. & Walsh, A. (2016). *Corrections: The essentials* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks CA: Sage.
- Sudbury, J. (2005). *Global lockdown: Race, gender, and the prison-industrial complex*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Tamale, S. (2004). Gender trauma in Africa: Enhancing women's links to resources. *Journal of African Law*, 48(1), 50-61.
- Townhead, L. (2007). Pre-trial detention of women and its impact on their children. In *Women in Prison and Children of Imprisoned Mothers Series* (pp.1–38). Geneva, Switzerland: Quaker United Nations Office.
- UNAIDS UNDOC. (2008). *Women and HIV in prison settings*. Retrieved from <http://www.unodc.org/documents/hiv/aid/Women%20and%20HIV%20in%20prison%20settings.pdf>
- UN Criminal Justice Handbook Series. (2014). *Handbook on Women and Imprisonment*. Retrieved from [https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/women\\_and\\_imprisonment\\_-\\_2nd\\_edition.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/women_and_imprisonment_-_2nd_edition.pdf)
- UNICEF Report. (2006). *Girls Education Movement South Africa*. Retrieved from [https://www.unicef.org/southafrica/SAF\\_resources\\_gembrief.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/southafrica/SAF_resources_gembrief.pdf)

- UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women. (2013). *Pathways to, conditions and consequences of incarceration for women*. Retrieved from <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Women/A-68-340.pdf>
- United Nations Development Programme. (2013). *Human Development Report 2013: The Rise of the South: Human Progress in a Diverse World*. Retrieved from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/2013-report>
- van den Berg, W. (2017, June 18). Making it easier for dads to help raise their children. *Times Live*. Retrieved from <https://www.timeslive.co.za/sunday-times/opinion-and-analysis/2017-06-17-making--it-easier-for-dads--to-help----raise--their-children/>
- Völlm, B.A., & Dolan, M.C. (2009). Self-harm among UK female prisoners: a cross-sectional study. *The Journal of Forensic Psychiatry & Psychology*, 20(5), 741-751.
- Walmsley, R. (2017). World Female Imprisonment List (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). *World Prison Brief, Institute for Criminal Policy Research*. Retrieved from <http://www.prisonstudies.org/news/world-female-imprisonment-list-fourth-edition>
- Wattanaporn, K.A., & Holtfreter, K. (2014). The impact of Feminist Pathways research on Gender-Responsive policy and practice. *Feminist Criminology*, 9(3) 191–207.
- World Bank. (2012). World Development Report 2012: Gender equality and development. Retrieved from <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/4391>
- Worrall, A. (1999). Troubled or troublesome? Justice for girls and young women. In B. Goldson (Ed.) *Youth Justice: Contemporary Policy and Practice* (pp. 28-50). Aldershot: Ashgate.

- Wright, E.M., Van Voorhis, P., Salisbury, E.J., & Bauman, A. (2012). Gender-Responsive Lessons Learned and Policy Implications for Women in Prison: A Review. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 39(12), 1612-1632.
- Yenjela, W. (2015). Young women's pathways to prison: A critique of selected Kenyan prison documentaries. *Agenda*, 29(4), 135-145
- Yingling, J. (2016). Gendered pathways to crime. In B.M. Huebner & T.S. Bynum (Eds.), *The Handbook of Measurement Issues in Criminology and Criminal Justice* (1<sup>st</sup> ed., pp. 181-199). Malden, MA: John Wiley Press.

APPENDIX A:

Ref. No: PERC-16028

**Ethical Clearance for M/D students: Research on human participants**

*The Ethics Committee of the Department of Psychology at Unisa has evaluated this research proposal for a Higher Degree in Psychology in light of appropriate ethical requirements, with special reference to the requirements of the Code of Conduct for Psychologists of the HPCSA and the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics.*

**Student Name:** Bianca Rochelle Parry      **Student no.:** 50776266

**Supervisor:** Prof. P. Segalo      **Affiliation:** Department of Psychology, Unisa

**Title of project:**

[Doctoral thesis]  
*The Motherhood Penalty – Exploring the Mothering Experiences of Incarcerated Women in South Africa as a Pathway to Crime*

**Result:** Ethical clearance is granted.

The application was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Department of Psychology at Unisa on the understanding that all ethical requirements regarding informed consent, the right to withdraw from the study, the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the information will be met to the satisfaction of the supervisor.

Further conditions relating to this ethical clearance are that:

- Additional ethical clearance, as well as permission to conduct the study, will be obtained from the Department of Correctional Services as indicated in the proposal;
- Recruitment of participants will occur via the correctional facility officials, and only incarcerated mothers who have explicitly indicated that they are willing to participate in the study will be included in the research sample;
- The ethical consideration of non-maleficence (no harm to the participants) will be strictly observed;
- The participants will be continuously informed of relevant psychological counselling services available to them during the course of the study, and such services will in fact be made available to them should they request this.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "H C Janeke".

**Prof H C Janeke**  
**[For Psychology Department Ethics Committee]**

**Date:** 10 October 2016

***The proposed research may now commence with the proviso that:***

- 1) *The researcher/s will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.*
- 2) *Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study, as well as changes in the methodology, should be communicated in writing to the Psychology Department Ethics Review Committee.*
- 3) *An amended application should be submitted if there are substantial changes from the existing proposal, especially if those changes affect any of the study-related risks for the research participants.*
- 4) *The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study.*

***Please note that research where participants are drawn from Unisa staff, students or data bases requires permission from the Senate Research and Innovation Committee (SENRIC) before the research commences.***

APPENDIX B:

## correctional services

Department:  
Correctional Services  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Private Bag X136, PRETORIA, 0001 Poyntons Building, C/O WF Nkomo and Sophie DeBruyn Street, PRETORIA Tel  
(012) 307 2770, Fax 086 539 2693

**Ms BR Parry**  
**36 Alphen Close**  
**Wroxham Avenue**  
**Paulshof**  
**Johanneburg**  
**2191**

Dear Ms BR Parry

**RE: THE MOTHERHOOD PENALTY-EXPLORING MOTHERING EXPERIENCES AS A PATHWAY TO CRIME FOR INCARCERATED SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN IN THE JOHANNESBURG FEMALE CORRECTIONAL CENTRE.**

It is with pleasure to inform you that your request to conduct research in the Department of Correctional Services on the above topic has been approved.

Your attention is drawn to the following:

- The relevant Regional and Area Commissioners where the research will be conducted will be informed of your proposed research project.
- Your internal guide will be **Dr G Nthangeni: Area Coordinator Development and Care, Johannesburg.**
- You are requested to contact her at telephone number (011) 933 7011 before the commencement of your research.
- It is your responsibility to make arrangements for your interviewing times.
- Your identity document/passport and this approval letter should be in your possession when visiting correctional centres.
- You are required to use the terminology used in the White Paper on Corrections in South Africa (February 2005) e.g. "Offenders" not "Prisoners" and "Correctional Centres" not "Prisons".
- You are not allowed to use photographic or video equipment during your visits, however the audio recorder is allowed.
- You are required to submit your final report to the Department for approval by the Commissioner of Correctional Services before publication (including presentation at workshops, conferences, seminars, etc) of the report.
- Should you have any enquiries regarding this process, please contact the Directorate Research for assistance at telephone number (012) 307 2770 / (012) 305 8554.

Thank you for your application and interest to conduct research in the Department of Correctional Services.

Yours faithfully

**ND SIMLEZANA**  
**DC: POLICY COORDINATION & RESEARCH**  
**DATE: 22/06/2017**

## APPENDIX C:

### Interview Guide:

- Greetings and Personal introductions
- Explanation of the study and aims
- Read through, explanation and signing of consent form
- Commence interview

### Questions:

*(Not all questions are known in advance due to the open-ended nature of the in-depth interview)*

- 1) How many children do you have?
  - 2) Are they [a] boy[s] or [a] girl[s]?
  - 3) How old are they?
  - 4) What is your age now and how old were you when you had your [first] child?
  
  - 5) What was the best part of becoming a mother?
  - 6) How did your life change after becoming a mother?
  - 7) What were the best changes?
  - 8) What were the hardest changes?
  
  - 9) Who was there to support you and guide you as a new mother?
  - 10) Were you working? If so, how old was your child when you went back to work?
  - 11) If you weren't working, who and how did you support your family?
  - 12) Did you feel overwhelmed at all by being a mother?
  - 13) If so, how?
  - 14) If not, why do you think you weren't?
  - 15) What was the most important part of being a mother?
  
  - 16) How old was/were your child/children when you entered the correctional facility?
  - 17) How did you end up in this correctional facility?
  - 18) Who takes care of your child/children while you are here?
  - 19) What was your biggest concern when you knew you would be separated from your child/children?
  - 20) What reasons did you give your child/children about you being in this correctional facility and separated from them?
  - 21) Before you were sent here, did you worry about the possibility of being caught and what would happen to your child/children if you were?
  - 22) What were your reasons for continuing the behaviour?
  
  - 23) What are your own hopes for your future?
  - 24) What are your dreams and hopes for your child/children?
- Debriefing and discussion of interview

APPENDIX D:**Informed Consent for Student Research Project Participation**

Study Title: *The Motherhood Penalty – Exploring the Mothering Experiences of Incarcerated Women in South Africa as a Pathway to Crime*

Researcher: *Bianca Rochelle Parry*

Description of study: *The purpose of this study is to understand the pathways South African female offenders have taken that led to their incarceration and the role motherhood has played in said actions. The study is part of a Doctoral thesis in psychology, under the supervision of Professor Puleng Segalo at the department of Psychology at the University of South Africa.*

In order to participate in this research study, it is necessary that you give your informed consent. By signing this informed consent statement you are indicating that you understand the nature of the research study and your role in that research and that you agree to participate in the research. Please consider the following points before signing:

- I understand that I am participating in a student psychological research study and will participate in a 45 minute to 1 hour interview that is audio recorded and observed;
- I understand that my identity will not be linked with my data, that all information I provide will remain confidential and will be accessible only to the individual working on the project;
- I understand that I will be provided with an explanation of the research in which I participated and be given the details an individual to contact in case I need to discuss any concerns that arise from my participation in the research study;
- I understand that participation in research is not required, is voluntary, and that, after any individual research project has begun, I may refuse to participate further without penalty from any individual or facility in which I reside;
- I understand that participation in research is voluntary, and that I will receive no payment or compensation from any individual or facility in which I reside for participating in the research.

By signing this form I am stating that I am over 18 years of age, and that I understand the above information and consent to participate in this study being conducted.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(of participant)

Print your First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Print your Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX E:List of Interview colloquialisms:

**Opskepper or Cooker** – Offender who works in the kitchen

**Scully** – Dining hall

**Folla** – Queue up morning, and for food Roll call for offenders

**Ngamla** – Offender who has visitors that bring them supplies. Can also refer to a white person or privileged person.

**Phakaline** – Queue in dining hall for food

**Straf** – Offender's time served or length of sentence

**Card or Ticket** – Document containing all the offender's information. An id, orange in colour with thumbprints, name, surname, offense and sentence.

**Allchange** – Offender has to go back to her cell after exercise

**Tronk** – Correctional Facility

**Kas** – My hood/area/space. Can also refer to the clinic

**Chommie** – My friend

**Dankie hek** – Request to open a gate or door

**Window visit** – See visitors from behind glass division

**Snoepwinkel (Snoepy)** – A shop in a correctional facility that sells sweets, stationary, hygiene products etc.

**Snoepy money** – account allowance provided by someone on the outside