

Mothers talk back: Exploring the experiences of formerly incarcerated mothers.

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INTRODUCTION

The increased rate of female incarceration over the past few decades has lead to the re-configuration of many families and communities in the United States.

PURPOSE AND OVERARCHING GOAL

Purpose of this research study

- Explore and attempt to understand the experiences of mothers who have been incarcerated due to substance -related offenses and their process of re-entry and recovery.

Overarching goal

- Explore how women who have been incarcerated define and experience the identity of "mother" through the incarceration and reunification process.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Gap in the literature about how to work with women and families entrenched in criminal justice, mental health, and child welfare systems.

Many quantitative studies in the fields of criminology, sociology, and social work about the psychosocial factors experienced by mothers but little is available from a family systems perspective.

Voices of women about the effects of this process on themselves and their families largely been ignored.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Impact of the incarceration of mothers on various social systems has extensive implications for the systems involved.

There is no successful aftercare protocol that supports the reunification of marginalized families.

The fragmentation of services leads to the continuation of intergenerational issues of abuse, substance use, and incarceration.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

FAMILY RESILIENCE FRAMEWORK

Family resilience is a process that is complex and unique to each family.

Each family has to be considered over time in order to understand the adaptation process to stressful circumstances.

A systemic view that includes the cultural and socioeconomic contexts needs to be included in the of the process of understanding a family's path.

With this framework we assess and address the challenges through the unique sociocultural and developmental context of the family.

PROCEDURES FOR RESEARCH PROJECT

METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW



DATA COLLECTION |

RESEARCH SITE

Queen of Peace Center is a family-centered behavioral healthcare provider for women with addiction, their children and families. The gender focused female recovery center provides a variety of treatment options to women with co-occurring disorders and those affected by trauma.

RECRUITMENT

Purposeful and criterion based sampling
Recruited sample from treatment group
Specific inclusion criteria
Voluntary participation

INCLUSION CRITERIA FOR FORMERLY INCARCERATED MOTHERS

- A. incarcerated for a minimum of 24 months,
- B. at least one child under the age of 18 during the time of incarceration,
- C. a history of substance abuse and trauma
- D. incarceration due to drug/alcohol, nonviolent offenses
- E. incarceration not due to child maltreatment
- F. a child placed in either kinship care or foster care during incarceration
- G. living outside of prison for one year
- H. re-unified with minor children

PARTICIPANTS

NAME	AGE	RACE	# OF CHILDREN	#OF INCARCERATIONS
DAWN	31	CAUCASIAN	1	2
DAISY	36	AFRICAN AMERICAN	2	2
LYDIA	38	AFRICAN AMERICAN	3	3
KAYE	40	AFRICAN AMERICAN	3	3
CHRISTINE	44	CAUCASIAN	2	5
ALLY	48	CAUCASIAN	1	2
LYNN	49	AFRICAN AMERICAN	3	3
RENEE	50	AFRICAN AMERICAN	5	4
ANDREA	53	AFRICAN AMERICAN	3	2
FAYE	54	AFRICAN AMERICAN	1	4
BEA	59	AFRICAN AMERICAN	4	2
RENITA	60	AFRICAN AMERICAN	6	5

DATA COLLECTION

- Semi-structured, in-depth interviews
- Interview guide
- Conducted in natural environment
- Audio taped and transcribed

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Central Question: Tell me about your journey of motherhood.

- What were the positive periods of your motherhood experience?
- How did you feel about yourself as a mother during that time?
- What were the challenging periods of your motherhood experience?
- How did you feel about yourself as a mother during that time?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Central Question: What advice would you offer mothers who have experienced incarceration and reunification?

- What would you tell mothers before they are incarcerated?
- What would you tell mothers who are currently incarcerated?
- What would you tell mothers upon release?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Central Question: What advice would you give to social service systems and other helping professionals about how to help?

- What would you tell prison officials and other professionals in the criminal justice system about how to help?
- What would you tell professionals in child welfare services about how to help?
- What would you tell professionals in mental health and substance abuse treatment about how to help?

DATA ANALYSIS |

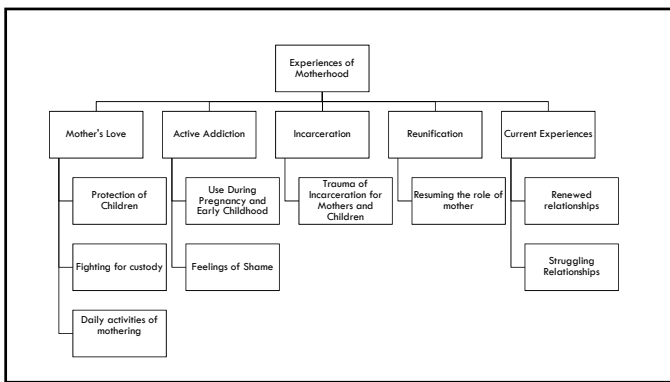
DATA ANALYSIS

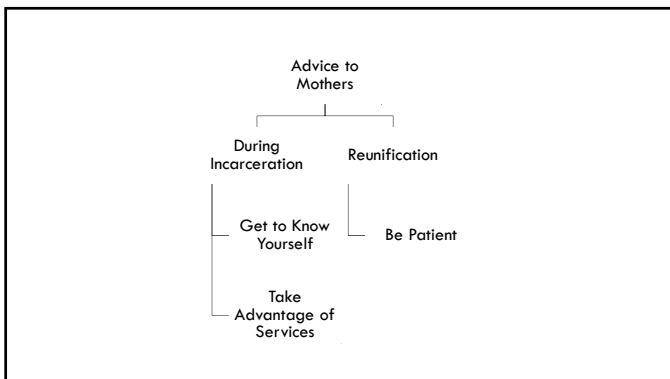
- Moustakas's systematic procedure
- Bracketing or "epoche"
- Multiple readings
- Horizontalization
- Cross-case analysis

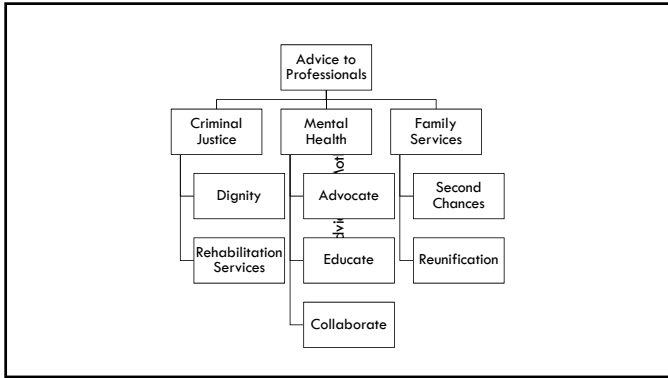
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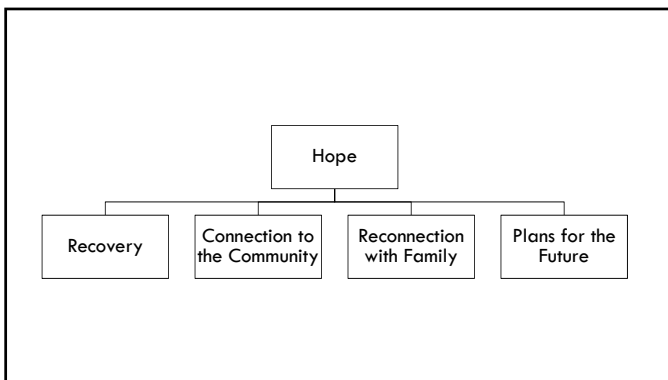
Textural description
Structural description
Essence of the phenomenon

STUDY FINDINGS |









ESSENCE OF THE PHENOMENON

Addiction, trauma, and instability were the realities of the participants.

The women experienced separation during incarceration.

All of participants experienced external barriers that negatively impacted their reunification process.

The women were able to maintain hope for recovery, stability, and development of healthy relationships with children and families.

All of the participants expressed a renewed desire to mother effectively.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- Mother-daughter relationships
- Experiences of children of incarcerated mothers
- Evaluating current family programs to establish an evidence base
- Exploring the desire of post incarcerated women to work in the social service field

IMPLICATIONS FOR HELPING PROFESSIONS

- Policy change
 - access to basic services
 - de-criminalization of substance use
 - increase use of drug court model
 - Integrate family court model
- Coordination of services across systems
- Continuum of care
- Family-centered treatment
- Collaborative relationships with care providers

QUESTIONS
