Incarcerated Mothers and Their Children: Implications for Policy and Practice

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As the number of U. S. criminal justice involved women—most of whom are mothers—has risen because of mass incarceration, so too has the number of children who experience their mother leaving to go to jail, prison, or residential treatment (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008; Kojstura, 2019). Some estimates indicate that 2.3 million children experience maternal jail incarceration each year—not even counting maternal imprisonment or community supervision (Sawyer & Bertram, 2018). It is a shocking statistic considering that more than one million women involved in the criminal justice system in the United States are on probation or parole (Kojstura, 2019), suggesting that many more children and families are affected by maternal criminal justice involvement than previous estimates indicate.

Most incarcerated mothers coresided with their children prior to incarceration (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008; Kojstura, 2019), and the vast majority of those who go to jail or prison will be released eventually (Travis, 2005), making separation, loss, and reunion common processes in families affected by maternal incarceration. Despite these facts, few US studies focusing on children and families affected by maternal criminal justice involvement have addressed maternal community supervision or how mothers and children fare when a mother returns from jail or prison, including recidivism or full reintegration into the family and society (see Poehlmann-Tynan, 2020, for a summary). Thus, there are many unknowns in this area of scholarship, despite the progress made in the past two decades in understanding the

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sequelae of maternal criminal justice involvement (e.g., Eddy & Poehlmann-Tynan, 2019).

The collection of studies contained in this Brief extends previous research on mothers who are involved in the criminal justice system and their children in at least four ways. First, the studies explicitly focus on specific types of maternal criminal justice involvement, including prison and jail incarceration, reentry, and community supervision, instead of the lack of specificity common in many previous studies or the emphasis on mothers in prison. Second, the studies in this Brief use multiple methods to address important gaps in our knowledge base, including examining new sources of longitudinal data; conducting and analyzing interviews with children, mothers, and professionals (e.g., doulas); examining corrections administrative data (e.g., risk assessment, behavioral infractions, visit logs, recidivism); and merging data across multiple systems, including corrections and social services (including foster care). Third, the studies include a variety of information about children, such as whether or not children visit their mothers in prison (see chapter "Maternal Pre- and Post-release Behaviors in a Residential Parenting Program (Prison Nursery)", this volume), children's birth outcomes when mothers labor and delivery during their incarceration with doula support (see chapter "The Benefits of Doula Support for Women who are Pregnant in Prison and their Newborns", this volume), where children live during maternal community supervision (see chapter "Redefining Motherhood: Mothering in Mandated Inpatient Substance Use Treatment", this volume), children's experience of maltreatment and placement in foster care (see chapter "Maternal Imprisonment and the Timing of Children's Foster Care Involvement", this volume), and their well-being as young adults (see chapter "Longitudinal Perspectives on Mother-Child Separation Resulting from Incarceration", this volume). Finally, the studies have meaningful implications for prevention and intervention.

In this chapter, we discuss our theoretical perspective and prior relevant studies using this interpretive lens to help contextualize the present volume. We then review what each of the new studies has taught us about mothers and children before, during, and following maternal criminal justice involvement. We revisit the set of themes that we initially identified as unifying the set of articles, including intersections among the experiences of separation, loss, and reunion, and discuss specific risk factors introduced in the chapters such as trauma, addiction, foster care, low resource environments, and resilience. Lastly, we integrate the findings of the studies in our discussion of implications for policy and practice.

Attachment, Separation, Loss, and Reunion in Context

As presented in our introductory chapter (see chapter "Introduction to Incarcerated Mothers and Their Children: Separation, Loss, and Reunification", this volume), we use an intergenerational attachment perspective within a developmental ecological model (Poehlmann, Dallaire, Loper, & Shear, 2010). This perspective is grounded

in the idea that children's early attachment relationships are important for their development and that experiences of disrupted attachments—including separation and loss resulting from a parent's incarceration or criminal justice involvement—can have profound implications for children's social emotional outcomes and future developmental trajectories. This perspective also emphasizes the quality of care that children receive during their parent's incarceration and how ongoing contexts of development, whether supportive or stressful, safe or traumatic, nurturing or callous, can ameliorate or exacerbate challenges that arise because of a parent's criminal justice involvement (Poehlmann, 2010; Poehlmann-Tynan & Arditti, 2017). Although we tend to emphasize proximal processes that are seen as drivers of development (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994), all layers of the ecology of human development are important for children in the context of parental criminal justice involvement, from law enforcement procedures that children may witness to policies about cash bail that lead to pretrial detention of parents, to visiting spaces in corrections environments, to stigma and practices affecting parental post-release employment or housing, and to criminal justice policies that determine length of sentences, parole, probation, and revocations (e.g., Eddy & Poehlmann-Tynan, 2019).

Despite the commonly made point about the importance of taking an intergenerational attachment perspective when parents are involved in the criminal justice system (e.g., Makariev & Shaver, 2010; Murray & Murray, 2010), measuring attachment relationships—either children's or parents' behaviors or their cognitive and emotional expectations of attachments (also called internal working models)—has not been as common in the literature as one might expect. This has occurred for a number of reasons, including measurement challenges, the multidisciplinary nature of research conducted in this area, and the reliance on secondary analysis of large datasets that do not measure attachment (e.g., see Turney & Haskins, 2019). Attachment theory, as conceptualized in this Brief, arose out of developmental psychiatry and psychology, whereas much of the research on children with incarcerated parents comes out of sociology or criminology. In sociology and criminology, attachment is typically conceptualized in the context of Hirschi's (1969) social control theory: a person's emotional bonds or attachments to prosocial institutions like schools, workplaces, religious organizations, and prosocial others, such as supportive parents, help keep individual criminal behavior in check.

In contrast, in developmental psychology and child psychiatry, attachment is seen as a universal phenomenon that occurs in human and non-human primate juveniles and across the life span, developed via natural selection over millennia to protect the survival of young and the reproduction of genes in a species (Bowlby, 1982). Attachments in infants and young children, formed with adults serving as attachment figures, provide a safe haven for the child when actual danger, threat, or fear arises and a secure base from which the child can confidently explore their environment to facilitate learning and social development (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1982). Given that attachment theory arose amidst the ashes of World War II, when separation of children from their parents was all too pervasive, attachment theory has also had a clinical bent that aims to understand the quality of children's attachments; the internal and external sequelae of children's

experiences of separation, loss, and other forms of disrupted caregiving; and how to help children and adults develop positive relationships and mental health despite such disruptions (Bowlby, 1973, 1980). Attachment theory also predicts both continuity and discontinuity in intergenerational transmission of attachment, based on parental resolution of problematic attachment issues or trauma, corrective experiences or interventions, how parents treat their children, and other protective factors in contexts of development (e.g., Ammaniti, van IJzendoorn, Speranza, & Tambelli, 2000; Weinfield, Sroufe, & Egeland, 2000). Thus, intergenerational attachment models naturally suggest heterogeneity in the effects of separation, loss, and reunion on child outcomes, similar to what sociologists focusing on intergenerational implications of maternal incarceration have recently found (e.g., Turney & Wildeman, 2015; Wildeman & Turney, 2014).

Attachment theory specifies that when a disruption occurs between a child and a primary attachment figure because of prolonged separation or other type of loss or significant interruption in care, children typically become intensely distressed and initially search for the absent attachment figure (Bowlby, 1973). They may resist care from substitute caregivers while searching and may mourn before they are ready to reattach to a new figure or turn to a secondary attachment figure for comfort. Consistent with Bowlby's conceptions of children's reactions to attachment disruptions, young children with incarcerated parents have been reported to express worry, sadness, confusion, anger, loneliness, developmental regression, and sleep problems following their parent's departure (e.g., Poehlmann, 2005c; Poehlmann-Tynan, Burnson, Runion, & Weymouth, 2017). Elaborating on the attachment concept of loss, some scholars have referred to a child's (and adult's) experience of separation resulting from parental incarceration as ambiguous loss (e.g., Arditti, 2005), which is described as the most challenging loss that can be experienced because it is surrounded by uncertainty, anxiety, and stigma (e.g., Boss, 2007). It is challenging for the child (or adult) to understand or process the loss, especially when few facts are known or told to the child or because of children's developmental limitations in cognitive or language skills and emotion regulation (Poehlmann-Tynan et al., 2018; Zeman, Dallaire, Folk, & Thrash, 2018).

One component of attachment theory that is increasingly explored in the literature focusing on incarcerated mothers and their families involves the caregiving system—or the adult system or bond that supports children's attachment relationships (Bowlby, 1982). Studies have examined effects of enforced separation from children on mothers because of maternal incarceration, including intense emotional pain, heartbreaking and sometimes traumatic feelings of loss that do not subside, depression, self-harm, and negative institutional behaviors (see Powell, Ciclitira, & Marzano, 2017, for a review). Some caregiving research in this area has also examined parenting of children with incarcerated parents, parental working models of children (including parental reflective functioning), as well as the experiences of substitute caregivers such as grandmothers, other relatives, and foster parents and children's relationships with them during maternal incarceration. However, it is also important to keep in mind that some scholars, such as those who have observed triadic interactions, such as children interacting with their formerly incarcerated

mothers and co-parenting grandmothers (e.g., McHale et al., 2013), suggest that an attachment perspective alone is inadequate for understanding children with incarcerated mothers because their relationships often occur in a triadic or wider family context. The idea is that children have multiple caregiving relationships and that dyadic interactions may change in quality or quantity with the presence of another caregiver. Attachment theory focuses on the development, maintenance, disruption, and loss of dyadic relationships—albeit in the family context—and it is possible that this perspective may limit our understanding of and measurement of wider interactional contexts for children with incarcerated parents. For example, visits between incarcerated parents and their children often occur in a triadic context because most correction facilities require that a caregiving adult or parent bring the child to the facility and remain with the child during the visit (Poehlmann-Tynan & Pritzl, 2019). Some of these factors have been taken into account when developing new measures of children's attachment behaviors in the context of parental corrections involvement (e.g., Poehlmann, 2012) as well as interventions (Kerr et al., 2021). These factors are also why we choose to integrate an attachment perspective with life course ecological systems models.

Because of the limitations of carceral contexts and ongoing parent-child separation, it is difficult to measure attachment when a parent is incarcerated (e.g., Bretherton, 2010). Yet a number of studies have attempted to assess attachment in children affected by parental incarceration, as well as attachment in incarcerated parents, using a variety of methods, as summarized in Table 1. The diverse methods that have been used to assess attachment in children with incarcerated parents include (1) standard laboratory-based observational methods with infants; (2) naturalistic observations of infants or young children that are analyzed qualitatively or quantitatively; (3) newer observational methods designed for children with incarcerated parents; (4) structured interviews with young children; (5) self-report measures with school-age children and adolescents; and (6) coding of family drawings of preschoolers and elementary school children using an attachment-based system. Attachment and caregiving bonds have also been measured in incarcerated mothers and caregivers using a variety of methods such as interviews and self-report measures, including parental reflective functioning, states of mind with respect to attachment, and caregiver report of the caregiver-child relationship (Table 1).

Overall, it appears that young children with incarcerated parents show elevated attachment insecurity with their incarcerated parents and at-home caregivers at about the same rate as children in other clinical samples (e.g., Poehlmann-Tynan et al., 2017), although interventions in prison nurseries and jail diversion programs can improve rates of secure infant-mother attachment (Byrne, Goshin, & Joestl, 2010; Cassidy et al., 2010; Sleed, Baradon, & Fonagy, 2013). Incarcerated mothers have especially high rates of disorganization and lack of resolution in their states of mind regarding attachment (Borelli, Goshin, Joestl, Clark, & Byrne, 2010; Harris, 2017) and low levels of reflective functioning (e.g., Sleed et al., 2013), similar to that seen in other high-risk samples. Incarcerated mothers often have experienced trauma, mental health problems, and adverse childhood experiences (e.g., Dworsky et al., 2020; Friestad, Åse-Bente, & Kjelsberg, 2014) in addition to poverty, vio-

Table 1 Attachment and caregiving as assessed in previous studies of incarcerated parents and their children

Construct assessed	Measure	Subject	Sample description	Intervention study?	Citation
Infant-mother attachment during maternal imprisonment	Strange situation (Ainsworth et al., 1978)	Child	30 infant-mother dyads; 16 coresided with mothers for 12 months; 14 had briefer coresidence	Nursing intervention in a New York prison nursery	Byrne et al. (2010)
Infant-mother attachment during maternal jail time	Strange situation (Ainsworth et al., 1978)	Child	20 infant-mother dyads who coresided for 12 months	Circle of security intervention in a jail diversion program	Cassidy et al. (2010)
Infant-mother attachment during maternal imprisonment	Naturalistic observations of infants that were analyzed qualitatively	Dyad	17 mothers and infants; infants ranged from newborn to 29 months	Residential parenting program in Oregon that included early head start	Condon (2017)
Infant-mother dyadic interaction during maternal imprisonment	Coding interactive behavior (Feldman, 1998)	Dyad	75 infant-mother dyads residing in residential parenting program in UK prison	Manualized attachment intervention, RCT with New Beginnings Program in multiple prison nurseries	Sleed et al. (2013)
Child-caregiver attachment during parental incarceration in jail	Attachment Q-sort (Waters & Dean, 1985)	Child	77 children age 2–6 years; observed at home with their caregivers	No intervention	Poehlmann-Tynan et al. (2017)
Children's attachment behaviors to jailed parents and caregivers	Jail/prison observation checklist (Poehlmann, 2012)	Child	20 children aged 2–6 years with a parent in jail; observed visiting in a jail	No intervention	Poehlmann-Tynan et al. (2015)
Children's attachment behaviors toward jailed fathers and caregivers	Jail/prison observation checklist (Poehlmann, 2012)	Child	71 diverse children, aged 3–8 years, and their caregivers randomized to an educational outreach (n = 32) or wait list control (n = 39) group	Educational intervention; RCT using Sesame Workshop's (2013) *Little children, Big Challenges: Incarceration*	Poehlmann-Tynan et al. (2020)

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Construct assessed	Measure	Subject	Sample description	Intervention study?	Citation
Children's internal working models of attachment to imprisoned mothers and caregivers	Attachment story completion task (Bretherton, Ridgeway, & Cassidy, 1990)	Child	54 children aged 2.5–7.5 years who had mother currently imprisoned	No intervention	Poehlmann (2005b)
Children's internal working models of attachment to incarcerated parents and caregivers	Inventory of parent and peer attachment (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987)	Child	22 children aged 9–15 years, administered at intake and 6 months later	Mentoring children of incarcerated parents intervention	Shlafer and Poehlmann (2010)
Children's internal working models of attachment to jailed fathers and caregivers	Family drawings of preschoolers using an attachment-based system (Fury, Carlson, & Sroufe, 1997)	Child	16 children aged 3–6 years with a jailed father; family drawings created at home and during a visit in the jail	No intervention	Runion (2017)
Children's internal working models of attachment to jailed parents and caregivers	Family drawings of elementary school children using an attachment-based system (Fury et al., 1997)	Child	44 children aged 6–10 years; 24 separated from parent because of parental incarceration in jail; 20 separated because of other reasons	No intervention	Dallaire et al. (2012)
Maternal reflective functioning	Qualitative analysis of interviews; parent development interview (Slade et al., 2004)	Mother	27 infant-mother dyads coresiding in residential parenting program in UK prison	Pilot phase of the New Beginnings Program	Baradon et al. (2008)

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Construct assessed	Measure	Subject	Sample description	Intervention study?	Citation
Maternal reflective functioning	Parent development interview (Slade et al., 2004)	Mother	75 infant-mother dyads coresiding in residential parenting programs in UK prisons	Manualized attachment intervention, New Beginnings, with RCT design	Sleed et al. (2013)
Maternal state of mind regarding attachment	Adult attachment interview (George, Kaplan, & Main, 1996)	Mother	30 mothers coresiding with their infants in a prison nursery	Nursing intervention in a prison nursery	Byrne et al. (2010)
Maternal state of mind regarding attachment	Adult attachment interview (George et al., 1996)	Mother	69 mothers coresiding with the infants in a prison nursery program, assessed at entry into the program and at program completion	Nursing intervention in a prison nursery	Borelli et al. (2010)
Maternal state of mind regarding attachment	Adult attachment interview (George et al., 1996)	Mother	28 incarcerated mothers who were also involved in the child welfare system	Family reunification group	Harris (2017)
Paternal state of mind regarding attachment	Adult attachment interview (George et al., 1996)	Father	38 incarcerated fathers	Assessment during or immediately following completion of a 13-week parenting skills program	Fairchild (2009)
Maternal feelings of self-safety, self-trust, self-esteem, self-intimacy, and self-control	Trauma attachment and belief scale (Pearlman, 2003)	Mother	28 incarcerated mothers who were also involved in the child welfare system	Family reunification group	Harris (2017)

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Construct assessed	Measure	Subject	Sample description	Intervention study?	Citation
Maternal bonding with her infant during maternal incarceration	Qualitative analysis of interview data	Mother	12 incarcerated postpartum mothers who were anticipating separation from infant	No intervention	Chambers (2009)
Maternal history of attachment during incarceration	Adult parental acceptance rejection questionnaire (Rohner, 2005)	Mother	138 imprisoned mothers with minor children	No intervention	Loper and Clarke (2013)
Caregivers' feelings about caregiver-child relationship during parental incarceration	The revised inventory of parent attachment (Johnson, Ketring, & Abshire, 2003)	Caregiver	19 caregivers of children who were age 7–15 years completed the measure at intake and 6 months later	Mentoring children of incarcerated parents intervention	Shlafer and Poehlmann (2010)

Note: *RCT* randomized controlled trial

lence, and racial discrimination (e.g., Dworsky et al., 2020), and these experiences are likely to contribute to their attachment states of mind and reflective functioning. These factors are risks regarding the development of insecure and disorganized attachment relationships and less optimal outcomes for children, findings that help set the stage for the new studies presented in this Brief regarding separation, loss, and reunion between children and their mothers because of maternal criminal justice involvement.

Lessons from Six New Studies

In this Brief, six new studies focusing on maternal criminal justice involvement are presented. Here we review the new findings and draw out connections with our overarching theoretical lens. Although none of the studies specifically measured child or maternal attachment, the studies focus on issues related to separation, loss, and reunion that are highly relevant to our understanding of intergenerational attachment processes in children with mothers involved in the criminal justice system and help fill some of our knowledge gaps in this area.

Separation, Loss, Reunion, and Long-Term Implications for Children

The first empirical chapter provides a longitudinal overview of the intergenerational implications of maternal criminal justice involvement, highlighting individual children's stories through in-depth interviews with affected children at multiple time points. Siegel et al. (see chapter "Longitudinal Perspectives on Mother-Child Separation Resulting from Incarceration", this volume) draw on two phases of their qualitative study to examine immediate and longer-term implications of maternal incarceration for children. After reviewing findings from Siegel's (2011) *Disrupted Childhoods: Children of Women in Prison*, a study of 67 children with criminal justice-involved mothers, findings from follow-up interviews with 13 of the original child participants are presented. Now young adults ranging from 19 to 28 years of age, the youth discuss how their mother's incarceration and reentry affected them as children, often in poignant and painful ways. The young adults discuss how their perceptions of how their mother's incarceration and other family stressors affected their childhood and adolescence and continue to influence their transition to adulthood.

Although child-mother attachment was not directly assessed in the study, many of the themes that arose from the qualitative data analysis are consistent with a perspective of intergenerational attachment in developmental ecological contexts. One of the most striking themes to emerge focused on how frequently the young adults experienced separation from their mothers (and fathers), often because of maternal drug use in addition to the mother's criminal justice involvement. Sometimes children developed strong attachments to substitute caregivers such as their grandmothers while their mothers were gone, but these relationships were often disrupted when the mothers returned from prison. Yet the young adults reported acutely missing their mothers and experiencing pain because of the separation(s); they often longed for their mothers when they were away and wished that they could be together again, consistent with attachment theory. When mothers could not stay sober or free from drugs, children often interpreted these maternal behaviors as a lack of love and commitment, suggesting feelings of abandonment, rejection, and loss.

Other themes that emerged from Siegel et al.'s interviews reflected children's experiences of economic disadvantage and violence exposure in the home and neighborhood. About one-third of the young adults indicated that they had been arrested for violence-related offenses, indicating some continuity and discontinuity in offending patterns across generations. The youth also reported that they had to assume adult responsibilities sooner than they wished, often engaging in role reversal and other challenges prompted by their mother's absence and continued challenges.

Few longitudinal studies of children with incarcerated mothers have such depth or show the extent of children's complex feelings about their mothers as they move in and out of children's day-to-day lives because of criminal justice involvement

and challenges with addiction and mental health problems. The study helps illuminate some of the longer-term sequelae of attachment disruptions and multiple risks that keep reappearing in the lives of children with incarcerated mothers.

Following Siegel et al.'s overview of how child and adolescent development often unfolds in the context of maternal criminal justice involvement when interventions are not available or effective, the Brief turns to two studies focusing on gender-responsive interventions for incarcerated pregnant and postpartum women and their newborns. The studies provide insight into how corrections interventions can affect mothers' and children's experiences of maternal imprisonment, including separation and loss.

Separation, Loss, and Resilience in the Context of Doula Care

Because most incarcerated individuals are men, many correctional facilities are not equipped to meet the needs of women. As the incarceration of women continues to increase, especially in jails, facilities need gender-responsive programs and policies for mothers, especially for pregnant and postpartum mothers. Previous research has demonstrated the benefits of programs for pregnant women and their newborns (Dallaire, Forestell, Kelsey, Ptachick, & MacDonnell, 2017), as well as coresidential programs for mothers and their infants (i.e., prison nurseries; see Byrne, 2019, or Goshin & Byrne, 2009).

This Brief includes two new studies examining gender-responsive programming for pregnant women and mothers with infants that extends previous work to cover additional program content areas, expanded assessment of meaningful outcomes, and larger sample sizes. Shlafer and colleagues ("The Benefits of Doula Support for Women who are Pregnant in Prison and their Newborns", this volume) describe and evaluate a doula program for 67 women incarcerated in a state prison, and Pace and colleagues (see chapter "Maternal Pre- and Post-release Behaviors in a Residential Parenting Program (Prison Nursery)", this volume) examine the impact of a coresidential program in a sample of 117 mothers of infants incarcerated in a state prison. Program outcome and evaluation research studies such as these are critically needed in the field not only to document the successes of the programs but also to provide evidence-based support as critical first steps for making programming for women and mothers more accessible.

In the Brief's second empirical chapter, Shlafer and colleagues focus on an intervention that can support pregnant incarcerated mothers with gender-responsive care. Shlafer et al. examine the characteristics and perinatal outcomes of 67 women who were pregnant in Minnesota's only state prison for women and who received a unique intervention that is rarely available to incarcerated pregnant women: one-on-one doula support during pregnancy, labor, birth, and postpartum. Shlafer and colleagues analyze data from multiple sources using mixed methods, including quantitative analysis of maternal self-report questionnaires, qualitative analysis of written responses to questions by mothers and doulas, and doula reports of infant

birth outcomes. Pregnant incarcerated mothers reported on their demographic and incarceration-related characteristics; history of physical and mental health; and satisfaction with the doula program and time with their baby. Doulas recorded frequency and type of contact with mothers and their perceptions of the time mothers spent with their babies; and doula reported birth outcomes were examined.

Pregnant incarcerated women were disproportionately women of color and with limited educational attainment and high rates of physical and mental health problems, similar to previous studies of mothers who are incarcerated (Poehlmann, 2005a). Findings indicated that despite the many risks experienced by the pregnant incarcerated mothers, they had low rates of cesarean births (relative to the 30% of cesarean births reported for imprisoned women in 2016–2017; Sufrin, Beal, Clarke, Jones, & Mosher, 2019) and their newborns were generally healthy with respect to gestational age and birth weight. In addition, Shlafer et al. identify three themes from open-ended responses from mothers and doulas about mothers' time spent with their babies prior to separation: (1) mothers strongly felt that the time they had with their newborn infants was not long enough; (2) mothers savored every moment with their newborns prior to separation; and (3) doulas observed strong maternal-infant bonding in the hours that they were together. Although the new mothers reported being generally satisfied with the time spent with their babies given the typical context of birth in prison, they also reported intense emotional pain experienced because of separation from their newborn infants, consistent with attachment theory. They wished for more time with their infants prior to their inevitable separation because of their continued imprisonment and lack of a prison nursery program in Minnesota.

Overall, the findings indicate that doula care is an innovative, gender-responsive intervention that appears to benefit incarcerated pregnant women in prison, with preliminary findings pointing toward the potential for impact on newborn health, though more research on this aspect is needed.

Preventing Mother-Child Separation Through a Prison Nursery Program

In the third empirical chapter, Pace and colleagues focus on a different type of gender-responsive intervention for incarcerated mothers who gave birth during their prison stay: a Residential Parenting Program (RPP; often called a prison nursery) in Oregon. A very small proportion of infants with incarcerated mothers live with their mothers in prison nursery programs in the United States rather than being separated from their mothers and placed in the community during her incarceration. Only a handful of states have prison nurseries available to pregnant incarcerated women and their babies, and they differ dramatically in their approaches and policies.

Byrne and colleagues conducted a landmark longitudinal study on the development of the children during and following their prison nursery stay at Bedford Hills

Correctional Facility, which has the oldest prison nursery program in the United States (Byrne et al., 2010). While in the nursery, more infants developed secure attachments to their mothers than expected, given the mothers' high-risk status (Byrne et al., 2010). Mothers who had been in the nursery program had low rates of recidivism within 3 years after discharge, with only 4% of women returning to prison for new crimes (Goshin, Byrne, & Henninger, 2014). In addition, infants who were discharged into the community with their mothers fared well with respect to ongoing maternal care. About 59% of children were discharged with their mothers, and 83% of these remained with her at the end of the third reentry year (Byrne, Byrne et al., 2012). Of the 40% of children who began living in the community prior to their mother's prison release, most were with family caregivers at the end of the first reentry year. Although other studies focusing on prison nurseries exist, the majority of outcome variables focus on maternal recidivism.

In this volume, Pace and colleagues extend this literature by examining maternal behavior in prison and following release, including recidivism and other infractions; whether mothers and infants are discharged together; and whether or not the mother had visits from her other children or other loved ones during the RPP stay. Using a longitudinal dataset, several variables including length of sentence, level of risk and needs, and history of visits are examined as predictors of mothers' behavior during participation in the RPP and after release into the community. Maternal outcomes are defined in terms of institutional misconduct and field violations during community supervision in the community.

Mothers resided in the RPP between 20 and 987 days, and remarkably all mothers were discharged together with their infants. Only 17 of the 117 mothers had visits during their entire stay in the RPP though, and only 4% of the mothers were visited by their other children who were living in the community. Of the children who visited, 80% were less than 7 years old. Following maternal-baby discharge from the RPP, the rate of recidivism was 8.3%, which is about one-third the rate for the general population of imprisoned women released from the same correctional system in the same year (with the caveat that these statistics are not directly comparable because of bias related to selection characteristics into the program). Yet Pace et al. go beyond this recidivism statistic to examine additional maternal behaviors during and following incarceration. Analyses indicated that mothers reporting elevated needs related to coping skills engaged in more behavioral infractions during their RPP stay; following release into community supervision, higher overall risk levels and higher needs for education were associated with more maternal field violations (i.e., violations of rules that occurred during community supervision). Importantly, RPP participation in the form of keeping mothers with their infants in a supportive environment can be a protective factor for mothers involved in the criminal justice system regarding their stress and recidivism.

When the infants did not have to experience the separation from their mothers that usually occurs when a mother is in prison in the United States, their primary attachment relationships can be fostered, contributing to the child's and mother's resilience. However, if maternal recidivism occurs, and the mother needs to return to a corrections environment, prisons and jails in the United States do not have the

option for children to accompany their mother into the corrections facility, unlike many other countries in the world (Byrne, 2019). Although data regarding child outcomes were not available in the dataset used by Pace et al., the findings shed light on how new mothers function with respect to their misbehavior during incarceration and following release into the community.

Separation, Loss, and Reunion and Overlap with Foster Care

In the Brief's fourth empirical chapter, Gifford and colleagues examine the overlap between maternal imprisonment and children's foster care placement over time. Their study examines the timing of maternal incarceration in relation to children's involvement with child protective services and children going in and out of foster care, focusing on the 3 years prior to and following the mother's incarceration in state prison. The study is unique because it links administrative data from multiple systems in North Carolina: the state's Department of Corrections, Vital Statistics, and Division of Social Services. A large group of mothers were involved in the study: 5478 mothers who entered state prison between 2009 and 2012 and who had a minor child. Using these rich longitudinal data, Gifford et al.'s primary finding was that mothers were more likely to be imprisoned *following* a child's placement into foster care, similar to the Vera Institute of Justice's findings using data from New York City (Ross, Khashu, & Wamsley, 2004).

Child welfare systems and criminal justice systems serve many of the same families, often spanning a number of years. It is particularly important to examine the timing of such overlaps (even when the overlap does not occur at the same time). When a child is placed into foster care, it may be a significant risk marker for a mother's imprisonment. It is possible that if resources, treatment, and monitoring were provided to mothers, such as intensive intervention for trauma, addiction, and serious mental health problems, perhaps fewer mothers would end up in prison, which is often further traumatizing for both children and mothers. Given high rates of child welfare and criminal justice system engagement in the years prior to prison entry, enhanced efforts to provide preventive services may reduce maternal-child separation via preventing imprisonment and foster care placements. The high rates of parole, probation, and arrest prior to prison were also noted and seem to be additional potential intervention points. Once a child is placed in foster care and a mother goes to prison, a vicious cycle is often started (e.g., see chapter "Longitudinal Perspectives on Mother-Child Separation Resulting from Incarceration", this volume).

Separation, Reunion, and Separation Because of Recidivism from Jail

Studies focusing on maternal reentry into family life are rare. However, a number of studies have examined how incarcerated fathers adjust during reentry from prison. For example, findings from the Multisite Family Study on Incarceration, Parenting, and Partnering, a longitudinal study of 1482 incarcerated fathers and their women partners, suggest that community supervision policies and practices did not support incarcerated fathers' family ties, instead focusing on monitoring for infractions and removal for violations (McKay et al., 2019). Although there are no similar longitudinal studies on mothers returning from prison, the Returning Home study, conducted from 2001 to 2006 by the Urban Institute, focused on incarcerated men and women reintegrating into their communities following release from prisons in Illinois, Maryland, Texas, and Ohio. LaVigne, Brooks, and Shollenberger (2009) examined Returning Home data on women, most of whom were mothers. Although many mothers had family members to support them following return to the community, their family supports were not as strong as those reported by returning fathers. Moreover, reentering women were less likely to receive financial support from their own parents and more likely to receive financial support from their partners and their older children.

In the fifth empirical chapter in this Brief, Folk and colleagues contribute to the reentry literature on mothers by conducting a longitudinal examination of women who spent time in jail, rather than prison. Although the number of women going in and out of jails in the United States is rising, little is known about women's recidivism during the years following their release from jail. Folk and colleagues examine recidivism in the 7 years post-release from jail among 143 women, 77% of whom were mothers. They explored differences between mothers and non-mothers in recidivism rates, reasons for recidivism, and undetected crimes that did not result in recidivism to corrections. Rearrest rates in the 7 years post-incarceration were equally high for mothers and non-mothers—unfortunately with rates of more than 50%. For both detected and undetected crimes, mothers were more likely to reoffend than non-mothers for property offenses and violent crimes, but not drug-related or public order offenses. Violent reoffending was especially likely to occur within the context of domestic violence.

Folk et al.'s results suggest the need for interventions to address the material and economic needs of reentering mothers as well preventing domestic violence during the reentry period. Although child-level data were not available in the study, the family level variables such as domestic violence and economic well-being are critically important contexts for children's development and attachments. Moreover, low-resource environments also contribute to children's well-being for years to come, as was seen in the Siegel et al.'s chapter and many other studies (e.g., Nichols & Loper, 2012).

Disrupted Motherhood in the Context of Community Supervision

In the sixth and final empirical study presented in this Brief, Goshin and Sissko use qualitative methods to uncover how 23 mothers managed to take care of their (combined) 78 children during maternal experiences in a residential treatment facility in the community. It is noteworthy that of the 78 children, only 4 lived with the mother in the residential treatment facility. All mothers reported having past or current involvement with child welfare agencies, with most reporting a history of repeated custody losses. Mothers described how their child custody losses and justice involvement were connected, but they were sometimes confused about the directionality of the connection. Some mothers reported slipping into worsening drug use and criminal justice contact following loss of child custody, similar to that reported in Gifford et al. (see chapter "Maternal Imprisonment and the Timing of Children's Foster Care Involvement", this volume). Another important finding is that in a number of cases, mothers requested outpatient substance use treatment so that they could remain with their children at home, but community corrections officers forced them go to a residential treatment facility, causing mother-child separation. Given these factors, Goshin and Sissko found that mothers had to redefine how they engaged in parenting over time based on their experiences of criminal justice involvement.

The authors identify seven strategies that mothers used, including conserving their limited resources to focus on supporting and living with their younger children, engaging in role reversal with some of their children to get family needs met, and breaking supervision rules to parent their children. Some mothers fought to regain custody of their children, whereas other mothers attempted to accommodate others' wishes and engage in the "least upsetting" mothering role rather than following their own wishes. Some mothers focused on finding a caregiver who would safely raise their children, while others put their energy into mothering from a distance. Mothers used these strategies to navigate challenges at the personal level and at broader ecological systems levels, including accommodating the developmental needs of their children and creating the most physically and emotionally close maternal roles that they could, given multiple constraints.

These findings provide insight into the many struggles faced by mothers on community supervision. Although it is often seen as an alternative to incarceration, community supervision can prevent mothers from full participation in family life and parenting their children. Community supervision includes involvement with parole, probation, or specialized courts, each of which has specific rules and expectations regarding the parent's conduct, which can be confusing and constrain parenting roles. Few prior studies have focused on how children in the United States fare when alternatives to parental incarceration are offered, and more work needs to be done in this area (e.g., Fry-Geier & Hellman, 2017).

We now turn our attention to current issues affecting parents involved with the criminal justice system and their families and conclude with recommendations for policy and practice.

Current Issues and Parental Incarceration

Current issues involving the worldwide novel coronavirus pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement are closely related to the experiences of parents involved in the criminal justice system and their children, and thus we briefly touch on these topics here. As noted below, there have been clear challenges but also potential opportunities.

On the one hand, the coronavirus pandemic has had disproportionately negative effects on incarcerated individuals and their families, not only because of health disparities in rates of COVID-19 infections and related deaths. In addition to causing general anxiety in parents and children (e.g., Garcia de Avila et al., 2020; Stark, White, Rotter, & Basu, 2020), the pandemic has also impacted residents of corrections facilities, as people in jails and prisons are more likely to become infected with the virus than the general population (e.g., Hawks, Woolhandler, & McCormick, 2020). In addition, in an attempt to limit the spread of the novel coronavirus in jails and prisons, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2020) recommended limiting in-person visits to corrections facilities. Many facilities allowed only video visits, phone calls, or e-mail or paper mail during the pandemic, with some systems offering a limited number of free or reduced cost phone calls at the beginning of 2020 or other communications using tablets (Williams et al., 2020). Non-contact visits also have been recommended by the CDC (2020). Given these factors, it has been challenging for many incarcerated individuals to stay in contact with their family members, especially when families struggle with material resources that make paying for phone calls and video visits challenging if not impossible (Christian, 2005).

On the other hand, there have been some positive effects of the novel coronavirus on corrections systems, especially related to decarceration. In response to the pandemic, some corrections systems have released incarcerated individuals early—especially those deemed low risk or those close to completing their sentences (Abraham, Brown, & Thomas, 2020). In addition, some compassionate releases were allowed if an ill or aging incarcerated individual had a person to take care of them in the community. In other cases, signature bonds were allowed at the time of arrest instead of detainment. It is possible that such decarceration efforts could occur routinely without compromising public safety, rather than reserving such methods for use only during a worldwide health crisis (Abraham et al., 2020).

Another set of current events, triggered by the tragic murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis and the ensuing protests against police brutality and for racial justice by the Black Lives Matter movement, has important implications for individuals and families involved in the criminal justice system, including mothers and their

children. The criminal justice system, like other systems in the United States, has perpetuated institutional racism resulting in disproportional representation of people of color, especially Black men and women (Davis, 2017). For example, Black children in the United States are twice as likely to have an incarcerated parent compared to White children (Murphey & Cooper, 2015). It is also important to note that police brutality and its effects on the Black community include children who are witness to such violence. A growing body of research has found that witnessing a parent's arrest can be traumatic, with effects on subsequent development, including elevated behavior problems, less optimal health and developmental skills, and dysregulated stress processes (Dallaire & Wilson, 2010; Dallaire et al., 2015; Phillips & Zhao, 2010; Poehlmann-Tynan et al., 2020; Muentner et al., 2021).

Requiring law enforcement agents to use child-sensitive protocols during arrest is one way of improving this situation and decreasing trauma experienced by children, especially Black children (International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2014). Another option for improving the situation is diverting police funding to community-led organizations to improve community members' mental and physical health and access to resources and opportunities, as has been done successfully in some communities like Camden, New Jersey. Such models recognize the incredible breadth of expectations that exist for many law enforcement agencies, which can cause such systems to become overburdened and thus crisis-driven, instead of prevention-oriented.

Although the studies included in this volume were largely written prior to these current events, it is important to recognize the relevance of the current events for the recommendations that have emerged from this volume.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Each of the studies presented in this Brief makes significant contributions to our understanding of mothers involved in the criminal justice system in the United States and how family life and children's development unfolds within such contexts. Each study highlights the challenges that mothers and children face when the criminal justice system becomes a part of their lives, whether it is through incarceration or reentry from prison or jail, or spending time in a residential parenting program in a prison or residential treatment program in the community. Children and their justice-involved mothers typically experience separation and loss—repeatedly in far too many cases—and sometimes reunification, in addition to a host of other risks such as maternal addiction, mental health concerns, domestic and neighborhood violence, poverty, trauma, and early adversity. Despite these serious challenges, as well as glaring racial and economic disparities that are pervasive in the criminal justice system (Western & Wildeman, 2009), there is potential for prevention and intervention that can facilitate resilience processes in affected mothers and families. What follows are our suggestions for changes at multiple systems levels to better

support children and families when a mother becomes involved in the criminal justice system.

Gender-Responsive and Trauma-Informed Care

When a pregnant woman or mother becomes involved in the criminal justice system, gender-responsive and trauma-informed care should be the norm. The majority of mothers who have contact with the criminal justice system have experienced multiple adverse childhood experiences (e.g., Dworsky et al., 2020) and attachment-related trauma (Table 1). Often these factors are underlying causes of mental health problems and addiction that are entwined with criminal behavior, all too commonly seen in women who are arrested or enter jail or prison. Gender-responsive and trauma-informed care can help mothers heal and be less likely to recidivate and cause additional separation and loss for their children. Examples of gender-responsive and trauma-informed care are doula programs for pregnant incarcerated women (see chapter "The Benefits of Doula Support for Women who are Pregnant in Prison and their Newborns", this volume) and residential parenting programs that provide intergenerational support and *allow mothers and babies to be discharged together* (see chapter "Maternal Pre- and Post-release Behaviors in a Residential Parenting Program (Prison Nursery)", this volume). Discharging mothers and infants together is particularly important in preventing separation-related trauma for children and mothers that can have lasting effects. Residential parenting programs have particularly low rates of recidivism, which is better for mothers and their children.

When mothers and their infants are discharged from a residential parenting program, it is important to provide support and case management, including helping the mother develop coping skills in the community, continuing access to educational opportunities and parenting support, and ensuring adequate material well-being for the mother and her child(ren). These factors can make a substantial difference in preventing recidivism and helping families stay together.

When doula programs are implemented in corrections settings that do not have a prison nursery program available, it is particularly important to consider how and when to transition the baby to care in the community. Shlafer et al. report that mothers in the doula program engaged in positive bonding with their infants and the mothers wished for more time with their newborns. Infant-mother separation can cause pain and even trauma for mothers and should be implemented with care, perhaps gradually introducing the mother and newborn to the community caregiver.

Gender-responsive and trauma-informed care are also essential for substance abuse and mental health interventions. Studies have found different effects of alcohol and other substances on women compared to men and women often respond to treatment differently than men (see National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2020, for a review). In general, individuals who experience both substance abuse and other mental health diagnoses have symptoms that are more severe, persistent, and treatment-resistant compared to individuals who have either disorder alone (NIDA,

2020). In general, men are more likely than women to have both disorders, although the exception is incarcerated individuals; incarcerated women are more likely than incarcerated men to have mental health problems and addiction, as well as trauma experiences (NIDA, 2020). Women are also likely to use substances to self-treat their mental health symptoms or trauma sequelae (NIDA, 2020). Although much of the literature on mothers and addiction focus on pregnant and parturient addicted mothers, as well as infants with neonatal abstinence disorders, addiction in mothers with young children and older children should be included in research and intervention as well, especially mothers involved in the criminal justice system (e.g., Cassidy et al., 2010).

Poverty-Informed Care

In addition to trauma, experiencing family and community poverty, including housing instability and homelessness, food insecurity and food deserts, financial insecurity and limited economic opportunities, and insufficient basic material resources, is pervasive for mothers involved in the criminal justice system and their children (e.g., Poehlmann, 2005a). Ameliorating family and community poverty is an essential consideration when attempting to support maternal and child well-being and mothers' relationships with children during maternal incarceration and during community supervision or reentry (Noyes, Paul, & Berger, 2017). Adequate income, food, housing, healthcare, and access to help in finding the resources to get one's basic needs met are essential for mothers and their children (see Jonson-Reid, Drake, Kohl, & Auslander, 2019, for a review). Far too often, criminal justice-involved mothers who return to their communities are forced to choose between living with and supporting their youngest children over their older children who are already living with other caregivers or independently, or even just focusing on themselves despite their wishes to parent their children (e.g., see chapter "Redefining Motherhood: Mothering in Mandated Inpatient Substance Use Treatment", this volume). Too many children must assume parental roles and support their younger siblings or even their reentering mothers, which often delays or prevents their own educational opportunities or getting their own attachment needs met (e.g., see chapter "Longitudinal Perspectives on Mother-Child Separation Resulting from Incarceration", this volume). Role reversal can reflect relationship disruptions or disorganization in the family context and have negative implications for children's future social development and relationships as well (e.g., Macfie et al., 1999; Macfie, Houts, McElwain, & Cox, 2005). Importantly, poverty-informed care must be implemented at both the community and family levels so that enough resources are available for all (e.g., Noyes et al., 2017).

For example, Goshin and Sissoko (see chapter "Redefining Motherhood: Mothering in Mandated Inpatient Substance Use Treatment", this volume) reported

that mothers in residential treatment in the community adjusted how they mothered their children because of limited family and community resources. Sometimes mothers had to turn down requests for help from their adolescent and adult children, such as living together, so that they could focus on the youngest child's needs. Every mother that Goshin and Sissko interviewed (who was a primary caregiver) lived with her youngest child, even though many mothers had older children living in the community. Mothers described their youngest children as sources of strength, and they were often desperate to keep the youngest in their care in part because of prior custody losses and negative experiences with the child protective system. One recommendation is to support extended family members and members of the mother's community or church to help in these situations and alleviate some of the pressure on adult children or teens to "grow up too fast" (e.g., see chapter "Longitudinal Perspectives on Mother-Child Separation Resulting from Incarceration", this volume).

With adequate family and community resources and supports, it may be possible for reentering mothers to have enough to share with all of their children or to access on behalf of their children. Poverty-informed care may reduce future maltreatment of children, and it may be needed even more than parenting education in many cases (e.g., Jonson-Reid, Drake, Kohl, & Auslander, 2019). Indeed, some scholars argue that community and family poverty amelioration are needed instead of more individually focused parenting education to prevent maltreatment, especially for neglect and especially in Black families (e.g., Roberts, 2011).

Child Protective Services Involvement as an Opportunity for Intervention

Multiple previous studies (e.g., Brazzell, 2008; Ross et al., 2004), and new studies by Gifford et al. (see chapter "Maternal Imprisonment and the Timing of Children's Foster Care Involvement", this volume) and Goshin and Sissko (see chapter "Redefining Motherhood: Mothering in Mandated Inpatient Substance Use Treatment", this volume), have found that child protective service involvement often predates maternal incarceration. Thus, when children become involved with child protective services, it may be seen as a risk marker or predictor of their mother's future imprisonment, especially for poor Black women because of racial and economic disparities, racism, and structural discrimination at all systems levels (Roberts, 2011). Instead of letting the situation unfold in a way that escalates the distress and despondence of addicted, traumatized mothers, often leading to placement of children into foster care or termination of parental rights, more resources and intensive intervention should be provided to mothers at the time of first child protective involvement. Extensive family and community approaches to services could be preventive and lead to fewer separation-related traumas or multiple placements for children.

The youth.gov website features several resources that may be helpful for families and professionals in these situations. For example, there is a guide for incarcerated parents who have children in the child welfare system. There is also a new three-part series, available at https://youth.gov/youth-topics/children-of-incarcerated-parents/tools-guides-resources, which includes information for families about parental arrest and detention, parental incarceration, and reentry. Although many of these guides are helpful, they do not go far enough in linking how support and treatment for mothers following child protective involvement might possibly prevent maternal incarceration and future mother-child separation or custody loss.

In a white paper from the Urban Institute (Brazzell, 2008), researchers found that among children in foster care, children with incarcerated mothers were more likely to have "adoption as their ultimate placement goal" than children with no history of maternal incarceration. Moreover, children with incarcerated mothers were more likely to be placed in foster homes (78 versus 56 percent) and less likely to be placed in group homes (14 versus 31 percent) compared to children with no history of maternal incarceration, suggesting that foster care cases may be handled differently when mothers are involved in the criminal justice system. The white paper did not suggest policy changes to remedy the situation, however. Clearly, new approaches and interventions are needed; indeed, perhaps the careful work of Gifford and colleagues (see chapter "Maternal Imprisonment and the Timing of Children's Foster Care Involvement", this volume) can spur action in this area.

New approaches to consider, implemented in conjunction with family and community poverty amelioration and treatment for maternal addiction and trauma, include individual or group mindfulness and self-compassion and restorative justice approaches. A recent systematic review and meta-analysis suggests that mindfulness meditation and yoga can have positive effects on psychological well-being and behavior—albeit small average effects—on those in prison (Auty, Cope, & Liebling, 2017), although the studies reviewed did not focus on incarcerated parents. Such interventions may be important to consider for incarcerated and reentering parents, as Bögels, Lehtonen, and Restifo (2010) present mechanisms by which mindful parenting interventions can improve parent-child interactions in the context of parent or child mental health problems.

Another approach that could be particularly helpful, especially for parents of color involved in the criminal justice system, is a restorative justice approach implemented prior to release, during the reentry period, or during community supervision (e.g., Walker & Davidson, 2018). Although controversial, restorative and transformative justice interventions may be appropriate for some families in the context of domestic violence, cases need to be chosen with care (Kim, 2018). Such approaches may offer new options to prevent future violence and also may promote social justice for families of color (Kim, 2018) who are disproportionately affected by incarceration and its collateral consequences (Western & Wildeman, 2009).

Reentry Support

Although Folk et al. found that being a mother is not consistently related to rearrest or reoffending, except in the context of domestic violence or undetected crime (see chapter "A Longitudinal Examination of Women's Criminal Behavior During the 7 Years After Release from Jail", this volume), children may provide motivation for parents to succeed during their incarceration and reentry (Poehlmann, 2005b). Reentry support is particularly important for mothers and their children as repeated experiences of separation and loss can leave children feeling abandoned or unloved (e.g., see chapter "Longitudinal Perspectives on Mother-Child Separation Resulting from Incarceration", this volume). In a recent paper, Poehlmann-Tynan (2020) suggested a number of ways to support reentering parents and prevent recidivism, and some of these recommendations are echoed in this volume in the following section. Reentry support is best initiated during incarceration and then continuing into the community.

Planning for Reentry

When planning assistance is provided, reentering individuals are more successful and have lower recidivism rates (La Vigne et al., 2008). Planning can include identifying supportive family members and community support systems, as well as assistance with basic needs such as finding employment, housing, healthcare, substance abuse treatment or counseling, and child care. So that reentry planning can begin as soon as possible, including involving the family, prisons and jails should inquire about parental status at intake and provide parenting support and reentry case management that has a family focus. Special care should be taken to honor and continue attachment relationships that children have formed with their caregivers during a mother's absence, even during the mother-child reunion process (see chapter "Longitudinal Perspectives on Mother-Child Separation Resulting from Incarceration", this volume).

Helping Children and Mothers Stay in Contact with Each Other

Studies have found that the contact that parents have with their children during incarceration affects the quality of the parent-child relationship following incarceration (e.g., La Vigne et al., 2006). Such contact can occur through visits, phone calls, or letters, with phone calls being the most common form of contact (Shlafer, Duwe, & Hindt, 2019). Although Pace et al. (see chapter "Maternal Pre- and Post-release Behaviors in a Residential Parenting Program (Prison Nursery), this volume) found that very few mothers in the residential parenting program in Oregon had visits from

their other children, it is possible that other forms of parent-child communication occurred. Barriers to parent-child connections during incarceration include the high cost of phone calls and video visits, travel time, unwelcoming carceral environments, and conflict with children's caregivers (see Dworsky et al., 2020, for a recent review). However, children benefit from child-friendly in-person visits, sending and receiving notes, letters, drawings, cards or emails, and video chats (Poehlmann-Tynan & Pritzl, 2019). Developmentally, it is difficult for young children to have meaningful telephone conversations, however.

Decreasing Reliance on Incarceration and Community Supervision

In addition to supporting children and families, it is also critical to decrease over-reliance on incarceration especially at the local level, where most incarceration occurs. Maternal incarceration in prison or jail has intergenerational consequences for children as well as high costs to society, meaning that it should be used sparingly. However, increasing community supervision is not always the best alternative either, especially when mothers are forced to live apart from their children (e.g., see chapter "A Longitudinal Examination of Women's Criminal Behavior During the 7 Years After Release from Jail", this volume). For the mothers involved in community supervision, refocusing from surveillance and sanctions to support and keeping mothers with their children if at all possible are imperative. Decreasing the length of community supervision is important as well, as the average length of parole and probation in the United States is about 2 years (Kaeble & Bonczar, 2016). Western (2018) recommends shortening community supervision periods to a maximum of 18 months, and even shorter periods are used in other countries. Finally, because racism, discrimination, and stigma are present throughout the criminal justice system, including longer sentences for people of color, it is also essential to combat these problems through social justice action, which may include protesting publicly and mindfully mediating privately as well as restorative justice, feminist action, anti-racism, and cultural humility approaches. Intergenerational perspectives are essential as well, because *children—through no fault of their own—frequently suffer the consequences of their parent's criminal justice involvement* and the often punitive societal treatment of them.

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