

A LIFE-HISTORY APPROACH TO COMMUNITY REINTEGRATION: FEMALE EX-  
OFFENDERS' EXPERIENCES OF FACILITATORS AND BARRIERS OF SUCCESSFUL  
COMMUNITY REINTEGRATION

A Thesis Submitted to the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master's in Applied Social  
Psychology

In the Department of Psychology

University of Saskatchewan

Saskatoon, SK

By

KELSEY N. BROWN

© Copyright Kelsey N. Brown, May, 2018. All rights reserved.

## PERMISSION TO USE

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a Graduate degree from the University of Saskatchewan, I agree that the Libraries of this University may make it freely available for inspection. I further agree that permission for copying of this thesis in any manner, in whole or in part, for scholarly purposes may be granted by the professor or professors who supervised my thesis work or, in their absence, by the Head of the Department of Psychology or the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research. It is understood that any copying or publication or use of this thesis or parts thereof for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission. It is also understood that due recognition shall be given to me and to the University of Saskatchewan in any scholarly use which may be made of any material in my thesis/dissertation.

Requests for permission to copy or to make other uses of materials in this thesis in whole or part should be addressed to:

Dean

College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies  
University of Saskatchewan  
116 Thorvaldson Building, 110 Science Place  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, S7N 5C9, Canada

Department of Psychology  
University of Saskatchewan  
9 Campus Drive, 154 Arts  
Saskatoon, SK, S7N 5A5

## ABSTRACT

Research suggests that the experiences of female offenders differ greatly from their male counterparts; however, because females only make up a small proportion of offenders in North America, community reintegration programs often focus on male offenders (Belknap, 2007). This shortcoming stimulated the current study, which was conducted to better understand the experiences of reintegration for female offenders as told by the women themselves.

Using life-history interviews with five female ex-offenders, accessed through the Elizabeth Fry Society of Saskatchewan, in-depth stories about reintegration were created from the perspective of those closest to these experiences (Patton, 2002). The data were analyzed using a narrative analysis approach in which stories were re-written in chronological order. Each story depicts a single character and underlines the events and meanings prescribed by the participants themselves.

Results indicated several shared themes across participants' stories that referred pathways to crime, experiences during and after incarceration, facilitators and barriers to successful reintegration and resilience. Whether participants were first-time or repeat offenders, results offered some support for past research regarding pathways to crime and difficulties with community reintegration; however, various unique and distinct experiences emerged. The nature of the study allowed for an in-depth exploration of issues including family reunification, stigma and securing stable employment, and gave participants a chance to share their stories. These stories suggest various implications for research and practice such as one-on-one counselling, child advocacy and concrete release planning, which may lead to improved support for female offenders during and after incarceration.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Stephen J. Wormith, for his patience, guidance and support during my thesis process. His door was always open whenever I ran into difficulties or had questions about my research or writing. He has allowed me to follow my own research interests, but always steered me in the right direction when I needed it. My research skills have developed significantly under his supervision which has landed me various academic and employment opportunities and will help me to succeed in the future.

I would also like to thank my Thesis Committee members, Dr. Mark Olver and Dr. Linda McMullen. They have helped guide me through this process, provided valuable feedback, and have always shown me patience and support.

I want to thank my family and friends, who have offered me unfailing support and encouragement through this process and throughout my academic career. A special thanks to my parents, Lori and Merv, for always believing in me and pushing me to achieve my goals.

Last, but certainly not least, I want to thank each of the women who agreed to participate in this study. I am grateful for the stories they have shared with me and for the opportunity to share their stories with others.

Without all of them, this accomplishment would not have been possible, Thank you.

Kelsey Brown

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

PERMISSION TO USE	i
ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
1. INTRODUCTION & LITERATURE REVIEW	1
1.1. Community Reintegration	2
1.1.1. Barriers to Reintegration	2
1.2. Criminogenic Characteristics and Treatment Needs of Female Offenders	3
1.3. Reintegration Programs for Female Offenders	4
1.4. Female Offenders' Needs	6
1.4.1. Increased Stigma	6
1.4.2. Mental Health and Addictions	7
1.4.3. Physical Health Issues	9
1.4.4. Unstable Housing	10
1.4.5. Limited Education and Employment Services	10
1.4.6. Family Reunification	12
1.4.7. Experiences of Childhood Abuse	14
1.5. Summary of Research	16
1.6. The Current Study	18
1.6.1. Study Design	19
1.6.2. Research Questions	21
1.6.3. Definition of Terms	21
2. METHODOLOGY	23

2.1.Data Generation	23
2.1.1. Epistemological Assumptions	23
2.1.2. Methodological Approach	24
2.1.3. Researcher’s Personal Position	25
2.1.4. Interviewing	27
2.1.4.1.Structure of Interviews and Procedure	28
2.1.5. Purposeful Selection of Participants	29
2.1.5.1.Participants of the Current Study	30
Table 1: Participant Demographics	31
2.1.6. Informed Consent	31
2.1.7. Confidentiality	32
2.1.8. Creating Meaning Through Narrative	32
2.2.Data Analysis	34
2.2.1. Steps to Ensure the Quality of Data	35
3. RESULTS AND INDIVIDUAL STORIES	38
3.1.Morgan’s Story	38
3.1.1. Before Incarceration	38
3.1.2. During Incarceration	40
3.1.3. After Incarceration	41
3.1.4. Future Aspirations and Lessons Learned	42
3.2.Anita’s Story	43
3.2.1. Before Incarceration	43
3.2.2. During Incarceration	44

3.2.3. After Incarceration	46
3.2.4. Future Aspirations and Lessons Learned	48
3.3. Brittany's Story	49
3.3.1 Before Incarceration	49
3.3.2 During Incarceration	50
3.3.3. After Incarceration	52
3.3.4. Future Aspirations and Lessons Learned	54
3.4. Carol's Story	55
3.4.1. Before Incarceration	55
3.4.2. During Incarceration	57
3.4.3. After Incarceration	60
3.4.4. Future Aspirations and Lessons Learned	61
3.5. Patricia's Story	62
3.5.1. Before Incarceration	62
3.5.2. During Incarceration	63
3.5.3. After Incarceration	64
3.5.4. Future Aspirations and Lessons Learned	65
4. DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS	66
4.1. Themes and Meaning Making	67
4.2. Childhood Experiences and Pathways to Crime	67
4.2.1. Experiences of Abuse and Dysfunctional Relationships	67
4.2.2. Substance Abuse	70
4.2.3. Single Parenthood	72

4.3.Experiences and Support During Incarceration	73
4.3.1. Lack of Relevant Programming	73
4.3.2 Lack of Mental Health Support	76
4.3.3. Limited Release Planning	77
4.3.4. Relationships with Other Inmates	79
4.4. Experiences After Incarceration	80
4.4.1. Feeling Overwhelmed	81
4.4.2. Difficulty Finding Employment and Stigma	82
4.5. Facilitators of Successful Reintegration	83
4.5.1. Spirituality	83
4.5.2. Community and Family Support	84
4.5.3. Motherhood	86
4.6. Barriers to Community Reintegration	86
4.6.1. Securing Stable Employment and Finding Housing	87
4.6.2 Stigma and Low Self-Esteem	88
4.6.3. Addictions and Anti-Social Attitudes	89
4.7. Resilience	90
4.8. Conclusions and Implications for Understanding	91
4.8.1. Implications for Practice	92
4.8.2. Implications for Future Research	94
4.9. Aspects of the Current Study	95
References	97
Appendix A: Interview Guide	109



Appendix B: Clinical Graduate Student Information	111
Appendix C: Information Sheet and Script for EFS SK	112
Appendix D: Consent Form	114
Appendix E: Transcript Release Form	118
Appendix F: Morgan's Timeline	119
Appendix G: Anita's Timeline	120
Appendix H: Brittany's Timeline	121
Appendix I: Carol's Timeline	122
Appendix J: Patricia's Timeline	123

\

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION & LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, the number of female offenders in Canada has increased considerably. More specifically, between 2004 and 2013, the number of female offenders sentenced to federal jurisdiction increased by 14 percent (Statistics Canada, 2014). As of April 2014, there were approximately 1,098 women offenders serving federal sentences in Canada (628 incarcerated women and 470 women under community supervision). In Saskatchewan, rates of adult female admission to provincial custody exceeded the national average at 15% in 2017 (Mahony, Jacob, & Hobson, 2017). In line with the rising population of female offenders, the complexity of women's needs has increased over time. In particular, the percentage of women deemed to have high needs increased from 43% in 1996/1997, to 55% in 2007/2008 (Correctional Service Canada [CSC], 2010a). This is particularly true when examining gender differences in Saskatchewan, with a higher proportion of females having medium to high needs in regards to employment [65% vs. 57%], family/marital concerns [61% vs. 55%] and personal/emotional factors [23% vs. 14%; Kong & AuCoin, 2009). Though female offenders still represent only 5 percent of the total population of Canadian federal offenders, and 17% of the population of offenders in Saskatchewan, the increased rates of correctional supervision for women hold various implications (Statistics Canada, 2014). In particular, an escalation in custody and community sentences for female offenders highlights a need to understand the experiences of women who come into contact with the criminal justice system, in order to facilitate successful community reintegration and crime-free lifestyles.

## **1.1. Community Reintegration**

Community reintegration is a process of transition that begins at the offender's earliest point of contact with the criminal justice system. It involves a series of concurrent social, behavioral and cognitive changes (Doherty, Forrester, Brazil & Matheson, 2014). Upon being sentenced, offenders may participate in various cognitive-behavioral-based intervention programs to ease reintegration into the community once released from custody. These programs target factors that are associated with reducing recidivism, and focus on topics like education, skill development, violence prevention and substance abuse (CSC, 2009). Additionally, offenders often work closely with correctional staff to create appropriate release plans. These correctional plans outline a risk management strategy for each offender, specifying interventions and monitoring techniques to address factors associated with recidivism, such as the 'central eight' risk and need factors (Andrews & Bonta, 2010). Correctional plans usually involve particular restrictions, as well as requirements to participate in jobs and specified programs to facilitate successful reintegration (CSC, 2009).

### **1.1.1. Barriers to Reintegration**

Unfortunately, despite the existence of intervention programs and correctional plans, many offenders experience difficulties reintegrating into the community. In fact, research demonstrates that offenders returning to the community often face numerous economical, emotional and social issues that impact their ability to reintegrate into society (Graffam, Shinkfield, Lavelle, & McPherson, 2004). The prolonged separation from normal societal routines, social supports, employment and other daily activities while incarcerated may affect an individual's social adjustment when returning to the community. This exclusion from society can create further obstacles with reintegration due to a lack of positive connections with community

networks, which may be related to risk factors regarding family/marital circumstances and leisure/recreation (Andrews & Bonta, 2010; Carter, 2012; Graffam et al., 2004). Consequently, individuals released from prison may experience difficulties finding stable employment, securing safe and affordable housing and forming and preserving meaningful relationships. Moreover, offenders released from prison may be undereducated, possess limited employability skills, and experience added stigma because of their criminal records, adding to their risk to reoffend (Graffam et al., 2004; Valera, Brotzman, Wilson, & Reid, 2017). These issues are further emphasized when offenders are unable to access community resources, experience a lack of family support or are inadequately prepared for the realities of reintegration by correctional facilities (Moses, 2014; Valera et al., 2017).

## **1.2. Criminogenic Characteristics and Treatment Needs of Female Offenders**

Prior to examining the barriers to reintegration for women, it is important to understand the differing criminogenic characteristics and treatment needs between male and female offenders. Following the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) Model, knowledge of an offender's risk level and criminogenic needs is a crucial part of offender rehabilitation, as these factors can inform treatment by determining the specific needs to be targeted to increase the likelihood of successful reintegration (Andrews, Bonta & Wormith, 2011). By examining what led women towards criminal offending, researchers are able to better understand the needs of women that must be addressed upon release into the community (Ortiz, 2010). Some researchers argue that female offenders are more likely to live below the poverty rate at the time of their offense, to have lower levels of education, to represent ethnic minorities, and to have higher instances of substance abuse and mental illness than male offenders (Moses, 2014; Wetzler, 2005). On the other hand, females are less likely to be involved in violent crime, have a less extensive criminal history, and

tend to commit crime as a means of coping with abuse, to obtain basic resources, or by abusing drugs and alcohol (Wetzler, 2005). However, among the most significant differences, research demonstrates that women are more likely to have been caring for their children prior to being convicted and more commonly experience physical or sexual abuse prior to incarceration. In terms of abuse, this can be extremely traumatic, having begun during childhood and persisted into adulthood via romantic relationships (Moses, 2014). Similarly, many criminalized women are traumatized by being separated by their children during incarceration. Thus, according to the RNR model, reintegration programs for female offenders should focus on substance abuse, mental illness, trauma and other gendered experiences to ensure that the basic needs of women are met immediately upon release and continually during the reintegration phase (Andrews, Bonta & Wormith, 2011; Tucker, 2014).

### **1.3. Reintegration Programs for Female Offenders**

Though research regarding female offenders is becoming more frequent, the experiences of women continue to be misinterpreted when applied to reintegration programs. Therefore, more research is required to better understand the needs of female offenders, and how current reintegration programs relate to these needs. Presently, Canadian correctional institutions offer various correctional programs to facilitate reintegration. These programs attempt to follow the previously mentioned RNR Model of offender re-integration (Vitopoulos, 2011). This model consists of three principles that are used to guide offender treatment and support offender rehabilitation. The Risk Principle states that the amount of intervention that an offender needs should correspond with his/her level of risk to reoffend where more intensive intervention services are reserved for higher risk offenders (Andrews, Bonta & Wormith, 2006). In contrast, the Need Principle maintains that the focus of intervention services should be matched with the

criminogenic needs of the offender. Finally, the Responsivity Principle states that the styles and modes of service delivery should correspond with the abilities, learning styles and motivations of the offender to promote successful rehabilitation (Andrews, Bonta & Wormith, 2006). Thus, in terms of female offenders, successful reintegration should be endorsed by treatment that matches their learning styles and motivations, and focuses on the needs of women (e.g. physical/sexual abuse, mental health, substance abuse and family reunification).

Unfortunately, despite the efforts of correctional systems to understand the needs of offenders reintegrating into society, there are numerous shortcomings of the system that have a greater impact on women, compared to their male counterparts. Though research demonstrates that the needs of male and female offenders differ, correctional systems continue to use risk assessment tools, developed and validated on male samples, to assess risk and inform treatment for women (Belknap, 2007; Blanchette & Brown, 2006). Because of this, various studies have examined the gender-neutrality of these tools, producing mixed results. For example, a meta-analysis conducted Olver, Stockdale & Wormith (2009) found that the YLS/CMI significantly predicted general recidivism for both male and female juvenile offenders; while a comparative analysis by Vitopoulos, Peterson-Badali, and Skilling (2012) indicated that, though the YLS/CMI predicted recidivism equally for both sexes, the matching of appropriate services to RNR needs was significantly more successful in reducing recidivism for males. These mixed results are similar for various other risk assessment tools such as use the Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R), Violence Risk Appraisal Guige (VRAG) and the Historical Clinical Risk Management-20 Scale (HCR-20; Van der Knaap, Alberda, Oosterveld, & Born, 2012). In addition, some meta-analyses examining the effectiveness of treatment for female offenders have found that “what works” for men (i.e. adherence to the principles of the RNR model) is also

effective for women; however, the extent to which gender-responsive treatment is effective, over and above this model, remains unclear (Dowden & Andrews, 1999; Tripodi, Blesdoe, Kim & Bender, 2011). More specifically, more recent meta-analysis claim that women are more likely to respond well to gender-responsive treatment if they demonstrated gendered risk-factors such as extensive trauma histories (Gobeil, Blanchette & Stewart, 2016). Thus, many believe that correctional systems may not be addressing the needs most closely associated with criminal offending for women, which may hinder their successful community reintegration upon release.

#### **1.4. Female Offenders' Needs**

Though all offenders experience difficulties with reintegration, most women return to the same marginalized and challenging environments from which they came, often without having received services to address their needs. In fact, research shows that female offenders experience gendered issues with reintegration such as the following: increased stigma; accessing services for medical and mental health/addictions; unsafe and unstable housing; fragmented and limited educational and employment services; family reunification and child advocacy; and difficulty overcoming past trauma (Carter, 2012; Mceuin, 2005; Ritchie, 2001; Wetzler, 2005). An examination of each of these issues follows.

##### **1.4.1. Increased Stigma**

Though all offenders experience issues with social stigma upon conviction, research demonstrates that women may face exaggerated issues associated with their charges. Social stigma can be defined as the designation of deviance upon an individual that leads others to judge that individual as prohibited for social inclusion. According to Goffman's (1963) Social Stigma Theory, stigma becomes attached to an individual who possesses a negatively viewed quality as a result of stereotypical ideology (Aronson, Wilson, Akert, & Fehr, 2010). This is

often exaggerated for women due to the public's perception of crime as defying traditional gender roles. More specifically, because crime is typically viewed as a male dominated activity, females who commit crime are often viewed as 'doubly deviant' for disobeying social norms, as well as traditional gender roles (Dodge & Pogrebin, 2001; Leverentz, 2006). This may be further emphasized for women incarcerated for drug abuse, and women with children who are then considered 'bad mothers' (Bartholomew, 2009; Mceuin, 2005). Thus, as a consequence of such classification, female offenders are often dehumanized, viewed as dangerous and inferior, and are not respected, accepted, or supported by society. This stigma becomes the offender's 'master status' which defines who the person is, and undermines all other social identities, making it extremely difficult for released female offenders to move past their criminal record and obtain stable employment, accommodations, and relationships. This is especially problematic because research indicates that stigmatizing and shaming contribute to problems of physical and mental health, inhibits social reintegration, and advances criminal behavior (Dodge & Pogrebin, 2001).

#### **1.4.2. Mental Health and Addictions**

For female offenders, addiction presents a particularly significant challenge to successful reintegration, especially for those who have been exposed to traumatic experiences (Matheson et al., 2015; Wetzler, 2005). More specifically, in 2011, 85% of federal women offenders in Canada had significant substance use problems (CSC, 2013). Despite a need for substance abuse treatment for incarcerated women, these services are extremely lacking in correctional facilities (Ortiz, 2010; Young & Reviere, 2006). Though programs do exist, there is often a considerably long waiting list to participate, making reintegration more difficult for women who were unable to receive treatment (Laux et al., 2008). In addition to receiving treatment while incarcerated, substance abuse treatment should continue post-release in order to be effective (Ortiz, 2010).



Unfortunately, effectiveness of these services may be influenced by an overall shortage of community treatment, refusal of service, external barriers such as transportation and childcare, and treatment programs that do not address the specific needs of women which include parenting, interpersonal relationships, low self-esteem and previous trauma (Belknap, 2007; Mceuin, 2005).

In tandem with substance abuse issues, co-occurring mental disorders and medical conditions add further complexity to the reintegration process for female offenders. Issues may be exacerbated when the individual has experienced trauma prior to incarceration. This is a significant issue given that recent studies have found higher substance dependency among individuals with PTSD in comparison to those without (Papastavrou, Farmakas, Karayiannis, & Kotrotsiou, 2011). Thus, offering trauma informed treatment during incarceration can enable women to understand why they use drugs as a way to cope with the painful memories of abuse. Unfortunately, the traditional correctional treatment approach focuses on the substance dependence and helps women understand the relationship between alcohol/drug use and their criminality, but fails to directly address the relationship between trauma and substance use (Matheson et al., 2015). This serves as a significant issue because incarcerated women with histories of substance abuse and mental health diagnoses, such as PTSD, are less likely to be employed or to receive financial, housing, or social support from their extended family upon release from prison (Doherty et al., 2014).

Approximately 73% of female offenders have been diagnosed with mental health issues, compared to 55% of male offenders in Canadian federal prisons (Doherty et al., 2014). In terms of serious mental illnesses, such as major depression, schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, instances among incarcerated female offenders are eight times higher than those in a community

population (Covington, 2007). According to CSC (2013), incarcerated women are three times as likely to be diagnosed with depression than incarcerated men. In addition, female offenders are more likely to exhibit symptoms of schizophrenia, eating disorders, personality disorders, anxiety, and substance abuse (CSC, 2013). Thus, upon release, without receiving appropriate treatment within the institution, and without social support, housing, and connections to community services, women are more likely to experience decreased mental health, a higher level of homelessness, and are more likely to reoffend (Benda, 2005).

### **1.4.3. Physical Health Issues**

Aside from issues of stigma, and mental health/addictions, returning female offenders also face numerous barriers in meeting their healthcare needs. Inability to access medical services has been identified as a concern both within the institutions and during the reintegration stage (Ortiz, 2010). Because of long-term substance abuse issues, inability to access community healthcare and chronic poor nutrition, female offenders are often in poor health when received by correctional institutions. Research shows that female offenders present with higher rates of gynecological problems and chronic illnesses such as HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted infections, hypertension, diabetes, and epilepsy (Kane & DiBartolo, 2002; Mceuin, 2005; Ortiz, 2010). Unfortunately, though many female inmates enter the correctional system with health concerns, low rates of medical treatment are reported during incarceration in the United States (Baer et al., 2006; Mceuin, 2005; Ortiz, 2010). In addition, female inmates are unlikely to receive support for health conditions when transitioning back into their communities, especially in regards to health education and medical insurance, and often return to the same disenfranchised conditions. This may be exacerbated when women are not provided the necessary services to address the

underlying causes of health issues, such as appropriate substance abuse treatment, and therefore, do not have the tools to address their medical issues (Ortiz, 2010).

#### **1.4.4. Unstable Housing**

When female offenders are released from incarceration, many return to the same unstable living conditions that encouraged them to engage in criminal activity initially (Mceuin, 2005; Ortiz, 2010). Offenders are often released from prison without having secured safe and affordable housing, returning to the streets, attempting to access limited shelter beds, or moving from place-to-place with friends or family until they can secure a place of their own (Wetzler, 2005). However, many female offenders do not have positive social supports to turn to, and belong to families that are already overtaxed by economic and social stresses, or no longer communicate with family members as a result of their criminal behavior (Ritchie, 2001). Moreover, though transitional housing such as halfway houses exist, options for women are limited because of their underrepresentation in the criminal justice system, with more resources being designated to male offenders (Mceuin, 2005). Thus, secure housing options are further limited for women reintegrating into the community, contributing to recidivism and increased violent crimes for women (Nyamathi et al., 2017). In fact, a survey conducted by CSC indicated that increased collaboration between parole/probation officers and community partners to facilitate residential accommodations post-release should be a priority for female offenders (Thompson, Lutfy, Derkzen & Bertrand, 2015). This collaboration may help to diffuse issues with securing stable housing related to criminal records, mental health and housing for both women and their children.

#### **1.4.5. Limited Education and Employment Services**

Related to issues of housing, research demonstrates that female offenders are undereducated, and often do not have the education or vocational skills to obtain employment (Mceuin, 2005; Ortiz, 2010; Wetzler, 2005). This leads to economic marginalization of women and has been linked to rates of female offending, especially with those who are mothers and living in poverty stricken areas (Leverentz, 2006). Though women arrive at institutions with a need for education and employment training, they are not often receiving this support during incarceration. Thus, combined with the stigma of a criminal conviction, a limited education and lack of employable skills further disadvantages women in obtaining employment post-release (Hunter, 2016). CSC attempts to diffuse this issue by offering educational and vocational services, such as GED training and programs like plumbing and welding; however, resources are limited with few inmates accessing these services. Consequently, the concept of incarceration itself may be detrimental for women who do not receive services in that returning uneducated and unskilled offenders to their communities may enhance recidivism rates and pose as a threat to public safety (Stevens, 2015). Other barriers to obtaining employment include criminal records, a lack of employment history prior to incarceration, a lack of transportation, poor self-esteem, limited funding to access job training programs, and a disconnect between vocational skills learned in institutions and those required in the community (Thompson et al., 2015). Even when women do obtain employment, the majority acquire low-wage, service sector jobs, that seldom pay enough to secure stable housing, and regain custody of children (Ward, 2017). In turn, many women feel trapped and may turn to selling drugs, stealing goods or sex work to supplement their legal income, putting them at risk of incarceration once more (Thompson et al., 2015; Ward, 2017).

#### **1.4.6. Family Reunification**

As previously stated, the punishment for committing a crime is compounded for many female inmates by being separated from their children. In fact, approximately 55 to 70% of female offenders are mothers to children under the age of eighteen (Carter, 2012). Research shows that, in comparison to males, female offenders are more likely to have been caring for their children prior to incarceration, and are often expected to care for children post-release (Robbins, Martin & Surratt, 2009; Ward, 2017). During the period of incarceration, children of female offenders are likely to be placed in foster care. While incarcerated fathers are more likely to have their children placed with their mother, female offenders are more likely to leave children without a parental presence upon entering custody (Moses, 2014; Ward, 2017). To add to this issue, women are less likely to have contact with their children during incarceration than male inmates, causing a great deal of turmoil (Mceuin, 2005; Moses, 2014).

After being released from prison, women are expected to assume parental responsibilities, however, rebuilding relationships can be extremely challenging, leading to additional distress for female offenders trying to reunite with their children. This finding is in line with Statistics Canada (2015) research, which demonstrates that 69.1% of provincially sentenced women, and 59.8% of federally sentenced female offenders indicate treatment needs related to family reunification. Despite research finding that committing to family roles, such as parenting, may contribute to successful reintegration (Doherty et al., 2014), women are not commonly offered assistance with family reunification matters such as, custody of their children, restoring relationships, and/or parenting strategies (Gobeil, 2008; Thompson et al., 2015; Wetzler, 2005). Moreover, the significant social stigma against female offenders reestablishing

relationships with their children may contribute to fewer community services being offered in this area (Mceuin, 2005).

Contributing to family issues for reintegrating, female offenders are faced with challenges related to substance abuse, and securing stable housing and employment. More specifically, women released from prison often find themselves experiencing recurrent periods of homelessness, but, in order to regain custody of their children, women need to meet strict requirements (Mceuin, 2005; Moses, 2014). These requirements often state that female offenders must: 1) be sober for a specified period of time; 2) be employed for at least 6 months; 3) have secured appropriate housing where children can also be housed; and 4) be free of parole/probation requirements (Moses, 2014; Thompson et al., 2015). As mentioned, meeting these requirements may be difficult and time-consuming for reintegrating female offenders, adding to the stress of community reintegration. Moreover, if women are not able to meet their basic needs and do not receive appropriate support, they may be at risk of relapsing with drugs or alcohol, which creates further strain on family relationships, especially with children. In fact, research shows that relapse may negatively impact the well-being of the children in that children believe their mother cannot nurture and protect them when she relapses or returns to prison (Mceuin, 2005). Overall, whether women cannot provide financial support and a stable environment for their children; or whether they suffer relapse, or return to prison, being separated from their children contributes to feelings of guilt and shame, which may emphasize issues of mental health and inhibit successful reintegration (Bartholomew, 2009; Dodge & Pogrebin, 2001; Leverentz, 2006).

#### **1.4.7. Experiences of Childhood Trauma**

Along with the above challenges, women who come into contact with the criminal justice system are more likely to have experienced trauma prior to incarceration, when compared to their male counterparts (Blanchette & Brown, 2006; Gobeil, Blanchette, & Stewart, 2016). Most often, female offenders have grown up in homes plagued by violence, which has been linked to delinquency and later criminal activity, substance abuse, and mental and physical health concerns (Matheson, 2012; Matheson, Brazil, Doherty & Forrester, 2015; Nathan & Ward, 2001). Moreover, most studies involving female offenders find that nearly all participants have experienced trauma during childhood, including physical and sexual assault, witnessing violence, and emotional abuse or neglect (Ryder, 2003; Ward, 2017).

Though various forms of trauma exist, many female offenders report being physically or sexually assaulted as children. For example, Moses (2014) examined experiences of violence among offenders in the United States and found that all women in their sample had experienced physical and/or sexual violence throughout their lives. In line with other research, women in this study reported experiencing abuse from caretakers as a child, and romantic partners during adulthood. Similarly, Greenfeld and Snell (1999) examined hundreds of thousands of U.S. female offenders and probationers, finding that 44% had experienced physical or sexual abuse during their lives, with 69% reporting that the assault occurred before eighteen years of age. Supporting this research, a study exploring the rate of childhood trauma in substance-dependent female offenders found that 39% were sexually abused, and 29% were physically abused before the age of sixteen (Messina, Grella, Burdon & Prendergast, 2007). In this study, more than 50% of female offenders reported at least 3 instances of trauma, while 22% reported five or more. These rates have been shown to be even higher for juvenile offenders, with girls reporting high

rates of caregiver maltreatment, being a direct victim of physical and sexual violence, and being fearful of further victimization (Alemagno, Shaffer-King, & Hammel, 2006; DeHart, 2009).

Broadening the spectrum of trauma, other studies have used the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Scale to measure the relationship between childhood trauma and adult health, mental health, and high-risk behaviors. This 10-item scale assesses whether abuse (physical, sexual and emotional), neglect (emotional and physical), or household dysfunction (family violence, divorce, or having a substance-abusing, mentally ill, or incarcerated parent) occurred before the age of 18 (Felitti et al., 1998). Using this scale, authors found that higher ACE scores were associated with a higher likelihood of alcohol and drug abuse, depression, attempts of suicide, intimate partner violence, and other health conditions like pulmonary disease, sexually transmitted infections, obesity and heart disease (Centres for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2013a). When applied to forensic populations, studies found higher ACE scores among female offender populations, compared to women in the general population (Levenson, Willis, & Prescott, 2015). For many of these women, early childhood adversity paved a path towards criminal activity in their adult lives. When young girls fled abuse, family dysfunction or neglect, they often lived in poverty, at risk of substance abuse, association with violent peers, and survival behaviors such as, prostitution and property crimes (Covington, 2007). This may be even more pronounced for female offenders who commit serious crimes, such as sexual offences. For example, Levenson et al. (2015) found that, when compared to women in the general population, female sex offenders reported a significantly higher ACE score, with a prevalence rate for experiencing sexual abuse three times higher than the general public. In addition, this study found that multiple adverse experiences, such as neglect and abuse, were likely to occur with high rates of family dysfunction. Of the offenders included in the



sample, only 20% reported no instances of adversity, while 35% of the general population had an ACE score of 0 (Levenson et al., 2015). Similarly, Wolff, Baglivio, and Piquero (2017) studied the relationship between ACE scores and recidivism behaviors with a sample of violent juvenile offenders and found that higher ACE scores were associated with shorter time to reoffend, demonstrating that targeting past trauma can be relevant for female offenders, regardless of age and the crime committed (Levenson et al., 2015; Wolff et al., 2017)

Though the prevalence of trauma among females in the Canadian prison population is unknown, studies based in the United States have estimated that 25% to 90% of women in prison have experienced childhood trauma, depending on the scope of traumatic events considered (Matheson, 2012; Matheson et al., 2015). Although these rates vary widely in magnitude, the research suggests that estimates of trauma for female inmates are routinely twice as high as their male counterparts (Matheson, 2012). This research also reveals that the consequences of abuse persist over one's lifetime, triggering psychological, social and physical implications for female offenders such as clinical depression, aggressive behaviors, impulsivity, strong reactions to threatening situations, substance dependency, low employment attainment, and vulnerability to a variety of medical conditions (Matheson, 2012; O'Brien, 2002). In addition, trauma research on offenders has found that, women who have not received therapeutic treatment for physical and sexual abuse are more likely to recidivate because this unresolved trauma is a barrier to their readiness for reintegration (Moses, 2014; Doherty et al., 2014).

### **1.5. Summary of Research**

Overall, women who come into contact with the criminal justice system experience various issues related to reintegration. These barriers include increased stigma, mental health and addictions, physical health issues, unstable housing, limited education and employment services,

family reunification, and experiences of childhood abuse. Consequently, women who come into contact with the criminal justice system enter prison with a need for services that address their experiences; however, these services may not be readily available due to a lack of consistent empirical research, limited funding and overcrowding of institutions (Matheson et al., 2015). Although research demonstrates a difference in treatment needs for male and female offenders, the importance of gender-responsive interventions is still unclear, and thus, correctional facilities have been slow to offer programming for female offenders that attends to their specific needs (Beare, 2009). Currently, Canadian corrections uses evidence-based and seemingly gender-neutral reintegration models, such as the RNR model, that have been shown to effectively reduce recidivism behaviors; however, many female offenders are still experiencing difficulties upon release. In fact, recidivism amongst female offenders continues to be a common issue in Canada. For example, a national study of Canadian federal female offenders participating in substance abuse programming found that 41.3% of women reoffended within a year of their release (Matheson, Doherty, & Grant, 2009). This finding would suggest that reintegration programs for women are not appropriately addressing their needs effectively (Matheson, 2012; Thompson et al., 2015). As a result, many researchers have questioned whether gender-informed treatment may lead to improved reintegration for female offenders (Matheson, 2012; Thompson et al., 2015). More specifically, when a female offender exhibits gender-specific risk factors, such as increased stigma, family reunification matters or a history of trauma, gender-informed interventions may be more effective than traditional correctional programs and lead to greater success during the reintegration phase (Saxena et al., 2014).

In addition, while staff attempt to connect individuals with community mental health services upon release, there are various barriers that hinder access to such services. The limited

capacity of existing community-based services, the general reluctance to serve individuals with criminal records, shortages of qualified health care professionals within institutions, and the high cost of medications are additional challenges that influence community reintegration. Moreover, the lack of collaboration and communication between correctional facilities and community services continues to be problematic (Carter, 2012).

### **1.6. The Current Study**

The overall purpose of this study was to examine the process of reintegration for female offenders in Saskatchewan. In particular, this study was designed to allow female offenders to tell their stories and highlight important and meaningful life experiences before, during and after incarceration. These stories may shed light on how experiences during one's lifetime contribute to criminal risk, and how the experiences of women may guide practice to best support female offenders in Saskatchewan during their incarceration and after release to facilitate successful community re-entry. Given that female offenders remain a relatively understudied population, the results of this study may further explain the needs of female offenders as expressed through their experience with reintegration. Understanding the individual and comprehensive needs of female offenders is a fundamental step in developing and implementing programs to facilitate community reintegration. Historically, correctional programming for females has been based on profiles of male criminality; thus, this study will address the limits within provincial correctional institutions in Saskatchewan, the ways in which community support programs can contribute to the gaps in services, and the outstanding needs of women that are not being addressed by corrections or community services. The results may be used to guide necessary changes within the correctional system and may contribute to the development of social programs that support reintegration for female offenders. Consequently, this may lead to more appropriate support for

female offenders during and after incarceration, which may ultimately contribute to a decrease in recidivism rates; however, most importantly, this study offered women an opportunity to have their voices heard.

### **1.6.1. Study Design**

Previous literature has begun to examine the facilitators and barriers of community reintegration for women; however, the majority of studies employ an objectivist lens, or focus on quantitative methods. Though this research has suggested that women face challenges throughout the reintegration process, few studies have provided women with an opportunity to share their own experiences. Thus, instead of being guided by the experiences of those closest to the reintegration process, research conclusions and implications seem to be following a top-down approach where researchers and systemic leaders decide what is ‘true’ for female ex-offenders. This research employed a qualitative design, including life-history interviews with female ex-offenders. The current study employs a social constructionist, qualitative approach using narrative analysis which allowed for the experiences of female ex-offenders to be explored according to the meanings they constructed, while considering cultural and social contexts. Following a social constructionist lens, it is believed that individuals construct their own meanings of experiences based on their personal perceptions and objective reality cannot be established. Thus, the method used in the current study offers alternative interpretations of the reintegration process and provides women with an opportunity to become catalysts of social change by sharing their personal stories and subjective realities.

In addition to the benefits of following a social constructionist framework, the qualitative design allowed me to obtain personal, in-depth accounts of this social and criminal justice issue by empowering individuals to share their stories, hear their stories and minimize the power

differential that often exists between researchers and study participants (Patton, 2002). Thus, I was able to gain a better understanding from the perspectives of those most closely involved in the reintegration process. Though qualitative research may be criticized for small sample sizes and low levels of generalizability, this was not a concern for this study given the purpose was to understand the reintegration process for women in the Saskatchewan context (Patton, 2002). Because this study was exploratory in nature, and does not concern predetermined hypotheses, the use of qualitative methods is most suitable to add rich data to pre-existing studies. In addition, by using qualitative methods, phenomena such as pathways to crime, and facilitators and barriers to reintegration were defined and categorized during the data generation process (Gergen, Josselson & Freeman, 2015). In particular, the qualitative design allowed for women to share life experiences that may otherwise be unexplored using other methods. If this study was conducted using a quantitative procedure, women would be limited in their choices to explain their experiences before and during incarceration, as well as with the reintegration process. In other words, a quantitative design would not allow for the discovery of new meanings or variables within the construct of reintegration. In contrast, a qualitative design allowed me to ask a broader set of questions, and supported female offenders in describing their experiences openly, in a way that was meaningful to them.

Another benefit to using a qualitative design for this study is the ability to examine the perspectives, personal stories, and characteristics of the female offenders in Saskatchewan. Personal experiences, cultural differences, and personalities could be uncovered during the data generation process (Patton, 2002). Qualitative research may also unveil the unexpected differences among female offenders through their responses. For example, certain patterns may emerge among women based on their cultural and personal experiences (Carter, 2012). If this

study were conducted using quantitative measures, the social, cultural and historical contexts in which my participants' realities were constructed may not have been fully understood.

Furthermore, this study allowed for an in-depth examination of varying characteristics and circumstances, unique childhood events, and differing reintegration experiences. This method has also emphasized the diversity of needs among female ex-offenders, and has highlighted the amount of flexibility needed to support women before, during and after incarceration.

### **1.6.2. Research Questions**

To better understand the plight of female ex-offenders in their reintegration to the community, the following research questions were examined:

1. How do female ex-offenders communicate their childhood experiences and their pathways to crime, and how were they supported during and after incarceration?
2. How do female ex-offenders define the facilitators and barriers of reintegration once they returned to the community?
3. What do female offenders determine as necessary for successful reintegration?

### **1.6.3. Definition of Terms**

The following terms have been defined for the purpose of this study:

*Barriers:* Any factors that are beyond the female ex-offender's control that may hinder the reintegration process.

*Experience:* Female ex-offender's everyday lived occurrences (i.e., personal thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and behaviors).

*Facilitators:* Any factors (within and beyond the female ex-offender's control) that may ease the reintegration process.

*Female Ex-offender:* A woman who has been released from incarceration after completing a prison sentence in a provincial correctional centre.

*Recidivism:* A repeated criminal act that results in re-arrest, reconviction, or the return to prison (Criminal Code of Canada, 2013).

*Reintegration:* The process by which female ex-offenders who have been released from incarceration return to a community and adapt to life as a member of that community (Wetzler, 2005).

## CHAPTER TWO

### METHODOLOGY

#### **2.1. Data Generation**

##### **2.1.1. Epistemological Assumptions**

Following a social constructionism framework, I sought to understand the process of reintegration for female offenders in Saskatchewan based on their own particular meanings that correspond with their experience. This position has facilitated a thorough understanding of the ways in which participants construct their personal realities by allowing me to take part in a deep exploration of the experiences involved. Following this epistemology, I have taken the position that reality does not exist independently of human knowledge or perceptions, rather, it is constructed through interactions the individual has with their environment and others (Hosking & Morley, 2004). In this sense, each individual's reality is subjectively created, and each person has generated distinctive meanings of their personal experiences, based on the historical, cultural and social context in which the experiences take place. This reality is expressed through language, which was facilitated through life-history interviews in the current study.

Within the social constructionist approach, there are underlying assumptions to which I have adhered to. It was assumed that these meanings are not etched or innate within each participant, but rather they are formed through interaction with others (Cresswell, 2003). This means that the participants' realities are subjective and can be interpreted in various ways. In addition, it was assumed that there may be many dimensions within the participants' life history that construct their current reality. Thus, the participants' overall reality is made up of numerous interacting parts. It was also assumed that the meanings generated through the data are local and specific in nature in that they apply to the specific population included in this study, at this given



time (i.e. female offenders reintegrating into a community in Saskatchewan). This is because the individual meanings of given experiences are dynamic and may be altered based on new encounters, reflection or recollection of personal memories, as well as the context in which the stories are retold (Polkinghorne, 1988). Given that the purpose of this study was to examine the process of reintegration for female offenders in Saskatchewan, less emphasis was placed on universal knowledge and generalizability. Finally, as a social constructionist, I held a critical stance towards ‘taken for granted knowledge’, and viewed knowledge and truth as generated by interactions between individuals in society, including between myself and the participant (Crotty, 1998). Thus, it was assumed that the relationships between the participants and myself influenced the generation of data, and in the context in which it took place.

### **2.1.2. Methodological Approach**

This epistemological framework compliments the methodological structure using narrative research. More specifically, narrative research appreciates the relativity and complexity of truth in that truth reflects a constructed version of an experience (Wertz et al., 2011). Narrative research includes gathering detailed stories from participants to gain a better understanding of their perspectives and experiences. These stories are usually generated using interviews, as they were used in this study. Given that the purpose of this study was to examine the process of reintegration experienced by women in Saskatchewan, utilizing the narrative research methodology was most appropriate. In addition, because I was not testing any specific hypotheses, the use of narrative research was suitable for this study. Using narrative research, the purpose was not to construct a new narrative, but to convey an already existing story as told by the participants, in a way that was meaningful to them. This was important for understanding the experiences of my participants over their lifetime, including those events prior to, during, and

after incarceration. Following this framework, it was my goal to keep my participants' stories intact, and simply interpret and convey the particular meanings developed by the female ex-offenders through their personal lived experiences. Because the process of reintegration is different for each individual, and takes place over a period of time, this method has helped me to better understand my participants' experiences.

In addition, context was particularly important in interpreting data when applying this methodology. In particular, narratives were understood based on “the circumstances under which they were obtained, with consideration given to the intended audience and the motives the narrator may have had for constructing the narrative in a particular way” (Wertz et al., 2011, p. 225). Thus, the data generated for the current study were interpreted based on the relational and social context from which they were constructed. Furthermore, narrative analysis was appropriate for the current study because I was interested in both the holistic analysis of data, as well as the emerging patterns. Thus, data was analyzed holistically to gain a better understanding of each participants' experience, and thematically to uncover common themes in reintegration for female offenders in Saskatchewan. I looked for explicit and disguised meanings of the data to address the identified research questions.

### **2.1.3. Researcher's Personal Position**

As a researcher, it is important to be aware of how personal opinions, perceptions and experiences may influence data generation and interpretation. I am a female master's student, seeking to obtain a degree in Applied Social Psychology. My areas of interest include forensic psychology, support for individuals involved with the justice system, risk, and recidivism, especially concerning female offenders. This research was conducted to fulfill the requirements of the Applied Social Psychology Master's Program, but, more importantly, to contribute to the

literature regarding the facilitators and barriers to reintegration for female offenders by using an approach that is not often applied in this research. Though I had not conducted research specifically with this population before, I have taken many courses that contributed to my interpretations throughout my academic career. For example, previous courses in Forensic Psychology, Cultural Psychology, Social Psychology, and Indigenous Research Methods generated various pre-conceived notions that may have affected this study. For example, the pathways theory, which posits that adverse events, especially traumatic events like child sexual abuse and intimate partner violence are risk factors to offending for women, was a pre-conceived notion that I held (Belknap & Holsinger, 2006; Covington & Bloom, 2006; DeHart, 2008). In addition, though myself, close friends, or family have not been personally involved with the law, I have previously worked with female victims of crime (via a non-profit agency for domestic violence victims), and have had brief research experience working with female ex-offenders during a program evaluation practicum. This practicum involved conducting a focus group with sharing circle participants to evaluate the services provided by Elizabeth Fry Society of Saskatchewan (EFS SK). Thus, prior to conducting the current study, I was aware of the activities offered by EFS SK, as well as the general profiles of women whom they serve. Furthermore, I previously travelled to Pine Grove Correctional Centre (PGCC) with EFS SK to observe activities and gain a better understanding of the demographics of justice-involved women, as well as the issues they face both within and outside of institutions. For example, many of the women who come into contact with the criminal justice system in Saskatchewan, as well as with EFS SK, represent various indigenous cultures. This was an observation made during my visit to PGCC and previous contact with EFS SK, where women self-identified as Indigenous. Therefore, my experience with conducting research with Indigenous peoples was

very helpful for this study. Still, though establishing rapport with participants is important for this type of research, the women included in the current study did not overlap with those included in my practicum in order to avoid any conflicts of interest.

In this study, my relationship with EFS SK and my knowledge of conducting research with Indigenous peoples may have helped to build rapport with participants and ease their worries while sharing their personal stories. That said, though I have a relationship with EFS SK, and may be able to relate to female offenders based on gender, it is likely that I was still viewed as an ‘outsider’ to my participants. Thus, I employed various strategies to further build rapport (e.g., seeking assistance from EFS SK staff to facilitate communication) with participants in order to better understand their experiences. Though I have empathy for my participants and their stories, and have conducted my research to the best of my ability, it was important for me to understand how my outside stance, and differences in demographics (such as culture) may have affected my analysis of the data. Because of these factors, I practiced reflexivity to ensure the quality of the data that were generated and honor the individual lived experiences of the participants.

#### **2.1.4. Interviewing**

While using a narrative research methodology, the purpose was not to construct a new narrative, but to convey an already existing story as told by the participants, in a manner that was meaningful to them. Following this framework, it was my goal to keep the participants’ stories intact, and simply interpret and convey the particular meanings developed by the female ex-offenders through their personal lived experiences. In line with this methodology and my chosen epistemology, the current study employed life-history interviews to generate data. In this sense, the data were not collected, but were generated through interaction between myself and the

participants. This method is extremely useful for understanding the experiences of the participants over their lifetime, given that story-telling is a large part of human communication (Bain, 2011). Using this method, participants were able to share the events that were most significant to them in order to create meaning that is unique to their experiences.

#### **2.1.4.1. Structure of Interviews and Procedure**

Participants were guided by overarching questions to address their life experiences before, during and after incarceration. The women were free to construct their own narrative and interpret which moments were significant in their story. Following the framework put forth by McAdams (2003), the life-history interviews began with a general narrative of the individual's life, and were followed by an exploration of specific events or experiences that line up with the research questions. These interviews ended with a brief look into the participant's anticipated future including, goals, expectations, and evaluations of their overall story (McAdams, 2003).

Each participant completed one face-to-face interview which lasted up to 60-minutes and took place at the EFS SK office. These interviews were conducted back-to-back, during one full day, to ease participation for the women and ensure that an EFS SK staff member was available for debriefing, if necessary. The interviews were semi-structured in nature and followed a pre-determined interview guide (*See Appendix A for a copy of the Interview Guide*). This allowed me to ensure that each interviewee was asked the same overarching questions, and though participants were at liberty to share information deemed significant to them, the interview guide helped to re-focus the women when responses were not applicable to the given questions (Patton, 2002). Interview questions remained open-ended so that participants were in control of their own stories. During each interview, a senior clinical graduate student was present with me to ensure that participants felt supported if recalling experiences produced any negative emotions. The role

of this student was to provide support and appropriate referrals to the participant, if necessary. Each participant was also provided with contact information for the senior clinical graduate student should any support be needed after the interview had been completed (*See Appendix B for the Clinical Graduate Student Contact Information*). Each interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim, by myself, and later analyzed to create five individual life-histories. After initial analysis of these transcripts, it was decided by myself and my supervisor that there was no perceived need for a follow-up interview. This is because women appeared to share the information and experiences that they deemed as important to their life stories. The stories generated by participants were the main source of data for my study. Using life-history interviews has allowed me to better understand their experiences and the subjective meanings attached to those experiences.

#### **2.1.5. Purposeful Selection of Participants**

To obtain a meaningful sample that represents women from several cultural and criminal backgrounds, I requested assistance from EFS SK staff to identify clients that represent women varying in age (over the age of 18), ethnicity, cultural background, index offence, sentence length, and amount of time post-release from incarceration. When using qualitative research methods, it is important to establish heterogeneity of the sample so that comparisons can be made to establish similarities and differences among the sample (Wertz et al., 2011). Thus, EFS SK staff were provided with an overview of the nature and methodological details of the study, prior to recruiting participants (*See Appendix C for the Information Sheet and Script for EFS SK staff*). They were explicitly asked to exclude any women who they believed, in their working experience, might be negatively affected by the interview. EFS SK staff identified 10 potential participants whom they believed represented a range of demographics and would be willing to

share their stories. Once these participants were identified, I met with the Executive Director to review their client files. After I confirmed that these women met the selection criteria, EFS SK staff invited 5 women to participate in interviews, in order to respect the privacy of the participants and their rights to participate in the study. At this time, EFS SK followed a script provided to them which explained the study's purpose and their role as participants (*See Appendix C for the Information Sheet and Script for EFS SK Staff*). All of the women that were contacted initially agreed to participate in the study. Prior to participating in the study, informed consent was obtained from all female ex-offenders. Participants were provided with an informed consent form to read individually which explained the purpose of the study, any identified risks and benefits to their participation, and limits to confidentiality (*See Appendix D for the Consent Form*). In addition, to ensure that participants understood entirely, I provided a verbal explanation of the consent form as well. The interviews were completed face-to-face at the EFS SK office in a private room to ensure that data remained confidential. Participants were given a small gift certificate honorarium, in the amount of 20 dollars, for their time participating in the study.

#### **2.1.5.1. Participants of the Current Study**

Participants of the study included five female ex-offenders who were released from Pine Grove Correctional Center (i.e. Provincial Institution) and were receiving services from the Elizabeth Fry Society of Saskatchewan (EFS SK) at the time of the study. The small number of participants facilitated the generation of personal, in-depth data, which is most important for narrative research. I chose to interview only 5 women so I could devote extensive time and effort to sharing and analyzing each woman's story. The women ranged in age from 21 to 59 years ( $\mu=43.2$  years,  $s=15.5$ ). Three of five women identified as Aboriginal or First Nations, while the

others identified as Caucasian and Canadian. Index offenses included possession with the intent of trafficking, robbery, driving while intoxicated and fraud, with sentences ranging from 8 to 24 months in length ( $\mu=16.9$  months,  $s=5.9$ ). In terms of release, participants had been free of incarceration for 1-9 months and therefore, represented various stages in the reintegration process ( $\mu=3.8$  months,  $s=3.3$ ), however, 2 of 5 women still remained under correctional supervision (i.e. parole/probation).

Table 1: Participant Demographics

Research Name	Age	Culture	Marital Status	# of Kids	Level of Education	Rural or Urban	Repeat or First-time Offender	Index Offense	Sentence Length	Time Post-Release
Brittany	21	First Nations	Single	0	High School Diploma	Urban	Repeat	Robbery	24 months	1 month
Anita	34	Aboriginal	Single	4	Professional Certification	Urban	Repeat	Possession with Intent for Trafficking	19.5 months	5 months
Carol	49	First Nations	Separated	4	Some University	Rural	Repeat	DUI	8 months	1 month
Morgan	53	Caucasian	Single	0	Technical Training	Rural	First-time	Possession with Intent for Trafficking	18 months	9 months
Patricia	59	Canadian	Divorced	1	Some University	Rural	First-time	Fraud	15 months	3 months

### 2.1.6. Informed Consent

Prior to conducting research, approval was obtained from the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board. In addition, I followed all guidelines of conducting ethical research by obtaining informed consent from all participants. More specifically, upon meeting with



participants, the nature of the study was explained, and participants were provided with an informed consent form to read over (*See Appendix D for the Consent Form*). This form provided the women with information about the study, its intended uses, and the anticipated benefits and risks to participating in the interviews. No particular risks were anticipated; however, it was possible that participants may have had emotional reactions when discussing their life experience. Thus, during all interviews, I was accompanied by a senior clinical psychology graduate student who was trained and equipped to support the participants, if necessary. Participants were also informed that they were able to withdraw from the study, at any time, without penalty. Finally, confidentiality and the measures used to protect their personal data were explained to the participants. Though this information was included in the informed consent form, I reviewed these items verbally with all participants to protect against potential literacy restrictions and ensure that a mutual understanding was established.

#### **2.1.7. Confidentiality**

In order to protect the identity of my participants, I allowed each woman to choose a pseudonym or ‘research name’ to be used in this project. These research names were used at all times when referring to the participants including during transcription, and throughout the final report. Other identifying information has been altered or deleted to protect the participants’ identity. In addition, the data and consent forms are to be securely stored by my research supervisor for a minimum of five years of completing my study, with consent forms stored separate from the associated data.

#### **2.1.8. Creating meaning through narrative**

Narrative inquiry is the process in which individuals make meaning of their experiences in a chronological manner. Though behavior is influenced by personal experiences, humans

make their past, present and expected future experiences meaningful through narrative (Polkinghorne, 1988). Therefore, narratives are ways of understanding the meaning that a person has applied to their lives, where individual experiences are understood based on the whole life story. Within these stories, significant life events contribute to the plot, which is used to make sense of our thoughts, feelings and behaviors (Polkinghorne, 1988). In other words, the plot is used to communicate these significant events and the meaning they have generated, while considering the social, cultural, and historical context of the narrative.

In the current study, narratives were facilitated through life-history interviews. These narratives are unique to each individual participant and contribute to the development of a distinctive sense of ‘self’ (Bruner, 2003). Following a social constructionist framework, the self cannot be objectively described. Instead, the self is revealed through the narratives, and similar to the whole life-story, may be made up of many aspects. Thus, an individual’s life represents a story with numerous self-characters who represent different components of the same identity (McAdams, 2003). This identity can be shaped by internal motivations such as memories, feelings, beliefs, and values, or by external factors such as cultural and social norms.

Overall, life-history interviews have allowed me to gather in-depth data about my participants’ life experiences and the specified research questions. These interviews were used to gain an understanding of the reintegration process from the perspectives of those closest to the process (Patton, 2002). The personal experiences shared are extremely important to better understand the facilitators and barriers of community re-entry in order to support female offenders during and after incarceration.

## 2.2. Data Analysis

All qualitative data generated from the interviews were analyzed using a life-history approach. With each transcribed interview, a description of context was included which addressed the interview time, location, and persons present. In order to keep the participants' stories in-tact, and honor each person's constructed self, I chose to use a method of narrative inquiry that involves telling each individual life-history. It is important to understand that that participants in the current study have constructed these narratives based on various factors including the experiences over the course of their lifetime, the social and cultural context from which they are told, their interpretations of their life-experiences on the day of the interview, the research time and space, their relationship with myself as the researcher, the stories they felt comfortable sharing within the research context, and their expectations of the research project.

During the analysis process, I immersed myself in the data, read and reread each transcription to capture a holistic view, and re-organized experiences in chronological order. I wrote notes in the margins of each transcription, and looked for patterns and themes that held meaning. To ensure that all of these factors were considered, I followed Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional model that explains the narrative context. The first dimension considers temporality, which is made up of the participant's past, present and anticipated future. Second is the social and personal dimension which refers to the relational factors of the participant's experience. Finally, the third dimension considers the place where the narrative occurs. In relation to place, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) also refer to four directions to explain the process of narrative inquiry where forward and backward are associated with temporality, inward considers the person's internal motivations such as thoughts, feelings and beliefs, and outward includes external environmental factors. That said, it was important to

consider each of these dimensions and directions to gain a better understanding of the participants' holistic life stories. By reviewing transcripts over and over to create, adjust and reexamine participants' stories, I was able to better understand their experiences and honor the unique meaning attached to each story.

### **2.2.1. Steps to Ensure the Quality of Data**

When using narrative inquiry, it is undeniable that each researcher will generate and interpret data in a unique way. Because life-history interviews involve open-ended questions, each researcher will respond differently, and focus on different aspects of a participant's story. As a social constructionist and a narrative researcher, I sought to understand participants' subjective reality, instead of an objective truth. Thus, the results are ultimately a depiction of my interpretation of participants' life stories.

In this type of research, there are no specified measures of reliability and validity to ensure the quality of data; however, various steps can be taken to achieve credibility. As a researcher, it is important to be aware of personal opinions, perceptions, and experiences that may enter into data generation and interpretation. Personal feelings and perceptions may lead to bias and misinterpretations of the data generated in this study; however, I practiced reflexivity throughout the entirety of the research process to protect against this concern. Reflexivity is a method of emphasizing and examining one's own awareness of personal values and viewpoints (Patton, 2002). For example, after each interview, I debriefed with the clinical graduate student to reflect on the interview and the data that was generated. During analysis, I wrote notes in the margins of each transcript and considered any pre-conceived notions I may have had while reading through transcripts. I returned to each transcript over multiple weeks to ensure that I was being mindful and aware of the factors that may have affected data generation and interpretation.

As researchers, we often seek to understand social issues that align with our passions, values and interests; thus, recognizing that my perspective, experiences, personal interests, thoughts and feelings may have influenced my analysis of the data is important (Wertz et al., 2011). For instance, due to results of previous research, I expected that the women in my study would follow the traditional pathway to female criminality. Reflexivity allowed me to challenge that expectation and remain conscious of how my demographics, experiences, and social, cultural and educational backgrounds can influence my interpretations of the data. Furthermore, through reflection, readers can better understand how I came to my findings and conclusions in this study.

In addition, all the participants were given an opportunity to review their transcripts. They were encouraged to edit their personal transcript and add, alter or remove any aspects of the document. Upon editing, or denying the opportunity to review their transcripts, I asked participants to sign a transcript release form (*See Appendix E for the Transcript Release Form*). None of the women chose to review their transcripts, which was perceived as a sign of confidence that I would represent their testimonies in a fair manner. In addition, timelines were co-constructed with participants, which contributed to establishing credibility by verifying that the data generated from each interview is an authentic representation of each participant's life-story.

In narrative research, researchers suggest that the findings must be grounded in the data in order for the study to be valid (Wertz et al., 2011). This means that it is my responsibility to create robust arguments for my interpretations based on the data that was generated during interviews. In this thesis, I have, to the best of my ability, strived to create authentic representations of all participants' life experiences before, during and after incarceration.

Readers are welcomed to critically analyze my work to determine whether my findings exemplify believable, life-like and plausible stories of the participants' personal experiences.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESULTS AND INDIVIDUAL STORIES

As I interviewed the five women who shared their life stories, I was in awe of their strength and bravery. I felt compassion as they courageously shared their stories with me, creating a space of vulnerability and reliving the many emotions that overlapped with their experiences. We shared moments of laughter, hope, and sadness as the moments from the past, and goals for the future were brought forward.

Using narrative analysis, I have created five individual life stories. Each story depicts a single character, whose name was chosen by each corresponding participant, and underlines the events and meanings prescribed by the participants themselves. Throughout the construction of each story, I have paraphrased participants' comments and integrated them with direct quotes which can be distinguished by italic font. Each participants' story is complimented by a timeline of events which was co-constructed during the interviews (*See Appendix F, G, H, I, and J for Participant Timelines*).

#### 3.1. Morgan's Story

Age	Culture	Marital Status	# of Kids	Level of Education	Rural or Urban	Repeat or First-time Offender	Index Offense	Sentence Length	Time Post-Release
53	Caucasian	Single	0	Technical Training	Rural	First-time	Possession with Intent for Trafficking	18 months	9 months

##### 3.1.1. Before Incarceration

Starting from the beginning... I wasn't a planned pregnancy and *was adopted at the age of five weeks into a dysfunctional home*. I don't know how it happened but, back then, the same

checks and screenings were not done when it came to adoption. I had a tough childhood. *I had to deal with things like alcoholism, pedophilia, and abuse in my home. Luckily, I had wonderful adoptive grandparents who helped me through - they were my salvation.*

Aside from the family dysfunction, I was well taken care of. I lived in an *upper middle-class, white suburban neighborhood in a small town in Saskatchewan*. I went to school, but dropped-out to start working full-time at the age of thirteen. Otherwise, I spent a lot of time with my grandparents. *I would talk to Granny every day and be there every weekend*. I loved spending time with them. Growing up, *I learned a lot of my values from my grandparents like honesty, hard-work, taking care of bills and other needs before taking on luxuries, living within my means, 1930's type thinking...* I think this helped me to become self-sufficient, *to not rely on anybody for anything or trust anybody but myself. I have a lot of personal strength, because I've had to, since the age of 2.*

So I focused on my work... I got certificates, training and all the work experience I could get. I got experience in retail sales, I was a Systems Manager at a local Supercentre, I worked with Federated Co-op, and I was a healthcare aid. I also have training in operating forklifts, area-platforms and skid-steers. Because I worked so hard, *I never had to depend on anybody, and I'm pleased with that. Everything I have, I own, free and clear. I didn't get anything from inheritance, or from some man... it was me, I bought everything I have.*

Unfortunately, at the age of 50, I found myself in a situation where a certain decision was made to make ends meet. *I wasn't able to say no and ended up being charged with possession with intent for trafficking*. I served 9 weeks in the institution and was sent back to the community for 8 months under the Early Temporary Absence Program (ETAP) to live in a half-way house under parole conditions.



### 3.1.2. During Incarceration

Jail was a *gong-show*, it was *pathetic*. It felt like I was *living in an adult day-care without proper teaching*. So it was basically just like *living with a bunch of catty little women*. I was not treated very well by the other inmates and *had to face being called a 'White Racist'* by many of the women. *I never made any derogatory or racist comments*, but that didn't matter to them, *it was just assumed based on my skin color*. I think it's just easier to *blame someone else for your problems and ignorance in jail*, and that's just the way it is. So I tried to keep to myself and just serve my time.

In terms of the guards, I was treated differently compared to other inmates. *I am an anomaly in the justice system* because I don't have a history of crime and was considered very low-risk. I would talk to the guards any chance I got because I enjoyed having intelligent conversations with them. Obviously, not all guards are the same, and to some, *everybody's an inmate, everybody's a [piece of shit] and that's just the way you get treated*, but some of them were really good and would talk openly around me and trusted me with certain information.

Luckily, within a week of going to jail, I got work in the laundry and cleaning area. That kept me busy because there were no programs that were applicable to me. *I have no addictions, so that was out; I have certificates and training up the ying-yang, so there was nothing they could offer me*. Even my caseworker didn't know how to help me. In fact, *when I first met her, she said 'what are you doing here other than shitting on a judge's desk?'* She looked at my Saskatchewan Primary Risk Assessment (SPRA) score and, because it was so low, she said there was nothing they could offer me in the institution and wanted to get me out of there as soon as possible. Still, it was a long nine weeks... It would have been helpful if *I could have taught WHMIS while I was there, or if they had computers so I could take an online course of my*

*choosing... Something to pass the time because I didn't fall into any of the programs they offered. I also would have liked to have more hands-on work experience, like in Industrial sewing, or some other aspect of Industrial work like wood-working or learning a bit of a trade... that would have been beneficial.* Unfortunately, jobs like that are limited because there are protocols about the guard to inmate ratio, and there just aren't enough resources.

In terms of release planning, only a superficial plan was made because my caseworker felt that I was capable of helping myself. We set up a plan to be released to a local half-way house for women, but, in terms of jobs and other supports, I was on my own. Both my caseworker and I were confident that, *with my experience and my work history and training, I could do this on my own.* No support was offered to me regarding my childhood experiences, but that is because I chose not to share that information – *they knew nothing of my history. I have accepted everything that happened* and I don't feel like I need mental health treatment.

### **3.1.3. After Incarceration**

So like I said, after I was released from prison I went to a women's halfway house where *I had more freedoms and responsibility.* It was tough because I couldn't find work right away because of the economy in the city. *I came from a small town in Saskatchewan where businesses are more prone to hire people who are mature and experienced; but in the city, businesses want to hire young people. I don't get that... but, whatever.* I applied for almost any job, but it was not as easy as I expected. After a while, I got a job as a receptionist at EFS SK. *I was very fortunate to get on with them.*

*Otherwise, the only challenges I faced were the same-old, living with women who are catty and constantly being told that I am a racist. It's like two-kids fighting and one kid can't come up with anything intelligent to say so they start name-calling ... that's totally what it was*

*like for me living with women... but I just walked away and laughed.*

Luckily, despite the challenges, *I had the support of a really good friend* and I also *had a really good caseworker. She's a social worker with corrections and she's awesome... like, we're actually friends.* At one point, I went to see a mental health professional, but it was not my choice. *As soon as you get to the halfway house they want you to go to addictions counseling or mental health* or some sort of support to address underlying issues. *So I went to see a mental health counsellor a couple of times because I don't have addictions and the social worker said 'you know, do you really need to come back? I mean, I'm here if you want but I think you've got everything worked out,'* so I was happy to move on.

To be honest, I think it was my own personal strength that got me through. *I would just, you know, go off on my own to the mall, or to a movie and just forget about whatever was bothering me and just know that this is just a moment in time and I can get through it.* Self-care and self-reflection were really important to me, and I think my maturity and intelligence made the process easier as well.

#### **3.1.4. Future Aspirations and Lessons Learned**

In terms of the future, *well, I'm going back to my home town in the next week, so I'm going to work for my past employer for now, and continue looking for other employment. Hopefully, I can get on with the camps and just focus on working. I need to recoup all of the savings that I've lost over this and just work.* I think that focusing on work will help me to stay on track and stay out of jail because, *if I don't have any financial burdens, you know, it's a lot less stress to worry about and a lot less tempting to turn to other ways to make ends meet.*

Looking back, *I should have just said no at the time. Then I wouldn't have gone through all this, right? I wouldn't have this on me and I'd still be working... I'd still have all my*

*certificates in health care too. It's hard now because my criminal record is just everywhere... everybody asks for it. I feel like I can't even pump gas now without a criminal record check - it's just crazy, and that makes it hard to return to the community and even harder to find employment. I'm not really proud of my past, or of what I did but I'm pleased with the fact that I've never had to depend on anyone. In the end, I'm in charge of what my future looks like.*

### 3.2. Anita's Story

Age	Culture	Marital Status	# of Kids	Level of Education	Rural or Urban	Repeat or First-time Offender	Index Offense	Sentence Length	Time Post-Release
34	Aboriginal	Single	4	Professional Certification	Urban	Repeat	Possession with Intent for Trafficking	19.5 months	5 months

#### 3.2.1. Before Incarceration

Well, I was born and raised in a large city in Manitoba but moved to Saskatchewan with my parents because I had nowhere else to go. I was never very close with my family, and *had kind of like a broken relationship with my parents. I had a crappy childhood. My parents were pretty abusive – sexually, mentally, and physically - and I never really had the chance to deal with any of that stuff. So I turned to drugs when I was a kid, when I was growing up, and got pregnant with my first daughter at a young age. I had another daughter shortly after. When the girls were born, I stopped doing drugs for a long time. I graduated high school, got my Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA) designation, had a nine to five job, and my kids went to extracurricular activities.* I had a lot going for me, but then I met my sons' father. We had two beautiful boys together, but during the relationship, I became even more separated from my parents and, eventually, I got addicted to drugs. At first, *we just started experimenting, or, using*

*drugs socially on the odd weekend, here and there. We kept doing that for a while and then it just kind of spiraled downhill from there. Because of that, I lost my job, got involved with the law, was charged with possession with intent for trafficking and lost custody of my girls when I went to jail. I had been with my kids everyday since they were born, but I got picked up at a gas station when I was going to buy cigarettes and I didn't come home for nineteen months...*

### **3.2.2. During Incarceration**

Originally, I was on remand on eight months and served ten and a half months once I was finally sentenced. *Jail was the shittiest time of my life. It was hard for me because I don't look [Aboriginal], so I didn't really fit into that part of it... and I'm not White, so I didn't get along with the White people either. It was really hard. A lot of the inmates thought they could bully me, so I was always kept on my toes and had to stick up for myself. I had to fight my battles for myself.*

There are a lot of unwritten rules in jail. *You learn very quickly that you can't go running to the guards and rat people out. If you do, it goes around with you in the jail, and you have to pay the consequences with the other inmates. It's also incredibly lonely. You learn that nobody comes to see you, and nobody sends you anything. While I was incarcerated, I didn't see my kids, or talk to them, for pretty much 2 years, my entire sentence. That was one of the most difficult things for me, being separated from my children. My whole life outside of jail is pretty much gone now. All my stuff is gone, my dog was killed, my kids were separated, my children's father ended up cheating on me after a month of being in jail... it's really hard, I lost everything. So I went through depression and... I don't know, it's like the worst thing I've ever done or had to go through.*

In terms of the jail staff, *I didn't really talk to them much. We didn't really get along. They say you can come talk to them anytime with any of your problems but really, if you do, you're pretty much screwed with the inmates. You really have to pick and choose your battles, and you have to pick and choose what you say to them.* I also found that both the guards and the inmates treated me poorly because I was highly educated. *I had a really hard time there. Pretty much, the only person that really helped me was an Elder that was there during my first year.*

When I was on remand, I was lucky enough to get a job working in laundry full-time, but *it's hard to get medical attention on remand, or any programming really. I harassed them and was lucky to get a job to pass the time.* Once I was sentenced, I participated in some programming like Relationship Skills and addictions programming. I needed to complete these programs to get into the women's halfway house after I was released. But once I got to the halfway house, I ran. *I felt uncomfortable being there and I don't really like being told what to do. It was especially hard because I knew my kids were in the city and I just wanted to be with them.* I was on the run for about five months, was considered Unlawfully at Large (UAL) and was sent back to jail once I was caught. *Because I was a UAL person, I wasn't qualified to do my ETAP at that time. I did more time for it, but I got to spend Christmas with my sons, so it was worth it to me.* Luckily, *I got a three-day early release* to allow me to have transportation from the jail. *Other than that, they didn't plan anything for my release at all.* In my experience, *they left it entirely up to the inmates to plan their release.* I think it's because there aren't enough resources because, *a year prior, staff seemed a lot more helpful, but then when the budget cuts came in it was like the guards just didn't even care and we were just another paycheck to them.* I didn't receive any support for any mental health issues either. *It was really hard to get attention for mental health issues. If you wanted to see a counsellor or anything like that, it wasn't really*

*available. They didn't really have anything there for counselling, and for addictions, well I was lucky to see the addictions counsellor maybe once every 6 months and she barely remembered my name. There's just not enough funding for anything there. There aren't enough people to help the inmates., They wonder why so many people reoffend but there's nothing there to help us or rehabilitate us at all. I think that mental health and addictions counselling is important for a lot of the inmates and stuff to do with family and trying to reintegrate back into society would be beneficial because they don't really help us to get back.*

*I think that, overall, women going to jail is probably a lot harder than men have to deal with. It's not an environment that's helpful. They really need to think about changing how they deal with women. It's traumatizing being away from our kids, and there is nothing provided to help with that. There's [also] nothing in place about helping us get back into society, and there's a lot of stigma associated with women going to jail, so it's looked down upon and really hard to get out. Like yeah, I screwed up, I get it... but I served my time for it and that doesn't seem to matter to anyone.*

### **3.2.3. After Incarceration**

*When I was released from jail, I had been there for about nineteen months. In total, pretty much two years of my life had been based on being on the run or being in jail. I was given my last pay, and my paper of conditions, and booted out the door with no direction. It was really hard. When I came out, I had an anxiety attack because everything was so overwhelming. I wasn't used to doing anything on my own, so to get everything thrown back onto my shoulders was really hard. I couldn't even go shopping half the time or go to Walmart without getting sweaty and just, nervous. I think they should have a better reintegration plan for women, especially if they have children and families. I lost everything when I went to jail, and when I got*

*out it was overwhelming to have to try to find that stuff again. And it's hard to assume the roles and responsibilities of a parent again after being gone for so long. Like, getting the kids registered in school, moving, and having to start relationships with people again is terrifying. I have a hard time relating to people now and I really don't like being around people anymore. I would rather just listen to my headphones and not even talk to people or get to know them.*

I also had trouble trusting people again. When people found out I had been incarcerated I got either a look of pity or fear, and felt I had to explain myself. *It's not my proudest moment in life, trust me, but I did my time and shouldn't have to justify it to anybody. I used to be different before... I was a happy-go-lucky person, I had fun making friends, and now I just don't even want to be around anyone. I'm depressed and I don't really leave my room much. I don't really trust many people anymore and I don't put myself out there. I wait for people to come to me and when I came out of jail, not very many people showed up for me.*

Luckily, I have been able to work with EFS SK, which has given me strength to move forward. I volunteer with them every once in a while, and they pay me part time hours to help organize clothing donations and other events. *It probably keeps me sane.* Otherwise, I have my kids, and their grandfather who helps me out sometimes. Regarding family, I don't really have much support. *I will hang out with family sometimes but nobody asks me how I'm doing, how I'm feeling or if I need help with anything.* I don't really talk to many people... I go to my mental health appointments but, other than that, I just focus on being a good mom. I have my two boys and I hang out with them as much as I can. *I don't go to any addictions meetings anymore because I'm very well-known in the city and try to stay away from my triggers. I choose to just avoid that scene completely because it's too easy for me to resort back to the same stuff. I was addicted to Crystal Meth and Cocaine and it's too easy to get in the city... I don't even have to*



*have money to get it.*

Avoiding my triggers is the best way I know how to stay on track right now and stay out of jail. *I probably have the crappiest self-esteem at this moment so the best thing I can do is stay away from that lifestyle and just be a mom and know that without me, there's probably nobody that can be there for my children.*

### **3.2.4. Future Aspirations and Lessons Learned**

I think that going to programming would help if I can put myself out there, and securing a job would ease some of my anxieties. I'm hoping to continue working with EFS SK where I volunteer. *I like it there because I don't have to hide who I was, and I don't have to hide anything about my past - they already know. I don't have to not talk about it, or bypass it, and I don't have to feel pity or feel like I'm a charity case. I just go about my day and they're okay with that. They understand, and they're not going to make me feel bad about it.*

Otherwise, I'd like to reconnect with my daughters in the near future, and I'm hoping to move to another province. I don't like where I live currently because it's nothing but bad reminders. *It just reminds me of everything I've lost and everything that I've gone through, so I'd like to move closer to my daughters, or to a place where I can just start fresh and not be reminded of what I did or where I was.* Aside from that, I have no plans currently. *I used to plan my future... I used to goal plan and stuff like that, but now, I don't know what I want to do... I don't know where I'll be and I don't know if I want to continue working as an accountant, I just don't know.*

Overall, I would say I have some regrets, *but a lot of the stuff I did to go to jail was to earn money to pay for my kids, pay rent, and pay for their extracurricular activities. I regret gaining a drug habit; I regret screwing up my career that I had just to support that drug habit;*

*and I regret getting myself into crappy relationships. That had a major part to do with what happened and why I became addicted to Crystal Meth and Cocaine. But I learned that each day is a gift and not to take anything for granted. I am so proud that I still have my sons. They still love me and I still have them in my life.*

### 3.3. Brittany’s Story

Age	Culture	Marital Status	# of Kids	Level of Education	Rural or Urban	Repeat or First-time Offender	Index Offense	Sentence Length	Time Post-Release
21	First Nations	Single	0	High School Diploma	Urban	Repeat	Robbery	24 months	1 month

#### 3.3.1. Before Incarceration

*Growing up, I was born and raised in Saskatchewan with my mother and two siblings. I have three siblings, but only two of them grew up with me. I don’t know much of my family, like, the background of it – I don’t know my family tree that well. I have never met my father, but have recently reconnected with him and plan to meet him in the near future. Growing up, my grandma was a big part of my life. She taught me some traditional things about my heritage. My mom didn’t grow up with the traditional background so it wasn’t passed down to us automatically. My [maternal] grandmother passed when my mom was young, so she didn’t have a traditional upbringing and my [maternal] grandfather was an alcoholic. None of my family speaks our traditional language because it was lost along the way.*

*I grew up not caring about consequences and was charged with Driving Under the Influence (DUI) when I was thirteen. I did not have a license at the time, and was caught driving a stolen vehicle, so there were some other charges associated with it as well. I wasn’t sentenced to serve time because I was young, but the crown prosecutor was trying to use my case as an*

*argument to lower the age limit when sentencing of young offenders. At the time, the age limit was sixteen, but they were trying to lower it to fourteen because I was in an accident where someone was injured. Going through the court process, I just did my best, asked a lot of questions and stood up for myself. I didn't really have much legal support because my lawyer was not helpful. She didn't really fight for me. Eventually, I was sentenced to a year probation. During that time, I attempted suicide... I was having a hard time dealing with everything I had been through... but I made it through and I got off of probation when I was fifteen. At that time, I was on the run for almost a year. I was out of school during that time because the school had called the cops... so I didn't go back to school. That was my first encounter with the law.*

*I did try to have a job for a while, and go to school, but getting in trouble kind of became a pattern. When I was eighteen, I was sentenced to adult incarceration for the first time. I did about 5-6 months that time, but when I was released, I breached my conditions and ran for 3 months, so I was sent back to jail for another 6 months. I later became involved with a gang and was sent back to jail for robbery and served a two-year sentence.*

*Although my upbringing hasn't been ideal, I feel I can handle bad situations much better than people who had a regular upbringing. I have more of a capability of not freaking out when I see something bad happen, and I'm not worried about certain situations that would look harmful or negative in society's eye.*

### **3.3.2. During Incarceration**

*Jail wasn't that difficult for me. People say that they get depressed for the first six months, but I adapted in two weeks. I wasn't sad anymore. I missed my family, but, I don't know, I wasn't really that sad about it. I learned that it was important to keep busy, and not just physically, but I needed to keep my mind busy to avoid getting depressed. I read a lot of books,*

wrote songs, poetry, and spent time drawing. I'm not really a drawer but, in jail, [I had] time to do things that [I] wouldn't really do before. I also caught up on my school work and was able to graduate. I was three credits away from graduating when I dropped out so I did that and did upgrading as well. I also completed the Women's Substance Abuse program and got a job in a shop inside the prison. It kept me busy. Recently, there have been so many rules in the jail that have changed. Jobs were taken away and some people can't make money, so, towards the end, that job really helped to sustain me because I had no help from the outside.

The most difficult thing for me was the system itself. There are rules – and you couldn't really stand up for yourself, you can't speak about certain things, you don't often have a say in what you do. For example, [I] could be trying to explain [myself] to the staff and they wouldn't have it so [my] rights felt kind of violated in that way. There was also no programming available to people on remand, so I was lucky to be sentenced quickly.

In terms of release planning, I didn't really get help in jail. I mean, they don't even give you a ride home anymore and there are no buses to take you to the city. They don't teach you how to find a house, or find a job. You are left on your own to figure that out. I guess there is a program called Employment Essentials... I never took that but it helps you get your tickets. And there's basic school, but they have less programming there now after the budget cuts. [EFS SK] was one of the women's major helpers because there was not much programming in the jails for that kind of stuff. I think more release planning would be helpful, because women get out, and, in my personal experience, you have a plan set up in your mind, but things don't really go as planned. I was lucky to take a program called Expected End where they talked to us about our plan in detail, but there were only 10 of us in the class and the jail has like 200...The budget cuts for Saskatchewan really affected the programs in [the jail]. And because of that, things got

really messed up there. *Like, there are more fights, there are more people arguing, there are no jobs so no one can support themselves, and it's just not a good environment. There's always going to be something wrong with [the system] but I think the budget cuts really did some damage.*

*As for other support, there were Elders there, and a Chaplin, so depending on religion, or if you just wanted to talk to somebody, you could put in a request that would be answered as soon as possible. I think the women who set up appointments are really fair. They just go in order and it wasn't a really long wait for me.*

*My personality, regardless of what I went through is adaptable, and I'm thankful for that. I adapt to my situations really well compared to the way other people do. So I think that's helped me in jail.*

### **3.3.3. After Incarceration**

*When I first stepped out of jail the first time, I felt like I wasn't really free because I was still wanted. The address I gave the system was invalid because my friend was no longer living there and I knew that... but I chose to take that route anyways. So I felt restricted when I got out because I was homeless and had nowhere to go. I thought I would just figure it out on my own but it's difficult because I had been removed from society for so long and I really had no direction. [The jails] give you no direction when you get out...*

*But because I've been in and out of jail a few times, the second time I got out, I had more of a plan set up for myself. But even still, the mistake I made was trying to set up a long-term plan right away. A short-term plan would have been more helpful because when you get out of jail, you set your standards high, and don't really think about all the small steps it will take to get there. You sometimes bite off more than you can chew because of the new-found freedom.*

Luckily, the halfway house helped me to set small goals. *They told me I needed to get on social assistance to, at least, pay rent there... so they kind of helped [me] reintegrate like that. That's what the program is about... reintegrating and going to programming... but other women just get out and I can imagine them [being like me] the first time, not really knowing what to do and just going back to what they know...*

I also think it's hard because not everyone is aware of the services available to help women with reintegrating. *I think it would help if there was more advertising or they could get the word out more about places where [we] can go. I mean, [when you get out] you don't really get handed a list of places you can go but it could help. It's still the individual person that has to actually choose to go [get help] but if they know that there is a place then it might help.*

For me, *it was [EFS SK] that gave me support, my teachers from [the institution] gave me support, and the Elder gave me support. But most importantly, for myself, my spirituality gave me the most strength to continue on. I used to go back and forth on, you know, God or no God, but now I just kind of chose to believe in myself and my spirituality. It has become very important to me. I pray and I think that helps whether [a person] believes in it or not... it just helps to be positive and pray for things.*

I also think that my confidence in myself helps me to reintegrate. *I mean, [other people] might be nervous about doing something and choose not to... I push myself to try things anyways. It's really overwhelming when you've been locked up for so long. So many people are so nervous to get out and it's hard for [them] to see a future for [themselves] because [they] just can't think of anything better. And for myself, I was only there for 2 years and when I got out I was so overwhelmed with being around people... I just couldn't. [I'm] so used to being around the same 19 or 20 women... so when I'm on the bus I feel kind of crowded, and when I'm job-*

*hunting, I feel really fake, like I have to put on a mask when I go out into society.*

But even though it's overwhelming, I like to celebrate my achievements. I was so excited when I got a bank account, or when I accomplished a goal, *little things like that, but that's just who I am as a person. Some days I'm overwhelmed and some days I'm not... There are a lot of negative feelings when you get out and it takes a lot of positive thinking just to push yourself and keep going. You really just have to feel your way through it all.*

My life hasn't always been easy, but it really helps that, *as a person, I've already made peace with my past. Throughout the years, I forgave my mom, I forgave my dad, and I forgave a lot of things that happened in my life. But even still, I've found that my attempted suicide follows me everywhere, even though it happened when I was 13. I've been honest about it with people and they just keep bringing it up, but I've let go of my past and I don't think about death anymore like I used to. I'm really at peace with everything and I think that helps me a lot. Another woman [who is reintegrating] might still have to deal with [depression] and that might make it hard to continue on because she's in pain. But for me, there are days when I feel a bit sad, but I find a way through it. I've had to do a lot of things on my own in my life, and I got this far on my own.*

#### **3.3.4. Future Aspirations and Lessons Learned**

Right now, I'm just looking for a job *but it's hard when [I] have to be honest about [my] past. Having a criminal record makes it really hard to find employment because of the stigma attached to it, but I'm not giving up. At this point, I'll take any job really. But I'm looking more for restaurant, retail, or customer service jobs. And I have talked to my Band office and I have an application in to get funding for University. I just plan on taking my first two years of Arts and Science and choosing a variety of classes before I settle on one career path. That'll be the*

*next step as soon as I get my feet going forward. I'm just trying to take things one day at a time.*

*In the long-term, I just want to finish school. I'm hoping to get my pardon one day, but if that's not the way it turns out then I might just be another statistic... I'm doing my best to stay out of jail but it's hard to follow society's rules sometimes. It's difficult because I've grown up dealing with everything on my own and standing up for myself instead of relying on other people or the system. But I'm trying to stay positive. If [I] just start thinking 'fuck it, I don't care', and saying those kinds of things to [myself], [I] am just going to go back to drinking, getting in trouble, and going to jail – so I try to push my negative thoughts away. In the end, regardless of what I've been through, I wouldn't change it because it's made me who I am today.*

**3.4. Carol's Story**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Culture</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>	<b># of Kids</b>	<b>Level of Education</b>	<b>Rural or Urban</b>	<b>Repeat or First-time Offender</b>	<b>Index Offense</b>	<b>Sentence Length</b>	<b>Time Post-Release</b>
49	First Nations	Separated	4	Some University	Rural	Repeat	DUI	8 months	1 month

**3.4.1. Before Incarceration**

*Well, my biological father was killed in a car accident by a drunk driver when I was 2 years old. After that happened, my mother went on to raise me and my 3 sisters and became an alcoholic herself. She later married another gentleman who raised me as my father. My [childhood] involved going to school and participating in activities and athletics. We lived above the poverty line and my parents provided for myself and my sisters very [well]. They drank on weekends and had occasional social drinks. It didn't affect their ability to work or [affect] our lifestyle. I graduated grade 12 out of [a mid-sized city in Saskatchewan], and that was it for my life with my parents.*



After that, I lived on my own and travelled all over Canada and throughout North America. I just wanted to see the continent and visit other First Nations tribes, visit with their Elders, learn my Aboriginal culture. My family didn't identify with the Aboriginal culture. Instead, we were brought up with Christianity, and, because I was never exposed to that part of me, I wanted to find out. So I went on my journey and I went to various First Nations from the West to East coast, down to Albuquerque, New Mexico, Vegas to Florida and all over. I sat with Elders and listened to their stories and their ceremonies, and I loved it.

Eventually, I came back to Saskatchewan [because] this is originally where I'm from – my tribe sits here. My first run in with the correctional system was when I was 19. I had come home from [Quebec] and [my cousin] had asked me to drive him to a store... he said he was going to pick up cigarettes. I drove him to the store not knowing that he was going to go and pull off a robbery. Later, when it went to Queen's Bench, I didn't want to make a statement against him because I didn't want to spend my life living in fear, looking over my shoulder, because, technically, on the street, people who do that are considered rats. Even though I was told that, if I didn't make a statement, I would be looking at 3 years in a Federal penitentiary, I valued my life more so I went to [jail] for the first time. I was released to a halfway house and completed my parole. That was all successful and I was out of the system until I got my first DUI years later.

But before my first DUI, I married another gentleman from my tribe and, at the age of 21, I had my first son. The marriage was not a healthy marriage – it was a dysfunctional marriage. But even with that going on, I continued to work hard for my family. I [completed] 3 years of post-secondary schooling towards social work. Then, due to my education, when I returned to my First Nation, I was nominated to run for Band council. I was elected and

*continued to be a Band Councilor for the next 12 years. At the same time, I worked as a member of the Public School Board in a small town in Saskatchewan. I oversaw 53 schools in Southern Saskatchewan.*

*As my marriage moved along, due to the abuse, I started to drink alcohol on occasion. My husband was always having parties in our home which I couldn't stop him from doing. In my community, it was well-known that if [anyone] wanted to have a drink, they could come over to our home. People considered it like the local bar. My husband was providing the alcohol, he was providing the drugs, and they partied on in our basement. My husband was working at the time too, and I was raising my children. After a while, because of the abuse that was taking place physically, emotionally and spiritually, I started to have a few cocktails every now and then. It became like an escape from the reality I was in, in my marriage. Generally, if you're not happy in your marriage, you're just not happy in life all together.*

*At the age of 30, I received my first DUI. I was sent to [a program for Driving while Impaired]. I went there for 3 weeks and my license was taken away from me. I continued on with my drinking and went back to being an elected official. My life just carried on... I was raising my children and working the same jobs I had been doing previously. After a while, I was caught drinking and driving again. This time, I was sent to jail. From there, I came out, and carried on with my drinking but I was what you call a functional alcoholic. The pattern just continued from there. I would get my driver's license back and wind up losing it again, drinking and driving, back into the system and the wheel just went round and round.. Now, today, I am still legally married, however, I left 4 years ago, and trying to live a healthy life.*

### **3.4.2. During Incarceration**

*My time in jail was challenging. Due to my education, the correctional system has*

*nothing to offer [me] or a person of my stature of education. Also, the correctional system has nothing to address the issues of alcohol or the reasons as to why I drank. There were no AA meetings or anything like that. However, I understand that AA is a voluntary program and a lot of inmates haven't taken sobriety seriously. Secondly, when in jail, you live under a hidden society. Prison has it's own society. The correctional system and the guards think they run the prisons but it's the inmates who run the prisons. They have their own way to communicate with each other. Even though you may not see each other, you can still communicate with somebody. You know who's coming into the prison and who's leaving. You also live under a threat every day. You never know if your life could be taken away from you. If the women decide they don't like you, your life can be made a living hell. The word they use [for this] is 'strong arming'.*

*For myself, well, I knew all of the women in there. I either knew them personally, or knew their mothers. When I went to jail for the first time at 19, there was a really active body of women called the Inmate Chair Committee and I was elected the Inmate Chairwoman and spent 9 months doing that job. I advocated for [women's] rights, made sure they were all treated with human dignity. So, after that, it became easier. I just did my time. I was there for one thing – to do my time and carry on with my life – so I [minded] my own business. I [didn't] approach anybody. In jail, it's important that you don't talk about anybody, that's the number one rule. And if someone [was] telling [me] about their problems with somebody else, I simply just said 'I'm here to do my time. I'm here to do my own time, will you please just do your own time?'. I [didn't] want to get dragged into anyone's problems. I always followed the rules by the guards, I knew the warden very well, and the staff knew I was a role model inmate.*

During my last time in prison, I didn't participate in any programming. I had been in and out of the correctional centre for 8 years prior, so I had taken many of the programs offered, but

there wasn't much available for women with a higher level of education. *I think it would have been helpful if they offered post-secondary class, or courses via satellite, or have professors come in. I'm not sure what percentage of women have post-secondary, but I feel that it needs to be made available.*

Most importantly, *one thing I think the system really needs is therapists because [women] are going through a hard time emotionally and they're separated from their children. I was fortunate that my children were grown up and gone, however, for [others], it's very emotional, hard, and mentally draining for them. And the problems that arise within the institution itself – they have to deal with that too. It's very lonely in jail... [we] have to just keep an eye out for [ourselves] and there is nobody there to ever talk to, ever. The guards are busy doing their job, they don't have time to sit there and listen to [us] as a counsellor. Somebody like that is null and void... it's like the Sahara desert... there's nothing like that in there. Maybe asking 24 hours a day is too much, but if a person can't sleep at night because they're having a problem and they need to talk to someone, it would be nice if there was somebody on call or right in the jail and [we] could knock on the cell or press the buzzer and get escorted to see the counsellor. I think it would alleviate a lot of tension within the system and within the inmate population in general.*

I also think that spiritual activities would be helpful for a lot of the inmates. *I believe, myself, that we're in an era right now with Aboriginal people that, due to the Residential schools and everything that's taking place in the country right now, there is a cry for [Aboriginal peoples] to be exposed more to their culture. And I think the same goes for other cultures and religions...if those things were more available, more prevalent, more accessible, the women would utilize that and it would help them greatly in their healing journey to recover and get them to a place where they feel better about themselves. It would also help to pass the time in jail*

*easier by having that connection to a higher power... whatever their higher power is.*

*In terms of release planning, they have case managers, and the release planning is supposed to come from [them], however, I feel that the case managers [could be] more educated as to what's available in whatever community [the woman is] going to. But I do understand that they can only do so much because there is a lack of resources in the community as well. When you look at the three prairie provinces, there is only one centre that houses inmate women... I think the government could do a better job of providing those spaces.*

### **3.4.3. After Incarceration**

*When I was released from jail, I went to a woman's halfway house in Saskatchewan. I loved every moment of it. Looking at it as a whole, it's a fabulous program. More personally, reintegrating was no problem for me because I've travelled all over. I've lived in big cities, I've been on my own, so reintegrating was no problem for me. I'm fortunate because, though I've been through a lot, I had a supporting family. That's one thing I noticed about other women... they don't have the support that I have and that can make reintegrating extremely difficult.*

*For me, my spirituality has been my number one support and source of safety. I strongly believe in God and the Creator and I trust my spiritual sense daily... for me, well, I can't ask for more support. I often attend church and help out at the church. I do what I can to be actively involved in the church. When I return home [to my community], I do the same thing.*

*Aside from that, my determination, courage, hard work and optimistic attitude have been my saving grace. I look forward to the future and don't live in the past. I try not to be overly anxious and live in the moment. I do things in the moment that will better the next moment and the next day. Even still, I think these qualities can be strengthened by practicing and continuing to utilize them in all endeavors in life.*

#### 3.4.4. Future Aspirations and Lessons Learned

In the future, *I want to wrap up my degree. I have to wait a time frame to obtain my driver's license because having a driver's license is a privilege. As far as a home, I own my own home, I have a home... I have a job waiting for me, a job that I was doing prior to my incarceration.* Otherwise, I would like to reconnect with my children. *When I separated from my husband, he didn't let me take my children. He spoke bad of me, he felt abandoned and rejected, himself, and implanted some negative seeds in their minds about me. Even though they're grown and gone, I still feel that those relationships need some mending.* But, for now, *my spirituality carries me through.* In the future, I think a healthy relationship with my children is important. To me, this means *having more communication with them, where [we] get along, there's no arguing, and there's no blaming or putting the blame on me for issues that they may have right now in their lives.* I would like to repair their memories of me. *I take responsibility for my actions and am responsible for not being there for [them] when [they] needed me.* I want them to understand that I wanted to be there and allow us to *carry on with a healthy, loving relationship. That's all children and parents should have... regardless of their age.*

In order to make these things happen, I've learned that I need to stay away from alcohol. I've realized that *I can't drink and drive. And through the broader scope, I [realized] I just can't drink because [it] causes impairments in my rational thinking and causes me to make some poor decisions.* So, *in the future, I've learned that I need to safeguard my actions and I have to quit drinking or I'll find myself in the system again. I do believe that leaving my marriage was the best thing I could have ever done in that case... I was using alcohol to escape my reality.* Overall, there are *consequences that transpire when using drugs and alcohol,* and we, as human beings, pay a high price for those actions. It's important to know that *it's not you, yourself, as an*

*individual that is the problem. It's the brain, the mind, that have been misconstrued by these chemicals and it's causing you to take actions that are not of you. In that sense, [we] need to do whatever it takes to deal with the emotional issues that bother us inside so that [we] don't turn to drugs or alcohol or violence, which will only lead to one place... prison, or death. I've learned a lot, but regardless of what I've been through, I wouldn't change a thing because it makes me who I am today... what I am, my life experiences... and I wouldn't change anything.*

### 3.5. Patricia's Story

Age	Culture	Marital Status	# of Kids	Level of Education	Rural or Urban	Repeat or First-time Offender	Index Offense	Sentence Length	Time Post-Release
59	Canadian	Divorced	1	Some University	Rural	First-time	Fraud	15 months	3 months

#### 3.5.1. Before Incarceration

To start off, *I grew up with 4 siblings – 2 brothers, 2 sisters. I am the middle child. My childhood was healthy. I had good relationships with my parents and my siblings. We have a great family – we're all stuck together still. We grew up in a small town in Saskatchewan, where everybody knew everybody. I went to 1 public school from grade 1 to grade 6, and then transitioned into a high school that ranged from grade 7 to grade 12. I graduated high school and took some post-secondary education when I was between 25 and 30. I was a single mom, raised one child, who has now left home and has her own family. Since then, I've lived alone.*

I was employed in an office position, and later returned to receive more training in computer skills. Most of my life, I've worked in an office setting. Eventually, being a single mom, it became difficult to make ends meet, and that's what lead to my one and only offense.

*My offense was long-running, over a period of 7 years, and eventually, I was charged with fraud and sentenced to 15 months in jail.*

### **3.5.2. During Incarceration**

*My time in jail was interesting, to say the least. Jail is not the place you want to be. There was a large age barrier between myself and the other inmates. Additionally, because my SPRA was so low, I had no help. They couldn't offer me any programs... nothing. They didn't want to offer me programming because they thought it would plant criminal thoughts in my head.*

*Luckily, I did get a job in the laundry room to pass the time. Otherwise, I was just kind of shuffled back and forth, here and there. I had many caseworkers assigned to me and then they'd move me to a different unit before that caseworker would start helping me. I'd move onto a new caseworker, and a new unit, and that just kept rolling along. So I was incarcerated for a month before I had any help at all... Once I did get to the lowest security unit, I finally [got] a caseworker that would help me— but everybody just kept saying to me 'what are you doing here' ... so I think those things need to be considered before women are incarcerated. I'm not saying I shouldn't have been penalized, but, when I got there, nobody knew what to do with me.*

*Basically, if I had been on house arrest, I could have kept both my jobs, and I would have been employed and self-supporting... but now I'm here – I have no job and I'm not self-supporting.*

*When I finally got a caseworker, she got my application into [the halfway house] so I could be released there, sooner than later. She was very instrumental in getting the point across that jail had nothing to offer me.*

*In terms of the inmates, a lot of them considered me grandma or mom because of that big age barrier. For the most part, I didn't have many issues in regards to the age barrier or the inmates, so I was thankful for that. I think there could be improvements in terms of relationships*



with staff. *A lot of the time, the staff aren't patient enough to sit down with some of the inmate population and just listen. I just feel like maybe there is a lack of communication and sometimes, the inmates are viewed as 'just inmates', and that upsets me because we are all people and we all deserve respect.*

### **3.5.3. After Incarceration**

When I was released from jail, I lived in a halfway house in a large city in Saskatchewan. I'm lucky that *I've got really good family support* to help me through. I've learned that my family and friends will always support me. *People still accept me for who I am and I have many friends and family that are very close. I really thought that, once the charges were pressed, there would be negativity but I haven't come across any of that.* Once I was released, *I thought I'd walk around with a sign on my forehead saying 'I've been in jail, look out for me', but people have been very accepting, very trusting, and have given me a chance to prove who I really am, so it's been very positive.*

Finding work has been most difficult, as well as adapting to living in the city. *I've never rode a city bus before and I'm not a city girl.* But I've been very fortunate to have great supports. My family has been my strength – *my daughter and her family, my dad, my two brothers, my sisters and their families – [they're] all there.*

More personally, I think *my willingness to help and to prove to people that I can be of service to them* has been beneficial for my reintegration process. *I volunteer at least 30 hours a week to keep busy, to gain some confidence in society and the people out there, and to gain references. I'm also willing to try anything* which I think has made it easier to adapt to life after incarceration.

#### **3.5.4. Future Aspirations and Lessons Learned**

In the future, I'd like to find employment and a place of my own. I just want to work and get ready for retirement. *I'll take almost any job to get started, but most of my experience is in office* and I'd like to get back to that. *I have to pay restitution so I want to get that taken care of as soon as possible. I feel that if I have a job and I have my own place, then I'll have what I want and consider myself successful. I have my family, I just need a place for them to come visit me, and if I have a job I can sustain myself. I will be most proud of myself when I have a job and be back to where I was. I am not proud of what I did, but, in the end, family is everything to me and, if I have that, then I can't ask for much more.* My brother told me that *[they] need me to be the person [I was] 10 years ago*, so that's who I want to be.

Looking back, *if I would have been true to myself and realize that what I was doing would eventually snowball and create a bad situation*, I wouldn't be where I am today. *Had I not done that, I'd still be working*, and that has been my biggest challenge. *I've learned a lot.*

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a discussion of the findings by elaborating on each theme, reviewing the process of meaning making for each participant, identifying common characteristics across participants, presenting the conclusions and research implications and addressing my experience as a researcher.

In the remaining sections, I will present the themes that have emerged from the data. My goals for this section are the following: to provide the reader with a thorough understanding of the themes that were generated through the data; to provide my interpretations of the data; to present evidence-based findings from the participants' interviews; and to credit the women who bravely shared their stories with me for the purpose of this research. Moreover, I will refer to relevant literature and discuss how my findings correspond with previous research.

The themes that were generated have been organized to respond to each of the research questions: (1) How do female ex-offenders communicate their childhood experiences and their pathways to crime, and how were they supported during and after incarceration?; (2) How do female ex-offenders define the facilitators and barriers of reintegration once they returned to the community?; (3) What do female offenders determine as necessary for successful reintegration? The majority of the data in this chapter will come from Morgan, Anita, Brittany and Carol's experiences. This is not to discredit the significance of Patricia's data; however, the other participants' data were more in-depth and revealed aspects of their lives and experiences in more detail than Patricia's data. Throughout each theme, I have integrated direct quotes, as distinguished by italic font, and discuss the meanings made by each participant. Please be reminded that each individual's reality is subjectively created, and the distinctive meanings of

their personal experiences are based on their own historical, cultural and social context (Hosking & Morley, 2004). Finally, I present my conclusions and the implications of my research.

#### **4.1. Themes and Meaning Making**

In this section, I present the themes that have been generated in response to the data, discuss the meanings made by my participants, and refer to relevant literature in relation to my study. The themes that were generated are based on patterns, shared experiences, and narrative threads that participants identified as significant to their life stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

#### **4.2. Childhood Experiences and Pathways to Crime**

In response to the first research question, participants identified various themes that described their childhood experiences and pathways to crime. This included *experiences of abuse and dysfunctional relationships, substance abuse and single parenthood*. Throughout these themes, participants referred to the importance of being in relation to others such that the relationships formed with family, friends, children and others affected their experiences. In the following sections, I discuss the components of each theme exhaustively.

##### **4.2.1. Experiences of Abuse and Dysfunctional Relationships**

According to previous research, experiences of childhood abuse are common among women who come into contact with the criminal justice system (Blanchette & Brown, 2006; Gobeil, Blanchette, & Stewart, 2016). These experiences can be extremely traumatic, and often begin during childhood and persist into adulthood via romantic relationships (Moses, 2014). This theme was evident throughout the stories shared by the participants. More specifically, the women identified various instances of physical, verbal, spiritual and/or sexual abuse, neglect and living with alcoholic parents or partners. Participants also spoke about dysfunctional

relationships with significant others during late adolescence and into adulthood. In terms of personal meaning, participants spoke about how these relationships and experiences affected their own self, as well as their pathways to crime.

For example, Morgan referred to her relationship with her adoptive parents as a source of abuse and neglect. Through this time, Morgan had the support of her grandparents from whom she learned a lot of values. Though Morgan had the overwhelming support of her grandparents during this time, she explained these experiences as being the reason she became independent, self-sustaining, and learned to trust no one but herself. As a result, Morgan focused her efforts on her employment and training, which was evident throughout her stories. Even still, the pressures to make ends meet on her own were ultimately what led her to crime.

Similarly, Anita referred to her strained relationship with her parents during childhood. For Anita, this abuse persisted into adulthood via relationships with romantic relationships and lead to misusing substances as a means of coping with her emotional trauma. Anita further explained that, though she had suffered from substance abuse issues during adolescence, it was the relationship with her son's father that lead to her criminal charges. Anita's substance abuse will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter; however, for now, I would like to focus on her experiences of abuse and the meaning she attaches to these experiences.

During the interview, when discussing instances of abuse, Anita became very emotional. She spoke about having extremely low self-esteem, and appeared to harbor a lot of regret. She believed that her inability to overcome past trauma, involvement in unhealthy relationships and lack of family support is what lead her to using cocaine and crystal meth, which ultimately lead to involvement with the criminal justice system in order to support her family. This experience is common among incarcerated women, with research demonstrating that, for females, substance

abuse may result from a need to cope with child adversity, such as limited parental presence or neglect. Many times, after the onset of drug use, women turn to further criminal activity to support their habits, as well as their families (Bowles, DeHart & Webb, 2012).

Throughout Brittany's story, she referred to various dysfunctional relationships that were related to feeling removed from her family and her culture. For example, she stated that she had not met her father; her maternal grandfather was an alcoholic; and her relationship with her siblings was strained. In terms of Brittany's mother, it appeared that she did not provide much parental supervision which contributed to her involvement with the law. This was evident through her explanations of being involved with the law at an early age, lack of support through the court process and during incarceration, and lack of family support post-release. Since then, Brittany explained being in and out of the system. Like Anita and Morgan, Brittany's experiences are supported by past research in that growing up with absent, or addicted caregivers increases the likelihood of future offending for adult women (Belknap & Holsinger, 2006).

For Brittany, these experiences appeared to be especially difficult during adolescence, as seen through her explanation of having attempted suicide at the age of 13. This is also consistent with past research which explains that adolescents with a history of child maltreatment are more likely to be depressed or suicidal compared to individuals without such history (Brown, Cohen, Johnson & Smailes, 1999). Even still, she explains that her past experiences and relationships with others have now created a woman who is resilient, independent, and adaptable. She also discusses having difficulty following society's rules, which makes it difficult for her to stay out of jail. Though not exclusively stated in her story, this may be related to Brittany's past experiences as research claims that family relationships and a history of neglect are robust predictors of antisocial attitudes and delinquency among girls (Hubbard & Pratt, 2002).

Alike the other participants, Carol experienced some difficulties growing up including losing her father at a young age, living with alcoholic parents and witnessing violence. As mentioned, living with addicted caregivers has been linked to future criminal behavior; however, despite misusing alcohol, Carol claimed that her parents always provided for her and her siblings. Once Carol left home, she married a man from her tribe who became physically and verbally abusive. For Carol, this abusive relationship is what led her to misusing alcohol, which ultimately landed her in the criminal justice system.

That said, for Carol, the abuse she experienced during her marriage had significant meaning for her story because her addiction was a means of coping, which led her to become involved with the criminal justice system. Carol spent the next part of her life in and out of the prison system for driving under the influence. When considering past research, Carol's experience corresponds with findings that drinking to cope is positively associated with increased alcohol consumption and long-term alcohol abuse (Holahan, Moos, Holahan, Cronkite & Randall, 2001). In addition, research demonstrates that intimate partner violence victimization is strongly associated with alcohol abuse for women (La Flair, Bradshaw, Storr, Green, Alvanzo & Crum, 2012). Though experiences of abuse led Carol towards drinking and criminal behavior, she spoke of these instances from a place of great wisdom. She explained that she had made the decision to leave her husband and turned to her spirituality to guide her through.

#### **4.2.3. Substance Abuse**

According to previous research, female offenders often have higher rates of substance use than male offenders (Moses, 2014; Wetzler, 2005). In this sense, addiction presents a particularly significant challenge to successful reintegration, especially for those who have been exposed to traumatic experiences (Matheson et al., 2015; Wetzler, 2005). This theme was prevalent

throughout interviews with my participants. In particular, women shared experiences of both alcohol and drug-related substance abuse. In terms of meaning, these experiences appeared to hold substantial significance in their stories because they were often associated with criminal offending.

As previously mentioned, Anita shared experiences of substance abuse in relation to her criminal offending. She explained that she began using drugs during adolescence but quit until she became involved in an unhealthy relationship. As her drug use became more frequent, Anita explains that getting addicted to drugs caused her to lose her job and become involved with the criminal justice system. As a result, Anita stated that she lost everything and has become very depressed. Often times, for women, mental health symptoms and substance abuse act as moderator variables between childhood adversity and adult criminal offending. In this sense, women develop depression and other internalized mood disorders, turning to substances to cope with these feelings. As substance abuse increases, women may turn to criminal activity as a way to support their habits (Salisbury & Van Voorhis, 2009). In line with this research, Anita appeared to harbor a lot of guilt and shame for her addiction; however, she had developed strategies to stay clean and sober, such as staying away from her triggers, and shared a desire to manage her addiction for the sake of her children.

Similarly, Carol spoke about her experiences with addiction. For Carol, alcohol was her substance of choice and appeared to stem from experiences with alcoholic parents and an abusive marriage, a notion that is supported by past research (Bowles, DeHart & Webb, 2012). For Carol, substance abuse was significant to her story because it led directly to her involvement with the law. Carol explained that her return to, and release from, jail became a pattern for most of her adult life. Though Carol had been struggling with her addiction for many years, her last DUI was



of particular importance for her story. She explained that she has learned from her mistakes and is not interested in drinking any longer. In contrast to Anita's perceptions, Carol appeared to be more optimistic and did not regret, or blame herself for her addictions. Instead, she viewed addiction as an illness resulting from external factors, and did not label herself as an addict.

Though Brittany spoke about receiving a DUI at the age of 13, and participating in women's substance abuse programming during incarceration, she did not share any personal experiences with substance abuse. Thus, I will not include her data as evidence of this theme.

#### **4.2.4. Single Parenthood**

According to previous research, women are more likely to have been caring for their children prior to being convicted (Moses, 2014). In addition, females tend to commit crime to obtain basic resources and provide for themselves and their children (Wetzler, 2005). In line with this research, participants shared information as to how being a single parent contributed to their criminal charges.

As previously shared, Anita disclosed having 4 children. She spoke about working full-time, and registering her children in extracurricular activities; however, once she lost her job, she chose to partake in drug trafficking as a way to make ends meet for herself and her children. Consistent with past research, Anita explained that, during incarceration, being apart from her children was extremely difficult and caused her a lot of pain (Carter, 2012; Robbins, Martin & Surratt, 2009; Ward, 2017). Even after release, being a single mother proved to be difficult for Anita; however, her children also served as inspiration to stay on track.

Similar to Anita, Patricia shared how being a single mother guided her towards criminal activity. For Patricia, though she had support from her family, she ultimately chose to partake in fraudulent activity in attempt to support herself and her child. For Patricia, family is particularly

important and she explained being very lucky to have the support of daughter and family moving forward.

Though Carol was technically married to her husband prior to incarceration, she felt as though she was raising her children alone because her husband was often drinking and using drugs. However, because she did not recognize that being a single parent contributed to her pathway to crime, I will not refer to her data to support this theme.

### **4.3. Experiences and Support During Incarceration**

In response to the first research question, participants identified various themes that described their experiences during incarceration and the lack of support offered. This included *a lack of relevant programming, a lack of mental health support and limited release planning*. Throughout these themes, participants referred how to their level of education, their risk scores, and their mental health state affected the programs necessary to assist with reintegration. Because of a lack of relevant support, participants shared experiences of being unprepared for the realities of reintegration. In addition, participants spoke about importance of being in relation to others, where race affected their relationships with others in the prison, and ultimately, their perceptions of their time being incarcerated. I will now discuss the components of each theme exhaustively.

#### **4.3.1. Lack of Relevant Programming**

All participants spoke about a lack of relevant programming in some form or another. This was often related to overcrowding within the institution, a lack of programs for individuals with low SPRA scores or higher levels of education, or the provincial economy, currently described as troubled, at the time of their incarceration. These findings contrast previous research which claims that female offenders often have lower levels of education, and, therefore, these

issues may be less relevant for the wider offender population (Moses, 2014; Wetzler, 2005); however, limited budgets and overcrowding of the institution is not surprising. More specifically, though Federal institutions across Canada provide various programs and services, Provincial prisons appear to be more affected by an increasing number of inmates and recent budget costs. For example, in 2017, changes were made to decrease the amount paid to Saskatchewan inmates for participating in correctional programs; however, the issues of limited programming and long waitlists were not addressed as no funds were allocated to these concerns (Government of Saskatchewan, 2017).

For Morgan, the lack of relevant programming was not related overcrowding or long waitlists, but instead to her level of education and lack of substance abuse-related issues. In particular, because of the vast amount of technical training she had received, the programming offered in the correctional centre was not appropriate or helpful. This finding was conflicting with past evidence as most female offenders have low levels of education and can greatly benefit from correctional programming (Moses, 2014). In addition, Morgan had a very low SPRA score, which made her ineligible for various types of programming. Morgan also referred to limited programming in relation to obtaining jobs while incarcerated. In line with past research, this was related to budgetary concerns, and specifically to a lack of correctional staff available for supervision. Despite spending only 9 weeks in jail, a lack of relevant programming affected Morgan's experience by failing to add anything instrumental to her reintegration journey.

Throughout Patricia's interview, she shared experiences similar to Morgan. More specifically, due to a low SPRA score, Patricia was not able to gain anything valuable from her time in jail, at least in regards to programming. Because of this, Patricia expressed that, though she didn't believe she should be let go without punishment, she may have benefitted from

serving her sentence within the community.

In contrast, when Anita shared her story, she first brought up a lack of relevant programming when referring to her time in remand. She stated that she was on remand for 8 months, in which no programming was offered to her. Luckily, she had the opportunity to work during this time due to her persistence. According to the Government of Saskatchewan, the greatest influx of offenders considers those on remind, thus, recently, an Early Case Resolution project has been introduced to be included in the 2018-2019 Saskatchewan Budget. This program is designed to resolve cases that would otherwise require an extended stay in correctional facilities for offenders who may be better managed in the community using additional supports (Government of Saskatchewan, 2018). However, during incarceration, Anita still spoke about a significant lack in programming referring to family reunification and mental health, which will be discussed in further detail later in this chapter.

For Carol, programming within the institution was irrelevant to her because of her stature of education, as well as repeated stays in the institution in that she expressed that she had already taken the programs offered in the jail. Unfortunately, these programs appeared to be ineffective for Carol thus far, given that she was repeatedly charged for driving under the influence. In relation to this, Carol spoke about the limits within correctional programming. This is consistent with previous literature which emphasizes that the traditional correctional treatment approach focuses on the substance dependence and helps women understand the relationship between alcohol/drug use and their criminality, but fails to directly address the relationship between trauma and substance use (Matheson et al., 2015). Similar to Anita, Carol spoke to a lack of mental health treatment, which will be discussed in further detail in the section to follow.

Finally, like Carol, programming within the institution was limited for Brittany, due to repeated stays in the institution; however, unlike others, she expressed benefitting from the educational programming in the institution. In addition, Brittany shared that she participated in substance abuse programming, and worked in a shop within the prison. Like the other women, Brittany spoke about a lack of mental health services and limited jobs within the jail. Thus, despite having program available for inmates, there were not enough resources to allow all of the women to benefit from them.

#### **4.3.2. Lack of Mental Health Support**

As briefly mentioned, many of the women referred to a lack of mental health support during incarceration. This has various implications because, as demonstrated by the data, many of my participants disclosed experiences of abuse during their lifetime. In addition, research demonstrates that, when released from prison, women who have not received therapeutic treatment for physical and sexual abuse are more likely to recidivate given that unresolved trauma has been identified as a barrier to reintegration readiness for women (Moses, 2014; Doherty et al., 2014). This may be a particularly salient problem for women as research has linked poor mental health to substance abuse, and trauma and victimization, with the link between mental health and incarceration being significantly stronger for women (Covington, Burke, Keaton & Norcott, 2008).

As mentioned, throughout her story, Anita shared how a lack of mental health support during incarceration affected her time in jail and her ability to reintegrate. During the interview, it was evident that Anita had suffered depression during her incarceration. Because of this, Anita felt that she could have benefitted from mental health support, but there was no such support available. This may serve as a significant issue for women in prisons, as pathways research

claims that effective treatment and programs for women, which is presented with a trauma-focused lens, is beneficial for criminalized women, their dependent children and the communities they return to (Belknap, Lynch & DeHart, 2016). This appeared to be true for Anita because, even after release, it was evident that she was still struggling with her mental health and personal confidence.

Though Carol only briefly referred to personal mental health needs when discussing the reasons she drank, she had strong feelings about the lack of mental health support during incarceration, as seen throughout her story. Similarly, Brittany did not reference any personal mental health needs, but she spoke about the lack of mental health support in relation to others. She referred to Elders and a Chaplain as being the only outlet to discuss emotional issues. Though she referred to being at peace with her past, she explained that others may benefit from mental health support, similar to Carol's thoughts. This finding was in line with previous research which found that even correctional staff supported these notions. More specifically, this research found that, based on their experience, correctional staff believe that low self-worth, self-confidence, and self-esteem place women at risk of reoffending. In addition, correctional staff disclosed that though jails are one of the largest holding tanks for women with severe mental illness, and women are likely to want to discuss their problems in prison, there are limited resources to offer these services. In particular, jails have limited resources to assist women with severe mental health issues, trauma, or life skills (Belknap et al., 2016).

#### **4.3.3. Limited Release Planning**

In addition to a lack of relevant programming and mental health support, participants also shared their experiences with release planning, which was perceived as inadequate. Though release plans are designed to outline a risk management strategy for each offender, specifying

interventions and monitoring techniques to address factors associated with recidivism (CSC, 2009), the women stated that they received little help from correctional staff. This is problematic because research shows that difficulties with reintegration are further emphasized when offenders are inadequately prepared for the realities of reintegration by correctional facilities (Moses, 2014; Valera et al., 2017).

In regards to release planning, Anita shared that correctional staff did not provide her with much direction. Aside from granting her a 3-day early release for transportation reasons, Anita stated that they didn't plan anything for her release at all. According to Anita, they left it up entirely to the inmates to plan their stuff. For Anita, though she had been free from incarceration for 5 months, receiving limited support had significant effects towards her mental health and her experiences with reintegration, even at the time of the interview. During the interview, she appeared quite discouraged; however, she was determined to stay out of jail and take care of her children. This finding is in line with previous research which states that committing to family roles, such as parenting, may contribute to successful reintegration (Doherty et al., 2014). Even still, women are not provided assistance with family reunification matters such as, custody of their children, restoring relationships, and/or parenting strategies (Gobeil, 2008; Thompson et al., 2015; Wetzler, 2005), which was evident throughout Anita's story. In addition, Anita appeared to experience reintegration issues that many female inmates who are mothers do, in that assuming parental responsibilities, and rebuilding relationships was extremely challenging, leading to additional distress (Statistics Canada, 2015).

Like Anita, Brittany also disclosed that limited release planning was offered to her during her incarceration. Though she was able to participate in the Expected End program described

previously, she perceived her release planning to be insufficient. Because of this, Brittany also thought that more structured release planning should be offered to women.

Similarly, Carol perceived release planning to be lacking because case managers were not aware of resources in smaller communities. This is important for many female offenders in Saskatchewan, especially those of First Nations heritage, who may be returning to rural communities (Statistics Canada, 2017).

Through Morgan's story, she shared that, due to a low SPRA score, correctional staff was unable to help her. Though she released early and set up with a temporary bed at a halfway house in a large city in Saskatchewan, she did not receive any release planning to help her obtain employment. Unlike other participants, Morgan felt confident that she could face the challenges of reintegration on her own. Though she expressed challenges obtaining employment, she felt that it was because of the current economic state.

Finally, Patricia shared experiences similar to Morgan, in that, release planning was superficial. Though she was connected with the women's halfway house, further assistance was not provided. Similarly, Patricia mentioned difficulties finding employment, however, she felt that her willingness to volunteer, and her overwhelming family support was enough to get her through.

#### **4.3.4. Relationships with Other Inmates**

During the interviews, participants spoke about their relationships with other inmates in that participants' race or perceived race appeared to affect their experiences. As research demonstrates, Indigenous women in Canada are overestimated in the criminal justice system. More specifically, though Indigenous women represent only 5% of the total female population in Canada, Indigenous women accounted for 39% of admissions to federal custody and 38% of



admissions to provincial institutions in 2015 (Statistics Canada, 2017). In Saskatchewan, this is even more pronounced with Indigenous women representing 85% of female admissions to provincial custody in 2015 (Statistics Canada, 2017). Thus, in Saskatchewan, Non-Indigenous women represent the minority. Unfortunately, little research has been done to examine racial discrimination and the relationships between inmates in female institutions in Canada, but studies in the U.S. demonstrate higher rates of victimization among White women (Wooldredge & Steiner, 2012). According to my participants' stories, these patterns may be similar in Canadian institutions for women; however, more research is needed to make such conclusions.

Throughout her interview, Morgan disclosed issues with other inmates in regards to racial differences. For Morgan, this made her time in prison difficult; however, she only remained incarcerated for 9 weeks. Though Anita identifies as Aboriginal, she is white presenting, meaning that she does not have the typical dark features of most Indigenous women. Thus, like Morgan, Anita shared experiencing challenges with other inmates. For Anita, this made her time in prison very lonely and shared feelings of isolation and depression, which ultimately affected her overall experience.

For Patricia, though she did not identify as First Nations or Aboriginal, she did not report any racial discrimination during her time in prison. Instead, she stated that most inmates considered her grandma or mom because of the age barrier. Thus, I will not refer to her data as evidence of this theme.

#### **4.4. Experiences After Incarceration**

As interviews preceded, participants spoke about their experiences in the community after incarceration. For most participants, various challenges were shared including: *feeling overwhelmed; difficulty finding employment and stigma*. Throughout these themes, participants

provided examples and referred to personal and external factors that contributed to these issues. I will now discuss the components of each theme in more detail.

#### **4.4.1. Feeling Overwhelmed**

As mentioned, participants referred to feeling overwhelmed with having to make daily choices and regain all of the things lost during their incarceration. This finding is consistent with past research which has shown that many female offenders report feeling stressed about securing employment while fulfilling their requirements under correctional supervision (Cobbina, 2010; Visher & Travis, 2003). These feelings can be exacerbated when women are unable to find care for their children post-release, or are working towards regaining custody. As such, the inability to balance competing demands may result in relapse or reoffending (Cobbina, 2010).

For Anita, reintegration had been difficult. Anita shared that she felt her self-confidence was lacking and that she preferred to be alone. This affected her reintegration because she felt ashamed of her past and had a hard time asking others for help. In addition, Anita shared feeling overwhelmed in seeking support for her addictions while avoiding known triggers.

Similar to Anita, Brittany spoke about feeling overwhelmed post-release. More specifically, she provided examples of how, after her first release, she mistakenly focused her reintegrating on considerable long-term goals, which became overwhelming to achieve immediately after release. Luckily, staff at the halfway house helped her to set smaller, feasible goals after her most recent release to improve her chances of successful reintegration. Even still, she referred to feeling overwhelmed.

For Carol and Patricia, reintegration had been an easier process; however, both recognized that without family support, the process could have been quite overwhelming.

#### **4.4.2. Difficulty Finding Employment and Stigma**

Consistent with the literature, the majority of participants reported experiencing challenges in securing stable employment. This was connected to the current economic conditions, as well as the stigma attached to their criminal records. Contrary to past research which states that female offenders are often undereducated, and do not have the vocational skills to obtain employment (Mceuin, 2005; Ortiz, 2010; Wetzler, 2005), the majority of participants had high levels of education and substantial employment experience. Even still, only one of the women in my sample had secured employment and, unfortunately, it was part-time and temporary. This is significant because many of the women initially committed crimes to make ends meet, and may be at risk of future offending if employment is not secured (Thompson et al., 2015; Ward, 2017).

As previously mentioned, Morgan described an inability to find employment as her biggest challenge with reintegration. Luckily, after a while, Morgan got a job as a receptionist at a non-profit organization; however, this position was only available to her part-time.

Similar to Morgan, Anita had difficult securing employment. For her, job hunting was extremely difficult because she didn't feel confident enough to put herself out there and felt ashamed of her criminal record. However, to pass the time and gain some experience, Anita volunteered at a non-profit organization. For her, this was very significant to her reintegration journey in that she felt safe and accepted for who she is.

Brittany also shared her experience with searching for employment. She stated that she had experienced difficulty due to her criminal record. In relation to this, Brittany expressed worry that if she could not overcome the stigma attached to her criminal record, she might just be another statistic.

Relatedly, Patricia also experienced difficulty finding employment. For her, finding stable employment was the biggest hurdle she had faced thus far; however, unlike others, Patricia had not experienced any stigma. Similar to Anita, Patricia also spent time volunteering at EFS SK to gain experience. Despite her criminal record, *Patricia was hopeful that her willingness to help and to prove to people that she can be of service to them would be assist her in her employment journey.*

#### **4.5. Facilitators of Successful Reintegration**

Throughout their stories, participants recognized several facilitators of successful community reintegration including: *spirituality; community and family support; and motherhood.* Throughout these themes, participants referred aspects of the self, as well as the importance of being in relation to others such that the relationships formed with family, the community, and children their experiences. I will now discuss the components of each theme comprehensively.

##### **4.5.1 Spirituality**

For two of the three participants who identified as First Nations or Aboriginal, spirituality was particularly important throughout their stories. Though little research has been done regarding this topic, studies have demonstrated that incorporating cultural concepts and practices in various types of offender treatment had led to improved criminogenic needs, and reductions in recidivism (Thakker, 2014) as per specific responsivity principles (Andrews & Bonta, 2010). In terms of reintegration, Waldram (1993) found that spirituality holds relatively high importance in terms of preventing substance use during community reintegration for Aboriginal offenders. Granted, these studies did not focus exclusively on women; however, the current study suggests that this may also be true for their reintegration journey.

Through Carol's explanation of her journeys across North America, it became evident that spirituality was very important to her. This was later discussed in relation to her reintegration as being her most significant support. Throughout Carol's narrative, it was revealed that her spirituality contributed to the development of her distinctive sense of 'self' and was an important part of who she is (Bruner, 2003). Like Carol, Brittany deeply connected with her spirituality and shared information about how her spirituality had contributed to her reintegration success thus far.

#### **4.5.2. Community and Family Support**

In addition to spirituality, participants recognized that having support from family and others in the community facilitated reintegration. Though not all participants had family support, they appreciated the support received from non-profit agencies like EFS SK and the halfway house where 4 of the 5 women has stayed temporarily. This is particularly important because research demonstrates that, often times, when women are released from prison, many return to the same unstable living conditions that encouraged them to engage in criminal activity in the first place (Mceuin, 2005; Ortiz, 2010). This means that offenders are often released without having secured safe and affordable housing, and are forced to return to the streets, attempt to access limited shelter beds, or move from place-to-place with friends or family until they can secure a place of their own (Wetzler, 2005). Unfortunately, like some of the women in my sample, many female offenders do not have positive social supports to turn to, belong to families that are already overtaxed by economic and social stresses, or no longer communicate with family members as a result of their criminal behavior (Ritchie, 2001). Thus, transitional housing is particularly important; however, options for women are limited because of their underrepresentation in the criminal justice system, with more resources being designated to male

offenders (Mceuin, 2005).

For Anita, reintegration has been difficult, especially in terms of housing. This finding is consistent with past research which found that one of the most significant needs of women released from jail is finding stable housing. This may be emphasized for those with mental health issues who have broken relationships with family and friends and have exhausted many community resources (Belknap et al., 2016). Fortunately, Anita shared that the support from EFS SK helps her through because she doesn't have much support from her family. In addition, Anita appreciated the support from her mental health counselor and, most importantly, her children.

For Brittany, the support of the halfway house staff was especially important in helping her to set small goals and secure the necessary supports to facilitate reintegration. In addition, halfway house staff helped her to connect with mental health and addictions supports in the community, to further facilitate community reintegration.

Like the others, Carol agreed that the halfway house provided excellent support. Unfortunately, as research demonstrates, transitional housing programs for women are very limited (Mceuin, 2005). Fortunately, for Carol, she shared having a supportive family and a community of friends to assist with reintegration.

Throughout her interview, Patricia recognized the important of family support, which serves as a protective factor when considering reoffending behaviours (Andrews & Bonta, 2006). Though she expected family and friends to view her differently after being charged, she was pleasantly surprised that this was not the case. Though Morgan did not disclose much support from family or friends, she appreciated the support from the halfway house staff and EFS SK before moving back to her home community.

### **4.5.3. Motherhood**

As mentioned, three of the women disclosed having children and shared the importance of these relationships. More specifically, participants stated that being a mother helped facilitate community reintegration. Though previous research that demonstrates that committing to family roles, such as parenting, may contribute to successful reintegration (Doherty et al., 2014), the pressures to support children has also been linked to criminal activity for women (Bowles, DeHart & Webb, 2012). Based on the women's stories, it appears that both may be factors for my participants, but even though children were not living with participants, the women shared a strong desire to repair relationships with their children.

As mentioned, Anita disclosed having four children – two daughters and two sons. Unfortunately, due to her incarceration, Anita lost custody of her daughters. That said, she shared that she was motivated to reconnect with her daughters. In addition, Anita's relationship with her sons encouraged her to remain sober and stay out of jail.

Throughout her interview, Carol shared having four children whom she felt a bit estranged from since her separation. Though Carol's children are *grown and gone*, she shared a desire to reconnect with her children and repair relationships, which facilitated her reintegration.

Similar to Anita and Carol, Patricia communicated the importance of family for her reintegration. For Carol, it was important to secure housing so that her daughter and grandchildren could come visit her.

## **4.6. Barriers to Community Reintegration**

During the interviews, participants highlighted numerous barriers to reintegration. These included: *securing stable employment and finding housing; stigma and low self-esteem; and addictions and anti-social attitudes*. These barriers are in line with previous literature which

states that individuals released from prison may experience difficulties finding stable employment, securing safe and affordable housing and forming and preserving meaningful relationships. Moreover, female offenders may experience increased stigma because of their criminal records, adding to their risk to reoffend (Graffam et al., 2004; Valera, Brotzman, Wilson, & Reid, 2017). Furthermore, as evident throughout the participants' stories, a lack of community resources, limited family support, or inadequate preparedness for the realities of reintegration may add to these issues (Moses, 2014; Valera et al., 2017).

#### **4.6.1. Securing Stable Employment and Finding Housing**

Among participants, securing employment appeared to be the most prominent barrier to reintegration. Many of the women shared that they were experiencing difficulty finding any employment, regardless of the desired field. Moreover, though the majority of participants were residing at a halfway house, most expressed challenges finding more permanent and affordable housing. I will now discuss these themes in greater detail.

Morgan described an inability to find employment as her biggest challenge with reintegration. She expressed that she had applied to various types of jobs, prior to securing employment as a receptionist with a non-profit organization. Fortunately, Morgan disclosed that she had secured employment and a permanent residence once she returns to her home community.

Similar to Morgan, Anita had difficult securing employment. For her, job hunting had been unsuccessful thus far, however, to pass the time and gain some experience, Anita volunteered at a non-profit organization. She was unsure of what her future career path looked like. In terms of housing, Anita was living with friends at the time and was hoping to relocate in the future.



Brittany also shared her experience with searching for employment. She stated that she had experienced difficulty due to her criminal record, which is supported by past research discussing the effects of stigma for female offenders (Dodge & Pogrebin, 2001; Leverentz, 2006). In relation to housing, Brittany did not speak about her experience or her plans after leaving the halfway house.

Relatedly, Patricia also experienced difficulty finding employment. For her, finding stable employment was the biggest hurdle she had faced thus far and, in terms of housing, Patricia shared that she was still looking for housing in her home community.

#### **4.6.2. Stigma and Low Self-Esteem**

Many of the women spoke about the effects that stigma has on reintegration. This finding fits with past research which demonstrates that women may face exaggerated issues associated with their charges. Because crime is viewed as a male dominated activity, females who commit crime are often viewed as ‘doubly deviant’ for disobeying social norms, as well as traditional gender roles (Dodge & Pogrebin, 2001; Leverentz, 2006). This can be emphasized for women incarcerated for drug abuse, and women with children who are then considered ‘bad mothers’ (Bartholomew, 2009; Mceuin, 2005).

For Morgan, stigma acted as a barrier to reintegration in terms of finding employment. She shared that her criminal record followed her everywhere. Anita’s story supported this notion in that she felt judged and isolated due to her criminal record. For Anita, the stigma she experienced contributed to her low self-esteem, which affected her ability to reintegrate into society. Brittany also shared that she had experienced barriers related to her criminal record. For Brittany, it was important to keep a positive attitude to mitigate this issue.

#### **4.6.3. Addictions and Antisocial Attitudes**

Finally, the women identified barriers related to addictions and anti-social peers. For some, this meant avoiding various places or programs where triggers may exist. Though self-help services such as AA or NA are designed to support individuals struggling with addictions, participants often felt that these programs were triggering rather than helpful. This was an important finding because, research demonstrates that AA/NA programs may be limited to serving those with less severe addictions, and for female offenders, addiction presents a particularly significant challenge to successful reintegration, especially for those who have been exposed to traumatic experiences (Kelly, Dow, Yeterian & Kahler, 2010; Matheson et al., 2015; Wetzler, 2005).

For example, throughout her interview, Anita shared that she often felt confronted by her addiction. In particular, she reported that she avoided specific support services, such as NA, in attempt to stay away from her triggers. By avoiding antisocial peers, Anita felt more confident in tackling her addictions. She also expressed a desire to move away from the city where she is not known and does not need to be reminded of emotional experiences. For Anita, avoiding her triggers was the best way she knew to stay on track right now and stay out of jail.

For Carol, addictions served as her greatest barrier to successful reintegration. She shared that she had returned to jail numerous times as a result of drinking and driving. Thus, overcoming addiction was crucial for Carol to reintegrate successfully. She did not speak to attending any services, but instead, she hoped to rely on her spirituality and the lessons learned from her past to avoid alcohol in the future.

As mentioned, Brittany shared that her criminal activity began in early adolescence when she received a DUI. Though she did not explicitly state that addictions were a barrier for her, she

spoke about difficulty following society's rules. That said, it was important for Brittany to stay positive.

#### **4.7. Resilience**

Throughout these stories, all of the women exuded resilience, which I strongly admire them for. Resilience can be defined in many different ways. For example, Richardson (2002) suggests that resilience is composed of characteristics that identify people who will prosper through adversity. Resilience may exist on a continuum and may refer to the process of overcoming adversity, coping with change, or seizing opportunity that results in identification and enrichment of resilient traits or protective factors. In the forensic field, resilience often refers to the protective factors that help individuals avoid risk factors associated with reoffending (Viljoen, Nicholls, Greaves, Ruiters & Brink, 2011). However, for the participants, resilience was depicted in the form of self-actualization, independence, self-sustainability, bravery, self-determination, optimism, and perseverance. For many of the women, resilience was exposed at many points in their story. The process of developing that personal strength often began in childhood, cultivated during incarceration and flourished after release. Though each participant shared various levels of detail and demonstrated resilience in different ways, all stories are appreciated and respected equally.

For Morgan, resilience began to develop during childhood. Through many experiences, she had begun to trust only herself and became self-sufficient on her own. For Morgan, this resilience was perceived as significant to her reintegration in that it helped her to accept her past and cope with the challenges of reintegration.

Similarly, Brittany demonstrated resilience throughout her story. She shared moments of independence, adaptability and bravery. She also exuded confidence, an eagerness to try new

things, appeared to be aware of herself spiritually and emotionally, and was optimistic about her reintegration.

During the interview, Carol demonstrated strong self-esteem and perseverance. She appeared to take responsibility for her past, was aware of her strengths and had shared experiences of soul-searching throughout her lifetime. She spoke bravely about her experiences with abuse and alcoholism. Though she reported that her spirituality was her number one support, she also recognized various other qualities that helped her to reintegrate such as *[her] determination, courage, hard work and optimistic attitude*. Carol also recognized that, though these were her strengths, they could be improved by practicing and continuing to utilize them in all endeavors in life.

Though Patricia did not share as many details about her story, she demonstrated resilience through her optimistic attitude and openness towards new experiences. She was eager to prove herself to others, to work hard to maintain healthy relationships, and was willing to try anything.

Finally, for Anita, resilience manifested differently throughout her story. For her, reliving the past and discussing her present circumstances was very emotional; however, she was brave and open to sharing her experiences throughout the interview. Though she had been through a lot of emotional turmoil, she was honest and aware of herself and her triggers. For Anita, her greatest purpose was being a mother – she was so proud of her children and was determined to be the best mother she could be.

#### **4.8. Conclusions and Implications for Understanding**

I am grateful for the opportunities to meet these five women, and for the stories they have shared with me. Morgan, Anita, Brittany, Carol and Patricia have bravely shared their stories

regarding life before, during and after incarceration. The focus of this study was to use life-history interviews and narrative inquiry to explore the facilitators and barriers to community reintegration for women in Saskatchewan; and identify the meaning that was generated by participants about these experiences. The nature of this study has allowed for an in-depth exploration of issues to reintegration for women and has given participants a chance to share their stories and embark on a healing journey. The study is qualitative in nature, and focuses on individuals' experiences, which allowed the data to be generated by the participants themselves, in ways that were meaningful to them. Overall, I have found that, whether participants were first-time or repeat offenders, this research provides some support for the pathways theory and reintegration for female offenders; however, there are various aspects of the participants' stories that make them unique and distinct. More specifically, it is important to note that not all participants in this study followed the widely-believed gendered pathway to crime. As mentioned, feminist/gendered pathway theorists generally suggest that female criminality is largely tied to early childhood trauma or abuse, mental health issues and substance abuse and/or poverty; however, there may be other important factors to consider (Jones, Brown, Wanamaker & Greiner, 2014). In terms of reintegration, though it is widely believed that women experience the same issues with employment, housing, substance abuse, stigma and family reunification, some women in my study demonstrated that this may not be relevant for all women released from prison. Taken together, these stories suggest various implications for research and practice which may lead to improved support for female offenders during and after incarceration.

#### **4.8.1. Implications for Practice**

Considering the various issues that female offenders face when reintegrating, it is evident that improvements may be made to better support criminalized women. During incarceration,

women may benefit from mental health support such as one-on-one counselling. As research demonstrates, mental illness and experiences of abuse are common among female offenders, thus, many women enter correctional institutions with a need for mental health services (Doherty et al., 2014). These issues may also be coupled with addictions, as evident in the literature and throughout some of the participants' stories. Unfortunately, though addictions services are offered within correctional institutions, there is often a considerably long waiting list to participate (Laux et al., 2008). Furthermore, as demonstrated by past research, as well as participants' statements, traditional correctional treatment approaches focus on the substance dependence and criminality, but fails to directly address the relationship between trauma and substance use (Matheson et al., 2015). Thus, offering trauma-informed treatment during incarceration may help to reach more women, and enable them to understand why they use drugs as a way to cope with the painful memories or mental illness.

Secondly, the women highlighted various issues related to being separated from their children such as family reunification and child advocacy, as well as depression related to prolonged disconnection from their kids. Thus, correctional institutions may better serve women with children by considering family reunification during release planning, connecting women with appropriate services, or offering parenting courses and support groups for female inmates with children. By offering these services, it may ease tension among the inmate population, contribute to the well-being of inmates who are mothers, and prepare women for the realities of reintegration as it relates to parenting.

Finally, though budgets must be considered, female offenders may benefit from more concrete release planning and programming that targets women of low risk and/or higher education levels. This may include post-secondary courses, additional employment training or

mentorship programs which allow low-risk offenders to teach certain skills or safety courses. Additionally, providing women with art or beading classes may help to keep them busy during incarceration and contribute to less conflict within the institution.

Upon release, it may be helpful to provide women with information about or connections to community resources to assist with securing employment, finding housing, and overcoming mental health and addictions. This information should be specific to the community that the women are being released to. By collaborating with communities, women can receive wrap-around services that address individual barriers to reintegration, decreasing their risk of reoffending.

#### **4.82. Implications for Future Research**

Though these findings underlined the needs of women reintegrating in Saskatchewan, and were consistent, in many ways, to previous literature, a consistent meaning of, and need for, gender-responsive interventions has not yet been established in research. Thus, future research may focus on determining a common definition of gender-responsive treatment, and whether this treatment is necessary and effective for women, over and above traditional correctional treatment. Furthermore, regarding treatment for women, it is important to consider other theories of criminality, such as the traditional antisocial pathway, among others, as the feminist or gendered pathway may not apply to all women (Jones et al., 2014). That said, each woman should be treated as an individual and have her needs matched to the appropriate treatment methods as per the RNR framework (Andres & Bonta, 2010). This may contribute to improving services for female offenders and ultimately reducing recidivism.

In addition, little research has examined the relationships between female inmates, especially within Canadian institutions. Given that findings demonstrated racial discrimination

among female offenders, it may be beneficial to explore this relationship further to decrease conflict within institutions. Future research may examine other demographic characteristics and variables, as well, such as age, level of education, religion and number of children to determine if any significant associations exist. Furthermore, future research may examine the experiences of reintegration for female offenders in other provinces within Canada, and among federal offenders to see whether similar patterns emerge.

Finally, because little research regarding female offenders has applied qualitative research methods, future research may use qualitative research to examine experiences of female offenders during various stages of involvement with the criminal justice system. By using qualitative measures, researchers may be able to offer in-depth information about specific phenomena from a different perspective than the traditional objective, quantitative approach. This may help to better understand these phenomena locally, which may contribute to more appropriate support for criminalized women.

#### **4.9. Aspects of the Current Study**

In the current study, narrative research was used to understand the process of reintegration for female offenders in Saskatchewan. The findings from this study contribute to important literature regarding the needs of female offenders; however, there are various aspects of the current study that must be considered.

One aspect of the study to consider is the small sample of women, which may not represent the ‘norm’ among female offenders. Firstly, all of the women were receiving services from the Elizabeth Fry Society of Saskatchewan. Though, due to the nature of the study, generalizability was not being sought, all of the women were connected with an additional support service, and therefore, may not represent those who do not receive any support.



Furthermore, most of the participants were temporarily housed in transitional housing, therefore, the realities of housing issues during reintegration may not have been captured completely.

Finally, women in the sample held higher levels of education compared to most female offenders. Taken together, a study with a more diverse sample may have yielded alternative results. This brings into question the transferability of the findings, which may be limited due to the homogeneity of the sample on some variables. These interpretations may not be transferrable to other contexts or participants; however, cross-contextual generalities may be made (Parish & Candon, 2012).

Moreover, it is important to consider the relationship between myself and participants. Though I had established previous relationships with EFS SK, and it was helpful that staff could facilitate contact with participants, it's possible that participants may have left out information that they did not feel comfortable sharing. In addition, participants may have felt intimidated by the presence of two academic researchers. If this were the case, representation of the participants' stories may not be comprehensive. Related to this, participants may have been subject to the social desirability bias in which they responded to questions by giving the most 'socially-acceptable' response.

As with all research, alternative interpretations and conclusions may be drawn from this study. The themes generated throughout the interviews often overlap and may change over time. I have done my best to represent the experiences of my participants and have generated conclusions based on direct accounts from the data. I hope that the findings generated from this study will enhance the knowledge of reintegration experiences for female offenders and contribute to the improvement of services that facilitate healthy crime-free lifestyles.

## References

- Alemagno, S. A., Shaffer-King, E., & Hammel, R. (2006). Juveniles in detention: How do girls differ from boys? *Journal of Correctional Health Care*, 12(1), 45-53.
- Andrews, D. A., & Bonta, J. (2010). *The psychology of criminal conduct* (5th ed.). Cincinnati, OH: Anderson.
- Andrews, D. A., Bonta, J. L., & Wormith, J. S. (2006). The recent past and near future of risk and/or need assessment. *Crime & Delinquency*, 52, 7-27. doi:10.1177/0011128705281756
- Aronson, E., Wilson, T.D., Akert, R.M., & Fehr, B. (2010). *Social psychology: Fourth Canadian edition*. Toronto, ON: Pearson Canada.
- Baer, D., Bhati, A., Brooks, L., Castro, J., La Vigne, N., Mallik-Kane, K., Naser, R., Osborne, J., Roman, C., Roman, J., Rossman, S., Solomon, A., Visher, C., & Winterfield, L. (2006). *Understanding the challenges of prisoner reentry: Research findings from the urban institute's prisoner reentry portfolio*. Retrieved from <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/42981/411289-Understanding-the-Challenges-of-Prisoner-Reentry.PDF>
- Bartholomew, L.R. (2009). *Breaking the cycle of recidivism: Understanding the economical, emotional, and social needs facing female ex-offenders during the transition and reintegration process*. Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertation and Theses (Order number 3378409).
- Beare, M. (2009). *Development and proposed evaluation of the guided recovery for offenders with trauma histories program: a novel trauma program for female offenders*. Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertation and Theses (Order number 3356382).

- Belknap, J. (2007). *The Invisible Woman: Gender, Crime, and Justice* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Belmont, CA: Thompson Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- Belknap, J. & Holsinger, K. (2006). The gendered nature of risk factors for delinquency. *Feminist Criminology, 1*, 48-71.
- Belknap, J., Lynch, S. & DeHart, D.D. (2016). Jail staff members' views on jailed women's mental health, trauma, offending, rehabilitation and reentry. *The Prison Journal, 96*, 79-101.
- Benda, B. (2005). Gender differences in life-course theory of recidivism: A survival analysis. *International Journal of Therapy and Comparative Criminology, 49*, 325-341.
- Blanchette, K., & Brown, S. L. (2006). *The assessment and treatment of women offenders: An integrative perspective*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley.
- Bowles, M., DeHart, D.D. & Webb, J. (2012). Family influences on female offenders' substance use: the role of adverse childhood events among incarcerated women. *Journal of Family Violence, 27*(7), 681-686.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77-101.
- Brown, J. Cohen, P., Johnson, J.G., & Smailes, E.M. (1999). Childhood abuse and neglect: Specificity of effects on adolescent and young adult depression and suicidality. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 38*(12), 1490-1496.
- Bruner, J. (2003). Self-making narratives. In R. Fivush & C.A. Haden (Eds.), *Autobiographical memory and the construction of a narrative self: Developmental and cultural perspectives*. Mahwah, NY: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

- Carter, L.M. (2012). *A qualitative study of reintegration focusing on the perceptions of female ex-offenders returning to society*. Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertation and Theses (Order number 3522589).
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2013a). *Adverse Childhood Experience Study: Major findings*. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/>
- Cobbina, J.E. (2010). Reintegration success and failure: Factors impacting reintegration among incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, 49(3), 210-232. doi: 10.1080/10509671003666602
- Correctional Service Canada (2009). *Correctional Service Canada's Correctional Programs Evaluation*. Retrieved from <http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/pa/cop-prog/cp-eval-eng.shtml>
- Correctional Service Canada. (2010a). Revised national community strategy for women offenders. Ottawa, ON: Correctional Service Canada
- Correctional Service Canada (2013). *The Mental Health Strategy for Women Offenders*. Retrieved from <http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/publications/fsw/mhealth/4-eng.shtml>
- Covington, S. S. (2007). Women and the criminal justice system. *Women's Health Issues*, 17(4), 180–182.
- Covington, S.S. & Bloom, B.E. (2006). Gender-responsive treatment and services in correctional settings. *Women and Therapy*, 29(3), 9-33.
- Covington, S.S., Burke, C., Keaton, S. & Norcott, C. (2008). Evaluation of a trauma-informed and gender-responsive intervention for women in drug treatment. *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs*, 5, 387-398.
- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods Approaches (2nd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Criminal Code of Canada, R.S.C. (2013) c. C-46.
- Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. London, UK: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Day, J. C., Zahn, M. A., & Tichavsky, L. P. (2014). What works and for whom? The effects of gender responsive programming on girls and boys in secure detention. *Journal of Research in Crime & Delinquency*, 52, 93-129.
- 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. (2009). *Polyvictimization among girls in the juvenile justice system: Manifestations and associations to delinquency* (Report No. 228620). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice.
- Dodge, M.R. & Pogrebin, M. (2001). Women's accounts for their prison experiences: A retrospective view of their subjective realities. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 29(6), 531-541.
- Doherty, S., Forrester, P., Brazil, A., & Matheson, F.I. (2014) Finding their way: Conditions for successful reintegration among women offenders. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, 53(7), 562-586.
- Dowden, C., & Andrews, D. A. (1999). What works for female offenders: A meta-analytic review. *Crime & Delinquency*, 45, 438-452.
- Felitti, V. J., Anda, R. F., Nordenberg, D., Williamson, D. F., Spitz, A. M., Edwards, V., & Marks, J. S. (1998). Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults: The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 14, 245-258.

- Gobeil, R. (2008). *Staying out: Women's perceptions of challenges and protective factors in community reintegration* (Research Report No. R-201). Ottawa, Canada: Correctional Service Canada.
- Gobeil, R., Blanchette, K., & Stewart, L. (2016). A meta-analytic review of correctional interventions for women offenders: Gender-neutral versus gender-informed approaches. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 43(3), 301-322.
- Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall Print.
- Government of Saskatchewan (2017). *Saskatchewan Provincial Budget 16-17*: Regina, Saskatchewan
- Government of Saskatchewan (2018). *Saskatchewan Provincial Budget 18-19*: Regina, Saskatchewan
- Gergen, K.J., Josselson, R., & Freeman, M. (2015). The promises of qualitative inquiry. *American Psychologist*, 70, 1-9.
- Graffam, J., Shinkfield, A., Lavelle, B., & McPherson, W. (2004). Variables affecting successful reintegration as perceived by offenders and professionals. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, 40(1/2), 147-141.
- Greenfeld, L.A. & Snell, T.L. (1999). *Bureau of Justice Special Report: Women Offenders*. Retrieved from <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/wo.pdf>
- Holahan, C.J., Moos, R.H., Holahan, C.K., Cronkite, R.C. & Randall, P.K.(2001). Drinking to cope, emotional distress and alcohol use and abuse: a ten year model. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 62(2), 190-198.

- Hosking, D.M. & Morley, I.E. (2004). Social constructionism in community and applied social psychology. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, 14*, 318-331. doi: 10.1002/casp.801
- Hubbard, D.J. & Pratt, T.C. (2002). A meta-analysis of the predictors of delinquency among girls. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation, 34*(3), 1-13. doi: 10.1300/J076v34n03\_01
- Hunter, R. (2016). *An examination of provincial adult correctional programs in Ontario*. Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses (Order number 10173952).
- Jones, N.J., Brown, S.L., Wannamaker, K.A. & Grenier, L.E. (2014). A quantitative exploration of gendered pathways to crime in a sample of male and female juvenile offenders. *Feminist Criminology, 9*(2), 113-136.
- Kane, M. & DiBartolo, M. (2002). Complex physical and mental health needs of rural incarcerated women. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing, 23*(3), 209-229.
- Kelly, J.F., Dow, S.J., Yeterian, J.D. & Kahler, C.W. (2010). Can 12-step group participation strengthen and extend the benefits of adolescent addiction treatment? A prospective analysis. *Drug and Alcohol Dependency, 110*, 117-125.
- Kong, R. & AuCoin, K. (2009). *Female Offenders in Canada*. Ottawa, Canada: Statistics Canada.
- Kitzinger, J., & Barbour, R.S. (1999). Introduction: The challenge and promise of focus groups. In R.S. Barbour and J. Kitzinger (Eds.), *Developing focus group research: Politics, theory and practice* (pp. 1-20). London, UK: Sage Publications Ltd.
- La Flair, L., Bradshaw, C., Storr, C., Green, K., Alvanzo, A. & Crum, R. (2011). Patterns of alcohol use and intimate partner violence victimization among women: a latent class analysis. *Comprehensive Psychiatry, 52*(6), 9-29.

- Laux, J.M., Dupuy, P.J., Moe, J.L., Cox, J.A., Lambert, E., Ventura, L.A., Williamson, C., & Benjamin, B.J. (2008). The substance abuse counseling needs of women in the criminal justice system: A needs assessment approach. *Journal of Addictions & Offender Counseling, 29*(1), 36-48. doi: 10.1002/j.2161-1874.2008.tb00042.x
- Levenson, J.S., Willis, G.W., & Prescott, D.S. (2015). Adverse childhood experiences in the lives of female sex offenders. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment, 27*(3), 258-283. doi: 10.1177/1079063214544332.
- Leverentz, A.M. (2006). *People, places and things: The social process of re-entry for female ex-offenders*. Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses (Order number 3219547).
- Mahony, T.H., Jacob, J., & Hobson, H. (2017). *Women and the Criminal Justice System*. Ontario, Canada: Statistics Canada.
- Matheson, F.I. (2012). Implications of trauma among male and female offenders. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 9*, 97-99. doi: 10.3390/ijerph9010097
- Matheson, F.I., Brazil, A., Doherty, S. & Forrester, P. (2015). A Call for Help: Women Offender's Reflections on Trauma Care. *Women & Criminal Justice, 25*, 241-255.
- Matheson, F. I., Doherty, S., & Grant, B. A. (2009). *Women offender substance abuse programming & community integration* (Report No. R-202). Ottawa, Canada: Correctional Service Canada.
- McAdams, P. (2003). Identity and the life story. In R. Fivush & C.A. Haden (Eds.), *Autobiographical memory and the construction of a narrative self: Developmental and cultural perspectives*. Mahwah, NY: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.



- Mceuin, C.L. (2005). *Family reunification initiative: A needs assessment and family reunification program to address the challenges that female offenders and their dependent children face in family reunification*. Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses (Order number 3205125).
- Messina, N., Grella, C., Burdon, W., & Prendergast, M. (2007). Childhood adverse events and current traumatic distress: A comparison of men and women prisoners. *Criminal Justice and Behavior, 34*(11), 1385–1401.
- Moses, G.R. (2014). *Female ex-offenders after incarceration: A study of the re-integration experiences of female ex-offenders three years after incarceration*. Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertation and Theses (Order number 3615047).
- Nathan, P., & Ward, T. (2001). Females who sexually abuse children: Assessment and treatment issues. *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law, 8*, 44-45.
- Nyamathi, A., Salem, B.A., Farabee, D., Hall, E., Zhang, S. Faucette, M., Bond, D., & Yadav, K. (2017). Impact of an intervention for recently released homeless offenders on self-reported re-arrest at 6 and 12 months. *Journal of Addictive Diseases, 36*(1), 60-71, doi: 10.1080/10550887.2016.1147796
- O'Brien, P. (2002). Reducing barriers to employment for women ex-offenders: Mapping the road to reintegration. *Safer Foundation, 2*(6), 1–24.
- Olver, M.E., Stockdale, K.C., & Wormith, J.S. (2009). Risk assessment with young offenders: A meta-analysis of three assessment measures. *Criminal Justice and Behavior, 36*(4), 329-353. doi: 10.1177/0093854809331457

- Ortiz, J. (2010). *A needs analysis of recidivating female offenders in Oklahoma*. Retrieved from Proquest Dissertations and Thesis (Order number 3408490).
- Papastavrou, E., Farmakas, A., Karayiannis, G., & Kotrotsiou, E. (2011). Comorbidity of post-traumatic-stress disorders and substance use disorder. *Health Science Journal*, 5(2), 107–117.
- Parish, T. & Candon, T. (2012). Narrative Data Analysis and Interpretation: “Flirting with Data”. In *Understanding Narrative Inquiry* (185-226). Sage Publications Inc.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods (3rd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Polkinghorne, D.E. (1988). *Narrative knowing and the human sciences*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Richardson, G.E. (2002). The metatheory of resilience and resiliency. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 58 (3), 307-321.
- Richie, B.E. (2001). Challenges incarcerated women face as they return to their communities: Findings from life history interviews. *Crime & Delinquency*, 47(3), 368-389.
- Robbins C.A., Martin, S.S., Surratt, H.L. (2009). Substance abuse treatment, anticipated maternal roles, and reentry success of drug-involved women prisoners. *Crime & Delinquency*, 55, 388–411.
- Ryder, J.A. (2003). *Antecedents of violent behavior: Early childhood trauma in the lives of adolescent female offenders*. Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses (Order number 3074679).

- Salisbury, E.J. & Van Voorhis, P. (2009). Gendered pathways: a quantitative investigation of women probationers' paths to incarceration. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 36(6), 541-567.
- Saxena, P., Messina, N. J., & Grella, C. E. (2014). Who benefits from gender-responsive treatment? Accounting for abuse history on longitudinal outcomes for women in prison. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 41, 417-432.
- Statistics Canada. (2014). *Admissions to adult correctional services, by characteristic of persons admitted, type of supervision and jurisdiction*. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2015001/article/14163/tbl/tbl04-eng.htm>
- Statistics Canada (2014). *Adult Correctional Statistics in Canada 2013/2014*. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2015001/article/14163-eng.htm>
- Statistics Canada. (2015). *Women and the Criminal Justice System*. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-503-x/2010001/article/11416-eng.htm>
- Stevens, D.J. (2015). *Education Programming for Offenders*. Ottawa, Canada: Correctional Service Canada.
- Thakker, J. (2014). Cultural factors in offender treatment: current approaches in New Zealand. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 113, 213-223.
- Thomas, D. R. (2006). A general inductive approach for analyzing qualitative evaluation data. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 27, 237-246.
- Thompson, J., Lutfy, M.A., Derkzen, D., & Bertrand, M. (2015). *The needs of women offenders under community supervision* (Report No. R-388). Ottawa, Canada: Correctional Service Canada.

- Tripodi, S. J., Bledsoe, S. E., Kim, J. S., & Bender, K. (2011). Effects of correctional-based programs for female inmates: A systematic review. *Research on Social Work Practice, 21*, 15-31.
- Tucker, Y. (2014). *Reentry and transitional program for female repeat offenders: A grant proposal*. Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses (Order number 1526964).
- Valera, P., Brotzman, L., Wilson, W., & Reid, A. (2017). "It's hard to reenter when you've been locked out": Keys to offender reintegration. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation, 56*(6), 412-431.
- Van der Knapp, L.M., Alberda, D.L., Oosterveld, P., & Born, M.P. (2012). The predictive validity of criminogenic needs for male and female offenders: Comparing the relative impact of needs in predicting recidivism. *Law and Human Behavior, 36*(5), 413-422. doi: 10.1037/h0093932.
- Viljoen, S., Nicholls, T., Greaves, C., de Ruiters, C. & Brink, J. (2011). Resilience and successful community reintegration among female forensic psychiatric patients: A preliminary investigation. *Behavioral Sciences & the Law, 29*(5), 752-770.
- Visher, C.A. & Travis, J. (2003). Transitions from prison to community: Understanding individual pathways. *Annual Review of Sociology, 29*, 89-113.
- Vitopoulos, A. N. (2011). *The efficacy of the risk-need-responsivity framework in guiding treatment for female young offenders*. Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses (Order number 915643834).
- Vitopoulos, N.A., Peterson-Badali, M. & Skilling, T.A. (2012). The relationship between matching service to criminogenic need and recidivism in male and female youth. *Criminal Justice and Behavior, 39*(8), 1025-2041. doi: 10.1177/0093854812442895

- Waldram, J.B. (1993). Aboriginal spirituality: Symbolic healing in Canadian prisons. *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry, 17*(3), 345-362.
- Ward, A. (2017). *Returning "home"? The impact of housing instability on women exiting jail*. Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses (Order number 10287214).
- Wetzler, E. (2005). *Assisting female offenders with a more seamless reentry into the community: A needs assessment and program development*. Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertation and Theses (Order No. 3205141).
- Wertz, F.J., et al. (2011). *Five ways of doing qualitative analysis: Phenomenological psychology, grounded theory, discourse analysis, narrative research, and intuitive inquiry*. New York: Guilford.
- Wolff, K.T., Baglivio, M.T., & Piquero, A.R. (2017). The relationship between adverse childhood experiences and recidivism in a sample of juvenile offenders in community-based treatment. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology, 61*(11), 1210-1242. doi: 10.1177/0306624X15613992
- Wooldredge, J. & Steiner, B. (2012). Race group differences in prison victimization experiences. *Journal of Criminal Justice, 40*(5), 358-369.
- Young, V., & Reviere, R. (Eds). (2006). *Women behind bars: Gender and race in US prisons*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

## Appendix A: Interview Guide

**Date:**

**Location:**

**Start Time:**

**Information from database:**

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Index Offense: \_\_\_\_\_

Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_

Sentence Length: \_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Background: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount of Time Post-Release: \_\_\_\_\_

**Consent.** The purpose of our interview today is to learn about your personal story and your experiences with reintegration. I will be asking you about what has helped you in your life, and what has gotten in the way, and whether or not your needs were addressed by the correctional system.

Before we begin, I would like to confirm that you understand what was in the consent form, and that you are willingly participating in this study. Do you have any questions for me?

To protect your identity, I will not use your real name in my report. But to distinguish you from others, I would like to give you a chance to choose your “research name” or fake name. Is there a name you’d like me to use in my report?

**Research Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Interview Questions:**

- 1) Can you tell me a bit about your family life growing up?
  - a. How have your experiences affected you?
- 2) Can you tell me about your time in the prison?
  - a. What challenges did you face?
  - b. What kinds of programming did you take?
  - c. What type of release planning were you offered?
  - d. What type of support were you offered to help you deal with past trauma?
  - e. What kinds of programs would help you most?
- 3) Can you tell me about your experiences on the in the community after your most recent release from prison?
  - a. What difficulties have you faced?
  - b. Where have you found strength, support and safety? This may include people, organizations, or other settings.
  - c. What are some of your qualities that have helped you succeed? How can these qualities be strengthened?
  - d. What type of support have you received to help you deal with past trauma?

- 4) What are your short-term goals for the next 3 months to a year? What are your long-term goals for the next 2-5 years?
  - a. What are the things that make you want to stay on track?
  - b. What kinds of support do you think you need to help you stay out of jail?
- 5) If you could change one thing about your story, what would you change?
  - a. How would this affect where you are now?
  - b. What have you learned from your story?
- 6) What about your story are you most proud of?

**Closing Statement.** Thank you for sharing your personal stories with me. I am very grateful to have met with you and to be part of this moment. Is there anything else that you would like to talk about that you think is an important part of your story?

I will do everything I can to make sure that your story is told honestly and accurately. You will have the opportunity to look over it again before I start the analysis, if you would like to do so.

**Debrief.** I would like to take a moment to check in with you now that you have told your story. Was there any part of this experience that surprised you or was not what you expected?

How are you feeling right now? Would you like to talk to the clinical psychology student, or speak with someone that you can meet with after today, about anything that has come up?

Do you have anything you would like to ask me before we finish?

## **Appendix B: Clinical Graduate Student Information**

Thank you for participating in my research study. As mentioned, you may experience some negative feelings after remembering and talking about some of your life experiences. These are very natural, and may include feeling sad, embarrassed, angry or helpless. The clinical graduate student who was present for your interview is happy to speak with you, or provide you with a referral for other services in the community.

Her contact information is:

Ashley Coveney, Clinical Psychology Graduate Student  
[Ashley.coveney@usask.ca](mailto:Ashley.coveney@usask.ca)  
306-966-6657 (Department of Psychology, University of Saskatchewan)

You may also contact Saskatoon Crisis Intervention Services at any time if you are feeling overwhelmed. They can be reached 24/7 at 306-933-6200.



## **Appendix C: Information Sheet and Script for EFS SK**

### **A Life-History Approach to Community Reintegration: Female Ex-Offenders' Experiences of Facilitators and Barriers of Successful Community Reintegration**

#### **What is this study about?**

Research suggests that the experiences of female offenders differ greatly from their male counterparts; however, because females only make up a small proportion of offenders in North America, most research about community reintegration and criminal risk focuses on male offenders. This idea has informed my Master's thesis, which attempts to better understand the experiences of reintegration for female offenders as told by the women themselves.

Using life-history interviews with 5 female ex-offenders, accessed through your agency, I am hoping to gather in-depth stories about reintegration from the perspective of those closest to these experiences. All qualitative data generated from the interviews will be analyzed using a life-history approach in which stories will be rewritten in chronological order to keep the women's experiences in tact. During the interviews, I will also construct a time line of events, with the participants help, so I can better understand their experiences.

Because research shows that, in comparison to male offenders, women may experience gendered-issues to reintegration (i.e. increased stigma, finding stable housing, accessing medical and mental health/addictions services, family reunification, education/employment needs and difficulty overcoming past trauma) understanding the individual and comprehensive needs of female offenders is a fundamental step in developing and implementing programs to facilitate community reintegration (Moses, 2014).

Given that female offenders are an understudied population, the results of this study may help to determine the unique needs of female offenders in Saskatchewan, and address the limits within provincial correctional institutions in Saskatchewan. This study can also help community support programs, such as yours, determine the ways in which they can contribute to the gaps in services and best support women reintegrating into Saskatchewan. Overall, this information can be used to guide necessary changes within the correctional system and may contribute to the development of social programs that support reintegration for female offenders. Taken together, this can lead to more appropriate support for female offenders during and after incarceration, which will ultimately contribute to a decrease in recidivism rates.

#### **What am I asking you to do?**

To obtain a meaningful sample that includes women from various cultural and criminal backgrounds, I would like to request a collection of client files that represent women varying in age, ethnicity, cultural background, index offence, sentence length, and amount of time post-release from incarceration. At this stage, the names of these women should be removed from the file. I would also request that you please provide the information only for women who you believe, in your working experience, are willing to share their stories. This means that any

women who might be negatively affected by the proposed interview, should not be included in these files. From these files, I will select participants to create a diverse sample of participants varying in age, ethnicity, cultural background, index offence, sentence length, and amount of time post-release from incarceration.

Once I have chosen 5 women, I would ask for your assistance in contacting the women, in order to respect the privacy of the participants and their rights to participate in the study. Once participants have given you permission for me to contact them, I will provide them with further information about the study, and go over consent. This can be done over email, over the phone, or in person, depending on what is most convenient for the participants. Participants will also be offered a small gift certificate honorarium, in the amount of 20 dollars, for their time participating in the study, and transportation costs (e.g. parking at the university, or bus tickets) will be covered as well.

Please refer to the script below, which provides you with a guideline for contacting the women about the study.

Thank you for your assistance in contacting potential participants. Your contribution to this study is greatly appreciated!

#### **Suggested Script for Initial Contact with Potential Participants:**

I would like to invite you to participate in a research study about the experiences of reintegration for women in Saskatchewan. This study is being completed by Kelsey Brown, a student at the University of Saskatchewan, as part of her Master's Degree. Kelsey is interested in learning more about the experiences of women exiting prison in Saskatchewan, in terms of what has helped, and what has gotten in the way of reintegration. The results of this study may help to support women who are getting out of prison in the future because there has not been much research on this topic, especially in Canada.

She is working with Efrayim to recruit women for this study, and has asked me to contact women who I think may be willing to share their stories. I am wondering if you would like to participate? You should only participate if you want to. Our agency does not require you to participate, and your relationship with us will not be affected in any way if you choose not to.

All you will be asked to do is share your story and answer some questions about your experiences before, during and after incarceration. There are no right or wrong answers, only what is true for you. The interview will take place at the University of Saskatchewan, and will take about 1 hour. Kelsey will ask you to share your personal story about your needs and what has helped you along the way. You will also be provided with a \$20.00 gift certificate for participating, and all your transportation costs, such as bus tickets or parking on campus, will be covered by Kelsey as well.

If you would like to participate, or would like more information, please let me know and I will provide Kelsey with your contact information. You should hear from her within a couple of days.

## Appendix D: Consent Form

### EXPERIENCES OF REINTEGRATION FOR WOMEN IN SASKATCHEWAN

#### What is this all about?

You are being invited to participate in a research study called **A Life-History Approach to Community Reintegration**. The study is being done by me, Kelsey Brown. I am a graduate student at the University of Saskatchewan.

I have to complete a research project as part of my Master of Arts degree in Applied Social Psychology. Because I am a student, my work is being supervised by Dr. Stephen Wormith, a professor at the University of Saskatchewan. If you have any questions about this research, you can request to talk to my supervisor by emailing [s.wormith@usask.ca](mailto:s.wormith@usask.ca) or contact me at [kelsey.brown@usask.ca](mailto:kelsey.brown@usask.ca).

#### What am I studying in this project?

Research has shown that women exiting prison face many challenges with reintegration like getting medical care and addictions treatment; finding safe and affordable housing; accessing education and employment services; connecting with family and children; and receiving support for past trauma. Though programs are offered in jail, these courses aren't available to everyone, and don't seem to provide women with the tools and support they need.

I am hoping to learn about your experiences with reintegration. I would like to learn about what has helped you in your life, and what has gotten in the way. I am hoping that you will share with me how the experiences of childhood trauma may have affected your ability to meet your needs, and whether or not the correctional system (i.e. the courses offered in jail, the people working in the jail or probation/parole officers) has addressed these issues. I am hoping to learn about what type of support you need from the correctional system, or other agencies, to stay out of jail.

The results may help to support women who are getting out of prison in the future because there has not been much research on this topic, especially in Canada.

#### Do you need to be a part of this research study?

**No! You don't *have* to participate.** You should only participate if you **want** to. The Elizabeth Fry Society of Saskatchewan (EFry) does not require you to participate, and your relationship with EFry will not be affected in any way, no matter what you choose. If you decide you want to participate, you can always change your mind – even in the middle of an interview – without any consequences. You can ask to have your story removed from the study up to one month after your interview. Since it is expected that the study will be completed and distributed within a month of your interview, if more than a month passes, it will then be too late to withdraw your data from the study.

### **What will you have to do?**

You will be asked to share your story and answer some questions about your personal background and your release from custody. There are no right or wrong answers, only what is true for you. The interview will take about 1 hour, and I will ask you to share your personal story about your needs and what has helped you along the way. Another student will be present during the interviews. This student is trained in clinical psychology, and can help you, or offer you resources, if you feel upset or overwhelmed at any time.

### **What makes you a good participant?**

You are being invited to participate in this interview because you are a woman who is working with EFry, you have been released from a Saskatchewan Correctional Institution, you are over the age of 18, and you can talk about your experiences before, during and after incarceration.

### **What are the pros and cons to you being a part of this study?**

**Pros** include:

- You might feel better after sharing your story and having it heard.
- You might feel good that you could help make a difference for other women in the future.
- This study could help bring more awareness to issues faced by women returning to their communities after prison. This information could reach the general public, and possibly the corrections system and the government. This study is an opportunity for women to have their voices heard.
- There may be a possibility that this study will help women stay out of jail in the future.
- This study will provide researchers with new information about women ex-offenders and their circumstances and may inspire even further research on this important topic.

**Cons** include:

- Having your interview recorded may make you feel self-conscious or uncomfortable.
- You may have some negative feelings when remembering or talking about some of your life experiences. These are very natural, and may include feeling sad, embarrassed, angry, or helpless. As mentioned, a clinical psychology graduate student will be there for the interviews if you wish to talk with her, or receive a referral from her. You may also feel tired after the interview.

### **Will people know that you are a research participant or what you say in the interview?**

I will protect your confidentiality. This means that I will not include your name in the report, and no one but me will hear the recorded interview. Because of the nature of the study, I may include direct quotes from your interview in the report, but you will be given a “research” name, and all personal information that could identify you will be removed so that you remain anonymous. The only place your real name will appear is on this form which is stored in a secure location. The interviews will be typed out and, along with recordings, will be transferred to a secure computer. The recorded interviews will be deleted from the recording device immediately after

they have been typed out. This form will be kept separate from the typed interviews so that no one can link your name to your responses. Anything that is saved on the computer will be password locked and encrypted so they will not be readable to others. The only other person who may see copies of the interview is Dr. Wormith, my supervisor. No one from EFry will have access to any material from your interview.

**Please note that there are some scenarios where I am legally required to break confidentiality. These cases include:**

- **Immediate or serious harm to yourself or others**
- **Child abuse**
- **Criminal activity**

*Though you will be asked about your past experiences, please do not discuss any criminal activity that has not been reported during the interview.*

**How will the research results be used?**

The report will be stored at University and may be available to other students and University staff who might want to continue this line of research.

The information may also be published in a scholarly journal, which can be available to students and researchers everywhere. The results may also be presented at conferences, which are attended by other students, researchers and professionals.

The results may be used by organizations such as EFry and the government of Saskatchewan to modify, and hopefully to improve, their programs and services to women ex-offenders who are returning to the community.

The results could be shared with you and the other individuals I interviewed, if you are interested. I will offer to send you the report, and you are welcome to attend any public presentations.

**What if you have other questions?**

If you have any questions or concerns, you can contact me at [kelsey.brown@usask.ca](mailto:kelsey.brown@usask.ca), or my supervisor, Dr. Wormith, at [s.wormith@usask.ca](mailto:s.wormith@usask.ca). You can verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any other concerns you might have by contacting the University of Saskatchewan Research Service and Ethics Office at (306)996-4126.

By signing your name below, you are saying that you want to participate, based on your own free choice, and that you understand what is involved in participating in this study. You are also saying that you have had the chance to have your questions answered by the researcher and a copy of this consent form has been given to you for your records.

—

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Name of Participant*

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

By signing below, you are saying that you will allow your interview audio-recorded and that a copy of this consent form has been given to you for your records.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Name of Participant*

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

Appendix E: Transcript Release Form



TRANSCRIPT RELEASE FORM

EXPERIENCES OF REINTEGRATION FOR WOMEN IN SASKATCHEWAN

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have reviewed the complete transcript of my personal interview in this study, and have been provided with the opportunity to add, alter, and delete information from the transcript as appropriate. I acknowledge that the transcript accurately reflects what I said in my personal interview with Kelsey Brown. I hereby authorize the release of this transcript to Kelsey Brown to be used in the manner described in the Consent Form. I have received a copy of this Data/Transcript Release Form for my own records.

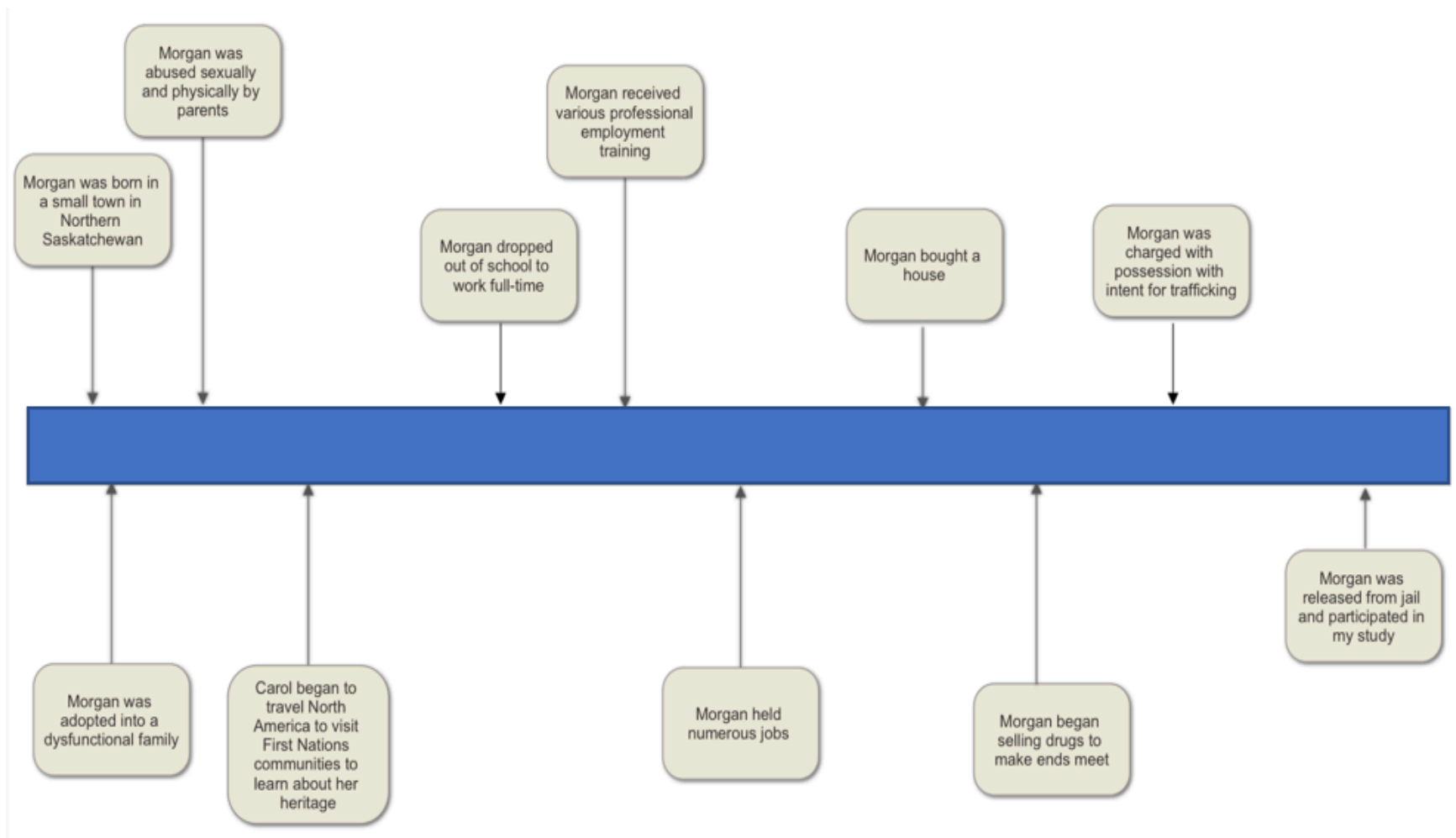
\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

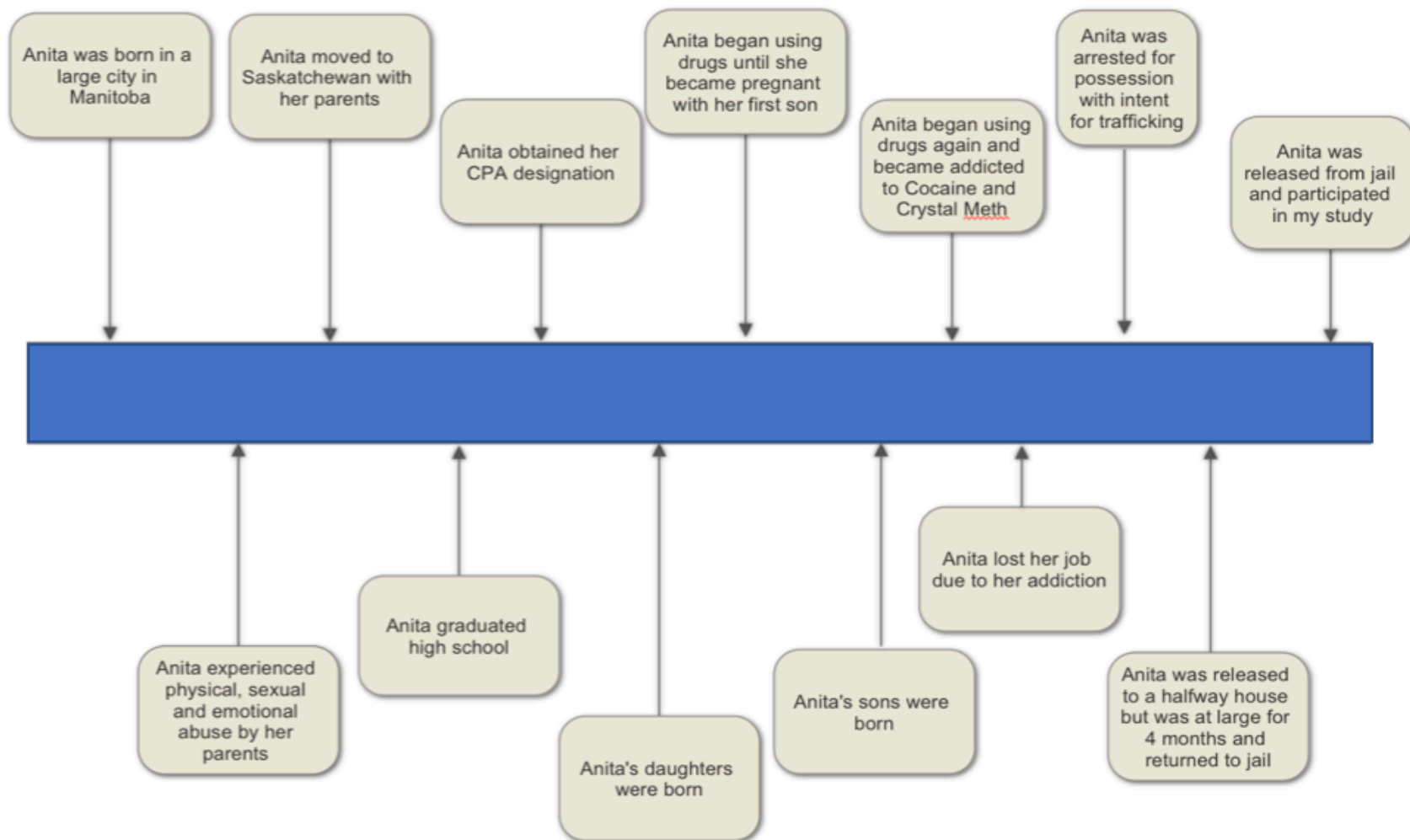
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of researcher

## Appendix F: Morgan's Timeline

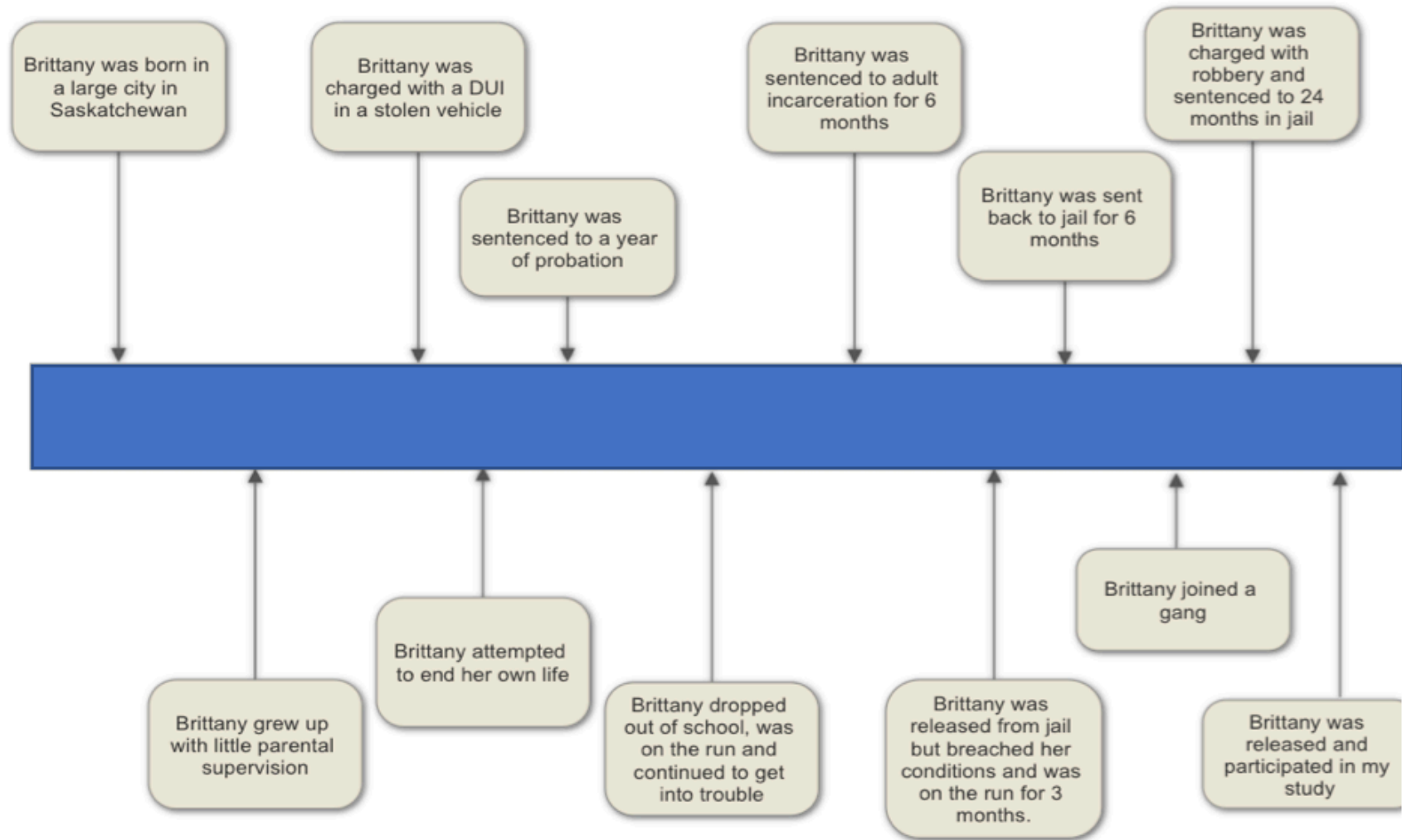




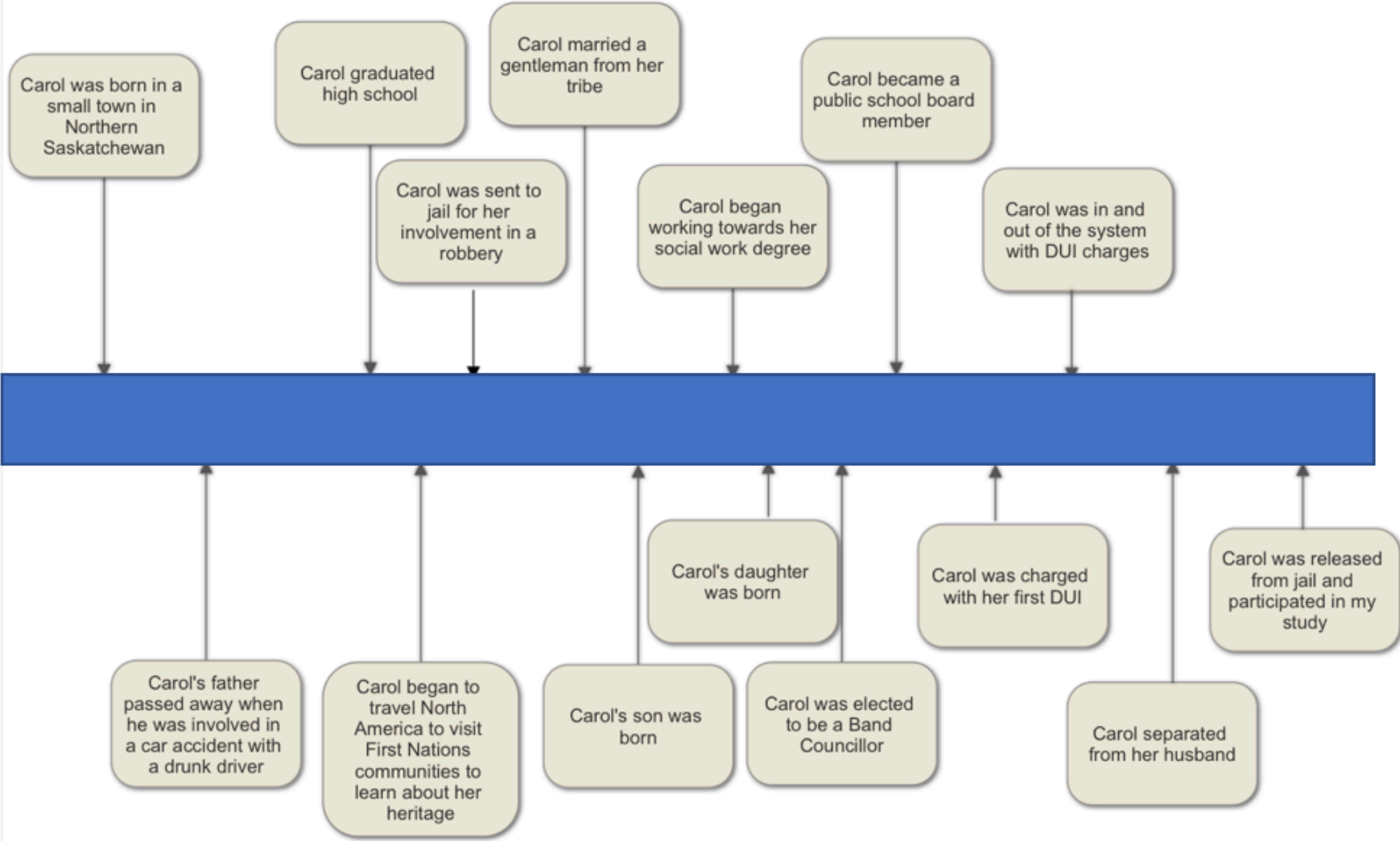
## Appendix G: Anita's Timeline



## Appendix H: Brittany's Timeline



Appendix I: Carol's Timeline



## Appendix J: Patricia's Timeline

