ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: INCARCERATED WOMEN AND HELP SEEKING: HOW IDENTITY IMPACTS PROGRAM PARTICIPATION AND EFFECTIVENESS

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This thesis draws attention to the limited field of identity and help-seeking research. Focusing on a population of incarcerated women, this study analyzes the impact of self-identity and labeling on program participation and perceived effectiveness. While programming has been shown to be effective in many areas, some women choose not to participate. Self-labeling is one potential factor preventing women from program participation. This study proposes a qualitative design of surveys and interviews to determine the relationship between chosen self-identity, program participation, and perceived program effectiveness among incarcerated women in Maryland's Correctional Institution for Women. Past research has identified correlations between victim identities, such as victim and survivor labels, and increased likelihood of help-seeking. While these patterns may persist within a carceral setting, due to the complex nature of and stigmatization of identity within correctional facilities, the relationship may be disrupted or complicated.

INCARCERATED WOMEN AND HELP SEEKING: HOW IDENTITY IMPACTS PROGRAM PARTICIPATION AND EFFECTIVENESS

By

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Worldwide, 1 in 3 women are victims of physical or sexual violence in their lifetimes (WHO 2021). According to the US Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics, only 34% of people injured by an intimate partner receive medical care for their injuries (Truman 2014). By this statistic, it is clear that many victims of intimate partner violence (IPV) do not seek help for their victimization. Violence against women is a prevalent crime, and yet many women face barriers to escaping and seeking help. Help seeking is already a difficult process, made more so by any potential barriers. Determining these barriers through research can assist in alleviating them, and pave the way for easier help seeking opportunities.

While sexual violence and violence against women is prevalent all over the world, these numbers only increase when looking at the population of incarcerated women. In the past, studies have estimated that anywhere from 50 to 90% of incarcerated women have been raped, sexually assaulted, or otherwise victimized by IPV (Goodmark 2023). Given these numbers, help seeking is all the more important within correctional facilities, and yet the past research focusing on this population is sparse. While help seeking opportunities are limited within correctional facilities, one available option is carceral programming which is designed to reduce reoffending, and help women with the unique stresses and challenges of incarceration.

In recent years, more research has shown the importance of program participation and completion while incarcerated, on post incarceration outcomes such as recidivism, drug use, and mental health for women (Collica-Cox and Furst 2019; Pederson et al. 2022; Tripodi et al. 2011; Ward and Roe-Sepowitz 2009). However, less research has looked into factors that may prevent women from taking advantage of available programs. A few studies have examined the link

between self-labeling and help seeking behavior, both finding that labeling oneself in relation to a victimizing event increases their likelihood of seeking help (Johnson and LaPlante 2023; Spohn et al. 2017). In terms of labeling, those who self-identified as survivors were the most likely to speak with police or victim services and seek out legal aid (Johnson and LaPlante 2023; Spohn et al. 2017). The current research builds on the concept of self-perceptions of victimization as it relates to program participation and effectiveness within correctional facilities. While prior research has linked self-labeling and help-seeking in the general population, incarcerated women may have different or more complex relationships due to the addition of perpetrator labels (Bay-Cheng 2019; Duncan and DeHart 2019). The goal of this study is to identify the relationship between identity and help seeking behavior as they may align or diverge with what is known from prior research.

This study aims to examine if variation in women's self-perceived identity contributes to their likelihood of participating in programming while incarcerated, and of finding it effective. By understanding the mindset of those who don't participate, programming designers will be able to more effectively target those populations. To make the most effective programs, we must understand who is being left behind and why. If it is shown that women of a certain identity are less likely to participate in, and find effectiveness in programming, then programs can be reviewed and edited to better serve the full population of incarcerated women. Programs are meant to assist every woman serving time in a correctional facility, at present, this is not the case. This research has the potential to inform the next steps of program creation, to bring them closer to serving every woman.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Incarcerated Women

In the years since the peak of mass incarceration, prison trends have been changing, but while men's incarceration has been decreasing, women's rates are still on the rise (Dholakia 2021). The Vera institute reports 231,000 women and girls being incarcerated in the US in 2019 (Dholakia 2021). In the time between 2008 to 2018, mens incarceration rates decreased by 9%, however in the same time frame, women's rates have increased by 15% (Dholakia 2021). Incarcerated women also report many unique challenges when entering the justice system. Women are more likely to have disabilities and/or mental health issues than men, as well as higher rates of substance abuse (Kajstura and Sawyer 2023). Women also report many challenges throughout their childhood, such as homelessness, abuse, intimate partner violence, and sexual victimization (Dholakia 2021; Goodmark 2023; Kajstura and Sawyer 2023). These unique circumstances, paired with the rise in prison numbers, require more focus on women's correctional facilities as a whole, particularly on the programs which target such unique challenges.

Access to Programming

Once men's and women's prisons were separated in 1870, and the focus of incarceration transitioned to rehabilitation, men have had access to training programs while incarcerated (Rafter 1985). After World War II, the focus of punishment shifted to treatment and rehabilitation, leading to the creation of the correctional facility, as well as an array of therapeutic, educational, and vocational programming, in the 1950s (Irwin 1980). Unlike in men's facilities, women's facilities did not gain access to training programs until the 1970's (Moyer 1984). Even once programs were developed for women's correctional facilities, they

spread slowly. They were not available in the majority of women's prisons, and were often reliant on inconsistent funding and administration (Moyer 1984).

In the present day, women have gained access to more carceral programs, including educational, vocational, and therapeutic options. The Federal Bureau of Prisoners has introduced 15 new programs designed specifically for female federal inmates, in addition to programs offered in both male and female prisons (Federal Bureau of Prisons 2023). Among these new programs is a set of Evidence Based Recidivism Reduction (EBRR) programs, which includes a number of options for therapy and anger management, functional and social skill training, and life skill and vocational training (Federal Bureau of Prisons 2023). Women are also offered a number of Productive Activity (PA) programs including, domestic violence survival, communication skill training, emotional regulation, and job skill training (Federal Bureau of Prisons 2023). This trend continues at the state level, as many states have introduced carceral programming in their women's facilities. Maryland has introduced multiple educational, religious, and therapeutic programs to their Women's correctional facility (CMAT Program n.d.; Goucher College n.d.; MCE n.d.; PrisonPro n.d.). Multiple states, including Missouri, Indiana, and New York, have developed prison nursery programs which allows women who give birth in prison, to spend the first weeks raising and caring for their children (Riley 2019). The creation and implementation of these programs is designed to reduce recidivism amongst incarcerated women, however the programs cannot help if women are not taking advantage of them.

Program Participation and Effectiveness

Program participation and completion has shown to be effective for women in many different categories (Collica-Cox and Furst 2019; Pederson et al. 2022; Tripodi et al. 2011; Ward and Roe-Sepowitz 2009). Programs have shown a significant reduction in rates of recidivism,

one study even finding a 45% reduction in reoffending after a substance abuse treatment program (Pederson et al. 2022; Tripodi et al. 2011). Programs can also have positive impacts on mental health. (Collica-Cox and Furst 2019; Ward and Roe-Sepowitz 2009). For example, the Parenting, Prison and Pups program as mentioned in a study by Collica-Cox and Furst (2018), is designed to assist with depression, stress, and anxiety related to parenting while incarcerated. Results of this study showed a decrease in mentioned negative emotions, as well as an increase in self-esteem. Substance abuse programming has also been effective in reducing drug use and improving mental well-being (Messina et al. 2009). In a study done by Messina and Colleagues (2009), women who participated in drug use programming designed for women, had a greater decrease in drug use, and were more likely to remain in residential aftercare. Programming has been shown to be effective in improving many factors associated with incarceration and recidivism.

Women, overall, tend to have higher rates of program participation than men, however, for some program types, those who participate are still the minority (Crittenden and Koons-Witt 2017). Past studies have tracked rates of women's participation in educational programs, and although they peaked at 49% in 1986, they declined to 30% in 1997 (Rose 2004). While the removal of the Pell grant program, which provided incarcerated people funds to attend college, can account for some of this decrease, participation in educational programming had been decreasing prior to its removal (Rose 2004). Participation in other forms of programming had been decreasing at the time as well, such as vocational programs, which would not have been impacted by the Pell grant removal (Rose 2004). A more recent study found similar results, noting that 33.5% of women participate in educational programs (Crittenden and Koons-Witt 2017). Previous education was also shown to impact participation in this type of programming,

those with higher education levels being less likely to participate in educational programming (Crittenden and Koons-Witt 2017).

In terms of mental health programming, research has found that around 40% of women had some type of mental health assistance (Koons-Witt and Crittenden 2018; Vera 2023). Given that 76% of incarcerated women had some history of mental health challenges, it is clear that a number of them are not receiving help (Vera 2023). Research has found that around 58% of incarcerated women suffer from substance use disorder while only about 41 to 47% are treated for it (Crittenden and Koons-Witt 2017; Koons-Witt and Crittenden 2018; Vera 2023). Although program participation has been shown to improve prison outcomes, many women still do not take part in programming.

Reasons for non-participation in programming can be a result of both structural, and individual changes. Structural factors account for any change that cannot be controlled by an individual, such as the Pell grant removal mentioned earlier (Rose 2004). However, while this did impact participation, it did not account for the entirety of the decrease in program involvement (Rose 2004). At that time, and at present, multiple structural changes have been shown to influence program participation, such as changes in administration or funding, and changes in program integrity (Duwe and Clark 2015; Rose 2004). In addition to structural changes, individual level factors, such as motivations and individual characteristics, can also impact program involvement (Rose 2004). Past research has found self labeling to be one important factor related to help seeking behavior (Johnson and LaPlante 2023; Spohn et al. 2017). Self identity is one individual level characteristic that may be impacting the decision to participate in carceral programming.

Self Perception and Identity Labeling

Identity is a complicated concept, and the layers added to incarcerated women make it even more difficult. Self-identity is the way an individual labels themselves, made up of the labels they choose to internalize (Barreto and Ellemers 2003). While this is an individual process, both external and internal factors can influence self-identity (Barreto and Ellemers 2003). In some cases, external views can be internalized into new identities in order to better fit with society (Barreto and Ellemers 2003). Women within correctional facilities have many potential identities to consider, along with the societal view on those identities, and the potential stigma that may come with them. The way society treats those of certain identities, and the way others view them can influence the internalization of certain labels. Views on certain identities can be especially stark within correctional facilities, this can lead women to resist the internalization of identities that have been stigmatized by society and by fellow incarcerated women. This section highlights various ways in which the victim identity has been stigmatized, and how women have come to avoid it as a result.

Across many crime types, there exists a victim-offender overlap, those who are a part of the justice system as both a victim, and a perpetrator (Baxter 2020; Berg and Schreck 2022; Henderson and Rhodes 2022; Mancini and Pickett 2017). In a 2020 survey of incarcerated women, 30% of respondents reported being incarcerated for trying to prevent violence against them, and 69% linked their incarceration to prior trauma (Goodmark 2023). As this statistic shows, women are likely to enter the criminal justice system as both an offender and a victim. This overlap also shows up frequently within human trafficking crimes (Baxter 2020; Henderson and Rhodes 2022). After being involuntarily involved in trafficking, girls and women can be forced into active involvement by selling sexual activities, or coercing others into the same

illegal business (Baxter 2020; Henderson and Rhodes 2022). While they may have begun as victims of kidnapping, these girls can also feel like offenders of the crimes they are forced to commit. This type of victimization reflects a term coined by Leigh Goodmark (2023), the criminalized survivor. According to Goodmark (2023) this is a woman, transgender, or gender non-conforming (TGNC) person who has become involved in the criminal justice system in direct response to their own gender-based victimization. Women and TNGC people have long been the prime targets of gender-based victimization such as rape, sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and trafficking. Criminalized survivors are especially at risk of victim-blaming attitudes, as they can be seen as willing participants, or deserving of punishment (Mancini and Pickett 2017).

Dual Identity: victim vs. offender

For criminalized survivors, they must grapple with their identity as both a victim of crime, and as the perpetrator of one. As Beth Richie (1996) explains through her research of incarcerated women, many paths can lead to punitive involvement in the criminal justice system. Battered have been women forced to kill their abusers, while others have been coerced into crime by those abusive partners. Whatever the reason for ending up incarcerated, many women must face both their crimes, and the victimization that led to them. The line between victim and offender is often not a simple one, while some women acknowledge their victimization and not the crime, others only face the crime and not their victimization (Richie 1996; Duncan and DeHart 2019; Goodmark 2023). During interviews conducted by Bay-Cheng (2019), respondents were sure to deny any victimization, one even saying she did not want to be “painted out like a victim or…an attention whore”. This response comes after explaining her own shortcomings as the reason for sexual coercion (Bay-Cheng 2019). This reluctance to admit to victimization

reflects society's trends in response to feminism. While feminism exists to empower women, the ideals of post feminism have exacerbated negative views of victim labels.

Postfeminism and Neoliberalism

While men are thought to be able to pull themselves up by their bootstraps, feminism has led to similar thinking for women, much to their detriment in some cases. Increasingly, women are thought to have moved past gendered-constraints and disadvantages, and therefore have become capable of much more than in the past. Postfeminism is a culture of female autonomy and self-improvement; it does not, however, raise questions surrounding structural gender inequity and disadvantage (Baker 2010; Burkett and Hamilton 2012). This culture rose under the ideals of neoliberalism, a model that values self-regulating markets, and thus the self interest and competition that comes with (Ganti 2014). One of the central structures of postfeminism and neoliberalism is individualism, which posits that all individuals are autonomous and capable of choice (Baker 2010). These individuals are thought to act in a way which furthers their own self interest, they are responsible for their own forward motion, regardless of their circumstances (Baker 2010). This individualism praised by postfeminism plays its own part in stigmatizing victimhood and vulnerability. The combination of feminism, which puts women on equal footing with men, and individualism, which claims that women are autonomous beings, creates an environment that does not have room for the concept of victimization (Baker 2010; Burkett and Hamilton 2012).

Because women are taught that the world is equal, and that they are individuals, they are unlikely to blame structural factors for any negative events, and therefore unlikely to label themselves as victims (Baker 2010; Bay-Cheng 2019; Burkett and Hamilton 2012; Rutter and Barr 2021). Many women have begun to associate the label of victim with a lack of control,

autonomy, and personal responsibility, being a victim is a failure to be an individual (Baker 2010; Rutter and Barr 2021). Feminism tells women they can be anything and do anything. To meet the expectations those structures set, women must also be able to overcome anything all on their own (Baker 2010). This individualized response to experiences mirrors the prominent responsibilization rhetoric also made popular by neoliberal ideals (Ellis 2023; Rutter and Barr 2021). Responsibilization puts the weight of punishment and rehabilitation solely on an individual's shoulders, rather than on structural or societal institutions. This rhetoric calls on an individual to transform themselves, rather than getting help from others (Ellis 2023). Responsibilization is yet another force pulling people away from the victim label, as that label implies a need or desire for outside help. This world has taught women that they can either be an individual or a victim, and victim is not a label that any woman is taught to accept.

Agents vs. Victims

The duality of agency and victimization brought about by postfeminist and neoliberal ideals of individualism comes with the duality of agents vs victims (Bay-Cheng 2019; Cunniff Gilson 2016; Taylor, Wood, and Lichtman 1983). Victimization has become an all or nothing status. Either a woman is an agent, in control of herself and her decisions, or she is a victim, too weak to control her own life (Bay-Cheng 2019; Cunniff Gilson 2016). The label of victim is seen as fundamentally negative, denoting someone who is weak and powerless (Cunniff Gilson 2016; Johnson and LaPlante 2023). Past research has found that women are likely to downplay any events that may reduce their narrative agency, instead choosing to cover up instances of exploitation and victimization (Bay-Cheng 2019; Cunniff Gilson 2016). The victim status has been heavily stigmatized in society, leading to these attempts to distance oneself from it (Bay-Cheng 2019). Any form of vulnerability is step further from the label of agent.

Vulnerability has become tightly linked to the label of victim. Those who are perceived as vulnerable, are thought of as unable to change their own circumstances, and therefore are incapable of exercising agency (Cunniff Gilson 2016). While victim labels have become stigmatized and less accepted by victims of crime, there are also impacts of choosing not to label oneself after a victimizing event.

Theoretical framework

Due to the shifting ideals of society, the meaning of victim labels has changed. Women have become more reluctant to associate with terms that distance themselves from the idea of a feminist woman, or an agent in their own lives. This more common denial of victimization could be related to the low carceral program participation noted earlier. Past research has noted the importance of labeling to help-seeking behaviors, and designed the framework that begins to explain the relationship (Liang et al. 2005).

Problem Definition and Help Seeking

Liang and colleagues (2005) designed a non-linear framework relating labeling of IPV and help seeking behaviors. The first phase in this framework is the problem definition stage, followed by the choice to engage in help seeking, and selecting a help seeking source (Liang et al. 2005). While the framework is non-linear, both Liang, and subsequent research, note problem definition as the initial step (Johnson and LaPlante 2023; Liang et al. 2005). They explain that in order to address a problem, one must first acknowledge that there is one. Liang (2005) explains that the way someone perceives and defines their situation influences the ways they will seek help. One who does not define an event as victimizing will be less likely to seek help in response. While Liang's study focuses primarily on problem definition itself, multiple studies have found self-labeling to be an important part of acknowledging and defining the problem

(Boyle and Rogers 2020; Jaffe et al. 2021; Littleton et al. 2017). These studies found relationships between problem definition and outcomes involving mental health, self-blame, and maintaining a relationship with the perpetrator of sexual abuse (Boyle and Rogers 2020; Jaffe et al. 2021; Littleton et al. 2017).

A few studies have also related problem definition and help seeking directly. A study conducted by Johnson and LaPlante (2023), as well as one conducted by Spohn and colleagues (2017) have found that labeling can have large impacts on reporting and help-seeking. Johnson and LaPlante (2023) found that women who accepted the survivor label were two times as likely to speak with police following a gendered-violence event as those who did not label the event. Both studies also found a link between experience labels and help-seeking (Johnson and LaPlante 2023; Spohn et al. 2017). Spohn and colleagues (2017), found that women were more likely to speak to police after labeling their experience as rape. As noted earlier, a number of incarcerated women do not engage in help seeking behaviors, as these studies show the importance of self labeling on help seeking, it is possible that these women's perceptions of identity are acting as barriers.

Chapter 3: Current Study

Within prison settings, already stigmatized victim identities can become blurred with criminal and offender identities. Prior research has found a link between self labels and help seeking, but has not yet examined this relationship within correctional facilities (Johnson and LaPlante 2023; Spohn et al. 2017). Due to the added layers of identity and stigma weighing on incarcerated women, they may experience different relationships with their identities, and therefore different relationships with help-seeking than seen in the general population. Determining these relationships could be an important step in strengthening programs, and increasing participation. This study seeks to fill this gap by answering the question: How do incarcerated women's perceptions of victimization impact program participation and effectiveness? Using a combination of survey and interview data, this study hopes to identify and understand the complex relationship incarcerated women may have with their past victimization experiences, and the possible impact this has on their help-seeking behavior. With this qualitative approach, this study will look at women's own perceptions of their victimization, and of their program success. By separating participants into stratified groups based on their chosen identity; victim, survivor, offender, or no label, this study will be able to analyze larger themes and patterns in the differences between self-perception and program markers.

Chapter 4: Methods

Sample

The proposed study will involve interviews with a group of currently incarcerated women. This study will take place in Maryland, and as such will create its sample from the single women's institution in the state, the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women (MCIW) in Jessup. The MCIW houses inmates of minimum, medium, and maximum security levels. According to the Vera institute, in Maryland in 2020, for every 100,000 residents, there is an women's incarceration rate of 79 Native Americans, 37 African Americans, 25 White, 4 Latinx, and 1 Asian/Pacific Islander (Vera 2023).

As this study will focus on program participation and effectiveness, it is crucial that the chosen location offers a variety of programming available to the inmates. This makes MCIW an effective sample location. This facility offers multiple educational programs such as the Goucher Prison Education Partnership, which allows incarcerated women to take classes with college faculty (Goucher College n.d.). This program gives women access to academic advising and tutoring, and upon completion, a Goucher bachelor's degree in American studies. The MCIW also offers religious programming like the Christian Mentoring and Transition program. This program pairs incarcerated women with Christian mentors to both facilitate their religious healing, and help them find resources to assist with their rehabilitation and transition out of prison (CMAT Program n.d.). Finally, women at the MCIW are eligible to participate in the Maryland Correctional Enterprises program. This statewide program provides vocational and interpersonal skills training to incarcerated individuals (MCE n.d.). Within the MCIW, women are able to learn skills such as sewing, graphic design, mailing service procedures, and more (PrisonPro n.d.).

All currently incarcerated women with a history of victimization will be eligible to participate in this study. The sample selection will not make any distinction between program types, as the study hopes to get a sense of overall program participation numbers, and women's feelings on any programs they have participated in. Participants do not have to be current members of any programming to participate, as reasoning for non-participation, past participation, or non-completion will also provide valuable data. This study will attempt to recruit participants of all security levels to account for variability in program eligibility and availability.

Past studies have found that a majority of incarcerated women have a history of some form of past victimization (DeHart et al. 2014; Goodmark 2023; Green et al. 2005). Many incarcerated women report a past history of sexual violence, with studies finding that anywhere from 50 to 95 percent of incarcerated women have experienced some form of sexual violence (DeHart et al. 2014; Goodmark 2023). Women have also reported histories of childhood trauma and partner abuse (DeHart et al. 2014; Green et al. 2005). Studies have also found rates of non-sexual and non-familial victimization including gang violence, stranger and acquaintance attacks, and witnessing violence (DeHart et al. 2014). Based on these rates of victimization, a sample of women at the Maryland correctional facility for women should encompass a variety of past victimization experiences.

A sample of currently incarcerated women was chosen as this study hopes to gain in depth knowledge on correctional facility programming as well as self perceptions of victimization. While incarcerated, women will have the best and most current knowledge on their programming experiences. As this study is based on perceptions, it will be most accurate to ask women their own thoughts about programming, rather than waiting for release. The basis of

this study is to ask women how they think they are doing in their programs, and how much they think they are gaining. Perceptions of success and statistical markers of success may not align. To gain an understanding of perceptions of effectiveness, interviews should be conducted before women graduate or complete their programs. Although a population of currently incarcerated women will be difficult to access, due to the long and challenging process of gaining access to correctional facilities, they have the potential to provide the most detailed and thorough responses. The study will plan for an extended timeline to account for the bureaucratic processes that must be completed before working with those under state supervision, as well as an acclimation period to ease comfort with both correctional staff and the facility's population.

Sample Selection

As this study seeks to find the relationship between perceptions of victimization and program participation and effectiveness, the selection of this sample will begin with a brief voluntary victimization survey. This survey will be conducted to gain a baseline knowledge of victimization within the correctional facility. The MCIW houses approximately 875 women, the survey will be open to every inmate currently housed in the facility. Once the survey has been completed, a stratified sampling method will be used to divide the sample for interviews. Surveys will first be stratified into two groups: those who chose an identity label, and those who responded with 'no label'. From there, the label group will be further stratified into 3 identity groups: victim, survivor, and offender. At the end of the sampling process, there will be 4 interview groups, this will allow comparison between those who do not label their victimization, and those who do. Each group will consist of 12 participants, meaning the total sample size of this study will be 48 participants.

This number was chosen to reflect past research findings of thematic saturation and qualitative methodology. Past studies have found that interview response saturation can be found in as few as 6-12 interviews (Guest, Bunce, and Johnson 2006; Hennink and Kaiser 2022). A study conducted by Guest and colleagues (2006) found that the majority of new codes are found in the first 6 interviews. Sample size is also dependent on the research question and population. A broader question requires a larger sample size, whereas a narrow question can be answered by fewer responses (Malterud, Siersma, and Guassora 2016). Due to the narrow scope of this study, a smaller sample size would be able to account for the majority of themes. This study also targets a relatively specified target group, with the only studied difference being their identity response. A study using a dense population like incarcerated women and seeking to question a specific trait is able to amass a smaller sample size as well (Malterud et al. 2016).

Both gaining access to, and gaining the trust of correctional institutions is a difficult and long process. To ease this process, and ensure the comfort of potential respondents, I intend to spend time within the facility prior to the start of this study. This time before the study will allow me to gain trust within the institution. Without trust, it is unlikely women would be willing to participate in the research or answer honestly. I will ensure respondents' comfort by spending time with them before asking questions. This time will also allow me to get my own sense of the MCIW through my own observation. I intend to observe daily functions, program schedule, and program functioning through observation. Being a constant presence in the prison will build trust, and thus lead to a larger sample size and honest answers.

Past research has made use of similar practices when entering correctional facilities. Rachel Ellis notes the importance of being a presence in the facility and spending time with the women prior to asking questions (Ellis 2023). She explains that because the women were aware

of her purpose in the facility, and were able to get to know her, consent became ongoing, and women were more interested in and accepting of her work (Ellis 2023). Some women began to ask questions about her study, or bring attention to things Ellis may have missed otherwise (Ellis 2023). Allowing time and space for the women to become comfortable with her allowed Ellis to conduct more in depth and effective research, without this step, many women would have been less willing to participate.

Prior to the start of the study, I will explain my intentions of handing out surveys. This announcement will be given multiple times in gathering areas such as during meal times and in recreation spaces. The survey will then be handed out by correctional officers at the time of evening count, when women will be going to their cells for the night. Surveys would be collected the next morning at wake-up call. By handing the surveys out before bed, inmates are granted as much privacy as possible while responding. Other than a potential roommate, no other women will know their responses, or know if they are filling out the paper. Each woman will be able to decide whether they want to answer the survey or not, without peer pressure of those nearby. If a woman doesn't want to respond, they can return the survey completely blank. The sheets will be collected first thing in the morning to prevent violations of privacy. All surveys will be collected and stored so that no other inmates know who filled out the survey, or what their answers were. The final question on the survey will ask about willingness to participate in the interview portion, once again allowing privacy and anonymity during the choice. I will be the only one to know how each person answered. When it is time for the interview, each woman would be asked to join me during periods of downtime or recreation, when their absence will not be noticed.

Methods

As mentioned previously, this study will be conducted in two phases, the victimization survey, and the semi-structured interviews. The first phase will be a short victimization survey adapted using questions from Coleman (1997) and Shepard and Campbell (1992). This will be kept as brief as possible because it will mainly create a baseline of victimization history, and responses can be elaborated on during the interviews. The survey will cover multiple forms of victimization, and will have no specific timeframe. Before beginning the survey, participants will complete informed consent forms to ensure complete understanding of the study. The first question of the survey will ask respondents to label their past experiences from a multiple choice question of the following labels: survivor, victim, offender, or none. Respondents will be asked to select the option they most identify with. This question will be placed first to prevent subsequent questions from influencing respondents' answers. After this question, there will be a series of demographic questions including, age, race, ethnicity, and the time they have been incarcerated. The last portion of the surveys will ask about prior victimization, including a series of yes or no questions about threats, physical violence, sexual violence, and stalking. The surveys will then be coded prior to the start of the second phase. Answers to the first question will be used to divide respondents into four groups for the interview phase, ensuring the sample encompasses women with each view of their identity. Victimization questions will also be analyzed as a comparison to the self-perceived identity question. Discrepancies will be noted and used for further comparison after the interview phase.

Once the surveys have been fully coded, the study will begin the interview phase. Any participant is welcome to refuse the interview, even after completion of the survey. For those who consent, they will participate in the interview phase of the study.

Interview Structure

These interviews will be semi-structured and conducted in a one-on-one environment. To ensure confidentiality, prison staff would remain outside of the room during the duration of the interview. However, if the participant is uncomfortable being alone with the interviewer, and they consent to it, a member of the staff can remain in the room. Participants may also choose to skip a question at any point during the interview. The interviews will focus on three main topics: self-perceptions of victimization, program participation, and program effectiveness. While questions will be pre set, there will be ample time for open discussion should the participant have further opinions.

To begin the interview, participants will complete informed consent forms, and be made aware of their rights as respondents. To ensure confidentiality, all personal identifying information will be removed from responses during the coding process. Participants will be made aware that while their surveys are connected to their interviews, neither will be connected to them upon completion. They will also be informed that interviews will be recorded for transcription and analysis purposes. Recordings will be deleted after transcription, and all personal identifying information will be obscured in transcriptions. If a participant chooses to withdraw from the study, their survey will be deleted. Every participant will be given the option to withdraw consent at any time throughout the interview, and may choose to decline to answer any question.

Once this process is completed, the semi-structured interviews will begin. As these interviews will have some formal structure, there will be a set list of questions, although every question will likely not be asked, and some additional questions may arise upon hearing participants' responses. The first topic of the interviews will be focused on program participation.

Respondents will be asked if they are currently enrolled in, or have ever been enrolled in a facility program, and if so will then be asked details on the program. Participants will also be asked to specify their participation, including how long they have been enrolled, and how often they attend program meetings. These questions will be used to gauge program dedication. For this study, all types of programs count equally, any recreational, therapeutic, religious, or vocational programs will count as participation. All reasons for participation will also count, whether court mandated or voluntary. If participation was voluntary, respondents will then be asked on their reasons for participation, or non-participation in programming. If participation was not voluntary, further questions will be weighted more towards effectiveness rather than participation. Any further conversation involving program participation will be participant led.

The second main topic of these interviews will be focused on program effectiveness. Objective markers of effectiveness are difficult to obtain, and as such, this study will focus on self-perceptions of effectiveness. This section of the interviews will seek to determine participants' feelings on their program experiences. This will include questions on their perceived success, and the perceived usefulness of the programs they are in. Participants will be asked if they feel participation in programs will help them upon release from the correctional facility, and how. This will likely be the most unstructured portion of the interview due to the variety of program types, and as such, the vast difference in definitions of success. This portion of the interviews will seek to understand what women feel they are getting from their programs, if they view them as helpful in the long run or not. This will be especially poignant when comparing voluntary and non-voluntary participation.

The final topic of the interviews will be about participants' perceptions of their own victimization. The purpose of this section is to elaborate on the responses of the survey.

Participants will have the opportunity to explain their choice in identity marker. For ease of grouping, the survey will use a multiple choice to identify respondents' top label. During the interview, respondents will be asked if they identify with any other labels, either that they didn't choose in the survey, or weren't offered as choices. This portion of the interviews will allow participants to define their identities in their own words, and explain why they identify how they do. To end this portion of the interview, respondents will be asked from their perspective, how their history of victimization and their chosen self-label may be impacting their experience with programming. This will give a final opportunity for respondents to reflect on their experiences and determine how their history may be an influence. After one final question to ask about anything the interview may have missed, the interview phase of the study will conclude.

Analytic Strategy

As this study will employ qualitative research methods, the most effective analytic strategy will be the use of deductive and inductive coding techniques (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006; Williams and Moser 2019). Prior to the interviews, initial codes will be synthesized based on the main questions of the study. These codes will relate to positive and negative experiences with programming as well as differences in self-labeling. The goal is to note any broad differences or similarities amongst and between the sample groups. Upon completion of the interviews, audio recordings will be transcribed verbatim. These transcripts will first be used to match significant quotes to the existing codes. Once this process is completed, remaining quotes and patterns will be organized using inductive coding. This will help draw attention to any significant themes that had not been accounted for prior to the interview process (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006; Williams and Moser 2019). Using this combination of deductive and inductive coding should allow for the greatest capture of relevant themes. The initial deductive coding will ensure that the central questions of the study are

focused on, while the inductive coding can bring attention to any questions or patterns that hadn't been thought of at the start of the process.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Potential Findings and Implications

This study proposes research to fill the gap of identity and help-seeking behaviors within correctional facilities. While past research has found a link between self identity and help-seeking, this study seeks to expand those findings into correctional facilities, where labels of identity can become more complex. To answer this question, this study proposes mixed-method research in order to find the relationship between how incarcerated women identify themselves, and how they choose to make use of help-seeking opportunities within their correctional facility, defined in this study by programming groups. Based on prior research, it is expected that those who identify with some form of victim identity (i.e. victim or survivor) would be more likely to participate in, and find use in programming, or help-seeking. However, due to the complicated nature of identity within correctional facilities, there may be unexpected outcomes of this study.

If this study follows a similar path of prior research, the women who identify with a victim label, and in particular, the survivor label, would participate in programming the most often, and perceive the most effectiveness of it. Research conducted by Johnson and LaPlante (2023) and Spohn and colleagues (2017) found that when women identified themselves after a victimizing event, they were more likely to engage in help-seeking behaviors such as talking with police or victim services. Those who did not perceive themselves as victims also did not perceive a need for services intended to aid victims of crime (Duncan and DeHart 2019). Research findings similar to these would imply that incarcerated women have similar perceptions on their own identities. While incarcerated, those who identify as someone who has been

victimized would still see the most benefit in help-seeking services, whereas those who identify as an offender would find the least potential in help-seeking.

While it is possible that incarcerated women share the same perceptions of identity, it is also possible that their relationship with identity is more complex than the participants in past research, and their help-seeking behaviors may reflect this complexity. As the target population of this proposed study is incarcerated women, along with victim identities, they also have to contemplate offender identities. Many of the women in the study will likely be facing implications of the victim-offender overlap, meaning they could see themselves as a victim, offender, neither, or both. Women will be grappling with multiple stigmatized identities that could potentially be even more stigmatized within correctional facilities. In society today, the victim identity is associated with weakness and vulnerability, two things that can be dangerous to show within prison settings. Past research has noted that crying and showing other negative emotions is looked down upon and seen as a weakness to be manipulated (Greer 2011). When considering the prison setting, it is possible that a victim identity is potentially dangerous to identify with. This could change the way incarcerated women view their victimization, and thus influence their help-seeking behaviors. With this notion, it is important to consider the ways in which correctional facilities could further complicate self perceptions of identity, and possibly disrupt the relationship seen in past identity and help-seeking research.

One potential result is that within correctional facilities, victim identities have a different relationship to help-seeking. Whereas in the general population, victim identities correlate to increase help-seeking behaviors, a study of incarcerated women may find a reversal or complication of this relationship (Johnson and LaPlante 2023; Spohn et al. 2017). If the results of this study show that participants who responded as victims or survivors are no more likely, or

less likely to participate in programming, then it would show that victim identities do not facilitate help-seeking within correctional facilities. If those with a victim identity are not the most likely to participate in programming, that would also mean another group is. In this case, either those who identify as perpetrators, or those who do not self identify are the most likely to participate in programming. If this study was to find that those with offender identities are the most likely to participate in programming, it would oppose the findings of those past studies.

Lastly, it is possible that the relationship between program participation and effectiveness is less clear. The results could find that those who participate more don't find them more effective, or that those who participate less find them more effective. This has implications for who is finding use in programming. It might be the case that those with victim identities participate more often, which would be in line with past research, however, they may find programming less effective (Johnson and LaPlante 2023; Spohn et al. 2017). If the results show these findings, it may be related to the target population of available programming. As incarcerated women are considered offenders first, programming may be designed to work with women of that identity. Women who either don't identify with an offender identity, or identify with a victim identity more may have more trouble relating to the material, or learning from certain programs. In this situation, those who are most often participating are gaining the least from participation, and would imply the need to reframe programming so that those involved are benefiting.

Depending on the results of this study, programming can be designed to further help those who participate, encourage others to participate at all, and help women overcome the barrier of their perception. If those who identify as offenders are participating in programming less, and similarly to past research it is because they see no need to participate, initiatives can be

taken to prove their necessity. Programming can be specified to target the populations that are currently the least represented in them (Collica-Cox and Furst 2019). The same is true if the results show that those with victim identities participate the least. Pre-program initiatives can target that population and get more of those women involved. If the results show that participation and effectiveness don't align, that can be adjusted as well. Programming could be reformed to be more effective for those already participating who find them less effective (Duwe and Clark 2015; Pederson et al. 2022; Wright et al. 2012). If it is also the case that the least likely to participate find the most use from programming, developers would know to encourage more participation from that population, as it is likely to be useful for them.

This study also has implications for the prison environment. Women are unlikely to identify with a label that is highly stigmatized or even dangerous for them. Within the prison setting, weakness associated with victim identities can be potentially harmful, and so many women may avoid that label (Greer 2002). However, if these identities are associated with beneficial programming, it is necessary to destigmatize them. Allowing women to freely associate with identities correlated to help-seeking would improve program participation rates, and potentially their effectiveness as well. Initiatives to destigmatize labels within correctional facilities could benefit currently incarcerated women. If the results of this study show that any label increases the likelihood of help-seeking, then it is necessary for women to feel comfortable identifying with it.

The question of identity impacting behavior is thus far a limited field of study. The research becomes even more limited when applying it to marginalized populations. Incarcerated women face high levels of victimization, and their response to it could be impacting their future behavior (Goodmark 2023). Programming has advanced in many states, and is designed to give

women the best chance possible upon release. These programs, however, can only work if women are participating in them, and finding them effective. Self-perception may be acting as a barrier to this important opportunity. The implications of this study may inform the adjustment of programming, and could help program developers work to target this barrier to participation. The results would determine who is getting the most from programming, who is being left behind, and what area needs to be targeted to fix this problem.

Limitations and Future Directions

One limitation of this study is the narrow lens of the population. This study proposes a mixed-methods, mainly qualitative analysis of one women's correctional facility. While this study does open the door for this topic of discussion, more research can and should be done to broaden the results. Both further qualitative studies of other state facilities, and quantitative analysis of larger samples would expand the conversation, and add to the body of research. When thinking about widening the scope, this could also mean widening the population. Victimization is not discussed as thoroughly within men's correctional facilities. Applying this research to men may show different patterns. The same is true for juvenile facilities. Many women were victimized from a young age, and this could play a role in their juvenile facility experiences (DeHart et al. 2014; Green et al. 2005; Goodmark 2023; Richie 1996). Understanding how perception influences help-seeking could be extremely important in juvenile settings. If we knew how to better help those who are adjudicated as juveniles, it could prevent incarceration as adults.

Another limitation of this research is the lack of a group with no history of victimization. For the purposes of this study, the question revolved around women's relationship with their victimization, whether they chose to label it or not. However, there is a population in women's

facilities that do not have a history of victimization.Women who are not victimized still choose how to identify, and that may also have an impact on programming participation. This population could be centered in future research to study the self-perceptions of non-victimized incarcerated women, and how their identity can also impact program participation and effectiveness. The results of that potential future study could also be analyzed with this study to determine similarities and differences between those who do and do not have a history of victimization.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Carceral programming has the potential to positively impact incarcerated women and influence their post-release experience, but there are still barriers preventing women from making use of them (Collica-Cox and Furst 2019; Duwe and Clark 2015; Pederson et al. 2022; Rose 2004). Self-identity perception is one of those barriers, and this study wanted to understand how it may be impacting women. For incarcerated women, there are many identities they may be struggling with, identities responding to past victimization being one of them, along with identities related directly to their incarceration. Any of these identities may positively or negatively impact the likelihood of participating in programming and of finding use in it.

In order to design the most effective programming, it is necessary to understand who is not benefiting, and why. Understanding the barrier of self-perception allows for the creation of better programming, and better program experiences for all incarcerated women. This area of research is still understudied. In the future, more research can be done to expand on the potential findings of this study, as well as to find other potential barriers to program participation. By expanding this field of research, programming can be designed to be as effective as possible and assist the most women it can.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Sample Victimization Survey

1. Of the following labels, how would you most identify?
    a. Survivor
    b. Victim
    c. Offender
    d. None
    e. other/prefer not to say
2. Has a family member or intimate partner ever (circle all that apply):
    a. Threatened to harm you
    b. Physically harmed you
    c. Pressured you to have sex in a way you didn't like or want
    d. Threatened you with a knife, gun, or other weapon
    e. Physically forced you to have sex
    f. Used a knife, gun, or other weapon against you
    g. Said things to scare or threaten you
2. With the intention to cause fear, has a partner or past partner (circle all that apply):
    a. Followed you
    b. Watched you
    c. Called you at home or at work
    d. Came to your school or workplace
    e. Sent unwanted photos, letters, or gifts

f. Threatened to harm a new partner

g. Harmed a new partner

Appendix B: Sample Interview Questions

1. Are you currently enrolled in any programs? Or have you been enrolled in any during the course of your incarceration?
2. If you have never participated in a program, why is that?
3. What type of program(s) are you or have you been involved in? Can you tell me about this program or programs?
    a. How often are meetings held?
    b. How often do you attend?
    c. What is the goal of this program? Is it educational, social, therapeutic etc…
    d. Anything else you would like me to know about your program
4. Why did you choose to participate in this program? And what were you hoping to achieve through your participation?
5. Would you consider your program involvement a positive or a negative experience overall?
6. Has the program been helpful? In what ways? Or if not, why not?
7. Do you feel that the program effectively addressed your reasons for participating? Did you achieve what you were hoping to through this program?
8. Do you feel more prepared for your release date and beyond because of this program? In what ways? Is there anything you feel is missing that may have prepared you further?
9. What skills or lessons have you learned through participation in your program?

10. From your perspective, how has your history of victimization impacted your experience with programming?
11. Recall how you responded to the self-identity question on your survey, how do you think this perception has impacted your experience with programming?
12. Thinking about that self-identity, why do you believe it to be the best or most comfortable label for you? How would you define this label?
    a. Are there any labels either mentioned in the survey or not that you would also identify with?
13. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experience with programming or your self identity that we haven't discussed yet?