

Qualitative methods have the ability to reveal women's agency. For instance, Susan Batchelor (2005) conducted in-depth oral-history interviews with 21 young women convicted of violent offenses. The women spoke of constraints on their agency such as being mistreated by friends or family (Batchelor, 2005, p. 366). However, what emerges from the interviews are the examples of agentic women who are empowered, in charge of their lives, in control of their fate, and deserving of respect. One woman says, "You can't rely on other people. You've only got [yourself] (2005, p. 369)." Another young woman explains the importance of being seen as powerful and in charge, stating that "If you let people walk all over you, people will and people do...If you hit them back, then they usually stop (2005, p. 369)." Batchelor recommends that positive change in women's lives may be optimized when correctional practitioners maximize women's agency by increasing their involvement in programming so they feel that they are valued and respected partners in their own treatment.

Qualitative methodologies are appropriately suited to exploring women's strategies for coping with transportation deprivation and the agency they exercise. For example, the research may reveal that women use effective strategies for making transportation arrangements, despite not having access to automobiles or money to pay for public transit.

Purposes, Goals & Objectives

The broad purpose of this study – to explore transportation deprivation in a sample of women offenders – grew out of work being performed as a research assistant on a three-wave NSF-funded study of 402 women on probation and parole (referred to as the *NSF Women Offenders Study* hereafter). Arranging face-to-face interviews for women in this study provided early indications that transportation access was a problem for these women. The initial research plan involved scheduling interviews to coincide with women's parole/probation reporting days;

the assumption being that these would be the best days for women because they would already have made transportation arrangements to get to parole or probation offices and presumably had openings in their schedules. However, it became apparent that even getting to agents' offices was challenging for women. Several women reported that their rides would not wait the two hours needed to complete the interview. One agent in a rural area required that her financially-stressed clients, who lacked transportation, receive vouchers for the on-call bus service to avoid additional hardship in getting to the interview. These experiences led to scheduling interviews near women's homes or offering transportation funds to decrease no-shows and increase the participation rate.

Other interactions with supervision agents (parole or probation officers) revealed that many may be unaware of the transportation problems facing women and, as a result, could be penalizing women for transportation deficits. For example, preliminary data analysis conducted on a partial data set before the dissertation research began, suggested that agents' lack of awareness may be problematic for women. One woman in the study was required to attend AA meetings but, at the time, did not have car insurance and her probation agent simply advised her to, "Go to find a way." Without help or understanding from the supervision agent, they women knew that she must attend AA and that the penalty for failure would likely be a supervision violation. Another woman in the study explained that, "it's discouraging when [agents] tell you, 'You have to get there regardless, or you're gonna to end up back in prison.'"

A corrections practitioner who develops programs and policies for corrections agencies explained that, in response to callous responses of agents, she recently "conducted a client sensitivity training that required staff to travel using public transit to make appointments...and complete the day's schedule of a client. Staff persons reported errors in scheduling of the

buses...missing transfers and enduring long wait times” (Personal Correspondence with Lusanne Green, International Community Corrections Association). This comment indicates that probation and parole agents may be unaware of the issues women face with regards to transportation and suggests a transportation access assessment tool may assist them to address women’s needs. The lack of awareness and understanding about transportation deprivation may also result in the imposition of violations or other sanctions when women’s transportation arrangements are unreliable. Adequate training for agents and assessment of women’s transportation needs, however, may improve women’s transportation situations. As a result of this new knowledge, the key transportation-related predictors for the dissertation were developed and collected as part of the wave three interview.

The specific design and goals of the research project were developed. The research project was a mixed-methods study of transportation deprivation and its effects on recidivism using existing quantitative data for a sample of 402 women on probation and parole. The goals for the quantitative analysis of available wave three data were to **(1)** describe the extent and distribution of transportation access of women offenders, **(2)** examine the reliability of selected measures of transportation access and the feasibility of creating a composite access score, **(3)** show how well resources (e.g., family support, individual mobility) predict transportation access, **(4)** show whether transportation access moderates the association of criminogenic needs with recidivism, and **(5)** show the degree to which transportation access adds to the prediction of recidivism outcomes. The outcomes of interest were supervision violations, new arrests and convictions (i.e., rearrest and reconviction data), and transportation-related illegal activity (e.g., driving without a valid license).

The quantitative data allowed for identification of statistical associations involving

transportation resources and access, but were limited in their ability to explain the presence, or absence, of associations. For example, the available quantitative data did not explain why a woman without her own car and no alternative transportation (i.e., she had low resources) reports no difficulty getting to necessary appointments (i.e., she reported that she had high access).

Therefore, the research project also integrated qualitative follow-up interview data from a subsample of the women (n=75). The goal for the qualitative component of the research was to capture women's insights, experiences, and strategies regarding transportation resources and access and to show whether transportation deprivation contributed to failure to attend needed or required programs (e.g., substance abuse treatment). Specifically, the qualitative analysis increased understanding of (1) the types and intensity of transportation problems women experienced while under supervision, (2) their use of additional resources, not captured by quantitative measures, that increased their transportation access, (3) strategies women used to increase transportation access and whether these strategies brought women into conflict with the law (e.g., driving without a license or riding with a friend who has a felony conviction) and (4) the contribution of transportation problems to any violations or new offenses.

Findings of this research are expected to inform the development of a useful measure of transportation access that combines knowledge gained from both quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The project used a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design (Creswell, 2008; Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006). Consistent with this design, in **Phase I**, the quantitative data from the *NSF Women Offenders Study*, an available dataset, was analyzed first. This analysis addressed several research questions, raised several others, and provided the basis for selecting potential participants for the **Phase II** qualitative data collection. The responses provided by women interviewed in **Phase II** were analyzed to allow for interpretation of, explanation of, and additions to the quantitative results.

Phase I: Available Data and Sample Design for Quantitative Analysis

The sample for the quantitative data analysis included 402 drug-involved women on probation or parole who were convicted of a felony offense. The rationale was to study drug-involved women because they account for the most common subgroup of women offenders (Harer & Langan, 2001; Morash, 2010; Peters, Strozier, Murrin, & Kearns, 1997), and, as such represent the typical female offender. The sample was recruited beginning in fall 2011 by first selecting 16 counties located within a ninety-minute drive from the research office. These counties encompass 68.5 percent of the 2011 state population, all major population centers (e.g., Detroit, Grand Rapids), and a mix of rural and suburban areas.

In these 16 counties, 73 parole and probation agents were recruited. Michigan is innovative in that it is already taking strides to address the unique needs of women offenders by offering women-only supervision caseloads for agents. Of the 73 recruited, 71 were female and two were male. Parole agents were oversampled in relation to probation agents, to increase parolees to 25 percent of the total sample. Then, approximately eight clients were recruited from

each agent’s caseload. The plan was to interview women after two, five and eight months of supervision had passed. At the fifth month, 97% (390) were reinterviewed, and at the eighth month, 94.3% (379) were reinterviewed; these are remarkably high response rates for a social science sample. Although 379 women participated in the wave three interview, 12 of them were institutionalized (i.e., in jail, prison or inpatient substance abuse treatment) and one woman was too physically ill to leave her home. As a result, the sample for this study is restricted to the 366 women from wave three who could appropriately answer questions about transportation access. Table 1 shows the means for both the full sample (n =402) and the reduced sample (n=366). Independent sample t-tests examining differences between the means revealed there were no significant differences between the two samples.

Table 1. Risk Factors & Criminal History for Women on Probation & Parole

	<u>n = 402</u>	<u>n=366</u>
<i>Criminal History</i>		
Prior Felony Sentences	37.3%	36.6%
Prior Misdemeanor Sentences	60.2%	59.8%
<i>Risk Assessment Tool Items</i>		
Has Educational Needs	17.9%	17.8%
Lives in Unsafe Housing	9.2%	9.8%
Has Low Levels of Family Support	55.5%	55.5%
Has Low Parental Involvement	22.1% (n=208)	23.3% (n=189)
Experiences Parental Stress	32.7% (n=208)	33.3% (n=189)
Low Self Efficacy	29.9%	29.0%
Has Problems with Anger/Hostility	17.9%	18.6%
Has Experienced Depression/Anxiety, Ever	74.4%	73.5%
Has Experienced Psychosis, Ever	33.6%	33.1%
<i>Overall WRNA Score</i>		
	mean = 19.9	mean = 19.8
Low Risk (0-12 pts)	21.9%	23.0%
Medium Risk (13-24 pts)	48.8%	47.8%
High Risk (25 + pts)	29.4%	29.2%

Women in the *NSF Women Offenders Study* have extensive criminal histories and exhibit a constellation of needs (See Table 1). Indicating risk for recidivism, for the reduced sample at wave one, more than a third of the sample (36.6%) reported they were sentenced for a felony

conviction besides the one for which they were currently on probation or parole and 59.8% of the sample had been sentenced for misdemeanor crimes. The gender-specific needs assessment tool, Women's Risk/Needs Assessment: Probation/Parole Interview (Van Voorhis et al., 2008), administered in wave one indicates that sizeable proportions of women should receive assistance in the areas of education (17.8%), housing safety (9.8%), family support (55.5%), parenting skills (23.3%), self efficacy (29.0%), anger/hostility (18.6%), depression and anxiety (73.5%), and clinical psychosis (33.1%). Prior research shows that these needs predict recidivism (Hardyman & Van Voorhis, 2004; Salisbury et al., 2009; Van Voorhis et al., 2008). The risk instrument also indicates women's overall level of need. A substantial portion of women are high risk (23.0%) and the mean score (19.8) indicates that a considerable number of women are very close to the cut-off value for being high risk (25).

Addressing and treating criminogenic needs often requires that women travel to receive treatment or services. Yet, the majority of the women earn less than \$10,000 per year (80.9%). An income of \$10,000 per year breaks down to \$192 per week. Experts predict expenditures in excess of 15-20% of one's income present financial hardship (Litman, 2011). This translates to \$28.80 - \$38 per week which may cover gas or bus fare but is unlikely to pay for car insurance, vehicle registration, a driver's license, and car repairs. Thus, there was a reasonable expectation that women offenders lacked resources needed to get to and from treatment or services.

Quantitative measures. Figure 1 depicts the **Phase I** quantitative data used for the dissertation research. Those data contained quantitative measures of (1) individual, family/friends, and community levels of resources for getting from place to place, (2) transportation access, (3) supervision agents' reports and official records of compliance with supervision requirements and of rearrests and reconvictions, and (4) criminogenic needs known

to predict women's recidivism. Measures of transportation resources and access were added to the third wave of the study specifically for the dissertation and the criminogenic needs and recidivism measures were already available in the *NSF Women Offenders Study*. The hypothesized relationships between these measures, and examples of each measure, are illustrated in Figure 1. It is hypothesized that transportation resources influence women's access to transportation. Transportation access is believed to impact recidivism events. And, the relationship between criminogenic needs and recidivism is hypothesized to be moderated by access to transportation such that the impact of criminogenic needs on recidivism may be attenuated, or amplified, by variation in access to transportation.

