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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WOMEN OFFENDERS
AND THEIR CHILDREN

By
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ABSTRACT

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Little research has focused on the relationship between women offenders and their children. This study will explore their relationship before, during and after incarceration. Specifically, the research will study the effects of the separation due to incarceration; the caregiving patterns which exist for the children; the process by which offender mothers and their children reunite; how the experience of being a mother is influenced by being in prison and on parole; and ways in which the criminal justice system can address issues relating to offender mothers and their children.

Fifty-five women parolees, randomly selected from all paroled offender mothers in Michigan, were interviewed for this study. In addition, 18 parole officers were interviewed and the parole records of the participants were examined. The amount of time on parole for the women interviewed ranged from 3 months to 23 months.

Eighty-five percent of the women lived with all or some of their children prior to incarceration. At the time of the interview, 83.6% of the women were living with at least some of their children. Although most of the children were

cared for by relatives during their mother's incarceration, 74% of the women said their children experienced some problems during and possibly due to their incarceration. Among the problems cited by the mothers were fighting, lower grades in school, anger, nightmares and emotional problems.

The relationship between offender mothers and their children were evolving relationships shaped, in part, by family history, kinship networks, temporary caregivers, physical presence, guilt, maturation and the experience of separation.

The women and their parole agents were in agreement that the parole process should not interfere in the family relationships of the women. These feelings were curiously in conflict with the realities of the situation. Specific problems faced by women parolees include: lack of money, need for employment, custody and the reactions of their children to their return.

This study demonstrated the need for parole and prison agencies to recognize the impact they have on offender mothers' lives and to develop programs/policies to better meet the needs of these women.

To my grandmother, Ursula McEvoy
who taught me to dream
And to my parents, Mary Lou and Jim Hunter
who taught me I could do
whatever I chose to do.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Women have traditionally comprised only three to four percent of the prison population in this country (Bowker, 1980). In addition, women's prisons have experienced less violence, litigation and activism than have their male counterparts. For these reasons, prison programs have historically been developed for male populations with only slight variations accepted for female offenders. In recent years, however, the courts, legislatures and citizens' groups have exerted increasing pressure on correctional agencies to determine whether they are meeting the needs of women offenders. In coordination with this effort, researchers have begun to ask if they have uncovered information helpful in designing programs to specifically meet the needs of female offenders.

The fact that women comprise a small proportion of the prison population has been used to justify not developing adequate programs in women's prisons (Holt, 1981/82). The cost of duplicating programs available to the larger numbers of male offenders for utilization by female offenders has been used as justification for not providing them. However, the courts have intervened to assure that women offenders receive parity. The court decision in *Canterino vs. Wilson* (Kentucky, 1982) states:

A desire to preserve the state's limited resources cannot be used to justify an allocation of those limited resources which unfairly denies women equal access to programs routinely available to men [546 Federal Supplement 174].

The fact that there are relatively few women offenders has been used not only to justify inadequate programming, but also to exempt corrections departments from addressing issues which primarily affect women offenders. A primary example of such an issue is the relationship between offender mothers and their children. Although children are probably more important to male offenders than is usually recognized, male offenders are much less likely than female offenders to be the primary (and usually single) care provider. Thus, offender mothers face some unique situations when they enter the criminal justice system. Women offenders must assure that their children are cared for during their incarceration (which can involve a residence change for the children) as well as deal with the myriad of circumstances surrounding their separation and ultimate reunion with their children. While some offender mothers do not face these situations because they were not the primary care provider before prison, the majority do face these very difficult problems.

Data from the U.S. Department of Labor estimates that 70 percent of the female inmates are mothers and that the average inmate mother has two dependent children. McGowan and Blumenthal (1978) estimate that on any given day there are approximately 21,000 children in this country whose mothers are incarcerated. This somewhat staggering figure is

just a prelude to what is a significant problem for many women offenders.

There are a variety of complex problems that arise for women when they are incarcerated. McCarthy (1980) discusses some of these difficulties. They include: temporary or permanent loss of custody; the need to explain the mother's absence to her children; maintenance of communication and contact with both children and their caregivers; limited visitation; the child's perception of the caregiver as "real" mother; pressure to resume parenting immediately after incarceration and perhaps before the women are ready; poor self-image due to not fulfilling one's perceived role. Sametz (1980) adds that visitation in impersonal surroundings and communication problems with foster parents are also problems which must be dealt with by the inmate mother. She also notes that many women are unaware of their parental rights. Some offender mothers will surrender a child for adoption if they are told they no longer have rights or are denied custody.

Enforced separation makes it difficult for the mother and child to establish a close, trusting relationship (McGowan and Blumenthal, 1978). Most women offenders who were questioned in the McGowan and Blumenthal study saw the damage as temporary unless the children were infants or quite young. McGowan and Blumenthal state that the degree of injury to the child is affected by: age, personality, prior relationship to mother, type of care received and opportunity for continued contact with the mother (1978). These authors

conclude that there is a strong likelihood that the incarceration of the mother is related to long-term severance of the family unit. They state that unless there is a positive intervention, the incarceration of a mother is not only likely to create temporary distress for the children, but also to threaten permanently the mother-child relationship.

There are also significant social costs incurred by incarcerating offender mothers. Estrangement of children, the weakening of family ties, and possible criminal activities of the next generation are all costs that must be borne by our society according to a study prepared by the Correctional Economic Center of the American Bar Association (1975). Social scientists are concerned that little attention has been given to the plight of the children of incarcerated women (Stanton, 1980). Unlike separation caused by illness or death, incarceration is often explained in vague terms and the child is forced to help conceal the truth. Children are faced with the sudden removal of a parent and they are left to face stigma and mockery from their peers (McGowan and Blumenthal, 1980). It is common for children to have feelings of rejection, anxiety, anger and confusion (Daehlin, 1974). In a study of jailed mothers, Stanton (1980) found that children experience multiple disruptions in their lives when their mothers are incarcerated. Over one-third of the children had more than one living arrangement during their mother's absence. Typically, this is the result of a hurried placement of the child with a friend or neighbor. In addition

to having to adjust to a substitute mother, one-fourth of the children were separated from their brothers and sisters. Most children consider it inappropriate to discuss their mother's circumstances with outsiders. They have no honorable way out and tend to go 'underground' with this family secret (Sack, Seidler and Thomas, 1976). These stresses take their toll and two studies have confirmed that children with imprisoned parents had some problems in school both with a drop in grade and instances of aggressive behavior (Sack, Seidler and Thomas, 1976; Stanton, 1980).

In addition to the social and emotional costs to the inmate mother and her children, there are other repercussions caused by the incarceration of offender mothers. There is growing concern that one reason for recidivism and embitterment among offenders may lie in the atrophy of family ties (Pueschel and Moglia, 1977). The correctional system is oriented toward punishment and rehabilitation of the offender as an individual not as a person with familial roles and responsibilities. Success is typically measured by recidivism rates and not by the degree to which the offender can be reintegrated into society or by the effects on their families (McGowan and Blumenthal, 1978). Not only is it humane to be concerned about the families of offenders--it is also good correctional planning. The most consistently positive factor in the rehabilitation of offenders as measured by parole success is the maintenance of family ties while in prison and upon parole (Holt and Miller, 1972; McGowan and Blumenthal,

1978; Homer, 1979). This suggests that it might be wise to view the inmate's family as a prime treatment agent and family contacts as a major correctional technique (Holt and Miller, 1972; Pueschel and Moglia, 1977).

Given that the separation of offender mothers from their children has a severe impact on both of them and that success on parole is strongly correlated with maintenance of family ties, it seems essential that the study of the relationship between women offenders and their children receive significantly more attention than it has been given. The few studies that have been done in this area have examined the impact of incarceration while the mother was still in prison. Stanton (1980) cites her study as the first to do any follow-up research on released inmate-mothers. She contacted women who had been released from jail for one month. This researcher knows of no studies to date (other than the present one) that have investigated the relationship between children and offender mothers who had been released for more than a month or who had been incarcerated for longer periods of time in a state penitentiary. Researchers have found that most incarcerated women state an intention to reunite with their children after prison (McGowan and Blumenthal, 1978) yet there is no information regarding the actual living arrangements of these women when they leave prison.

The current research project explored the relationship between offender mothers and their children. The literature pointed to three crucial factors in the study of this topic:

the separation of offender mothers and their children; the patterns of caregiving that evolve between offender mothers and their children; and the relationships between mothers and their children when the mothers are released from prison. Therefore, this project focused on research questions developed from these concepts. The central research questions which shaped this study were:

What effect does the separation caused by incarceration have on offender mothers and their children?

How is caregiving organized by/for offender mothers before, during and after incarceration?

What is the process by which offender mothers reunite with their children after prison?

How is the experience of being a mother influenced by being in prison and on parole?

How can the criminal justice system address issues relating to offender mothers and their children?

These research questions were explored through a series of 127 specific interview questions. The responses to these questions formulated the major categories which provided information about the relationship between offender mothers and their children. Issues such as custody, parental responsibilities, emotional attachments, and parole survival were explored.

It is important to note the highly sensitive nature of the present research project. Not only do offenders typically dislike strangers "dipping into their business" (i.e. asking personal questions), they particularly dislike being bothered when the time is their own. This reluctance to

accept intrusions is likely a significant reason why so few studies are done with offenders once they leave the prison. In addition, simply contacting people once they are "on the streets" is quite difficult.

The present research project has added a significant amount of new information to the study of offender mothers and their children. It will hopefully help decision makers in prisons, parole officials and community support agency personnel become more aware of the needs of women offenders and their children. This area of research has long been neglected yet is critical to sound programming for offender mothers. Not only is there a need to know more about the mother-child relationship itself, but there is a particular need to know how/if the patterns of caregiving have been altered as a result of the mother's incarceration. There is a need to know the effect that separation due to incarceration has on the offender mother's relationship with her children. Insights into the life of the offender mother after she re-establishes herself in the community are also needed. For example, should a woman decide she did not or could not resume parenting, support could be offered to help her deal with feelings of guilt, societal pressure to conform to a mothering role and other concerns she might have. If a woman decides she would like to reunite with her children, other types of support might be necessary. But before programs can be planned to address the needs of women offenders, those needs must be recognized. The needs that women

offenders have with regard to their children are only one aspect of their lives--but clearly an important and little studied one. This study examined the relationship offender mothers and their children as reported from the viewpoint of the women after they had been released from prison.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Some insights and information about the relationship of offender mothers and their children can be obtained from previous research. Although prior research has not focused on offender mothers after their release from prison, there are studies both of women offenders themselves and their position as mothers who are incarcerated. Both of these sources of information will be reviewed in order to gain conceptual and factual background for this study. In addition, some of the literature on families (especially Black ghetto families) and the families of (male) prisoners will be discussed. Brief note will be taken of some of the literature in the area of attachment/separation in order to understand how these dynamics might affect offender mothers and their children. Finally, literature concerning parole and the reintegration of the offender into the community will be reviewed.

Women Offenders

Glick and Neto (1977) have provided the most comprehensive survey of programs and services available for female offenders as well as a demographic analysis of incarcerated women. They selected fourteen states for their study which represented the range of the types of programs available to

women in county, state, federal and community-based corrections. The profile of the incarcerated women in their survey included: two-thirds were under 30 years of age with a median age for felons of 27 years; 50% of the women were black although blacks comprised only 19% of the adult female population in the states studied; incarcerated women tended to be less educated than women in the non-incarcerated population; although 60% of the women had been married at least once, only 10% of all inmates had been living with a husband prior to incarceration; 56% of the women had dependent children living at home prior to incarceration with an average of 2.48 children per inmate mother; 43% of the women felons were incarcerated for violent crimes such as murder or armed robbery; 29% were incarcerated for property offences such as forgery or fraud and 22% were incarcerated for drug-related offenses.

After surveying the programs available to women offenders, Glick and Neto concluded that women's prisons represent "the least repressive end of the continuum of a given states' correctional philosophy" yet cautioned:

At the same time, women's institutions are still heavily steeped in some of the more common notions of appropriate female behavior, a fact which helps account for some of the more positive aspects of the physical surroundings as well as the more negative aspects of limited program opportunities [1977:190].

Recommendations which came from the Glick and Neto study include: research into pre-release anxieties and other adjustment factors following release from prison; additional

information regarding how community services could be more effectively used for female offenders; and research into the parole needs of women, including development of criteria to measure success other than recidivism.

Bowker's (1978:279) study concentrated on developing "an understanding of structural and psychosocial aspects of the three-way relationship among women, crime, and the criminal justice system." He examined crime statistics and trends concerning women and teenage female offenders. He also researched the treatment of women offenders by police, courts, and corrections as well as women's interactions with the criminal justice system as victims. He reviewed theories regarding female criminality and concluded the following:

Our general position is that developmental, situational, and macrostructural variables are all operative in the etiology of female illegal behavior and in female role occupancy within criminal behavior systems. By and large, these variables operate in ways that can arguably be referred to as oppressive. This tradition of female oppression is continued and amplified by the way in which women are processed in the criminal justice system [Bowker, 1978:280].

Feinman (1980) studied women in the criminal justice system as both professionals and offenders. She argued that the history of women within the system has been governed by the dual stereotype of the madonna/whore. This concept is based on the perception of the effects of female sexuality on men. Either women produced children (which was good) or women inflamed men's passions and caused them to lose control (which was evil). Implicit in this duality, according to Feinman, is women's subservience to men who assumed the role

of protectors of the madonnas and punishers of the whores. Feinman extends this conceptual framework to her analysis of female offenders. She states that the causes for female criminality have often been ascribed to the "whore" part of the duality rather than to causes such as poverty and lack of opportunity.

In these, and other works on women offenders, the writers/researchers conclude that women offenders have not been treated equitably in the criminal justice system. They recognize that far more research, specifically focused on women offenders, needs to be conducted in order to identify and then meet the needs of women offenders.

Several researchers have specifically studied the family relationships of women offenders. McGowan and Blumenthal (1978) conducted a national mail survey and received data on seventy-four institutions where approximately 9,379 women were confined. They also held intensive interviews with sixty-five inmate mothers at the New York City Correctional Institution for Women. They found that the vast majority of children of women offenders were young (two-thirds of those in the national survey were under ten and one-fourth under age four); approximately three-fourths of these children lived with their mothers before the arrest occurred; children who had to be moved after their mothers were arrested usually went to live with relatives although one out of eight children was placed in foster care; approximately 85 percent of the inmate mothers maintained some contact with their children

during the mother's incarceration; and over three-fourths of the mothers surveyed hoped to re-establish a home for their children following the mother's release although they received little, if any, help in making suitable plans.

McGowan and Blumenthal stated that the most striking finding of their study was the severity and range of problems experienced by children and families because of the lack of concern and appropriate services for this population at every point in the criminal justice process. They conclude that the criminal justice system:

...does have a responsibility to prevent destruction of family life through ignorance or indifference and to help each woman who comes into the system to make the best plans possible for her children [1978:6].

Stanton (1980) conducted in-depth interviews with seventy-five mothers and their children who were between the ages of 4 and 18. The incarcerated mothers and their children were interviewed twice, first while the mother was serving her sentence in the county jail and again about one month after she was released. Since sentences are relatively short in county jails, these women would not likely be serving over one year. The person responsible for children's caregiving during the mother's incarceration was also interviewed. The child's school was contacted for general achievement and behavior information for time periods before, during and after the mother's incarceration. The women were from four Bay Area counties in California.

Stanton found that the children frequently experienced

multiple disruptions in their lives. Although the majority of the children were cared for by relatives, over one-third of the children had more than one living arrangement during the mother's incarceration. One-fourth of the children were separated from siblings. She also found that the mothers were poorly informed when asked factual questions about their children (they typically knew the child's grade level, but not the name of the child's teacher). Stanton concluded that:

The period of incarceration does bring about a serious division in the mother-child relationship. And though most of the women and children are reunited, there is evidence that this separation could have enduring effects. It is generally believed that it is in society's best interest to maintain family units, especially for young children. Since jail mothers are often single parental figures, the erosion of this important family tie is bound to have deleterious consequences for the child, perhaps for the mother and society... In summary, while some recent attention has focused on the female offender- her motives and her crimes - very little attention has been given to the plight of the children of these women. A great deal remains to be done in thoroughly examining this situation and in developing new ways to deal with convicted parents [1980:122-123].

Other researchers have examined the problems of incarcerated women with respect to their roles as mothers and identified both problems and possible solutions. Baunach (1979) reviewed much of the literature in this area and concluded that the most significant and consistent recommendation made throughout the studies was the development of intervention programs designed to maintain continuing contact between inmate-mothers and their children during the former's incarceration. Palmer (1972) provided an explanation of how legal

limitations on parental rights for offender mothers were determined and offered suggestions for possible alternatives.

He noted:

It is the goal of this note to bring the prisoner-mother's problem to the attention of the state legislatures and cause them to seek alternatives to the procedures which are presently in effect [1972:129].

Holt (1981/1982:542) specifically identified the problems of pregnant inmates and explored the legal precedents. She concluded that increased litigation by pregnant inmates "appears to be the best way to compel an examination of the problems of pregnant inmates and at the same time ensuring a permanent, effective remedy," Haley (1977) discussed the "two-pronged sentence" that offender mothers face: the prison term itself and the additional punishment of a temporary or permanent deprivation of parental rights. She also noted:

Moreover, when men go to prison, they generally assume that their wives, or a female relative, will care for their children. Yet the women sentenced to prison can make no such assumption [1977:143].

The literature in the area of women offenders clearly identifies the discrimination and/or lack of attention which has been given to the needs of women offenders. Some of the literature specifically addresses the problems women offenders face with regard to their children. None of the studies have focused on the issues which face offender mothers when they are released from prison, although the literature has identified this as an area which needs to be studied.

Families

Another area of literature which is relevant to a study of offender mothers has focused specifically on families. While this body of literature is very extensive, perhaps the most relevant aspects of it for the present study would be those works which have examined black ghetto families and offender families.

The study on families which might be most relevant to the population in the present study is Carol Stack's All Our Kin. Stack (1974) studied black ghetto families in an urban area in the midwest. She spent three years researching the kin relationships and patterns among the members of the community she studied. She noted that unemployment in the area was high and many people lived in deteriorating houses. Although not all of the women in the present study were black, the majority (83%) were. The cities where the women lived (Detroit, Grand Rapids and Lansing) are, like the one Stack studied, industrialized cities in the midwest. Unemployment has remained high in the state of Michigan over the past several years. Similarities between the population in Stack's study and the population in the present study suggest that Stack's findings may be relevant.

Stack discovered early in her study that "household" and its members were not a meaningful unit to isolate for analysis of family life. She ultimately defined family as "the smallest organized durable network of kin and non-kin who interact daily, providing domestic needs of children and

assuring their survival." She pointed out that arbitrarily defining the family according to nuclear or matrifocal criteria would prevent a full understanding of how the people she was studying organized their lives.

Stack discovered that, instead of a nuclear family, there was a network of kin which provided for the care of children. Children moved easily among households to receive their care. Thus, although children might spend much of any given day with their mother, the adult who was immediately responsible for the child changed with the child's residence. Domestic functions relating to children were carried out by clusters of kin rather than one or two parents. A temporary exchange of children was a sign of mutual trust among kin and friends. This network of shared parenting was seen as a right, not an obligation, among kin. Stack found that most of the children had at least one, and oftentimes more, stable male figures in their lives. The male figure was sometimes the biological father, but often an uncle.

Stack viewed these networks for caregiving as a viable and stable family form. Because there are similarities between the families Stack studied and the women who participated in the present study, questions for the interview were designed which would allow the patterns of which Stack spoke to emerge if they existed, but not lead respondents into answering in any particular way.

Other studies of families which added useful information to the present study were conducted with offender

families. Pueschel and Moglia (1977) point out that the person who walks into prison is not an unattached human being, but rather is a member of a social system called the family. Most of the studies that have been conducted concerning the families of prisoners have concentrated on male offenders who have wives and children (Holt and Miller, 1972; Schneller, 1976; Sack, 1977; Cobean and Power, 1978). But as a report sponsored by the American Bar Association (1975:13-14) points out:

Although incarceration of men also presents problems for their children, few men are solely responsible for rearing their children, whereas many women offenders are. Due to role patterns in our society, the incarceration of a mother is probably more disruptive to a child (especially when young) than incarceration of a father.

Palmer (1972) points out that men often are not legally responsible for the children, other than possibly providing support payments or they have wives who care for the children, whereas most of the women who are imprisoned are unmarried and consequently do not have a man with whom to leave the children. Yet there is still benefit to be gained by looking at some of the studies on the families of male offenders, since some parts of the experience of being an incarcerated parent may be applicable to women offenders.

The prison experience has definite effects on both the individual involved and the other family members in their role as family members. Yet service programs in corrections have traditionally focused on the individual offender with little systematic attention given to spouses, children,

parents, relatives and other significantly related individuals whose well-being is often jeopardized by the offender's incarceration (Fishman and Alissi, 1979).

Cobean and Power (1978) state that initially the inmate will go through a period of denial and then often experience depression, anxiety and even panic. The inmate must psychologically separate from both home and community in order to exist in the prison. The inmate also might use extreme ways to test relationships outside the prison - for example, threatening divorce. This person is also prone to distorting family and community events possibly because of a lack of reliable information. The family must adjust to these changes in the inmate and not only withstand tests of their relationship, but also deal with their own feelings of loneliness and helplessness (Cobean and Power, 1978). The wives in the study by Cobean and Power (1978) also had to deal with pressure from extended family members to separate from the incarcerated spouse, traumatic reactions in their children, sexual deprivation, humiliation and resentment resulting from disrespectful treatment by prison officials, and having to depend on Social Security for subsistence. They often received inadequate information about prison programs, visiting privileges and rules regarding the correctional institution. The wives had to adjust to new roles in which they made the major decisions and had total responsibility for the children.

Although the view presented by Cobean and Power seems most typically to represent problems that a middle class

wife would face, they may be applicable to the families of women offenders. Whereas the male prisoner's family is left without a provider, so too may a female offender's family be left without a provider. Problems with finances, loneliness and depression could also fall on the members of the woman offender's family. Just as the male offender becomes apprehensive about returning home after incarceration (Cobean and Power, 1978) so too the woman offender must prepare to move back into a family unit that has changed since her incarceration. Not only will the released woman have to get her own life in order, she could have to face responsibilities regarding her children as well.

Several studies have shown that the imprisonment of the father has a definite effect on the children. Sack (1977) found the children seem to internalize the father's positive qualities and there is a danger that they might also incorporate the current negative view of their father caused by his imprisonment. He stated the children seemed to be confessing their own wrongdoing by announcing their father's confinement. He points out that the stigma is reinforced when children are not told the truth about their father's situation. Neighborhood children can also be quite cruel to the inmate's children. Children experience feelings of rejection, fear, guilt and can develop serious emotional problems (Showalter and Jones, 1980). Pueschel and Moglia (1977) point out that a number of these children become school problems, school dropouts or juvenile delinquents.

In studying male prisoners, Showalter and Jones (1980) found that many of the men had a very low self-esteem caused both by past failures and by being in prison. They found that being loved by the family helped the men to see value in themselves. The positive feelings that the prisoners had because of the family's love would probably be the only means he had of justifying his life to himself. Further, "the loss of his relationship with his family would leave a prisoner without any significant attachment with the outside world and cause him to lose positive feelings about himself" (Showalter and Jones, 1980:225).

Women offenders, who may also experience a lack of self-esteem, could derive a sense of meaning in their lives from their relationship to their family. In fact, it is possible that because of their socially defined role of mother, they would need to be even more assured that they were loved by their family since failure to be a "good mother" is experienced as both a personal and social failure. McCarthey (1980) listed just a few of the problems faced by incarcerated women concerning their children: temporary or permanent loss of custody; how to explain their absence; maintenance of communication and contact; temporary caregivers not willing to maintain frequent contact with the mother; restricted visitation hours and sometimes visitation limited by distance; children perceiving a caregiver as a "real" mother; women pressured to resume parenting before they are ready; and continuing poor self-image.

The importance of the family in helping the offender cannot be overstated. In Perry's (1973) study, the director of a halfway house in Washington, D.C. stated that there are two factors which are particularly important in rehabilitating the offender: employment and family relationships. The study also found that 85 to 90 percent of all incarcerated individuals have family problems (Perry, 1973). Haley (1977) emphasized that the loss of parental rights is a significant hardship for the offender mothers. Because there is not an adequate legal definition of a biological parent's rights, there is quite a bit of discretion left to the courts concerning custody issues for incarcerated parents. A few states still have equated imprisonment with abandonment of parental responsibilities and have implied the power to terminate parental rights upon incarceration (Haley, 1977).

Recognizing that the family is an important aspect of an offender mother's life, it becomes increasingly essential that we discover more about her life when she leaves prison and attempts to reunite with her family. If there has been significant damage done to the family unit, that could certainly contribute to her difficulties on parole. On the other hand, if she chooses not to reunite with her family, it would still be important to know whether she is successful on parole and how she develops support networks to assist her in adjusting to life outside the prison. Holt and Miller (1972) suggest that it might be well to view the inmate's family as the prime treatment agent and family contacts as a

major correctional technique. If this is ever to occur, the specific dynamics of the woman offender's family must be explored in order to take into account those aspects of family which are particularly relevant to women. Although there has not been a great deal of research on prisoner's families, most of what has occurred has been done on the families of male offenders. The literature available in this area points to the need for continuing research on offender's families, with a particular need for more studies to be conducted on the families of women offenders.

Attachment/Separation

There are several aspects of the attachment/separation literature that have significance in addressing issues concerning offender mothers. Many theorists in the area of maternal care use the work of John Bowlby as a reference point for their own research. Bowlby (1951) asserted that early bonding to the mother was essential to normal development for the child. Further, he stated that early deprivation of maternal care might have permanent negative effects on the child's development. Some researchers have confirmed his findings and state that maternal separation causes adolescent problems (Haslam, 1978; Bradley, 1979). Ainsworth (1973) argued that separating a new born from an affectionate and concerned caregiver could retard the child's emotional and psychological development. The conclusions she reached in her report to the World Health Organization in 1951 were accepted by many researchers who then defined more precisely

some of the significant variables (Bowlby, Ainsworth, Boston and Rosenbluth, 1956; Rheingold, 1961; David and Appell, 1961; Provence and Lipton, 1962; and Ainsworth, 1979). For instance, separation that occurred after a long period of indifferent parental care or overt rejection and hostility would likely have a different meaning to a child than if there had been a caring and intimate relationship with the parent (Yarrow, 1964).

Others have re-evaluated Bowlby's conclusions regarding maternal deprivation and separation. They seem to represent a more balanced viewpoint on the effect of separation. Rutter (1971) noted that Bowlby's original emphasis on the deleterious effects of separation itself were not correct. Rather he found that antisocial disorders were linked with broken homes, not because of the separation involved, but because of the discord and conflict which lead to the break. Yarrow (1964) also concluded that separation in itself was not a single contributor to difficulties in the child's development. Rather he stated that the effects of separation were dependent on a variety of factors, most important of which were the age of the child at the time of the experience, the degree of the accompanying trauma, and the extent to which subsequent experiences reinforce or lessen the initial trauma. He further stated that placement in a poor institution or foster home or a successive change in mother-figures would increase the likelihood of personality disturbances (Yarrow, 1964).

There appear to be varying effects of separation depending on the length of time of the separation and the cause. Rutter (1971) found that short-term separation from parents (caused by a child's stay in the hospital) created only short-term distress and emotional disturbance. However, long-term separation created the most severe antisocial changes in a child's behavior when the separation was from both parents and the reason had to do with some type of family discord or deviance. McDermott (1970) studied the intake records of 1,487 children at Michigan's Children's Psychiatric Hospital. He found that a large group of children of divorced parents could be classified as predelinquent. He also discovered that children tended to identify with a part or a fantasized part of the missing parent. Nagera (1970), in discussing children's response to separation from a parent due to the parent's death, identified the following characteristic responses: short sadness span, massive use of denial, search for substitutes and character distortions. He concluded that this type of loss represents a developmental interference for the child. Cain and Fest (1966) studied children's reaction to a parent's suicide. They found that children feel responsible for bringing on the parent's despair and assume guilt for what happened to their parent.

Separation due to imprisonment adds a unique occurrence or circumstance to these studies. Various forms of parent-child separation (death, divorce, military leave, suicide,

hospitalization, desertion) have been found to have an impact on children yet little research exists on the effects of separation caused by imprisonment (Sack, Seidler and Thomas, 1976). The majority of the studies that have been conducted have looked at separation caused by the imprisonment of the father, although a few have discussed separation from the mother.

Sack, Seidler and Thomas (1976) studied the effect of separation on the family when the father was imprisoned. They found that in other examples of parental loss, there was some means of open acknowledgment and compensation available to the child. With imprisonment, the whole situation is often shrouded in secrecy. McGowan and Blumenthal (1978) agree that, unlike separation through illness or death, incarceration is often explained in vague terms and the child is forced to help cover up the situation. The children are often faced with the mockery of their peers, enforced isolation, uncertainty about their future, and the feeling that they are not loved or they would not have been abandoned. All of this obviously contributes to the child having a difficult time adjusting to the parent's incarceration. Sack, Seidler and Thomas (1976) found that many of the children they studied had some problems in school. They experienced both drops in their grades and instances of aggressiveness. Likewise, Friedman and Esselstyn (1965) found that children of fathers who had gone to jail had significantly lower school performance after their father

was incarcerated. In a study of inmate mothers, Baunach (1979) reported that the mothers of nearly half the children in the study felt that problems were either created or exacerbated by the separation. Children were seen as more restless or withdrawn. Younger children were viewed as more aggressive, especially towards caregivers who were strangers. Subsequent experiences could either reinforce or mitigate the negative impact of separation. It seems that for the children of incarcerated parents, subsequent experiences often reinforce the negative effects of a separation.

Another critical factor regarding the way a child adjusts to separation has to do with the age of the child at the time of separation. In the study of jailed mothers conducted by McGowan and Blumenthal (1978), the vast majority of children were young. Their national survey of incarcerated women showed that 2/3 had children under ten years old and 25% of them had children under four years old. They also found that 3/4 of the children lived with their mothers before arrest. Although these younger children were more likely to have lived with their mothers prior to arrest, they were less likely to have had frequent contact with them after arrest. Younger children were inherently more vulnerable to separation because of their age and because the lack of contact after the mother's disappearance made the separation comparable to loss by death (McGowan and Blumenthal, 1978). Research has shown that after the development of a focused relationship with the mother has occurred, infants on being

separated show the most severe disturbances (Yarrow and Goodwin, 1963). Rutter (1979) found evidence that experiences at all ages have an impact. However, he notes, "It may be that the first few years do have a special importance for bond formation and social development" (Rutter, 1979).

The other variable that was viewed as significant in determining whether children would have a particularly difficult time adjusting to separation was whether they had multiple mother figures or one stable figure. A study of jailed mothers showed that one-third of the children had more than one living arrangement during their mother's absence, typically as a result of hurried placements for the children with either friends or neighbors. One-fourth of the children were separated from their sisters or brothers (Stanton, 1980).

All of the factors listed by the researchers studying parental separation are present in varying degrees among the children of incarcerated parents. It would seem reasonable to state that the separation caused by incarceration of a parent will present some of the most serious difficulties in adjustment for their children. Nonetheless, there are some circumstances which can help mitigate the negative consequences for the children. Recent research has demonstrated that the negative effects of separation are minimized when: the separation is brief; the child is permitted to maintain some contact with the primary caregiver so the loss is not perceived as total; when the child can remain in a familiar

environment; and when the child has a prior relationship with the new caregiver (McGowan and Blumenthal, 1978). Although children have many feelings of rejection, anxiety, anger and confusion when their mother is incarcerated (Daehlin, 1974), the negative effect on the child can be mitigated by some intervention on the part of the criminal justice system. It is imperative that we learn more about this relationship between offender mothers and their children if we want to develop services and programs that will help to lessen the negative impact of separation. Since so many potentially harmful factors are intrinsic in a separation caused by imprisonment, it is particularly important that we focus on this previously neglected area.

Parole

The last area to be discussed is the parole literature, particularly as it relates to families and factors leading to success on parole. Most studies concerning parole have concentrated on male populations. This fact is particularly evident when one notes that almost none of the literature mentions children. There is, however, a consistent finding regarding the importance of family ties. Homer (1979:49) states:

The strong positive relationship between strength of family social bonds and parole success has held up for more than 50 years, across diverse offender populations and in different locales. It is doubtful if there is any other research finding in the field of corrections which can come close to this record.

For instance, Holt and Miller (1972) studied a sample of 843 inmates in California. The central finding of their research was a strong and consistent positive relationship between parole success and maintaining strong family ties while in prison. They also found that frequent visits did not seem to improve the inmates institutional behavior, but did lead to better parole plans and a better chance of being paroled. Also, inmates who maintained frequent outside contacts while in prison did significantly better on parole. These findings were substantiated by the results of other research. Earlier, Lloyd Ohlin developed a parole success prediction scale for Illinois. Using his index of family interest and a sample of releasees between 1925-1935, he found that 75% of the inmates classified as maintaining active family interest while in prison were successful on parole while only 34% of those considered loners were successful (Glaser, 1964). Using Ohlin's classification system, Glaser, in 1956, studied a sample of releasees from federal prisons. He found that 71% of those releasees classified as maintaining active family interest were successful on parole while 50% of those not maintaining contact were successful (Glaser, 1964). Strong ties between the inmate, family and friends even resist the expected eroding influences of time spent in prison (Holt and Miller, 1972). Even the most highly regarded parole success indicators were not found to affect parole success as much as having a family to which to go home (Homer, 1979).

Stanton (1980) echoed the finding that there is strong

correlation between parole success and the existence of family ties, but criticized the fact that there are no parallel studies done with women. Women face a different set of circumstances when they return to their families. They typically do not have male partners who have maintained the home (Haley, 1977). Men, on the other hand, often do return to a home where the woman has kept the family together. Women with children must first decide whether they are going to reunite with those children. If they choose to reunite, they must find a place for themselves and their children to live as well as possibly take the children from their present environment. Or, a woman might have the opportunity to join her children in their present living environment. The woman then has to deal with moving into someone else's home and negotiating child care responsibilities. It is difficult to speculate whether reuniting with children provides the same benefits to women in terms of parole success as reuniting with a family provides to men. Moving into a family situation as the person who will assume responsibility for keeping the family together is a different situation than moving into family setting which has been maintained during the father's absence. This circumstance could potentially cause pressure for women or it could be a support to them. There are no research studies which indicate which of these situations might be true.

In a study of delinquency, Hirschi (1970) proposed a social control theory. He found that an individual with

strong bonds to society would be less likely to take anti-social risks that conflict with a commitment to conventional roles such as husband, child, etc. If that theory is applied to women parolees, it could suggest that family ties would increase a woman's success on parole because she would be less likely to perform deviant activities. Again, the question appears to be whether the pressures created by taking on the responsibility for the children would outweigh the support and control provided by family ties.

Some insight into this situation can be gained by looking at what occurs when a person leaves prison. In his book, The Felon, John Irwin (1970) discussed three types of problems facing the parolee: those that arise immediately after release, those that arise when the parolee is functioning in the community, and those that arise because the parolee is under the supervision of a parole agency. During the first phase, the releasee moves from a state of incarceration where the pace is slow, routine, but familiar into a world where things are chaotic and unfamiliar. The parolee is typically disoriented by the new physical surroundings, experiencing extreme personal stress, and suffering from various adjustment problems. These problems seem even more severe because typically, while preparing to leave prison, the person is highly optimistic about the chances of success. During the second phase of re-entry, the parolee must face difficulties in locating employment, housing, transportation, clothing, and generally "taking care of business."

This can be anything from keeping appointments with parole agents to learning how to fit all one's responsibilities into the day. The third phase involves the parolee working with the parole agent. The person must learn to deal with restraints that are imposed by the parole authorities as well as the feeling of being "watched." All of these various re-entry problems have a significant impact on the person leaving prison. They must learn to negotiate a new world and to cope with responsibilities that were taken away from them while in prison. The pressure of the first few months of parole are quite severe for many parolees. Although Irwin makes no mention of reuniting with children, it is possible to see how they would present another major responsibility to a person trying to readjust to society.

Studt (1973) agreed that the parolee's reintegration into the community after prison is quite difficult. He points out that the parolee can utilize few, if any, of the behavior patterns that were appropriate in prison. Consequently, the person must "unlearn" many of the patterns developed in prison while trying to acquire new patterns to succeed in the "normal" world. However, the parolee's role that was assumed in prison is quite pervasive and thus often affects social roles once the person is out of prison. "In consequence, difficulties in one area of the parolee's life can spread rapidly throughout his [sic] social experience; they are, accordingly, less easily managed and have a tendency to escalate beyond control" (Studt, 1973:44). He

further points out that reintegration does not occur unless the parolee has access to necessary social roles and is supported by role partners. A person cannot reintegrate in a social vacuum.

Ekland-Olson, Supanic, Campbell and Tenihan (1983) conducted structured interviews with offenders just prior to release from prison and then three, six and twelve months following release. Their goal was to assess the prevalence of postrelease depression and the stress-buffering role of familial ties. Two sources of data were consulted: interview data gathered as part of the Transitional Aid Research Project (TARP) in Texas and Georgia and interviews with the male participants in the Texas phase of TARP. It should be noted that the report does not make note of whether the initial interviews included female as well as male offenders. The study results supported the findings of Irwin's model of "reentry." The authors noted, however, that their subjects were still primarily in the "making it" stage and not yet into the "doing good" stage. That is, the study participants showed the cognitive-emotional shifts involved in settling down with consistent widening of movement toward increased practical adjustment to life after release from incarceration. Their findings also showed that a supportive family climate and a feeling of not being a burden on the family were related to an increased probability of settled response. They stated that "emotional support appears to be a particularly critical factor." Ekland-Olson et al concluded:

Just as with other life changes, postrelease depression and, conversely, emotional adjustment following release from prison depend in large measure on the availability of supportive, bridging interpersonal networks [1983:271].

The interaction between the parolee and the parole process/authorities is a complex one. To begin with, there has been a trend toward developing predictors for parole success. Although the benefit/accuracy of such predictors is still being debated, a typical list of parole predictive factors would include: an account of the offense; the offender's personal background; the offender's criminal record; the offender's institutional record; the parole plan; and the prison staff's recommendations (Stanley, 1976). However, Adler and Bazemore (1980) point out that the history/risk items were developed from analysis of data from predominantly male parolees but are now being applied to both male and female offenders. They strongly caution that using parole prediction models that were developed on male populations may exhibit serious deficiencies when applied to women offenders. The role of children is not considered in prediction tables that have been developed. Perhaps the presence of children would not have any effect whatsoever on a person's chances for success on parole. However, there is no way to know that unless research is conducted that will incorporate children as a variable.

In addition to the complexities of receiving parole in the first place, the offender faces a number of potential problems in working with parole agents in the community.

Studd (1973) reported that most parolees liked their agents, but felt they were ineffective in dealing with the practical problems of reintegration. They also felt that their agents' presence in their lives presented a stigma to them and reduced the possibilities that they would be treated normally. The agents typically agreed with these opinions.

Over the last few years researchers studying parole have found that the response of the parole agency itself affects parole success. Spencer and Berocochea (1979) found that the recidivism rate is the product of two interacting factors: the behavior of the parolee and the response of the agency to their behavior. McCleary (1977 and 1978) concluded that parole records do not accurately reflect the behavior of parolees but rather reflect the many problems which confront the parole officer. He also found that the outcome of parole will be largely determined by the initial typing decision because this decision dictates the type of supervision and record keeping that will be done regarding a certain offender. Parole authorities have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo and showing that the initial classification decision was correct. McCleary (1978:44) concluded that: "To understand the outcomes of social service cases, we must understand the motives and personal interests of the workers employed by social service agencies." The opinions of these three researchers certainly add a new twist to the whole issue of reintegration for the parolee. Not only do offenders have to deal with the problems of leaving the

prison and going into a new environment, but they must also negotiate the political requirements of a bureaucracy.

Offenders themselves have identified a number of areas where they feel they need assistance on parole. The research results outlining their needs have all been completed from studies conducted on male populations. The areas they identify include: economic support; technical services to resolve problems concerning their civil status; official protection of their rights; free access to the job market; crisis service; more dignified status on parole; full civil rights restored; friends; medical care; recreational activities; legal assistance; sexual life; home/shelter (this list is a combination from two studies and does not indicate any prioritized orderings) (Stanley, 1976; Studt, 1973). It is reasonable to assume that women offenders would certainly share in identifying these needs but it is also reasonable to assume that they might also add some additional categories that would have to do with caring for their children, such as child care services and child counseling.

Despite the difficulties facing all parolees, statistics show that women seem to fare slightly better than men in being able to remain out of prison (Simon, 1975). Simon noted that there were two categories that are exceptions for women: those with a history of drug use and those with a history of prior commitments. Women in both of these categories have less successful paroles than do men in similar categories.

Conclusion

The literature in the areas of women offenders, families and offender families, attachment/separation and parole provide both conceptual frameworks and some concrete data for the present study. The various researchers seem to agree that there has not been enough attention to the programming needs of women offenders, that children are affected to some degree by the incarceration of a parent with whom they are attached, and that families can provide important support to offenders when they return to the community after incarceration.

The present study has focused on learning more about the relationship between offender mothers and their children. Women who were released from prison for at least three months were interviewed. They were questioned about the effect of the separation on their relationship with their children. They were asked to discuss the patterns of caregiving that exist in their families and how they changed/evolved as a result of the woman's incarceration. Particular attention was directed toward understanding how the women reweave the strands of their relationship with their children since their return from prison. The women were asked to examine the difficulties they experienced since being on parole and what types of assistance were/would be most helpful to them.

The literature has suggested that the above areas of research are pertinent, and especially critical to understanding and meeting the needs of offender mothers.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Type of Methodology

This research is an exploratory, descriptive study of the relationship between offender mothers and their children. Over the past few years, several researchers have studied offender mothers. However, they have primarily focused on women while they were still incarcerated (Baunach, 1979; McGowan and Blumenthal, 1978; Sack, Seidler and Thomas, 1976). Stanton (1980) studied offender mothers who had been released from jail for a month. Some researchers speculate about the effect of separation due to the mother's incarceration but, to date, there has been little research concerning offender mothers once they had returned to the community. Therefore, this research focused on women parolees who had been released from prison for at least three months. The intent of this study is to describe the relationship between offender mothers and their children before, during and after prison.

A thorough examination of literature pertaining to the relationship of women and their children after incarceration leads to the belief that hypothesis-testing at this point is premature. There simply is not enough research to suggest any casual relationships. For instance, parole literature has concluded that close family relationships are significant

in determining success (Markeley, 1973) yet these studies have all focused on male offenders. While the results might be applicable to female offenders, there is no research to assure these results are transferable. A woman offender returning from prison to her family faces not only the social stigma of a mother who has abandoned her children (society still seems to consider it a greater evil for a woman to leave her children than for a man to do so) but also, typically, has to reunite children who may have been sent to live with various relatives. It is more likely that if a man is returning to live with his children, the children's mother has kept the family together during the father's incarceration. It is less likely for the reverse situation to be true for female offenders. Thus, the parole literature has not adequately assessed reintegration factors as they affect offender mothers.

Since the literature on offender mothers has been conducted primarily during incarceration and the parole literature has focused on male offenders, there is a dearth of directly applicable studies from which to draw hypotheses. This literature is helpful in forming conceptual frameworks but does not necessarily provide adequate information for developing hypotheses. For example, deductive reasoning from the literature on separation and attachment might lead to erroneously categorizing the data because of preconceived ideas. As Glaser and Strauss (1967:238-239) caution:

Deducing practical applications from formal theory

rests on the assumption that the theory supplies concepts and hypotheses that fit. When the theory does not fit well, the consequences are a typical forcing and distorting of data to fit the categories of the deduced applications, and the neglecting of relevant data that seemingly do not fit or cannot be forced into the pre-existing sociological categories.

In order to avoid problems such as the above and because of the extremely limited research in this area, the methodology used in this study will be exploratory descriptive analysis. Grounded theory will then be generated using the constant comparative method. Once theories are developed, hypothesis-testing could be conducted in subsequent research projects. The constant comparative method is a means of analyzing qualitative data that combines, by an analytic procedure of constant comparison, both explicit coding and theory development (Glaser and Strauss, 1967:102). It is designed to generate a theory that is integrated, consistent and relevant to the data yet is in clear enough form to be subsequently used in quantitative research. It is designed to combine discipline with flexibility to aid in the creative generation of theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967:103).

A qualitative methodology was selected because, as Lazarsfeld and Barton (1951:239-240) explain:

...qualitative materials are particularly suitable for this exploratory phase of research: their wealth of detailed descriptive elements gives the analyst the maximum opportunity to find clues and suggestions. For hypotheses testing, on the other hand, the ideal model would be the controlled experiment, with precise measurements on a limited number of pre-selected variables.

The research being conducted in this project is precisely the type that these methodologists have identified as needing a qualitative method. Because there is so little research done in the area of women offenders and their children, and virtually none of it concerning their relationship after the mother is released from prison, it is imperative to explore the issue before developing and testing hypotheses. Ball (1970) points out that one of the most important contributions of qualitative methodology rests upon the richness of the descriptive accounts. From it, patterns can be discovered which might not have emerged if preconceived ideas were used to limit the scope of the study. Theory can then be formulated using the constant comparative method of analysis.

The question of validity is one of the central issues for conducting qualitative research. Attempting to determine whether one is adequately measuring what is intended is an important consideration in qualitative analysis. In the interview situation, there is danger of data contamination both on the interviewer's part and on the respondent's part. Possible sources of bias are: knowledgeability (is the respondent in a position to have valid knowledge of what she is reporting); reportorial ability (does the respondent express herself well, have a clear and reliable memory, have enough self-confidence to respond to frequent probes without feeling that her integrity is being questioned); reactive effects of the interview situation (is the respondent trying to give the

researcher the kind of answers she thinks are being sought, are comments and reactions of the interviewer causing the respondent to answer in certain ways); ulterior motives (is the respondent trying to slant the results of the research in a certain direction); bars to spontaneity (was someone else present or was there a chance someone might overhear the interview and thus cause the respondent to be hesitant); and idiosyncratic factors (was the respondent in a particular mood prior to the interview that might influence the answers) (McCall, 1969).

The above factors were considered in designing the present project. In general, women parolees are knowledgeable about this topic because all of those persons included in the random sample were mothers, whether they were currently living with their children or not. Although some of the women were more articulate than others, a surprisingly large number of the women who agreed to be interviewed were willing to talk about their children at length. In arranging the interviews, the researcher requested that the interviews be conducted without other family or friends present. In addition, the women were able to choose the location of the interview. Most of the interviews were conducted with little outside interference to spontaneity.

There is more of a threat to the validity of the present research effort from the other factors mentioned by McCall. Many of the respondents agreed to be interviewed because they said it was about time someone thought about their

"kids." They therefore could have had ulterior motives since they wanted this situation brought to light. Social desirability could be evident since few mothers would likely want to be seen as an uncaring parent. Also, the women were talking about their children because of the interview situation. One parole officer said that he did not really think the women cared that much for their children because they never talked about them. When the women were questioned in this regard, several women explained they did not talk about their children in prison because it was too painful and they did not talk to the parole officer because it was none of her/his business. However, since the women in the study had nothing personal to gain by presenting any particular view of their relationship to their children, it is likely that the information they shared is their perception of the relationship they have with their children. In addition, simply wanted to "look good" would likely give way to the facts of the family history which were shared. Finally, there were a couple of women who came to the interview situation having just gone through a traumatic incident. One woman had just been thrown out of her apartment by her "boyfriend" and was extremely upset. Another interview time was scheduled and she ultimately did not show up for the rescheduled appointment. The other woman who was particularly affected had just been in a car accident and was stranded at a repair shop. The interviewer picked her up at the other end of town yet could tell that she was in no frame of mind

for an interview. Another appointment was scheduled for the following day and although she was several hours late, she was eventually interviewed. Other than these two cases, none of the women were in such a state of mind that it would have significantly affected the interview.

In addition to the factors just discussed, McCall states that there are two ways to guard (to the best of one's ability) against threats to validity - which will consequently improve reliability of the data as well. The traditional first check in the evaluation of qualitative data is to inquire whether the account seems plausible, whether it makes sense in light of one's understanding of human behavior. The second check is to determine whether the data is consistent with other accounts from the same source. These methods were employed in the present study to increase the validity of the data. For instance, responses regarding some of the demographic data were obtained both during the interview and from parole files. These responses were evaluated to determine if there was any discrepancy. Additionally, a few questions were asked at different times and in different ways during the interview so that they could be compared to determine whether the same or a similar response was given. In addition to the methods listed, information obtained from the literature as well as the researcher's professional experience in working with women offenders, were used to determine if their responses seemed plausible. Given the various methods used to assure validity, it was concluded that the

instrument measured what it was intended to measure.

The issue of reliability is not as salient as validity in the constant comparative method. As Glaser and Strauss (1967:103) point out:

...the constant comparative method is not designed (as methods of quantitative analysis are) to guarantee that two analysts working independently with the same data will achieve the same results; it is designed to allow, with discipline, for some of the vagueness and flexibility that aid the creative generation of theory.

The reliability, however, is increased by utilizing methods (as described previously) to increase validity.

In addition to discussing validity and reliability, it might be helpful to also briefly examine the advantages and disadvantages of the types of questions used in the interview. Of the 127 questions which were asked during the interview, 48 questions were closed-ended and 79 questions were open-ended. The closed-ended questions were used to obtain objective information (such as age, amount of time in prison, number of children, etc.). These are most appropriate for obtaining this type of information according to Selletz, Jahoda, Deutsch and Cook (1959).

The open-ended questions were used to obtain a free response, to allow the woman to answer in her own words and perspective. The disadvantage of this type of question is that because responses are not standardized, analysis is difficult and expensive. The advantages, however, are great if the information being sought is complex and the researcher is looking for the broad dimensions of the subject matter.

The open-ended question does not force a response into a certain category and allows the researcher to probe for additional information or clarification. It allows a respondent to adequately explain an answer so it exactly represents their point of view or the situation. This type of question was used to obtain information about family history, the woman's perspective of difficulties she has had to face, the woman's opinion about parole officers/regulations, etc. For instance, the question, "How was that decision (who would care for children during mother's incarceration) made?" yielded a wealth of information about the woman's perception of family responsibility and the woman's own role as care provider. Thus, a combination of open and closed-ended questions was chosen because of the various types of data which were desired and can be seen in Appendix A.

The Variables

There were various types of data collected during this study. Demographic data was collected from the files and part of the interview. The variables included the following: age, marital status, education, employment/vocational training, number of times in prison, length of time in prison, length of time on parole, type of release, number of children, ages of children, and source of financial support. In addition, the following descriptive information was obtained from closed-ended questions:

1. The number of women in the sample who actually reunited with their children after incarceration.

2. Child custody before, during, and after incarceration
3. The child caregivers before, during and after prison
4. The length of time between when a woman left prison and the first time she saw her children
5. The length of time between a woman's release from prison and the time she started living with her children

The majority of the data for this study was obtained through open-ended questions during the interview. Probing was done to elicit as full a response as possible. Enough flexibility was used in the interview to allow new topics or thoughts to emerge while at the same time providing enough structure so that coding could be accomplished. The following areas were explored in this study:

1. The functioning of the family networks of which women offenders are a member
2. The understanding among women parolees of child custody rules and their interactions with the official system
3. Caregiving patterns in the kinship networks of women offenders
4. The concept of physical presence in the relationship of incarcerated mothers and their children
5. The use of custody as a threat, appeasement, bargaining tool and for various other motivations
6. The residence patterns of both children and their mothers - before, during and after incarceration
7. Children's response to separation from their mother

8. Decision-making processes of offender mothers before, during and after prison
9. Factors which serve to unite or to separate women offenders and their children when the women are incarcerated
10. The concepts of exchange and "owing" with offender mothers, especially as they relate to caregiving
11. The effect on children of their mother's incarceration
12. The role of economics in the caregiving patterns of offender mothers
13. The reintegration process for women parolees - with family and in relation to parole
14. Offender mother's opinions regarding how "the system" could better meet their needs

In addition, 18 parole agents were asked open-ended questions to obtain their perspective on the relationship between offender mothers and their children. These questions are listed in Appendix B.

Methods of Data Collection

The first step in defining what information was available and the best way to gather it was to obtain access to the parole files of the women parolees in Michigan. Corrections officials were very helpful in allowing this information to be obtained. However, the files did not contain consistent information about the children of the women parolees. In fact, the parole report did not necessarily contain any information about the women's children unless there had been an incident involving the children. The Basic Information Sheet which was included in every report contained the

number of dependents - but did not list the nature of the relationship between the dependent and the parolee nor any other information. The Pre-Sentence report, which was also included in the parole file, did contain a family evaluation which provided some information regarding the children. However, for many women this report had been written several years earlier and there were no up-dated versions of the family history. The parole files proved helpful only in obtaining demographic information.

It was decided to gather some preliminary information from the parole offices where the women were located so as to select a sample of women for the study. The first and most basic question in deciding how and where to draw samples of women parolees was to determine the exact number and location of women on parole in the state of Michigan. This proved to be no easy task. The Research Bureau of the Department of Corrections did not have that information available. They knew the total number of parole clients but not the number of women clients. A meeting with the Probation and Parole Administrator for the Bureau of Field Services yielded similar results. It was decided to request a computer print-out to determine the number of women parolees in Michigan. Unfortunately, because of the large volume of work at the computer center, it took six months for that information to be made available. It was, therefore, not very useful in determining the sample since the project could not wait six months.

Field Services staff indicated that the largest percentage of parolees lived in Detroit; followed by Lansing, Grand Rapids, Flint and Kalamazoo. They called the field offices in these cities to obtain the number of women parolees. There were 227 women on parole in these five offices in May, 1980. They further estimated that approximately 80% of the parolees in Michigan were in Detroit (called "in-state") and 20% in other parts of Michigan (called "out-state").

Based on these estimates, the five largest parole areas in Michigan were used from which to draw a sample. These five areas included approximately 90% of the total number of parolees. The actual number of women parolees, as determined by the Bureau of Field Services through calls to each office made in April/May 1980, were:

Detroit	171	75.3%
Lansing	22	9.7%
Flint	15	6.6%
Grand Rapids	14	6.2%
Kalamazoo	5	2.2%
TOTAL	227	100.0%

Since the decision was made to obtain 50-60 interviews, it was first thought that by talking to a percentage of women from each parole area the desired number of interviews would be completed. However, the dissertation chairperson thought that getting one or two interviews from a city might not produce a representative sample from the area. At his suggestion, the Research Bureau, the Bureau of Field Services Administrator and several district supervisors were contacted to determine whether women parolees in certain cities were similar so that areas could be combined. They agreed that

women parolees in Flint would be most similar to women in Detroit because of the prevalence of the auto industry. They also thought that most "out-state" parolees would be similar (except for the very small number in the Upper Peninsula) so that parolees in Kalamazoo - or other "out-state" cities - would be similar to the women parolees in Lansing and Grand Rapids.

Therefore, it was decided that the sampling should be concentrated in Detroit, Lansing and Grand Rapids. The aim was to obtain:

40-45 interviews in Detroit
5-7 interviews in Lansing
5-7 interviews in Grand Rapids

A pilot study was conducted with two women in Lansing. Because the total population of women parolees was so small, the dissertation chairperson suggested doing a pilot interview with a woman who had completed parole. The parole supervisor agreed and provided the name of a woman to contact. She agreed to the interview and it was conducted in her office. Another woman who was on parole in the Lansing area was interviewed for the pilot study. The pilot interviews resulted in several changes in both the context of the interview and the interview itself. It became obvious that it was important for the parole agent to contact the woman prior to the interviewer. This did not occur in one of the pilot interviews and the woman was quite angry that her name had been given to someone without her permission. In the case of *the* pilot interview, the woman was no longer on parole and so

she certainly had a point that the parole agent should not have been giving her name out. When asked whether she thought women who were currently on parole would be as upset and angry as she was if the parole agent did not contact them about the study before the interviewer called, she said she thought that they too would be upset that their names were given out even though the parole agents had the right to do so. There seemed to be no point in antagonizing the women and so the parole agents were requested to inform the women about this study before they were contacted.

One of the pilot interviews took place in the woman's office and there were other people near-by. This situation highlighted the need for the interviews to take place in private. During the first pilot interview, the interviewer tried to fill in all the responses on the form even though the interview was being recorded. This proved to inhibit the flow in the conversation. The woman being interviewed kept waiting for the interviewer to stop writing. During the second pilot interview, only the "closed-ended" questions were filled in during the interview, brief notes were taken on the "open-ended" questions. This interview seemed to flow much more freely and provided an opportunity to probe more completely. It was decided that this form of recording would be used for subsequent interviews. It was also decided that the interviewer would remain flexible enough to follow up on topics which required more discussion rather than rigidly asking questions in their numbered order. Many times the women's responses quite naturally

flowed into a question which was located later in the interview. The women in the pilot interview did not seem to have difficulty with the way any of the questions were worded other than a question concerning exchange of goods or services with other people. They did not understand the concept of exchange in this context nor did they think it sounded like a very good idea when it was explained to them. The word was changed to "borrow" and "loan" which increased the understanding of the question. In subsequent interviews the women did not have a difficult time understanding the question, but they still seemed to be opposed to the concept of borrowing.

Two dissertation committee members listened to the tape of one of the earliest interviews to critique the interviewer's style. It was suggested that the interviewer was being too empathetic and needed to develop more distance between herself and the woman being interviewed. These suggestions were followed in all subsequent interviews.

The Probation and Parole administrator contacted the regional administrators and area supervisors in Lansing, Grand Rapids and Detroit to tell them that this study would be conducted in their districts (see Appendix C). The researcher met with each of the supervisors to discuss the study and to solicit their suggestions for selecting a sample. Forms were distributed to the offices in Lansing and Grand Rapids to obtain preliminary information on the women parolees in those areas (see Appendix D). The district

supervisor in Detroit suggested that this information be obtained using a form similar to one the parole agents in that area already used. Such a form was devised and she distributed it to the seven parole offices in Detroit (see Appendix E).

The forms from the parole offices in Lansing, Grand Rapids and Detroit were returned within a few weeks. Since the sample was to be as representative as possible, it was first decided to select the sample according to the characteristics of all the women on parole. Dr. Tim Bynum suggested instead that a random sample be used since otherwise certain characteristics (age, offense, etc.) would be emphasized. This suggestion was followed. Since the intent of the research was to explore the relationship between women offenders and their children, only those women who had biological children, whether or not they were reunited with them after prison, were included in the samples to be interviewed.

In Lansing and Grand Rapids, the names of the women with biological children were put in a box and randomly selected. The names were listed in the order in which they were chosen. In Detroit, a table of random numbers was used and the women chosen were listed according to that selection process. A list of the names of these women was then sent to the respective parole agents. They were requested to inform the women the study was being conducted and to ask if the women would like to discuss their possible participation

with the researcher. The parole agents were instructed not to either encourage or discourage the women from participating but rather to determine if they were willing to be contacted.

The time from when the name of a woman for an interview was randomly selected until the time the interview might actually occur was a difficult period. Some women initially told the parole officer they did not wish to participate. Others made and broke or did not show up for one or several appointments. The final tabulation of the number of women who were interviewed for this study is represented in Table 1.

Table 1
Participants Interviewed for Study

Total Randomly Selected	Detroit 105	Grand Rapids 11	Lansing 15
Interviewed	44	7	6
Declined	9	0	5
Could not contact	14	3	3
Discharged	8	0	0
Jailed	7	0	1
Absconded	7	0	0
Letter/No Show	6	0	0
Reschedule/No Show	3	0	0
Transfer	2	0	0
Hospital	2	0	0
Moved out of State	1	0	0
No children before prison	1	0	0
Psychiatric Treatment	1	0	0
Too upset to be interviewed	0	1	0
Total Interviews Used in Study	43	7	5

Interviews with two of the women could not be used because in one case the woman had not had her child until

after the woman's release from incarceration and that did not become evident until the interview had begun (her name was mistakenly put into the sample) and in one case the tape recorder had not been working, so the interview could not be used. Nine of the women who were interviewed missed at least one scheduled appointment before the interview actually took place. Twelve of the fourteen women who declined, did so to their parole officers. One declined after obtaining more information from the researcher and the other declined after missing several scheduled appointments.

It was decided that attempts would be made to contact the women at different times of the day and evening for at least seven consecutive days before designating them as a "could not contact."

As is depicted in Table 1, eight women were discharged from parole between the time the parole officers compiled the list and the time an attempt was made to contact them for an interview (a time period of up to 3 months depending on when they were contacted for an interview). Seven women were in jail at the time of the interviews and seven others had absconded.

Twelve of the women who were randomly selected to participate in the study had no phones by which they could be reached. Letters were sent to their homes briefly explaining the study and arranging a time for them to be interviewed. Of these twelve women, six did not show up for the scheduled interview, two showed up at the appointed time without any

further correspondence, two others were ultimately interviewed but the parole agents helped to schedule alternate times for the interview, and two of the women were in jail.

Three women in the study did not show up for scheduled appointments and they ultimately were never interviewed: one woman because she could not be reached after she did not show for her appointment and the other two women because they did not show up for several alternate appointments. One woman was contacted 12 times and the other woman was contacted 21 times in total. Two women in the sample transferred to parole districts out of the Detroit area. Two women were in the hospital for prolonged stays. One woman from the sample was currently living in a psychiatric foster home while on parole. One woman had not had any children before or during prison and her name had incorrectly been added to the list. One woman had moved out of state and was not available for an interview. One woman arrived for the interview after just having been thrown out of her house by her boyfriend. She was crying and very upset, obviously in no frame of mind to be interviewed. Another interview was scheduled for a time after she had a chance to work out this situation. She readily agreed, but did not show up for the rescheduled appointment.

The attitude of the parole agents in each office toward the study had an effect on how readily the researcher was able to contact the women parolees from that area. For instance, some parole agents were very willing to locate a

woman by calling her at a friend's house or by rearranging their (the parole agent's) appointment with the woman so she would be able to meet with the researcher. The parole agents in the Grand Rapids and Detroit West offices were especially helpful.

The women were allowed to select the site for the interview. It was emphasized that the interview should occur in a setting where there would not be a lot of interruptions and where conversation would be conducted in private. Many women chose to do the interviewing in the parole office when they came for their monthly report. Others chose their home and several chose restaurants. One of the earlier interviews was conducted at a truckstop restaurant around 5:00 in the evening (the researcher picked the woman up after work). It became obvious from this interview that certain types of restaurants were not conducive and that certain times would prohibit a relaxed atmosphere for the interview (because of the heavy business).

The following is a breakdown of where the interviews took place:

parole office	30
woman's home	19
restaurant	5
researcher's office	1

The interviews lasted from 40 minutes to over 2 hours. Some of the women talked quite freely about their thoughts and experiences while others gave fairly concise responses. Most of the women were very cooperative with several

commenting that this was the first time they had spoken about these feelings to anyone. The women were asked if the interviews could be taped. They all agreed to the tape recording except for two. For those two women their responses were written on the interview form. For the women who were being tape recorded, the responses to most of the "closed-ended" questions and a few notes on the "opened-ended" questions were written on the form by the researcher. The women were all paid \$10.00 in cash for their participation in the study. They signed forms stating that they had received the money. Demographic information was obtained from the parole files after the interviews were completed.

Eighteen parole agents were also interviewed to discover how much importance they put on the women's relationship to their children during parole. These interviews were all "opened-ended" questions and were tape recorded. The parole agents were also asked to describe the planning they did and expectations they had for offender mothers.

After the interviews were conducted, it was decided to compare the interviewed sample to all the women on parole in Michigan. By this time the computer printout was available, but it appeared there were a number of mistakes in the printout. For instance, it showed that there were 469 women currently on parole. A later report sent in by all the parole agents showed that several months later there were 354 women on parole. Since Department of Corrections officials said there were no basic differences in trends during this time,

it can be assumed that the computer printout was not accurate. Examples of the inaccuracy include the fact that several women on the computer printout were shown to be living in male residential centers at different cities in Michigan. Therefore, in order to assure accuracy in obtaining the exact number and some characteristics of the women on parole in Michigan, letters were sent to the 69 parole offices throughout the state (see Appendix F). Responses were received from 44 offices. Follow-up letters were then sent to the remaining 25 offices (see Appendix G). All the parole offices in Michigan responded after the follow-up letter. Their responses indicated that there were 354 women on parole in the state of Michigan as of September 15, 1980.

The Method of Analysis

The goal of the data analysis was to provide demographic and descriptive information about offender mothers in Michigan and to generate grounded theory regarding the relationship between women offenders and their children. Demographic information from the files and from the interviews was organized to establish a profile of the women. Information from these two sources was compared. Information from the "closed-ended" questions was coded so that frequency counts and correlations could be used to discover various relationships (for instance, do younger women tend to reunite with their children less frequently as is suggested by the literature). The more difficult analysis was the weaving together of the ideas that emerged from the "opened-ended" questions into

some form of grounded theory. The Glaser and Strauss (1967) "constant comparative method" was used. It involved joint coding and analysis in order to generate theory in a systematic way. This is aimed at producing a theory that is "integrated, consistent, plausible, close to the data - yet in a form clear enough to be readily, if only partially, operationalized for testing and quantitative research (Glaser and Strauss, 1967:103).

Initially a list of emerging themes that developed during the interview process was maintained. Then the interview tapes were all listened to and responses completed on the "closed-ended" questionnaire. Additional themes developed during this process. A student was hired to completely transcribe the interview tapes. This student checked the information from the "closed-ended" questions that had previously been recorded to assure their accuracy and completely transcribed the rest of the interview tapes.

The responses from the transcribed tapes were coded. Color-coded stickers were used to identify major topics and clusters of responses. Categories were continually clarified and refined according to emerging themes. Transcriptions which had already been coded were re-read to assure there was a close correspondence between the collected data and the developing themes. For instance, the theme of the different meanings attached to physical presence had not been expected and the researcher did not recognize its pervasiveness until at least five complete interviews had been coded. When those

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five transcriptions were re-read, there were several additional examples which were used in developing the theme.

When the coding and re-reading of some of the tapes was completed, a master list of categories with all the related responses was developed. As the coding of the majority of the transcriptions was completed, fewer and fewer "new" dimensions to a category were discovered. Rather, the women were confirming some of the points which had been made in earlier transcriptions. From this master list of categories, it was possible to identify and discuss the major themes and ultimately theories which evolved from the interviews. The various dynamics of the theme were examined and examples given from the women's direct responses concerning the issue. From this information, hypotheses were developed which could be tested in subsequent research projects.

Demographic Characteristics of Women Parolees

Before presenting the findings from this study, it will be helpful to know the demographic information concerning all women parolees in the state of Michigan and the same information concerning the women parolees who participated in the study. The data which was supplied by the parole supervisors throughout the state is presented in Appendix H.

Demographic information concerning the sample population and that supplied by the parole offices on all women parolees in the state was compared and is contained in Table 2. Since 55 women parolees participated in the study (out of a state population of 354 women parolees), 15% of all

women parolees in Michigan were study participants. See Table 2.

Table 2
Demographic Data

Characteristics	Total Population Women Parolees (in Michigan) N = 354	Random Sample N = 55	
		Interview Information	File Information
Average Age	29.6	31.8	31.7
Ethnicity			
Black	65.4%	Not asked	83.6%
White	32.7%		16.4%
Hispanic	1.6%		0
Other	.3%		0
Offense			
Property ^a	58.0%	Not Asked	43.0%
Violent	41.0%		29.0%
Other	1.0%		28.0%
Months Incarcerated	24.0	Not asked	18.8
Months on Parole to Date	10.0	Not asked	9.5
Women Who are Mothers			
Yes	76.6%	100.0%	Information Not in File
No	23.4%	0	
Women Currently Living			
All Children	51.0%	52.7%	"
Some Children	14.5%	30.9%	"
No Children	34.0%	16.4%	"
Unknown or Deceased	.5%	1.0%	"
Average Number of Children	2.36	3.0	"
Marital Status			
Legally Married	12.0%	12.7%	5.5%
Never Married	40.0%	30.9%	31.0%
Separated	15.0%	18.2%	5.0%
Divorced	24.0%	29.1%	26.0%
Widowed	6.0%	9.1%	5.5%
Common Law	3.0%	.0%	27.0%

^a When given a property/violent offense dichotomy, corrections professionals will typically categorize specific property offenses into the "property" category and all non-property offenses into the violent category. Thus, this category would include those women sentenced for violent crimes, such as involuntary manslaughter and armed robbery, as well as those sentenced for drug offenses.

The average age of the total population (29.6) and the sample population (31.7) was slightly different. One likely explanation is that when the parole officers were compiling their figures, they used the age reported in the file as of the time the woman was received on parole. Thus, since the women had been on parole an average of 10 months, and the two sets of figures were compiled three months apart, the ages for the two groups are quite likely similar.

Ethnicity was another factor which reflected some differences between the study population and the total population. The study population contained a higher percentage of black women (83.6%) than did the total population (65.4%). This difference is probably a result of the cities which were chosen for the study. As was stated earlier, due to the relatively small number of women parolees in cities other than Detroit, the random sample was selected from Detroit, Lansing and Grand Rapids. This sampling strategy probably increased the percentage of black women in the group interviewed.

The differences in offense categories for the sample and total population are probably due to the way they were reported. Figures from the parole officers throughout the state were reported as either property or violent offenses. Figures from the files of the study sample contained response categories for property, violent, drug, or 'other'. So it is reasonable to assume that if the drug or 'other' category of offenses were collapsed into a property/violent offense dichotomy, the figures between the sample and total populations

would be quite similar.

The percentage of women in the sample study who reported living with their children (83%) was higher than that reported by the parole officers throughout the state (76%). The interviewed women and the parole officers reported very similar figures concerning the study sample of women who lived with all their children (52%) and the total of all women parolees living with all their children (51%). There was a greater discrepancy in the reports concerning the number of women living with some or none of their children. The parole officers reported that among all women parolees who had children, 14.5% lived with some of their children and 34% lived with none of their children. The women in the study sample reported that 31% lived with some of their children and 16% lived with none of their children. There seem to be two possibilities that could account for the differences. More women in the study sample might actually have been living with some of their children than were those in the total population of women parolees. Women who were living with at least some of their children might have been more likely to agree to participate in a study concerning the relationship with their children. However, there is another factor which may have influenced these findings. The official parole records do not uniformly record whether a woman is living with any or all of her children. Unless there was a problem concerning a woman's children which came to the attention of a parole officer, or the parole officer

continually asked about the children, the parole officer might not know the actual living arrangements of the children. Official records make no mention of children after the Pre-Sentence report is submitted prior to a woman's incarceration. Therefore, the parole officers who submitted the information for the study were reporting what they believed to be true. When the study participants were interviewed, many reported that their parole officers did not talk to them about their children at all. One woman even stated that her parole plan prohibits her from living in the house where her daughter and common-law husband lived. However, she said she was at that house everyday to take care of her daughter while her common-law husband worked; she also spent some nights there. The interview took place in that house early one morning and her daughter awakened during the course of the interview. The woman stated that she was primarily responsible for her daughter's care even though the parole officer did not know it. It is possible that there were other situations where the parole officers did not know the entire situation surrounding the care of the women's children, and the women wanted to keep it that way. Many women said, either directly or indirectly, that "the state" could tell them what to do regarding parole but had no business interfering with their families.

The average number of children for women in the study population was 3.0. Additional characteristics which were compiled on the women in the study sample are summarized in

the following table.

Table 3
Demographic Information
on Sample Population

Characteristic	Number of Women	Percentage
Vocational training (including while in prison)	28	50.9
Working at time of interview	16	29.1
Receiving state aid	27	49.0
Incarcerated only once	32	58.2
Released to community center prior to parole	36	65.5
Released directly to parole	19	34.5
History of drug abuse in parole file	32	58.0
History of alcohol abuse in parole file	7	12.0

In addition to the above information, the average education level of the women in the study was 11.3 years. Many of them had increased their education level while in prison. The average age at the time of the woman's first arrest was 22 years, although 30% were arrested by the time they were 18 years old. The average age of this group when they first went to prison was 26.7 years. The average amount of time the women spent at a community corrections placement was 7.3 months.

The demographic characteristics of the women in the study sample differed from those in the Glick and Neto (1977)

study as seen in Table 4. Glick and Neto selected 14 states (including Michigan) which represented the range of the types of correctional services/institutions for female offenders. Their study included women in state and federal prisons, local jails, and community-based corrections programs.

Table 4
Comparison Demographic Characteristics

Characteristic	Glick & Neto	Current Study
Black population	50%	83%
Age	2/3 under 30	40% under 30
Unmarried	80%	85%
Number who were mothers	70%	83%
Average number of children	2	3

The demographic characteristics of the random sample of women parolees in Michigan was somewhat different than the profile from the Glick and Neto Study. These differences are probably due to the difference in the composition of the study groups (Glick and Neto studied women in jails, prisons and community-based programs) as well as possible regional differences.

There was an interesting difference between a result of the present study and a similar item in McGowan and Blumenthal's study. McGowan and Blumenthal conducted a national mail survey of prison and jail programs for women offenders. Two-thirds of the children of incarcerated mothers were under 10 years and 1/4 were under 4 years of age. Among the women who participated in the present study, the children were

somewhat older. Forty-eight percent of the children were 10 years or under and only 13% were 4 years or younger.

In summary, the study sample in this project more closely resembles the overall population of female parolees in Michigan than it does the profiles compiled by researchers doing national surveys.

Demographic Characteristic Relationships

Several demographic relationships proved to be significant in the study population. For instance, the older the woman, the more likely she was to have finished high school or its equivalence, as seen in Table 5 ($P < .05$).

Table 5
Relationship Between Age and Schooling

Age	Schooling	
	Completed high school or equivalence	Did not complete high school or equivalence
25 years & under	2 (20%)	8 (80%)
over 25 years	29 (65%)	16 (35%)

Not surprisingly, the age at which a woman had her first child also affected the chances she had to complete high school or its equivalence. The younger a woman was when she had her first child, the less likely she was to complete high school ($P < .01$). See Table 6.

Table 6
Relationship Between Age When Had
First Child and Schooling

Age when had first child	Schooling	
	Completed high school or equivalence	Did not complete high school or equivalence
17 years and under	7 (33%)	14 (67%)
over 17 years	24 (71%)	10 (29%)

The younger women also seemed to be sentenced for violent offenses in a slightly higher proportion than the older women ($P < .05$). See Table 7.

Table 7
Relationship Between Age and
Type of Offense

Age	Offense Category	
	Violent offense commitment	Non-violent offense commitment
25 years and under	6 (60%)	4 (40%)
over 25 years	10 (24%)	32 (76%)

Knowing the characteristics of the women who participated in this study, it is possible to now look more closely at their lives, especially their relationship with their children.

CHAPTER 4

SEPARATING WOMEN OFFENDERS AND THEIR CHILDREN

Incarceration affects offenders' lives in various ways-- one of them is to separate women offenders from their children. As traumatic as this event can be for both the women and their children, most women offenders state they did not consciously disregard the needs of their children when they got involved in criminal activity. A number of the women in the study actually said that they stole because of their children in one way or another. One woman, who at the time of the interview was laid off as a computer programmer and who supported three children, her husband (who had not worked for three years), and her brother and sister, explained:

When a child gets to Junior High and he says he needs a pair of shorts and you don't have \$7 or \$8 to buy these shorts, the first thing you say is this kid needs a pair of shorts and if you can't borrow from anywhere first thing you're gonna think about is getting him these shorts one way or another... I started stealing.

Not all women offenders start "boosting" to buy clothes for their children. Others developed an expensive drug habit which they supported by stealing. In the study population, parole records indicated that 32 women (58%) had drug histories. But again, the drug habit and related activities were not typically a simple choice between their children and the drugs. Not only did the addiction tend to

mute the woman's ability to make an informed choice, but in some cases the drugs were actually an immediate remedy to pressures caused at least in part by the children. A woman who was on a special release status arranged to have her children live in the same neighborhood as her placement because her ex-husband and other family members refused to care for them. She was only allowed to see the children with the field agent's permission even though they lived around the corner from her. She commented:

If she [field agent] wasn't in a good mood then I just couldn't have them, at least to me that's the way it went. So then I started using drugs - how stupid I've been... I found the fastest escape I could.

Thus, the question regarding whether children are really important to women offenders cannot be approached from the simple observation that criminal involvement of any kind precludes family concern. Rather the issue of the children's importance - and the experience of separating them from their mothers who are incarcerated - is best approached from the perspective of the people who are actually involved.

Of the 55 women in the study, 47 (85%) had been living with at least some of their children prior to their most recent incarceration. Thirty-eight women (69%) were living with all of their children prior to this incarceration. The women in this study had an average of three children each with the actual size of their families ranging from one to nine children. The mean age of the oldest child was 13 years, the median age of the oldest child was 11.8 years. The average

age of all children in the study was 12.1 years. The mothers participating in the study had a total of 164 children.

Many issues must be examined in order to explain the experience of separating women offenders and their children. Some of these dynamics tended to unite mothers and their children even though they were physically separated. Other factors served to divide them - with future consequences that are yet unknown.

The Pain of Separation

One of the most striking findings of the study was the depth of pain that the majority of the participants felt at being away from their children. Although reunited with their children at the time of the interview, several women cried repeatedly during the interview as they discussed being away from their children.

Many of the women stated that the hardest part about being in prison was being away from their children. Typical of such comments was the following:

That was the hardest! The time wasn't, being there wasn't, dealing with the women wasn't, even being locked up wasn't. It was wondering what my kids were going through...I had got desperate, really desperate for awhile there [to see children].

Each of the women dealt with the pain in their own way. One woman asked her husband not to bring the children to visit after the first time, "It hurt to sit in there and watch your child walk out of there. I told my husband to have them call and I didn't want to see them. It hurt."

Not all the women expressed suffering pain at being away from their children. One woman commented that to survive in prison you cannot worry about your family because you have to be concerned for yourself and what is going on around you. She represented the feeling of only a few women.

One interesting relationship that emerged from the interviews was that the very pain the women felt in being separated from their children often served to help unite them after release from prison. Prison gave the women a lot of time to think about their lives and to miss their children. Whether it was absence making fond memories or a sincere commitment to change, many women seemed to leave prison with a resolution to take better care of their children. When asked if her feelings toward her daughter had changed at all while she was in prison, this woman made a statement echoed in other interviews:

I think my love might have grown and maybe
the responsibility and more determination.
I think a lot of determination to be a good
mother.

It is difficult to assess all the factors that might help explain how the separation caused by imprisonment might actually help to unite some women and their children. Quite likely, the guilt the women felt at having left their children and the problems the children had to face without them served to make the mothers resolve to change. But another factor seemed to be relevant. The women aged during the time they were separated from their families. For the group

studied, the average length of time served away from their children (including community corrections for the 67% who went) was 27.3 months. Some women, however, served longer times, with one woman serving six years. There was a natural maturation that occurred. Most of the mothers in prison had their first child when they still felt like children themselves. The average age of the study group women at the time of birth for their first child was 18 years. However, 11 women (20%) had their first child by the time they were 16. One of the women was a mother by the time she was 12. As with many teenagers, the women who became mothers at an early age were still experiencing their "wild oats" stage and had no plans for settling down. The birth of a child was more likely to be viewed a sign of increased independence and adulthood than it was a sign of parenthood.¹ But after "running the streets" for awhile and eventually serving time in prison, the women were older and perhaps emotionally more prepared to assume the role of a mother. The separation caused by imprisonment - and the mother's own passage from childhood to adulthood - are strands that serve to unite children and offender mothers after their release from prison. One woman said:

I went in prison when I was a kid...and
came out a woman and a mother...

However, other aspects of the separation between offender mothers and their children did seem to divide them far more than unite them. The child's reliance on and attach-

ment to another caregiver, the child's resentment at having the mother leave, and the life history that occurred for the child during the mother's incarceration were factors caused by the separation which disrupted the relationship between offender mothers and their children.

One of the particularly painful aspects of being separated from children occurred with the two women in the study who gave birth to their children while still incarcerated. One of the women explained her feelings:

I went to Detroit General to have her and I stayed about three days. They let me feed her there. I wanted to breast feed her but because I was in prison I couldn't. The only times I really got to see her was feeding times. I was very proud of her. I mean she was just beautiful when she was born. And when the day came for us to be separated I just talked to her and let her know that this was something that had to be done and for her I was just going to do the time so I could come home to her and nothing like that would ever ever happen again. The hard part was knowing she was only three days old and I wasn't going to get to be with her for at least another six years or so. That's something I never want to go through again. Its hard to explain if you've never been there - the inner feelings you have. It's a traumatic experience.

The other woman who was pregnant when she went to prison explained how it helped her deal with prison for a short while:

Well, it was kind of nice in a way that you weren't alone. You know, like when they locked you up in your room at night, you had somebody to talk to. And, I don't know, it was kinda a good feeling, I wish I could have stayed pregnant the whole time I was there... I think everybody's got a little of that mother instinct in them and when they see

somebody else who's pregnant, you know, everybody just wants to share it with you...they try to prepare you for when you have the child and you leave it. But I had mine three months early so I hadn't gotten to that stage yet.

This woman had to leave her son in the hospital since he was premature and only weighed two pounds at birth. She had him placed in a foster home when he was ready to leave the hospital but several months later her mother decided to take care of him in her home until the woman (baby's mother) was released from prison.

The pain of being separated from their children seemed particularly evident when the mothers related some of the situations that occurred while they were in prison. One woman discussed problems her two sons had after one of them was sexually assaulted.

[Second son] was assaulted by 6 boys. And [my] other son went wild - messed up the whole family. This happened on the playground. Both sons went to psychiatrists [at school]. One reacted in a way that was fighting mad - anyone that came near him that was a boy he thought this was gonna happen. [My] other son couldn't relate to anyone.

Other problems faced by the mothers during their incarceration included a daughter who died from a drug overdose, a house burning down, a grandchild dying and a young daughter being molested by a social worker. More common problems included conflict with caregivers over discipline and visiting, children going to the hospital or getting sick, and being away from the children at "special" times such as Christmas, birthdays, school functions, etc. Perhaps what aggravated

these problems was the sense of guilt and helplessness the mothers felt at not being able to either prevent these tragedies or at least comfort their children. A woman who had been in prison three times, explained why it was so much harder this last time after she had had her first child.

See, before I was young and I seemed to pop through it but this time, I couldn't deal with it and I was still so guilty. The guilt was eating me up about my baby... my mother had to take care of her - knowing she had the other 2 kids [woman's mother's children]. All of it was eating me up - I couldn't deal with it no more.

Effect on Children

Some of the occurrences concerning children which caused pain for the mothers during their incarceration were not a result of the mother's incarceration per se. Rather, because they took place while the mother was incarcerated, she was unable to be present with the child to help deal with the problems. That in itself had an effect on some children. In other situations, the mother's imprisonment itself had an effect on her children.

The majority of women stated they could see some effects on their children from having been separated from them. In fact, 74% (40) of the women said their children experienced problems during and possibly due to their incarceration. The children tended to respond in a variety of ways to their mother's incarceration. The Sack, Seidler and Thomas (1976) and Stanton (1980) studies suggest that a parent's incarceration results in children fighting and having problems in

school. That finding was confirmed in the present study. Ten mothers specifically said (without directly being asked) their children had become involved in fighting since their incarceration. Although more mothers of boys commented that their children had started fighting frequently, the observation was not limited to boys. When asked if she noticed any changes in her daughter's behavior, one woman commented:

Yea, she would behave kinda odd! She would fight all the time. Like one of her friends would say, "Well, your momma's in jail!" She would fight her - hit her! There was a lot of problem with that...She had friends but she would have to play with the little boys instead of the little girls! But her little girlfriends, they would say, "We not going to play with [child's name] today because [child's name] fight me!"

The problems in school typically included failing grades and fighting. In fact, when asked if their children experienced any problems while they were in prison, eight women commented that their children's grades had fallen during the time of their incarceration. But some school problems were more severe. One woman discussed problems her daughter had:

She started having temper tantrums. I had come home on a furlough. She had been put out of school...My mother came and got me early enough to where I could go up to the school and talk to her teacher. They said that [daughter's name] missed me, because they knew I was away from home...they wanted her to talk to a psychologist and just see what was really bothering her. That's just what her main problem was - by me not being there and she couldn't see me. She just...nobody could control her! She would like throw chairs or somebody would tell her to do something, like the teachers, and she just wouldn't do it...Her grades had dropped and everything. Then when I came home she just went back to normal.

The anger that the children seemed to express through fighting also surfaced in other ways. Several women commented that their children hated all police because of what happened to the mother. Yet another woman's daughter directed her anger to anyone seen as a part of "the system." The woman related an incident where her 16 year old daughter became indignant with the power company when the lights in the house went off during a power problem in the neighborhood. In telling her mother why she had been so angry when she called the power company to complain, she said, "I thought they was messing with you again." Three women reported that their children became involved with juvenile authorities during this time.

There was a significant relationship between the mother's age and whether or not the children experienced problems. Of the 10 women who were 25 and younger, 50% reported that the children experienced problems during their incarceration. However, 78% of the 44 women who were over 25 stated that their children experienced problems ($P < .05$). In addition, eight women in the 25 and under age group stated they lived with some or all of their children before incarceration while 39 women in the over 25 age category said they lived with all or some of their children prior to incarceration. A reasonable interpretation of the relationship between the mother's age and whether the child experienced problems might be that since fewer younger mothers lived with their children prior to their incarceration,

there was less disruption to the child's life when she went to prison and thus the child was less likely to experience behavior problems. Or, perhaps, the younger mother was just less aware of behavior problems. It is important to note, however, that even if 50% of the children were experiencing problems, that was still a lot of children whose lives were disrupted.

It is important to recognize that the women who reported that their children experienced problems were not actually living with the children at the time they thought the children were having problems. The mothers may have had vested interests in perceiving the child to be having problems (such as reconfirming that only they - the mother - could adequately care for the child). On the other hand, the mothers could have been accurate in their assessment that their children experienced problems. McGowan and Blumenthal (1978) stated that many children did experience problems as a result of being separated from the mother due to incarceration.² Therefore, it is necessary to remember that while self-reported information is important, it does have limitations.

There were other effects that the women perceived their children experienced as a result of their incarceration. Although only two women perceived that their children got involved with drugs as a result of their behavior, it is possible that many more of the older children were actually involved with drugs. It is reasonable to assume that some

mothers either did not want to acknowledge a child's drug problem or did not want to discuss it with a person who had any connection with "the system." An indication, however, of the effect a mother's drug habit and subsequent imprisonment could have on her children is illustrated in the following comment:

He [oldest son] said he was angry with me.
He didn't pull no punches. He told me
that he used drugs...He said he did it
because he was trying to get back at me
and his father [who was also a drug addict].

Most mothers of school-age children reported that their children were teased by their friends because of the mother's incarceration. Not surprisingly, this occurrence prompted some of the fighting. Other children were put into situations that would prove difficult for any child. One young girl who lived with her mother's parents for six years was taken into bars regularly since that was where her grandparents (both alcoholics according to the woman) spent most of their time. Two teenage boys were left to fend for themselves during their mother's absence; she was not sure where they lived.

Several children experienced health problems which appear to have been aggravated by the mother's absence. One six year old boy who had asthma quite severely had to be admitted to the hospital four times within five months while the mother was in prison. Until her incarceration, the boy had lived with her and had never been admitted to the hospital. He also suffered from malnutrition during this time

when he lived with his father. Another boy who had an enlarged heart experienced complications which the mother felt were caused by the stress of her leaving him for the first time.

There were other, more subtle effects on the children whose mothers had been incarcerated. Twenty women commented that their children either had nightmares or experienced some emotional problems since the mother's incarceration. The children worried that the patterns of the past would be repeated and that their mother would leave again. Said one woman who spent time in prison, a drug program and a resident home:

She [11 year old daughter] puts her arms around me and says, "Now mommy, I don't ever want to lose you!" She'll get up in the middle of the night and she'll come down and look in the bedroom just to make sure I'm still there. And my son [8 years old]... will say, "Mommy, will you lay down with me for awhile...and "I'll tell you a story." So I'll do that with him just to reassure him that I'm there. They're frightened...They call me at work a zillion times a day. My daughter called me three times today to tell me her stomach hurt and her nose was running. I know her stomach don't hurt, if it hurts, she's making it hurt. She's worried. [They call] just to make sure I'm at work and not out doing something I ain't got no business doing.

The stress these children felt also took other forms. When asked if the children experienced any problems during the time the mothers were in prison, five women responded that their children had emotionally withdrawn. One 11 year old girl became so withdrawn she would not talk to anyone.

Eventually, the mother took her to Atlanta because she (the mother) was "on the run." The woman got a job, spent time with her daughter and put her in nursery school while she was working. Within three months her daughter came out of it and wanted to return home. In another example, a four month old baby whose mother was sent to prison cried so constantly after the mother left that she had to be hospitalized. After running a series of tests, the doctors were unable to identify the cause of the child's crying. The woman reported that her daughter was released from the hospital and eventually the crying stopped.

Not all mothers thought their being sent to prison had an effect on their children. Fourteen mothers (26%) specifically stated that it did not have an effect. In most of these cases, the mother did not seem to be the main caregiver prior to her incarceration.

In discussing the effects of separation caused by imprisonment, Stanton (1980) also cited the disruption caused to children's lives by having more than one living arrangement during their mother's incarceration and being separated from their sisters and brothers during this time. In the present study it is difficult to give an exact figure regarding whether the children had more than one living arrangement since some situations seemed to be changeable without being seen as unusual. For instance, a child might move back and forth between a grandmother's and an aunt's home yet the mother perceived that as quite natural. It would seem that

Stanton was referring to permanent changes in living situations. This was not clearly determined in the present study since a distinction was not made between permanent residence changes and the fluid residence exchange which seemed to exist. It was easier to determine whether brothers and sisters were separated. In this study, 22 brothers and sisters were separated when the mother went to prison, 23 brothers and sisters remained together, 9 women had only one child and there was one missing case.

Although the long-term effect of separation on the children whose mothers participated in this study will not be known until they are grown, the immediate effects on the children's lives are evident from their mother's description.

Custody

The issue of custody proved to be complex and bewildering for the women in the study. During an interview for this study, an attorney with the Michigan Attorney General's Office who was assigned to the Department of Social Services said, in referring to custody issues, "its a very fuzzy, fuzzy area." Although the attorney pointed out that unique characteristics in each case could alter any generalizations, she offered the following explanation of custody policies and regulations in Michigan.

A woman who gives birth to a child becomes that child's legal guardian unless a court action intervenes. A woman could petition the Probate Court to grant temporary guardianship of her children to another person. This is a formal

petition and usually involves a hearing. A woman who simply signs a paper saying she wants another person to care for her children is, at the most, granting them Power-of-Attorney. Custody or guardianship cannot be transferred in that way. Power-of-Attorney transfer is usually a temporary matter and the attorney said a recent law now limits the granting of Power-of-Attorney to six months.

A relative, protective services worker, etc. can also petition the Probate Court to grant guardianship to someone other than the mother. The mother does not have to agree to the proceeding but, again, a hearing will usually be held.

Guardianship and legal custody are most frequently synonymous terms although in certain situations they may not be. The guardian is legally responsible for the support of the child - although in some case may not have physical custody of the child. For instance, a child put into foster care would be in the custody of the foster parents but the mother or even the court could be the legal guardian. Legal guardianship cannot be changed without a court action, initiated by the guardians themselves, other relatives, a protective service worker, etc. However, most people use the term "custody" to refer to "guardianship" and do not have a functional knowledge of the differences between the terms. Since both the women and the parole agents used the term "custody," it will be used in this report.

Responses to questions about custody ranged from a clear explanation regarding who had legal custody to statements

that no one did. The parole files offered no information regarding custody unless there had been a particular situation which occurred involving the custody of the children. Thus, the women were questioned about any papers they signed or discussions they had regarding custody to try and determine exactly who had legal custody of the children.

The following table depicts the legal custodians as described by the respondents.

Table 8
Legal Custodians During Mother's Incarceration

Custody	Number	Percentage
Woman (respondent)	23	41.8
Woman's mother	9	16.4
Court	5	9.1
Does not know	5	9.1
Woman and child's father	3	5.5
Woman's mother & father	1	1.8
Child's father	1	1.8
Child's father's mother	1	1.8
Other	7	12.7

Although they comprised the single largest category, the women themselves retained custody in less than half of the cases. The woman's mother was the next most likely custodian followed by court custody. It seemed interesting that in five cases the women had no idea who had legal

custody of their children. The confusion many women expressed regarding legal custody was epitomized by these women who had no knowledge regarding their child's legal custody.

In the women's perceptions, one of the most common, yet possibly erroneous, measures of legal custody was the equation of custody with physical presence. Thus, wherever the child was physically living was understood as conferring on the adult in charge the legal responsibility for custody. Although no court or personal papers were signed, nor even conversations held in some cases, many women assumed that whoever cared for the child thus acquired legal custody. One woman, who did not file any legal papers or sign any notes, put it this way:

She [woman's mother] had legal custody [of one daughter] because she was my mother and I wanted it to be that way. My father... he had legal custody [of other daughter] because he was with her.

Another woman, who responded that her father (category "other" in chart) had legal custody of her daughter stated that her father "just took her [woman's only daughter] there and that was that - no court." A mother of four who said she did not want to discuss custody would only say that, "I believe my grandmother had custody of the baby, they just kept her, it was an understanding."

Underlying this reliance on physical presence as a determination of legal custody was a definite lack of knowledge regarding the legal aspects of custody. The issue of legal custody did not seem especially meaningful to the

women unless a situation arose which made it so. A woman who lost custody of her two daughters explained it this way:

[Woman's ex-husband and his current wife] got married and they both have custody of my girls. I don't remember signing over my custody slips or anything like that. I do remember signing over temporary custody to my sister but to him, no I don't. I didn't sign anything so I'm not sure how that works. So they [her two daughters] have been there ever since.

Another woman whose child lived between several friends' homes while she was in prison stated:

They [the state or county] didn't take her from me or anything so you know, I imagine you know, she was still under my custody.

One mother of three children took definite steps, in her mind, regarding custody. She explained her reasons for doing so:

...I had papers notarized. I composed them, I typed them up and I had them notarized. I sent my lawyer a copy and I sent her [sister-in-law to whom she gave temporary guardianship] a copy and I sent a copy to my mother. I had a copy. When I first got to jail [she was referring to the state prison] I didn't do that. It was a while before I did it but I had saw a lot of girls losing their kids. I saw a lot of things happening and it frightened me. I went to my counselor and asked her if I could. She said that the institution wouldn't pay for it. But if I had to do it I could type it up but that I'd have to pay to have it notarized and to have copies sent out but that I was free to do it if that was what I wanted to do. They just don't inform you of the things you can do to protect yourself. If you don't know them or don't ask questions, you're not told.

According to the attorney from the Attorney General's office, this woman would have only given her mother

Power-of-Attorney unless the woman's attorney had taken other actions that the woman did not discuss.

The language used by some of the women in discussing custody belied their feeling that "custody" was somehow beyond their control and was something that was done to them. Parents "were made" legal guardians, a sister "informed" one offender mother someone else was the child's guardian. Many of the women did not perceive that they had any power concerning custody decisions. Rather, their language portrayed the passive role they perceived to be theirs. Many women seemed either overwhelmed by the bureaucracy of custody or fearful that their offender status would assure a loss of custody. Few women felt they had much control regarding the decision of child custody.

One of the greatest fears the women expressed regarding custody was the perceived ever-present threat that the "state" or "county" would take their children from them. One woman who was not sure who should care for her child and who ultimately had her former sister-in-law move into her house stated, "I was afraid if I gave my kids up to the state I'd never get them back." Another woman said

...like sometimes the state will take
children because of the fact that they are
in jail...I was a little more clever than
that...

These sentiments were echoed by women who had or had heard examples to support their fear that the state would take children from their mothers. One woman said that while she was in prison, a woman had all six children taken from

her. She said:

They didn't put them in a foster home, they took those children. And that just tore that girl up. Unfortunately, that girl is dead today - she OD'd. Nothing to live for anymore!

Another woman stated that her oldest son (who would have been three years old) was placed in foster care the first time she went to prison and was then put up for adoption. She and her husband (who was released from prison shortly before her) were going to pursue legal action since she contended neither of them signed consent forms for the adoption. They were waiting to obtain permanent custody of their youngest son (who was 1½ years) before proceeding with the court action to regain custody of their oldest son. She said they feared retaliation by the state regarding their youngest son if they took any action concerning their oldest son.

Perhaps one of the most poignant stories regarding custody involved a 23 year old mother of two girls, aged seven and eight. The file information showed that this woman had been abused as a child, was forced by her mother to prostitute at age 13, was raped by her mother's boyfriend and became pregnant. She miscarried that baby after a beating. She then became pregnant and had her first child at 15. She had served almost five years in prison, during which time her children were sent to separate foster homes and then both were adopted. She was unclear or chose not to know how it all took place. The psychologist report in the file

stated that she was a deeply interested and concerned mother and the only thing keeping her together (in prison) was her hope that she would be able to take care of her children when released. At the interview, the woman herself was very emotional in talking about her children and the pain of not even knowing where they were. She said she had no hope of ever finding them again.

As could be seen in one of the previous examples, custody was sometimes given as insurance against something even worse happening. In that case, the mother saw her sister-in-law as a more desirable custodian than the state. Another woman, who resisted signing over temporary custody to her ex-husband, finally did so because she was afraid he would steal the children. Another mother signed papers giving temporary custody to her mother so that her ex-husband could not get permanent custody while she was in prison.

The issue of custody seemed also to become an avenue for settling or getting even for past disputes. In one case, the mother had custody of her son but her ex-husband had received custody of their daughter when he divorced the woman when she was sent to prison. The ex-husband refused to allow the woman to see her daughter, and the mother had gone to court to try and regain custody. However, her ex-husband had been telling her that they should get back together because she owed it to her daughter. The woman said she felt like her ex-husband (who had remarried) was trying to force her to have a sexual relationship and was using her daughter to do it.

Several ex-husbands used the threat of a custody battle to have some control over the women. One woman explained:

Yeah, he tried to take [son] away from me. And, you know, anytime he gets upset with me about something, that's the first thing he'll do. He'll run to his lawyer. Yeah. He uses the kids cause he knows thats the only way he can hurt me is to have my kids, you know, the family broken up...

In another situation, a woman had two children fathered by the same man but not the one she later married. After they divorced, this man tried to obtain custody. When asked why, the woman stated:

I believe for aggravation! That's what I believe. I mean, why after six or seven years decide you want these children? He's never contributed to their support or anything!

Not all of the past disputes with entangled custody issues involved former husbands. One woman signed custody of her two children over to her mother while she was in prison because she was getting a divorce and wanted to assure their welfare. At the time of the interview, the mother had refused to return custody to the woman. She said her mother wanted her to get married to a man her mother approved of before she could get her children back.

Not all of the women experienced a sense of powerlessness with regard to custody. The issue of custody caused some of the women to fight back and/or fight the system. Custody seemed to provide a motivation for taking definitive actions in some cases. One woman went into a drug program

not so much because she felt she needed it but because she thought it was the only way to have the court give her custody since her only son had been in foster care during her incarceration. She said:

It wasn't that I like the idea of the drug rehabilitation center but I did it to get [son] back so that's what happened...It was almost a year and I made house supervisor, that's more or less running the shop. Then they took me into court and gave me custody back. During that time the court had temporary custody even though [son] was living with me [at drug rehab program]. Once I was a graduate they gave custody back to me.

Another woman who had tried to take care of her children while she was in a resident home (because her ex-husband refused to care for them for many months and finally took them) but became involved with drugs again explained the resistance she met in trying to regain custody of her children:

She [woman's caseworker] told me that my ex-husband wasn't going to let me have the kids back and that my chances were really bad. Which naturally they would, been to prison, had a chance, messed the chance up, been on drugs, the whole bit...[but]...I'm feeling confident this whole time - got clean, got my head on right and got my priorities finally in the right place...Called my mother one night and she said, "If the kids are happy down there and your ex-husband is taking care of the kids...you shouldn't be complaining." And she had a lot of good points, she did, but she was skipping the main fact that I loved them and they loved me and we wanted to be together...and she kept arguing with me that I was wrong and should leave things well enough alone...And I told her I wasn't going to forget it! I never was going to forget it. I told my caseworker that and I told her I meant it! I'm glad it didn't now! [the woman had just recently regained custody].

Another woman chose to fight to regain custody of her

daughter because she was concerned that the environment she was living in was unsuitable (lots of people passing through the house and a lot of drinking and other things going on) and that her daughter had become very withdrawn. She said:

I feel like just going over there and taking her because that's what he did but I'm trying to do it the legal way.

Disputes regarding custody caused many problems for the children. Their allegiances were tested, their living arrangements changed, and they were unable to develop a sense of permanence with regard to their lives. Custody disputes were also difficult on the mothers, even though they tended to recognize their responsibility for the problems. A mother of a ten year old boy described her feelings when she learned her son had been placed in foster care:

I had a lot of hate. I had a lot of hate for my parole officer, the supervisor of the probation department...my mother, my dad because they didn't go get him, my in-laws. I had a lot of hate for everybody at the time. I felt like everybody has let me down until I finally realized that I did it to myself.

In summary, custody appeared to be an even more complex issue than the literature would indicate. Although McCarthy (1980) talked about the temporary and permanent loss of custody as one of the severe problems faced by incarcerated mothers, the lack of knowledge regarding the legal processes for custody and the sense of fear and powerlessness in the face of the state bureaucracy add an essential element to any discussion regarding custody issues for incarcerated women. In addition to being a primary problem for offender mothers

in and of itself, custody issues seemed to also be a tool to use with the women to either punish, subjugate, pressure or just control them. The way the women dealt with the legal issues of custody present an interesting insight into how the law affects the people it is supposed to serve. Few women perceived the courts as a protector for themselves or their children. The courts were perceived to be an adversary to be avoided, tricked - or at the very least, pleaded with. There did not seem to exist an intrinsic belief that the courts would mete out fairness. No doubt the women's lack of knowledge regarding court procedures contributed to their conception of the courts. They seemed to feel that strategies were needed when the courts got involved - as if simple truths were not enough.

Economics

Economic issues permeate any discussion of prisons. It is well-recognized that prisons house people primarily from lower socio-economic groups. In addition, many of the crimes for which women in this country are incarcerated are economically-related.³ Therefore, it should be no surprise that the issue of money continued to surface during the interviews with offender mothers. Forty-six percent of the women in the study group were committed for property offenses - primarily false use of a financial instrument (i.e., bad checks), attempted larceny in a building (i.e., shoplifting), and false pretenses (i.e., fraud).

Although money was obviously a factor for many women who became involved with the criminal justice system, it continued to be a focal point when they were released from prison. The emphasis placed on money could perhaps best be understood by recognizing that because money was so scarce, it became a highly-valued commodity. This concept is similar to Komorovsky's (1967) conclusion that poverty (among blue-collar families) increases the salience of economic factors. She proposed that when families are living in poverty, money and economic survival become primary goals and other aspects of their lives become focused around that main concern.

Mothers used money to explain why they were sent to prison, the reason for some of the problems the children experienced because of the separation, and as a barrier to the reuniting of mothers and their children. The high percentage of women in the study group committed for economic offenses speaks for itself in terms of the critical role money played in the lives of many women offenders. Yet the impact of inadequate financial resources did not end there. The woman who was in a resident home when her ex-husband decided he was not going to continue caring for their two children, thus forcing her to find another home for the children, explained her situation:

I had just got there [resident home] and didn't have any money. I didn't have custody [her ex-husband had custody] so I couldn't get financial help for the kids [or] for the lady through Protective Services because I didn't have custody of the kids. They wouldn't give me custody of the kids because I was inmate

status so he kept custody down in [city where he lived] but they [the two children] were living in [city where woman was in resident home]. So I had to find some money to give to this lady, right? And there's where my troubles began. So I started turning tricks and getting back off into the scene of what got me there in the first place.

Many women felt their children had to continue "doing without" because of their imprisonment. Not only did the families have to support the woman's children, many would send money to the woman in prison. One woman related the following:

My mother, she doesn't have that much money to do and then she's taking care of my kids and then at the time, my brother. The money she was getting was...just enough to get by and then she's trying to send me some too! That's why I said they [woman's children] missed out on a lot because of the fact I took from them - she had to do for me, she had to do for them. I should have been there to do it myself!

Women related instances where their children could not get glasses, braces, and clothes because there was not enough money. A few women also stated that they were not able to have their children visit often in the prison because the cost of gas was so high their families could only make infrequent trips. Money problems continued to plague most women during their prison sentence.

Many women saw financial circumstances as a major obstacle to their assuming responsibility for their children after prison. When they left prison, most women had little or no money with which to find housing. A few women had their own households that remained intact during their

incarceration. In these cases, usually another adult relative (daughter or husband) was living with the family prior to the mother's incarceration and remained to care for the children. In one case, the woman's church pastor and her husband moved in temporarily. Forty-six percent (25) of the women moved into the house where their children lived during their absence. In most instances, this was a relative's home to which the children moved when the mother went to prison or in which the mother and her children had lived prior to the mother's incarceration. The majority of these women expressed a desire to get a home of their own for their children but saw money as the barrier. Nine women who were not currently living with their children stated or implied that lack of money was at least part of the reason. A number of these women wanted their children who were living with another relative to live with them but thought that because they (the mothers) could not offer the same quality of living arrangements, it would not be fair to the children to remove them from their present home. One woman related that she was released from prison one week before Christmas. She had to tell her children that she didn't have even \$5 to buy them something for Christmas. "That's a set up," she said, "to go back out and steal." Another woman felt that her future ability to provide for her children was affected because her having been in prison was recorded on her credit report. Prior to prison, she had a steady work record with the same company for eight years. When she tried to buy a

home, she said she and her husband were denied because she had recently been released from prison. These findings regarding the role of economic issues for women parolees resemble the finding by Cobean and Power (1978) that financial pressures adversely effect the families of male offenders.

Money could become a symbol for whether the woman could properly provide for her child. Perhaps that is why economic issues became intertwined with hopes for the future. Many women hoped that the future would bring them a job so they could take care of their kids. Many especially wanted to get off ADC so they could be in control of how they spent their money to care for their families. In the study sample, 14 women stated they just did not have enough money on which to survive. They seemed to hold out the hope that money would bring happiness. One woman wanted to have a "big Christmas" to help make up to her children for being away. When asked about the joys of being a mother, another woman said:

When they laugh or are happy and you can
see the joy in their face when you buy
them something.

For a variety of reasons, economic issues play a significant role in the separation of women offenders and their children. Money tended to be a major stumbling block to women who wanted to get their lives back in order. Women with little education, little or no work history, several children and a prison record are not typically given access to good jobs and thus some relief from financial burdens. Instead, the difficulties they faced in being separated from

their children because of prison were increased because of a lack of viable opportunities to find relief from their financial problems.

Owing

In discussing the separation of the women from their children, a curious finding emerged from the interviews. The majority of the women expressed a strong feeling that they "owed" something to their children for having been separated from them due to prison. They used terms like "owe" and "make up" to describe many of their interactions with their children. Typically, the women felt the children had had a harder life and less material comforts than they deserved. This feeling of "owing" the children had both beneficial and potentially detrimental effects on the relationship between women offenders and their children. One woman, whose infant son was placed in foster care when she went to prison, stated:

I feel I owe my baby something - to be better. I have to be more stern about myself - keep myself together so I can be a better mother to him.

In addition to feeling it was time to straighten out their lives, a number of women felt that their own troubles with the law could be used to teach their children right from wrong - and in this way, they would be giving their children a better life. Another woman said:

There is something special I feel I owe... I feel I owe it to them to make sure they get the right things and the right raising

so they won't make the same mistakes I did in life. And those are my main goals - to make them realize you just don't take what don't belong to you. I learned it but I learned it the hard way.

Some women felt they must spend more time with their children and give them more care because, as one woman said, she "deprived my daughter of a mother" by going to prison.

It would be nice to think that this sense of "owing" was a supportive influence in helping the women re-establish their lives after prison. Unfortunately, obligation to "make-up" for having gone to prison was not always a helpful motivator in terms of child development. Several women related that they "spoiled" their children now so the children would know they still loved them.

Sometimes I feel I took something from them [her three daughters] and they didn't deserve it! And sometimes I'll do a little more than I'm supposed to. Like I said, I probably spoil them a little more than I usually would have if I'd been there all the time.

Several women related that when they first got home, they would not discipline their children. Since the women perceived that the caregivers during their incarceration had not used a lot of discipline with the children, the children's behavior became quite a problem for several of these women.

For a 55 year old woman, the desire to make up for her past life became a seemingly desperate attempt to win the affection of her grandchildren since she felt her own children would not forgive her.

I try to make up to my children, like I said, through my grandbabies. I buy them the things they would like [woman is on Social Security and Disability]. She [granddaughter] wants a car when she finishes school so I'm buying that for her... I'll do that if it takes everything I got. I'll do that for...[her daughter] now. I do all the housework...Making up to people, that's what it is. And basically I've got enough sense to know that I can't. But it seems like to me, in my heart, I know I got to make up for something. I don't know what. But maybe they'll be proud of me for something. [Woman was crying].

Twenty-eight women said they owed something. Thirteen of those women specifically mentioned that they owed something to their children for having left them. Many other women alluded to "owing" something to their children in other sections throughout the interview. In addition, 15 women felt they were indebted to the people who cared for their children. A few women said the best way to make up to their family was to stay out of trouble. Most of the women who felt indebted to caregivers said they did not think they could ever make it up to them. Also, most women reported that the caregivers did not expect any return. However, nine women stated that the caregiver seemed to expect something from them. Although the women could not easily identify what was expected, it seemed primarily to be in the realm of "doing things for" the caregiver. For those women who did not think they owed anything to the person(s) who cared for their children, it was usually because the women felt that it was expected that family would help each other.

"Owing" exerted a significant force on another woman's

life although it was not to her children or a caregiver. She had become involved with one of the counselors at the drug program where she lived and became pregnant by him. He lost his job because he had become involved with a client and was working in a factory. Her sense of confusion was evident:

I wouldn't be who I am today if it wasn't for him. He's just a dynamite person. Sometimes I wonder if I'm with him out of "I thank you." And I wonder when I'm going to be through thanking him and then be ready to go about my business - which I hope like hell never happens.

In conclusion, although the intensity of the feeling varied, many women felt they "owed" somebody as a result of their having gone to prison. Primarily, they felt they owed their children more care and love - but in some cases they felt they were indebted to the caregiver. Perhaps the sense of "owing" could be an adaptive function to help the mother deal with her guilt and establish goals for herself to make amends. However, there also seemed to be varying levels of desperation for some women. They seemed to feel worthless since they had gone to prison, didn't have a job - and had abandoned their children. Their "salvation" lay in making it up to their children. The danger, if there is one, in all of this is that many of these women seemed to hang so many hopes on their children that one has to wonder what kind of pressure that in itself must create for both the woman and her children. The interaction seemed more intense than that found in most parent-child relationships. The separation of offender mothers and their children appeared to be affected

by the "owing" the women assume upon their release from prison.

Physical Presence

The concept of physical presence emerged from the interviews as a powerful dynamic in the relationship between women offenders and their children. A person's physical presence or lack of it could define role relationships; be used as a punishment or an appeasement; bring security or fear; define allegiance or even define custody, as was previously discussed.

The most prevalent use of the concept of physical presence (although that term was not used by the women) was to define role relationships, especially that of mother and child. Being "mama" was typically a functional title for the person who provided primary care to the child. The biological mother was "mama" in many of the cases but ten women stated, without being asked, that someone else was really "mama." Mcarthy (1980) talked of this phenomenon concerning the child's perception of the caregiver as the "real" mother. The women whose children called someone else "mama" (except those whose children were adopted or were babies) said the children knew they were the mother but mostly looked to the other person as the real "mama."

"Mama" was the woman who was there, who took care of the child every day. Knowledge about the biological mother in these cases did not alter the fact that the woman who

"birthed" them did not care for them and thus was not mama. Some women said that although their children did call them "mama", the child did not relate to them as a mother. An example given by one woman was that when her child fell or was sick, she always cried for her grandmother - in this case, the woman who raised her. Many of the women in the study had raised their children and were, in fact, "mama." But those women who had been "running the streets" and did not provide care for their children, were aware - and usually remorseful - that their relationship with their children had been affected. One woman had been in prison almost three years and her two daughters went to live with their father and stepmother when the woman was incarcerated. She related the following:

My youngest calls [stepmother's name] "mom."
Both the girls call her mom. That was some
more changes I went through. When I first
found out they called her mom, I said to my
oldest, "Don't you dare call her mom." Then
I'm thinking that's wrong on my part because
the girls have been living with them,
[stepmother] takes them to school, she's in
PTA. If my girls called her by her first
name, [other kids would say] "Who's your
mother?" It's easier for them not to say
anything.

Another woman explained a similar situation with her six year old daughter. Although she stated that she and her daughter lived in a house together prior to her incarceration, she admitted that because she was "too busy trying to find something to steal", her daughter primarily was raised by the woman's mother.

She [woman's mother] would just raise her. My child she used to call my mother "mother." My mother was like a mother to her...Like when I used to keep her with me, she would get lonesome, she'd say "[woman's name], I want to go home to mama." It used to hurt me. I used to get mad with her, start hollering at her. Used to make me so mad she wouldn't call me mother. So my mother explained to me, she said, "She's just a baby. How do you expect her to call you 'mother' when everybody calls me 'mother' and everybody calls you [woman's name]. The baby's just doing it because everyone else was doing it!"

The physical presence of a caregiver (and likely the love and emotional support that accompanied it) seemed to determine who was the mother in the eyes of the child. In many cases, the offender mother had raised her children until the time she went to prison and, although the temporary interruption in physical care for the children may have had some negative consequences, it did not change the fact that the woman was the child's mother. In other cases, however, the mother's lack of physically caring for her child most likely before and certainly during prison created a situation where the woman was not seen as the functional mother.

The concept of physical presence also emerged in the interviews as a mode of both punishment and appeasement. One woman who was in and out of prison during most of her three children's teenage years related that they all refused to visit her even once while she was in prison. Her discussion of her relationship with and knowledge of her children at the present time indicated that they were so angry at her during the time she was in prison they simply refused to see

her. Another woman, whose eight year old son had been living with her for two weeks, at the time of the interview, said that when he got mad at her he told her he wanted to go and live with his father. She knew he did not really want to live with his father but rather was trying to hurt her. These, and other children, used their refusal to be with their mother or threat to leave their mothers as one of the ways they could express their anger and hurt at having their mother leave them.

Physical presence was used by some of the mothers as their way of appeasing or making up to their children for having been gone a lot.

By me being gone - and I know I was gone a lot - I would do things to try to make up for me not being there - like spend some time with them [her children].

Many of the women related that they were spending more time with their children now that they were on parole. Appeasement was by no means the only reason for doing this. Some women thought that by being with their children they could stay away from the problems or people with whom they associated before prison. The physical presence of their children in this sense was seen as a security against becoming involved with crime again. The children were a concrete sign that the mother had to be responsible. Said one woman:

Before, I'd get tired and I'd take her over to my mother's house. Now I keeps her with me. I take her everywhere I go then I get a chance to be at home and I don't be in no

trouble. I stay with her. When I'm not working I cook, I wash for her and I press her little dresses for her - like a mother. My days are really busy...I have to be there... Things are better now because I know the responsibility is with me.

Another woman related an incident where she and her two children were waiting for the bus and a man who her daughter knew had been a negative influence on the mother drove by and offered them a ride. The woman admitted she was glad to see the man but said:

My daughter stopped dead in her tracks and took charge like and said, "No mama let's catch the bus." She looked really puzzled like "Please don't get in that car." So I looked at him and said, "That's alright, we'll catch the bus."

The idea that once a woman decided to care for her children their presence would provide security and keep the mother out of trouble took on an almost desperate tone with one woman:

Before there was my mother and I was in the streets all the time and [used] the money to get me some dope. But now it don't work like that. I know I have babies and I have to pay for the bills and I have to get them things. So now, the babies help me now. I don't think I would want to be alone without a baby.

Although this woman had indeed been working before going on maternity leave and was living on her own with her daughter, the over-reliance on the presence of her children as a means of "staying off the streets" seemed somewhat unrealistic.

For several of the women, fear was attached to the concept of physical presence. During prison they feared that

their children would stop loving them or that too much distance would develop for them to have a good relationship with their children after prison. Some women feared that they would "lose" their children - that the "county" would put them in foster care and that the mothers would be unable to get them back. These women feared that because they were not physically caring for their children, they would lose custody. Again, they saw custody as tied to the physical presence of the child.

Finally, allegiance was another dynamic that seemed to be associated with physical presence. For a few women, the child's presence - or the child's wanting the mother's presence - was an indication of the child's allegiance. This situation seemed only to arise when there was some conflict between the mother and another caregiver. In the case of the woman who had two daughters living with her ex-husband and his wife, this sense of allegiance was most obvious:

My youngest feels guilty about coming with me on weekends, because she doesn't want to hurt my ex-husband's wife...My youngest does have strong feelings about my ex-husband's wife. She might be afraid to hurt her but I believe my youngest loves me when we are together. And when we are not together, she loves my ex-husband's wife.

Physical presence proved to be associated with various aspects of the offender mother's relationship with her children after prison. Whether it defined who was "mama" or served to punish/appease or brought security/fear or defined allegiance, the physical presence of mother and/or child was

central to the ways women and children reshaped their lives after the mother's imprisonment. In addition, if, as many women said, a person shows their children they care by being there for them, then the separation caused by imprisonment could take on additional ramifications if it was interpreted by the children as meaning that the mother did not really care.

Getting Together

One of the main ways for the women and their children to maintain contact during the separation caused by the mother's incarceration was through the child's visits with the mother at the prison. Visiting would seem to be one way to lessen the effect of the separation on the mother and child. However, as with most aspects of the offender mother's life, visiting was not always an easy matter. As is true in most states, there is only one women's prison in Michigan. Thus some women were located quite a distance from their children. Although the majority of children in the study were living within a $2\frac{1}{2}$ hour drive of the prison, some children were sent to live with relatives in other states. One woman whose three children went to live with her foster sister in Mississippi never saw her children the entire time she was in prison. There was no money or transportation available to her to arrange any visits. Several women whose children were located within the state cited lack of money or the unwillingness of caregivers to bring the children as reasons they did not have more visits.

The number of visits that the women in the study had are summarized in Table 9.

Table 9

Frequency of Visits

Frequency of Visits	Number of Women	Percentage
Once a week	8	14.5
Several times a month	6	10.9
Once a month	6	10.9
Once every two months	1	1.8
Several times a year	1	1.8
Rarely	17	30.9
None	9	16.4
Other	7	12.7

The persons who brought the children to visit are summarized in Table 10.

Table 10

Provider of Transportation

Provider of Transportation	Number of Women	Adjusted Frequency (8 Missing Cases)
Caregiver	21	44.7
Other/Friends	10	21.3
Relatives	7	14.9
NA	8	19.1

Fifty percent of the women did not think the visits with their children were frequent enough. As can be seen from the table, nine women stated that while they were in prison they

did not have even one visit with their children. Twenty-six percent of the women said that they were able to see their children frequently enough and another 22% said they were satisfied with infrequent visits because they were too difficult for them and in some cases their children.

There seemed to be two basic attitudes among the women concerning visiting with their children. One was that they wanted to see their children as often as possible. These women typically saw the visits as important to their relationship to their children. For example, one mother commented:

I think its very important to see the child, to be able to communicate and talk. Because I think when you don't see your child you tend to feel like strangers when you do. Then everyone is at a loss for words when you do get together.

It was within this group of women - those who thought they should visit their children as much as possible - that several women explained the problems they had in arranging visits. A woman whose children visited only once said:

One time my brother brought my kids up to see me! I used to write and beg him [ex-husband who was taking care of the two children] to bring them to me...He used to promise me he was going to bring the kids up to me and had me setting and waiting there on a Saturday afternoon and the kids never showed up.

Those women who felt that visits were not frequent enough were also within this group. However, there were other problems with visiting in addition to its not being frequent. Several women commented that they were never able

to be alone with their children. The visiting room was crowded and the person who brought the children was always there. This presented a particular problem to one woman who continued to be the disciplinarian in the family even though she was in prison. She did not want to embarrass her children by disciplining them in front of other people. This same woman discussed other difficulties with visiting:

I was always glad to see them. Its just that the visits just weren't long enough! After awhile, they don't have anything for the kids to do. Like my kids were on cheer-leading teams and they would come up there and show me some of the cheers and different stuff. They [referring to prison staff] always tell the women, "You have to make the kids sit down! You got to do this!" But kids don't like to sit down! If there was something you could do with the kids. OK, you don't see them everyday so give you something to do so you can enjoy the time you do have with the kids!

The other basic attitude towards visiting was that the visits the women had with their children were frequent enough. For some women, that was because they saw their children several times a month. For other women, however, it was because seeing their children was such a painful experience. These women often requested that the children not visit. One woman explained:

I didn't ask very often [to see daughter] because it used to hurt when she would leave and my baby wouldn't want to go. She would cry, she would say, "Mama, where you going to go?" I told her I was in prison and that I did something wrong and I'm suffering for it. She used to cry and say, "Mama, I don't want you to go to jail anymore!" That really hurt me. I'd go back to my room, I'd be locked in all day.

Another mother of three children explained:

It hurt to sit in there and watch your child walk out of there. As long as I knew they were OK, I didn't need to see them. My little girl said, "Mom you don't have to be in there - the door opens - watch." I told my husband to have them call and I didn't want to see them. It hurt.

It is difficult to evaluate whether visiting the mother in prison (with the accompanying emotional turmoil) was more or less beneficial to the children than not visiting the mother. However, there are several observations that could be made regarding the role of visiting in the relationship between offender mothers and their children. Visiting with the mother would possibly help the child to understand that the mother still loved the child but was unable to leave the prison. Also, visiting with the mother could maintain some ties that would serve as a bond between mother and child when the mother was released. Spending time with her children might help to lessen some mothers' tendencies to idealize the relationship they had with their children. Remembering that the kids can "get on my nerves" could be a needed anchor in reality.

There were two women whose attitude toward visiting was in contrast to the majority of the women. They were more concerned with dealing with their life in prison than with thinking about their children. One woman who spent most of her three years "in max" (maximum security unit) said:

It's just that the thing I had to go through mentally - being bothered with the people in jail - my kids would call up there and tell me to call home because I wouldn't call home

sometimes for weeks at a time. I just wasn't in that frame of mind!

For many incarcerated women, visiting with their children provided one of the few ways for maintaining a relationship with their children even though they were separated. It was a time that allowed for communication and contact which, as McCarthy (1980) said, is difficult to maintain. However, constraints in the visiting setting and prison rules seemed to infringe on some of the benefits that could be obtained.

Conclusion

The fact of being separated from their children due to incarceration was, for the most part, a painful experience for the women who participated in this study. It created problems concerning the child's welfare, living arrangements and well-being. Information given by some of the women agreed with Rutter's (1971) contention that if a separation of parent and child is a result of deviance, the child will experience antisocial changes in behavior. The separation of these mothers and their children also caused problems regarding legal custody. In some instances, the child became more attached to caregivers than to their biological mothers. Thus the separation caused by imprisonment served to create interpersonal as well as physical distance between the mothers and their children. In other ways, the separation helped to unite the women and their children. Some women made firm commitments to be better mothers, others decided they

needed to make up to their children for the hardships - and some others just simply grew up a little. For these reasons, the separation caused by imprisonment appeared to create a stronger bond between some of the women and their children. In other cases, it created situations which caused the bond to be broken, perhaps permanently.

NOTES

¹ In her study of the black ghetto area of a midwestern city, Carol Stack (1975) talked about how teenage girls established themselves as an adult by having a child. The new mothers were given additional privileges in the home such as sleeping in a bed with only their infant as opposed to sleeping with their younger sisters. In the present study, one of the parole officers made the observation that by having a baby the teenager established herself as a woman. Thus, it seemed that in both the present study and in Stack's work, having a baby was a symbolic rite of passage into the adult world.

² McGowan and Blumenthal (1978) state, "As this study demonstrates, American society continues to punish children for the crimes of their parents." They found this happened by the children being removed abruptly from their homes, schools and communities; by being moved from one caregiver to another; by not seeing their parents or siblings; by being teased and avoided by their peers; and left to try and understand what was happening on their own.

³ Bowker (1978) pointed out that compared to male crime, female crime is more heavily concentrated in the areas of larceny - theft, forgery and counterfeiting, prostitution and commercialized vice, and runaways. Male crime is more heavily concentrated in the areas of burglary - breaking and entering, vandalism, narcotics, driving under the influence,

and drunkenness. His information is from the Uniform Crime Reports (Washington, D.C. FBI, U.S. Department of Justice, 1976).

CHAPTER 5
CAREGIVING FOR CHILDREN BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER
THE MOTHER'S INCARCERATION

The process of caregiving for the children of the women who participated in this study was both complex and evolving. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to characterize any one set of circumstances as 'typical.' Rather, each woman seemed to resolve her own situation as best she could. There were a few patterns of relationships which emerged among the women, but there was also significant variation. In addition, patterns of caring for children seemed to evolve and change as the woman's life progressed. That may well be attributed to the fact that the average age at which the women who participated in this study became mothers was 18 years. The mother's role as caregiver seemed to evolve as she herself grew older.

Biographies of Caregiving

The majority of women in the study were living with their children prior to their incarceration. Sixty-nine percent (38) of the women lived with all of their children; 16% (9 women) lived with some of their children; 9% (5 women) did not live with any of their children; and the remaining 3 women had children in "other" circumstances which included being deceased or in institutions. The majority of

the living arrangements for these women were fairly evenly divided into three main groups:

Table 11
Living Arrangements Prior
To Incarceration

Living Arrangements	Number of Women	Percentage of Women
Women, Children and Other Relatives	16	29.0
Women, Children Husband or Boyfriend	15	27.5
Women and Children Alone	14	25.6
All Other Situations	10	17.9

The women who lived with other relatives lived primarily with their mother and/or grandmother and assorted other siblings. There was one exception of a woman who lived with her father. Most of the women who lived with other relatives stated that their children were primarily raised by these people since the woman herself was often absent from the home for long periods of time. About her life prior to prison, one mother of four children stated:

My kids were at my mother's. I was suppose to be there but I was staying with a girlfriend. I was back and forth in both places. They would stay there because I was always out but I would have to buy their clothes and feed them and stuff.

For the women who either lived alone with their children or lived with their children and a husband/boyfriend,

the women seemed to primarily be responsible for raising and supporting the children. One woman who was committed to prison for Attempted Larceny in a Building stated:

See, my husband hadn't worked in about three years so I was the sole support of this family which I am now and it was a lot harder to accept this than it is now - you know, being sole supporter of a family. So, I just did what came naturally and I wanted the kids to have a little bit more than what they had so I started stealing.

This woman supported her three children, her husband and a brother and sister of hers. Another woman, who lived alone with her three children prior to her incarceration explained how she raised and supported her family.

They were extremely close. My little girl, the 14 year old, she's the most sensitive of my children. To be honest, it was just like a normal family life except for the fact I had to do a lot of things that maybe a married mother wouldn't have to do. Their [her children] whole life was isolated from the street life so until I went to prison my children never knew that I was doing anything wrong. Like I'd leave early in the morning - it was about 9:00. I'd say I was going to work. At that time, I had a beeper and if anything went wrong, they could beep me. But in actuality, I was out in the street boosting, shoplifting, whatever you call it, all day and I'd get back about 5:00 - coming home from work.

When asked to describe the care their children received prior to the mother's incarceration, many women commented that they protected their children from any involvement in their criminal activities. One woman who was committed to prison for Uttering and Publishing (writing bad checks on a bogus bank account) talked about her having involvement

with drugs prior to her arrest and the decision she made to have her only son with her parents and sister.

I saw him quite often until I felt guilty about seeing him, or until I was afraid he was going to ask me what I was doing...We couldn't do that much together because of what I was involved in. I was trying not to have him around - not trying to shelter him from the world, but trying to avoid a lot of pain that he didn't have to go through.

In trying to determine who was actually caring for the children (that is, not just living with them), the women were asked who made decisions for the children with regard to school, medical care, discipline, etc. The majority of the women (29 women or 59%) said that they alone made decisions regarding their children. Seven women (12.7%) said that their mothers made the decisions while three women (5.5%) said they and their mothers made the decisions together. The remaining responses were a combination of "other" categories.

In summary, prior to their incarceration the majority of the women were living with and caring for their children although some women had clearly given the responsibility of child care to other relatives, primarily their mothers and/or grandmothers.

A critical decision which had major effects on the children's lives was who would be the child's caregiver while the mother was in prison. In 33% (18 cases) of the cases, the mother made the decision about who would care for her child. In some cases, the arrangements made by the women

were followed and there were few, if any, problems in the implementation of her decision. A mother of three said:

I set up with my baby sister to take my girl [age 10]. She has a house of her own and two kids. [Name of second son, age 14] was to stay with grandma and [name of oldest son, age 15] was to stay at home.

Although the 15 year old son traveled back and forth between their home and his grandma's house, the arrangements made by this mother prevailed for the most part during her incarceration.

In 25% of the cases (14 women), the women stated that there was no decision to make about the care of their children. To them it was automatic who would care for their children. A typical response from one of these women was given by a mother of three who was arrested in Illinois:

OK, when they arrested me, she, well she [woman's mother] said she would take care of the kids for me. That was automatic... and she said, don't worry about it. The kids will be all right.

Another woman, who had a 6 year old daughter, said:

I didn't make no decision because I knew my mother would take care of her. We talked to the father because he had to go over and get her for visiting privileges...I knew she'd take care of her

Implicit in these statements are the women's perception that their family structure is such that care for their children will be assumed by other family members. Thus the women did not feel a need to take legal action or to formally ask someone to care for their children.

For the other women, the court decided who would care

for their children in 3 cases (5.5%), the child's current caregiver decided in 7 cases (13%) and various other people decided in the remaining situations. Many women experienced problems making arrangements for the care of their children. These problems ranged from making no plans since the women did not expect to be taken into custody to having their plans changed after they were incarcerated. A 40 year old mother of nine children who was arrested for False Pretenses Over \$100 (her offense involved violating the welfare laws) explained that her attorney told her he was sure she would not be sent to prison since it was her first offense and she was supporting eight of her nine children (the oldest boy was in the armed services). She explained how her sentencing occurred and arrangements for her children were made:

He [the Judge] said, "...you got anything to say before I sentence you?" I started talking to him, telling him about my children. He said, "Well its too late for that! I knew you had all those kids but I didn't know you had all that surgery." [The woman had just had 22 cysts removed from her breast]. He said, "Due to the fact you've never been arrested, never been in trouble...1½ to 10." I said, "What?" And I passed out! When I came to, I say, "What about my children?" I said "I've got a houseful of furniture." He told me he didn't give a damn! I was crying so hard the lady took me back...I said, "Nobody know I got a little boy with an enlarged heart! I just don't know what to do!" She [jail official who knew the woman from high school] said, "I tell you what, I'll get out there and deliver a message to your aunt"... "You tell her to please call my cousin up - she doesn't have any children. Or even my sister - tell them to please get my children and my furniture."

Most of her children actually ended up living with this

woman's sister and her husband. However, one child was placed in a foster home and another joined the service.

A woman who had two daughters arranged that her sister would take care of the girls while she was in prison. However, the mother's decision regarding care for her daughters was changed and the woman never did know how or why.

[Two daughters] stayed with my sister for 10 months. My ex-husband and his new wife-to-be lived together in my old house. His wife had a son, and they lived there for awhile and maybe a month or so later, my girls moved in. They got married and they both have custody of my girls.

The decision regarding who would provide care for the children was made by the mothers (assuming the "automatic" decisions had the mothers implicit consent) in over half the cases. The person who was chosen to be the caregiver most frequently was the woman's mother. Selected caregivers were as follows:

Table 12
Caregivers

Caregivers	Number	Percentage
Woman's mother	16	29.1
Woman's mother and father	3	5.5
Woman's grandmother	2	3.6
Child's father	2	3.6
Foster care	2	3.6
Other relatives	2	3.6
Child's father's mother	1	1.8

Table 12 (Continued)

Caregiver	Number	Percentage
Friends	1	1.8
Children split up among various people	10	18.3
All other situations	16	29.1

The living arrangements and quality of care received by the women's children varied greatly. There seemed to be some problems in the situations of almost all the women who were interviewed. However, the majority of women (60%) said they were basically satisfied with the care their children received. Many of the women qualified this response by adding phrases similar to "considering the circumstances." The scope of problems faced by the women and their children regarding the children's living arrangements can best be explained by the women themselves. One woman, who had two daughters, arranged for her cousin to care for the girls while she was in prison. Three or four months after the woman was incarcerated her mother decided that the girls should live with her. The woman stated:

I think she basically decided to take care of them because most of her neighbors knew that I was in jail and she's got this thing where she's trying to keep face for her neighbors... I felt that as long as she didn't abuse them, then it was fine.

This woman said she worried that her mother would abuse her children but did not think it actually happened. However, she said, her daughters were kept isolated from

"the outside world." Her mother would not allow them to have any outside activities other than attending school. When asked if she was satisfied with the care her children received, the woman responded, "I thought it was all right, it was adequate."

One woman who was not satisfied with the care her children received from relatives explained that she had asked the Department of Social Services if her three younger children could live with her oldest son (age 21). She did not receive an answer before she was incarcerated and so she sent her three children to Mississippi to live with her sister.

This was thrust on my sister and she was not prepared. She was frustrated and would blame the kids - almost made them feel guilty for [me] being in jail. She didn't have too much money - she was living on disability, just she and her husband.

Another woman, who had no contact with her family, arranged for a woman friend to care for her three year old daughter. The friend who was to care for her daughter got a job and so arranged for another friend to care for the daughter. This friend became quite dependent on drugs and started using the ADC money to buy drugs. Eventually, the child's father took his daughter and moved her in with a friend of his mother's. The woman being interviewed explained:

I didn't like her [father's mother's friend] because last time she watched her when I went to jail for about 30 days, she wouldn't give her back to me...she told her son to

shoot me if I tried to get in the door to get my baby...finally, they [the police] just gave her [daughter] to me.

Despite all these problems, the woman said she was satisfied with the care her daughter received.

Two women had their children in foster care for most of the time they were incarcerated. One woman, whose son was seven years old at the time of her arrest, discussed how her son was placed in foster care and her feelings about it. She had been a heavy drug user and had been having difficulties with her son since her husband's death two years before. She implied that her husband died in connection with his drug dealings, but that issue was not explored since the woman had not agreed previously to talk about that aspect of her life and showed no inclination to do so during the interview. The woman had been going to a child guidance clinic to improve her relationship with her son. When she was arrested, her probation officer and the child guidance clinic arranged for her son to be placed in foster care.

She reported that her son has had difficulties during all this time but did not attribute them to the foster care placements. She felt that her drug habit and their unstable life was more responsible. She stated that she was satisfied with the care her son received.

The other woman whose child was placed in foster care had a very different reaction. Several years before this incarceration she had been arrested and served 60 days in jail. Since her husband was arrested at the same time, she

asked her brother to care for her then three year old son until she or her husband was released. Instead her brother took the child to a children's home. She and her husband initiated legal proceedings to get this child back but were told he had been adopted. The woman contended neither she nor her husband signed papers giving this child up for adoption. She said she and her husband would attempt to regain custody of this child after her attempt to obtain custody of her youngest child was settled. When her second son was taken to foster care during this most recent incarceration (at age three months), she was fearful because of her previous experience. The baby was with her at the time she was arrested and her father came for him when she was taken to jail. Her sister took care of her son for a month and then had him placed in foster care. The woman was told she had to sign the papers placing him in foster care. On the current charge, the woman spent 12 months in prison for Attempted Larceny in a Building. The record showed she was convicted of stealing 13 steaks worth \$106.71 and had a history of larceny, welfare fraud and substance abuse. When released from prison, the woman spent 7 months in a halfway house for substance abusers.

At the time of this interview, the woman and her husband were both on parole and had their son (now almost two years old) living with them. He was still under the court's custody. They had to petition the court to obtain custody of him. The woman said:

The court eventually gave us 90 days [to have son live with them on a trial basis], then 90 days [more] then 6 months again. I feel like they are waiting for us to get in trouble.

The woman was very dissatisfied with the care her son received in the foster home. She visited the foster home after she was released from prison and before her son moved in with her. She thought the foster home was messy, that her son was kept in wet diapers too long and that the foster mother was babysitting for too many children at one time to be able to adequately care for them. Her greatest concern, however, occurred after her son was returned to her and her husband. She reported:

[Son] is just now getting to where he's happy, not frightened. He'd scream going downstairs. He threw tantrums when he had to walk downstairs. Its like he was kicked down steps - he was scared to death. He was the smallest of 6 so I think he had to fight for his survival. Another freaking thing - he'll get up and start playing with your breasts. I never nursed him.

Because each woman interviewed had a different experience regarding the care and living arrangements for her children while she was in prison, there are very few generalizations that can be made. There was no situation which proved completely problem-free although, as stated earlier, 60% of the women reported they were basically satisfied with the care their children received. In addition, no one living arrangement seemed to guarantee success in terms of the mother being satisfied with her children's care. Some mothers were satisfied and others dissatisfied when their

children lived with relatives just as one mother was pleased and one displeased at the care their children received in foster care.

The nature of caregiving after the woman was released from prison will be detailed in the following chapter. However, to complete this 'biography of caregiving' it will be helpful to look at the relationships that existed among mothers, children and their caregivers.

Relationships

The relationships between the women in the study and the caregivers during the mother's incarceration could be divided into two groups: those caregivers whom the mothers felt did a satisfactory job and those caregivers whom the mothers felt did not. Thirty-three women (60%) said they were basically satisfied with the care their children received; 11 women (21%) said they were not satisfied; and 9 women (16%) said they were satisfied with some aspects of the care but not with others (there were 2 missing responses).

Not surprisingly, the women who were satisfied with their children's care were more likely to have a good relationship with the person(s) who cared for the children. In many, but not all, cases these caregivers were relatives. In fact, there was a significant relationship between satisfaction regarding care and having relatives be the caregivers. Of the 27 women who had relatives caring for their children, 78% were satisfied with the care their children received but only

46% (12) of the women whose children were cared for by someone other than a relative (including but not limited to foster care) were satisfied with their care ($P < .025$). Eight additional women whose children were cared for by relatives said they were satisfied with some aspects of the care and not others; one woman whose children were cared for by a non-relative said she was satisfied with some aspects of the care and not others.

In one situation where the woman's mother cared for the children and the mother was satisfied with the care, the woman explained why her mother had been caring for her children even before her incarceration:

My mother used to feel that I just wasn't ready, you know, I had things to do, things I wanted to do so she offered to take care of them 'til I got out all my energy - had done what I wanted to do and was ready for them.

This woman was living in the house with her mother and children at the time of the interview. She said she did most of the disciplining but her mother and father would do some if she was not around. When asked who would attend school functions, she responded:

It depends. Sometimes I would go but when I was working my mother would go. When they would have parent things in the evenings, then I would go.

This woman was pleased with her relationship with her mother and with her mother's way of caring for her children.

Another woman who had a good relationship with her children's caregiver but who was not related to the caregiver

explained:

They [her 2 children] love [caregiver]. At the time [they stayed in her home] they liked her then too but they'd say...would tell me when they got disciplined or something but I never sided with the kids because I knew [caregiver] was never going to hurt my kids.

When asked if she ever felt jealous of her kids' love for the woman taking care of them, the woman being interviewed explained:

Yea, I never thought they were going to love her more. I was jealous because she was providing the type of home that I always wanted. I wasn't doing that and the more that I was into what I was in to, the farther away from that I was getting, I felt caught up and I felt jealous because when I'd go and get the kids [woman was in a resident home], they'd be coming home from church or they would have gotten something new or they were on a picnic ..., it was a family setting and I always wanted that with my husband and that's why I divorced him because he couldn't never settle down. Yea I was really jealous because I knew any kid would enjoy upbringing like that...I knew it was going to take a lot of work in order to not compete, I didn't want to compete - just make it comfortable for them. I was jealous like that but I was happy at the same time.

Among the women who were not satisfied with the care their children received, many of these women noted conflicts between themselves and the caregiver. One woman called the difficulties between her and her children's stepmother "different styles of mothering." Examples she cited of their different styles included her perception that the stepmother tried to make decisions for her two daughters (such as cutting their hair and telling them how to do things); that the stepmother was trying to "buy" her daughters' love; that the

stepmother was trying to get her daughters to stop loving their biological mother; and that the stepmother had the woman's daughters calling her "mother" and she played their mother at school functions.

Many of the conflicts that existed between the mothers interviewed and the other caregivers involved custody of the children. Another source of controversy involved visiting. As was previously discussed, many women felt they did not have enough visits with their children. As one woman said, she "begged" her ex-husband to bring the kids for a visit. But even when there were visits, conflicts sometimes arose. Explained one woman whose only daughter lived with the woman's parents:

I didn't get visits alone with her...No, my mother was always there. Right up under me all the time. And I didn't like that because I wanted the closeness with her, even to this day "Tell mommy what you did, tell mommy about when we went to McDonalds." She [woman's mother] thinks for her...I wanted to hear stuff out of my own daughter's mind. You know because I think kids are remarkable, some of the things they come up with without being told "say this"...I can never remember a visit where we was alone more than 5 minutes.

A source of conflict for many of the women with their children's caregivers involved the mother's role in decision-making regarding their children. The women responded that in 43 cases (78%) the people who were caring for the children during their incarceration were also the ones who made decisions about the children's schooling, health care and any other decisions that needed to be made. In the remaining

situations, either the offender mothers themselves made the decisions (4%); the offender mothers participated in the decision-making process (9%); or decisions were made in a combination of "other" circumstances (9%). Discipline was also primarily within the purview of the person(s) caring for the children. In 71% (39) of the cases, the children's caregivers decided on and administered any discipline. The mother and various other people (primarily relatives) provided the discipline in the remaining cases. One woman described the conflict between her and the person who cared for her four children, the woman's grandmother:

My grandmother made decisions and didn't talk to me. She might tell me if the boys were in trouble. I said, "You're [grandmother] going against what I tell them anyway so why should I talk to them." Happened all the time. I'd get angry because it went in one ear and out the other. We'd hang up. I'd go to my room and cry, that's all. Made time very hard. If I was angry or hurt at my grandmother, I'd go off on them [people at prison]. Gets to place you don't care. I didn't let nothing else bother me - just my family and my kids.

In addition to the relationship between the mothers and caregivers, the other relationship which is important for understanding the role and history of caregiving is the relationship between the caregiver and the children. Most of the mothers said that their children basically felt close to the person(s) who cared for them. Some mothers stated that their children really loved the people who cared for them. One woman whose baby was four months old when she went to prison and who was 13 months old when she returned home

explained that her daughter was so attached to the woman's mother (the caregiver) that "she'd cry when she'd see me." She described one incident when she was trying to spend time with her daughter so she would become used to her:

I took her to a girlfriend's house and she cried for 3 hours. She didn't want anything, she didn't want us to touch her!...My mother had dropped me off there and so soon as my mother came to pick me up, this little girl like to flew to the door! She grabbed my mother like I'd been killing her all day! Yea, it made me feel real bad!...But she's gotten so now that if she thinks I'm getting ready to go somewhere, she'll run to meet me at the door saying..."I want to go."

One woman explained that it was her mother (the child's caregiver) who taught the child to call the woman "mama." And the woman's mother re-enforced the woman's role as mother in her child's eyes after prison. The woman remarked:

...She'll [woman's mother] say, "Didn't your mother tell you to do something?" [Child's name] say, "Yes, but..." My mother say, "No butts, you do it! That's your mother!" My mother helps out a whole lot - she's not a mother who wants to keep her [woman's daughter]...she's not like that at all.

In not all cases did the mother perceive the relationship between the children and the caregiver as positive. In one instance, a woman's 14 year old daughter did not get along at all with her grandmother, who had also raised the woman being interviewed. She said:

I could see history repeating itself. I felt she [woman's daughter] had to go [somewhere else]. She would write letters and phone, she wanted to tell me but was afraid to tell me. One day she cried for an hour. She was not being able to go,

having to stay with her grandmother,
being called names, being hit. A child
shouldn't be hit for some things.

This woman said she found out her grandmother made her kids steal and implied the same had happened to her. Another woman explained her concern regarding her parents caring for her young daughter:

She was never sick or in the hospital or anything like that. The only thing that would give me concern is when I would call other members of my family. See my mom and dad both drink. They have a drinking problem and the part that concerned me was that my daughter would be in bars, be with them when they was drunk and driving home.

A woman whose now six year old son stayed with her father while she was in prison (and on escape) explained her concerns:

He [her son] was dirty every time I went to see him and always hungry, runnin' bare-footed ...his whole disposition was a wild child and certain things he didn't know about.

Her son was currently living with the woman herself and she stated that he now "hated" her father and didn't want to stay with him again.

A woman whose three children were sent to different caregivers during her incarceration, talked about the problem she experienced because of the way her mother cared for her 14 year old son.

He didn't want to come home right away - [they] bought him games that hook up to the TV and his own sleeping bag...grandparents shouldn't down their [the children's] mothers... Grandparents should talk to the kids and say, "Yes mama made a mistake" instead of saying that your mama is nothing but an old bitch.

In summary, it is again difficult to draw generalizations regarding the history of caregiving or the relationships that developed with caregivers as a result of the mother's incarceration. In some situations, the people involved seemed to move from one caregiving situation to another with a minimum of disruption. In other situations, the children seemed to be innocent victims of difficult times. If there is a generalization that can be made perhaps it is that the children were the ones who seemed to suffer to varying degrees when their mother was imprisoned. The woman - and her family and friends or even the courts - could help lessen the trauma for a child, but nonetheless, imprisonment of a mother caused a change in the living situation of most children and often created a myriad of problems for them. Past histories of caregiving and the quality of the relationships a child had with others helped mitigate the degree of difficulties, but nonetheless, their "mama is in jail."

Patterns in Caregiving

It would be difficult - and inaccurate - to make sweeping generalizations about the caregiving patterns that became evident through interviewing the women in this study. There were many unique variations in caregiving which developed out of necessity and availability. Also, caregiving patterns were not static but rather evolved as families changed and grew. There is, however, descriptive information which will help identify the variety of caregiving modes.

Stack (1974) described Black ghetto families as being composed of networks of kin and friends who supported and reinforced each other, developing strategies for surviving social and economic deprivation. Domestic functions (including but not limited to childrearing) were carried out by clusters of kin who did not necessarily live in one household. There were collective expectations and obligations which were created by these cooperative networks. Thus, whether children, food, clothes, money, etc. were exchanged, a system of reciprocity was established on which one could depend during their time of need.

The patterns of caregiving that evolved in the kin networks described by Stack provide an understanding of some family relationships described by the women who participated in this study.

Stack (1974:63,87) pointed out that close female kin do not expect a single person, the natural mother, to carry out all of the responsibilities of "motherhood." Rather, children would be cared for by a number of people. Stack stated:

Although patterns of eating, visiting, and child care may bring mothers and their children together for most of the day, the adults immediately responsible for a child change with the child's residence...When women consciously perform duties as provider, discipliner, trainer, curer, and groomer, they have accepted the reality that they may be required to nurture these children.

Thus, there are major responsibilities - as well as rights - that the kin who help rear a child share. The residential life histories of the children in the city which

Stack studied showed they had been "kept" by kin one or two times during their childhood. Two of Stack's conclusions are essential to understanding the lives of the women in both her study and the present one. The patterns of exchange and child-rearing which she described were resourceful, adaptive strategies which highlighted the residence and stability of the kin networks. Also, the shared parental responsibilities of the kin network were not only an obligation of kinship but they were a highly cherished right.

As was discussed earlier, the Black ghetto environment described by Stack was similar to the environment in which many of the women who participated in this study lived. Most of the families in this study also cared for "their own."

Prior to the womens' incarceration, the majority of the children lived with their mothers and, in some cases, other relatives as well, as seen in Table 13.

Table 13
Children's Living Arrangements Before
Mother's Incarceration

Living Arrangement	Number	Percentage
Woman only	15	27.3
Woman and child's father	9	16.4
Woman and other relatives	10	18.2
Some with woman, some with other relatives	9	16.4
Some with woman, some in foster care	1	1.8
With woman's mother	1	1.8
Other	10	18.2

Combining the various living arrangement categories, 38 or 69% of the women lived with all their children prior to incarceration; 9 or 16% lived with some of their children; 5 women or 9% did not live with any of their children; and three women or 5.5% fell into the "other" category of living arrangements.

When the women were sent to prison, the living situation of most of the children changed to varying extents. The extent of the change depended on the role the mother had played in the child's upbringing and care before her incarceration.

During the woman's incarceration, the person who provided care for her children most likely to be her mother.

Table 14
Caregiving During Mother's Incarceration

Caregiver	Number	Percentage
Woman's mother	16	29.1
Various people cared for different children	10	18.2
Woman's mother & father	3	5.5
Woman's grandmother	2	3.6
Child's father	2	3.6
Other relatives	2	3.6
Foster care (wholetime)	2	3.6
Child's father's mother	1	1.8
Friends	1	1.8
Other	16	29.1

As can be seen, other than the woman's mother caring for the children, there was a large variety of care arrangements for the children. However, the clear majority of caregivers

were relatives of the child. Even that did not assure that siblings would be able to remain together during this time. In 24 situations (44%) the children were separated from their sisters and brothers during their mother's incarceration. In 10 (18%) cases there was only one child and in the other 21 (38%) cases the children remained in the same house as their siblings. In many cases, separating the children was an economic necessity. In other cases, siblings were purposefully separated. One woman explained why she arranged separate homes for her three children:

If I'm not around, they fight all the time. Its always a hassle. One or two people can handle one child. Nobody can handle three kids that are sisters and brothers without a lot of problems. If those kids are split up each person that has them can handle them a little bit better and the kids appreciate each other more than when they do see each other. They were real happy when they got back together. There was no fights for a long time.

This woman arranged for her 10 year old daughter to stay with the woman's youngest sister, her 14 year old son to stay with his grandmother and her 15 year old son to stay with the woman's husband. Another mother of three arranged for her daughter to live with the woman's brother, her youngest son to live with the woman's mother and her oldest son to live with his grandfather. Friends, a foster sister, cousins, and a pastor were all among the people who became caregivers while the mothers were in prison. Although as stated earlier, the majority of women said they were satisfied with the care their children received, 73% of the mothers stated that their

children experienced problems while the mothers were in prison and that they had concerns about their children. Some of these concerns and problems were related to the child's caregivers and others were not. For instance, a mother of three arranged for her cousin to care for her children. But after 2½ months, he told the kids they had to leave. The woman's 16 year old daughter had entered the room about this time in the interview and explained what happened:

He said my mother [who was in prison] wasn't sending enough cause the money wasn't substantial, he had nothing against us but he just couldn't deal with it without enough money from her, so we had to leave. Then me and my brother split. I went to one of my friends that I had been going to school with...and my brother, he basically went out on his own.

The woman explained that her son was 13 at the time and became involved with some people with whom he started selling drugs ("because he was too young to go to jail.") But her son did end up being turned over to juvenile authorities and was still in a juvenile state institution at the time of the interview. The woman stated, "None of them had [been doing wrong] til I went to jail."

Another problem faced by the women with regard to the children's caregivers had to do with the mother's role in decision-making. As stated previously, 78% of the women reported that the caregivers made the major decisions about their children and 10% said they had some role in the decision-making process. For some of the women this division of authority was acceptable yet for others it clearly was not. One interesting factor which proved significant regarding the

woman's role as a decision-maker regarding her children was the age at which she had her first child. Of the 21 women who gave birth to their first child at age 17 or less, 90% of them (19 women) said someone else made most of the decisions about their children while they were in prison. However, for the 33 women who were 18 or above at the time of their first child's birth, 48% (16 women) said they made most of the decisions regarding their child's care while in prison and 52% (17 women) said someone else did. ($P < .005$). A plausible explanation might be that the younger the women were when they gave birth to their first child, the more likely it would be that someone else would assume a caregiver's role and thus it would be less likely for the woman to be primarily responsible for the child's care - or decision-making. The networks of kin would be available to assume caregiving responsibilities for the women who were not able and willing to assume the function themselves. For some of the young women who gave birth to children, the extended family was prepared to accept the responsibility and care for her children.

In most of the cases where someone else was making the major decisions, the women admitted that prior to prison they were "caught up in the streets" - be that drugs, stealing or whatever. Many women recognized that they had not been good parents during that time. One woman who had an infant daughter prior to prison explained:

Well my husband took care of her most of the

time. He worked midnights and I had a drug problem, and it was kind of safer for him to, you know, stay with her when she was awake during the day. And at night, I wouldn't be as involved in the drug thing, and I could stay awake. And if I was having problems with that, I would have my sister come over and stay with her.

The patterns of caregiving which evolved were varied and the problems both the mothers and their children had to face were complex. When the women returned from prison, the complexities involved with caregiving continued and will be discussed in depth in the next chapter. However, another insight could be gained into the patterns of caregiving for the families of women who were incarcerated by focusing on caregiving itself within the families of these women. Perhaps the most essential element to understand regarding caregiving is that it is not a role within the kin network. Rather, as Stack explained, caregiving is a complicated series or cluster of daily activities which may be more or less shared and which are done in differing ways. Caregiving creates obligations and expectations but at the same time it bestows rights.

Stack's (1974) description of a network of kin who help each other socially and economically fits the situation of the women who participated in this study. Caregiving seemed, for the most part, to be a fluid experience in which more than one person provided care to the children. Although there was usually a clearly identified "mama" in each family, there were other people who contributed to the care of the children. Sometimes these people lived in the same house as

the children yet sometimes they did not. Perhaps one indication of the extended concept of family was the response by 14 of the women that there was no decision to make regarding who would care for their children when they went to prison - it was "automatic" or clearly known who would care for the children. There were some fairly striking examples of this network of family/kin. For instance, one woman's sister had 10 children of her own yet the woman related her sister's response to her arrest:

At this time, my sister was in the hospital.
She saw it [that woman was arrested] on TV!
Her husband came up to the hospital to see
her and she said, "You go and get my sister's
3 youngest kids. You find her 3 youngest kids!"

In fact, the woman's three youngest children did live with her sister during the woman's incarceration. Another situation presented a clear example of the care provided by extended family groups. Children seemed able to move/live in more than one household.

Like now, they're [three of woman's four children] staying at their grandmother's for the summer. Since I moved, I'm in a different neighborhood and they don't know the kids there so they like to go back and play with their old friends. And then my mother, is like, they're my kids but they're hers too.

When asked where the children kept their clothes over the summer, the woman replied that they kept them in her house. She said sometimes they spent the night at their grandmothers and sometimes at her house. Another woman, who had five children, said she had raised her sister's five children in addition to her own.

It is reasonable to assume that this pattern of an extended kin network might help to mitigate some of the harmful aspects of having the children be separated from their mothers. It clearly did not eliminate problems, but may have helped to lessen them for some children. However, not all of the occurrences within this extended kin or family group were smooth. One mother related how her six year old daughter manipulated the situation:

She'll go over there like when I make her mad. She'll say, "Dad, come get me!" She'll be there 2 days and then she'll say, "Mom, I want to come home." She gets lonely there.

Although the majority of the caregiving patterns that evolved in the families were based on cooperation and caring, one woman clearly had a different opinion regarding her mother's decision to care for her two daughters. The woman had arranged for her cousin to care for the children and they stayed with her for 3-4 months. Then the woman's mother decided to take and care for the two girls. As discussed previously, this woman thought her mother was only trying to "keep face for her neighbors."

It seemed that when relatives were caring for the children, the child's emotional attachments were centered on people who were closest to them during the mother's incarceration. Of the 34 women who reported they had relatives caring for their children while the mother was in prison, 79% (27 women) said that their children felt closest to someone else, presumably, the caregiver. In the 17 cases where

someone other than a relative cared for the woman's children, 59% (18 women) said their children felt closest to them ($P < .01$). The potential problems presented by this finding are obvious. Although it was probably beneficial to the children to feel close to the person caring for them, the likelihood was that they either had or would be returning to live with their mothers. The manner in which the children, their mothers and their caregivers made that transition was critical to the children's future.

It appeared the woman herself was less likely to perceive changes in her child's behavior as a result of her incarceration if the child had primarily been raised by someone else even before the mother's incarceration. The most typical circumstance involved a child being cared for by extended family members. In these cases, the extended family may have helped to mitigate the effects of separation from the mother since she had not been a constant caregiver even before her incarceration. Of the 13 women who said they did not see changes in their children's behavior, 11 or 85% said someone else had primarily raised their oldest child. However, the majority of women (37) said they did see changes in their children's behavior and in those cases it seemed not to matter who had raised the child. In 51% (19) of the cases, the woman had primarily raised the child ($P < .05$).

Finally, Stack pointed out that one of the potential conflicts which could arise from the folk (kinship) system concerning the transfer of rights in children was that it

was in conflict with the law. Thus, although some women in the study thought their typewritten note or their mother's physical presence demonstrated they had provided for their child's care, the court would not necessarily find that to be so if a case ended up in court. Thus, the patterns of caregiving practiced by many of the women offered them little protection in a court of law.

In conclusion, an extended kin network which assists in dealing with hardships, much like that discussed by Stack, appeared to be present to at least some extent among the women in this study. Groups of family members, and in some cases friends, provided an environment where caregiving was a shared experience. This would possibly help to lessen the trauma caused to children when their mothers were imprisoned but it certainly did not eliminate it. The children were still affected by the loss of their mothers as were other family members affected by the separation. The patterns of caregiving evolved as the lives of these women and their children changed. The patterns seemed adaptive to the various situations - yet were not usually problem-free.

Values

If wanting children to get an education, have careers and make something of themselves sounds like the traditional "American dream," then the women offenders who participated in this study wanted very much for their children to achieve the dream. They may have been separated from their children

because of their imprisonment, but that did not seem to alter their perception of how they hoped life would be for their children. In fact, it may have helped them to realize they wanted more for their children than they had themselves.

Most of the women stated that they wanted their children to finish school and to find jobs (a few said careers) that they liked. One mother said she wanted her daughter to be a "perfect lady" while another woman wanted her children to settle down in nice family settings.

A few of the women had had to make decisions which were difficult for them personally but they believed to be in the best interest of their children. Three women had children who were living with another relative because of the mother's incarceration. They each decided not to attempt to obtain custody because they did not feel they could, as one woman said, "offer what [caregiver] can." The children's welfare and future success were important to the majority of the mothers.

Strong concern was voiced by several women regarding their fear of the murderers, child molesters and drug dealers which threatened the safety of their children. In fact, these women typically lived in neighborhoods where such occurrences were not unfamiliar. Although the women who participated in this study were technically "criminals," they too feared for the safety of their families. One of the women was distressed that her mother's house had been robbed during the time she was in prison.

A stereotype which is sometimes associated with offenders as well as people in a lower socio-economic status is that they do not really want to work and are quite content to perpetuate a welfare state. Many of the women who participated in the study were a contradiction to that stereotype as well. When asked to discuss their goals for their life, most of the womens' responses concerned the well-being of their children and obtaining a job. In fact, 19 women stated that their goal was to get a job. Several women specifically said they wanted to get off welfare or they did not want their children to ever have to receive state aid. Other women said they wanted to go to school, establish careers, or pay the bills.

Many women in this study had specific goals in mind for their daughters. For instance, although 15 women said they wanted their children to go to college, or at least "get an education," two women specifically said they wanted their daughters to attend college. One woman who had seven boys and two girls between the ages of 12 and 21, said:

[I] hope they all finish school. I want my daughters to go to college but you never know - whatever they do, I want them to be good at it. I don't want them to have as many children as I have. If I had the opportunities like my children have, I wouldn't have all these children. I would love for them to have a nice job...

Not one woman singled out sons over daughters in their desires for them to finish school or go on to college. Many women emphasized their hopes that their daughters would be

able to provide for themselves and make something of their lives. In general, the women were more likely to have similar goals for daughters and sons - or to have loftier goals for their daughters. Said one woman:

I want her [daughter] to have a career. I want her to be happy...I want her to earn her way. So she can go down and charge if she wants to. To be a responsible human being. That's what I want more than anything.

Only one of the mothers in the study saw her daughter's security tied to marriage. The majority of the women who discussed goals for their daughters saw those goals connected with some other aspect of their lives. That is not to say that none of the mothers mentioned a relationship with a man or marriage. Several mothers did discuss either marriage or finding a good man for their daughters but it was mostly in relation to raising children. They wanted their daughters to raise their children with two parents.

Many of the women expressed different levels of standards for women and men. In discussing some of the reasons she needed to stay home with her children (all daughters), one woman said:

And by me having girls, especially, I want them to see and to know that women have more to prove here in life than men because men can just go out and do anything! But a woman can't. I be trying to show them.

The strength that many of these women had and tried to foster in their daughters was exemplified in another woman's statement:

That's a wide range [of pressures]. There's

so much expected of me. You being a mother is like the soul of everything - the heart of a volcano. It can explode. You were there. Kids don't rely on fathers. They don't even think about them unless they want something or need something. Its always Mom. It's a big responsibility. It's very hard. Sometimes you feel like you're gonna explode but you come back down to earth and you say this is my job and I gotta do my job. I gotta job until they get to be a certain age. But you never end being a mother. You have that job for the rest of your life.

Many of the women shared an understanding that they were responsible for the care and survival of their families. The majority of the women were the primary provider for their families. Twenty-four percent did this by obtaining state aid, but another 29% were working to support their families and were supplemented by aid. Only 11% (6 women) were totally supported by someone else. The women did not see their self-reliance as unusual, for the most part. Many expressed the opinion that it was a hard life but they did not suggest that "a man" might be a solution to the problem. Instead, the women developed other adaptations for providing for their family's needs. Obviously, many of the women used criminal activities to this end prior to prison. However, no one (not surprisingly) stated they were using this method at the time of the interview. The sense of responsibility shared by many of the women was certainly taxed by the lack of adequate opportunities available to them for supporting their families. One of the adaptations used by many of the women was an exchange of goods and services with relatives and friends. Thirty-nine women said that they did either borrow or loan

food, money, clothes, and services as a way of providing for themselves and their families. It was possible that more of the women actually did participate in an exchange with friends and relatives - but they did not perceive themselves as borrowing or loaning. Rather, in some families, exchange seemed to be taken for granted and not called borrowing/loaning. These findings support similar results discussed by Stack (1974).

Another value which many women mentioned was the importance of being honest with their children. While that might not seem like a significant factor, their examples demonstrated how firmly they believed that principle. Generally, the women were talking about telling their children they were in prison. In fact, only six women in the study said that their children had been told the mothers were either in school or the hospital. In these cases, the mothers said the children were told the truth after they were older. Being told their mother was going to prison was a harsh reality but one which most of the women felt their children needed to know. Many also believed their children should know the truth about other realities in life even though they were painful. For example, when one woman's 15 year old son was having problems, she decided to try and find his biological father since she thought that might help. She discovered that the biological father had died in jail the year before. She told the son and explained her reasons for doing it:

I wasn't going to lie to him. I'm not in the

habit of lying to my kids about anything. I'm in the habit of telling them - this is what it is. I can't sit down and tell them a fairy tale and ten years from now they find out mama told us a lie. I want them to deal with reality. I want them to deal with it.

Reality - that seemed to be the key for many of the women.

Reality seemed to take on greater importance in a world with few amenities - or perhaps it was just harder on the kids.

The women in this study espoused a desire for the "American dream" but they did not look to others to help provide it. For the most part, these women did not see their futures - or that of the children - dependent on men. They believed in the strength and ability of women to provide for themselves. However, this was not a position arrived at through social and political consciousness. Rather it seemed to be a consequence of living in a world that repeatedly presented obstacles to be overcome. Men were a comfort and sometimes men took care of them. Of all the women in the study, only six were financially supported by men. Several men provided some support and many spent time with the children. But the women did not expect the men to take care of them. They were aware that it was up to them to care for themselves and their children.

In fact, the future of many of the women seemed connected to their children's future. The children became a symbol of the future. If the children could succeed, the woman would feel she had been able to accomplish something with her life. Said one woman:

I want my baby to be like I want her to be.
 My life history, I don't like that at all!
 I wanted to be a model and I wanted to have
 a career and I didn't get a chance to do that.
 I want to make sure she does! I'm not going
 to pick her career for her but she'll have a
 career. She ain't going to do no wrong.

Several women made sense out of their own pasts by reasoning that their children would benefit from the mother's mistakes. In relating a conversation with her children, a woman said:

"Are you going to treat your kids the same way I treated you?" And they say, "No, I'm not gonna leave my kids. I'm gonna be with them. I'm gonna get me a job and I'm gonna work. I'm gonna make sure that I won't have to leave mine like you left me" and I said, "That's the best thing." I've made mistakes in my life and I've had to pay for them and I think they understand me and they're gonna treat their families a whole lot better.

The women in this study had many of the same hopes and dreams for their children that other mothers might hold. As one woman said, being in jail "don't make me less of a mother." The values they expressed were not very different from what non-offender mothers might express. However, the opportunities and likelihood of success for the offender mothers in realizing those hopes, dreams and values is likely quite different than that for non-offender mothers.

Expectation Regarding Being a Mother

In addition to holding specific values for their children, most of the women had clear expectations of how they were supposed to act/be as mothers. They were also acutely aware of their sense of sorrow and failure at being an

incarcerated mother.

A good mother, according to various women, did the following: took care of kids while they were sick; watched school things; took kids to church and the park; got up with the children every day, saw to it that they ate and had clean clothes; did not let different people babysit; and took kids to the dentist/doctor when necessary; taught children right from wrong; cooked; washed; and pressed dresses for little girls. In addition, women made the following comments about being a mother:

See, I've given them theirselves. See they were only loaned to me. God only gave them to me for a little while. See, He said, I'm gonna give these kids a mind of their own, only thing that you can do to them is talk to them and instill in them what you want to know - what's right and wrong.

...if the mother's there, I feel like she can bring things closer together and the mother should always have the guidance about the children, especially raisin' them without a father...So you look for your mother, the right way to do things.

[My goal is] to be a good mother. I'm not really into a career. A lot of people tend to have their career and that's their main thing. My main concern is my children. It really is ...My main goal is just to be a good mother. Somebody like when my son grows up to say, "I want my wife to be like my mother." I want him to be able to say that.

The sorrows start when they get grown. Because they're on your heart - you wonder about them more and you wish you could just reach out and pull them back to your lap but I can't do that. They've got to go out in this great big cruel world and I think of some of the things I was going to do in life and... I wish...I'm trying to save my kids from it, you know?

But being what a mother was "supposed" to be became intertwined with being an offender mother. The sense of failure at having left their children - and for not being what a mother was "supposed" to be - was evident from the majority of the women. One woman said:

I feel really good on one hand [having children with her now] and a little disappointed on the other because I can see where I have failed them. I can feel it, with my son in particular. I have really let them down...I think its going to come out of my daughter later. I was going to parent-child counseling...they were really helping me out...I truly feel it's going to come out of her later. I think she's afraid to let me know exactly how she feels. She has got to be bitter.

Some of the sorrow the women expressed at being an incarcerated mother had to do with not being there for their children when they were needed, such as when a daughter started menstruating or dating. Other sorrows involved missing "a lot of little stuff like bikini underwear and little clog shoes." One woman talked about how she had grown up in prison and thus had a lot to learn:

I think it's unusual because I went in as a kid. I grew up when I was in prison, from 20 to 26 [years old], and those are like to me your maturing years. I came out an adult and I think that's why I tend to reach out so much. There's a lot of things I don't know and that I want to know and I strive to be a good mother...I was looking for classes that would be helpful in raising a child because I never was with my daughter or anything and I was concerned about having my son and stuff.

Several women took on an almost desperate tone as they talked about being a mother and about failure:

But there has been times when I thought if I didn't have children, I think I would have committed suicide. My children keeps me going.

I'm just a failure as a parent period. I'm trying but my son is almost grown - he's 14 ...Not too much trying to do there. I'm disappointed in myself - can't start all over! I was caught in a vicious cycle so I just kept on going. I look back, I'm 31, all those years wasted. [When asked if she ever thought of having another child, she responded] No! Never! I messed up with 2. Three strikes and you're out.

The expectations these women had regarding being a mother were quite specific. How they accomplished that goal took on some unique dimensions because of the circumstances in which they found themselves. Many of the women had to deal with intense feelings of failure as well as the reactions of their children and other family members because they had not fulfilled the role of "mother" as they all (including the women) expected it to be fulfilled.

Significant Male Figures

Stereotypes have often depicted black families as being deviant, matriarchal and broken (Stack 1974). Stack provided a different view of black families. She offered the following description:

Due to poverty, your females with or without children do not perceive any choice but to remain living at home with their mother or other adult female relatives...Likewise, jobless males, or those working at part-time or seasonal jobs, often remain living at home with their mother or, if she is dead, with their sisters and brothers. This pattern continues long after men have become fathers and have established a series of sexual

partnerships, with women, who are living with their own kin, friends, or alone with their children. A result of this pattern is the striking fact that households almost always have men around. Male relatives, by birth or marriage, and boyfriends...children have constant and close contact with these men, and especially in the case of male relatives, these relationships last over the years. (Stack, 1974:104).

Although not all of the families in this study were black, certainly a large percentage (83%) were. The contentions made by Stack appeared to be accurate for this study population. Eighty-seven percent (48) of the women said that their children had a primary male figure in their lives. Sixty-two percent (34) of the women said this person spent 10 hours or more each week with the children. Only four women (7%) said their child had no primary male figure. The person who most frequently was the primary male figure was the child's father. The following table depicts distribution of primary male figures.

Table 15
Primary Male Figure

Person	# Women Reporting	Percentage
Child's father	18	32.7
Woman's husband/boyfriend	9	16.4
Other relatives	4	7.3
Woman's brother	3	5.5
None	4	7.3
Other	15	27.3
Missing	2	3.6

The women described the relationship their children had with these important men in their lives. One mother of three described her brother's relationship with her children:

Well, they'll see him at least 2 or 3 times a week - he'll come by. But my son [age 10] spends a lot of time with him. He's a male figure for my son. He takes him bowling, he takes him golfing, horseback riding. I do most of the things with the girls...but he's [son] at an age now where he needs a male influence so he spends a lot of time with my brother.

Another woman, who had a six year old daughter and lived in her mother's house, explained the role of her child's father:

He takes care of the baby constantly - he would take the baby and keep her. Never no problem. He go buy the baby clothes and he's a father figure. He's alright.

Although the majority of women (31 or 56%) said they primarily disciplined their children, in four of the other cases the male figure had a role in discipline during the mother's incarceration and later. One woman talked about her brother's relationship with her two daughters while she was in prison:

That's why now when [daughter's name] does something, my brother he be around and just look at her - and she'll just [stop]. So it was my brother that was always disciplining her.

In one case, a woman discussed some difficulties that arose because her two younger sons (aged 3 and 7 weeks) had a father who visited and the older son (age 9) had a different father who he had not seen in years:

The two younger children their father, OK, he comes over here, he takes very good care of the two younger kids. He comes over here... and picks up [3 year old son] and take him to the basketball courts...Every week, every two weeks...he drops something off...he just bought him that Big Wheel last week...he bought the baby Pampers...you know, he takes real good care of his two kids. And [9 year old son] sees this...and it bothers him. He asked me one time, he said, "Mama, would it be alright if I were to call [the father of the two younger children] Daddy?"...And I told him I'm quite sure [man's name] wouldn't mind. So he asked [man's name] one day...and [he] said, "Yeah." And a lot of times when [man's name] comes by to pick up [3 year old son], he'll take [9 year old son] along. You know like he knows the changes [9 year old son] has been through with my divorce, and with his father, and with my, you know, being incarcerated and all. [9 year old son] has a load on his shoulders. And he [man] understands, that's why he takes up a lot of time with [9 year old son] when he can.

Not all interactions with a male figure were a positive influence for the children. One woman explained:

And see when I got married I was young, and the children's father he didn't die a natural death. He was shot. He told his son before he died, anything you want outta life, you take it. Because ain't nobody gonna give you nothin' and if you have to die doing it, do it. So naturally when he died violently, he was another hero, a Jesse James to his son. I spent my life trying to show him its not like that.

During this woman's incarceration, her son was sent to a state juvenile institution. One other woman discussed a different kind of problem regarding a male figure.

He [her 11 year old son] wanted a family so bad. He's gone to his school and singled out a single man and say, "Oh, my mom is single, would you like to go out with her?" And he has talked to me about it and said, "I want to have someone I can call Dad!" So I was being the dutiful mother going out and saying, "Are

you doing anything for the next few years?"
I was soliciting for a husband!

One other woman commented that she felt bad/jealous when her children spent time with her ex-husband and his "girlfriend" because they would talk about the "girlfriend." However, except for the few problem situations described, the mothers seemed pleased with the relationships their children had with primary male figures.

Caregiving and Drugs

One of the most negative influences on women's caregiving responsibilities was addiction to and/or use of drugs. The parole files showed that slightly over half (58% or 32) of the women had a history of drug abuse. The women themselves talked about the tragic consequences their drug abuse had on their families. A woman who was 55 years old at the time of the interview said she had used drugs for 30 years. She had been off drugs since her last time in prison and was giving talks to community groups about the problem of drug use. She talked about the devastating effect the drugs had on her relationship with her children:

It's too much, too much time taken away from your children and not remember how they looked. I can't even remember how they looked in their teenage. And I'm right in the house with them. Now that might sound like a lie but that's the truth! I don't remember nothing!

I loved my children but it's not that real love that a mother has that has dealt with her children all their lives. That's not the kind of love I have for my children. Nothing excites me about them...You could call me and say, "Hey [son] is in the hospital." I'd say,

"Yea, what about, what's wrong with him?"
 Rather than the average mother would throw the phone down and say, "Oh my God, why?" But I wouldn't do that, I don't have that kind of feeling inside of me. I love my children too ...I can explain it no other way than that.

This woman said she had paid for her mistakes with her children. Her relationship with them was forever strained and she was convinced they would never forgive her. The woman, who was suffering from many health problems, explained that she had committed the rest of her life to trying to make up to her children by caring for her grandchildren. She cleaned house for her daughter and spent whatever money she had buying things for her grandchildren.

I feel very badly about it and I try to make it up with my grandbabies. And so I try to do everything I can. I know I can't repay any of the things I've done - there's no making up the debt you know but I feel like, hey, maybe I can compensate some of that by doing what I can for them.

Another woman, who eventually lost custody of her children, talked about how her use of drugs affected her relationship with her children:

My life before I was arrested was really horrible, it was really disgusting. I was really down in the pits with drugs. After I got arrested I cleaned my act up. I was being counseled once a week, I was making urine drops twice a week. I turned into the good person I used to be. I was a good mother and I got up everyday like mothers are supposed to. When I was on drugs, I wasn't like that, for almost a year I wasn't like that. The kids always ate and they always had fresh clean clothes. But I wasn't a good mother. I let different people babysit them which I normally wouldn't have done but did when I was on drugs. I must have left a bad impression. After I got arrested, I got really sick for

about 6 weeks and I know my little one, that's how she remembers me, as always being sick.

A woman who regained custody of her son after completing a drug rehabilitation program said:

I was on drugs and I didn't appreciate him [son]. I was mostly taking care of myself. [Son] always came second, my drugs always came first. If I didn't have no drugs, it was to the point that he really knew not to be around me because I was usually sick - bad! Drugs are like a whole other world - you don't care about no one but yourself.

An interesting correlation was found in the study to highlight the effect that drug abuse can have on a woman's relationship with her children. Children were likely to feel closest to their mothers (as opposed to other relatives) if the mother did not have a history of drug abuse. For those women with a history of drug abuse, only five (17%) said that their children felt closest to them while 25 (83%) of the women with drug histories said their children felt closest to someone else, most typically a relative. However, for the women without a history of drug abuse, 10 women (56%) said their children felt closest to them while 8 women (44%) said they felt closest to someone else ($P < .01$). In addition, children were more likely to be living with their mothers (and sometimes a husband/boyfriend) prior to the mother's incarceration if she did have a history of drug abuse. Of the 32 women whose records showed a history of drug abuse, only 9 women (28%) had their children living with them prior to incarceration. Of the 20 women who did not have a history of drug abuse, 13 (65%) had their children living with them

and sometimes a man. ($P < .01$).

Another "substance" which caused problems for some women was alcohol abuse. The parole files showed that 7 women (12.7%) had a history of alcohol use. Since there were 13 files with missing information in this area, it is possible that there were a few more. Drinking did not emerge from the interviews as a topic of as great a concern to the women as had drug use.

The women who had substance abuse problems seemed to be painfully aware that their addiction led to a damaged relationship with their children.

Links Between Generations

The women would draw a variety of connections between themselves and those who had given care to them. Not surprisingly, since most of the women saw themselves as failures, their recognition that they were a part of a continuation typically caused them concern since they feared their children might turn out as the mother had. A mother of five children said:

Its really hard to say [tell kids what to do] because really my mother could tell me nothing ...I'd sit there and listen but as soon as she'd get up and go to the other room, I'd do what I want. But I don't want my kids to be like that. I'm trying to tell them now, to instill in them that somebody, somewhere going to tell you something.

Another woman said that the sorrows in being a mother "are when they get older and you wonder, are they going to turn out like me?" One woman said she knew her daughter's

attitude was wrong because "its just about the same attitude I had."

Some of the women used their awareness that there were similarities between their own upbringing and that of their children to improve their own caregiving habits. A mother of two girls said:

My relationship with them was extremely close!
I grew up in a family where there was no
closeness between the children and their
mother...I have always felt that in my family
there will be some closeness because I think
all families need that.

In some cases there was a humorous side to the woman's recognition of her own past patterns in her children. One woman related what happened when her children tried to make up stories or excuses for something:

And they start giving me reasons why and I
tell them, "So you think I'm really going
to go for that? Don't you think I told my
mama that when I was little?...I done this
before and I know what you're all trying to
do!"...I'll say, "Yea, you can't play that
one, you've got to come up with something
new!"

In a few cases, there were interesting role connections between generations. For instance, one woman said that her mother used to take care of both her and her daughter (this woman had the long history of drug involvement) and now her daughter was helping to care for her. And the woman added:

I have a good rapport with her [daughter]
now, more than I thought I would because
she is kinda, she's so much like my mother
and they don't take no stuff!

One woman who was raised by her grandmother had been

concerned when she was in prison because her grandmother was caring for some of her children. The woman made references to physical abuse and lack of communication concerning her grandmother and said, "I could see history repeating itself" with her children.

When the women saw connections between their own upbringing and that of their children, it typically caused them to feel concern for their children so that they would not follow in their mother's footsteps.

Conclusions

The patterns of caregiving that emerged from the interviews showed a commitment to care for children but not necessarily in the stereotypic nuclear family. Rather, caregiving was a shared function among closely related kin or friends. In many cases the mother was the focus or primary caregiver while in others, the grandmother or some other relative was central. The children, for the most part, also had a primary male figure although it was not typical that that person lived in the same household as the child. This pattern of caregiving closely resembled the kin groups described by Stack (1974). Given the lives of the women in the study, the extended family group seemed to be the family structure most suited to their lifestyles. Caring for their children was an important aspect of the lives of most of the women in the study. Some of the women seemed to recognize its importance a little late but nonetheless, most of the women had made conscious decisions to provide the best care

possible for their children. The offender mothers in this study shared similar hopes and dreams, for themselves and their children, as do most non-offender mothers.

CHAPTER 6

RELATING AFTER PRISON

For women offenders and their children, the separation due to the women's incarceration was obviously destined to be a significant part of the history of their relationship. Whether that separation would prove to continually divide them - or whether it would serve to help unite them - could only be determined by the future. Nonetheless, offender mothers faced unique challenges and obstacles as they attempted to restructure their lives after release from prison and community correctional facilities. How they reweave the altered strands in their lives determined the future relationship they had with their children. It also yielded insight into the complex situation of being a mother who was on parole.

Of the women who participated in the study, 19 (or 34.5%) had been released directly onto parole and 36 (or 65.5%) were released from a community corrections program. The women had served an average of 9.5 months on parole at the time of the interview. The minimum time any study participant had served on parole was three months and the maximum was 23 months.

The majority of the women (46 or 83.6%) were living with at least some of their children at the time of the interview. Twenty-nine (53%) of the women were living with all

of their children. Only 9 women (16%) were not living with any of their children. Of the women who were living apart from any of their children, 31.5% said it was better that way and 68.5% said that it was not better that they should be apart from their children.

The majority of the women in the study (37 or 67%) at least saw their children on the same day they were released from either prison or the community corrections center. Another 11% saw their children during the first week after their release. However, three women (5.5%) said they still had not been permitted to see their children since their release. Twenty-nine women (53%) began living with their children on the same day as their release. In addition, three women (5.5%) were living with their children within a week of their release and ten additional women were living with their children within the first six months.

Of the women who were living with their children at the time of the interview, in 25 of the cases (45.5%) the mothers moved in with the children and in 17 cases (31%) the children moved in with the mother. The remaining cases involved various "other" situations, such as mother and children not living together initially and then all of them moving into a third residence. A significant relationship was found between the mother's age at the time of her first child's birth and whether it was the mother or child who moved when the mother was released on parole. It was more likely for the child to move in with the mother after her release from

prison/community corrections (as opposed to the mother moving in with the child) if the mother was 18 years or older at the time of the birth of her oldest child. Of the 21 women who were 17 years or under at the time the first child was born, only 14% (3 women) had children move in with them while 42% (14 women) who were 18 years or over had their children move in with them ($P < .05$). This finding might indicate that the older the woman when she had her first child, the more likely she and her child are to establish a separate household from the woman's family.

Not surprisingly, it was more likely that the mother would move in with the child if the child was being cared for by relatives than by non-relatives. Of the 35 women whose children were being cared for by relatives, in a little over half of the cases (20 women or 57%), the mothers moved into the relatives home with their children upon release. Of the cases where someone other than a relative cared for the children, in only five cases (or 26%) did the woman move into where the children were living.

Another significant relationship was found between the mother's age at the time of her first child's birth and whether or not the mother and her children were living together at the time of the interview. The older the women were at the time of the birth of their first child, the more likely that their children would be living with them. Of the 21 women who had their first child when they were 17 years or under, 71% (15 women) reported that all or some of

their children were currently living with them. However, of the 34 women who were 18 years or older at the time of the birth of their first child, 91% (31 women) reported they were currently living with all or some of their children ($P < .05$).

The women who were currently living with any of their children were likely to have lived with all of their children before prison. Of the 46 women who were currently living with any of their children, 34 women (74%) had lived with all of their children before prison whereas only three women who were currently living with their children had not done so prior to prison ($P < .05$).

In summary, the majority of women who agreed to participate in the study were living with at least some of the children. Slightly more than half of the women in the study began living with their children as soon as they were released from either prison or the community corrections center. They were more likely to be living with their children if they had lived with them before prison and if the women had been 18 years or older when they had their child. It was somewhat more likely that the mother moved into the home where her children lived during her incarceration than that they moved in with her. That was particularly true if the children lived with a relative during her incarceration.

Reweaving the Strands of a Relationship after Prison

Leaving prison or the community corrections center and moving back home was an image many women cherished during their incarceration. However, their dream had some very

difficult moments once it became a reality. Many women talked about the adjustments they had to go through once they were back in the community. The majority of women stated that some adjustment time was needed from when a woman was released until she felt comfortable with her life outside of prison. The reasons for the adjustment time varied. One mother of four said:

You know, being away from a child for any amount of time, say for instance my nine months...I didn't have the worries or the whines and the wants and, you know, the stubbornness...of a child. You know, I had to get back to understanding, being around the child again...And it took a little time because I know when I first came home, it used to get on my nerves and I'd find myself being harsh in some of the things that I'd say.

Another woman said she had to not associate with some former acquaintances because it could cause her problems. She explained:

Although like I told them, I've never stopped speaking or talking to any of my friends or nothing like that but I know what I got to do to stay out...feel what you want to feel about me, you know, but I know what's best for me... They don't begrudge me anymore you know like they used to.

In addition to adjustments with family and friends, there were also some adjustments which needed to be made concerning jobs. One woman described her situation:

In the first job I had I was ashamed of the fact I was just released from prison. I worked with all women and women are all gossipy "where are your kids?" and this type of thing. I had to cover up stories after stories because I didn't want them to know.

Although many of the women said the adjustment was

was difficult, two women had particularly stressful times returning home. A mother of three related:

I just didn't feel right. I had to get back used to society. I didn't do nothing but watch TV, I guess I had grown accustomed to watching it. I didn't do nothing but cook, clean up, watch TV - didn't go nowhere! Didn't even go to the store for sixty days. Then, I started gaining and gaining weight - gaining and getting bigger. I said one day, "Let me out of here" and that's it! I've lost a little weight but I haven't lost too much.

The woman in the study with the nine children explained her reaction to returning home.

[I was a] nervous wreck. People stare at you... so I crawled in a hole. I wouldn't go anywhere. I would go to work, I would come home, I wouldn't go anywhere. I wouldn't hardly go to the grocery store. If I did, I would go early in the morning so nobody would know who I am. So finally one day the Father of the church and a couple of friends said, "Girl, you never been in trouble in your life. You are still a decent person. You are still the same person you was when they sent you away from here. Let me tell you something honey, you stop sitting in that house." So then one night my family, they all came and got me and they took me out and I was kind of stand-backish. So now it don't bother me no more but it took me a whole year to get over it.

Although the adjustment experiences of these two women were more severe than those of the other women who were interviewed, most of the other women also spoke about some difficulties they had in adjusting to their life after prison. One woman seemed to sum up the feelings expressed by several of the women:

I felt like, just like I was interfering with everything, you know. I still feel like I'm the outcast, you know, the stranger in the household. And I don't know, sometimes I wonder if it would of been best if I'd left them just alone - the kids with my mom. Because I do

disrupt a lotta things you know. I want to do things differently than they want to do and its hard for me to make them understand why they should listen to me and not grandma. And when grandma wants to spoil them and I think they should be disciplined, it's hard for them ...I mean here comes this strange lady poppin' in, you know, telling that she's mommy, we got to live with her, you know.

Women also talked about having to get used to their children crying, having to get to know their children again, having to answer questions and just dealing with their own fears about being a mother. Some women stated they were given some time to adjust prior to resuming care for their children, others were not, and a few said they did not need any adjustment time.

Most of the women (65.5%) went to a community corrections program after prison prior to actually returning to their homes. The women seemed divided in their opinions regarding whether the community corrections programs aided them in their adjustment after prison. Most answers did not neatly fall into a "yes" or "no" category but rather contained an array of the pros and cons. The drug rehabilitation programs seemed to receive the most consistently positive remarks. One woman talked about how, while she was in prison, she would be locked in her room after her daughter visited because it was so hard for her to deal with "things." But she explained that at the drug program she was forced to confront some of these difficulties:

They would make me come out. Every visit, in the day, [name of drug program] used to put a sign on my door, "Do Not Enter!" Because they

knew I was going to my room every time I had a visit. After I had my visit I was to sit out and deal with all the women. I got used to it and I started facing up to things that I wouldn't face up to.

Several women credited the programs with literally changing their lives. They particularly liked the programs that allowed the children to either live there or visit on the weekends. One woman whose eight year old son moved in with her at a drug rehabilitation center said:

It was growing back together where we could talk and leave [house] and go to a show together. [Son] had a million and one questions when he got out of foster care about what happened to me and what it was like. It was just that he could finally start talking to me. I think he understood that I was a completely different person. He knew I was in there to get help.

Many of the women who attended these drug programs thought they provided a necessary transition to the community from prison.

The women who were placed in the community corrections programs expressed more concerns. Some of the women recognized there was a benefit from getting jobs and saving some money prior to their release. However, they still experienced problems concerning their children. One woman was staying at a center which was not accessible by public transportation and so she had a difficult time arranging to see her children. Another woman said her son

...almost had a nervous breakdown. He couldn't understand how I could be in Detroit and not be home. Most girls who leave [ie, escape] its because of family, children.

Several women commented that they broke the rules of

the halfway house in order to care for or see their children. One woman said she got to go home on the weekends but that sometimes she would sneak out during the week "just to make sure she (daughter) was alright." Another mother of three children related:

I'd leave [the halfway house] at 5 a.m. and get back at 7 p.m. I'd tell them I needed the time to get the bus when actually I'd go home and cook breakfast and dinner.

A mother whose son was in foster care said that she put up with the halfway house because she thought it was the only way to get her son back. Another woman had difficulty in a community placement because it was located in a small town that did not have a bus which was necessary transportation for her to get home for weekend furloughs.

One woman talked about a program where she was released from the halfway house and able to live at home for six months before she was actually paroled. She had to call the halfway house every night to check in and they called her several nights a week to verify that she was home. She explained a problem this caused for her:

At that time, I had to be at work at 5:00 in the morning so naturally I went to bed early. My cousin had the phone in her bedroom. She would have to wake me out of a sound sleep. "Hello, what are you doing?" "What do you mean what am I doing?" "We're checking to see if you're [home]." "Yea, you're talking to me aren't you? I got to go to work, I got to be up at 3:30 in the morning because I got to be at work at 5:00." But I think that's the most ridiculous thing I've seen...It takes a strong person to go through that because a weak person would run, I tell you!

One woman was particularly bitter about a staff member

at one of the community corrections programs. Her reasoning for the cause of her resentment was that this person wanted her to discontinue her relationship with her children. She explained:

She [staff person] said her reasons were that I were too wrapped up in my own children, and that I needed to learn who I was. I tried to explain to her that they were my life and I thought the halfway house was to help a woman ease back into society and the problem of children without running away from them or using a crutch such as drugs or whatever you may do...So I asked to go back to Huron Valley [the prison] so I wouldn't be sent back for sneakin' and seein' my children.

This woman said she returned to prison for a month and was then released on parole. It was difficult to get "the other side of" the story because of her anger toward this particular staff person. She further stated:

In fact, the police [referring to staff at the community corrections center] that was working on the floor, even they knew that was wrong. They used to, one of them, I won't mention names, but one of them used to sneak and take us [woman and her children]...to Top Hat, it wasn't the idea of how much it cost or what, it was the idea we were together. And there was another one that caught me going in...only thing she stopped me and told me was be careful, to watch my back, because just like it was her that seen me going there, it could have been someone else and I could be on my way back to the penitentiary. But the police on that system was alright...sometimes they would sneak them [woman's children] up the steps and let me see them.

The conflict for the women while they were in community corrections centers seemed to be the partial freedom they enjoyed at the center. They could see their children and visit their homes but they were subject to fairly strict rules at the center. As they looked back at their time in

the community corrections centers, many of the women seemed to think they would have preferred to go directly from prison to parole. Reweaving their relationship with their children seemed to take on additional and burdensome dimensions when the children saw that their mothers were out of prison yet the mothers were not really taking care of them.

Whether the women had gone to a community corrections center, had received some adjustment time after prison or had moved directly from prison into the home, the women perceived that their relationship with their children had clearly changed as a result of having been incarcerated. Many of the women felt their relationship with their children had been damaged but a few observed that it had been helped. One woman related:

I give them more [care]. I don't know if they need more. I guess because of the way that I feel, about me being in prison I tend to give them more, because of me depriving my daughter of a mother I guess I realize how important it is to have a mother and I think that's why I tend to give them more.

Another woman talked about how her nine year old son had developed a "nonchalant, don't care...type attitude." She said there had been some difficult times since she was released from prison but they are working them out. She said:

So, you know, him and I we're able right now to relate much better than we've ever done before.

Many of the women talked about how difficult it was to relate well with their children after the mothers were released from prison. One woman said that her daughter had

become materialistic as a result of living with caregivers who had more money than the mother. Another woman said her son tried to make her feel guilty for leaving and another agreed that her children held her incarceration against her.

Some mothers discussed how they handle their children differently than they did before prison. For instance, a woman commented:

...breaks my heart to discipline him [since] I
feel like I neglected him the last year. I
leave things go.

Other mothers talked about children manipulating between them and the person who cared for the children during the mother's absence. One mother said she could tell that her relationship with her children was damaged because she now had to say things two and three times and that they still sometimes did not listen. She did not perceive that had been a problem before her incarceration. Two women commented on role reversals that had occurred with their children. One woman said her daughter had taken on the mothering role (toward the mother) and another woman said her son had become overly protective toward her. She said he was jealous of the man in her life and resented it when she treated him (he was 11 years old) as a child.

As can be seen from the previous discussion, women returning from prison not only had the adjustments one might expect from being granted freedom, but they also had many adjustments and difficulties to deal with concerning their children. Incarceration not only physically separated

mothers and their children but also created many barriers and resentments which needed to be overcome. Some women were able to surmount these problems and establish even stronger relationships with their children. However, the majority of the women experienced problems as they attempted to reweave relationships with their children after having been separated due to incarceration.

Being a Mother on Parole

The women in the study had a variety of opinions about parole. The majority seemed to think it presented added pressures to them; quite a few women thought it was "no big deal"; and one woman thought it helped her because then she did not "go wild." But there was one basic agreement among the women: they did not want the parole officers to "pry" into their family affairs and they perceived that the parole officers were not really interested in knowing about their children. This latter observation was confirmed by a majority of the parole officers interviewed. In addition, parole records rarely provided any information about the woman's children unless there had been a problem that came to the parole officer's attention. Parole records did not routinely include whether the woman even had children.

The fact that many of the women on parole were also mothers presented some unique problems. Several women were paroled to places that were different from where their children lived. One woman was paroled to a friend's house. However, her four year old daughter lived with the woman's

"boyfriend" who was also the child's father. The woman and man had been together eleven years and were living together with their daughter before the woman's incarceration. Since the man was working during the day, the woman said she went over to their house every day around 8 a.m. so she would be there when her daughter woke up. She then cared for her during the day. But she added:

I spend nights over here [place where daughter and boyfriend lived and interview took place] like on the weekends. I don't care what he [parole officer] says. I've even told him you know that I come over here on the weekends and that I spend you know the weekend... [the situation] makes me sick!

Another woman said she was paroled to her aunt's house even though her three children lived with her mother because her mother's house did not have a phone. One woman was unable to return to the home where her father and children lived because a cousin had been paroled there and two parolees could not live at the same place. The first two women wanted to live with their children while the third woman was not definite about it. Although there may have been extenuating circumstances the women did not discuss - and the records did not show - these examples as explained indicated a lack of regard for the relationship between mothers and their children by the paroling authorities.

An area of concern for several mothers who had infants (and one who was pregnant), was the parole regulation that they had to work or be in school. These women wanted to stay home and care for their babies until they were old enough

(one woman stated that was two years of age) to be cared for by someone else. One woman who had her first child in prison and arranged for her mother to care for the child until her release was now engaged in a custody battle over that daughter. She had her second child while on parole and explained her problem with her parole officer:

I think that its important that parole agencies do pay close attention to the problems that women have as far as their children. I think if they would, they might be surprised at someone not getting in trouble. Like my parole officer, he really made me mad. I had just had my son and he was rushing me about going to work or going to school. And I tried to stress to him that by me not being with my daughter, how important it was for me to be with my son...And he's scaring me into thinking well if I don't get a job, if I don't go to school, he's going to send me back to the joint and I'm going to be away from him - my son...It really bothers me. I've been trying to look for people to go talk to my parole officer for me to let him know how important it is for me to be with my son and for him to be with me. I don't want to drop him off at a babysitter. It makes my angry that they don't take inside feelings. They just go by this black and white.

There was a good deal of ambiguity regarding whether there was a department policy requiring women to work if they had children to care for and, if there was such a policy, exactly what it was. Eighteen parole officers were interviewed. They were all asked what the official policy was with regard to women who had children going to work outside the home. There were a wide range of responses, including:

We're supposed to tell everybody they got to work.

I play it by ear.

No, there's no clear cut policy, its never been stated...

We're supposedly forcing them to work...and we've lost our leverage...[because of] overcrowded prisons.

The department policy doesn't discriminate, it wants all parolees engaged in some sort of activity that will positively aid in their adjustment...

No [policy], not at all.

Officially I don't do either [make her go to work or stay home]...my direction is more in setting down and finding what the individual wants to do with their lives.

Who am I to tell a woman to go out and look for a job or to go out and seek training and leave her children.

Although the parole officers clearly had varying expectations for the women on their caseloads, the women did not perceive uncertainty regarding the parole agent's expectations as one of the problems they faced. The women seemed to know what their parole agent expected. They might have perceived their agents' actual expectations as a problem, but there was no doubt what the expectation was.

Several women faced yet another sort of problem related to their role as a mother. Despite the sadness and "missing" they experienced at being separated from their children while they were in prison, the women were not always prepared for the realities of taking care of them again while they were on parole. One mother of three children aged 15, 14 and 10 said:

You gotta think about washing their clothes, making sure they eat, fix sores, listen to them holler and scream and make all that noise. It was kinda nerve-racking. I got so drunk I'd pass out and most of the time I wouldn't hear

the noise. Now it doesn't bother me...I don't like to holler at them because they're growing up and going through changes. I understand that but, being back with your kids is hard at first. It takes a little time.

Another woman who fought to get temporary custody of her 1½ year old son who was in foster care during her incarceration said:

I didn't realize it was so tiresome [taking care of a baby] until I was gone for so long. We fought so hard to get him back and he's got more energy than when we brought him home. It's hard.

There seemed to be a general consensus among the women offenders and the parole officers - the woman's role as a mother was not regarded as a significant factor to be considered during parole. With but a few exceptions the parole officers did not interfere in the woman's family matters so long as she complied with parole regulations and the offender mothers did not share information about their families with their parole officers because they did not perceive family matters to be the parole officer's business. This mutual pact of non-interference might be quite adequate if it were not for this study's finding that many of the difficulties faced by women offenders on parole were caused by or aggravated by their role as mothers. The majority of agents equated "problems" with those actions which directly caused a person to get involved with criminal activity and thus be returned to prison. Since problems with children did not typically produce such a direct result, they were not perceived to be important factors. Yet since these are the types of problems that could potentially lead to a less

successful readjustment to the community and eventually even parole revocation, it would seem that there should be some awareness of the problems of being a mother on parole if those problems are to be adequately addressed.

Problems During Parole

While a few of the women parolees in the study said that parole was not too difficult, the majority of the women stated that being on parole added pressure to what was already a difficult life. In discussing the pressures she felt on parole, one woman listed: having to take care of her daughter, realizing people she thought were her friends were really not friends, losing clothes and other possessions that were stolen while she was in prison, and "just parole." She said:

I be scared to get a traffic violation, I be scared to drive sometimes. And I know [parole officer] is not like that - he don't even bother me. Just the fact that its on me - that's pressure in itself. I don't get off parole until the end of next year...and that's pressure too - never being completely free.

Most women cited a lack of money as the principal obstacle they faced in trying to re-establish a life. This seemed to both cause and aggravate problems they had concerning their children. Many women who were not living with their children were unable to do so because they could not support them. If they were living with their children, many women said money problems made the situation more difficult. One woman had three of her four children living with her but was unable to afford a larger apartment so the youngest

remained with her father.

At first, there was not enough room in the apartment and no hot water, no heat and roaches and rats. I didn't want the baby in that environment. Now we have only two bedrooms and are pressed for room. [I am determined] to get her back. Her stepmother and father understand I'll get her back when I get situated with more room. I was in the hospital for nerves.

In discussing the problem she was having with getting custody of her daughter back from her mother, another woman commented:

All the time I was in prison Mom said, "Don't worry, you'll get her, I'm not going to keep her from you..." I found out it's not like that at all so I'm having more problems now than I did when I was in there [prison].

One woman had applied for aid but because she was working, she had not received any assistance. She had to pay a babysitter to take care of her children while she worked which added another expense.

I'm only making a tinsy bit of money - minimum wage - and I pay rent and all...I only bring home \$100 and take \$25 of that to give her [babysitter] and plus their [children's] lunches and bus fare. It's like working for nothing. It really is. Something has got to give.

Another woman who had a critically ill child in the hospital said that getting transportation to the hospital to see him was a problem for her.

Perhaps one of the most frustrating examples of some of the problems facing offender mothers was offered by a 38 year old mother of five children who was the sole supporter of her family. Her Pre-Sentence Investigation report showed that she had worked at one company for nine years as an industrial

hardware machine operator and had a good work record prior to her incarceration. The report also stated that she was extremely concerned about her children and that her life revolved around her family and her church. Her Pre-Sentence Investigation further stated that she "tends to rationalize her criminal behavior as necessary for a woman with five children to support in today's economy" and showed no remorse. The woman, who had no previous criminal record, was convicted of Violation of Welfare Act Over \$500 and served seven months in prison and nine months in a community corrections center.

During the time she was incarcerated, this woman's children were split up for the first time in their lives; one daughter failed in school and became pregnant; one son started getting in trouble for the first time and was in jail at the time of the interview; and another daughter was very hostile and had some emotional problems. As a result of her felony conviction, this woman was fired from the job she had held for nine years. She was told it was company policy. Since being on parole she had obtained - and been laid off from - two other other jobs. She had finally applied for unemployment. As she cried, she said:

[The] hardest to work out is job security and the financial situation. Trying to feel secure when you have children.

There were other problems the women faced on parole in addition to money and custody. They had to deal with the effects the separation had on their children (such as emotional distance and anger); they had to confront parole

regulations (such as working or being in school) that were contrary to the desire of many women to provide full-time care to their children; they had to deal with problems their children had (such as drugs and "running the streets") whether or not they were related to the mother's imprisonment; and they had to deal with their own behavior tendencies that got them in trouble initially. As one woman said, "We beat ourselves up a lot."

Many, not all, of the parole agents themselves perceived that the women had the very problems the women mentioned. Most of the agents cited examples of problems women parolees had with custody, their children's school, other relatives caring for children, money, or some other problem areas discussed by the women. One parole agent said:

They [women parolees] don't really know which end is going to go up. Because not only are they coming out to take care of themselves and get back on parole, but if they have children, they have the whole thing compounded. Whereas a lot of our men, they don't feel a responsibility for their children.

Another parole agent said:

Most [women parolees] want to live with their children, but there is a period of adjustment that looks like theres been some problems. I've had two women who've had problems dealing with the children. That's where they've been older, they've been in their teens, where the children throw it in your face, and said, "Hey, I've been around, I've been staying with aunt so and so and uncle so and so, they told me I can do it this way, you've been gone for five years you know..." These are kids that are fifteen years old and telling them that, and they have a hard time dealing with that. It takes some time.

Another parole officer, although obviously displaying

certain negative attitudes toward women, did discuss some other problems he perceived the women having:

...you've got to give a girl [sic] legitimacy... You know, like many of the women we talk to, that's, God, they can't think themselves out of a room. They couldn't think, they don't even know how to use a phone book. All they know is check on the first of the month and check on the fifteenth. And how do you use that money - they know nothing about budgeting. And poverty, poverty is a bitch - [they] know poverty and all that goes with it. I've been to some homes that I didn't believe, and I've been in a lot of these low neighborhoods around the city - and that's all they'll ever believe they can have. And I think that's incredible. I know I would like to see them get some hope.

Another parole officer stated:

I think one of the biggest things...I never realized it before I got this job, but there is a big conflict between generations... The grandmothers are the ones who have the kids while they're in prison. OK. And especially it seems among black women, the children are their best, most valuable possession... The mother will come home, and she'll, whether she has a court order or not, she'll take those children, and a fight almost always develops. If they're younger children, it happens the fight has to do with support, who's gonna have the children and who's gonna get the welfare for them. That is a big hassle. And it involves pride - the grandmother wants to raise the kids right and saw what happened to the mother and OK, boy, its almost automatic within the first week, people are calling you, you know the parole office thing, she's over here grabbing my check and its a big problem. And I don't think the women are necessarily prepared for it or the adjustment. They just think I'm going to get those kids back and they go to any extreme. [It's not so much the check]. I think its the pride. I think its the sense they think when they're in prison, I'm gonna go back and get my life together, and this is the way to do it. I'm gonna get the kids, and everything's gonna be OK.

One parole officer added another element to this notion.

He said that the problem he saw was the dependency that existed even before the woman went to prison:

[A woman who is on his caseload] now she's talking about getting an apartment. So with four children in an apartment, that's not even realistic, that's not how you plan to take care of children. So, most of their planning and decision-making that surrounds this whole notion of childcare and nurturing is lost on them because for the most part of their lives, they have been dependent and they've relegated that responsibility to someone else.

To add to this complex array of problems facing a woman parolee, yet another agent added this dimension:

...Maybe for a month or so it's great and as soon as something positive does not happen soon, that there's no short range goal reached immediately, the hell with the long range goals. I can't make it myself. I would be dependent, I don't care. I'll find somebody else, and their idea of making it is existing...I see it in my male parolees [too]. They get to a certain point, and it's like crawling up the side of a mountain. You look down, you get scared and fall. I think there's a self-destruct button in all...offenders. Where there's no reason for them to goof off but they goof off, get caught and go back and you say why. And the answer's always "I don't know." But the theme, and a lot of them I think it goes that far, is breaking par, doing as good as they did before. ...To motivate them past what they were before, to me is extremely difficult.

It must be noted that the women and parole agents knew the interview concentrated on their relationship with their children so it is likely they discussed difficulties concerning their children in more detail than they did other areas. However, the myriad of problems that emerged was so extensive - and their occurrence so frequent - that it is necessary to take these discussions quite seriously. Although few of the women themselves nor the parole officers seemed to

think family problems should be included in the parole process, these family problems quite definitely seemed to have an effect on the woman's successful completion of parole. Therefore, some type of support in the area of family problems seems needed during parole.

Role of the Parole Agent

The women in the study group had mixed reactions about their parole officers. One woman thought her parole officer was helpful and another that she was a good listener. Other women thought their parole agents offered them no help whatsoever. One woman said she thought that power went to her parole officer's head. A fairly common perception among many women was that the parole agent seemed like a nice person but was not of much assistance to the women. For instance, one woman said her parole officer was a "nice guy" but that he could not help her find a job. The women almost unanimously agreed that the parole officers did not perceive their job to be helping the women find employment. Rather, most of the women saw their parole officers as someone who was "checking up" on them but not someone who would offer any kind of support. As one woman said, they give you "enough rope to hang yourself." The women who said their agents did help them seemed to appreciate the help but saw the agent's role as somewhat limited. After saying that her parole officer had talked to her about her children, one woman said,

[There was] nothing more she could do to help.

Everything that happened at that point I was able to work out. My PO [parole officer] was a good listener and I never had real big problems with the rules.

Other women, however, were quite specific that they did not want their parole officers "interfering" in their personal lives. While many women would have liked to receive help from their parole officers in finding jobs, they did not typically think the parole officers should provide counseling even though many of the women said they were in need of counseling concerning their children. After one woman commented that the parole officers just check to see if a person is doing good and was asked if she thought they should do more counseling, she responded:

No! I think they try to act like it but they're not qualified.

Although the majority of women agreed their parole officers were not very helpful, they were not, for the most part, critical of them. Many women said they did not want the parole officers to "pry." When another woman was asked whether she had discussed her current custody problems with her parole officer, she replied:

I do not talk to my parole officer about my daughter and the situation...I guess they feel that it's not their responsibility.

The monthly parole interview was mentioned by quite a few of the women and parole officers as being superficial. Said one woman:

They don't have time to be helpful. And I can understand. If I had a problem I wonder if they would have time to even listen to my problem. Number one is they're so swamped with people and

paperwork. I'll give you a for instance. Once a month I go to the parole office to report. They have a sheet, a pad of yellow paper and you go in and you say, I'm here to see [name of parole officer]...He said, Is everything OK with you, are you still working? Yes. OK. Go over there and fill out one of those yellow sheets. So I hurry up and fill it out which takes about 5, 6, 7, 8 lines - how much you make, have you moved during the month, have you been in jail, blah-blah. That's it. Sign your name. You give it to him. OK, I'll see you next month. But I must say this, they always ask, is everything alright? Well, when you come into an atmosphere like this, of hurry, hurry, hurry, you'd be a damn fool to say wait a minute, I have a problem now.

A few women specifically mentioned ways a parole officer had helped them: one said her parole officer helped her understand the need for a budget, another said her agent helped her get out of jail and another even said:

My parole officer has been an extreme help to me. In fact, I would put a lot of credit on that man for renewing my faith in the system because he showed a concern in me where it just turned me around where I felt he was really trying to help me.

There were also women who did not think their parole officers were at all helpful. One woman said:

I was really depressed around Christmas - called my parole agent at home [because] I needed help. I couldn't give them [children] anything and I felt terrible. He didn't help at all...He could have helped with going through depression and nervousness and [when I] had no means to go to a doctor.

One woman said she thought parole officers "threaten and pressure" and another woman (who had recently given birth to a baby) said:

And he's scaring me into thinking well if I don't get a job, if I don't go to school, he's going to send me back to the joint and I'm going to be away from my son.

Another woman said she was on drugs and prostituting and her agent did not know it until she turned herself in to get help.

When the women discussed what the role of the parole officer should be, the majority thought they should help women find jobs but not interfere in family/personal matters. In summary, some women were critical of their parole agents, some found them to be quite helpful but the majority seemed to be somewhat neutral toward them. They did not like parole but did not have a quarrel with the agents themselves providing they did not interfere in the women's personal lives.

It is interesting to note that many of the parole officers (PO's) themselves had some similar opinions as the women parolees. One PO summarized the official role of the parole agent as:

I think the parole agent is here to take a direct role in anything that involves #1, criminal behavior, #2, involves the rehabilitation process.

Most parole agents saw their job responsibility as supervision - monitoring to assure the parolee followed the rules (for the most part) and did not become involved in any criminal activity. The majority of parole agents said they did not like to - nor did their clients want them to - get involved in the parolees personal life. An example of many of the parole agent's sentiments were expressed by this man:

I more or less like it this way [not talking about personal things]. I don't go into that. I normally tell my clients, I'm not gonna go into your personal or private life, because that is personal and private, and if there's a problem that occurs in your personal life that you want assistance, or whatever, please bring it to

my attention...because I don't want them to feel like I'm trying to boss them around here to direct their lives, to tell them what to do, because most of my clients get turned off by that.

Most parole officers said they did not strongly either encourage or discourage the women about returning to take care of their children. Rather they said that if they knew anything about the situation to begin with, they would encourage the women to "do what they need to do." However, several PO's pointed out they do not always know what is going on since their role is such that people are afraid to tell them if there are problems. One parole officer explained:

But overall, I think my relationship is one of being someone who is supervising their parole. You can't avoid that issue. And rather than even admit that someone [a parolee] has a problem I think there's a tendency to paint a picture like everything is going just real well...I really have to dig to get any further than, Hi, how are you? And, Fine.

The parole agents pointed out that their role also becomes defined by their limitations. The most common problem discussed was the high caseloads of each agent. While many agents said they did not want to get involved in their clients personal business, those who did want to said they really couldn't because of high caseloads.

But like I say, I'm so concerned...with high caseloads that we're going to lose a lot of that [talking about problems with client]. It's going to be the paper shuffle and its even to that point right now to some extent. And just clipping the peaks, just hitting the high points. Somebody acts out...they get a little attention ...which is what they've learned to do all along.

Another agent said:

Agents get caught up in the official nature of the work we do, and kind of lose sight of people and the real problems that people have that cause behavior...

But quite a few parole agents pointed out that they experienced additional problems with women parolees because although the caseloads were high, the number of women parolees remained relatively small.

If you were to examine first that only four out of eighty-five cases that I have are women, that alone really limits the time that I can devote to the types of problems that women would have... and so the system kind of shoves them in the corner.

Another agent said: "I wish to God I had more [women] because I'd know more about it."

One parole agent explained how he perceived interacting with women parolees:

I think most women view male parole agents as chauvinistic and they do have a stand offish attitude toward males. I'm sure a woman agent would have a deeper relationship than a male agent when you're dealing with women clients... I find most women clients, with me being a man, they tend to deal with me superficially. And I return the same type of attitude.

This same agent said he thought that there was not enough awareness of women's problems among all parole agents.

The role of the parole officer seemed fairly well defined both officially (by "Lansing" - the site of the administrative offices) and unofficially (by the high caseloads). None of the parole officers said they thought they were doing all that was needed but they did think they were doing all that they could given constraints. The women parolees who participated in the study seemed to agree that the agents'

role was primarily supervision and that they did not, nor should they, become involved in that woman's personal/family matters.

Parole Agents' Opinions Regarding Women Parolees

The parole agents expressed strong opinions regarding both women offenders and the roles their families played in their lives. Although none of the 18 parole agents questioned were asked whether female or male parolees were more difficult, many of the agents commented that the women were more difficult to supervise on parole. Not one agent stated that the women were easier to deal with than the men. An agent commented:

[A friend used to say that women] were far more trouble [on parole] than the men were. It might be a lot of things, the fact that a woman will have quite often a more substantial criminal activity before she finally gets sent in...so by the time you do have a woman on parole, you've got an awful hard-nosed character.

Another parole agent explained why "I'd rather have twice as many male parolees as females":

Honestly...I think that women are definitely harder to work with... Women are more verbal about their complaints...the state spends four times as much, I don't know the exact figures, on medical costs as they do with men. Well, there's no reason it should be that high, it's just the women are more determined to get their complaints taken care of... I'd say men are 80% on time [for reporting to parole office], the women are about 30%... They [women] will not keep morning appointments, which I've noticed too. I'm sounding really negative, but I'm just trying to lay it out for you... I think the men I've had are more conscientious about their parole reporting and showing some deference to the rules... They'll [women] fight the rules... If you ask them to give a

urine sample... we'll debate it you know, now two hours will pass and we still won't have the sample. Well, forget about it...

Another parole agent said that men were easier to deal with on a day-to-day basis, but actually posed a bigger threat to society.

Several parole officers indicated that the women were allowed to "get by" because it seemed to be too much trouble to deal with them. Said one:

It's part of your old system, the old thinking of women shouldn't be here anyway, you know, they're just light, five, ten percent of the program. So we'll just let them get through and we'll get the 90 percent. We won't worry about them too much.

Another interesting observation made by several parole officers concerned the "dependency" they saw in many women offenders. One officer described it in the following way:

And this [shoplifting and prostitution] just drives me nuts as a parole agent working with a female offender. They can always get money. And if they can't get it themselves, it's very, very easy for them to become dependent on a male to get that money coming in... What it all boils down to is she is not out there doing something for herself. She is so used to being dependent that it's very rare that she can go out and do something on her own... I feel their motivation is lower than a man's. I'm not trying to be chauvinistic, I'm just trying to say from the experience I've had, most of the women their motivation is lower. They know darn well the chance of getting a job is short, and they aren't going to kill themselves because eventually someone, somewhere is going to take care of them. I don't care if they're old, ugly or whatever, someday they're going to find a man to take care of them.

The opinions voiced by these parole agents illuminate a dilemma faced by parole officials. On the one hand, they

condemn the dependency they see among women offenders. Yet on the other hand, they administer a system which requires women to obtain permission to make personal choices (such as moving, changing jobs, getting married, etc.) and they admittedly overlook actions for which the women should be held accountable. In their own ways, they assist in perpetuating the dependency.

Another observation made about women parolees by one agent was that they were more "individualistic" than the men. He said they were more difficult to type-cast and it was hard to "get an idea where they may or may not be coming from." In contrast to the opinion expressed in a previous statement, this parole agent observed that women parolees were more likely to accept their fate. He said:

...they accept things as they happen, whereas a male parolee might lie, cheat, argue, get angry, play games, the females seem to accept what's happening to them. It's very rarely that a female parolee will be caught in a crime on parole and scream she's innocent. It's very rare.

The opinions of the parole officers about women parolees were varied yet typically definite. Everyone had a strong opinion about the women. This was particularly interesting given that the majority of agents had between two and four women on their caseloads which typically numbered over eighty.

The parole agents likewise had varied - but again definite - opinions about the role that children and families played in the lives of the women. Again, the responses to

questions about the importance of children/family from the agents' perspective did not fall into simple categories.

Some agents thought that the women talked about being concerned for their children in prison and immediately upon release, but they did not see that concern carried into action after the women were in the community for awhile.

Typical of such responses was the following:

And I think that one of the things that I find is that it's a lot of lip service. That whole business of taking responsibility for self and for children is one that's out of proportion with their capacity to take care of those children. I don't think they want that kind of change. Most of them are really afraid of that much responsibility.

This same agent went on to say that the women did not have children because they wanted to be a loving parent, but rather because "they were fertile." Several other agents commented that the women "used" their children as excuses for not reporting on time and for not working. They did not see the children as important in and of themselves to the mothers.

Other parole agents had a different view of the women's children/family in their lives. An agent who seemed to represent the viewpoint expressed by this group of agents said:

I think most of the women that are with their children after going through incarceration care, simply because they had the option once they were incarcerated and they got back out, they basically had an option whether to take the children back or not, I'd say in most cases. And if they did, I think it was based on some type of affection, motherly instinct or whatever.

Most of the parole agents stated that whether having children

was supportive or burdensome depended on the individual women. Many cited examples of a woman from their caseloads who exemplified each option. An example of this type of statement was:

I guess I think that that is such an individual thing, from what I've seen. It can be a very positive sort of motivating force or I think it can occasionally be an additional responsibility that these people are not capable or willing to meet. It's a burden...on their lifestyle and interferes with what they want to do on the street. In many cases the children are, quite frankly, abandoned to other family members, or not even family members... Or [I've] seen cases in the reverse where it's been part of a supportive structure that's helped them to refocus and make a positive adjustment.

One parole agent touched on the concept which emerged from the interviews with some women that their children somehow became their [the women's] hope for the future. The agent said:

I think it's pride. I think it's a sense they think when they're in prison, I'm going to go back and get my life together and this is the way to do it. I'm going to get the kids and everything's going to be okay.

Another agent said:

I don't know if it's, I think maybe it's more characteristic of black women with children than a white woman with children that I've seen, but they take a lot of pride in their children and even if they don't have a job, or have very little money, when you see their kids, they take them out someplace, they're sharp. They are dressed right. You know, they really, you can see that they value their kids...by the way they spend money on themselves and the kids. They don't have a lot, but somehow that's real important to show them in their best way.

One agent talked about the bond between a mother and

her children, especially the younger ones, as being important. Others talked about the woman being responsible for her children since the fathers usually were not. Another agent said he actually thought children could help a woman be more successful on parole, in some cases. He stated:

Some women, if they have children, I think it stabilizes them more than say a woman who has no children and is basically free to do whatever she wants whenever she wants. Whereas a woman that has children at home, and cares about the children, is going to take up a certain portion of her day and her time and this helps in stopping recidivism, I think, but it depends on the particular woman.

As can be seen, there was not a consensus among parole agents regarding the importance, or lack of importance, of children to women offenders. If there was any common agreement to be drawn from the statements of the 18 agents, it was that the importance of children to a woman was an individual experience and that they could cite examples of cases where having children was supportive as well as cases where the women were not very responsible with their children.

There is one final observation to make regarding the opinions expressed by the parole agents regarding women offenders. Many of the agents, as have been described, seemed concerned about the women succeeding on parole and treated them as individuals. However, there were also comments expressed which conveyed stereotyped or closed opinions. For instance, the parole officer who described a client as "this last broad I had on parole" was clearly indicating a negative attitude toward women, as well as toward women offenders.

In talking about educational grants, another agent commented that "it seems like every parolee in Wayne county has heard of them." He somewhat begrudgingly admitted he would not stop someone from going to school. Again, this agent's attitude was likely to influence his interactions with parolees. Another agent expressed some concerns regarding how parolees lived when he stated:

...and occasionally I've stopped there [a parolee's house] and particularly it's a hot day and the house is just a little dirty or whatever like that, [I've] invited the wife or the spouse to come out in my car to talk ...it gets me out of their house, cause a few of those couches and chairs I don't particularly care to sit down on... [I] leave my notebook in the car so I can go in there and say, oh, gee my notebook--why don't we just step out to my car so we can sit in my car and talk.

These attitudes, together with the opinions of the parole agents, are likely to be prime determinants of how successfully a woman completes parole. As McCleary (1978) pointed out, parole outcomes are largely a function of maintaining the status quo as opposed to being completely related to parolee behavior. He states that outcomes of the parole process are determined by the initial typing decision. This typing decision assesses a new parolee's potential for causing problems on parole. The typing decisions are, at least in part, formed by the parole agents perception of the parolee from a home visit and first interview. It then becomes important that the typing decision prove to be accurate. Thus, if a parole officer is "maintaining the status quo" and thus presumably showing a certain success rate, the attitudes and

opinions of the agent will likely color her/his perception of who is successful on parole.

Helping Women Parolees

Having discussed the problems the women were having on parole, as well as the parole officers perception of the problems women experienced, all of the offender mothers and the parole agents were asked to describe services/programs/policies which might provide assistance to women returning from prison, especially those who are mothers.

The women offenders who participated in the study had many suggestions for assistance. The most frequent suggestion - in fact, one that was mentioned by the majority of the women interviewed - was to have counseling. Women spoke of needing more counseling in both the prison and the halfway house, but especially of needing counseling once they were released on parole. The reasons for and type of counseling varied. One woman said:

I think they should have some counseling... Counseling kinda helps them [offenders] unwind...like sitting here talking to you... about my past has a great deal to do now with what I'm going to do now when I go out. Because I say, hey, here is someone interested enough to talk to me about my past-okay-and it brings to my mind a lot of things that I did...but I never had a chance to discuss them. And discussing them has a lot to do with getting you back into the swing of things... So I feel that when a woman comes home or a man that's been in prison, and especially those that's been in prison awhile, they need counseling. And I think they should set up a system...that at least twice a week they have to come in for some kind of counseling.

This woman specifically said counseling should be

mandatory, but most respondents simply talked about the need for counseling although the implication seemed to be that it be available, not necessarily required. The major areas that the women mentioned which counseling could help included: adjusting to life after prison, building better relationships with their children and dealing with drug problems. Although a few of the women said they would like their parole officers to do some counseling, the majority seemed to think it should be another person.

I think they should have a person with the parole agency that is a counselor type thing - somebody like if you go through child custody. A counselor or somebody like that who you deal with and work with you in going to court because parole officers can't, they have such an overload as it is!

The next most frequent response concerned providing programs/services for children. The women suggested that while in prison: children be allowed to spend the night, a nursery be established, visiting areas be established where there could be activities for the children as well as an opportunity for privacy between mother and child, transportation be arranged to bring children to the prison, arrangements be made to allow women to call their children even if they could not afford to pay for it, visiting times with children be expanded and counseling be provided both during prison and especially as a woman prepared for release. Various women made the following statements:

It's just that the visits just weren't long enough! After awhile, like here at Huron Valley [Michigan's only women's prison at the time], they don't have anything for the kids

to do...like my kids were on cheerleading teams and they would come up there and show me some of the cheers and different stuff. They always tell [you] "you have to make the kids sit down!" But kids don't like to sit down! They should have some little hook-up like a community room with tables and chairs and T.V. and toys for the kids. Yes, they need that.

I think it would be a good idea [to have children spend the night]. You know a lot of people probably would say it's not good for the child... I couldn't say it wouldn't be good...especially if the child is as small as a newborn...or not in school, I think it would be a good idea if some of the women that actually wanted to keep their kids with them... And then too, I think it would make better inmates out of women. You know, because she would be there and have to take care of her child. She would be more of a mother ... And once she's released, she doesn't have to go through the changes of trying to, her and her child getting to know each other again... I think that women would be a better woman upon release...she would be a much better person.

...when they did all this [new facility opened in 1978], why didn't they make facilities for the women to keep their children? They could send it [the foster home] right out there, they'd have enough room. I think that's the cruelest thing. They're talking about conjugal visits. Some places have it, why not be able to have your children? Oh, they say about raising somebody in a penitentiary atmosphere. Baloney!

The women had suggestions for programs/services to assist women with children once they were placed in a halfway house. They suggested parenting skills classes, allowing children to live at the halfway house, public transportation within reasonable access and counseling. An example of one suggestion was:

They got these rooms [in halfway house] let the kids live in them...it isn't going to cost that much more for the simple reason these women... got to pay rent anyway, they could contribute so much for a babysitter, you know, like when they go to work, there'll be someone there to take care of the child...

The women had many suggestions for programs/services that could assist them once they were released on parole, many of which concerned their children. In addition to counseling, many women specifically said that parenting skills classes would help them. Some also said that more attention should be focused on the problems women have when they are released and responsible for their children. The women cited financial and legal problems they faced. One woman said:

I think a financial thing should be set up, available to the women, even through a loan or something. Kids need somuch, I swear they do. Or an agency where the money can be checked into to make sure it's going to the kids. Like right now my little girl needs braces on her teeth. I been trying to get her to a dentist ever since I can remember. They need programs where these kids can go to for help financially. Another thing that they need is a center [for] parolees that can't live with their children here. They don't have anywhere to take the kids. They got to find somewhere to go and visit that child... I don't mean where there's people running in and out or dope fiends - a really nice place where the parent and child can get together. Some activities...where she can go and do something with her child. Parents need more support with the kids. A lot more. Also parent-child counseling... help out when the holidays come around. If the mother's just getting out of prison, there should be some way to get gifts to the children... And then when the mother starts working, they can pay it back.

Many of the suggested avenues for assistance on parole involved finding jobs. The women thought the parole officer or some agency could help them find employment. Said one woman:

I think there ought to be a job placement program for all parolees, but especially for single parents - be it male or female. Because it's

hard when you get out - you already have your self-esteem has been bruised so if you go into a parole office and your parole officer says, "Take a job washing dishes! Sweep the floor!" You know, they aren't demeaning jobs because my grandmother was a maid for many a year, but it was by choice...if you have workable skills then I think you should be allowed to use them ... I put in an application at a hospital, I passed the test, I passed the oral interview and as soon as my supervisor noticed I had been incarcerated, I was terminated...solely because I was an ex-offender. I think people should be made aware...that it doesn't make you a totally bad person.

Suggestions for assistance in the areas of counseling, children and jobs were the most frequently mentioned requests. However, the women identified other areas which would help them succeed on parole. Examples include: the system being more aware of the effect of incarceration on the children; legal assistance; a center for ex-offenders, staffed by ex-offenders, where they could work out problems, obtain grants for school, clothes, furniture, etc.; community drug programs; child guidance center; a place to live; listings of all the resources that are available; social services to be more helpful rather than be a pressure; and help in dealing with various agencies. Many women expressed confusion over how to get what they needed from agencies which they heard were supposed to help them. A parole officer offered the following observation:

Social services is nothing but a stone zoo. There are so many things [to] be done, so much paper work, such huge caseloads, that it's practically impossible, really, for someone to get something done for them.

It was interesting to note that the parole agents

offered similar suggestions for what was needed to assist women offenders when they returned to the community on parole as the women offenders themselves had offered. Many agents talked about the reality that they (because of high case-loads) could not fill counseling/grant resource roles for the women and their frustration at not always knowing how to get the women connected with the appropriate referral agencies. A few agents said they thought the women were lax in taking control of their situations and obtaining needed help. Yet other agents recognized that some problems were not necessarily a result of the woman's lack of motivation. One parole agent noted:

The money comes from, it seems to me, some federal grants and federal aid to the state or county and the state does it when the county may be disbursing the forms and there's so many grants, and different areas coming down it's extremely difficult. My clients tell me what's coming down half the time because I can't follow it.

Another parole agent said that coordination of services needed to begin prior to the woman's release on parole. However, this agent noted that there would still be some problems even if the timing was appropriate:

I think they should coordinate their efforts a bit more prior to coming out with other support agencies because, you know, I don't think the department [Corrections] is equipped to handle kids for the most part. You know they're particularly looking at a female coming out on parole, they're not looking at the children, that's not their job, so I think an effort can be made to coordinate efforts with other agencies.

Another parole agent who was discussing a similar problem

said, "We're constantly fighting other agencies!"

The parole agents discussed other improvements which they perceived would help increase a woman's success on parole. Many agents talked about large, societal changes that needed to occur. One agent said we (the system, the society) needed to give women hope that a better life was possible, another said they needed to learn they could do more than just "exist." One of the agents said:

But I don't think stop gap programs are going to change anything, you've got to give a girl [sic] [hope]. And we've got to show and make folks think they can participate in this system without prostituting themselves for a few bucks and make them think there's some hope.

Several parole agents said the problems they saw were due either to the lifestyle or environment from which the women came which included being reared in what one agent termed "inadequate families." He suggested:

We have to start training girls [sic] when we can get our hands on them, in public schools, and in churches, wherever we find them, recreation centers or wherever... So there's some kinds of ways that I think it can be done and I think I'm talking about sex education wherever we find them and we, that's society, has got to recognize that people are going to have sex so let's teach them how to do it responsibly. Then if we find that they choose to have them, then let's try to teach them how to take care of these children. Let's have more day care centers where these girls [sic] can go to school, look forward, learn how to be an adult.

The parole agents also offered the following suggestions for helping women offenders: help educate prison staff to better prepare the women who are leaving; provide day care programs; provide family and children's services including

counseling and a center; make services available, but keep them separate from corrections; and provide realistic training in prison. Two agents offered the following two suggestions:

I think women with children that want to go back to work, they've got to expand on day care. You know? It stinks as far as day care programs. There's nothing, you know? And, for these women that do find a job, then, you know, ADC or social services doesn't pick up the tab. Well, these women might as well not work because they're paying so much money for a child's day care center and half the paycheck is going for day care so there's no encouragement on that. There's got to be some type of expansion on day care.

Foster homes are not a real, really valuable alternative, orphanages are not a valuable alternative. It's difficult to say the children should be diverted to, or should be placed in another home placement. But what might be more realistic is a special condition which we don't have in our list of special conditions, that the parents seek some kind of rehabilitative therapy through social services or community mental health which we do have...family guidance or counseling of some kind.

In summary, both the women offenders themselves and the parole agents perceived that there are indeed some services/programs which would assist women offenders in successfully moving back into the community. The similarity of perception among the parole agents and parolees indicates that the needs are readily apparent. Some of those needs could be met through programs while others will need to await a public awareness that some attitudes and stereotypes are inaccurate and harmful. Women offenders clearly face immense obstacles as they attempt to leave prison behind them. Whether those barriers become insurmountable depends on the commitment of

corrections departments and other agencies to not only recognize needs, but to devote the energy and funds needed to resolve them.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study of the relationship between offender mothers and their children has focused on the separation of offender mothers and their children, the caregiving patterns which evolve, and the experience of being a mother who is on parole.

The relationships between offender mothers and their children cannot be succinctly described. They are evolving relationships which are shaped, in part, by family history, kinship networks, temporary caregivers, societal expectations, guilt, maturation and the experience of separation. This study has examined the relationships of 55 offender mothers and their children as described by the mothers and, to a limited extent, as portrayed by their parole officers/records. The richness of their feelings and experience was described in the text of this work. Several conclusions can be drawn from this study. One goal was to develop grounded theory for understanding the relationship of offender mothers and their children. This was accomplished by using the constant comparative method to analyze the data. The grounded theory will be included as a part of the conclusions. Hypotheses were also formulated from the obtained data. In addition, there are many recommendations which can be made as a result of this research project. There will be discussed after the conclusions are presented.

Conclusions

The literature, as well as reports by institution staff, contend that although many women offenders state an intention to return to their children, there is doubt whether many of them actually do return to live with their children once they are released from prison. However, in Michigan, and especially in the study population, the majority of women parolees did, in fact, return to live with their children. Among all women parolees in the state who were mothers, 65.5% of the women lived with all or some of their children after release. Among the offender mothers who participated in the study, 83% lived with all or some of their children after the mother was released from prison. Thus, the contention that women offenders give only lip service to returning to live with their children proved unfounded for this group of women.

The women in the study had an average of 3.0 children. When the mothers were in prison, the majority of the children (63.6%) were cared for by relatives. The majority (60%) of the women said they were basically satisfied with the care their children received even though 73% of the women stated that their children experienced problems as a result of the mother's incarceration.

These factual statements are but the beginning of the results that emerged from the present study. The experience of being a mother added various dimensions to the phenomenon of being in prison and being on parole. It is this experience of having children which shaped the results of the study.

The conclusions will combine information obtained from the various findings of the study. Symbolic references emerged throughout the interviews and will be highlighted. The situation of needing to provide for the daily care of the children helped shape the results of this study. Many aspects of the relationship between women offenders and their children were specifically influenced by the relational dimensions of the interaction among the women, their children and the caregivers. Custody, physical presence and caregiving will be considered in this context. Finally, parole will be discussed by focusing on the relationship between parole and the family, parole survival and the social issues surrounding parole.

Symbolic References

Children often became symbols to their incarcerated mothers. They represented the real work, the normal world. Children were a symbol that the temporary situation of the mother's imprisonment would end because, after all, the mother was responsible for caring for her children. Thoughts about providing child care could take on almost magical qualities: going to doctor's appointments, having parent-teacher meetings, taking children shopping, etc. became some of life's most valued activities. The reality of the drudgery attached to some caregiving activities was obscured by the woman's deep desire to leave prison and return home. Children also became a kind of symbol for the future and for the "good life" after release from prison. Many women saw their

futures tied to the success of their children. The women themselves might not have had much education or a career, but their hopes that their children would achieve these goals became the yardstick for the mother's own future. She would become a worthwhile person because her children would succeed where she had failed.

Children also became symbols of the woman's resolve to improve her life after prison. Whether it was because the children needed her guidance or because she needed to make "things" up to them or because they represented what was good in the woman's life - many women saw their children as their main reason for doing well after prison.

It is likely that social desirability played a large role in their perceptions. The women would want to be seen as caring mothers to other people - especially parole officers and even the researcher. Yet it is also likely that much of the symbolic importance of the children was genuine. The woman's image as a person - and perhaps especially as a mother - was damaged by her incarceration. Not only did she fail society, but she failed her children by leaving them. Thus, the way to make amends might well center on the children who became symbolic of a restored life.

Situational Factors

The daily tasks of providing care for children became a significant context for the evolving relationship between offender mothers and their children. The children had to be cared for during the mother's incarceration. Thus, a

caregiver provided for the economic, social and emotional needs of the children while the mother was imprisoned. How, and if, those situational factors changed upon the mother's release from prison became a part of the history which shaped the relationship between the mothers and their children - and became a part of the experience of being on parole. Whether the women moved in where their children were staying, moved the children out of the place they lived during the women's incarceration or did not live with the children at all became a factor relevant to being on parole. The children still needed to be cared for daily and one way or another the offender mothers were affected by that necessity.

The situation of needing to provide daily care for the children seemed to divide the offender mothers and their children in some ways, and helped unite them in other ways. The children's reliance on and attachment to another parenting figure, the mother's absence from important events and everyday experiences in the child's life, and the burden of needing to provide for the children financially created barriers which helped to divide the offender mothers and their children. Yet other factors concerning the situational elements of the separation helped unite the mothers and their children. The mother's resolve to be a better parent, often prompted by guilt, was carried out in action by at least some women upon their release from prison. Imprisonment gave the women time to think and with the passage of time, the women grew up. A maturation process occurred from the time the women were "running the streets" before incarceration until the time

they returned after incarceration. Many of the women, who had given birth to children while they themselves were but children, had grown up and were ready to assume the roles and responsibilities of both adulthood and motherhood. In this way, the situation of having the passage of time intervene in their relationships, the women seemed to be more united with their children.

Relational Dimensions

There were a variety of dimensions of mothering which were uncovered during the course of this study. These aspects of mothering were shaped by the relationships that emerged among mothers, caregivers and children. These relational aspects of mothering have significance in understanding the separating, caregiving and relating experiences of offender mothers and their children.

Custody. The women in the study had remarkably little knowledge regarding the legalities of child custody. Unless custody became an issue because someone else was trying to obtain it, the women did not perceive a need to know the law in this regard. Custody was often determined by caregiving as opposed to court order. The person who was caring for a child was perceived by the mothers as having custody except by those women whose experiences demanded a more accurate knowledge of custody procedures. A definite problems became apparent in those situations where custody became an issue. The women did not, for the most part, have sufficient

knowledge of custody laws to protect their rights. Thus, a woman being sent to prison was likely to believe her mother/relative when they told her that the children would be returned to her upon her release. When the women did sign papers, they did not often understand what they were signing. Their greatest fear was that the "state/county" would take their children from them - they did not foresee that relatives might refuse to return children when the women were released. Even if they had perceived the likelihood of future problems, many women did not have the knowledge to take preventative steps.

Custody also became a mechanism for settling past disputes and demanding certain actions. A former husband who was angry and a mother who wanted to help pick out the woman's (offender mother's) next husband, used custody to accomplish their goals.

Custody was often determined by the relations that existed between the offender mother and the caregivers. The women assumed that caregivers had custody since the women did not understand the legalities of custody and they trusted that custody, and their children, would be returned after release from prison.

Physical Presence. A person's physical presence, or lack of it, was a powerful dynamic in the relationship of offender mothers and their children. The person who was present in a young child's life became "mama." Thus, the woman who went to prison and was not physically present with

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her children was often replaced in the child's affections by a caregiver who was present. "Mama" was the person who made decisions, went to school, disciplined, made meals, etc.

Mama was the person who was present every day. The relationship which was necessary to be a Mama was to be the person who was physically present and who provided everyday care.

The relationship between the offender mother and the caregiver was also affected by physical presence. It could be used as a mode of punishment for the woman who went to prison. Caregivers could refuse to have a women's children spend time with her during the separation caused by incarceration and thus deny the mother any physical presence in her children's life. On the other hand, the offender mothers sometimes used physical presence as an appeasement for their children. Some mothers commented that upon release they spent time with their children to make up for being gone.

Physical presence became a symbol of security for some of the women. In these cases, the women thought that having their children with them would keep them (the mothers) from getting involved with the people/lifestyle that had been problematic before incarceration. The presence of the children assured they would "do right." Finally, physical presence became a sign of allegiance in the relationship between some offender mothers and their children. If the children choose to be/live with the mother, that was a sign to the mothers that their children still loved them.

Thus, physical presence became symbolic of many facets

of the relationship between offender mothers, their children, and the caregivers. The symbolic meanings which became attached to physical presence thus helped define experiences connected to the separation, caregiving and relating of offender mothers and their children.

Caregiving. One of the most significant relationships which emerged during this study was that of caregiver to children. The relations which developed as a result of the caregiving function had a definite impact on the relationship between offender mothers and their children.

Eighty-five percent of the women who participated in this study lived with at least some of their children prior to incarceration. During the woman's incarceration, the single most frequent caregiver for the children was the woman's mother (29%). Various other relatives accounted for 37% of the caregivers and 34% of the children were cared for by non-relatives (including foster care, friends, etc.). The caregiving role in many of these families resembled the kinship networks described by Stack (1975) in her study of black ghetto families. She discovered that cooperative domestic networks were mobilized for the care of children. In the present study, caregiving was often assumed by a family member. The response by 25% of the women that the decision regarding who would care for their children during the woman's incarceration was "automatic" or that there was "no decision" attests to the shared knowledge that family was responsible for caregiving during the mother's absence. The

strong presence of a male figure in the children's lives (87% of the women said their children had a primary male figure) echoes Stack's finding that although the biological father might not live with the mother and her children, he or another male figure (often an uncle) are a present feature in the upbringing of the children.

However, this study also showed that the strong presence of family members as caregivers did not assure a problem-free situation when the mothers returned from prison. These women faced a variety of difficult situations: caregivers not wanting to relinquish the role; children not prepared to accept the returning mother; financial problems; parole regulations and (sometimes) pressures; the allure of old friends and old times. In addition, many women felt a keen sense of guilt for having caused problems for their children and other family members by being separated from them. Seventy-three percent of the women in the study perceived that their children had problems during the time the mothers were in prison. Thirty-seven percent of the women said they saw changes in their children's behavior since they (the mothers) had returned from prison.

Another factor significantly affecting the caregiving role was the mother's use of drugs. In this study, children were more likely to be living with their mothers prior to their incarceration and to feel closest to their mothers (as opposed to other relatives) if the mothers did not have a history of drug abuse.

The age when a woman had her first child seemed to affect her later relationship with her children. The older the women were at the time of their first child's birth, the more likely they were to be living with their children after release from prison, and the more likely they were to establish a residence with their children that was separate from other family members.

Caregiving was a complex phenomenon among the women who participated in this study. The shared caregiving that existed among many family members even before the mother's incarceration seemed to be both an adaptive family structure to a difficult life as well as a lifestyle that could often provide care to children when the mother did go to prison. The relationships that existed between temporary caregivers, children, their mothers and other family members were essential components of the caregiving patterns that emerged.

Parole

The women who participated in this study faced major problems as they attempted to meet the conditions of their parole. The major difficulties identified by the women themselves and/or their parole agents were: need for a job; lack of adequate financial resources; custody problems; dealing with the effects of separation from family and community; complying with parole regulations; their children's behavior (especially with school problems and drugs); and the woman's own behavior tendencies.

Relationship of Parole to Family. Both the women parolees and the parole officers agreed that "the system" should not become involved with the family relationships of the women offenders. This mutual pact of non-interference seemed to make monthly parole encounters quicker and less intense, yet may not be the most effective method for assisting women to function as successful citizens after their release from prison.

Although many parole agents said they knew their clients needed help in pulling their lives together, the parole agents did not (for the most part) perceive that they had either the time or the training to do it. They thought that given their high caseloads and job expectations to provide supervision rather than counseling/support, it was not feasible for them to meet some of the clients needs. While some parole agents saw themselves as a referral source for their clients to receive needed services, other agents admitted they did not know much about where to send their clients for assistance.

The women parolees clearly did not want their parole agents interfering in their family lives. They did not think the parole agents were particularly interested in their children and the women did not want to focus any attention on themselves or their children. Therefore, most women would choose not to mention any problems concerning their children to the parole agent unless it was likely to come to the agents attention in some other way.

The feelings of the parole agents and the women parolees are curiously in conflict with the realities of the situation. The criminal justice system clearly does intrude into the family relationships of offenders. Incarceration separates family members for extended periods of time. Parole establishes rules for people (such as where they can/can not live) which can affect the family and the maintenance of family ties. Parole also allows an uninvited professional to have access to a parolee's home at any time. The system's direct interference in people's family life is a reality. The stated intention of both the parolees and parole officers that it not occur is somewhat meaningless since they can do nothing to prevent it. Even though the parole officers state they are dealing only with the individual parolee, the effect of that interaction can extend to other family members, including the children.

Parole Survival. Although many findings emerged from this study, one that seemed to be pervasive among all the parolees who participated was that they were going to survive the parole experience - just as they had survived the prison experience. The women discussed many problems they had encountered and the survival strategies they developed were significant. The woman who went early each morning to the house where her boyfriend lived with her daughter in order to care for her daughter all day (and could not live there because of her parole plan); the woman who fought to get her children back from her ex-husband despite the original

protests of her social worker and mother; the woman who was trying to teach her children they could not live in the same style as they did while she was "boosting" but rather had to live on the considerable lower, but legal income she now had - all are examples of how the women learned to survive on parole. A statement from the research study of Kassebaum, Ward and Wilmer (1971:197) helps to put the situation that parolees face in perspective:

The legality of the parole contract combines with the offender's lack of civil rights to produce a status in which the question for the parolee is survival under conditions that are more severe than those of any civilian.

The role of being a mother to one's children takes on new dimensions when a person is attempting to survive on parole at the same time.

Social Issues. While the whole topic of offender re-integration can be construed as a social issue in and of itself, there are several other social issues as well which surfaced during the interviews. Quite a few parole agents discussed what they termed the "dependency" factor that existed for many women. Usually the agents were referring to the women being dependent on men yet it also could include dependencies on friends of children or even drugs/alcohol. Many male parole agents also stated that it was far more difficult to work with women clients than male clients. It is necessary to look at the position of women in our society in general in order to understand

these observations. Women are often relegated to the most powerless positions: they are encouraged to be dependent, to be taken care of, to ask for help in getting what they want rather than actively taking what they want. Many women are socialized to believe that a man will take care of them and they in turn will take care of the children. Therefore, it probably should not come as much of a surprise that women parolees are acting out these messages. The parole agents state that the women complain more than the men. Perhaps it is because the women have not come to see that there are other more direct avenues available to them for resolving their problems/concerns than asking someone to do something for them. Many women parolees find themselves in the position of realizing no one is going to take care of them yet not having had the benefit of learning how to take care of themselves. In addition, as both women and offenders they are members of groups which historically have been perceived as having little power. Perhaps we should not be surprised that they complain a lot.

Several parole agents observed that because there are fewer referral programs for women and because women tend to get involved in more non-assaultive offenses, they are likely to go a longer time before court intervention. One agent commented that because the system was male-oriented, a woman could be a heroin addict for 10 years before going to prison (or getting treatment).

Several parole agents talked about disparity of

sentencing. In some cases they thought female and male offenders were treated differently, in other cases they thought in-county/out-county judges were quite different in their sentencing patterns (i.e. "in-county" referred to the area around Detroit, "out-county" was the rest of the state).

In conclusion, the women offenders who participated in this study seemed to defy the image of the lazy welfare mother who was content to be taken care of by the state. Rather, the women seemed to be survivors in a complex world where power and opportunity were outside their grasp. The goals of these women were similar to the goals of many American women and mothers. The histories of these women were histories of people who had tried. Some women were still trying, some had given up. The parole process itself was yet another of life's burdens in the eyes of many women.

Further Research

This study has provided new information regarding the relationship between offender mothers and their children. It also points to many areas of research which need further study. In addition to the grounded theory which evolved, there are a number of hypotheses which have emerged from the present study. These hypotheses could be tested in subsequent research regarding the relationship between women offenders and their children.

1. Children whose mothers are incarcerated are more likely to live separately from their siblings for at least some periods of time than are children whose mothers have not been incarcerated.

2. Children of incarcerated mothers are more likely to experience problems in school, such as a drop in grades and need for discipline, than are children in a random school group.
3. Children of incarcerated mothers are more likely to become involved in fighting behavior in school than are a random group of school children.
4. It is more likely that the children of an incarcerated mother will be cared for by woman's mother than by any other single person.
5. Incarcerated mothers are more likely to be satisfied with their children's care if their relatives care for the children rather than if care is provided by a non-related caregiver.
6. Women offenders are less likely to lose custody of their children if they demonstrate a knowledge of custody laws and policies.
7. The more contact (visits, phone calls, letters) that a mother has with her children while she is in prison, the more likely she will be to perceive that their care during her absence is satisfactory.
8. The more frequent visits children have with their mother during her incarceration the less likely they are to feel abandoned by their mother.
9. Women offenders are less likely to make formal arrangements at the time of their incarceration regarding custody of their children if they are members of a close-knit kinship group.
10. The older a woman is when she begins having children, the more likely she is to live with them both before and after prison.
11. The older a woman is when she begins having children, the more likely she is to establish a separate residence for her children and herself after prison.

12. Parole officers who have a working knowledge about referral agencies are more likely to refer parolees to other agencies for assistance.
13. Parole officers who refer clients to outside support agencies are likely to have higher rates of successful parole completion.
14. Women parolees who experience major difficulties with their children are less likely to successfully complete parole than are women parolees who do not experience major difficulties with their children.
15. A woman with a history of drug use is less likely to live with her children either before or after incarceration than is a woman without such a history.
16. Women parolees receive fewer referral services than male parolees compared to their individual need.

Recommendations and Implications

There are a wide variety of recommendations which can be made as a result of this study. The majority of these recommendations are policy issues which could be implemented by the appropriate federal, state or county agencies. Some recommendations would require legislation and/or funding. All of them seem to be within the realm of possibility if one is trying to improve successful community reintegration for female offenders.

Prison Programs

Prison administrators need to pay greater attention to the woman's role as a mother. Visiting areas could be developed especially for offender mothers and their children. Rules, decor and activities could be designed to make the

visit an enjoyable experience. The Children's Center, originally developed by Prison MATCH at Pleasanton, California would serve as an excellent model. Transportation for children to the prison and hospitality homes where families could spend the night for free near the prison would increase the likelihood that mothers and their children could visit.

Overnight visitation programs, such as those currently operating in Minnesota, Nebraska and several other states, could be implemented in other women's prisons. The benefits of these programs seem to greatly outweigh any difficulties/inconveniences to the prison. Administrators at women's prisons should explore the concept of operating a nursery at the prison. The Bedford Hills correctional institution in New York has operated a nursery for many years and it is reported to be quite successful. Currently, few states have addressed themselves to the needs of offender mothers with infants. Although this neglect should never have been allowed to exist for so long, it is essential that all states now address the issue directly. Releasing offender mothers to community programs where they can care for their infants or establishing nursery programs in the prisons seem to be the most adequate alternatives.

Prison programming needs to include pertinent parenting skills classes for women offenders. These classes should be composed of material typically found in any such class (child development, discipline, etc.) but should also include those topics which would specifically apply to offender mothers

(child custody issues, how to relate after a separation, etc.).

Prison administrators need also to assure that there are ongoing family counseling programs for women offenders. The current caregivers for the children and the children themselves would be likely participants for at least some portion of the counseling. In addition, those persons with whom the mother will likely live upon release from prison should participate in some sessions. Members of an extended family might also be included.

Parole

Parole offices could make changes which might benefit many offender mothers upon their release from incarceration. Since the role of the parole agent is primarily one of supervision, it would be helpful for parole offices to employ trained counselors (including a family counselor) to provide direct service to clients. Although the parole agent could refer a client to counseling available in the community, their opinion was that the women did not take advantage of such referrals (perhaps the red tape, perhaps mistrust, perhaps lack of motivation) or the agents did not have adequate knowledge to make such referrals. In addition, most community referral agencies do not have much expertise in dealing with some of the problems unique to ex-offender populations (such as the requirements of parole, the stigmas of the ex-con label, etc.). Correctional institutions employ some staff primarily trained to supervise and other staff trained

as counselors. A similar staffing in parole offices--as well as probation offices--is recommended.

Parole agents themselves need to receive specific training to work more effectively with female offenders. Learning to understand their own biases could potentially lead to more effective communication and supervision of women clients. Parole agents also need to be better trained regarding referral agencies--especially those that will meet the needs of their women clients. An up-to-date resource manual should be prepared and given to all parolees. If parole offices do not employ trained counselors, they then need to train parole agents to better recognize signals of distress/problems in their clients, especially women. The parole agents should be given smaller caseloads so that they could spend additional time with their clients. It appeared that many of the parole agents were well-intentioned, committed correctional professionals. The same can be said of the system managers. The stresses which caused them to be less effective in their work were primarily systemic (such as high caseloads and lack of training). Yet to ultimately affect the criminal justice system, these problems need to be addressed.

Parole records seem to be inadequate for obtaining an accurate account of a woman parolee's living situation. There is no description of those with whom she resides, her source of financial support, how many children she has, how many children live with her, what custody issues might exist, etc. The only time information is contained in the file --

regarding these factors is if the woman has had a problem and the parole agent has had to intervene. Otherwise the only family information which is routinely obtained is in the Pre-Sentence Investigation (PSI). Since years--and considerable family history--could have transpired between the time the PSI was completed and the time the woman is on parole--it would seem that this information should routinely be updated and expanded to bring the family history up-to-date.

A Community Center, run at least in part by ex-offenders, which provided financial counseling (including how to obtain grants for education, housing, etc.), social services, support groups, parenting skills classes/support groups, job referrals, housing referrals, emergency transportation, recreational activities and perhaps even child care would seem to meet a need identified by both women parolees and their agents.

A program similar to what one woman referred to as the Infant Development Program would also be beneficial. The program would send child care professionals to the women's home to observe how the women feed, play with and care for their children. The women would then be taught more effective ways of parenting or be reinforced for what they were doing.

A comprehensive delivery system for women offenders would allow a case planning approach to be utilized from the time they entered the criminal justice system until the time

they were released. Planning for the woman from probation, through incarceration (if it became necessary) and parole would help assure that programs/support that she needed could be coordinated and made available to her. It would also reduce needless duplication of initial evaluation and provide more time for in-depth progress reports. This system-wide case planning approach might be particularly helpful in providing support to the women in caring for their families.

As one parole agent suggested, it might be beneficial to add "attendance at family counseling sessions" as a special parole condition. Although there could be some disadvantages to "forcing" women to participate in family counseling, if handled well this special condition could potentially help keep families together.

Community corrections programs could provide similar resources as have been suggested for prisons and parole offices. It would seem to be even more convenient to allow children to live with their mothers in halfway houses than in prisons. Drug programs, some of which do allow children to live with their mothers, should continue to operate.

In conclusion, there is much that can be accomplished within the criminal justice system to assist offender mothers in maintaining and/or improving their relationships with their children. Possibly a woman's opportunities for successfully returning to the community would be enhanced through recognition of her responsibilities as a caregiver. However, whatever programs/services are provided to women

offenders, it is essential that the underlying attitude be that of respecting the human dignity of the women and recognizing the many facets of their lives.

APPENDIX A

Interview Schedule

Appendix A
Background Information

First I would like to ask you some questions about your background.

1. How old are you? ____years
2. What is your marital status?

____(1) legally married	How long? ____years
____(2) common law/living with boyfriend	How long? ____years
____(3) single, never married	
____(4) divorced	How long? ____years
____(5) separated	How long? ____years
____(6) widowed	How long? ____years
3. Have you ever been

____(1) legally married	No. of times ____
____(2) common law/lived with a man	No. of times ____
____(3) separated	No. of times ____
____(4) divorced	No. of times ____
____(5) widowed	No. of times ____
4. What is the highest grade you completed in school?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20
College	Professional
5. Have you received any vocational training - either before prison, in prison, or after prison?

____(1) yes	Please explain
____(2) no	

6. Are you currently

____(1) working

____(3) looking for work

____(2) not working

____(4) other

Please explain

IF WORKING/TRAINING

7. What type of job do you have now? _____

8. How long have you worked at your present job?

____(1) less than one week ____ (4) between 3-6 months

____(2) up to one month ____ (5) over 6 months

____(3) between 1-3 months

9. How old were you the first time you were arrested?
_____ years

10. How old were you the first time you were sent to prison?
_____ years

11. How many times have you been sent to prison? _____

12. How much time did you serve the last time you were in
prison? _____ months

13. How much time have you ever served (jail and all prison
terms)? _____ months

14. When you got out of prison, did you

____(1) go directly onto parole (go to question #17)

____(2) go to a community corrections center (go to
question #16)

15. How many months were you at the community corrections
center? _____ months

16. How many children do you have? _____

17. What are their ages and sex starting with the oldest?

Child #1 _____ (oldest) Child #4 _____

Child #2 _____ Child #5 _____

Child #3 _____ Child #6 _____

Ask questions #18-19-20 only if woman has been in prison more than once.

18. Who took care of your children during that first time you were in prison?

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| ____(1) your mother | ____(6) other relatives |
| ____(2) your grandmother | ____(7) friends |
| ____(3) child's father | ____(8) court appointed |
| ____(4) child's father's mother | ____(9) other: explain |
| ____(5) your boyfriend | _____ |

19. Who took care of your children when you got out of prison that first time?

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| ____(1) you | ____(6) other relatives |
| ____(2) your mother | ____(7) friends |
| ____(3) your grandmother | ____(8) court appointed |
| ____(4) child's father | ____(9) other: explain |
| ____(5) child's father's mother | _____ |

20. Did you go back to living in the same home - with the same children - after your first stay in prison?

(Referring to the most recent time in prison)

21. How many of your children were living with you before you went to prison? Which ones?

22. Who else was living in the house with you and your children? Please explain your relationship to these people.

23. Where and with whom were the other children living?
24. What was your marital status before you went to prison (this last time)?
- ____(1) legally married
- ____(2) common law/living with boyfriend
- ____(3) single, never married
- ____(4) divorced
- ____(5) separated
- ____(6) widowed
25. Were you employed at the time you were arrested?
- ____(1) yes
- ____(2) no
26. What job did you have? _____
27. Was this part-time or full-time employment?
- ____(1) part-time (less than 40 hours per week)
- ____(2) full-time (40 hours per week or more)
28. Who took care of your children while you worked?
29. Where did your financial support come from before you went to prison?
- ____(1) your job
- ____(2) your mother and/or father
- ____(3) husband or boyfriend What job? _____
- ____(4) other relatives Who? _____
- ____(5) friends
- ____(6) welfare, relief or aid to dependent children
(state which apply)
- ____(7) other Please explain _____

30. Did you ever exchange food, clothes, furniture, etc. with others (friends or relatives)? Please explain - including frequency and nature of the exchanges?
31. Would you please discuss what your relationship with your children was like before you went to prison? Include if possible: discipline problems, atmosphere in the home, amount of time you spent with them, problems you perceived them having, anything else you would like to share.
32. Who made the major decisions (i.e., regarding medical care, school, etc.) for your children before you went to prison?
33. Who were the people who helped you the most (in any way) before you went to prison? In what way did they help?

34. Who made the decision about who would care for your children while you were in prison?

____(1) you

____(2) the court

____(3) the person who is now taking care of the children

____(4) different people made decisions about different children

Please explain _____

____(5) other Please explain _____

35. How was that decision made?

During Prison

The following questions have to do with the time you were in prison.

36. Who cared for your children while you were in prison?

____(1) your mother

____(2) your mother and father

____(3) your grandmother

____(4) child's father

____(5) father's mother

____(6) other relatives Who? _____

____(7) friends Who? _____

____(8) different people took care of different children

____ please explain _____

____(9) foster parents

____(10) other _____
please explain

37. Who had legal custody of your children while you were in prison?

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| ____(1) you | ____(6) other relatives |
| ____(2) your mother | Who? _____ |
| ____(3) your mother and father | ____(7) foster parents |
| ____(4) your grandmother | ____(8) court |
| ____(5) child's father | ____(9) other |
| ____(6) father's mother | Who? _____ |

38. While you were in prison, who made important decisions (maybe about school, medical care, etc.) regarding what would happen with your children?

- ____(1) you
- ____(2) person(s) taking care of the children
- ____(3) you and person(s) taking care of children
- ____(4) other _____
please explain

39. During the time you were in prison, what were some of the important decisions that affected any of your children?

40. What was your role when decisions had to be made?

41. What do you think of this?

42. While you were in prison, who decided what discipline should be given to your children?

- ____(1) you
- ____(2) person(s) taking care of the children
- ____(3) various relatives and friends took part at different times
- ____(4) you and person(s) taking care of the children
- ____(5) other _____
please explain

43. How often did your children come to visit you in prison?
-
44. Who brought them for the visits?
45. Were these visits frequent enough for you - and them?
46. What were those visits like? Please include level of intimacy, attitude of child toward mother, attitude of mother toward children, problems and pleasures associated with visits, your feelings about the visits?
47. Sometimes people say that absence makes the heart grow fonder. That might mean that women are more likely to think about their children and want to be near them while they are in prison but when they get out, they realize they do not want to be with their children as much as they thought. Do you think this happens very often? Did it happen to you?
48. Did your feelings about your children change at all while you were in prison?
49. Were you satisfied with the care your children received while you were in prison?
50. If no, what could have been better about the way your children were cared for while you were in prison?

51. Did all your children live in the same house while you were in prison? Please discuss.

____(1) yes

____(2) no

52. How close or loving do any of your children feel toward the person(s) who took care of them? Did this cause any problems for you?

53. What were your major concerns about your children while you were in prison?

54. Were you kept informed about how your children were doing while you were in prison? Was it enough information? Who kept you informed?

55. Did your children experience any types of problems while you were in prison? Please discuss.

56. Were you given the choice - either in prison or when you were first getting out - to NOT take care of your children upon release? Please discuss.

57. Who gave you the choice?

58. Did anyone try to prohibit or discourage you from living with your children when you got out of prison? Please discuss.

59. Who came to visit you most frequently while you were in prison?

60. Did your children understand that you were in prison? Who explained it to them? How do you think they felt about it?
61. Did your children think that the home they were living in while you were in prison was a permanent or a temporary home? Did you ever discuss this with them? What were their feelings about it?

In Community Corrections Center

These questions are only for those women who went to a community corrections center before being released on parole.

62. How often did you see your children after you moved to the community corrections center?

____(1) every day

____(2) at least once a week

____(3) several times a month

____(4) at least once a month

____(5) once every few months

____(6) never

____(7) other _____
please explain

63. Was this enough? Please discuss.

64. How did those visits take place (i.e., did you go to the home where the children were living, did they come to the center, who arranged the visits)?

65. Were there any major changes in the care your children received or the place where they lived while you were at the community corrections center?

On Parole

Now that I have some idea of what your life was like before you went to prison and what it was like for you and your children while you were in prison, let's talk about you - and your children - now.

66. Where and with whom did you live during the first week you were out of prison? If you went to a correctional center, then answer it concerning when you got out of the correctional center.

67. How long were you out of prison (or the correctional center) before you saw your children?

____(1) saw them day of release

____(2) saw them day after release

____(3) within one week

____(4) within one month

____(5) did not see them

____(6) other _____
please explain

68. How did you go about getting to see them?

69. Did you want to see them but were not allowed? Please explain.

70. Are you currently living in the same house with any of your children?

____(1) yes (ask questions #78 to #83, then continue with #84)

____(2) no (ask questions #70 to #76, then go to #84)

IF NO -

71. Please discuss how this came about - include who made the decision that you would not live with them; how that decision was made; if you were consulted; when the decision was made.
72. Do you think it is best for you - at this time in your life - to live apart from your children? Do you think it is the best thing for your children to live where they are?
73. Please discuss your children's living situation now - include who they live with, your feelings about who they live with, your children's reaction to where they live and to being away from you, whether you and your children regard this as a temporary or a permanent home for them.
74. Who do you see yourself living with 5 years from now?
75. How often do you see your children now? Please discuss - include how those visits are arranged, where they take place, the level of intimacy, how your children relate to you. If you do not visit your children, please discuss this - including who made the decision that you not visit, your feeling about it, if it is likely to change?
76. Do other people ever try to make you feel guilty about not living with your children? Please discuss.
77. Do you ever feel guilty about not living with them?

IF YES -

78. How many of your children do you live with? Please discuss why you do/do not live with them all, where the others live, etc.
79. How long after you got out of prison was it before you and your children started living together?
- ____(1) same day as release
- ____(2) within one week of release
- ____(3) within one month of release
- ____(4) within 6 months
- ____(5) other _____
please explain
80. Why did you decide to do this immediately/or why did you decide to wait for awhile?
81. Did your children move to where you were staying or did you move into the house where your children were living?
- ____(1) children moved in with mother
- ____(2) mother moved in with children
- ____(3) other _____
please explain
82. What was your children's reaction to this change in how they were living?
83. How did these decisions get made? Who seemed to have the most power in this decision about where your children would live? What did you want to happen? Were you sure of what you thought was best - or were you overwhelmed by all the things that were happening to you at that time? Who were the people supporting what you wanted? Please discuss.

84. When you got out of prison, were you expected to take your children right away or were you given time to get set up in a place to live first? Who expected you to do certain things when you got out? How did they tell you about these expectations?

THESE QUESTIONS ARE FOR ALL RESPONDENTS

85. For each of your children, please indicate who has primarily raised them so far? Please discuss - and include all people who have been primary caregivers.

Child #1 _____(oldest)

Child #2 _____

Child #3 _____

Child #4 _____

Child #5 _____

Child #6 _____

86. How much time have you lived with each of your children?

Child #1 _____(oldest)

Child #2 _____

Child #3 _____

Child #4 _____

Child #5 _____

Child #6 _____

87. Who spends the most time caring for your children each day? Please discuss.

____(1) you

____(6) father's mother

____(2) your mother

____(7) other relatives

____(3) your grandmother

Who? _____

____(4) your boyfriend/husband

____(8) friends

____(5) child's father

____(9) day care

____(10) other _____

88. Who are the people who discipline your children most frequently? Please discuss.

____(1) you	____(7) other relatives
____(2) your mother	_____
____(3) your grandmother	please explain
____(4) child's father	____(8) your boyfriend/ husband
____(5) father's mother	____(9) other
____(6) your brother	_____
	please explain

89. Now that you are out of prison, who makes important decisions about your children? Please discuss.

____(1) you	____(6) other relatives
____(2) your mother	Who? _____
____(3) your grandmother	____(7) other
____(4) child's father	Who? _____
____(5) father's mother	

90. Who has legal custody of your children now?

____(1) you	____(6) other relatives
____(2) your mother	Who? _____
____(3) your grandmother	____(7) court
____(4) child's father	____(8) other
____(5) father's mother	Who? _____

91. Please discuss the issue of legal custody. For instance, have you tried to get legal custody if you do not currently have it, what did you have to do (if anything) to get legal custody?

92. Who are the primary male figures in your children's lives? Please discuss.

____ (1) their father ____ (4) other relatives
 ____ (2) your husband/boyfriend ____ (5) other Who? ____
 ____ (3) your brother(s) ____ (6) none

93. How much time do your children typically spend with this person each week? Please discuss.

____ (1) very little ____ (4) over 10 hours
 ____ (2) between 1-5 hours ____ (5) no such person
 in children's lives
 ____ (3) between 5-10 hours

94. If you got very sick right now, who would likely take care of your children? Please discuss.

____ (1) your mother ____ (6) other relatives
 ____ (2) your grandmother Who? ____
 ____ (3) child's father ____ (7) friends
 ____ (4) father's mother Who? ____
 ____ (5) your husband/boyfriend ____ (8) other
 Explain ____

95. Do you receive relief, welfare or aid to dependent children?

____ (1) yes
 ____ (2) no

96. Someone else spent quite a bit of time caring for your children while you were in prison. Do they ever feel that they still have a right to tell your children what to do even if the children no longer live with them? Do your children still like to see them? Do your children ever look to them for advice, caring, etc. What are your feelings about this? What are your children's feelings about those who cared for them while you were gone? What are the feelings of the people who cared for your children now (about you and the children)?

97. Who do you think your children feel the closest to of all the people they know. Please discuss.

____(1) you	____(6) other relatives
____(2) their father	Who? _____
____(3) your mother	____(7) friend
____(4) your grandmother	Who? _____
____(5) father's mother	____(8) other

please explain	

98. Would you please discuss what your relationship with your children is like now that you are out of prison?

99. If woman is working and taking care of children, who takes care of your children while you are working? Please discuss.

____(1) mother	____(5) other relatives
____(2) your grandmother	Who? _____
____(3) your husband/boyfriend	____(6) friends
____(4) child's father	Who? _____
	____(7) other
	Who? _____

100. What do you like and not like about this arrangement? Is there anyone that you would prefer to take care of your children?

101. Do you make enough money to take care of you and your children?

____(1) yes
____(2) no

Please discuss.

102. Have you noticed any changes in your child's behavior from the time you went to prison until now?

(IF children are living with mother)

103. Now that your children are living with you, do you ever think it might be easier to "make it on the outside" if you did not have them to worry about?

104. What advice would you give to a friend (regarding taking care of her children) who was just about to get out of prison?

105. What advice would you give a friend who was just going to prison regarding her children?

106. What are the joys and sorrows of being a mother?

107. What is your relationship with the rest of your family like now that you are out of prison?

108. Which people do you think are most concerned about you and your children right now? How do they show their concern?

109. Did you return to the same community on parole that you lived in before you went to prison? Why or why not?

110. How many relatives and close friends live within 5 miles of you now? _____

111. How often do you see any of these people?

____(1) at least once a day ____ (4) once a month

____(2) several times a week ____ (5) rarely

____(3) once a week

112. Do you owe any favors to the person (people) who took care of your children during the time you were in prison?

IF NO

113. Is there anyone who thinks you do owe them something for taking care of your children?

IF YES

114. How will you pay back the favor?

115. How long will it take?

116. Was there any pressure on you to start paying it back as soon as you got out of prison?

117. Do you ever borrow or share food, clothes, furniture, babysitting, etc. with friends or relatives? Please explain, including frequency and the kind of exchange.

118. When you got out of prison, did your parole officer help you find a job? Please explain.

119. Did your parole officer talk to you about your children and what might be best for you and the children?

120. Did the parole officer help you get your children back?

121. Did your parole officer think it was a good idea for you to get your children back?

122. Who has been the most helpful to you since you have been on parole - include family, friends and people from different agencies?

123. Which agencies in the community have been most helpful to you since you got out of prison?
124. Is there anything that could be done regarding your children that would make it easier for you to "make it" on parole?
125. Now that you have been on parole for awhile, you know what it takes to make it. What kinds of services or programs might be made available to women - and their children - both during and after prison?
126. What are your hopes for your children?
127. What are your goals for yourself?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH for your assistance and the thoughts/feelings you shared with me.

APPENDIX B

Questions for Parole Supervisors

Appendix B

Questions for Parole Agents

1. Is there any policy - official or unofficial - regarding women on parole who have children, or regarding the children themselves, especially concerning employment?
2. Do you ever encourage or discourage women from reuniting with their children when they leave prison?
3. What problems do women typically face regarding their children when they are on parole?
4. Do most of the women on your caseload talk with you about their children?
5. What concerns do they express?
6. What do you think should be done with the children of women on parole?
7. Is there anything that parole agents can or should do that concerns women and their children while the women are on parole?
8. Are there any other community agencies that either are or could be of assistance to women parolees with regard to their children?

APPENDIX C

Introductory Memo

MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT
OF
CORRECTIONS

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Appendix C

TO: Regional Administrators Nakfoor, Belson, Bonta DATE: 5/15/80
Area Manager Bare, SPA's Ted Anderson,
Dick Haddad, Robert Jensen, Jim Tomaszewski

FROM: Don Hengesh *DH*

SUBJECT: Research Being Conducted by Susan Hunter

Ms. Hunter has been approved by the Program Bureau to do her Ph.D. Dissertation utilizing client files and conducting interviews with staff and clients. Her research "The Impact of the Mother-Child Relationship Upon Women's Success on Parole" will explore the dynamics of the mother-child relationship for women on parole. Many women in prison state that they will resume parenting upon release. Few (if any) studies have been done that record the number of women who actually reunite with their children or that assess the quality of those relationships. Little is known about the quality of care (from the offender's viewpoints) that the children receive while the mother is in prison. This study will look at the above issues as well as looking at records regarding women's success on parole and if the mother/child relationship had any impact on success.

Information will be gathered primarily by conducting two to three hour interviews with female parolees. Ms. Hunt will be using files to get a mix of ages, offenses, time served, number of children, etc. The selected women will then be contacted and asked to participate in the study. Ms. Hunter will pay those who are interviewed \$10 to compensate for their time.

Ms. Hunter is quite familiar with the offender population. She has worked as a correctional officer and then supervisor/community liaison at a correctional institution in Arizona for three years. She has spent the last 3-1/2 years working with female offenders and doing staff training in various states, including Michigan. Your cooperation and assistance will certainly be appreciated by Ms. Hunter.

DH:1mb

cc: J. Elmquest
B. Kime (J. Yarborough)

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APPENDIX D

Preliminary Information Form -
Lansing and Grand Rapids

Appendix D

PLEASE FILL OUT A SEPARATE FORM FOR EACH OF THE WOMEN ON
YOUR CASELOAD AND RETURN THEM ALL TO: Susan Hunter
2900 Northwind Dr., #616
East Lansing, Michigan
48823

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION!

Name: _____

Client Number: _____

Age: _____ years

Race or ethnic group:

_____ (1) American Indian

_____ (4) White

_____ (2) Black

_____ (5) Other - Please explain: _____

_____ (3) Mexican American/
Puerto Rican

Marital Status:

_____ (1) legally married

_____ (2) common law/living with boyfriend

_____ (3) single, never married

_____ (4) separated

_____ (5) divorced

_____ (6) widowed

_____ (7) other - Please explain _____

Number of children living with her currently? _____

Number of children she has altogether? _____

Committing offense: _____

Length of time on parole: _____

Length of incarceration: _____

(please use corrected date to parole date)

Again, thanks

APPENDIX E

Preliminary Information Form -
Detroit

APPENDIX F

Initial Letter to All Parole Supervisors
for Information on All Women Parolees

Appendix F

August 1980

To: All Parole Office Supervisors

From: Susan M. Hunter

I have been conducting a research project to study the relationship of women and their children during parole. This study has primarily involved interviewing 55 women parolees in Lansing, Grand Rapids and Detroit. In order to provide a comparison group for the sample, it is necessary to compile some information on all women parolees in the state.

Please fill out the attached form using one space for each woman from your office who is on parole as of September 15, 1980. In each of the lettered spaces, fill in the appropriate number from the categories listed on the bottom of the page.

EXAMPLE: A 26 year old, black woman, who is single, committed a property offense, served 7 months in Huron Valley and 6 months in a corrections center, released on parole 2 months ago, has 2 children but they are not living with her, and is from the Flint parole area would be recorded on the form in the following manner:

Client's Name	Client's Number	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	Area Office

This information will also be sent to the central office in Lansing for their use in determining characteristics of women parolees. Please complete these forms and return them to the following address by September 26, 1980:

Susan M. Hunter, Superintendent
Women's Reformatory
P.O. Box 313
Rockwell City, Iowa 50579

Thank you very much for your assistance in gathering this information.

[illegible]

B. RACE or ETHNIC GROUP

C. MARITAL STATUS

(1) Legally married
(2) Common law/living with boyfriend
(3) Single, never married
(4) Separated
(5) Divorced
(6) Widowed
(7) Other

(1) Property
(2) Assaultive

E. LENGTH OF TIME INCARCERATED
IN MONTHS

Please use corrected date
to parole date

F. LENGTH OF TIME ON PAROLE
IN MONTHS

Please use actual time
served on parole as of
9/15/80

NUMBER OF HER CHILDREN
CURRENTLY LIVING IN THE
SAME HOME AS CLIENT

I. AREA OFFICE

Please fill in

APPENDIX G

Follow-Up Letter to All Parole Supervisors

Appendix G

Dear

I have not received any information about the women on parole in your area. In order to provide accurate statistics regarding women parolees in Michigan, it is important that every area supervisor complete the enclosed form. Even if you do not have any women on parole, please fill in that information and return the form to me.

I am sending another copy of the explanation sheet and blank form in case you have misplaced the original one. Please return this form to me by October 31.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Susan M. Hunter, Superintendent
The Women's Reformatory

SMH/nl
Enclosures

cc: file

APPENDIX H

Information Provided by Parole Supervisors

Appendix H

Information Provided by Parole Offices

Location	# Women Parolees	Ave. Age	Ethnicity Percentage				Marital Status - Percentage								
			B1	Wh	Hisp	N AM	Other	Mar	Sin	Sep	Div	Wid	ComLaw	Other	Missing
Michigan	354	29.6	65	32.5	1.4	0	.2	12	40	15	24	6	3	.3	1
Detroit	171	30	80	19	0	0	.5	10	41	17	24	6	1.7	.5	0
Lansing	22	28	54.5	41	4.5	0	0	23	50	4.5	13.6	0	0	0	9
Grand Rapids	18	31	50	39	5	0	5.0	22	39	5.0	17	11	5.0	0	0

Location	Offence-% Prop Aslt	Months Inc.	Months on Parole	Children		% Women Living with Child			Ave.# Child ren			
				% Yes	% No	All	Some	None		Unk	Dec.	
Michigan	58	41	24	10	76	23	51	14.5	34	.7	.3	2.36
Detroit	52	47	25.2	9.9	71	27	50	19	30	.8	0	2.5
Lansing	68	32	29.5	10.5	82	18	50	11	33	0	0	1.6
Grand Rapids	83	17	22.8	5.7	89	11	31	22	39	0	0	3

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