

THE WOMEN'S HONOR UNIT:
CASE STUDY OF A WOMEN'S PRISON

DISSERTATION

Presented to
the Faculty of the Graduate School
University of Missouri-Columbia

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by

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December, 1979

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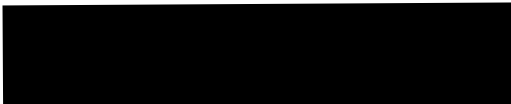
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The Women's Honor Unit :
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Abstract

Three ideas about women's criminality directed this analysis. Women prisoners have consistently been described as either immoral, incompetent, or sick. The goal of this research was to examine the social realities of these three ideas in the personal lives of women prisoners. The research utilized participant-observation techniques in developing an intimate familiarity with eleven prisoners as research sources, as well as an understanding of the realities of prison in the lives of the twenty four felons incarcerated at the Women's Honor Unit (W.H.U.) of the New Mexico State Department of Corrections in Albuquerque.

A women's prison may be viewed as a subculture of women within the dominant patriarchal society where women develop life styles in relation to other women. Many of

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the particularly masculine aspects of social life were seldom found in this prison for women, and others were adapted to fit the particular needs of females. In the morality of the women at the W.H.U., talk played an important role. Talk was used to order groups, to sanction deviants and to reward conformity. Talk aroused strong emotions: it was remembered and controlled behavior long after it was in the past. The potential for talk in ordering human relations was an important aspect of social life in a subculture of women.

On a conservative estimate, eighty percent of incarcerated women are mothers. This research studied threats to that identity among women prisoners. Analysis showed that loss of the major identity of mother was destructive to the self esteem of female prisoners and was likely to interfere with any positive outcomes expected for them. Adaptations to life inside the prison did not prepare women for competence in social life. Destruction of the major identity of mother leaves women prisoners personally unfulfilled, causes family conflict and disruption and brings untold hardships to thousands of children every year.

In prison, time is the punishment. Doing time has a strong negative impact on behavior and expectations. It

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concretizes temporality and gives it an overwhelming character which is distorted and alienating. Doing time in a total institution interferes with personal control and creativity and detracts from prisoners' potentials for beginning anew.

A women's prison is but one form of asylum, but it is an exceptional form because of the extremes of control found there and the lack of permeability to the society outside. Life in such a total institution is neither rehabilitative nor retributive. The goal of correction was lost. Instead, the goal of management had become paramount. The director of the prison was an administrator. His supervision was aimed at efficient management; other personal concerns were ignored.

In each of the three areas; morality, incompetence, and sickness, this research has shown that explanations of behavior must take the structure of the setting into account as well as the personal meaning systems of the prisoner. From such a perspective honor became a matter of survival, incompetence was imposed by the situation and sickness was related to alienation. The W.H.U. was a microcosm of the destitution of the system of corrections in the United States. It was a source of dishonor to the society which supports it.

Acknowledgments

This research owes much to the open corrections system presently operating in New Mexico. This influence made participant observation research in a women's prison feasible. In addition, the administration of the Women's Honor Unit, the matrons and the supervisor, must be commended for their courtesy and openness. Without their policy of noninterference the research could not have been carried out.

It is impossible to thank all of the members of the Sociology faculty of the University of Missouri-Columbia who contributed to the research in various ways. It is only to be hoped that they will be satisfied with the fruits of their labor as they are born out in this project. A particular thanks is due to Dr. John Galliher, though, for his steadfast support of both research and researcher. His personal concern was invaluable.

Personal thanks are also due to my sisters Ann, Jo and Gloria for their assistance and to my daughter Lara for her patience and understanding.

The greatest debt of thanks for the research is owed to the women of the W.H.U. These prisoners' contributions can never be adequately assessed. Their help and cooperation made the project possible. It was their

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explanations and demonstrations which guided the research and their ideas were the basis of analysis. They gave unselfishly of their time, effort and insight. Any contribution made by this research is theirs.

Sue Mahan

September, 1979

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Convicted Females as Prisoners, Mothers, and Women

Introduction

Sociological knowledge about women's prisons is extremely limited. It is also dated, lagging far behind knowledge of male prisoners (Simon, 1975). There are several reasons why prisons for women have not been considered important as a focus for sociological analysis. In the first place, females make up such a small proportion of the persons confined in correctional institutions. Only three to four percent of American criminal prisoners are women (Haskell and Yablonsky, 1974, p. 248). It is also true that females as convicted criminals are seldom considered to be threatening or dangerous (Clare and Kramer, 1976, p. 133, Halleck, 1967, p. 182). Since they are few in number, and pose no threat, female prisoners are easily ignored by the rest of society.

Incarcerated women have also been ignored by criminologists who are frequently applied scientists oriented to solving public concerns. It appears that female correctional institutions are often an after-thought in a system designed by and for men (Adler, 1975).

Women's prisons do differ from men's prisons in a variety of ways. Obviously size is one of the major differences.

In most states, all convicted women felons are placed in

a single institution due to their small numbers. Women's prisons are thus likely to hold a more heterogeneous group of prisoners than men's prisons (Simon, 1975). In addition, there are likely to be fewer concerns with security precautions and a more relaxed atmosphere (Clare and Kramer, 1976, p. 133). Many women's prisons have a cottage or dormitory living pattern, but most women's prisons have poor physical plants, and not enough funds to provide meaningful or useful programs (Bowker, 1977, p. 221).

This is the case in prisons for men in the U.S. as well, but there are even fewer programs for incarcerated females (Griggs and McCune, 1972, p. 7).

Although women's prisons may be less confining than men's prisons in an extrinsic sense, they are likely to be more confining in an intrinsic way.

Women's prisons may have an attractive appearance, but the walls and guns of men's prisons are replaced by stringent rules and the constant vigilance of the administration. A multiplicity of rules and punishments demand dependency and discourage independence (Gibson 1976, p. 99).

Incarceration stigmatizes and isolates the convicted female, reinforcing failure and rarely making any significant contribution to the prisoner's development or providing alternative life opportunities through training (Burkhart,

1976). It is generally believed that prisons are mirrors of the society in which they are found. The position of women prisoners reflects the position of all women in the U.S. society. Women's prisons are therefore, an important focus for sociological analysis (Klein, 1976, p. 5).

Understanding female prisoners adds to our understanding of individual perceptions of self and identity. Incarceration often means the loss of a major identity and a serious threat to self-esteem. Such losses occur in specific positions in society and their commonalities are important to knowledge of social structure.

Understanding female prisoners also adds to our understanding of the development of social roles for women. While the position of women in the U.S. is believed to be improving, the actual life situations of incarcerated women demonstrates that the pattern of sexual domination remains unchallenged.

Finally, understanding female prisoners adds to our understanding of the personal results of organizational arrangements in total institutions (Gibson, 1976, p. 104). Prisons have become increasingly bureaucratic. Funding from tax allocations is based on efficiency of operations; treatment of inmates is based on expediency. The resulting human relations are of interest to all humans whose lives are

controlled and manipulated by bureaucratic forms of organization.

There is another way in which the sociological study of women prisoners is important to general social understanding. Nearly eighty percent of women prisoners are mothers (National Advisory Commission, 1973, p.379). On a conservative bias, one would estimate there are 21,000 children in this country whose mothers are incarcerated on any one day. If one includes county jails, and lock-ups, the figure approximates 78,400 mothers with 156,800 children incarcerated in the year 1970 (McGowan and Blumenthal, 1976, p. 122).

The Literature

There is a long tradition of studies of the social interaction of prisoners in the field of criminology. The works by Donald Clemmer, Stanton Wheeler, and Gresham Sykes are notable and frequently cited examples. Each of these is a classic study of informal social organization. Yet each of these researchers focused their attention solely on populations of male prisoners and even used the word "inmate" as though it was by definition masculine.

The pioneer study of prisoners published by Donald Clemmer in 1940, gave rise to a frequently tested assertion that an inmate social system is developed within the

prison in relationship to the length of time spent inside. The social system or inmate culture is usually referred to as "the code". It is defined by Clemmer as consisting of,

Mores which are conducive to societal welfare, exert coercion to conformity, but are not coordinated by any authority (p. 152).

For Clemmer, adjustment to prison life, or prisonization, indicated taking on in greater or less degree the folkways, mores, customs and general culture of the penitentiary (p. 299). No data was gathered which gave consideration to aspects of prisonization which may vary by sex.

The process of prisonization has been given wide attention and testing in efforts to investigate whether the inmate culture is a response to prison deprivations as Clemmer asserts, or imported from the environment of the inmate (Irwin and Cressey, 1962, p. 142-55). Sykes, for example investigated this in The Society of Captives (1958). His approach was an attempt to view the whole institutional arrangement as a part of the process of prisonization. Sykes includes both captors and captives in his explanation of the development of an inmate culture in an authoritarian community (1958).

Stanton Wheeler (1961) also saw the process of

prisonization as a development within the prison in response to conditions found there. For Wheeler, inmate's adherence to inside group norms rather than the norms of conventional society formed a curvilinear relationship. He determined that the process of prisonization was related to the prisoner's connection to outside society; conformity to conventional norms being highest when the prisoner is first incarcerated and close to the end of his sentence. Conformity to the inmate culture is highest during the period in-between (1961, p. 697).

Erving Goffman published his study of total institutions, Asylums, in 1961. Goffman changed the focus from prisonization to institutionalization. He referred to institutionalization as disculturation or the untraining of social ways of life outside the institution (p. 13). He describes disculturation as common in total institutions which control every aspect of the inmates daily lives. Rothman (1971) has also shown the historical and social links of various forms of asylums.

The general characteristics of any asylum can be found in prisons but often they are exaggerated there. For example, there is often an extreme lack of permeability and interaction with outside society. In addition there is a strict division between staff and prisoners; and

prisoners are considered to need to be changed, corrected and controlled. Finally prisons are extreme forms of total institutions since the presence of inmates is coerced and order is often established by force. For these reasons prisonization is considered a specialized form of the general process of institutionalization.

Studies of Women's Prisons

In 1965, David Ward and Gene Kassebaum published the first of a small number of prisoner studies which used women prisoners as their population.

The three most frequently cited of the studies of women prisoners include: Women's Prison, published by Ward and Kassebaum in 1965, Society of Women, by Rose Giallombardo, published in 1966 and Making It In Prison, by Esther Heffernan, published in 1972. Each is an attempt to show that inmate culture for women is significantly different from the inmate culture developed by men. This difference leads these authors to conclude that, contrary to the findings disclosed by Clemmer, Sykes and Wheeler for male prisons, the inmate code among women prisoners is imported into the prison from the outside environment rather than as a response to institutionalization on the inside. A closer examination of these three studies will help to elucidate the concept of inmate

culture as it has been developed thus far in the literature on male prisons and tested in penitentiaries for females.

The first of these studies by Ward and Kassebaum was based on several data collection techniques all centered on the California Institute for Women, Frontera, California. The first source of data included forty-five extended interviews with inmates. Inmates were selected by staff referrals and a screening of the records. Inmates who agreed to be interviewed were asked to suggest others who would be willing to be interviewed. Of the forty-five respondents, nine particularly articulate and cooperative women were selected.

Nine inmates formed a respondent group which was used as a panel to test propositions about homosexuality derived from the interviews. In addition, both inmates and staff were asked to respond to a written questionnaire which constituted the major segment of the data. Finally, inmate records were reviewed for demographic and personal information. Visits to various criminal justice services throughout the State of California served as ancillary sources of data (p. 261). This method is best characterized as an extended investigation of a single institution.

The focus of this study is on homosexuality which Ward and Kassebaum see as the principal adaptation to

stress of prison life for women (1964, p. 47). Ward and Kassebaum conceptualized this absence as emotional deprivation. They wrote,

Emotional deprivation and lack of experience in fending for oneself combine in the women's prison to promote one predominant compensatory response, that of homosexual involvement (1965, p. 166).

Their statement,

For men, there are other important concerns than homosexuality (1965, p. 166),

implies that women lack important concerns since homosexuality is believed to play such a major role. For these authors a woman's absence from home and family is translated into absence from male companionship since they believe that ,

a female's status, security, response, and the acceptability of her self-image...depend on the establishment of satisfactory relations with the opposite sex (1965, p. 63).

Women prisoners are called, "criminally immature" (1965, p. 53). The authors conclude that,

The kind of experience women have had prior to prison have ill prepared them to cope with pains of imprisonment which include

indefinite loss of affection and interpersonal support, role dipossession and status degradation (1966, p. 74).

Thus, women are described as dependent on families, husbands and lovers on the outside, and on the staff who may treat them like children, or on homosexuals (butches) who may treat them as subservient and control their lives inside the prison (1965, p. 179).

Ward and Kassebaum view homosexuality in women as dependence and need for emotional support. They contrast this with homosexuality for men which they see as a response to sexual frustration (1965, p. 152). They view women's prisons as non-cohesive aggregates of homosexual dyads and friendship cliques (1965, p. 78) where loyalty is limited and informing on other inmates is not strongly sanctioned (1965, p. 166). Ward and Kassebaum have developed this argument based on the premise that,

Deprivation may be more severe for women than for men in prison. Women are ill-prepared to cope with uncertainty, unsophisticated as criminals and unprepared to suffer the rigors of confinement (1965, p. 46).

The second study, perhaps the most widely cited of the three, is based on research at the Federal Reformatory

for Women, Alderson, West Virginia, conducted by Giallombardo. Her principal method of data collection was participant-as-observer. Demographic information was compiled from inmate files. Correctional staff and prison administrators were interviewed and they completed questionnaires (1966, p.189). Again, the method involves carefully and directly investigating one institution; but, this study included many hours spent with inmates in their day-to-day routine. This is the only study of the three which included observation.

Giallombardo's focus is on pseudo-families which she defined as,

a set of inmates each of whom is linked up with all or some of the other members of the family by ties of kinship, who act together in the service of common interests, protection against other inmates, acting in service roles for other family members, and as a family unit in relation to other families and inmates (1966, p. 163).

Family ties are ties of allegiance as well as alliance (1966, p. 163). Giallombardo sees the inmate culture as designated by ties of calculated solidarity rather than mutual trust as is the case for males (1966, p. 278). This lack of trust, according to Giallombardo, comes

from the popular conception of women as predators toward other women (1966, p. 274). Women's roles in the popular culture are said to be based solely on the erotic; self respect and status is only available to women, she writes as, "good companions," "glamour girls," or "domestics" (1966, p. 274). This precludes woman-to-woman cooperation. Since women are seen as rivals by other women, social interaction is based on self-interest and self-orientation (1966, p. 275). Gillombardo found that only the "squares," the pariahs of the prison culture, do not engage in homosexual alliances (1966, p. 277) and that pseudo-families act to integrate the homosexual dyads into a community (1966, p. 157). These families develop a strong "we-group" feeling which is contrasted to the lack of trust and competitiveness with which the rest of the inmate population is viewed (1966, p. 164). For Giallombardo, the orientation of American females toward a life goal of domesticity, a cultural definition of women as passive, the acceptability of public displays of affection between women, and the perception of women as rivals by other women in the popular culture combine as the general features of American society which account for the pseudo-families which inmates form in the female prison community (1966, p. 187).

The third study, by Heffernan, was published in 1972. This study was influenced by both that of Ward and Kassebaum and Giallombardo (p. 105). Data was collected at the Women's Reformatory of the District of Columbia, Occoquan, Virginia. Every prisoner was interviewed utilizing a pre-tested interview schedule. Interviews were accompanied by study of all the official records for each inmate and investigation of general administrative records and reports (p. 189). The method resembles that of the other two, namely an in depth study of a single institution. In this instance the total population were felons and all were interviewed.

The focus of Heffernan's study is the effect of the prior environment on the attitudes of the inmates. She developed an alternative to the single social system approach to inmate culture. Heffernan cites evidence to support "multiple subsystems with goals, codes of acceptable behavior and means of mutual support" that reflect their members' reactions to and perceptions of prison life (p. 25). She divides these subsystems into three.

"The square" inmate culture reflects conventional norms and includes first offenders and those convicted for unpremeditated crimes.

"The cool" inmate culture in which norms are

manipulative and flexible, includes professional criminals and non-addict drug pushers.

"The life" is made up of habitual criminals who are frequently addicts and prostitutes (p. 29).

The culture of those in "the life" includes norms projecting the image of negativism and the idea of rejecting the rejectors.

The (prisoner) shifts the focus of attention from (her) own deviant acts to the motives and behaviors of those who disapprove of (her) violations. (Her) condemners (s)he may claim, are hypocrites, deviants in disguise, or impelled by personal spite. ...By a slight extension, the rewards of conformity -such as material success- become a matter of pull or luck, thus decreasing still further the stature of those who stand on the side of the law-abiding (Sykes and Matza, 1957, p. 664).

Heffernan sees adaptation to prison life as deriving from the orientation that typical offender types bring to their prison environment (p. 17). As an adaptive pattern homosexuality exists in levels or degrees: intimate relationships, play families, conjugal role playing and overt homosexuality. In this way, involvement in homosexual behavior exists in a variety of forms and is dynamic,

changing over time.

Homosexual alliances, according to Heffernan, are merely one factor around which groups form. This contrasts with the dominant position they are afforded in the analyses of Ward and Kassebaum and Giallombardo. Heffernan analyzes four crucial areas of inmate life:

1. staff contact,
2. relations with other inmates,
3. individual activity, and
4. response to the structure of status and power,

which are crucial to the subsystems. Each of the three subsystems, squares, cools and the life, forms an inmate culture to which the inmate belongs by virtue of her present offense and her offense history (p. 109). The premise which guides Heffernan's analysis is that inmate culture forms a social system which links the goals and values of the individuals involved with the purposes and norms of the system itself (p. 12).

Critical Summary

By way of critical summary of these studies of women's prisons it may be said that each of these interpretations has limited usefulness. Both the research of Ward and Kassebaum and that of Giallombardo are based on premises about the role of women which they assume to be brought into

the prison culture. Women are said to be deprived of the support of their husbands and lovers and unaccustomed to fending for themselves. These premises are not based on the lives which the inmates are actually likely to have led. Female prisoners, generally of lower socioeconomic status, are women whose lives all too frequently have provided them with experiences in fending for themselves and struggling for survival (Kirk, 1978, p. 4). As Harris has clearly shown in her book, Hell Hole (1967) female prisoners generally were not reared in homes in which they were able to depend on a male, nor have they been able to look to a male figure for financial support in most cases (pp. 101-179). Rather most of the women prisoners are not involved in stable relationships with men, but are dependent on welfare agencies and their families to provide the economic support which they cannot (Chandler, 1973, p. 85). This evidence is used to point out that the concept of dependency for convicted women must be premised on factors other than the traditional sex-role ideas used by Ward and Kassebaum and Giallombardo.

Both Clemmer and Irwin have noted that primary group relationships are absent from prison life, that male inmates are involved in symbiotic rather than affective relationships (1940, p. 85; 1970, p. 64). Yet, Giallombardo, Ward and

Kassebaum as well as others have presumed that there is an even greater lack of solidarity among women prisoners. They believe that it is part of the popular culture concept of women as competitors with other women that precludes cooperation among women prisoners (Conklin, 1971, p. 14). In discussions about lack of solidarity, both Ward and Kassebaum and Giallombardo mention that inmates agree that informing on another inmate is considered against "the code" in the women's prison. Each author argues that the violation of important norms in the male prison is more strongly sanctioned than in the female prison. It is not clear what standards may be used to judge the strength of sanctions. Giallombardo and Ward and Kassebaum mention vitriolic attacks, isolation, gossip, and loss of status as punishments imposed on informers. This would be considered by most to be strong sanctioning. However, they use the common occurrence of snitching as evidence that the inmate culture is not cohesive in women's prisons (1965, p. 165; 1966a, p. 275).

Since women engage in this negatively sanctioned behavior, the culture is believed to exert little control. Yet male prisoners also engage in negatively sanctioned behavior, and the inmate culture is still seen as exerting control in men's prisons. Johnson describes male rape

in the men's prison as the strongest of taboos, punishable by murder. Still, the frequent occurrence of this crime inside male prisons does not seem to be evidence that the inmate culture is not cohesive.

In the third study Heffernan has used the systems concept amplified by subsystems analysis. This concept of multiple systems in functional interdependence has limited analytical use. Many prisoners do not fit into either of the three subsystems. System boundary questions raise problems of exclusivity of categories, over-lap, and contradiction. The system concept leaves many questions about inmate culture and social organization not only unanswered, but unasked (1972, p. 25).

These three studies have a final problematic aspect in common; none of them adequately presents the perspective of the prisoner. A fourth study published in 1973 by Burkhart is a description of women's prisons from the points of view of the prisoners themselves. The basic premise of the investigation derives from the author's description of total institutionalization as synonymous with forced dependency. For Burkhart, this forced dependency in women's prisons serves to perpetuate a sexist society (p. 129).

The primary methodological technique used by Burkhart

was interviewing. However, unlike Ward and Kassebaum, Giallombardo and Heffernan, Burkhart interviewed numbers of people connected with women's prisons throughout the United States. The most important of the data came from hundreds of interviews and letters from women prisoners.

The focus of this work is the process of institutionalization. Burkhart is not concerned with inmate cultural components such as the classic studies by Sykes and Clemmer, but rather the experiences of powerlessness, degradation and mutilations of the self, common in prison. This type of analysis follows from Goffman's concepts about asylums. Burkhart's description of the infantilizing process of prisons is particularly supportive of Goffman's notions about total institutions. Women in Prison by Burkhart is, in the main, a critical social statement of the human waste and destruction of prisoners in the United States system of correction. It represents the point of view of women prisoners, and involves an insightful, graphic and moving account of this form of social organization. It derives from a critical perspective, and is journalistic in form.

Since 1974, there has been a gradual increase of interest in the topic of women's crime. Three books in particular have raised some interest in the subject of

female criminality.

Freda Adler's book Sisters in Crime published in 1975, asserts that women are psychologically more similar to, than different from, men. Adler assumes that changing sex-roles have allowed women to free themselves from many of the restraints which formerly kept them within the law.

Adler's ideas are derived from assumptions about women's liberation in the United States. She is convinced that sex-roles for women are becoming increasingly similar to sex-roles for men.

Adler contends that women are more violent as criminals and are found more often in prison now than ever before.

Rita Simon, published Women and Crime, also in 1975. She, too, asserts that women are no more moral or law abiding than men. Simon, however, predicts fewer rather than more crimes of violence by women in the future. Her thesis is that increased participation in the labor force provides women with more opportunities for committing "white collar" crimes and fewer situations of frustration leading to acts of violence.

Simon and Adler have imposed middle class standards of femininity on women criminals just as did Ward and Kassebaum and Giallombardo. They have ignored poor and third world women.

These are the women who are most likely to get into trouble with the law and are invariably part of the most sexist and exploited segment of society (Klein, 1976a, p. 7). Few of them are aware of any real meaningful women's liberation (Morton, 1976).

Carol Smart, published Women, Crime and Criminology in 1976. It is her position that women's crime is simply one facet of human behavior which has occurred in different forms at all historical moments. Smart reasons that what appears to be an increase in women's crime may simply reflect growing awareness of females as potential criminals on the part of the criminal justice system. While women may be more likely to be arrested and convicted now than in the past, this does not necessarily reflect a change in the real behavior of women.

Burkhart has pointed out that what appears to be an increase in female crime may simply be a statistical artifact (1976, p. 75). In addition, there is anthropological evidence that cross-culturally, the homicide rate for women remains relatively constant at about ten percent (Buckley, 1976). This has led to the argument that women are less inclined in general to deviance than are men. However, this notion has often been distorted in studies of female criminals.

Frequently incarcerated women have been viewed as turn-

ing to crime as a perversion of their natural feminine roles (Klein, 1976b, p. 6).

Poverty in the lives of female criminals is overlooked while white, affluent standards of femininity are emphasized. "Bad women" who are criminals are frequently explained in sexual terms even when their crimes are non-sexual.

Many women prisoners have real economic need. Their crimes are likely to be economic, not sexual (Kwartler, 1977).

An explanation for women's crime in the 1970's must take two factors into consideration. On the one hand, it is clear that the rate of arrests for females is higher than ever, but that the rate of increase in women arrested has declined since 1965 (Glaser, 1978, p. 74).

The developments of the women's liberation movement do not parallel the changes in arrest rates for women. Quinney points out that women are surplus on the labor market (1977, p. 70). Rates of arrest and incarceration for women actually reflect the positive relationship between high rates of unemployment and high rates of incarceration in the United States.

Secondly, the increase in women's crime is most frequently associated with alcoholism and drug addiction which is seen by some as a response to rising frustrations

(Haskell and Yablonsky, 1974, p. 252). In the United States, fewer than five percent of drug addicts are able to support their habit legally, fifteen to thirty percent support their addiction through traffic in drugs, leaving sixty-five to eighty percent (or more) who must support their habits primarily through "other criminal activities" (Goldfarb, 1976, p. 126). These other criminal activities make it likely that women drug addicts led a criminal life style prior to incarceration and that their offenses are property crimes.

The research of Glick and Neto has provided further evidence that action for the liberation of women has not significantly affected the life chances of convicted women. Less than 50% of women prisoners surveyed had jobs when they were arrested, although nearly all women prisoners had worked sometime prior to incarceration (1976, p. 438). In addition Chandler found that on the average, three to four persons are also the state's financial responsibility while a woman is in prison (1973, p. 85).

Women prisoners find it increasingly difficult to assume the financial responsibility for themselves and their children when they are released (Gibson, 1976, p. 100). Both Chandler and Burkhart have demonstrated that vocational training for women prisoners often supports the institution

and perpetuates ideas of females as domestic workers (Burkhart, 1976, p. 52). Such training does not contribute to the life chances of the woman prisoner nor does it add to her independence and self-sufficiency.

Three Assumptions About Convicted Women

Three ideas have frequently informed the shared assumptions found in criminological studies of women. Female criminals are incompetent or mentally deficient.

In 1934, the Gluecks described women prisoners in the following manner,

The women are themselves on the whole a sorry lot. Burdened with feeble mindedness, psychopathic personality, and marked emotional instability, a large proportion of them found it difficult to survive by legitimate means (p. 299).

In 1963, Xenia Field stated that women prisoners are not dangerous,

they are a pathetic group of inadequate often mentally, sub-normal people (p.8).

Female criminals have a lack of moral character,

In 1966, Rose Giallombardo found that female prisoners had no meaning for concepts such as "fair play," "courage," or the like (p. 285).

Female criminals suffer from individual physiological or psychological defects.

In 1971, Ellis and Austin stated that feelings of nonspecific body pain or discomfort related to menstruation are related to female criminality (p. 395).

Three examples of contradictions and distortions in the literature on convicted women serve as illustrations.

Incompetence

Clare and Kramer assert that incarceration is a more severe trauma for women than for men since it happens less often. They presume that women are less sophisticated in criminal life styles and more protected in outside life (1976, p. 133). On the other hand, Simon and Gagnon point out the social bias against committing females to prison. They believe that women prisoners are thus likely to have committed serious crimes or to have been strongly recidivistic. Women's prisons are said to be composed of some women who had no prior knowledge of a criminal life style but a much larger number with long-term ties to such a life (1977, p. 229). Bowker has noted that girl's training schools are places where females are taught the criminal subculture. The longer females stay in such schools, the more they learn (1977, p.81).

Contrary to Clare and Kramer's assumption that women

prisoners are naive criminals, it is likely that for some women the development of a criminal life style is very much a part of a long history of socialization (1971, p. 45).

A description of female prisoners as feeble-minded or lacking criminal sophistication does not take into consideration the actual life situations of convicted women. An accurate description must relate ability to opportunity and must consider women's crime in the framework of the general social expectations held for women in society.

Immorality

The issue of homosexuality raises contradictory interpretations regarding convicted females. Frequently this behavior has been related to lack of moral character by writers in the field. Some authors have presumed that a natural attitude of dependency makes homosexuality a much more common response for female than for male prisoners (Clare and Kramer, 1976, p. 138). Giallombardo has even asserted that a cultural climate which permits public displays of affection between females provides a predisposition for homosexuality (1966, p. 186).

Other authors have reasoned that in the United States, females are expected to manage sexual deprivation more easily than males. They say that in our society women are

likely to be socialized to control their sexual desires and are thus less likely to turn to homosexual partners in prison (Gagnon and Simon, 1968, p.229). Neither point of view has been empirically established. Still, the preponderance of material about homosexuality in the literature on women's prisons clouds the issue. Since so much interest is devoted to homosexuality among women prisoners in the literature, the reader is likely to assume that it plays a major role.

Real issues facing women prisoners and the actual part played by homosexual relations have been clouded by impressionistic data.

Sickness

Studies directed at women's prisons have often suffered from another form of distortion. This bias springs from a notion of female criminals as "sick". An example is found in the research on aggression and the menstrual cycle of prisoners which was done by Ellis and Austin. It was found that the frequency of aggressive behavior increases during the premenstrual and early menstrual phases of the cycle (1971, p.388). Glaser describes this as a physiological state of irritability greatly augmenting the probability of physical violence (1978, p.150).

This study can be questioned since Ellis and Austin failed to establish rapport with their subjects and used the behavioral reports of matrons as evidence of aggression. However, the menstrual cycles of the matrons were not considered to be relevant to this research, although presumably the interaction between the matrons and prisoners would also be related to menstrual cycles.

Summary

Throughout the literature on women's crime, there are implicit and explicit references to the offender as suffering from individual pathology and failure to live up to social standards of competence and morality. Rarely is emphasis balanced between social and personal factors.

These three ideas:

1. incompetence and mental deficiency,
2. lack of moral character, and
3. sickness,

have too frequently been assumptions which guided descriptions and explanations about women as prisoners.

These notions distort understanding about women prisoners and prevent a meaningful approach to women's crime. In addition, such ideas lead to social expectations which are themselves confining and exert control over the

lives of prisoners. As Burkhart points out, convicted women are imprisoned in an idea, not just a place (p. 437).

Research Report

The present research has maintained these three ideas as its point of focus. It is presumed centrally in this research that neither incompetence, immorality (nor amorality) nor biological or psychological traits provides the best explanation for female crime. In addition, while there are obviously differences between men and women based on size, biological function, conditioning, expectations and social roles, sexuality is not necessarily a relevant element in female crime nor is it necessarily a relevant element in male crime.

What this research has shown is that structural factors are clearly linked to women's crime and that they have the greatest influence on the ways women criminals are defined and treated. The best explanations about incarcerated women are social...not psychological. Matza (1964) has shown that in individual cases the actuality of determinism and free will is a variable.

Some (wo)men are freer than others. Most (wo)men, including (prisoners) are neither wholly free nor completely constrained but fall somewhere between. The general conditions underlying various posi-

tions along a continuum from freedom to constraint may be described (1964, p. 27).

How determined an individual's life becomes or how free s/he is to become a criminal could be measured relative to a person's position in the social structure. Women prisoners occupy the lower levels of the scale measuring determined existence vs. freedom of choice, and so are more dominated by social structure.

There are many commonalities and patternings in the lives of women prisoners despite the variety of crimes and settings of incarceration. This research explored the patternings that arose in the existence of women prisoners, as they perceived various exigencies and taken for granted realities. What is more, it was possible to take this approach with the goal of addressing the same three assumptions which have directed research into women's prisons in the past. These assumptions have been examined in a single setting. This case study of a women's prison will serve to illuminate and amplify the questions which are needed for a thorough understanding of women's crime. The focus is directly on the social actors and their action rather than on abstractions (Stryker, 1977). Abstractions may follow, only from a much greater understanding of the problem of crime than is now offered in

the literature.

Female Criminals are incompetent or mentally deficient

In this research, competence has been considered in terms of role performance. Specifically it has been concerned with the role of mothers.

In prison settings for women, a major loss revolves around the deprivation of children and inability to attain support for the identity of mother. This relates to the traditional notions of women prisoners as incompetent. However, the social aspects of the incompetence, "of unfit mothers," are just as important as the psychological aspects.

It is very likely that a female prisoner's identity as a mother lacks social support. This may be considered a strong threat, since every identity is as much social as personal (Berger and Luckman, 1967). The process of arrest and conviction strips the woman of social support for the identity whether or not the crime itself involved mistreatment of children.

The woman prisoner must continually resist attempts to deprive her of her right to the role of mother. If she is to maintain this crucial identity, she may be forced to resort to substitution, fantasy, or limited visits with her children in an artificial and restricted way.

This research has focused on the social perceptions of mothering among women prisoners. Relationships which women prisoners established in order to continue in the identity of mother have been examined. Ideas of value and worth and their relationship to the role of mother for women were questioned. Social support for the role has been related to the role performances of the women prisoner.

Female criminals have a lack of moral character

Morality has been examined in this setting with respect to the norms and values of the subculture itself. From the perspective of the actresses involved in the prison the meanings of the roles and rules were examined to show that morality is itself a social concept. There is a code of conduct which informs social life in women's prisons, and there are behavioral expectations which are recognized when they are met and when they are not met. There is a system of sanctions which reward and punish and support the moral order in the prison subculture. This perspective is contrary to the tradition of criminological literature in which imorality is used to characterize women prisoners.

Female criminals suffer from individual physiological or psychological defects

In this research, the individual psychological trait of dependency has been examined. It can be shown that

dependency is more fruitfully examined as a social trait than a personal one. Further, the concept of dependency has been shown to have strong structural components in total institutions such as prisons (Burkhardt, 1976).

In addition, the meaning of time for prisoners was explored in its relationship to dependency. Time is a particular unique component of the meaning system of prisoners. In one sense time became concretized as a punishment in the corrections system. This use of time mitigated against real personal adjustment. In another sense, time was concretized since the prisoner's file jacket listed the past events which were held against her. Her sentence number concretized her present into days, weeks and hours spent for the state. The future lost its ordinary abstract quality as well, since the prisoner expected experiences with "stigma" and discrimination to follow her throughout her life. This concretization of time had strong potential for alienation; for doing violence to the human nature of women prisoners.

In prison, time takes away autonomy and personal direction. Such alienation is related to coercion and is destructive of the ability to create and sustain social

roles. Doing time leads to a loss of identity; that is a loss of a sense of individuality distinct from group imposed roles (Feuer, 1969, p. 91). Dependency, specifically with relation to time, is not a personal defect. Rather, it is a social response to a structurally imposed situation.

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The Women's Honor Unit:
Methods of Data Collection
The Case Study

There has been one consistent, ordered approach throughout the progress of this investigation. That approach stems from a commitment to women prisoners and to understanding their experiences as convicted felons. I was determined to impose no order, but rather to discover the order which was characteristic within the data itself. For this reason, the research is qualitative. It is no doubt possible to order this information following mathematical propositions or to construct other categories from the data. Far from a detriment to my analysis, I see potential flexibility as an asset. I welcome attempts to test these findings. My fondest hope is that this research will stimulate others to examine women's prisons. The more scrutiny, the better. However, this case study was not a test; it was not intended to verify. Rather, it was an example of the form of examination in which interpretation follows investigation (Reynolds, 1971).¹ For this reason methods were just that, means to an end, not an end in themselves (Sjoberg and Nett, 1968).

In developing a case study of women's prisons, I have frequently thought of it as a life history. I hoped to

make as realistic an account as possible of the group life of a women's prison. It is by;

giving a realistic basis to our imagery of the underlying process that the life history serves the purposes of checking assumptions, illuminating organization and re-orienting stagnant fields (Becker, 14, 1966).

The Setting

The Women's Honor Unit. Women's Honor Unit (W.H.U.) was a large house set slightly away from a much larger state youth detention facility. The W.H.U. was a part of the New Mexico State corrections system, located in Albuquerque, New Mexico,

The house was airy and pleasant. There was an office and two large multi-purpose rooms on the first floor. These large rooms were the game room with a pool table and the lounge with a T.V. set. There were several other small rooms on the first floor and one bedroom with four occupants. The second floor had a roof-balcony and four large bedrooms with two large baths. Two bedrooms upstairs held six women; two others held four more. The bedrooms were bright, crowded but pleasant. The yard had flower boxes and trees, but immediately surrounding the landscaped yard of the house were vacant lots and old warehouses holding junk and

supplies for various state institutions. This was one symbol of state influence, but the more abrasive symbol was the large chain-link fence encircling the house. Often the gates stood open, but they were a reminder of restriction and control all the same, whether the observer was inside or out. When one arrived for the first time at the W.H.U. the large windows often looked vacant and blank, but the outsider may still have had the impression that someone was watching.

Inside there were always women sitting, looking out the window, noting and commenting. Few visitors were completely unknown to all the women. When a person arrived whose presence was unexplained, a lively discussion passed through the house as women came and went and made idle conversation with one another.

There were twenty-four prisoners at the W.H.U. Each of them was likely to know something about everything that happened there.

Data collection at the W.H.U. took place during the months of August through December, 1978. This was the last five months prior to a complete reorganization of women's corrections in the state of New Mexico. During this period the effects of bureaucratic control were felt strongly since rules and regulations were being

imposed over human rights in order to facilitate the change.

The Subjects. The women who were prisoners at the W.H.U. had all served time in a larger prison for women, in Santa Fe, New Mexico. They had been selected by the administration of that Women's Division of the New Mexico State Department of Corrections to be transferred to the W.H.U. Sometimes women were thought to be selected because their charge was child abuse and in confinement these women were frequently harassed by the other prisoners. Other women were selected when the administration believed they deserved a reward. Some women earned this reward by carefully avoiding any report of misconduct. This was difficult to do in a system where reports were written for even minor infractions. The women believed that others earned this reward by informing or snitching. The prisoners at the W.H.U. had all been convicted of serious offenses and many had very long criminal records. However, those selected by the administration of the larger women's prison were considered honor prisoners. The supervisor of the W.H.U. frequently interviewed these candidates and selected one of several possible prisoners when there was an opening. The woman was likely to get sent back to the main prison for any major rule infraction.

The chart below lists selected characteristics for thirty of the women I met during the data collection.

Every week women left and others came to the W.H.U. The population was unstable and the twenty-four women incarcerated were constantly changing. These are the thirty women I came to know during the five months of the research.

(See page 44A for chart referenced above.)

The Administration

When one entered the W.H.U., it was customary to announce one's presence at the office. The administration of the W.H.U. was handled by a staff of eight persons: a supervisor, six matrons, and a maintenance man. There was always a matron on duty and the supervisor also spent more than his required forty hours per week at his position. In effect, he was "on call" around the clock. The six matrons varied in their ages, ethnicity, and social class background. Some of the matrons were respected by the prisoners; some were not. Feelings and relationships between prisoners and matrons were dynamic and frequently changed. However, in terms of which matrons were seen as fair and reasonable there was usually agreement among the prisoners.

The maintenance man was not frequently mentioned by the prisoners and played only a small role in interaction. On some occasions male prisoners were brought from another prison to the W.H.U. to do maintenance work. Although the women usually knew who these men were and frequently knew something about them, too, they were "off limits" to each other. Interaction between male and female prisoners without permission could have led to punishment for both. So, interaction was limited,

Some other people who came into the lives of prisoners on a regular basis were the staff of the kitchen where all of the women worked at some time during their stay. Many of the women had no other employment during their incarceration at the W.H.U. The kitchen supplied the food for the neighboring youth detention center and to the W.H.U. itself. It was located on the grounds of the youth detention center and a few blocks away from the W.H.U. No youth were allowed to be in the dining area while women were working there. The prisoners were paid twenty-five cents per hour for their labor. If they agreed to work on Saturday, they were paid one carton of cigarettes.

In addition, the prisoners came into contact with "treatment agents" of the state corrections system at the W.H.U. These included psychologists and counselors as well as medical personnel, which was usually a nurse.

Visitors

Visitors to the W.H.U. included various members of the families and the friends of some of the prisoners. Some women seldom received visitors, while others had guests as often as they were allowed. There were visiting hours three times per week. Sometimes family members got to know and interact with other women besides the prisoners they came to see. It was generally accepted behavior to

offer hospitality to the family of a friend as though it were your own. This was especially true when children came to visit their mothers. They were warmly received by all their mother's friends.

Visits were allowed in two small, closed rooms on a first-come, first-served basis. When more than two visitors were present, visits were held in the large front rooms with the supervision of a matron.

Women were also visited by men friends and husbands. These visits were far from private. While no one listened to their conversations, and they sometimes visited behind closed doors, the visit was still a cause for gossip and speculation. Both the woman prisoner and her male guest were aware of the scrutiny of the rest of the group.

Religious groups and social service organizations frequently sent representatives to the W.H.U. Sometimes they visited with specific inmates and other times they presented some sort of program for the group at large. These people were usually known by the group to which they belonged rather than by name except to the specific woman prisoner who interacted with them.

Leaving the Grounds

The women went outside the W,H,U, for most of the goods

and services they needed and sometimes for pleasure as well. These excursions were scheduled through the administration. Women might leave unescorted only after they had "proven themselves" for an unspecified period of time. Then they were driven to the destination and picked up by a state car. Women prisoners were chosen by the administrator to be drivers. Some of the women held jobs in the community and others attended classes in various training centers. Women who held jobs paid rent of \$105 to the state for living at the W.H.U. However, none of the women were allowed to keep cash. Their cigarettes, soft drinks and candy came from a canteen. The women had order forms of all the things which were available and they checked the items for which they wanted to have money deducted from their account. Other goods were either brought by visitors, or they were purchased when the women were allowed to go shopping. Shopping trips were scheduled nearly every month. This was the only time the women were allowed to deal in cash. Before the trip, their money was handed out. After the trip, anything left over was collected. The women were taken to a central shopping area and agreed to meet at a certain time to return to the W.H.U. Women also left to go to church services, to visit medical facilities, apply for

jobs or schooling and infrequently for recreational activities.

At other times women were allowed to take furloughs with their families or friends. These visits ranged in length from three hours to seventy-two hours. There was a great deal of discretion in the application of the rules by which furloughs were granted.

Rules

During all of the prisoners' daily lives, the most important factor was scheduling and routinizing. Visiting times were scheduled for everyone, it made no difference if a prisoner's family could come to visit at those times or not. Leaving the grounds was also rigidly scheduled since only one vehicle was provided for the W.H.U. Women complained of not getting medical appointments, job interviews, shopping trips, and recreational excursions because they couldn't be efficiently scheduled. Also, women on work and school release were often forced to arrive extremely early or wait extremely late, since several women needed to be in different places at the same time.

Everything in the daily lives of the prisoners was covered by rules, but the rules were not always invoked. Rules were in existence "just in case," just as the handcuffs in the office hung from a hook in the closet, "just

in case."

The sanctions related to rule breaking were imposed without regularity. One day a woman might receive a bag of yarn from a visitor without comment. Another day another prisoner might be told receiving yarn from visitors was against the rules. One day it was permissible to watch the "stories" (serials) in the afternoons on T.V. The next day it was forbidden to turn on the T.V. before five p.m. One day prisoners were allowed to drive to the kitchen to work, the next day they were supposed to walk.

Instances of rule inconsistencies occurred with frequency but not regularity. The prisoners explained these changes from the behaviors they observed, and blamed each other. Such arbitrary rule imposition is one of the characteristics of a bureaucratic system of corrections. It led to suspicion and individualism. The individual prisoner came to fear blame from the group for the imposition of rules over which she had no control. Although this was a minimum security prison, structure and domination were always in evidence.

Research Goals

Throughout the five months of data collection, I continually kept in mind a very singular and perhaps

limiting goal. That goal was developing as intimate a familiarity with the experience of prison for women as possible (Lofland, 1976, p. 25). I wanted to be able to describe it as much as I could from the points of views of the actresses themselves. At the outset, I believed that short of having myself incarcerated, that experience would only become available to me from the accounts of the actresses. In fact, to a very great extent my understanding is based on the accounts that were made to me. However, I came to understand in another way as well, perhaps even in another dimension. Through my countless hours of interaction I learned of distress, sorrow, anxiety, frustration, hurt and fear through my own personal reactions and responses. Prisoners call it going through changes. I came to understand this phrase in a very intimate way I would never have expected. I now recognize certain periods of the research as times in which I had "gone native" (Pearsall, 1970, p. 168).

From this very dramatic experience I have been able to develop a description of this situation which captures the meanings as they existed for the actresses in a way which I would never have predicted at the start of the project.

I have analyzed and explained these meanings in a way

which follows from the basic premises of Symbolic Interactionism. According to Blumer,

human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them;... the meanings of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction one has with ones fellows;...these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things (she) encounters (Blumer, 1969, p. 2).

At the W.H.U., I learned to distinguish between meanings which followed from the previous life style experienced by the prisoner and meanings which arose from the day to day interaction with others in prison. In addition, I came to understand how these meanings are refracted and distorted by the structures and organization of life in a state institution for corrections.

The data is frankly subjective, For this no apology should be necessary. It is the strength of the research, I believe, that it comes from not only a scientific "knowing" but a personal "feeling" as well. I am grateful to Wellman for redirecting my thinking away from the traditional scientific protocol as I present this report (1977, Ch. 2), As he noted,

the importance lies not so much in proving points, but in making them ring true.

As with Wellman, my goal has been to, make writing accurately represent what was encountered (1977, p. 64).

This type of sociology is certainly not a new idea, nor is it unprecedented (Shaw, 1930; Liebow, 1967; Sutherland; 1937). One impetus is derived from The Sociological Imagination of C.W. Mills. The emphasis in analysis has been on the interplay between biography and history, personal troubles and social problems (1961). I have analyzed what I came to understand about women's prisons for its significance at three levels;

1. What are the implications for an individual woman prisoner?
2. What are the implications for women as prisoners?
3. What are the implications for society and social order?

Another impetus came from Glaser and Strauss' work on grounded theory (1967). I used what they have called the constant comparison method. This method involves:

(1) comparing incidents, (2) developing and integrating categories and properties of ongoing social life, (3) delimiting the theory with consideration for both parsimony, and

scope, and (4) writing the emergent theory (1967, p. 105).

My first bit of data turned out to be a prisoner's journal. Immediately after I announced myself and the reason for my presence at the W.H.U, a prisoner offered to show me the writing she had been doing. This was only the first of many unexpected openings which I encountered. The constant comparison method allowed flexibility and made it possible for me to move back and forth between the particular and the general without the confines of a rigid research design. Thus, I have been able to generate a different perspective on women prisoners; I have not been limited to testing already existing ideas.

In addition to the development of descriptive data about women prisoners I had another goal in doing the research. The reason was commitment to improving the lot of convicted women. In essence I am describing a process of exchange. I was determined that within my limited ability, I would give as much to the subjects of the research as they were giving me.

Some of my contributions were made possible because of very close ties which I developed with a few prisoners. Other contributions were made by the series of classes in

Human Relations which I taught at the W.H.U. Finally, of course, it is my hope that this research report will serve the interests of women prisoners through its communication of information about them. I am certain that every researcher has the same hope that his/her work will make an impact on the field. I am also certain that the likelihood of any single research endeavor actually making a difference is slight. Regardless of the outcome for this report, I can feel confident that I returned favor for favor and friendship for friendship.

This data collection was non-directed. I refrained from any questioning or observation which implied lack of respect for the subject. I went where I was invited, and asked only questions which were appropriate to the relationship I had with the individual. As I came to understand the value of talk for the prisoners, I attempted to use this resource as it was deemed appropriate for the group. As a result, I came to know about meanings which I would never have asked about had the data collection been directed. In addition, I earned the cooperation and the respect of the prisoners. One women told me, "Nobody would ever bother you, you never push, you never pry, you are always polite, you are good people." I hold this as a compliment, indeed.

Research Titles

My unique status at the W.H.U. makes it difficult to find a label for the women who helped me in this investigation. There are a number of discussions in the literature on field methods about this very issue (McCall and Simmons, 1969; Spradley and McCurdy, 1972). Some authors advocate the use of "informant" or "respondent" to describe such contributors. Others use "interviewee," and of course, frequently people from whom data is collected are known as "the population" or "subjects." I do not wish to imply any relationship of control between the women prisoners as "subjects" and myself as investigator. In no way are they "my" subjects. Still, they are "the" subjects of the research and as such they are the "doers of the action." For this reason the group as a whole will be referred to as the subjects. In those specific cases in which I wish to designate any specific person who gave me information, I will use the label "source."² These designations are somewhat artificial, perhaps necessarily so for the purposes of exposition. Yet, in my own mind I consider these prisoners to be my friends. That is the designation I would actually use in reference to these sources.

Issues

In the original research proposal in which this project was formulated, I delineated three issues which I intended to pursue in the investigation. The issues were: identity, female to female relationships and dependency. These were key areas to which the literature on women's corrections had drawn my attention.

The identity which is common to the majority of female prisoners is that of mother (National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals, 1973). I intended to study forced changes in salient identities when a woman must relinquish the day-to-day, care-giving, role behaviors of being a mother yet wishes to maintain that identity. This issue has retained its importance throughout the study. The data showed that motherhood is a critical concept for understanding convicted women; it is their most prominent identity.

The issue of dependency was not quite so clear-cut as I had anticipated, nor were the indicators as clear as was the case for motherhood. I had hoped to question the relationships which the prisoners had had with state agencies of health, education and welfare as well as legal agencies. This was difficult to operationalize; it simply was not a common topic of conversation. Instead, I found

that the only state agency which was of interest was the state department of corrections for whom the women were doing time. My focus was drawn to the concept of time because of all the phrases and references there were in prison conversations about this entity which is the basis for punishment in corrections.

The third issue, female to female interaction, raised questions about women's perceptions of their relationships with each other. I was interested in how women to women relationships developed in living together without men. This focus was sustained throughout. My analysis of this material employed some perspectives which were anthropological (Hall, 1959). I have examined this group of women from the standpoint of a culture with roles and status, values, norms, traditions and beliefs; i.e. the body of knowledge which it was necessary to know in order to adapt to life in this prison.

Finally, a fourth issue became important as the investigation progressed. This is the issue of tecatas³ or heroin addicts and their position in prison. I came to learn that there were important differences in the expectations for tecatas held by the administration of the corrections system, by other prisoners, and by tecatas themselves. I learned that junkie was a multifaceted status. My attention

was frequently redirected to this issue by what I observed and heard. In addition, I established many close ties with the prisoners who were incarcerated for drug related offenses. I came to feel a part of a social circle of tecatas. Thus, in effect I became a participant in the group. I learned the importance of a clique of friends first hand, as well as the impact which clique membership had on relationships with prisoners outside its circle.

Techniques

Prior to the beginning of data collection, I had planned to make use of three data sources. These were; interviews, panel discussion and official records. As the research progressed, I expanded other areas for data collection and limited these three. In every case, my decisions about which method to pursue came from the importance I placed on developing an intimate familiarity with the group.

Originally I proposed to record in depth interviews with all prisoners and staff at the W.H.U. These interviews were to have been directed at developing biographies of a number of inmates. I also hoped to interview families of inmates for adding detail to the biographies. This plan is not without merit, although foresight did not include the understanding about time, energy and feasibility which

hindsight brings. In the first place, it proved impossible to record, transcribe and analyze so many in depth interviews without giving up all of my other activities entirely. In addition, the population was so transitory that interviewing all the subjects turned into a complex question of sampling. Every week there were people leaving and arriving so that all the inmates on one day meant something different on another. I settled for a purposive or conceptual sample of six interviews.

This data was an important addition to that which came from observations, informal and spontaneous interviews and group discussion.

Secondly, interviewing proved less feasible than I had thought because of the role I established and the access I gained to the group. It became clear to me that establishing ties of friendship would help me to more closely approximate an intimate familiarity with prison life. On the other hand, if I was to act with the prisoners as a friend or a social equal, I could not expect those same prisoners to treat me as a formal interviewer on one day, and as an intimate confidant the next. I felt conspicuous arriving with tape recorder and note pad. I was well aware that this implied confessing, or snitching, to many of the women. In addition, I believed that it was contradictory

to my goal to impose the structure of an interview on the subjects. Moreover, I quickly found that the real data of prison life was going on in the interactions of the prisoners. Women were very willing to tell me, teach me and show me. The interview made artificial what the prisoners were demonstrating in their actions.

Observations

Much of the time spent on data collection was devoted to watching, listening, noting and comparing. At the outset, I was interested in pursuing observation as an important aspect of knowing in social life. However, I believed that the potential for this type of investigation was limited. I was concerned that I might have access to observe only a few of the settings of prison life. I pessimistically expected little fruitful observation would take place in such contrived settings as I was likely to have the opportunity to see. As it turned out, I was given the opportunity to observe most of the settings of the W.H.U., short of living there. There were several reasons for this. In the first place, the W.H.U. was small. There simply were not that many settings possible. In the second place, my introduction to the group came through prisoners. I kept my contacts with the administrators to a minimum. In this way, I was invited into the settings which the prisoners

chose and these were seldom the structured situations imposed by the staff. It was an asset to observation that I was never identified as "a cop." Furthermore, I was able to establish an identity as a teacher and a friend which invited confidences and encouraged straightforward behavior.⁴

Class Discussion

I entered the W.H.U. as a teacher and volunteered to the administration to teach a course in Human Relations. I was given free access to come and go as I chose and no restrictions were imposed on my visits.

The Human Relations class was intended as a forum for discussing the issues of life in prison, and also to make a contribution to the participants. The class met biweekly for ten weeks and was devoted to instruction in social manipulation, controlling others and maximizing social rewards. Impression management and social image were major topics covered in the class. (Galliher and McCartney, 1977, p. 480). These sessions in human relations provided the categories and questions which I continued to pursue throughout the research. During the twenty meetings I thought of the members of the class as a panel. Their discussions, agreements and disagreements, insights as well as their blindness raised the issues which I have

described in this report.

Use of Sources

During the time of my data collection, I came to know eleven women prisoners quite well. This group introduced me to others and during the final weeks of my research, I knew and was known by all of the prisoners present at the W.H.U. The capacity is twenty-four, but during the five months of data collection I interacted with at least thirty-four prisoners whose names I knew and who recognized me. Of these thirty-four, eleven became research "sources". These eleven women agreed to help with the research, answered my questions and took it upon themselves that I should understand the lives of convicted women. Six of the eleven also contributed in depth interviews to the research. To protect identities, I have described these prisoners using categories of age, ethnicity, crime committed, type of prisoner and relationship to a man.⁵

The eleven sources provided me with a much broader base for observation than was possible for me alone as an interactant in the culture. In addition, two of these sources were writers. They made many of their poems, essays, letters and descriptions available to me for the research. This has contributed an intimacy to the account which was invaluable.

Description of Sources

These eleven prisoners were all mothers, however, not all of them had custody of their children when they were arrested. Nor do all of them expect to take custody of their children when they leave prison.

It is impossible to predict how many of them will ever be able to actually resume the role of mother.

The following chart shows the age of the sources. Their ages are fairly representative of the general population of the prison.

AGES OF SOURCES	NUMBER
25 - 30	five
20 - 25	two
30 - 35	two
35 - 40	one
45 - 50	one

The ethnicity of the sources also generally represents the ethnic composition of the prison population.

ETHNICITY OF SOURCES	NUMBER
Chicana	4
White	3
Black	3
Indian	1

Each of the eleven sources had been convicted of a

serious crime. I have clustered these crimes into four categories. I have listed anyone who had killed another person as murder, with two exceptions. The first exception is the category of a drug related offense for addicts. This was the way prisoners designated drug addicts regardless of their charge. To some extent this is true for alcoholics also. The second exception was the case of child abuse. In this case the result for the victim was death, but child abuse because of its nature had a different connotation to prisoners. Of these eleven women, five actually told me they had killed someone.

CHARGE OF SOURCES	NUMBER
Child Abuse	2
Drugs	4
Murder	3
Use of Deadly Weapon	2

There were no prisoners convicted of shoplifting, check forging or embezzeling among the sources. None of these women were charged with the typical "feminine" crimes. However, three of the eleven spoke to me of their experiences as prostitutes which is, of course, a crime for which historically only females have been convicted.

With respect to their involvement in prison interaction,

three could be called squares, four could be called inmates, and four are convicts.⁶

Of the eleven, four told me of having sexual relations with some other woman prisoner. Two of the four also told me of having had lesbian relationships outside of prison.

Eight of the eleven women were involved in an ongoing relationship with a man. Of these, four men were also prisoners.

These were the sources who are actually responsible for this account. My description of them does not give a complete picture. However, with the goal of covering up their real identities, I have changed all of their names. One of these sources, to be known as Judy, warned me, "Be sure to change the names to protect the innocent." Then she laughed, "Of course, if we're in here, we're not innocent, are we?"

Inmate Records

No attempt was ever made to secure the inmate's official record or jacket. This too, may prove to be a valuable source of information to other investigations of women's prisons. However, I did not pursue it for several reasons. To do so would have involved **stepping** out of my role as friend and moving into the role of an

"official". I believe my role as friend generated more valuable information. The data of official records can be generated by anyone without intimate knowledge of the group. Yet intimate knowledge of the group is more difficult to establish, and it seemed to me, too valuable to be jeopardized for the less specialized knowledge of official records.

Also, I did not want to have information about the prisoners to which none of the other women had access. I did not want to have this potential power nor for anyone to believe I did. Such information would have made friendships much more difficult to manage since the women might have felt exposed. Furthermore, since the role I established precluded close relationships with the administrators, I did not wish to become indebted to them. Once again, I fitted myself into the expectations of the group. I felt it was not worth the risk to step outside my role and spend time with the administrator for this kind of data.⁷ For this reason the classifications which I make of the prisoners are based on the knowledge this group has of them, not on any official documentation.

The Role

Throughout the data collection I was repeatedly reminded of the necessity for maintaining my own identity (Wax, 1971,

p. 48). Each time I became familiar with a prisoner who was not a part of the original Human Relations Class, I was asked, "Who are you?" I soon recognized this question for its multi-layered meaning in interaction. It meant, "What is your name?" "What are you doing here?" But, more importantly, "Whose side are you on?" Over and over I heard myself introduced by prisoners as "teacher" long after the course was finished and even by those who had not participated. This was how I was generally known. From that vantage, I was seen as a person with access to officialdom, but without ties to it. I was asked to write recommendations for parole hearings, to make phone calls to officials, for help in locating jobs, for advice in dealing with various bureaucracies. I did what I could. Through many hours of interaction I came to be known to eleven of the prisoners as a friend. This was how I was addressed by these women in cards, letters and notes I have received from them. This was the second part of my identity in the research. The third aspect of my identity arose from the research itself. It was common knowledge that I was writing a book about women prisoners. A few took this seriously and made a point of offering explanations and demonstrations. Others seemed to forget all about it and still others may have avoided me because of it. However, among my eleven

sources, my role as researcher allowed me to ask questions which otherwise would not have been appropriate. Frequently they answered my questions and followed up with the admonition, "but people don't ask that."

Phases

The research moved through five phases. Each of them shaded into the next. However, the end of each phase was marked by some singular event which made me aware that I had entered a new phase in my role as researcher (Oleson and Whitaker, 1979, p. 384).

TIME	GOAL	ROLE	METHOD
June-August	Gaining Access	Outsider	Observer
Sept.-Oct.	Establishing a role	Teacher	Observer/Participant
Oct.-Nov.	Expanding the role	Teacher/ Friend	Participant/Observer
December	Changing the role	Friend	Participant
Dec. 26	Leaving the field	Outside Friend	Analyst

June-August, Phase One, Gaining Access, Outsider

In the initial phase I prepared to enter the field and actually began the project. I met the director of corrections for the State of New Mexico in June, 1978.

He allowed me access to any state prison for the purpose of doing participant observation research. However, access to the actual setting was granted by the administration of the W.H.U. I met the supervisor and two of the matrons on my first visit. The three of them voiced approval of my research plan and a tentative schedule was arranged.

The first meetings I had with prisoners came during the tour I was given by the administrator. My encounters during this phase were surface ones. Later, I came to announce myself, the class in Human Relations, and my research to the women at an evening mandatory meeting. The administrator was not present, and I was openly questioned about my relationship to him.

The next week, classes began. I began to move into the role of teacher. Finally I realized I had entered another phase when the administrator came to class unexpectedly, although it had been agreed that none of the administration would attend classes.

This event gave me an opportunity to declare myself as squarely on the side of prisoners in preferring classes without supervision. Later I was told, "after that night, we knew you were o.k."

Sept.-Oct. Phase Two, Establishing a Role, Teacher

Gradually the number of participants in the class

settled at about ten members. Eventually eight received certificates from the Continuing Education and Community Services Department of the University of New Mexico, for their full participation. These ten class members served as a panel for discussion, with myself as moderator.

I kept explicit notes on test results and written answers, as well as on material covered and discussions taking place. My contributions involved lectures in applied social psychology. Topics such as sex roles, helping behavior, aggression, self-concept, conformity, etc., were covered. I tested their feelings and opinions on these subjects in various ways, using pencil and paper quizzes, unobtrusive methods, such as charades, and often with direct questions. Gradually I found myself gaining the confidence of the women.

The third phase began when a class member received some very bad news. I went to the W.H.U. to visit and cheer her up. She was serving as driver that day and I went along to pick up prisoners on work and school releases. This was my first opportunity to simply be around outside of class time and was the beginning of my friendship with Sonia.

Oct. - Nov. Phase Three, Expanding the Role, Teacher/Friend

I began dropping in at the W.H.U. for visits with members

on days when the class did not meet. The administration asked no questions of me and did not restrict my visits in any way. The person in charge welcomed me on my arrival and seldom paid any further attention to me after that.

After the class was finished, I began visiting at least three or four times during each week. I began to build relationships with people I had not known as a teacher. I played board games, or just sat and smoked and talked. I came to feel particularly accepted by a social circle of four women while maintaining ties with all of the other sources I had come to know.

The event which demonstrated to me the extent of my role immersion occurred the day I arrived to find four of my friends quiet and withdrawn. I believed that they were all trying to get rid of me, and became upset and anxious. I decided that I had to ask each one what was wrong, so that I could get to the bottom of it and set things straight. Actually, each was concerned about her own troubles. I recognized then that to some extent I had "gone native". Many times other prisoners described similar situations in which they, too, felt compelled to straighten out the situation rather than suffer the isolation.

It was during this time that I realized that by January

almost all of my sources would be paroled or transferred in the reorganization of the prison. I was determined to complete data collection early in January, and began to intensify participant observations.

December, Phase Four, Changing the Role, Friend

I began visiting the W.H.U. during every possible opportunity. As the holidays approached, I spent time there every day. I learned that the women would be transferred on December 26th and this was to be my last day for observation. Two days prior to December 26, the administrator phoned to limit my access to the W.H.U., "for my own protection." This was the event which led to the final role change.

December 26th, Phase Five, Leaving the Field, Outside Friend

The administrator requested that I phone in advance and limit my visits. The unlimited freedom to come and go as I chose was curtailed and I could visit only during specified hours.

The Data

The data of observation are unique in their variety and endless possibility for detail. For this reason, I found it necessary to focus my observations, giving them form and structure in order to determine patterns and meanings (McCall, 1978, p. 2). My directions were derived

from anthropology and I began to collect data with the goal of developing an ethnography (Spradley and McCurdy, 1972).

I was interested in the symbols, the roles, the rituals, the beliefs, the values, and the knowledge of female prisoners. It turned out that the language of prisoners held keys to many of the meanings I wanted to understand. For example when I noted that prisoners referred to themselves as locked down rather than "locked up" it led to an understanding of their view of their own relative position in society. When I found that prisoners called being convicted taking a fall it showed me how they saw themselves as arriving at this social position.

Much of my data took the form of descriptions of incidents. Some of these were unique and dramatic and serve as illustrations. Others were remarkably similar and were used to establish frequencies and patterns in the data. In addition, incidents which often served as tests validated the importance of the developing categories. An escape was an incident which illustrated and validated the importance of the concept of mothering, for example. A woman who walked away did so only a few days after her daughter was admitted to the girl's detention center next

to the W.H.U. The woman returned and later told me that knowing her daughter was there had caused so much tension in her she just had not been able to stand it.

During the research certain categories were key topics for attention. I made careful note when these categories came up. Some of these were: mothering, state agencies, roles, rules, cooperation, conflict, relationships with men, homosexuality, and sex roles. In time, these categories changed, some remained virtually empty while new ones were added as I heard them mentioned again and again. This was the case for the concept of time. I learned that whatever else prisoners might say or think about prison, the overriding meaning of incarceration was doing time.

Form

In its actual form, the data includes the following:

1. Narrative descriptions of every encounter that I had at the W.H.U. during phases one, two and three of the research.
2. Detailed descriptions of selected incidents during all phases of the research.
3. Episodes, examples and lists which give detail to each of the categories which came to be used as sensitizing concepts in the final analysis of the research.

4. Character sketches of twenty-seven inmates written for use in developing the characteristics and descriptions for the three categories of women prisoners.
5. A detailed ethnography using the following outline:
 - a. defense (beliefs)
 - b. exploitation (technology - comfort)
 - c. interaction (language - gesture)
 - d. association (stratification - status)
 - e. subsistence (work - economy)
 - f. sexuality (erotic behavior)
 - g. territoriality (boundaries - use of space)
 - h. temporality (divisions - use of time)
 - i. learning (formal - informal)
 - j. play (games - humor) (Hall, 1959, Ch. 3).
6. A chronology which sets out the order of events which transpired. It led to the designation of five research phases.
7. Transcripts of interviews with six women prisoners. Each interview was more than two hours in length and addressed twenty general questions.⁸ Despite this framework, the interviews covered a broad range of topics.

8. Writings of prisoners. These include answers to questions written during the Human Relations classes and creative writings.
9. The Who Am I? Quiz results (Kuhn and McPartland, 1954). This test to investigate the issue of identity was administered to a group of thirteen prisoners.

Research Bias

There are three basic limitations to the study:

1. lack of generalizability from such a unique setting,
2. reactivity created by the impact of the observer on the setting,
3. bias in the data due to the one-sided nature of the account.

This research report describes a very special project. In the first place, the W.H.U. was a unique prison. It was small, since there were only twenty-four women incarcerated there. It was a fairly open setting designated by the state as minimum security. I was given free access and treated with courtesy by the staff.

In the second place my objectivity as a researcher was sacrificed by the relationship established with the subjects.

In the third place the data must reflect the impact of

the researcher on the setting. My role was an active one. I participated in making the actions as well as making an account of it (Garfinkel, 1967).

In the fourth place, this is a one-sided approach. I researched the setting of prisons exclusively from the point of view of prisoners. There is another point of view, that of the administration. They are an integral part of the setting, yet ignored here.

Although this setting was unique, it remained a prison. The prisoners were restricted, their daily activities were controlled almost totally by the corrections system, they experienced a deprivation of the role of mother, and they were forced to do their time in close confinement with other women. All were convicted felons. The methodological premise involved in this research is that the more a setting is different the more one should stress the sameness.⁹ This unique prison is far from the experiences of most people, yet within it are contained patterns of behavior which are common to all women and even to all humans. Looking for these "samenesses" is one way to approach the discovery of basic social patterns.

This study may be seen as a test case. By the terms of scientific protocol, one test case is far from proof. But, by the terms of reason a test case provides insight

from which proof might be derived. This is a descriptive analysis of one case which it is hoped will generate ideas to be verified. It is not of itself a verification.

This research is also limited by reactivity. The best way to account for the impact of the investigator is replication. As a single researcher, I employed a number of tactics to minimize this bias. I tested situations by checking frequencies and commonalities. Whenever possible, I asked the same questions of many women. I did not give credibility to accounts which I could not support with other accounts or observations. I made my presence as unobtrusive as possible, trying to fit into the women's settings rather than creating my own. My goal was to earn trust rather than impose an official "right to know". For these reasons the data reflects as closely as possible the behavior of the subjects.

Finally, the data is biased in its one-sidedness. It is as accurate a description as possible from one point of view. This calls for another description from the perspective of the administration to parallel this one. The next step in generating theory would involve a careful analysis of the integration of these two perspectives in the organizational arrangement of prisons. Still, it seems clear that in establishing an accurate description

of the female prisoner one cannot take the perspective of the matron, supervisor or any other position of administration. Administrators have been viewed as much as possible from the point of view of the subjects. Theirs was not an objective description; it came from the point of view of these actresses.

Reliability and Validity

In case studies such as this, there are no quantitative measures of the methods. However, in his appraisal of The Polish Peasant in Europe and America, Blumer has given five tests for the acceptability of field research.

1. The research gives a sufficient and adequate account. It covers all the relevant categories. No important concepts are missing. The account describes all that it purports to describe.
2. The research gives an accurate and reliable description. The concepts are clear and consistent. The account describes exactly what it purports to describe.
3. The research involves a representative sample. The subjects of the research meet criteria of inclusion and all the members of the group investigated are represented by the results.
4. The informants to the research are sincere,

Sources of data give accounts which actually represent the world as they know it.

5. The interpretation is valid; the account is generalizable.¹⁰

The research at the W.H.U. met these five criteria.

Further Development

I have stressed throughout the report that this is only a beginning. The literature on women's prisons is scarce and the concepts in great need of development. All types of investigations are called for, including statistical analysis of official records and historical analysis of trends in criminality, social institutions and sex roles.

On a more micro level, it is hoped that many field studies of correctional facilities will be forthcoming to amplify these findings so that a clear picture of the impact of institutionalization on women may be derived.

¹The general program for research of this inductive type is as follows:

- a. Select the phenomenon to be investigated and list all the characteristics which can be determined.
- b. Observe selected characteristics in as much variety or as many forms as possible.
- c. Analyze the data for patterns.
- d. Formalize the patterns into abstracted theoretical statements (Reynolds, 1971).

This procedure may not have progressed systematically from step one to step four, however, this was the general format followed in generating theory from the data collected at the W.H.U.

²The label "informant" has a very negative connotation for women prisoners. No convicted woman would appreciate having herself so designated.

³Tecato is a Spanish term of unknown origin. It is used throughout the southwestern United States to designate heroin addicts who are often chicano.

⁴This very openness between myself and the prisoners caused conflict and turmoil for me. I came to fear being labelled an informer or a snitch and nervous and ill at ease whenever anyone from the administration singled me out

for attention. In the language of prisoners, I worried that I might get caught in a switch.

⁵The usual categories, married/single/divorced do not apply here. Generally it is simply known whether a woman has an old man or not. Official status is seldom discussed.

⁶These categories are explained in detail in the fourth chapter, Life in Prison.

⁷I did step outside of my role in order to arrange to tour two other institutions while I was collecting information. During one tour, the administrator of that prison told me the date of a forthcoming transfer of prisoners. This information was important to the prisoners, but was being withheld from them.

When I returned to the W.H.U., I returned to my role and quickly relayed the information to my friends who were able to make use of it along with me. I had observed other women behaving this way when they had acquired privileged information previously. In my own case, and the cases I had observed, it was a very short time until the information had spread and grown. Very soon my own position as the source was lost except to a few grateful friends.

⁸1. How did you come to be here?

2. How did you first come to think of yourself as

a convict?

3. What help did other prisoners give you at first?
4. What have you learned in prison that has helped you most?
5. Describe life in prison.
6. What did you bring with you that has served you here?
7. What have been your biggest problems?
8. What do you know that you wish you had known when you came in?
9. What are the rules here?
10. What will you take away with you from this experience?
11. What was your biggest surprise in prison?
12. What would you do if you had it to do again?
13. What words do you use in prison and not elsewhere?
14. How are you different than you were when you came in?
15. Which of your expectations for prison life were not met?
16. Which of your expectations for prison life were met?
17. What have you liked most in prison? Would you say you had fun?
18. What have you hated most in prison?
19. What is most important to a prisoner?

20. Who are the most important people here?

⁹Although Lazarsfeld originated this idea in the reverse with very different implications, it did begin with his notions about scientific procedure.

¹⁰A quote from Wellman serves to answer questions of validity better than any response of my own:

The only way to generalize is to turn the matter around and ask what is representative or characteristic of American society in its impact on the people interviewed. It is not so much as a replication of other workers that their lives ought to be a larger witness, but as focused points of human experience that can teach something about a more general problem of denial and frustration built into the social order (1977, p. 73).

In this research the focused points of human experience arise from the meanings of women in prison which serve as lessons about denial and frustration in the social order.

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The Culture of the Prison

An Ethnography

The early studies of men's prisons, in some instances, examined group life from the perspective of a sub-culture (Bowker, 1977, 1-16).

Prisoner sub-cultures were seen as dynamic. They involved normative requirements as well as intergroup relations. The entire day-to-day life style in prisons was often included in the analyses. However, the later studies of women's prisons used a perspective based on a more structured approach.

Ward and Kassebaum's work (1965) was focused on the ways in which the social structure of women's prisons differ from the social structure in prisons for men (p. 78). They based their analysis on role differentiation as a response to sexual deprivation. Such a focus limited their research to an investigation of homosexuality in women's prisons.

Giallombardo (1961) was also concerned with structures which were said to be related to community integration. This focus led her to a complex description of pseudo-families. It is clear that these "play-families" do occur with some frequency in prisons for women, but there are many exceptions (Gagnon and Simon, 1963, p. 230; Bowker, 1977, p. 86).

Actual frequency of pseudo-families has not been determined. Nor have the organizational arrangements been compared in prisons where pseudo-families exist with those in prisons where pseudo-families do not. Prisoners at the W.H.U. speculated that the size of the prison, average length of sentences and possibilities for maintaining ties with real families outside were all related to the formation of these pseudo-families.

Giallombardo's analysis does not allow for an explanation of a prison for women in which pseudo-families do not predominate. For instance, Harris describes the same sort of clannish behavior in another women's prison as a "racket" (1967, p. 83). She reports that these exclusive groups were formed to exert pressure on staff and other inmates. The members of this "racket" were said to extort favors through fear.

Chandler used the phrase "exclusive club" as an analogy for these same inclusive ties among female prisoners elsewhere (1973, p. 25). Such an exclusive club was said by Chandler to be organized around the goal of acquiring favors and contraband.

Exclusive groupings in women's prisons take a variety of forms, and often this form may be modeled after the family. However, an analysis of pseudo-families is not an

adequate description of the social life of females as prisoners.

At the W.H.U. there was no evidence of pseudo-families. There were rumors of them, but none of the women admitted to being members. Rose said that she had been a member of an exclusive clique prior to her transfer to the W.H.U., but that this prison was really too small for the development of such groups. Several ex-prisoners have also spoken of these exclusive groups to which they belonged while incarcerated. Only one of these women, a native of another state spoke of her group as a family. The rest of the women who spoke about an exclusive clique were tecatas from New Mexico. These women belonged to a sort of clan which existed inside as well as outside of the prison.

Heffernan (1972) has used the assumptions of social structure to describe women's prisons as social systems. A unitary system approach is too limiting to afford real explanation of prison social interaction (Bowker, 1977, p. 127). For this reason, Heffernan's analysis is based on an examination of three discrete sub-systems which make up the social system of women's prisons.

These sub-systems are called "the squares", "the cool", and "the life" (1972, p.12),

The systems approach is also imposed on the data rather than rising from the reality of prison life. Chapter four (Life in Prison) includes a comparison of the systems approach to group life in prison with that approach found operating at the W.H.U. Few female prisoners would agree that any one of these three foci, homosexuality, pseudo-families, or sub-systems, leads to a description of prison life as they experienced it.

Burkhart's investigation of women prisoners (1976) is based on structural questions of a different sort. She was interested in explaining the effects of incarceration and in understanding how women adapt to deprivations in the total institutions of prisons. From this focus, many major concepts were derived without the imposition of the constraints on the data which were imposed by the structural assumptions of Ward and Kassebaum, Giallombardo and Heffernan.

Returning to ideas used in earlier studies, which formed a sub-cultural perspective about men's prisons, also involves a more dynamic approach. Less of the explanation was imposed by the researchers than has generally been the case in studies about women.

A sub-cultural focus has been utilized in the present case study. This interest led to an examination of Edward Hall's ideas about the bases of culture,¹ He pointed out

that the learning of culture is primarily based on language and must be communicated to new members. He derived ten primary bases which are mainly biological and represent ten separate kinds of human activity, forms of the communication process. He called these the primary message systems. They are interactive and dynamic:

Since each is emmeshed in the others, one can start the study of culture with any one of the ten and eventually come out with a complete picture (p. 45, 1959).

The primary message systems are:

1. Interaction
2. Association
3. Subsistence
4. Bisexuality
5. Territoriality
6. Temporality
7. Learning
8. Play, Games, Fun
9. Defense
10. Exploitation

This ethnography has relied heavily on the statements and experiences of the eleven research sources. As illustrations, their experiences contribute depth and insight to a

description of prison life.

The list below describes each of the eleven sources and denotes the fictitious name by which she will be known in the ethnography and throughout the research report.

	AGE	ETHNICITY	GROUP	CHARGE
Rose	25 - 30	W/Ch	C	D
Judy	25 - 30	W	C	D
Raye	25 - 30	B	I	M
Sonia	25 - 30	W	S	CA
Ann	25 - 30	CH	C	D
Carol	35 - 40	W	S	M
Madge	45 - 50	B	I	W
Helen	20 - 25	CH	I	W
Gloria	30 - 35	CH	S	CA
Dee	20 - 25	I	I	M
Gail	30 - 35	B/Ch	C	D
		Chicana ²	Convict	Drugs
		White	Inmate	Murder
		Black	Snitch	Weapons
		Indian		Child Abuse

An Ethnography of the W.H.U.

1. Interaction lies at the hub of culture; it includes speech, writing, gesture as well as non-linguistic

forms of communication.

Some examples of argot used by prisoners at the W.H.U. will serve to introduce an examination of the special nature of the prison interaction.

The joint meant prison. It was said derisively and implied disgust with life inside such a public establishment. The walls meant the main prison. This is a very widely used term for a large prison, and did not describe the prison at Santa Fe specifically. The main prison was surrounded by a high fence rather than walls. At the W.H.U. the women simply referred to the main prison as Santa Fe. The actual city was ignored and only the prison itself was meaningful. In New Mexico, prisoners also called prison la pinta. In Spanish pinta is a blemish or scar.

Behind it referred to the real cause of an incident. Rose told me about a certain murder case by saying, "there were drugs behind it." Ann told me another prisoner was transferred from the W.H.U. behind a picture of a male prisoner which she received as contraband. The idea conveyed was of an official facade which gives a public account of incidents, but behind it was the real story which was private and known to insiders. In the latter case the prisoner was actually transferred because she lied and acted

disrespectfully to the administration, not because she received contraband.

P.C. stood for protective custody. Members of the prison administration decided to lock some women prisoners away from the others because they were believed to be creating a disturbance or because they were threatened by the rest of the prisoners. Prisoners could ask for P.C. if they were afraid of bodily harm. At the larger women's division in Santa Fe, six special lock-up cells were constantly in use for all new prisoners and also in cases of disruption and conflict among prisoners. No such security measures were present at the W.H.U. Disruptive prisoners were returned to the women's division in Santa Fe. Incidents for which prisoners had been sent to P.C. in the past still fostered long seething resentments at the W.H.U. Judy remembered that certain prisoners had threatened her while she was in Santa Fe. She had feared for her life and had asked for P.C. She believed that this had been improper behavior on her part. She said, that "a true convict never rats, and never asks for P.C." Some of the women Judy blamed were also present at the W.H.U., and years later she refused to interact with them and spoke of them as not to be trusted. Dee also felt a seething resentment because of being sent to P.C. She was ordered into lock-up by the administration,

but the other prisoners believed she had gone voluntarily. Dee's experience with P.C. had made her suspect in the eyes of the other prisoners who believed she had asked for P.C. because she had something to fear - and that meant she must have been an informer.

Cop to it meant to admit to one's actions. "If I get caught, I'll cop to it," was the same as pleading guilty. A prisoner who copped to it was considered honorable by the administration. To the prisoners copping out meant admitting guilt unnecessarily. Such behavior was thought to be a sign that the person who copped to it before she was found out was untrustworthy and should be avoided. To cop an attitude was to put on a false front. Often copping an attitude really involved covering one's true feelings. Women covered disappointment, hurt and insecurity by copping an attitude of indifference and pretending to be invulnerable.

Broads was a generic term for women. It was somewhat negative, but terms such as bitch or whore were used when a very negative feeling was being communicated. The administration preferred the designation ladies. The administrator said, "If I call them ladies, they'll act like ladies." However, the prisoners seldom referred to themselves as ladies except facetiously or in some cases to show

identification with the administration. In a few rare cases, a woman prisoner was known as a real lady. Such a woman often had economic security and behaved with charm and grace. Real ladies were both admired and respected by the other prisoners. A few older women prisoners were called Miss (name) by the others. Such a form of address was reserved for older women who were respected and was meant to show that respect. The term girls was used more often than woman. The girls was a prisoner's special group. When a prisoner spoke of the girls, she generally referred to her friends.

Girl was also a common form of address. It implied equal status between women who addressed each other as girl.

Woman was sometimes simply a general referent to females. Judy admitted that her adjustment to prison had centered around the realization that the other prisoners "were women, just like me. We're all just women." In another usage, woman meant an ideal type of female; it had very positive connotations. Being woman enough to do the right thing was considered a standard for excellence.

Forced Interaction

In the examination of the W.H.U. it was consistently clear that incarceration meant forced interaction. "Yes,

but they don't have to live with her," was the sort of statement made by prisoners to illustrate the differences between the relationship of outsiders with their fellow prisoners and their own. Forms of interaction in prison were based on the personal differences of the women, to be sure. However, personal differences were refracted through the process of forced interaction in prison.

Often women refused to take part in activities and outings because they preferred to avoid interaction with certain women who were involved. The Human Relations course was beset with conflict since some women reported that they wanted to attend but found that participating in class meant interacting with prisoners they did not trust. They believed that class discussion was, for some, a "pack of lies" and false representations. During one class session on self disclosure a heated argument developed. Helen attempted to develop a confiding relationship with a former enemy who rejected the overture coldly. In a later session, members of the class joined with Helen in ridiculing and demeaning this woman while she was not present. In a still later session, a single class member spoke up for the woman in her presence. This third party admonished the others for "not sticking together," and, "cutting women down behind their backs." Eventually the class was

divided into groups by the conflict. One group came to class only if the others were not present. This was a defense against forced interaction with despised others.

2. Associations are the orderly forms of social organization such as the orderly progression from the bottom to the leader of a pecking order. At the W.H.U. differences in status and grouping were situational. Yet, one overall view of associations based on the meaning of incarceration for the prisoner was derived.

The patternings of groupings in total institutions are to some extent based on their all inclusive nature. All the activities of the prisoners' daily lives took place in this one setting. At various times each day the W.H.U. was a place to work, or play, to sleep or pray. Each activity called forth different associations and different groupings.

In addition, prison was a completely non-voluntary total institution. For this reason, its meaning had one overriding characteristic which concerned why the prisoner was there.

If the prisoner believed she was there to be helped, she associated with those she believed were there to rehabilitate her. If she believed she was there to be punished, she did not associate with those she believed

intended to punish her. These meanings of prison, and their relation to association are the most fundamental differences which ordered the groupings made among women prisoners. However, forced associations and interactions, are definitional parts of incarceration.

Forced Associations

Forced associations are ordered by other meanings, many of which are organizational and imposed by the administration. Forced association has its own characteristics which are more formal and utilitarian. In prison, as elsewhere, a woman referred to this as "being civil".

Women who were able to avoid conflict with the other prisoners and at the same time maintain their own integrity were well respected at the W.H.U.

However, in prison forced associations are much more common than in life outside the institution. They are perhaps made more tenuous by the different values toward prison as help or punishment which various prisoners held. As a result, other adaptations added to the culture to manage the strain of forced associations.

There was gossip which is a form of building support for self. In prison it was also conducive to ordering of groups. One had to be careful with whom one shared critical information, or it might return to the source of the criticism. In prison, one "talked" with only only a small

circle, that was ~~the~~ the number of people one trusted. For some, there was no circle at all. On the other hand, there were others who "talked" to almost anyone. A woman who "talked too much" was suspect.

Subjects of gossip included the prisoners' cleanliness and hygiene, their relationships, their trustworthiness, their past lives, their future potentials and various personal idiosyncracies. Gossip was treated as real and important. If a prisoner suspected that another woman had said something negative about her, she was likely to confront the gossipier and demand an explanation or restitution. Failure to confront might be construed as admission that the gossip was true by the rest of the prisoners.

Ridicule was also used to deal with forced association. For example, one prisoner was called Sasquach by some of the others because of her size. She openly acknowledged this nickname, yet it was used by some to show their social distance from her. She was convicted of child abuse herself and had married a male prisoner convicted of child molesting. These charges caused some of the prisoners to despise her. Calling her Sasquach was really intended not so much as an insult, but rather to communicate to others that the speaker was not actually

involved with such a person.

For a time, Madge was called Christmas openly. Other prisoners resented waiting for this one woman who was consistently late. During a shopping trip Madge's lateness had caused trouble for some of the others. The whole group was late in returning because they had waited for Madge. The prisoners showed their disapproval with this name.

There was silence. Women who had been incarcerated together stopped speaking to each other for extended lengths of time. This happened when both had arrived at the conclusion that association between them was impossible, but incarceration forced them into the same space. Sometimes there was a sort of mutual respect. Each one appreciated the other simply, "staying out of my face."

When prisoners were about to be released, there was often a process of putting an end to associations which took place before the women left the W.H.U. Women had to say "good-bye" to people with whom they had associated for a long time. During this pre-release period, women who had not spoken to each other for years out of enmity acknowledged their mutual regard and exchanged good wishes. Since the forced association was being broken,

silence was no longer necessary.

At other times, silence was unbearable. It was the symbol of status degradation and loss of social support.

When a prisoner was given the "silent treatment" she was ignored and isolated. Silence was used as a sanction by the group; not speaking showed utter disdain. Rose refused to even acknowledge one of the other prisoners. She spoke to others in the room to communicate to this woman without addressing her personally. Rose never threatened or openly insulted the other woman, but because of the "silent treatment" she avoided Rose and there was no open conflict between them. Gail used silence to show another prisoner her disdain for her behavior. Gail had been friends with the woman until the woman was believed to have informed on others to avoid trouble for herself over illegal phone calls. Although Gail was not personally involved in the incident, she disapproved of the woman's behavior. There was never open conflict between them, Gail simply ignored the woman from that time on. The meaning was clear to the other woman, who soon came to avoid Gail completely.

Still another form of silence was more personal. In prison, privacy is minimal. In Goffman's terms, there was no back stage (1959, p.134). For this reason, oppor-

tunities to manage one's emotions alone before facing an audience are limited. Prisoners learned to "suffer in silence" rather than risk exposure.

There was violence. Sometimes the tension of forced association led to aggressive attacks. Many times in women's prisons these were verbal. Sometimes they took the guise of a game, other times they were direct and serious, still others were emotional and irrational.

Less frequently the violence was physical, fraught with emotion, usually short lived and receding quickly into verbal aggression. No such physical assaults were personally witnessed. Women said that they usually happened as a result of talk, "gossip mostly".

Physical assaults which had taken place in the past, were inevitably reported as having sprung from something a prisoner had said. Gossip and silence were important sanctions in this culture; they had a potential for arousing strong emotional response. Sometimes there had been physical fights between two women over gossip and accusations. These were said to take place infrequently at the W.H.U. In other cases several women were reported to have jumped a single prisoner to "teach her a lesson", or "to shut her mouth". No one was said to have been jumped at W.H.U., but some cases were described at the

larger women's division in Santa Fe. Sonia, for one, had been jumped there because the rest of the women believed she was an informer. None of the incidents of physical violence which were described were connected to homosexuality. None of the eleven sources knew of violent attacks which had taken place because of homosexual jealousy or to coerce homosexual relations. This contrasts with the central position homosexuality is usually given in explanations of violence in prison (Chandler, 1973, p.30).

There is no doubt that violence in prison was seldom directed at the main source of the frustration, the incarcerated state. However, that is not to say it was meaningless. The very real sources of frustrations were experienced in forced associations and interactions among women with separate meanings for the situation.

3. Subsistence includes meeting the basic life requirements; obtaining a living. In most cultures this requires work. In prison the basic life requirements were provided; women work for other reasons (Goffman, 1961, p.11). Some work to cooperate, some work to conform, others work because the boredom of not working is more aversive than the labor. A rare few refuse to work. In a total institution, these few are disruptive. Just as Merton noted that retreatist responses to goal strain were degraded by the

larger society. Open refusers are a threat to the operation of the whole system, since others might be swayed by them, (1957, p.132).

Subsistence at the W.H.U. was based on the twenty-five cents per hour, no more than fifty dollars per month and four cartons of cigarettes paid to the prisoners by the state. A few women were on work and school release with extra income. Income was used on a variety of basic goods; food, clothing and cigarettes, as well as shelter.

Food was provided by the institution. Sometimes food was donated by charitable groups and family members. But, the women also used their income to buy treats and special food that the institutional diet did not provide,

At the W.H.U. "getting by" often involved secondary adjustments concerned with acquiring food. These adaptations did not directly challenge the administration, but allowed inmates to obtain forbidden satisfactions or to obtain permitted ones by forbidden means (Goffman, 1961, p.54). Ways of obtaining food concerned three different types of activities.

Women had learned ways of getting extra food from the main kitchen while working there. They were sometimes

allowed to keep left-overs and to prepare extras. At times extra food was carried from the kitchen to other prisoners. Some women carried food back to the W.H.U. for women who did not wish to go to the dining hall. It was considered preferable to eat without going to the dining hall. Carrying a tray of food to another woman prisoner was a way of repaying favors and cementing relationships.

When occasions for celebration arose, the prisoners prepared special food to add to the festivities. Carol described how thrilled she had been when her friends secretly baked her a birthday cake. Rose organized a Christmas party for the group. A delicious buffet was prepared for this party. The food was supplied by the resourcefulness and generosity of the prisoners. The women were especially proud of a large decorated cake they had managed to order from a local bakery.

Food was also given to the prisoners as gifts. Sometimes these gifts were charity from merchants or social organizations. Such donations usually included cakes, candy or fruit. Other food was given to the prisoners by their visitors. This supply of food was often used in trades or was expected to be shared between friends.

Since food was the center of many of the secondary adjustments made by the prisoners, it was not surprising

that many of them had gained weight during incarceration. Women spoke of weight gain while doing time as a common problem. Of the eleven sources, seven mentioned gaining weight, lack of clothing to fit their larger size, and loss of self-esteem because of this change in their appearance, as problems of prison life for them.

Although traditional notions of culture do not include cigarettes as one of the bases for subsistence, in prison culture cigarettes were basic. However, this was not a scarce resource. There was a steady supply of cigarettes from those willing to work on Saturdays.

Cigarettes were sometimes the base for trades, deals and bets. Extra cigarettes were added to the subsistence since prisoners who did not smoke might work on Saturday for cigarettes to trade, or to pay debts. Of the eleven sources, only one did not smoke but she often worked for cigarettes around Christmas time, nonetheless.

Other cartons were purchased through the institution's canteen. Canteen prices were slightly lower than retail, but only a limited number of brands were available.

Shelter was another base for subsistence partially provided by the system. Each person was given a bed and a dresser, closet space, and so on. However, those on work release paid \$105 per month for their quarters, This was

galling to the women and some used this as legitimation for avoiding work release. "Why should I pay them to live in the joint?" they asked.

Clothing had come to be an item which the women must supply. Women were not forced to wear a state-issued wardrobe. One was provided to anyone in need; but state-issue came to be stigmatizing to the wearer. For this reason, no woman wore these clothes if she could possibly avoid it.

Sometimes clothes were acquired by trades between prisoners. When special occasions arose such as parole hearings, job interviews, or visits, women borrowed clothing to add to their public image. Such important occasions led to arrangements between women who otherwise refused to associate. Their common size overcame other, less important, differences at that time.

Much of the barter and exchange of the prison economy was based on the problem of a subsistence neither totally controlled by the institution nor completely open to the choice of the prisoner.

4. Bisexuality refers to sexual reproduction and differentiation of both form and function along sex lines. Prison culture is distorted by its organization which separates sexes, while being situated in a society in

which union of the two sexes is the norm. Goffman (1961) has said that total institutions destroy family life. A prison for women may carry familial destruction to the extreme. The group life is likely to be controlled by men, but only women live in the setting. Virtually half of the family roles, male roles, may be excluded, except for the patriarchal role. This role of the superintendent or guard may be filled in a matriarchal way as well. Still the state system is not a matriarchal system; a state prison for women is part of that system controlled by men, yet the prison culture is made up of women. This was a distortion of traditional family life. This distortion added to the disculturation experienced by the prisoner.

Sexuality itself is also a unique expression in a unisexual institution. However, to project as Ward and Kassebaum do that "homosexuality is the primary response of women in prison" (1965, p. 50) is to presume that women in prison were not socialized in the dominant culture or that women prisoners are completely isolated from it.

Women's prisons are populated by members of a culture at large where sexuality is socialized as heterosexuality. Homosexual institutional life makes homosexuality more likely, perhaps. However, life in prison involved a complex round of relationships. Incarceration generally followed

a period of life crisis for the prisoner; she was deprived of family and freedom. Control of her life was taken from her and often she found her treatment by the administration to be arbitrary and unfair. Women must adapt to these and many other critical situations arising from forced interaction and association during their period of incarceration. Homosexuality was one of many forms of adaptation, but not the principal form. Close intimate friendships and sharing "talk" were principal adaptations, yet these forms are not sexual but associational.

5. Territoriality is the technical term used by the ethnologist to describe the taking possession, use and defense of a territory. In prison, space was clearly divided between inside and outside. Inside was divided into areas in part by activities performed there, people who were frequently found there, and space available. Some boundaries were shifting, as when a group of women monopolized the television set, or others gathered in one room to sew.

Sometimes a specific group of prisoners frequented a certain room, and the rest of the population avoided it.

The small room farthest from the office, on the first floor of the W,H,U. was one example of such a use of

territory. Women were not permitted to smoke upstairs, and this small, former kitchen was as private from the administration as possible for sitting, smoking and visiting. In this room only a few women were really welcomed. Others came in and out, but were met with stares and silence. Most of the women who frequented this room were junkies, but the group was shifting and dynamic. Changes were made as women were paroled and released and different friendships were made and broken. New members were invited into the circle by an older member. If a potential new member was accepted, the rest of the group would go on with gossip or passing information. If the new member was not accepted, members would refuse to talk in front of her. In extreme cases, when the new member was despised, old members would leave the kitchen each time she spent any time there.

Other prisoners felt uncomfortable in this territory, although it was sometimes necessary to go there for water, coffee, the ironing board, etc. Gloria told me, "I stay out of there. I don't want to know what's going on in there."

Boundaries were temporary at the W.H.U. as groups realigned and used other space. Other boundaries were fixed. For example, the office remained designated as

administrations territory. For another example each woman was assigned to a specific bed in a specific room. That remained her territory unless she was assigned to another bed by the administrator. The use of the rest of the territory was constantly changing and being realigned as prisoners left and new prisoners arrived, as activities and seasons changed, and as new relationships were developed.

6. Temporality has to do with the cycles and rhythms of life. Specifically it refers to the divisions in the life process itself. This factor was of major importance in the culture of women prisoners since the culture itself was based on doing time and was temporary. In prison, commitment to the institution was given in terms of time. One who was a prisoner was sorted and classified in terms of time, and other cultural components were tied together and enmeshed with relation to time. Time in prison was concrete, not abstract. It was a cultural element which distorted the other elements because of its pervasive control.

7. Learning is adapting to environmental changes. The process of learning the culture of a woman's prison was seldom done in advance. Many women told me, "I didn't know what to expect." The day of arrival at the W. H. J. was stressful for the new prisoner. She had grown accustomed

to prison life, to some extent, from her experiences at the larger women's division. She often left a circle of friends behind there. Here she must accustom herself to a new institutional regime and to a different circle of associates. Failure to adapt properly meant return to poorer living conditions in the prison at Santa Fe. Getting sent back also meant longer incarceration. A report was included in the prisoner's record to be used against her at her parole hearing.

The women who were already living at the W.H.U. had often known the arriving prisoner from experiences together when both were incarcerated at Santa Fe. Sometimes friends who had been separated for a long time found themselves reunited, but also enemies got back together again as well. One prisoner, on the night of her arrival reported, "I'm scared. I don't know what's going on in this place. This will take getting used to."

Women prisoners who didn't know what to expect when they were first incarcerated were ~~more~~ knowledgeable the second or third time they were convicted. Those with more experience taught those who wanted to know the general theory they had developed for "getting by".

Raye was particularly helpful to a prisoner new to the W.H.U. Both women were black, a minority at the

W.H.U. Raye often explained her rights to the new prisoner and told her about experiences other blacks had had there. Raye showed the new prisoner how to earn favors and to obtain rewards. She shared her goods with this new prisoner and included her in a circle of friends. In addition she talked to her about life in the streets and her experiences outside of the law. The new prisoner was younger than Raye and returned her favors with admiration and respect.

Secondary adjustments, "getting by" (Goffman, 1961 , p.55) were related to the meaning the prison had for the prisoner, punishment or rehabilitation.

The meaning of therapy was an example of this difference. All psychological treatment came from psychs in the vernacular of the prisoners. Prisoners had learned from experience that therapy was often useless and that psychs seldom understood prison life. Despite its poor reputation some of the sources attended psychological therapy meetings anyway. They had learned that a good report from a psych could be instrumental in getting a parole. However, each of the snitches reported being helped by a psych and referred to him/her in conversation as my psych. Others spoke derogatorily of the psych and laughed about what happened in therapy.

Learning was also involved in work and recreation at the W.H.U. Specific skills and techniques were taught by anyone who could demonstrate competence.

Women prisoners taught each other needlework, crafts, cooking, games, poetry, dances and other skills besides. Sometimes there was direct payment to the teacher, sometimes an exchange was worked out. Often the teacher-learner activities were only a part of a more inclusive friendship. For the most part, the learning was informal.

Some prisoners were given school release for more formal learning. This type of education was under the more direct control of the institution while informal learning was directly under the control of the prisoners. Personal control over the informal learning process was likely to add to its salience for the learner.

8. Play, games, fun and humor are a basic part of culture. Generally, these are considered to be related to the lighter side of life, to happiness. Few women would admit to being happy in prison, but almost all prisoners had fun at some times while they were incarcerated.

Parties were planned as occasions for fun at the W.H.U. The week before Christmas, most of the prisoners joined together ~~and~~ planned a Christmas party. Only one prisoner

really refused to take part. A band agreed to play and a feast was prepared. Women danced with each other and with the matrons. The guest of honor was a woman from the outside who worked at the kitchen with the prisoners. She was given a beautifully wrapped gift which turned out to be huge, red, bikini panties. The honored guest paraded about showing them off and adding to the hilarity. The five men in the band also took part in the fun with jokes, compliments and crazy music. Two of the prisoners were urged to sing with the band. One did very well and was given a jovial ovation. Other quick, secret parties to share contraband were also described as fun. These gatherings usually involved alcohol, and sometimes a small amount of marijuana was obtained. Beneath the gaiety at parties, another current was always present though. It was clear that these parties were still taking place in prison; the women remained prisoners.

Fun in prison may have been distorted by the institutional setting, but within their own person-to-person interaction, women prisoners commonly had joking relationships, and certain women commonly took the role of clown to entertain the others just as is common in society outside.

One of the women at the W.H.U. was called Baby by all her friends. She acquired the name because of the fun she

caused by imitating a baby. Because she was large, strong and usually quiet, her imitation of an infant always brought laughs. Baby sometimes presented herself in silly clothes and hairstyles, too. Her antics were well appreciated by her friends. Calling her Baby showed their affection for her.

Jokes which circulated among the women at the W.H.U. also added bits of fun. Humorous stories and accounts of incidents were shared throughout the prison, and prisoners who learned new stories hurried to share their enjoyment with their circle of friends.

Many funny stories were passed around about a dog named Fur Brain who lived at the W.H.U. He was a mangy old mutt, but a good watch dog and a friend. His stupidity and bad manners were all a part of the joke. He was a pet that added humor to the lives of the prisoners.

Games at the W.H.U. ranged from silly word twisting to complicated board games, such as Monopoly, or Scrabble. Another game which many enjoyed was pool. These games did not involve gambling for money, although sometimes losers were forced to perform some service for winners.

In prison, as elsewhere, humor was also a weapon. Barbed remarks which amused others had higher potential for gaining support from the audience than barbed remarks

which had no double entendre involved.

Many of these insults were directed at members of the administration. Women laughed about their appearances, and their behavior and made up stories about crazy things they might do on the outside. One of the members of the administration had a pronounced southern accent. The women amused each other by quoting him and adding an outrageous drawl. One prisoner was especially clever at her imitation. The others encouraged her by frequently asking her to tell them, "What did Fred say today?" Humor was one method of dealing with status differences between prisoners and administration.

9. Defense of the culture involves protection against hostile forces of nature and humanity as well. The ways which women prisoners handled defense were quite varied. Some protected themselves from the hostility of prison life by recourse to the legal system. Most could not afford this defense and could only hope to gain restitution after they were released.

Sonia was involved in an auto accident while serving as driver. She planned to sue the state of New Mexico for compensation. She wrote letters to various officials to state her case. When her parole hearing grew closer, she decided to stop threatening to sue until she was released.

She was afraid that her legal action might be used against her at her parole hearing.

Raye planned to sue the state because of a delay between the day when parole was granted and her actual release. She knew that other states did not have this delay; she believed it was illegal for the state to continue to hold her after parole had been granted. She was forced to wait over three weeks before being allowed to go home. During that time she never knew when she would be allowed to leave. She described her irritation and frustration since she was unsure if she would actually get the Christmas reunion with her daughter that she desperately wanted. However, she was forced to postpone the suit since she had no money to hire a lawyer, and did not want to jeopardize her chances of release even further.

Other prisoners turned to religion and particularly Christian ideas as defenses against their low status. Still others turned to Alcoholics Anonymous, Drug Rehabilitation Groups or Psychological Counseling to defend themselves from the dehumanizing process of incarceration.

Medicine was also seen as a defense in some instances. However, access to medicine was generally far from the direct control of the prisoner herself. Lack of control detracted from its meaning as a personal defense,

Medicine was acquired only by asking a member of the administration for it. The prisoner could obtain over the counter products and her own prescription medicine by personal request only. When further medical attention was required, the services of a nurse were sometimes available. If a doctor's office visit or laboratory tests were necessary, these were scheduled as expedient. Rose developed a noticeable limp because of pain in her foot. She waited for weeks before medical attention could be arranged. Finally she went to a clinic for treatment, but the doctor could not see her. She returned to the W.H.U. after simply sitting and waiting in the clinic for three hours. She was never given another appointment.

Another prisoner was denied access to necessary laboratory tests indefinitely because she was a new prisoner. She was not allowed to leave the W.H.U. unescorted, and there was no efficient way to arrange for her trip to the medical center.

Some defenses could generally be seen as protection from the impersonal forces of the State. Defenses which acted as protection from other prisoners and the administration were of another sort. These are mentioned in the discussion of forced association and interaction. Generally women prisoners defended themselves from each

other with the use of talk. Humor and joking could also become defensive behaviors to prevent aggression or retribution. Sometimes the best defense was a good offense, of course. Women prisoners sometimes took this line. By making themselves completely obnoxious to a specific prisoner or member of the administration they intended to defend themselves from forced association and interaction in the future.

10. Exploitation involves extensions of the body. Prisoners developed tools and instruments to maximize the use of the environment. This included all the materials which were used as resources in the culture.

In prison culture some of these materials were linked to the prisoner's life outside the institution and some to life inside. The tools of exploitation were often under the control of the administration, but were sometimes the result of complex exchanges between prisoners.

The tools of exploitation in the prisoners' culture were developed to contribute to comfort and aid in adapting to prison life. These tools may be divided into five categories.

Material goods were extremely varied. Prisoners used clothes, cosmetics, appliances, food, and decorative objects to maximize their use of their environment,

Information was an important tool and could be used to a prisoner's advantage in arranging exchanges and securing favors. Women prisoners used information about the corrections system, the administration of the W.H.U. as well as personal information about the prisoners themselves.

Skills which were exploited at the W.H.U. were related to various facets of day to day life; cooking, housekeeping, recreation, and of course, obtaining eventual release. Specialized skills such as hair dressing, dress making, typing and so on could be exchanged to the advantage of the woman who possessed this ability.

Association was important since the support of friends was often instrumental in obtaining the favors or goods the prisoners wanted. Women prisoners spoke up for their associates to the administration, shared resources, and provided emotional support. In addition, Helen reported, "I really don't have to worry about trouble from the others. I know that my friends wouldn't let anybody f__k me over. They have told me they'll stand behind me."

Outside Contacts and gifts provided the prisoners with extra resources that they could not acquire by their own efforts and meager pay. Visits with people from outside

also added to self esteem, since they showed that the woman was not completely cut off from the rest of society. In addition, outside visitors were also sources of contraband. Various items not permitted to the prisoners in this institution were provided by visitors both wittingly and unwittingly.

Sykes very clearly identified exploitation as a "central element in prison life (1958)." In a larger perspective it is a central element of human life. However, exploitation in prison had at its core the conflict between the values of rehabilitation and punishment. In addition, exploitation was framed within a code of behavior which was a group statement of ethics in a coercive total institution.

Footnotes

¹From The Silent Language by Edward T. Hall, 1959, New York: Fawcett World Library. This discussion is taken directly from Chapter Three, "The Vocabulary of Culture," pp. 42-62.

²Two of the convicts were not clearly members of any one ethnic group. Their heritages were mixed, but their affiliations with tecatos began in their lives on the streets of a "barrio" and continued in prison.

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Life In Prison

Social Groups - Part One

In her analysis of women's prisons, Heffernan identified three interlocking social systems. The first of these she called "squares"; these women follow conventional values. The second sub-system was called "cools".

Cools are manipulative followers of situational values. The third group are those in "the life." These women are professional criminals who follow negative or counter-conventional values (1972). This excellent analysis from the systems perspective leaves something to be desired in terms of explanation. It is imposed rather than arising from the lives of the actresses. Women prisoners saw themselves somewhat differently and behaved according to their own expectations which varied in ways not predicted by Heffernan's description.

Judy was the only prisoner at the W.H.U. heard using the term "squares". She referred to a group of one-term offenders who identified with the administration. Other prisoners seemed confused by the term "squares". In some cases this group was called the baby killers. In other instances a more inclusive term, snitch was used to designate women with conventional values who aligned themselves with the administration and spoke openly with them,

This group was not static. Women who were thought to be snitches when they first entered prison sometimes earned the trust of others. The opposite was also true. Women came to be thought of as snitches during their sentences when at first they had not been.

The term "cool" was not used by prisoners in any way to designate a group of prisoners. Instead, some of the women incarcerated for drug related offenses referred to the rest of the prisoners as inmates. Frequently they estimated that inmates made up sixty percent of the prison population. It was a small proportion of this group of inmates which was derogatorily known as snitches.

The term "the life" was used at the W.H.U. However, this designation referred only to involvement in the profession of prostitution. It did not describe social groupings or associations. At this prison, professional criminals were known as convicts, or sometimes stone convicts. The adjective stone was used to denote the greatest possible extreme. There were administrators described as stone cops, and prisoners described as stone convicts. The spanish term tecata also was used by these women in self designation. Other prisoners often called this group the junkies. The former criminal life styles of these convicts had generally centered around use and traffic in narcotics. These women

may have been convicted on a variety of charges, but the explanation for the crime generally involved acquiring illegal drugs.

Ted Davidson described the inmate culture at San Quentin from an anthropological perspective (1974). His analysis is directed from the point of view of chicano prisoners. He described the prison culture as made up of two opposing forces known as inmates and convicts. He cited historical changes in the system of corrections as contributing to the development of these two forces. The convicts were similar to those in "the life" as described by Heffernan. They were cohesive and had developed a strong commitment to counter-conventional values. This was derived from the historical notion of prisons as places for punishment. Convicts believed themselves to be incarcerated as punishment for their lack of conformity. They saw the process as unfair and that cooperation with such an immoral system was unethical and degrading.

Inmates, on the other hand, were the products of the system of prisons which they knew has been legitimated to "correct" them. They realized that this system was mistaken and ineffective, but they cooperated with it to serve their own ends. They did not believe that the system was immoral. Rather they simply thought of it as wrong. Thus the convicts and inmates were really opposing ethical

systems.

According to Davidson, convicts believed inmates were untrustworthy and likely to "bring down trouble": Both convicts and inmates generally believe they are "being punished, not rehabilitated" and most of them will at least superficially "play the game" of becoming rehabilitated for the staff. However, an inmate may individually go much farther to better his own position (snitching) even though it might be detrimental to another prisoner. In contrast, convicts display a strong unity in opposition to the staff, especially when important, covert prisoner activities are involved. A convict is not a snitch (1974, VI).

By way of comparison with Heffernan's analysis of women's prisons, Davidson's two groups resemble "the cools" and "the lifes". Inmates follow situational values and convicts follow counter-conventional values. Davidson did not mention a group which followed conventional values. From his analysis, we could predict that the historical changes in prisons would have also led to a group for whom the meaning of prison was rehabilitation. There was likely to be a group who believed that they

who adapt situational values to direct their lives while they are in prison. For the third group I have retained Davidson's use of the word convict. Although Ward and Kassebaum described self designation as "convict" as the ultimate in self degradation (1965, p.9) at the W.H.U. calling oneself a convict meant self inclusion in a group of good people.

Convicts

Davidson's analysis from the point of view of the convict is an excellent one, although it neglects the other perspectives which make up the prisoner culture. At San Quentin, where Davidson's research was done, convicts are chicanos in the majority. Homeboys by Joan Moore, et al., (1979) describes the "barrio" life-style and the importance of heroin in the environment of these chicano convicts in San Quentin. Pedro David (1974) has also described the life experiences of those "barrio" residents in New Mexico involved in heroin and ethnic group life. This life style is consistent with a belief that the criminal justice system is punishing. Chicanos as prisoners, particularly those convicted because they were heroin addicts, are likely to believe that cooperation with the corrections system is immoral.

The convicts at the W.H.U. were not all chicanas, but

they were by far the majority. Whites were sometimes accepted, and rarely blacks.

Snitches

Convicts formed one end of the continuum at the W.H.U. At the other extreme, there were women who belonged to a clearly identifiable, while not tightly knit group. These were the snitches. In terms of values and meanings for the actor, these were the prisoners who believed that the system of criminal justice had a goal of rehabilitation. At the W.H.U. these were women who cooperated with the system because they identified with its goal. These women were not always grouped because of similar backgrounds and life experiences as was the case for the convicts.

Snitches were grouped by the other prisoners because of their identifications with the administration and willingness to cooperate with the administration rather than prisoners. Many of these women were convicted for child abuse leading to death. They were known at times by other prisoners as baby killers. Such women were considered to be abhorrent and disgusting by the convicts. Rarely did a child abuser and convict become friends. In such cases, the child abuser must have some way of overcoming the heinous nature of the crime in the prisoner

culture. Women who had been convicted for child abuse were deprived of all social support for their identity. These women were despised and called "sick". Such a position made it likely that treatment would be the outcome sought by child abusers, and that their behavior would support the system which had the moral goal of rehabilitation.

Inmates

The middle group, inmates with situational values were more diverse and difficult to describe. These were inmates who were chicana, black, white and indian. Some of these women were arrested for charges stemming from drug abuse, but they had not been a part of the los tecatos life-style in the "barrio" prior to their arrest. Inmates were also convicted of charges related to alcohol abuse, theft and homicide. Inmates were likely to be serving shorter sentences than snitches or convicts. Snitches sometimes served longer sentences because their crimes were dramatic and brought stronger social sanctions. Convicts received longer sentences due to the recidivistic nature of crimes related to narcotics. Convicts were also more likely to be denied parole, since they were generally considered to be poor parole risks. Sometimes inmates were thus known as short timers to the rest of the prisoners.

Most of the inmates at the W.H.U. had never served time for a felony conviction before. However, most of them had been detained at county jails or girls' detention centers on previous charges and misdemeanors. Their prior life styles had often included conflicts with the police and the legal system and a history of confrontations and arrests.

Inmates formed few cohesive associations. These were prisoners with individualistic outlooks. They saw the system as neither moral, nor immoral, but simply wrong. Their behavior was a response to bureaucratic systems of state corrections.

A quote from an inmate published by Burkhart describes the individualizing and atomizing effect of the bureaucratic prison:

So there are these petty things forced on people's minds and it's hard to get organized around bigger issues when these little ones keep you worrying all the time (.1976, p.301).

Or, as Dee described it in the prison journal she contributed to the research:

What kind of an institution is this? A cross between a reform school and a mental institution which fosters and feeds resentment and hate

and petty strife,

Case Studies

Three separate "character sketches" will help to describe these three responses. Each of the following is the case study of a real woman.

These sketches are descriptions of actual persons derived from extended interviews. They are intended to characterize each of the groups in a more personal way. These three case studies are illustrations of the differences in values to be found among women prisoners. All three women are chicanas; their ethnicity does not account for the differences in values among them.

In these descriptions, seven areas are examined. Each of these areas serve as focal points for the differences in meaning of prison for the three groups. These areas also serve to emphasize those meanings for prison which were common for all women prisoners whether they were snitches, inmates, or convicts.

The seven areas of analysis are:

1. charge,
2. relationship with males,
3. relationship with family,
4. early experiences in prison,
5. relationships with other prisoners,

6. relationships with administration, and
7. problems of prison life.

Each of these case studies is presented in the words of the prisoner whenever possible. They were not derived from official records or documented evidence. Instead they reflect the meanings the three prisoners had for their situations.

Gloria - A Snitch

Gloria is a chicana, aged thirty-three. She is an extremely attractive woman, well groomed and well dressed. Her clothes have been fitting a little tight lately, though, she says. She adds that she gained weight when she tried to quit smoking. She has taken up smoking again, and managed to lose some of the excess weight, but she still describes herself as "a little heavy."

Gloria is serving a ten to fifty year sentence for child abuse. She was accused of beating a seventeen-month old stepdaughter to death. She says she was convicted on circumstantial evidence because of the terrible publicity given the case in the newspapers. She repeatedly insists that she loved the child and never harmed her. She believes the child died from internal injuries, a chematoma. She does not know what caused it and really did not even know there was anything wrong with the little girl.

A public defender handled Gloria's case. She knows he did not really try to defend her. In fact she thinks she never even had a chance in court. Her sentence is ten to fifty years. She must serve at least one third of the ten years before she will be eligible for parole.

Gloria has two children, a girl and a boy. Her daughter is eleven years old. She was born out of wedlock and was the result of forced intercourse. Gloria's mother and aunt tried to convince her to get an abortion, but she refused. Now she has a special place in her heart for this child, "not just because she came out of a rape, but because she wouldn't even be alive if I'd listened to them."

Gloria's son is five. He was the child of a common-law arrangement she had with a "ladies' man". She never married this man because she did not want to risk a divorce. For her, marriage is sacred because of her Catholic religion. Breaking up with him was just as hard as a divorce, but her sister caught him out with another woman. Gloria could not imagine putting up with that. This man tried to take custody of his son after her conviction. Gloria knows he cannot really provide for the little boy. The children stay with her parents. She says she believes her son will grow up to be protective of her. "He's very

romantic. I think he's the type to be a 'big man' and be real close to his mom."

At the time of her arrest, Gloria had been married for one month. She kept her stepdaughter for less than one month. She testified, "She loved me and took to me right away. I have always loved children whether they were mine or not. I have always gotten along with children; I have that yearning for babies all the time...There's a lot of things I'll just never know about the child. I dream about her once in a while, and to me, she's alive in my dreams."

Gloria and her husband went their separate ways right after their arrests. Their cases were separate. Gloria could not ask her family for thousands of dollars in legal fees, so she was represented by a public defender. She had no guilty conscience and really did not believe she would be found guilty. But, she says, "I was the odd-ball, the stepmother. The child was white and I was chicana. I was there when it happened." Her husband was able to get a private attorney. He testified that he had not seen anything and his charges were dropped. She says they were not mad or anything, they just stopped seeing each other before the trial.

Gloria steadily refused to see her husband after her

conviction. She asked him three times for a divorce, finally he filed for it. Now she expects never to see him again. That is how she prefers the relationship. She had only known him for six months when the child died. Sometimes it is hard for her to believe there was ever love between them.

"All of my relatives have stood by me one hundred percent. I have had a lot of help, a lot of love, and that's what counts," Gloria says. "I thought of suicide at first. I knew that would end this ugly nightmare for me, but the pain would be just beginning for my family. I couldn't put them through that." She has many visitors, and her children come to see her regularly as well. Her family puts money in her canteen account and brings presents for her when they come.

When she first arrived at the prison in Santa Fe Gloria says, "I went in trusting people," but she soon learned to stick pretty much to herself. She was afraid of violence at the beginning of her sentence but she has never seen anyone get hurt. She did witness a great deal of arguing and stealing though. When she first got to prison, some of the other prisoners asked her to buy their canteen for them or to buy them cigarettes. She said, "I've always given and I love doing things for the girls,

or anybody. Well, I learned the hard way...You gotta stand up for yourself. The more you do for them, the less they want to do for you. I finally wised up. It's very rare to find a person you can count on." She started to refuse the requests of the other prisoners, then, "they would steal things instead of asking."

Instead of the violence she had feared, Gloria found herself plagued with petty irritations. She was consistently the last one to get a shower. Other prisoners arranged to go ahead of her. Her laundry did not get done because she was not a "special person." They burned her gown, tore up her bra, "odds and ends like that; they break you in." The other prisoners began to criticize her and give her a hard time about being a child abuser after she had been in prison about two months. "I really never interfered with anybody. I did try to stay away from people."

The assistant warden called Gloria into his office after about three months and offered her protective custody, but she refused it. "I felt that if I was going to be in the penitentiary, I was going to do time like all the rest. I was going to be in population whether they liked it or not."

Gloria says there are some women in the prison who,

"do things to worry about." She knows they act against the rules and then try to hide it. She believes they are different from her. "They have different needs." She does not "drink or smoke grass or anything like that." She tells the others, "if you wouldn't do it, you wouldn't have to worry about it." She says she came, "from a different background and they resented me right away." She also discovered that since the matrons treated her with respect, the other prisoners disapproved of her. She likes to stay at home, sewing, crocheting or embroidering, so she does not miss going out. She had not wanted to change at all, but, "I have found myself saying words that are unbelievable. I told myself I never would, I'll block it up. I won't say anything like that. But, it's hard not to pick up a habit you've been living with."

Homosexuality was a matter of concern to Gloria before she actually entered the prison. She really did not understand lesbianism and had never been exposed to anything like that. She heard that this would be a problem for her in prison and really did not know how she would handle it. During her orientation, the prison psychologist advised her to answer any prisoner who mentioned homosexuality with a direct no if that was her preference, but he warned her not to be openly insulting. As it turned out, she was never

approached and the problem has never come up. She laughs at her earlier naivete now.

"In prison you stick pretty much to yourself, and keep one eye open," Gloria advises. "It's just a matter of...you don't get close. Everybody is suspicious of everybody else, trying to get you for one thing or the other." She admits that prison is not at all like she expected, though. "I had the idea it would be like a movie I saw one time, women with shaved heads and tattooed numbers, I had no idea how it would really be."

Gloria feels herself very fortunate to have been sent to the W.H.U. after the time she spent in Santa Fe. Here she was surprised to find that, "Everything is left up to us. We are as free as anything else." She is much happier here. "I think a lot of it has to do with the matrons. They are real nice and they help. If you go to them with a problem, they'll sit there and try to tell you the best way for you to do it." She thinks of the supervisor as a sort of, "brother since he is such a young guy." She says he is fair and tries to help the girls. "As long as you stay within your little rules here, everything's fine. Being in here is really nice. I can honestly say they have things to offer us if we take them, if you want to take a chance and participate,"

Despite her friendship for all the matrons, Gloria found that she had to cut down on the time she spent in the office. "I just had to cut down so I won't be accused of things. Times like when something happens, even if you saw it, you 'didn't see anything.' It's just your own protection. I'm here to do a long time, and I could care less what they do. They could jump the fence every night as long as I'm not doing it. That's the way it has to be for me and everybody else around here too."

The most horrible experience Gloria had in prison happened during a visit from her little boy. "He wanted me to go home with him. He made the matron cry, a lady who was visiting was crying, some of the girls were sitting here, they were all crying too. They offered him money for ice cream. They told him he could go out for a hamburger. But, no, he only wanted his momma to go home. He cried and cried, finally I carried him to the truck. Even when they were out on the road, I could still hear him. I walked in here and everybody was looking at me like I was some, mean lady. I had to do it. If I hadn't, it would have been worse."

The worst thing about being a prisoner for Gloria is her charge. She still cannot believe she was found guilty of child abuse. Even though the trial happened over a year

ago, she remembers the ugly publicity, her fear, her family's sorrow and all of the rest of the crisis as though it had just happened. As a prisoner she knows the others despise her and treat her strangely because she is a child abuser. She realizes that when she gets out people will find out. She knows that it will come up when she looks for a job, for example. She understands how people will feel, and she would not blame them for not hiring her. She worries about the unhappiness it will cause for her children. Her daughter tried to understand, but her son knows nothing about the charge. She plans the time when she must tell him. She has saved the newspaper clippings, "so he will know."

Gloria has found that many of the problems in prison arise because it is too small. "There's twenty-four women here and it's almost impossible to keep peace with a bunch of women. It's too crowded. Everybody wants to have their own way set up. It's very bad. You know, right now everybody's in a talking mood with me. But there comes a time when somebody will be mad and tells the other one and the other ones don't talk to me for awhile. It's nothing to make a big issue over. It's just a bunch of women under a lot of pressure."

Dependency is another worry Gloria has as a prisoner.

"What's bad about this place is, they run your life. For a year or two I'm going to be doing the things they want me to. When I get out of here, I'll probably feel afraid. Who's going to tell me what to do? I need somebody to tell me what to do."

Gloria is going to remember prison, "until the last minute I die. The outside world should accept the point that I did the time for it, whether I did it or not. It's already a part of the past...In the future, I think I'll be more observant of people. I'll know more about different types of people, things like that. I hate to say this, but when I get out I think I'll be suspicious of everybody. That's one of the things you learn here."

Helen - An Inmate

Helen is a twenty-three year old chicana serving a one to five year sentence for armed robbery. She wears sweat shirts and loose fitting clothing because all of the other clothes she had when she went into prison six months ago no longer fit. She has gained over twenty pounds and remarks that this is the most she ever weighed in her life. Helen has bright, green eyes and long, dark hair. Despite her added pounds, she is a lovely, young woman.

The crime of armed robbery for which Helen was convicted took place when she was eighteen years old. She was not

implicated in the crime until years later, although the rest of those involved served sentences as juveniles shortly after the robbery took place. She knows that her treatment in court was unfair, and she insists that she did not take part in the robbery. Instead she says she was implicated because she "hung around with some people who were probably involved." She repeats that she never took part in the robbery and asks, "could you see me holding a gun on somebody?" If she is guilty of any crime, she admits, it was sharing in stolen goods. "My boy friend and his friends used to come over to my house at night and bring me things. I never asked them where they got them. Once he came by for me and we all just took off to Juarez, Mexico. We blew a lot of money that time. We just played it high, you know? I didn't ask any questions at the time about where they got all that money. Now I have to say it was probably from robberies."

Three years later, Helen was convicted of armed robbery. She was prosecuted because of a tip made to the "crime stoppers" column of the local newspaper in the small New Mexico town where she grew up. She is sure that she knows, "who snitched me off. It was my old man's wife. He was my old man, but he married her. She always tried to get rid of me. She thought I would cause trouble for her and him,"

When she was arrested, Helen admits she was very afraid and that the police and the prosecutors threatened her and intimidated her. She says she only gave the prosecutor a confession because he threatened to take her daughter away from her. "At that time I didn't know he couldn't do that." She was defended by a public defender, but she remembers that he never seemed to have prepared the case at all. She never thought it would be necessary to go to all the expense of a private attorney because, "people kept telling me, 'you've got nothing to worry about'." During her trial the evidence was inconsistent, she says. "The witnesses couldn't remember anything because it happened so long ago. Really there was no case against me. I think I was only convicted because I was known to hang around with the wrong people. That's why the judge gave me such a short sentence. He really just wanted me out of town and to keep me from associating with certain ones."

Helen has one daughter, born out of wedlock. This child came from the relationship she had with the man who she believes was actually responsible for her charge. She says that although they never married, she never regretted their relationship. Because their daughter is such a special child, she had agreed that she would never have children by any other man. She is not so sure, now, that she still wants

to live up to this promise. The man was never faithful to Helen and eventually married another woman. It is this woman that Helen blames for her arrest. This man could have helped her at her trial, but he refused. "I even called him and asked him to come and testify, because he knew I wasn't guilty. He said, 'No, I just can't get involved in it.' The court subpoenaed him, but he just skipped town because he didn't want any part in it. They couldn't find him to give him a subpoena, so they went on without his testimony. He could have saved me, but he didn't want to be involved."

While she was incarcerated, Helen became engaged to another man from her home town. She had known him for years, and they got together when she went home on a furlough. They began to correspond frequently, and Helen announced she would marry him as soon as she was released. This relationship was very short-lived though. The man wrote to Helen and called off all of their mutual plans. At first Helen felt hurt and despondent over the loss, but she soon got over it. "I probably never would have married him anyway, really. It would have been a case of the bride jilting the groom at the altar, you know. I only held onto him because at least it was something, something to look forward to on the outside. When it was over I actually

felt sort of relieved. It really wasn't what I wanted."

Helen remembers that before she was convicted she had always wanted more children. She particularly wanted to have a son. Now she isn't sure. She says, "I just don't know. I'm just not sure anymore." Prison has upset many of Helen's ideas about relationships with men. "For awhile, I was worried that this might have made me frigid. I found the best way to handle getting along without sex was not to think about it. Then I began to wonder if I could ever feel the same about it again. Now, I don't think I'm frigid, but it still doesn't do any good to carry on the way some of these women do. They would even go after the boys in the juvenile home, if they could. I think some of them are disgusting." She has managed to get by without sex, but says she still needs affection from men. Her boss at work sometimes gives her a hug, or tells her she is good looking. "This makes all the difference in my life."

Helen's mother has been taking care of her daughter. This woman is a widow and Helen believes that most of the troubles in her life came as a result of her father's death when she was a teen-ager. "If my father had lived, it would have been different. He was very strict with my family and he made sure we were on the right track."

"I respected that man and I really loved him. When he died, I couldn't take it. I went to pieces and nothing mattered then, you know, drugs, and getting drunk and running wild. I just didn't care about anyone." Helen's mother also made a very difficult adjustment to the death. "She started to drink and pretty soon she was never sober. I didn't want to go home for anything." Eventually Helen's mother took over the care of her granddaughter. "That helped my mother out, now she is getting along fine. She is busy and my daughter needs her. She has something to live for."

It is as though Helen's daughter is lost to her. "It will be a long time before I could take her away from my mother. They really need each other. I will always visit her, and see her, but I couldn't take her away from my mother and hurt them both. I always dreamed of being there to take my little girl on her first day of school and birthday parties and all those special days, the first times...but now I have already missed so much. Someone else has already done these things for her."

Her mother comes to visit Helen regularly and brings the child. Sometimes other members of the family come to visit as well. She knows these others are usually only coming to bring her mother. These are the only visitors she has. She will not be allowed to return to her home

town when she is parol_ed. She already feels cut off and left out of the life she once knew there.

When Helen first arrived at the prison in Santa Fe, she expected it to be the way she had seen women's prisons in the movies. "I was really green," she describes herself.

Instead, she found that she had very little trouble at all. She explains, "When I was first taken to the county jail, I met a woman who turned out to be a real friend. When I think of her, I think of her as really the closest thing to a big brother I'll ever know. Then we both got sent to Santa Fe. She already knew her way around and how to take care of herself. She stood up for me and showed me how to do easy time. I can never repay that. She saved me from a lot. More than I know, probably." She never saw any "real trouble" in prison but agrees that prisoners often do give each other a hard time, "putting rats in their beds, burning bras, things like that."

Helen expected some advances from homosexuals in prison. Her friend sheltered her from this to some extent. "She was a stud broad and the others left me alone because she told them to. I never wanted any kind of homosexual relationship, and she understood that. One day this other stud broad tried to talk me into 'trying it,' I just told

her to leave me alone. I told her 'no' right then and there. My friend told me I had done the right thing to show them exactly where I stood." She has known of others having lesbian relations since being in prison, but she never heard of any woman being forced into homosexuality.

"One of the things I had to learn when I came to prison was not to blurt out whatever came into my mind. I have a very bad temper. I learned from experience the best way to get by in prison is to keep your mouth shut. That wasn't easy for me, either. Women bring trouble on themselves when they go around acting big and bad. Most of the women in here you could probably count on in a real tough situation, there are a few exceptions. But, it seems like all these women know how to do is make hassles for each other."

Helen does not really see any of the prisoners as being any more important than any of the others. She describes some of the women as "stupid," though. "Some of them try to buy their friends with canteen or whatever they have. This seems sad to me. Besides it always backfires. You can't get any friends that way."

For the most part Helen has found that the administrators of the prisons have done very little to help the prisoners. In fact, she says, "some of them just try to

catch the girls at something. They really don't care. Others pretend to be lenient, as if they really want to give us a break. Then they turn around and do just the opposite. I don't even talk to some of them. You just can't count on them."

Helen has made an exception for one of the matrons at the W.H.U. She considers her a real friend for life. "We both know things about each other that could be used against us. I really trust her. I've told her things I wouldn't tell anyone else. I know that if she had to she would write a report on me, but I will never put her in a spot like that. I just wouldn't ask her to make that choice, so I don't do things around her that would make it hard on our friendship."

"The supervisor, here, has a difficult time living up to his own image," in Helen's opinion. "He does have a difficult position. I can't say I really dislike him. Sometimes he was very understanding, and sometimes I think he tries pretty hard. But you can't trust him, either. He says one thing and does something else. I really resent it that he makes so many promises and then he doesn't keep them. Like, he promised me a furlough, but I never did get it."

Helen realized she was actually a prisoner when she received the first letter from her daughter, who was five

years old. "It was mostly scribbles, then 'I love you' and her name. When I got that little letter, I felt so far away from her and lost." For Helen the worst part of prison life has been doing without her daughter. "I have had these dreams about her since I've been in here. They are all different, but the same. She is having a party, or playing, happy and enjoying herself. But, in my dreams I'm always on the outside. I can't get in. I wake up so sad. Dreams like that really make me feel awful."

Hard time in prison, for Helen, "is feeling down. You can only think, I don't care about anything. I only managed to avoid being institutionalized by working at keeping a positive attitude. But sometimes no matter how hard you try, you bring hard times down on yourself."

The greatest problems Helen had in prison came from the inconsistencies of the administration. "If they wanted to improve this place, that's what they should do, make all the matrons consistent and fair. Most of them really aren't. They act in little petty ways, but never the same two times in a row. You can't call that fair."

Helen finds her lessons in human relations in prison have not always been good ones. "I will leave prison much more suspicious of people. I'll probably always be looking

over my shoulder. It will be a lot harder for anyone to fool me, I will snap much quicker than I used to. But I do think I understand people better now than I used to."

During her final month of incarceration, Helen got a job in a restaurant. She was very successful at this job. She says it was the best thing about prison life for her. "This has made me feel better about getting out. I don't feel so worried that everybody will reject me. Maybe I can be accepted after all, even if I have done time."

"One thing I'm sure of," Helen adds. "If there's one thing I've learned, it's that I could never do time again. I know I couldn't live through it again, no matter what. I'll be leaving soon, and the others warn me not to leave anything, or this or that. Yesterday, I wrote my name on a chair and one of the others told me, 'don't leave anything with your name on it or you'll be back for sure.' They tell me about this one and that one who left here looking good but they ended up coming back. Not me. I wouldn't do it. I can never come back here again."

Ann - A Convict

Ann is a twenty-eight year old Chicana serving a ten to fifty year sentence for larceny and forgery. She is small

with bright, quick eyes. She was often seen at the W.H.U. in old, comfortable clothes which she described as "my favorites." She was very concerned about her appearances when she went outside the W.H.U., however. On these occasions she was attractively dressed and groomed. She mentioned that she never wore dresses though and would not know how to act in one.

When Ann went out of the W.H.U. she consistently wore long-sleeved blouses. She said she felt less conspicuous with sleeves to cover the large tattoo on her forearm. She also has a tattoo on her ring finger and another between her thumb and index finger on her left hand. In addition, she had four other tattoos removed. Six of the seven tattoos were done while she was in prison. The three remaining are reminders of Ann's common-law husband who is also in prison.

Ann has spent much of her life, twelve of her twenty-eight years, in incarceration. Her teenage years were spent in the New Mexico State Girl's Detention Home. She says, "the reason I was there really was that nobody wanted me and there wasn't any place else for me to go."

Her first felony conviction was given to Ann in 1972. Her crime was accessory to homicide. Her old man was found

guilty of murder and she was also held responsible. She said, "There was no way they were going to let me go on that one. They wanted to put my old man away and they couldn't find him guilty and me innocent." Her old man is still serving the life sentence he was given for this crime.

Ann was paroled in less than one year for this first felony, but was returned to prison three months later for parole violation and smuggling. She was caught carrying contraband into the prison while illegally visiting her old man. This time she served over two years before she was released. She remained out of prison only ten months before she was convicted of larceny and forgery. She has already served four years for these crimes. Since 1972, Ann has only spent thirteen months outside of the joint.

In each of Ann's trials she was represented by a public defender, and has never received a fair trial. She talked about corrupt police and legal systems where informers were used to convict her without substantiating evidence. In the accessory to homicide case, a woman snitched Ann and her old man off. Ann hates this woman because she lied. "I know my old man didn't kill that guy intentionally, and she knew it too. But she lied in court so he would get life. I don't know what she got out of it;

she must have wanted to ruin us. She did it O.K."

In her other trials, the prosecution used other informers to testify against Ann. "They just did it to take the heat off themselves. But, after that first time, I didn't care. It didn't matter to me what they said or what I did. I had already given up on everything by then."

Ann's last two convictions were related to narcotics. "I stole to pay for my junk. I lost track of how long I was on stuff. I guess I must have started in 1969, or around then. It was a broad who first turned me on to it."

"At first all the junkies I knew were women. Later there was a whole group of tecatos I went to when I needed to fix or something like that." She has never been able to explain why she started using heroin. She becomes irritated when she hears pat explanations for addiction. "Maybe I wanted to escape, maybe I liked to hang out with the junkies, I don't know. I really don't think about why it happened. Maybe it was because people were always bugging me, always on my back. But I knew what I was doing, and I realized the price I would pay. I'll take the blame for myself. I'm not putting it on anybody. I did it, and even at the time I can't say I didn't know what I was doing."

Ann was once legally married, but is divorced now,

She has a ten year old daughter from this marriage. She has maintained ties with her former husband's family, especially her brothers-in-law. Her former mother-in-law has charge of her daughter. "She is full of gossip and hassles. That woman is always criticizing and starting trouble. She never liked the way I did anything, so I just left it with her." She looks forward to the day when she can take her daughter back with her. She plans to do so when she gets off of parole. She would like to have more children, too. "Having a family would be the best thing that could happen to me, I think. I really hope that I can get pregnant again."

In the meantime, Ann is happy that her daughter is well cared for, but avoids her mother-in-law if she can. "I'm just glad that my former husband was man enough to take over the responsibility." She speaks well of this man, although she says she never wants anything more to do with him.

Since Ann has been in prison, she has had few visitors. "In all this time, my sister came to see me two times. My mother-in-law brought my daughter to see me maybe ten times at the most." Other than that, she was almost completely cut off from society outside of prison.

Ann's real mother deserted her when she was an infant.

She never knew her until a short time ago, when her mother once came to visit her in prison. "She promised to try to make it up to me for all she caused me. It's too late for that now." As a child she was placed in a number of foster homes. One of these became permanent and she refers to this family as her mother and sisters. She remembers many beatings and other abuse she received as a child. "They always accused me of things. Sometimes I didn't even know what it was for. They just looked for any excuse to take the belt to me. One time when I was about six, I said 'son of a bitch'. It seemed funny to me. When my older sister told me to repeat it for her husband, I thought it was a joke. But he got mad and started beating me. He just wouldn't stop. My sister got scared and tried to get him to quit, but he was so mad he couldn't hear anything. She thought he was going to kill me. I did too! Afterward they had to do all kinds of covering up and I had to stay home because of all the bruises and marks all over me... I called my foster parent, mother, and I respected her for what she did for me. I call her daughters, sisters, but I was really never close to them. Not really. I was always an outsider."

For eight years, Ann has been committed to the same man. They have both been in prison for most of the past

eight years. He was not a junkie. "People always think my old man must be a junkie too. He didn't do drugs. We lived together while I was on stuff, but he wasn't. That's just the way it was between us." They have had regular visits for the past seven years. He will not be eligible for parole for another year. She is going to a board hearing in a few months. "I don't know how it will be for us on the outside. I believe I should stick by him until he gets out, but I know he's changed and I've changed. It might work out, but I won't be surprised if it doesn't. Sometimes when I go up to visit him, I don't even know what to say."

When she first arrived in prison, Ann says, "It was just another jail to me. I'd been in and out of jails all my life." She did not make friends right away. Instead she says, "I just watched them. I guess you could say I just waited to see what they were going to do." She gives the example of a very close friend she has now. "I knew her for over a year before we really started to get together. By then I knew I liked the way she carried herself. I liked the way she acted as a prisoner. When you go in to do a lot of time, you don't pick your friends from the short-timers. You pick long-time friends."

"After I'd been in Santa Fe for about thirty days, I

blocked the free world out of my mind. I completely stopped thinking about it...Prison got easier when I got the hang of sleeping more." The worst part of prison was the boredom. "There was nothing to do but sit around and get into hassles to break up the boredom. That's really what all the fights, and arguments and gossip are about, there's nothing else to do. I just spent my time sleeping. Once in awhile I'd cuss somebody out to get sent to lock-up. That was just something else and more boredom, but in a different place."

"During my first number, I didn't see any homosexuality in prison. When I got out the first time, people thought I was covering up when I told them I hadn't seen anything. Later it got a little more open, but there weren't really very many women involved. I never saw anyone forced or raped. I saw them get jumped for gossiping, but not because of homosexuality."

Ann describes a sexual relationship she had with another woman, "I think it was just affection for both of us, a closeness more than anything." She still speaks fondly of this woman who has since been transferred to another prison.

Ann often speaks derisively of the baby killers. As far as she can see, these are the only prisoners who really deserve to be locked up. Instead she thinks that they get

special treatment and are let off easy, while junkies are seldom given any breaks at all. "No matter what happened I would never abuse a child. That is really evil. People might think of me as a terrible dope addict, but I never abused anyone."

After spending five years in the prison at Santa Fe, Ann was transferred to the W.H.U. She says she was sent down here to separate her from another prisoner since the matrons feared trouble. There was a great enmity between Ann and another prisoner because she was the woman who testified falsely against Ann's old man. When this woman was sent to prison for another crime, it caused an incident which Ann describes as most horrible. "I hated her so much I couldn't stand to have her near me. One day they were there fixing the lights and I picked up a screw-driver. They didn't even miss it. I was, like, in a daze with no thoughts at all. I went into this general meeting. When I sat down, I saw she was in a chair in front of me. I felt out of it, I couldn't hear what was going on, or know where I was. All I could think of was her head, and how I hated her. Then all at once I felt my hand go up and I saw the screw-driver go into her head and it was as though there was blood spurting out all over her hair. Then I snapped and put my hand down. I just got up and took off, I nearly

knocked over the chairs getting out of there. I was just sick and dizzy. I could still see the blood even though I knew I hadn't really done it. I asked them to put me in lock-up. I knew I couldn't stay in the same place with her. I really wanted to kill her; just her face made me sick. They sent me down here to separate us, otherwise I know I would have killed her. All the time I was in the streets I never did any violence. But, in here, I could have killed her. I wanted to. That's how much I hated her."

From Ann's point of view the administration is no help to the prisoners at all. "They are really the worst instigators, they cause most of the problems. Most of these matrons are losers from the get-go." She has clear memories of many incident in which she was treated unfairly by matrons. She stays away from the administration as much as possible except when it is necessary to make requests.

"Everything I've gotten since I've been in here I've had to ask for. And I don't mean just once, either. When I wanted a school release, I put in a request five times and it was denied five times. Finally I got it. I just keep bugging them until they give me what I want. Now they just give in to me so I'll stop bugging them."

Despite her tenacity, Ann still remembers incidents in which she was forgotten and neglected as a prisoner. "One time they left me standing on a street corner for four and a half hours. I was out of school at four, but they didn't come to pick me up until eight thirty. They just forgot all about me." Other problems arose from indifference as well. "I have scars on my left leg to show for another problem I had in here. I had pain in this leg for over a year. I asked for help and got nothing. Finally I was dragging this leg and actually couldn't get around before they took me to a Doctor." By that time serious surgery for varicose veins was called for and Ann was an invalid for weeks.

There have been a few people in the administration with whom Ann has been able to get along and with whom she worked out relationships throughout her seven years in prison. Still, she is constantly reminded, "They are still cops. Sometimes you can feel pretty good about one of them, but when it comes down to it they are cops."

There are many problems with prison as Ann sees it, but the worst is boredom. "That is what all the griping and complaining comes down to. Sometimes it's over gossip, or stealing. Sometimes they break up into groups, blacks, whites, or chicanas go after each other. But, it

all comes down to boredom. There are only petty little jobs that take about two minutes to do, and the rest of the time you're bored. Women need something to do, training, something to go out with so they could actually make it on their own." Ann was able to complete a course at a beauty academy and is now working as a beautician. She realized that she was fortunate to be able to do so. It was only made available to her after five years and repeated requests.

Other problems with prison include crowding and incompetence. "Prisons shouldn't be like matchboxes. They shouldn't be crowded like this so that women are always getting in each other's way. But some of the biggest problems come from the staff. These jobs should only be given to people who are qualified. They should have to pass a test or something. They shouldn't just hire any idiot, or drunk, off the street who can't get a better job."

As far as Ann is concerned the only important ones in prison are herself and a few friends. Other than that, "It all just stinks."

The Prison Code of Behavior - Part Two

Some researchers have suggested that women prisoners are not bound by the same inmate code which was found among

male prisoners (Ward and Kassebaum, 1964, p. 165), (Sheley, 1979, p. 206). Others have maintained that the emotional deprivation suffered by women prisoners differs greatly from that suffered by men and the inmate code should not even be considered relevant for women (Adler, 1975). Still, elsewhere it is suggested that the inmate code for women is "mind your own business" while the inmate code for men is "never inform on another inmate" (Heffernan, 1972).

Despite their basic differences, snitches, inmates and convicts at the W.H.U. were aware of a prescribed code of behavior. They demonstrated their knowledge in day-to-day conversations and in common expressions used by members of all three groups. As Bowker points out, few prisoners consistently follow the code, but that is no measure of its importance to group life.

Few prisoners approximate the ideal (wo)man, but most give verbal allegiance to the model and for one prisoner to make behavioral demands on another prisoner that are based on these norms is considered proper (1977, p. 15).

The code of conduct at the W.H.U. functioned the same way that codes of ethics serve to order societies elsewhere. The code which was in operation at the W.H.U. was similar

to the code which Sykes and Messinger identified in prisons for men in 1960.

The code has been described in the following sections in the language of the prisoners. That is how it developed and was learned at the W.H.U.

SYKES

1. Don't interfere with inmate interests.
2. Don't lose your head
3. Don't exploit inmates
4. Don't weaken
5. Don't be a sucker

W.H.U.

1. Do your own time
2. Don't blow it or mess up
3. Don't get up on another inmate.
4. When you know you're right, say it.
5. Snap to it.

6. Don't snitch

1. Do your own time - meant not only to mind your own business, but also to carry your own weight and not cause trouble for other prisoners.

One prisoner who was accused of not knowing how to do her own time was called an instigator and a cry baby by the other prisoners. On one occasion she put disinfectant in her own shampoo bottle then accused someone of trying to blind her.

Prisoners said that women who did not know how to do their own time were pushy or forward and tried to get

involved in conversations that were none of their business. Keeping one's belongings and personal effects neat and orderly as well as performing household details were also indications of doing your own time. Women who were sloppy or careless or did not keep up their part in house cleaning at the W.H.U. were looked down on and gossip was used to sanction them for not doing their own time.

2. Don't blow it - meant not to let a good opportunity get away. Blowing it referred to the consequences. Messing up referred to the actual behavior which caused trouble unnecessarily.

A prisoner who was repeatedly denied parole was said to have blown it. She was described as having messed up at the hearing by denying her guilt and calling herself a "political prisoner." Another prisoner blew her school release. She messed up by making illegal phone calls and keeping cash in her possession.

Other prisoners resented women who mess up. They believed that following such behavior, release was more difficult for the rest to obtain. Sometimes women who frequently blew it by messing up were said by the rest to be institutionalized. A prisoner who had become institutionalized had lost touch with the reality of prison and society. Other prisoners believed that such a prisoner would never

make it in the outside world. Prisoners found it difficult to sympathize with such a woman, though. Instead she was considered dangerous. Prisoners feared that they might be inadvertently implicated in her messing up, and might be forced to blow it through no fault of their own.

3. The meaning of don't get up on another inmate comes from a corrections system in which prisoners were sometimes rewarded for causing the detriment of another prisoner. Some of the other prisoners accused Carol of getting up on other inmates. She said, "I always ask. I requested to go take the test for my G.E.D., work release, anything I could think of that I was entitled to. I've only been here a short time, but I've never been denied. Some of them have been doing time for years but they don't get any kind of release. They blame me. They seem to think if I didn't get it, they might."

Others resented Ann's school release. They said she got up on other inmates. Since only a few prisoners were released to school, one prisoner's benefit appeared to detract from the others' chances of getting released. It was considered suspicious when a prisoner received privileges such as pleasant household job assignments or room changes for example. The others had learned that sometimes prisoners had been given benefits from the administration in return for

cooperation and private information about other prisoners. It was difficult to be happy at the success of others in such a system of scarce resources. Another prisoner doing well seemed to bode ill for the rest since her access to resources apparently meant that others would be cut off from them.

4. When you know you're right, say it. A prisoner who had lost the initiative to even speak for herself was one who had been completely institutionalized. Such a person had lost all individuality. Prisoners feared this process of loss of self and maintained their personal identity in small ways such as this.

Ann remarked, "most of the trouble I've gotten into in here came from telling people what they are. They don't like to hear that, but I won't lie. I've never been afraid to say what I think, no matter how many times they've put me in lock-up."

Helen said, "If I know I'm right, I won't back down. I won't say something is right just to make it easier on myself or to agree with the matrons. I can't stand people who do that." Sonia also stated, "after my car wreck they wanted me to just forget it and act like it never happened. I won't do that. I know I'm entitled to some compensation and I won't stop until I get it, If that causes trouble

for the supervisor, he'll just have to handle it, that's all."

5. Snap to it - the word snap referred to the signal made with the fingers showing the "Ah Ha!" of a new realization. "Wise up" is another expression used to communicate the same meaning.

There were several ways in which the expression snap was used at the W.H.U.

When a prisoner was new to prison she sometimes spent her time as close to the administration as possible since she believed them to be a source of help in the adjustment to prison life. Sonia said she snappped when she realized that relationships with administration were frowned on by the other prisoners and were a real source of threat and conflict.

Other prisoners were said to never snap. For example some women were called "put-ons" and fakes who did not realize they were a source of humor for the rest. Such women were believed to be "heading for a fall," and often "pushing it". Helen said such women were acting big and bad. Bad for conventional society means, not good. In prison society, bad meant good, positively evaluated and carrying a quality of strength and power as well (Matza, 1964, p. 39). A person who pretended to act bad was trying

to show her potential for dominance. Others considered this ludicrous. As Gail laughed about someone who was acting bad, "there's really nothing big about her but her feet and the only thing bad is her breath, but she never snaps."

Snap was also used as a command. Raye kept insisting that Sonia should snap because she failed to catch the meaning of a joke Raye was telling.

Ann used snap to describe the change that came over her after she had served almost five years in prison. Until that time she was indifferent to the outside world and did not care about her own future; her outlook was completely pessimistic. "Then I snapped. After that I really wanted to move ahead. There was no going back once I saw it for what it was."

6. Don't snitch or rat on another prisoner - This actually meant handle your own problems. Don't tell administrators about prisoners' business.

At the W.H.U. there was a simple rule of thumb for measuring prisoners' adherence to this command. A woman could talk about her own affairs to whomever she chose. She was not supposed to speak to anyone about the affairs of others.

Snitches were women who were willing to carry on

conversations openly with the administrators. They spoke to administrators about other prisoners and often implicated others unwittingly. At other times snitches mentioned incidents to the administration, "for the prisoners' own good." Snitches believed administrators were present to help the prisoners. They saw no harm in talking to them about the day to day activities at the W.H.U.

Rats and snakes were considered worse than snitches. While a snitch might simply act from ignorance, a rat or a snake deliberately informed to the administration with the hope of personal gain. What was worse, snakes pretended to be trustworthy to their fellow prisoners in order to gain their confidence. Later they used what they learned in confidence to further their own ends.

The designation of a woman prisoner as evil carried implications similar to those of snakes. However, the woman who was evil was considered more dangerous. When Madge described a fellow prisoner as evil, there was a hint of superstition. It seemed that she believed the woman might have supernatural powers which made her a real threat. Several of the prisoners used the term evil. They described women who appeared kind and considerate on the surface, but who they believed would not hesitate to do harm to others. Evil women were cold, calculating and their

motives were purely for personal gain. Using gentleness and flattery, they were able to fool the administration and outsiders who seldom realized that the result of an evil woman's manipulations usually worked to the disadvantage of other prisoners.

Don't get caught in a switch also referred to snitching. But putting someone in a switch implied making it appear that a prisoner was guilty when she was not. It referred not only to informing to the authorities, but to false accusation as well (Sykes and Messinger, 1960, pp. 6-8).

Raye was infuriated with a prisoner who put her in a switch. "She was mopping the kitchen floor and I didn't want to tramp across it, so I just tossed a knife into the sink beside her. Then that bitch went and told them I was throwing knives at her. It was just a butter knife anyway. If I was going to throw a knife at her, I'd make sure it was one that would hurt her."

In the daily life at the W.H.U. getting caught in a switch was threatening because of the suspicion, animosity and lack of cohesiveness among the prisoners.

Dee contributed a maxim which summed up the importance of the code:

One's devotion to the code of silence will be

the judge of her reliance.

Each of these six commandments was an ideal and a moral to live by in prison. They represented what was perceived as the best interests of all the groups. As is true for any other set of maxims, they were made to be broken. Members of all three groups broke the code from time to time. Members had to decide based on each situation which was the best behavioral response. Members of the snitch group were likely to judge situations differently than convicts for example, and all three groups were likely to vary in their specific interpretations of the code.

Burkhart relates this to survival:

Staff policies, administrative prejudices and an individual system of rewards and punishments from extra privileges to honor status to parole considerations serve to break down solidarity and unity on a day to day level. The result is the individual woman's need to create personal strategies for accomodation and survival that will still meet the basic requirements of the code. And, in such rule-clad, total surroundings, survival becomes the most important thing to every woman (1976, p. 164).

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Unfit Mothers

Motherhood as an Institution - Part One

For most of what we know as the "mainstream" of recorded history, motherhood as an institution has ghettoized and degraded female potentialities (Rich, 1976, p. xv).

The reality of motherhood seldom even resembles motherhood-the-ideal from which the institution of motherhood developed. Mothers are at times expected to take up willingly, behaviors which would be difficult or impossible for any other person to perform. In some cases, failure at motherhood is grounds for criminal action against a woman. Adrienne Rich (1976) in an examination of motherhood as experience and institution states:

The institution of motherhood finds all mothers more or less guilty of having failed their children (p. 223).

This institution has crucial consequences for all women and for all humans.

The women at the W.H.U. existed at marginal economic levels prior to their incarcerations. At this level the strain for mothers is great; crisis of health and shelter are felt by women and families. Frequently, working

conditions are unstable, and financial threats are severe (Sheehan, 1977). Rich adds that at this level the immediate effects of the patriarchal nature of the institution of motherhood on the lives of women are made more severe by:

large families, inadequate day care, malnutrition, forced seclusion, lack of education and inadequate wages (p. 213).

A patriarchal society is guided by the power of the fathers. This power goes much further than laws and customs. Fundamentally masculine assumptions have shaped our moral and intellectual history (p. 41). Patriarchy is based on a conservative institution of motherhood in which mothers imprint their children with patriarchal values (p. 45). In the patriarchal system, the womb, the ultimate source of the power of women, is turned against women and itself made into a source of powerlessness (p. 52).

Powerlessness was a very real experience in the lives of the women at the W.H.U. In many cases they were degraded and punished because of their failure to live up to the institution of motherhood. In many other cases prisoners lived with feelings of self-hate and low personal expectations because of their experiences at being mothered and at mothering. In all cases, the institution of motherhood

exerted control over their entire lives.

Once a Mother, Always a Mother

According to the institution of motherhood, a person who gives birth to a child is a woman. She cannot be a child any longer. Giving birth is credited with the potential for making her into a stronger person, willing to suffer, and capable of deeper feelings of love. "In the eyes of society, once having been mothers, what are we, if not always mothers?" (Rich, 1976, p. 18).

Judy's biography presents an example of the contradictions involved in this once a mother, always a mother, aspect of the institution of motherhood. As a teenager Judy frequently ran away from home. She fled from arguments and bickering with her mother. She remembered that her mother hated her, but she could not explain why. Judy remembered her mother pushing her down the steps or banging her head against the wall in anger, and then moments later laughing and acting as if nothing had happened.

At the age of fifteen, Judy was deemed incorrigible because she refused to stay at home. She was considered promiscuous since she began to be involved with males to facilitate running away from home. She remained in the Girls' Detention Home for over two years. When she was

seventeen she was released. Within a few weeks she became pregnant. She sincerely wanted to marry her boyfriend and to nurture her child.

Judy's mother decided that she was an unfit mother. She went to court to gain legal custody of her granddaughter after she was born. Judy had no support. Her boyfriend's parents had given him a new car as a bribe to persuade him to break up with her. The lawyer in court represented both sides of the argument, so Judy had no real counsel. Her mother presented "evidence" that Judy was a lesbian and abused drugs.

Judy had not been gay or a junkie when her mother trumped up the court case, but by ten years later she had been both. She believed she must have done it in rebellion. She ran away to Hollywood and became a femme to a lesbian butch. She was arrested for being a prostitute, an addict, a narcotics dealer, a thief, and a murderess. She was serving the last of her four year sentence at the W.H.U. She had less than one year left to serve. Her goals were to marry and devote herself to the man she had lived with on the streets, four years earlier when she was arrested. He was also serving time and was also a junkie. Judy desperately wanted another child. She talked about it frequently and wondered why

she had never gotten pregnant since she was seventeen. She thought that as a prostitute she should have been able to bear a "trick baby". Though she did not use birth control, she had never gotten pregnant again.

At the age of twenty-eight, Judy cherished a picture of her daughter as she was at seven years old. The little girl was ten, but Judy had not seen her since she was an infant. She sometimes carried the framed picture with her and stood it up beside her. She sat and stared at the photograph of her daughter, a stranger to her, and mourned.

Lack of Personal Control

In the institution of motherhood as it exists in a patriarchal society, motherhood has become degraded. It has developed a potential for bringing dependency and loss of power to mothers. In order to insure their own survival and that of their children, women have been forced to disguise their own feelings even from themselves (Rich, 1976, p. 53).

Gail was a mother of three children. In her life prior to incarceration she often found motherhood to be based on so many contradictions that she could not control her own life or theirs. Her first husband frequently beat her. She related one incident in which he began to abuse her in a large crowd. The police rushed up to prevent

what appeared to them to be a robbery. When they found it was a wife-beating, instead, they shrugged their shoulders and moved away. Gail was left to her fate.

Eventually Gail shot and killed her husband to end the abuse. Afterward she sometimes wondered how to tell her daughter she had killed her father. This child had been a "daddy's girl". Her father had loved her and held her on his lap, and brought her presents. The girl was less than two years old when her father was killed. She remembered her "dad" in a barely conscious way as special and loving. When she asked her mother about her "daddy", Gail could not decide how to answer her daughter's questions without adding to her fears.

While she was a prisoner, Gail found herself even more powerless in affecting her children's lives. It caused Gail great sorrow to see her daughter growing into a woman. When she looked at her child, she saw herself and knew the unhappiness her daughter would feel following in her shoes.

The foster mother who was entrusted with Gail's children's care was overly strict and had no compassion for them. In part, Gail blamed this woman's negligence when she learned her daughter had been cruelly raped. But for the most part, she blamed herself. Gail considered

her prison sentence to be, "paying myself back for the suffering I caused them."

Childless Mothers

From the present institution of motherhood, the mother is the first to blame if anything whatsoever goes wrong in the process of child development (Rich, 1976, p. 222). A woman who is deprived of children, a childless mother, has been regarded as a failed woman, unable to speak for her sex and omitted from the reverence accorded the mother (p. 255). A woman whose children have been taken from her because she is held unfit to handle their development is doubly sanctioned. She is punished for her behavior as a childrearer, and she is considered a failure as a woman since she is no longer entrusted with the care of children.

Sonia was faced with this double sanction when she confronted the institution of motherhood by killing her baby. Sonia gave birth to three children, two sons and one daughter. She was held responsible for the death of the middle child, a retarded boy. At the time of her conviction, all three children would have been under four years of age. Sonia had last seen her daughter when she was one month old. She did not know where her children were living, or if she would ever regain custody of them.

During their trial, both Sonia and her husband were found guilty. It made her cry to think of him serving time for what she had done. She said he had not abused the child; she was the one who had put a baby in its grave.

During her incarceration, Sonia found her charge meant special restrictions. Because she was a child abuser, she was not eligible for work release, school release, or furloughs. When she went to her parole hearing, she found that the parole commissioner refused to hear her case. He delayed the proceedings because he was a "family man" and found her charge too distressing to handle at that time.

Whenever the subject of child abuse came up, Sonia displayed her feelings openly. She bowed her head, refused to look directly at the people around her, nervously wrung her hands and tried to withdraw from the scene completely. In rare moments, when Sonia felt compelled to speak of her charge and her guilt, there were invariably tears in her eyes.

The only way out of her dilemma, as Sonia saw it, was getting her two children back and living by the forms of the institution of motherhood as a wife and homemaker. She had been sterilized and could have no other children,

so she was determined to develop a traditional family life with her husband and eventually provide a home for the two children she had. Many times she expressed doubts and fears about her relationship with her husband, but she was determined to be a good wife to him and act as a domestic and dependent in order to provide the proper example for getting custody of her children again.

Sonia kept a number of small snapshots of her two children in a frame. She sometimes showed them to other women and talked about her little boy and girl. Always unspoken, but somehow clear, was the question, "Where is the other little boy? Do you have a picture of the child you killed?" The institution of motherhood continually intervened in Sonia's life with the taint of "unfit mother."

A mother who has caused the death of her own child is never forgiven. In doing so, Sonia lost the respect only bestowed on mothers. No matter how desperately Sonia worked for return to that position, and however well she played the role of mother, she was aware that the institution was against her. She was not simply an unfit mother, but also a failed woman.

Self-Hate

The effect of the institution of motherhood on women

in patriarchal society has been the division of women from each other. The result of powerlessness and dependency is often self-hate and low expectations. A mother may only identify with her daughter through weakness, not through strength. As a result, she passes on these afflictions to her child (Rich, 1976, p. 247).

Rose admitted her lack of self-esteem. She was aware that lack of confidence had been her problem most of her life. She had been afraid to speak up for herself. In her first marriage she could not take control of the situation, but was chronically depressed. She eventually stopped talking to her husband altogether, but that did not help anything. Finally she ran away from him and their daughter in desperation.

Rose entered the life of the junkies, married a tecato and gave birth to a second daughter. After a time she was convicted as a thief and served time at the W.H.U. She worried about her daughters while she was in prison, but she had very little control over their situations. She dearly loved these two beautiful, little girls, but she felt completely inadequate to take over their development.

The older daughter is nearly a teenager. It was when she was at this age that Rose was desperately afraid of being molested by her step-father. She often begged her

mother not to leave her at home alone. Her mother said she was just spoiled and refused to take her along with her. By leaving her alone with her step-father, Rose's mother ignored the sexual molestation of her daughter,

Years later, her mother told Rose how much she regretted her part in the molesting. But at the time she simply could not take Rose's side for fear of losing her husband's support. She remained married to this man. Rose never had open conflict with her step-father because it would only have caused problems for her mother.

The youngest daughter is five years old, disturbed and a behavioral problem. Rose remembered her own disturbed childhood feelings when she tried to relate to her littlest daughter. She could not understand this child's acts of rebellion, though. She could only relate it to her own childish acceptance of herself as "no good".

Rose looked forward to release and having her children with her again. When they came to visit, she simply felt good holding them near her. But she had no idea how she would ever deal with her own personal doubts and anxieties. She lacked confidence in her ability to live up to the institution of motherhood.

Taking Control

Since the institution of motherhood is based on

subservience and giving over control, a woman who dominates or takes control does so knowing she must expect enormous pain, inflicted both from within and without. Women who respond to the violence imposed on them by the institution with their own violence are labelled by society as psychopathological (Rich, 1976, pp. 215-67).

Carol described her crime as "the worst one there is, murder." She shot her husband to defend herself and her children from his physical abuse and sexual molestation. Carol did not realize her husband was molesting her daughters until two of them had already run away from her home. Her three teenaged daughters married before they were seventeen, and all three had become mothers themselves. She had come to understand that they had left an intolerable situation, but that they had entered into marriages which were themselves full of conflict.

Carol's third daughter had returned home with a small infant. Her husband's treatment of this fifteen year old girl was lewd and violent. He repeatedly berated and criticized Carol and her children, abused them and called them the most disgusting things he could think of. He had threatened Carol with shooting many times, even before witnesses. Just before he died, this man had

fixed Carol's car so that she could not leave the isolated ranch where he worked. The conflict accelerated, he threatened her, and beat her daughter. Finally, he actually headed for his gun to kill them all and himself. Instead Carol found her gun, and shot him before she even realized what she had done. When he fell, she thought it was a joke. She believed he was only "playing dead."

Despite the circumstances, Carol was found guilty of voluntary manslaughter. At her trial, the prosecution described her as a "crack shot" and an "expert with a gun." In reality her husband had given her the gun as a present, taught her the basics of using it, and insisted she carry it for protection. The threat Carol posed to patriarchal society was translated at her trial into "dangerous with a gun." She was found guilty of over reacting to the threat her husband presented. Rather than continuing to endure violence, Carol took control and ended it.

During her incarceration Carol felt remorse, but not really guilty. She regretted the crime, but believed if it happened the same way again, she would be forced to kill him again. She maintained a tender, loving relationship with a man twenty years younger than she. She described him as satisfying because she was able to break

him in herself. She had her own ideas about sexuality; she knew her mother had been hiding something when she had placed so many restrictions on sex.

When Carol heard a description of a patriarchal society in Human Relations class, she quipped, "Well then, let's just get out of here and leave the suckers with it!" and winked. More often women have responded to the institutional violence of motherhood using ploys and manipulation, thereby, perpetuating the institution for short-term advantages. Carol refused this form of submission only at great personal cost. Yet, she refused to admit punishment. She felt no one could punish her unless she gave in to it, and she refused to relinquish control.

During her parole hearing, Carol was explicitly warned about her future relationships with males. She was described as having unfortunate attachments for society's losers, "a rescuer who ended up being a victim." Carol was warned that she herself was somehow defective and preferred strange or weird male companions. As a woman who returned institutional violence with violence of her own, Carol was considered pathological and a threat to patriarchal society.

Sexual Division of Labor

In the history of our society it is clear that motherhood has become a catch-all for all manner of burdens. Women believe that they must live up to the ideals of motherhood, or risk failure as a human (Guettel, 1974, p. 60). This was characteristic of the women at the W.H.U. who held a strong value for mothering. One woman was called, Miss Alice instead of simply "Alice", or "hey you". Prisoners showed their respect for Alice because they believed she was an exemplary mother. She said, "I wish I could do time for all the women in here with little kids. My kids are grown, they don't need me, but these women's kids need them."

Women prisoners had found that division of labor by sex was fundamental to the inequalities they suffered. They had been compelled to take alienating jobs, because the demands of motherhood had left them unqualified for better ones. They lacked education and experience. They were faced with providing day care for their children as well as the desperate demands of providing for the emotional as well as the financial support of children.

Women at the W.H.U. had also found that the sexual division of labor had relegated them to mothering type roles in the work force. The past work histories of the

women at the W.H.U. commonly included positions as waitresses, cooks, nursing home attendants, day care workers, maids, garment factory workers, sales clerks, to name a few. In nearly every instance, women prisoners' past economic histories were tied to poorly-paid positions in service-related sectors without expectations for advancement.

Ann is considered a fortunate exception. She became a licensed beautician while at the W.H.U. She was fortunate to be able to enter the job market in a position with a fair potential for advancement. The rest of those on work release got low paying jobs in the food and domestic services sectors of the economy with low potential for advancement.

There were two other patterns found in the economic backgrounds of these women prisoners. A small number of the women had become tied to the economy only through domestic servitude in a household as a wife. This was preferable since those who held low paying jobs were responsible for domestic chores as well as work in the services sector. The prisoners who were wives, who "didn't have to work," were at an advantage in most cases. Yet, the position of wife often deprives a woman completely of control over her life and the lives of her children. In many cases, in the

role of wife, a woman may derive power only through her husband. Such an imbalance of power may strain the woman intolerably leading to violence. This was the case for Carol and for Sonia.

The third pattern in the economic history of the prisoners was found in "lives of crime." Many former tecatas had based their survival on illegal activities. Many of them had earned large amounts by shoplifting, stealing or prostitution. They had often supported themselves and their old men, and earned an adequate amount for a comfortable life style. However, this adaptation to marginality had a poor potential for advancement. Heroin was an integral part of the "lives of crime" of these tecatas. It served to effectively prevent the women from ever really gaining control over their lives.

Despite their past economic and emotional struggles, mother remained a role commonly cherished by prisoners at the W.H.U. The nurturant role of mother had provided them with one, real source of identity in a society which deprived them of access to most of the other forms of power.

A Question of Identity - Part Two

"Doing is being" (Goffman, 1961, pp. 180).

The individual can live in society with some assurance that (she) really is what (she) considers (herself) to be as (she) plays (her) routine social roles, in broad daylight and under the eyes of significant others (Berger and Luckmann, 1967, p. 101).

Identity is a developing quality. The development of an identity as a mother is progressive. The potential actress first learned the image of the identity from the performance of others. Later she came to apply this image to herself. She came to measure her sense of self by her performance relative to the expectations she had for the identity. Role identities are the expressive skills carried on in maintaining and managing an identity. McCall and Simmons stress the importance of role identities to self-esteem (1978, p. 75).

The construction of a social identity is central to the behavior in which a person engages. It is crucially important that s/he approve the result. Ability to assert and approve one's identity however, depends upon people and situations external to the individual (Hewitt, 1970, p. 14). A woman may play the role of nurturant female perfectly, but without social approval she cannot take on the identity of mother.

This report describes a setting in which the major social identity of mother was continually threatened by the organization of the situation. The threat arose from,

1. insufficient opportunities to perform the role behaviors in a socially approved manner,
2. insufficient audience support for the behaviors when performed,
3. insufficient personal qualities and characteristics necessary for performing the role in a socially approved manner.

The description of a threat to identity is couched in the language of dramaturgy (Perinbanayagam, 1974, p. 521). This frame of reference illustrates the concept of identity as a line of action devised by an individual as an occupant of a particular social position (McCall and Simmons, 1978, p. 65). In this chapter, the experiences of the eleven sources have been used as illustrations and examples of threats to identity. The organizational arrangements of prison deprived them of their identity as mothers. In such an arrangement, women were able to live up to their personal expectations as actresses, to social expectations of audiences, and to phenomenal expectations for the character only with great strain (McCall and Simmons, 1978, p. 83).

Actresses - Sense of Self

There was usually very little the woman prisoner could contribute to her children. In fact, it was likely that her incarceration had caused great hardship for the prisoner's children and the woman knew and suffered too.

For example, Gloria told me of the fear and anxiety her small son suffered because the police insisted on involving him in her arrest and the mortification of her incarceration.

The little boy was arrested with her and held in jail. He was very fearful and the reassurances of the police seemed only to increase his anxiety. After a while he was forced to leave his mother in jail and to spend the night alone in a foster home. Gloria protested that it was unnecessary; her son and his sister were welcome at their grandparents' home. She knew they would relieve some of his fears. Instead he was driven over one hundred miles to another city to spend the night in a strange home, because it was part of the regulations. There the child cried and was sick from fear of losing his mother. Afterward he had nightmares about this experience, Gloria reported.

In Helen and Dee's case, they had actually come to feel

the loss of their children. Loss came about because the grandmothers who had cared for the children during their incarceration had simply replaced them as mothers. They knew their children would always consider their grandmothers as "mother" rather than them.

Their response to the loss of the identity of mother was mixed. It was a relief to know their children were being well cared for and loved. Dee and Helen were proud of how well their children were doing. Yet, they felt they could not really share in their children's well-being nor feel a sense of accomplishment for having a hand in the development. They were outsiders, as Helen herself said she dreamed about it, able to look in on the joys of childhood but not taking part.

Audience Support for the Role

There are any number of categories by which women are known, (sex, age, ethnicity, occupation, etc.). These categories help the audience to typify them and place them in relation to other persons and other experiences. In the case of women prisoners, there are also pivotal categories. These are categories taken by the audience to be the essential nature or core being of the women (Lofland, 1969, p. 127). A pivotal category leads to expectations for a clustering of other categories which

the audience expects to occur together. Pivotal categories are used to predict a variety of personal qualities which designate what such a person is like. They provided predictability and reduced ambiguity between prisoners and between prisoners and administration.

If the pivotal category was child abuser, for example, very negative expectations were often held by the audience for a woman carrying this stigma. Sonia knew she could never get over it. Her charge was a source of continual emotional stress for her. Gloria maintained her innocence and thereby rejected the pivotal category outright. Yet, she said, "I'm a victim of child abuse, whether I did it or not."

Another pivotal category was that of junkie. There were certain expectations held for those fitting into this category, as well. Before some audiences the junkies were looked on as "hard core" criminals who saw themselves as better than other prisoners. They were expected to have been "bad women" who sought their own pleasure and selfish ends. These women were often suspected of having neglected their children and not having shown proper concern for their welfare.

Junkies responded defensively. While rejecting accusations of child neglect, they accepted the institution

of motherhood.

Judy said, "I'm proud I'm a junkie, at least I never hurt an innocent child." Gail said, "Even when I was strung out, I gave my kids their turn. I took my turn, but then I always paid attention to them and gave them their time." Ann added, "I may have been an addict, and I may have hurt myself, but I never abused anyone."

Women in prison found audience support for the identity of mother difficult to sustain. Even among their fellow prisoners, women found it difficult to muster support for their performances. Helen said, "I'm not saying that all the women here are bad mothers. They have their reasons, we all do. But, you know, when I see that a woman only thinks about her kids when she gets drunk; then she cries for them, the rest of the time she forgets them. Well, I believe a woman like that is a bad mother."

Substitution

Since children are in such short supply at the W.H.U. other behaviors must be substituted to gain audience support for the identity. Some women found that fellow prisoners needing care and concern came to make them feel "motherly". Madge and Carol mentioned this. These two women were somewhat older than the others and thus

the relationships seemed to follow the usual family, age patterns. While no other prisoners mentioned mothering their fellow prisoners they did speak commonly of their concern for one another,

Prisoners described a few women they had known in Santa Fe as mamas. These women were overly solicitous and nurturant to the rest of the prisoners. Mamas sometimes earned the affection and support of other prisoners because of their help and concern. At other times, mamas were meddlesome nuisances who would not mind their own business. Mamas were identifiable because they called all the prisoners by terms of endearment such as "baby, doll, honey or sweetie." Other prisoners called each other by these endearments, as well. However, for most prisoners, endearments were used situationally. In some instances they called a fellow prisoner "baby". In other instances they were themselves called "baby" or "honey". In this way, women prisoners used situations for mothering as well as being mothered.

Demonstrations

There were few other ways in which women at the W.H.U. could act out the identity of mother and gain audience support. Photographs of children were often shown and cherished. Letters were demonstrations that the woman's

identity was authentic. Presents from children were also evidence of a real relationship. Visits were, of course, the most important basis for social support of the identity.

A prisoner's own behavior could only rarely become instrumental in supporting the identity of mother. Most of the women had only a very little money and little opportunity to earn more. They could provide only minimally for their children. So the women devoted much time and energy to making gifts and acquiring items in trade for presents for their children and for others' children, as well. A complex system of barter and exchange developed at Christmas time so that each woman could maximize the number of presents she could send, and especially what she could acquire for her children. Helen traded macrame owls, Gail, Ann and Rose crocheted various items for trade. Sonia, Gloria and Raye sewed, Dee made beaded jewelry, and Judy decoupaged. These behaviors were in part social actions by which women could gain support from the audience for their personal identity as mother as well as contribute in a small way to their children's well-being (McCall and Simmons, 1978, p. 62).

Talk

Talk was also used to support the identity. Women discussed children and mothering with each other. Fellow prisoners were used as teammates in maintaining a positive definition of the situation (Goffman, 1959, p. 91). Women came to know a great deal about each other's children and they helped their fellow prisoners preserve the identity of mother by their conversations and advice.

One Human Relations class was devoted in part to giving support to Raye's identity as a mother. A crisis had developed because Raye's little girl had ruined her hair by putting potions, creams, lotions and oils in it. Raye's family could not get all of these cosmetics out and had told Raye of the dilemma by telephone. They had decided that the only solution was to cut the child's waist length hair. Raye begged them to keep trying other solutions and not to cut the child's hair too hastily. She promised to call them back the next day to check on the progress.

Raye began to seek other ways of handling the problem to prevent cutting the little girl's hair. Her friends offered suggestions from experiences they had had with similar incidents. They comforted Raye and tried to be helpful. Those who had seen the child

sympathized and agreed that the little girl was absolutely beautiful; that her hair was her crowning glory, and that cutting her hair off was indeed a tragedy.

The problem was solved. The child's hair did not have to be cut. The incident served to strengthen Raye's identity as mother, even though she could have very little effect on the crisis itself.

The Character - Social Image

The social institution of motherhood provides the social image of the identity of mother. The institution is contradictory. It leads to powerlessness. It divides women in their strengths and leads them to solitude in their weaknesses. It has a strong potential for violence, and it makes all mothers more or less guilty of failing in their children's development. Despite the discrepancies and contradictions in the reality of motherhood they experienced, compared to the ideal of the institution of motherhood they had expected, all of the eleven sources spoke of wanting to be good mothers to their own children.

Ann regretted the little she was able to contribute to her daughter. "When I think of how little I can do for her, I feel like a real crumb," she said.

As criminals, women prisoners recognize the difficulty of their positions in the institution of motherhood. Helen

asked, "How can I tell my daughter not to do this or not to have sex, or whatever. She was born out of wedlock, I'm a criminal. I can't hide what I've done. How can I tell her anything?"

In many respects this aspect of the image of mother resembles the image of husbands and fathers drawn by Elliott Liebow in Tally's Corner (1967). The image of mother is based on hopes and wants, not on real expectations. This image mirrors the women both as society says she should be, and as she really is, enlarging her failure from both sides (p. 212). Liebow calls it the cultural model of the larger society as seen through the prism of repeated failure (p. 221).

Prominence

As McCall and Simmons have pointed out, prominence is a strong variable in identity. The identity which is most prominent has the largest stake in the individual's self-esteem. The more prominent the identity, the greater the investment of self and the greater the loss of self when the identity is not supported (1978, p. 97).

In the Human Relations class at the W.H.U., a test for the prominence of specific identities was implemented for the class members. This test is a simplification of the Twenty Statements Test devised by Kuhn and McPartland

(1954). The test was administered to thirteen women prisoners, in a group setting. Volunteers were told to number their paper from one to twenty. They were then directed to write "Who Am I?" across the top and answer that question with twenty statements which began I am _ _ _ _ _ . Fifteen minutes were allowed for the answers; not all of the thirteen subjects supplied twenty self-references.

The complete data from the test is presented in Appendix A. It is interesting in several respects in addition to relating directly to the prominence of the identity of mother.

Kuhn and McPartland describe the prominence of a self-reference in this test to be relative to the spontaneity with which a particular reference will be used as an orientation in the organization of behavior (1954, p. 73). Or, in other words, the greater the prominence of an identity, the greater the probability of an identity being involved in a variety of settings (Stryker, 1977). In the analysis of the results of these tests, place of the response was used as the indicator of prominence of a self-reference. Answers listed in the first five statements are considered prominent.

Secondly, the categories of responses, were amplified.

With a sample of thirteen, the categories of self-reference could be broadened to include a number of prominent categories. The explanations for the division of self-references into categories is also included in Appendix A.

Finally, several women used self-references in more than one place which fit into only one category. This clustering of interest is apparent in the data as presented in Appendix A.

The following chart on page 211A describes the results of the "Who Am I?" test with respect to prominence. Every one of the thirteen subjects listed mother in one of the five top places of the twenty statements. This chart also shows the relationship between the self-referent mother and other prominent identities held by these thirteen women prisoners.

Unfit Mothers

211A

	Responses	# of Women Giving Response	# of Prominent* Responses
Mother	13	13	13
Female	11	9	11
Myself	15	7	6
Extended Family			
Member	12	6	6
Wife	5	5	4
Age	4	4	4
Neutral Descrip-			
tion	8	8	3
Ethnicity	4	3	3

Prominence of the Identity of Mother

from the Who Am I? Test

*Prominence is measure by place in the twenty statements. Self-references listed in the first five positions are considered prominent.

The preceding chart presents evidence of the prominence of the identity of mother. Such a prominent identity is considered by McCall and Simmons to be major to the concept of self which a person holds. They described eight lines of active defense used by actresses when major identities cannot be legitimated through role performance (1978, pp. 86-94).¹

Threats to a Major Identity

An episode in which a woman escaped during the time of the research came about because of overwhelming threats to her identity as mother. Her daughter was incarcerated in the girl's detention center on the same grounds. With her daughter's trouble a major identity was called into question. In such an instance there was a great discrepancy between what the actress and audience expected and the situation that was experienced. The actress may choose to withdraw from the interaction as was the case in this escape. This woman removed herself from the situation in the only way which occurred to her.

She said the strain of her failure as a mother was "killing me, though I put on as if nothing mattered." She responded to the strain by walking away from her school release and getting drunk. She turned herself in

within twelve hours knowing she would be returned to Santa Fe where she would deal with her failure as a mother from farther away.

Threats to a major identity may also be managed through selective interpretation. "Talk" sessions enabled prisoners to gain positive evaluations of their values and behaviors as mothers from others. Support came from a group of fellow prisoners who "really understand". This significant group functioned to maintain and reinforce the prisoners' self conception (McCall and Simmons, 1978, p. 99),

Sasquatch was an example of a prisoner who selectively interpreted her situation. She was a prisoner at the W.H.U. convicted of child abuse. She married a prisoner at the main prison in Santa Fe convicted of child molesting. Other prisoners considered such a union sick and disgusting. They predicted that such perverts would never be paroled together. They did not approve of this woman and showed it. A few other prisoners did not take the marriage so seriously.

Raye reassured her and told her not to worry about parole; whatever happened was God's will. Sasquatch agreed. Then she added that her marriage must have been God's will

or the warden would not have approved the papers. She believed that she could help her husband because she understood him, and that they were good for each other.

The third tact for maintaining a major identity which is called into question is selective perception. In prison a woman remembered her children in a fond and pleasant way. She put aside the memories of conflict, deprivation or trouble which led to her crime. She was not involved in the realities of supporting and socializing her children, so she tended to forget the negative and idealized the positive aspects of mothering.

The institution of motherhood began to control the identity of mother completely since women had few daily experiences with the reality of motherhood. Women were able to deal with the institution of motherhood by means of selective perception. Their conversations about their children rarely dealt with all of the dismal reality of motherhood they may have known through suffering and stress. It was focused on those aspects of mothering which are included in the ideal; pride, affection, concern and enjoyment.

A fourth response to a threat to a major identity is to take on another identity to replace the threatened

one. In some cases, women prisoners' attachments to men may have taken the place of attachment to children.

For the most part, women agreed that it was difficult to take on another identity which could replace the prominence of mother. "You know, men come and go and you don't even know about them. But children, that's different, they're always there," Madge told me. Ann agreed, "Your children are what matter; you always know where they are."

A fifth response to a threat to a major identity is rationalization. This involved a process of legitimating the identity. A woman prisoner must sift through the evidence to sort out a line of action which supported an explanation of her behavior, as, "the best I could do, under the circumstances."

Dee had to leave her young son behind to flee her home state and protect her brother from false arrest, for example. Ann gave up her daughter, "because I never wanted to hurt her." Helen's mother has come to be the real mother to Helen's daughter. She says that she can never separate her daughter and her mother now because they have grown too close and interdependent. Sonia and Gloria as child abusers were forced to legitimate their identities as mothers by their experiences with their living children

and in both cases there was strain.

A sixth response to a threat to a major identity is scapegoating. Judy blamed her mother for the loss of her own identity as mother. She described her mother as vacillating between extreme cruelty and indifference. Rose felt many of her problems stemmed from being molested as a child. Ann talked about abandonment and abuse, while Madge described her socialization in a house of prostitution, and Helen blamed the shock of her father's death. However, scapegoats were not always personal. Sometimes they were more "scientific" than personal. Many times the junkies blamed their loss of identity on the "sickness" of their addiction. Other women spoke of being "too nervous" or "emotional". These were not really scapegoats in the usual sense; but they still served to explain the behavior as having been controlled by external forces. In this way the woman prisoner could not be held responsible for the incarceration which threatened the major identity of mother. Scapegoating was one means by which women might alleviate their own feelings of worthlessness and degradation.

The seventh response to a threat to a major identity is disavowal of the identity. Some women claim they have no children and they want none.

For the majority of women prisoners, this is not likely. Eighty percent of women in prison do have children and all of the eleven research sources wanted and cared about the children they did have. Five of the eleven told me they wanted to have more children in the future. Even under great threat of loss of the major identity of mother, a woman prisoner was not likely to find disavowal of the identity to be a possible line of behavior. The identity of mother was so prominent in this culture that disavowal was seen as deviant among women prisoners. Value was placed on children as one of the few benefits in life. Dee wrote in her journal:

All I have left now is my own life and my memories of it: leave it at that. My son is the only thing I have left in this world that is beautiful.

Finally a woman prisoner may respond to a threat to a major identity by "rejecting the rejectors". This has already been mentioned as one of the responses used by junkies to audience expectations for them as mothers. However, this line was taken by prisoners other than junkies also. For example, Gloria was very angry about the newspaper stories which made her appear guilty of child abuse

so that she did not stand a chance of proving her innocence at her trial.

All of the eleven sources believed that the only reason they were in prison was that they were not properly defended. All of the eleven were represented by public defenders; all considered their trials to be unfair. Thus their status as a prisoner, which threatened the major identity of mother, was a mistake not the actual result of their own behavior. In Matza's terms, female prisoners neutralized their offense by rationalizations which came from the ambiguities, discrepancies and errors in the system of "justice" itself (1964).

Strategies by which women prisoners may attempt to maintain self-esteem although a major identity is threatened are: withdrawal, selective interpretation, selective perception, replacement, rationalization, scapegoating, disavowal or rejecting the threat. Each strategy involves an attempt to build self-esteem and develop a positive social identity.

Explaining one's behavior as a response to the situation when the outcome is negative is a common personal strategy for prisoners and nonprisoners alike (Kelley, 1973, p. 107).

However, techniques for maintaining identity may be perceived differently when used by women prisoners. Raye spoke disgustedly about her first parole hearing. A report about her character was read and among other negative traits she was reported as "always trying to make herself look good."

Isn't that what every mother f__r is trying to do? she asked.

Hewitt points out:

Whether defined as deviant or conforming, behavior is always a product of the motivations and capabilities of individuals and of the situations in which they find themselves (1970, p. 14).

Hewitt goes on to relate these motivations and capabilities to self-esteem:

A person's position in the social system may subject (her) to differential evaluation.

Negative evaluation and serious interference with self esteem inhibits the person's ability to get along with others (1970, p. 37).

In the case of the identity of mother for women prisoners, these eight lines of defense were seldom completely successful. The identity of mother may even come eventually

to be painfully recognized by some prisoners as a formerly legitimate identity that has been lost (McCall and Simmons , 1978, p. 219).

Footnotes

¹Two poems written by prisoners serve as further examples of the prominence of the identity of mother.

TO MY SON

He is far away. Doesn't society realize he was the
one to pay?

The price I paid was a baby's trust.

How will I make it up to him? All I know is that I must.

Can I piece back together all the pieces of a broken heart?

Can I replace a little boy's dream?

Why can't the Judge who sentenced me see beyond a mother's
mistake?

How long will I be gone, he asked.

How long does it take?

He told me he was lonesome - Lord knows I am too.

But, how do you tell a five-year-old about the price you
have to pay?

When I left he promised he'd be strong, - Lord why should
a child pay for a mother's wrong?

I haven't been gone too long - Lord knows I'm not very strong.

When it comes to a baby's laughter, you'll find that not
much else will matter.

He asked me who was gonna help him when he skinned his knee -

Lord knows the hurt and pain he feels when he
turns and looks for me.

The tears I shed, I carefully hid in silence and in sorrow.
I had to go away.

Why doesn't society realize the price my little boy and
I had to pay?

When he wants his huggy bear, and his crazy monkey with
a tear,

When he wants to know how his back grows and why are
froggies green?

Why can't they be purple, Mommy?

With questions I have never seen.

But, when he asks why Daddy's dead - Lord why is life so mean?

by Dee

DEDICATED TO MY DAUGHTER

My feminine beauty
So perfect in every way
May rainbows color your world
Sunshine fill your day
Happiness and tranquility see you through the years
A fine man who loves you to soothe your fears
And when needed -
Kiss away your tears...
A beautiful daughter
A handsome son
I want you to have something, be someone
I pray you don't walk in the wake of my footsteps
And do as I have done
Living off a needle - always on the run
I could write you a novel...
On the different lives I've lived through
The wishes I've made -
That never came true
The promises I've vowed
But never kept
The feel of tears, I've never wept...
My daughter, I want so much for you

My only wish is to see your dreams come true
To someday be your friend and hear you say
"Mother, It's gonna be O.K. now - I love you too."

by Judy

Appendix A

The Who Am I Test

The following chart gives the responses of thirteen subjects who were asked as a group to describe themselves with twenty statements beginning; I am _____.

Not all thirteen subjects supplied twenty self-references. Seven statements was the smallest number supplied by any subject. In one case, a subject supplied eight statements but erased number seven. Eight of the thirteen supplied more than thirteen statements.

There was no strict time limit given. However, papers were collected after fifteen minutes had passed. At that point all thirteen subjects had agreed that they were finished.

Twenty-one categories were derived from collapsing a diverse number of self-references. For example, within the category of intelligence were included self-references as an intelligent person, as well as of self as not intelligent. Another example is the category "caring for others" which includes various self-references as a person concerned for others.

Myself is the category in which all self-references to the individual were included. Such answers as I am a person,

or I am me, or I am (name), are examples of the types of responses which this category indicates. This category is particularly interesting in view of the individualistic response to the administrative goals of the prison which is predictable on the part of inmates.

The categories, positive, negative and neutral descriptions include a wide variety of types and forms of adjectives for which no other commonality could be contrived.

The charting of the data shows the clustering of responses in particular cases and also that certain issues predominate in the concerns of the subjects. While Mother was the most consistently prominent self-reference, more women indicated either female or identity in first place than any of the other twenty-one categories.

SUBJECTS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
<u>CATEGORIES</u>													
Myself		1	8,9	1	16,1, 12,13			1,8, 13	1,20			1	
Mother	3	5	3	2	2	2	1	3	3	2	2	2	3
Family Member		1,13, 14	4,5,6	3	3			4,5	7,8	7		10	
Female	1		1			1		2	2,4,5	1	1		1
Caring for Others	12,20, 12,17			4	8				14,15	8	16,18		
Positive Description	11,19	11		9	20,10, 17	9,8	3,8	9,10 12,14	19,23 13,18	11,12 14,16 11,14	8,10 11,14	5	
Neutral Description		15			4,15, 19	6,7,10	5		10,16, 17	4,10 13,17		11,14	
Negative Description					18,14, 6,9,11		6			9,18	6,7,9 12	7,8,9 12,13	5,6,7
Prisoner		6,9		5				15	9			6	4
Religion/God	4,9	10								15	17	15	

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Intelligence	10	16		7,8			2				3,4		
Worker	15,13, 14									5,6	19,20, 13		
Wife	2		2			3		7		3			
Friend			7	11		4		6	6				
Size	7,8			10				11			15	4	
Age		3									1	3	2
Ethnicity	5,6	2									1		
Quiet		7,12					4						
Funny				6							5		
Happy	16				7				11				
Alone		8				15	5						

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All We Have In Here Is Time

Several authors have described the enforced passivity of prison life (Bowker, 1977, p. 119). Burkhardt describes this process as infantilizing and women prisoners as "babied" in prison (1976, pp. 127-130). The women at the W.H.U. were very aware of this state of dependency. Ann disgustedly asserted, "This is no prison; it's a doll house!" Her analogy was directed at the prisoners' lack of control and inability to direct their own lives. Instead the women were expected to stay where they were placed and do as they were directed by the administration.

Ann also resented the part she and other prisoners were expected to play when outsiders toured the W.H.U. She disliked extra cleaning and being forced to wear "street clothes" for outside visitors. She saw herself and her fellow prisoners as mannequins in the doll house rather than as real people.

Commonly and openly the administrator was called "daddy" by the prisoners. Sometimes this reference was made with affection, sometimes it was used jokingly, but frequently the tone was one of utter contempt. However personalized this dependency had become, the

prisoners were actually dependent on time. In prison, time took on a potential for personal alienation which is perhaps unique.

Keniston has demonstrated that alienation implies loss. He asserts that an accurate description of such a process must answer four questions (1960, pp. 391-392):

1. Alienated from what? (FOCUS)
2. What relationship has replaced the lost one? (REPLACEMENT)
3. How is the alienation expressed? (MODE)
4. Is alienation imposed or chosen? (AGENT)

Focus

The focus of alienation at the W.H.U. was time. Each woman had been given an amount of time to serve. This was her sentence (number) and her identity. Her time converted the woman prisoner into a thing - a number. Fromm says, "A thing has no self and (wo)men who have become things can have no selves (1955).

Prisoners' numbers came to carry social expectations for behavior. For example a ten to fifty was a long-timer. She may have received this number because she was considered a habitual criminal. Or she may have been a ten to fifty because a single crime was very severely punished. This was

more likely; habitual criminals generally served a combination of numbers from several charges. So, at the W.H.U., ten to fifties were often child abusers. Despite the length of their sentences, child abusers were not considered escape risks. They were often conscientious and cooperative because they identified with the administration and tried to serve its goals.

In addition, child abusers were denied work releases outside prison because of their charge. Thus, they were excellent kitchen helpers in the larger state institutional complex of which the W.H.U. formed a part. Because of this administrative expediency, prisoners commonly expected that baby killers would automatically be sent to the W.H.U. while other prisoners were forced to earn the privilege. Other women who were ten to fifties were seldom transferred to the W.H.U. Their number classified them as ineligible until they had served the greater part of it.

Replacement

In prison, the woman did not experience herself as the creator of her own acts. Rather a relationship of forced dependency removed self-control and replaced it with bureaucratic control. Her existence was managed and

routinized. In short, her autonomy and personal direction were replaced by submission to the administration.

The (wo)man was compelled by the social situation to do violence to (her) own nature (Feuer, 1969, p. 95).

In prison women submitted the control over their lives to the power of the administrator. It was he who made their decisions for them. Decisions prisoners made were subject to question and change. Even their choice of costume was subject to approval. Gail was dismayed that the administrator told her to button her blouse, for example. The blouse was styled with only two buttons, so she changed to another more modestly styled one. For another example, the prisoners were incensed when a rule came out that they must wear suitable attire, no housecoats or gowns, downstairs at the W.H.U. before seven p.m. It added to the plethora of rules and regulations which governed their lives and took decision making from their control.

In order to control one woman's behavior, a rule was often added or enforced by the administration which affected all the women. Because one prisoner shirked her household cleaning assignment a regulation was enforced about how much time must be spent by each prisoner on

cleaning. Because one prisoner passed drugs to children from the juvenile center, all the prisoners were restricted from talking to them. Because one prisoner was suspected of drug abuse, all the women were expected to give urine specimens on an irregular schedule.

In prison, one woman's need was not considered and all the women were managed as a group. On the other hand, with such a multitude of rules, all rules could not be enforced equally. Rules were actually used on a personal level. When administrators used rules to respond to conflicts with prisoners, the rule chosen depended on the prisoner involved and the behavior to be managed. Nevertheless prisoners were forced to submit to all the rules, to prevent the rules they ignored from being used against them.

Prisoners were forced to redirect their behavior mindful of continually changing rules and rule enforcement. Women relied on each other to give them guidance in adapting to rule changes. The woman driver was held responsible for passing on the formula for behavior each day to those who were away. The prisoner asked the driver, "Who's on?" The driver replied with the name and the mood for the moment. "Mrs. White, and she's pissed!" gave one

formula, and "Mrs. Black is in a good mood," gave a separate formula. There were variations for each of the matrons. The administrator's where -abouts and frame of mind were also described.

While driving in the car, prisoners who generally did not speak to each other would at least pass this information before lapsing into silence. Each knew that she must behave according to the rules when they returned to the W.H.U. It was important to find out which rules they would be expected to follow.

Raye became worried when she found out who the matron on duty would be when she returned home from work one day. She hurriedly cleaned out her purse and threw eight cents out the car window. "That broad doesn't miss anything," she complained. She began to prepare herself to submit to the questioning she knew would be coming. This is one example of the way autonomy was distorted and replaced by submission in prison.

Mode

The alienation of women prisoners was expressed by individualism, suspicion and mistrust of one's fellows. In some cases, a small group of friends were believed to be trustworthy. In these cases a "we" feeling of group alienation replaced the "I" feeling of personal alienation.

In the majority of cases, egotistical interests replaced solidarity with and love for fellow (wo)men (Fromm, 1955, p. 113).

Prisoners said, "When trouble comes down you have to face it alone. None of the rest could help you, even if they wanted to."

Dee called a meeting of prisoners to express mistrust openly. She hoped to put an end to gossip and rumors by openly confronting the entire group. The meeting was disrupted by the administration before she could present her argument to her fellow prisoners. She was placed in P.C. for inciting, and the rest of the prisoners presumed she was afraid. They decided she was a rat and she was faced with even more suspicion when she returned from P.C. Such a response to any attempt at solidarity came to be expected by the prisoners.

Madge was called to account to the administration for a fire she accidentally started in her bed. The administrator did not make a report of it, but merely warned her about the incident. She was relieved and began to praise her roommates for helping out and not being too critical of her. Gloria overheard Madge mentioning Gail's name. She saw Gail and warned her

that she could expect questioning because Madge was bringing her into her trouble in the office.

Gail was angry and confronted Madge indignantly. When Madge tried to explain that she had been praising her. Gail was not persuaded. "From now on, you'd better just leave me out of it. Don't mention my name at all," she threatened her. In this example, the system of dominance and threat imposed by the administration led to suspicion and divided the women from each other. Individualism was the mode of expressing alienation from such a system.

Agent

The alienation of women prisoners emerged from being compelled to do time for the state, specifically, the system of corrections. The loss of the sense of one's individuality as distinct from the role which the organization imposed was the basis for the alienation of prison.

Forced incarceration was particularly alienating during times of family crisis. Prisoners were left feeling frustrated and disheartened by family emergencies in which they could play only a small part. Sonia's husband needed critical kidney surgery. Ann's mother died. Gail's daughter was raped. Carol's daughter had

a baby. Each of them wanted to help, but she could make only superficial contributions. These periods of crisis left the women feeling increasingly resentful and bitter about their lives. The forced incarceration of prisoners interfered in family roles in several ways not simply by removing women from family interaction.

During the Christmas party, Rose's husband came to play music with a band. Women danced only with other women. Rose had to ask the matron for permission to dance with her husband. It was clear that the authority of the administration was above family traditions in this case.

Despite prisoners' continual quests for personal identity, prison life consistently did violence to their ability to create and sustain social roles (Feuer, 1969, p. 95).

What makes prisons so destructive is not due to staff inadequacies or poor administrators.

Instead it is due to the basic and largely unchangeable structural characteristics of the prison as an institution (Bowker, 1977, p. 119).

Three characteristics describe the agent of alienation in prison: it is based on a sentence of time, it takes

place in a total institution, and it is coerced. These are the characteristics which strain and distort prisoners lives. The alienation of prisoners is imposed by the court; it is administrated by the Department of Corrections. It was this administration which separated prisoners from outside roles to expedite management. Prisoner became an overarching social role which controlled all other aspects of daily life.

Categories of Alienation

Alienation was a matter of expectation from prison experiences. The prisoners came to expect frustration, futility, ambiguity, loneliness and helplessness. Melvin Seeman divided the concept of alienation into five separate categories employing the language of expectations (1959, pp. 785-790).

Powerlessness - expectancy or probability held by the individual that (her) own behavior cannot determine the occurrence of the outcomes (she) seeks.

Meaninglessness - low expectancy that satisfactory predictions about future outcomes of behavior can be made.

Normlessness - high expectancy that socially unapproved behaviors are required to achieve given goals.

Isolation - low reward value given to beliefs that

are typically highly valued in the society, apartness from society.

Self-estrangement - behavior is based on expected rewards, loss of intrinsic meaning or pride in behavior.

1. Alienation as Powerlessness - Prisoners lose control over their lives. In prison, women must look to the actions of others to determine outcomes. Rarely do prisoners actually experience autonomy or self-direction. Prisoners' lack of control over subsistence; food, shelter, clothing and cigarettes, illustrates their powerlessness. Their own activities had so little direct connection with their style of life and material comfort as to render them powerless.

Women were given little experience in providing for themselves. Prisoners turned-in their entire wages to the administration. It was managed for them. The outcome was a written figure which notified the woman of how much she had in her account, shopping money. This treatment reinforced the women in a position of dependence. Prisoners were not prepared for an active role in the economy, but were given experiences in giving up control.

The majority of the women earned twenty-five cents per hour working in the kitchen. If they worked very well

they were paid twenty-five cents per hour. If they worked poorly, they were paid twenty-five cents. There was no reward for excellence and no potential for advancement. The women were powerless to improve their life styles.

Any extra resources were supplied by outsiders. Women could exchange few rewards in return for the favors of outsiders. Gifts and supplies brought by outsiders were cherished. They were a symbol of a prisoner's affectional ties to society. She could do little to earn them nor could she hope to repay them for a very long time.

Prisoners were given subsistence by the state. Their own occupations and skills had little to do with the standard of the subsistence they received. The essentials of their existence were not under their control. Their powerlessness was not only symbolic and relative, it affected the very basics of life.

2. Alienation as Meaninglessness - Prisoners were aware that the future was not predictable based on their own behavior. Rose, for example, had reunited with her first husband while being held at the W.H.U. She said, "I told him, though, that I wouldn't hold him to anything. I may not get paroled, or I may get put on restrictions, and it's likely that I'll be transferred

somewhere else. If that happens, I want him to just cut me loose. I can't expect him to wait forever."

The prisoners were objects. Prisoners were most often considered by administrators neither with love nor with hate, but completely impersonally. According to Fromm, "Managers must manipulate people as though they were figures or things (1955)."

3. Alienation as Normlessness- Prisoners at the W.H.U. were aware that their position in the complex system of corrections had little impact on the outcomes they experienced. Adding further to this ambiguity was the lack of clear standards for decision making on the part of administrators.

Prisoners learned contradictory standards for decisions and sometimes no standards at all. For example Judy presumed she would be transferred from the W.H.U. when she found out that all the junkies were being sent to another prison. But, on the day of the transfer she was called an "escape risk" and remained at the W.H.U. Only a few days later, she found she was to be transferred after all. She became angry and resentful because she did not know what the next decision for her life might be. Another prisoner became resentful when she was given a report

and lost her chance for a parole board hearing for returning late from a furlough. She knew that other prisoners had simply been given a warning for the same behavior in the past.

C.W. Mills succinctly states this very issue: Authority is often not explicit; those with power often feel no need to make it explicit and to justify it. That is one reason why ordinary (wo)men, when they are in trouble or when they sense that they are up against issues, cannot get clear targets for thought and for action; they cannot determine what it is that imperils the values they vaguely discern as theirs (1965, p. 170).

Women had found that certain behavior might invoke one response at one time and another line of action might follow the very same behavior at another time. The standard rule of thumb which was heard expressed time and time again was simply, "Don't Ask." If a prisoner openly asked for permission for certain behavior she could never be sure what the response might be. It seemed better if she simply did not ask. Then she could claim ignorance or forgetfulness if the behavior was seen and disapproved by

the administration. No one was ever sure what standards might be used to judge her conduct; when she might be rewarded and when punishment would be the outcome.

4. Alienation as Isolation - Goffman speaks of the process of disculturation which is undergone by persons who are controlled by total institutions (1961). In total institutions today, television may distort this disculturation in insidious ways. If prisoners were completely shut off from the free world, they may have expected it to remain as it was when they left it. Prisoners at the W.H.U. were not completely shut off from the outside world. They were able to go into the city on occasion and observe changes taking place. In addition, T.V. was available to all. Many of the women passed a great deal of their sentence watching T.V. So, although there was a connection with life going on outside, it was mainly a passive one. The women watched but only rarely had opportunities to interact or question developments in the larger culture. The ideas they had about the outside world were distorted by commercialism, sensationalism, and lack of personal relationships.

The women had few authentic interactions with people on the outside for comparison. A former prisoner told me,

"You know, while I was in the joint I saw all these things on T.V. I thought things were going to be really different when I got out, everything new, new, new! What a let-down when I finally did get out."

In addition to disculturation, Goffman describes time spent in a total institutions as wasted time - time exiled from real living (1961, p. 68). This quality of time as dead time in which nothing good can be accomplished added to the prisoner's sense of isolation. She felt left out and frustrated. In the state of New Mexico, sentences were given in terms of a range of years, for example one to five years or two to ten years.¹ The woman often knew the least amount she could serve and the maximum amount, but also knew that her actual time would fall somewhere in between. Thus, she could never really be sure of the amount of time she would be forced to waste.

Some prisoners attempted to make use of this dead time by learning new skills and acquiring higher educational levels. But, this means of using time was sometimes seen as just another waste of time. Gail said, "The only training they've offered me is culinary arts. Do you think I should take that? I know I will learn something, you always learn something no matter what you do. And it might be

worth it just to get out of here a little while every day. But I don't want to learn cooking. I've done that all my life. I want training in business, but they told me I don't look like a secretary and no businessman would hire me. So, it's culinary arts or nothing, and I think I'll take nothing!"

5. Alienation as Self-Estrangement - This is the category of alienation of prisoners which is related most directly to time. The time given to prisoners alienated them from their own creative potential (Fromm, 1966, p. 92).

The following is a list of common prisoner expressions which refer to the meaning of incarceration as doing time. These serve as illustrations of the self-estrangement that is endemic in prison life.

Doing Time - passing the days, putting in time, just letting the time go by.

Hard Time - personal and isolating emotional distress related to being in prison. A head trip. Judy described her hard time as a period of time spent in a locked cell without company or any freedom of movement. During her hard time, Judy feared violence from her fellow prisoners, lost touch with where she was, saw spiders and hallucinated fearful creatures, became nauseous, weak and unable to do anything to help herself. For Rose, hard

time was less dramatic, her hard time involved severe depression, withdrawal and crying. Prisoners knew that anyone in prison was vulnerable to hard time. They understood and sympathized. Yet, doing hard time was also a sign of personal weakness to some extent. Gloria asserted, "They're just waiting for me to break down, but I won't."

Going Through Changes - worry, anxiety. This was one facet of hard time and a prison-induced state of neurosis. When a prisoner was described as being put through changes, mood swings and erratic behavior were the changes which were being described. For example, when the women found out that the junkies were to be sent to another prison on some unspecified date, several went through changes as a result. Some went through changes by sleeping, some became irritable and moody, others withdrew. During states of personal crisis, prisoners might have attempted to act cheerful, but again and again reality acted as a cold slap in the face. Rose tried to talk herself out of depression over and over, but each time she was made aware again that the upcoming transfer meant one more separation from her family, she became quiet. When she did speak, her voice sounded as though she were choking back tears.

Going through changes was a particularly alienating

process in prison since despite all the emotional ups and downs no impact was made on the system itself. One went through changes figuratively, but literally the situation remained the same. Dee wrote: "With prisoners, time does not progress, it revolves. It seems to circle around one center of pain."

Doing My Own Time - Letting the time pass without conflict or interference, Judy said, "After three and a half years, I know how to do my time. I could do it in lock-up or standing on my head if they'd just quit f_____g with me." For the prisoner being unable to do her own time meant, "repressing deeper feelings and acting in ways which run contrary to what s/he would express herself (Feuer, 1969, p. 93)." Prisoners complained that administrators would not allow them to do their own time.

Judy had been trying to obtain a divorce while she was a prisoner. Delays and official regulations had prevented her from filing for this divorce for several years while she was in Santa Fe. Finally she was able to begin the process right before her transfer to the W.H.U. When she arrived here she found she must begin the process all over again because of the change of jurisdiction. She was beginning to make progress on the divorce again when

it was decided she would be transferred to still another jurisdiction. By that time Judy was frustrated and incensed. "Why won't they just let me do my own time?" she asked.

Good Time - time off from the sentence for good behavior. Some good time was statutory; but the assignment of good time was left to the discretion of the administrator. Good time was a threat rather than a reward in most cases. Raye told me, "All they can do in here is take your good time, they can't add to your sentence." On some occasions prisoners were lumped out. This meant they were assigned a lump sum of good time which equalled the amount of time left to be served. Perhaps not surprisingly this was often done simply to get rid of recalcitrant or problematic prisoners. Rarely was a prisoner lumped out as a reward for meritorious behavior.

Straight Time - serving the entire sentence without benefit of parole. This was known as flat time or finaling. Since some women were denied parole repeatedly and others were granted parole at their first hearing, it was possible for a prisoner serving a shorter sentence to actually do more time than

another prisoner serving a longer one. This alienated the women who repeatedly saw doing time as further and further removed from the actual crime for which they were convicted.

Number - your sentence. Actually having a number really meant two things combined in one term. In the first place a prisoner got an identification (I.D.) number by which she was known.

Secondly, one's sentence was a number (of years).

One could do a number and be a number. This came down to taking on the identity of a prisoner. In this sub-culture, it was inappropriate to ask a prisoner, "What are you here for?" But, it was considered polite to ask someone "What's your number?" Numbers were roughly ordered in the following manner:

One to five,
two to ten,
ten to fifty, and
life.

These numbers and combinations of them, were frequently used to categorize prisoners as short-timers, long-terms, and lifers. Depending on the decision of the court, a prisoner could serve more than one number concurrently. That is, they might serve several sentences at the same time. Others were forced to serve several sentences

consecutively, or back to back. This was called numbers running wild. This expression referred to the outlook expected from a woman with so much time to serve.

Prisoners spoke of having a number put on them or "They'd like to just slap another number on me." In this way, they made clear the stigmatizing effect of conviction. Ann was jokingly saying one day that she'd even prostitute herself if she thought it would help her to get out. She laughed, "I'd offer him my ass, but he'd probably just put another number on it!" She realized the potential numbers had for stigmatizing prisoners.

In effect, the woman prisoner became a number. She experienced herself as alien mastered by her sentence; identified and categorized by a number, and unable to create her own action as long as she was administered as a number. This quality of time in prison conveyed a mood of pervasive tragedy rather than the possibility of effective action (Feuer, 1969, p. 97).

Action, Work and Labor

In The Human Condition, Hannah Arendt has drawn a major distinction between labor, work and action (1958). This analysis relies heavily on her concepts.

Labor

Arendt categorized behavior which meets physical necessities as labor (p. 87). She described labor as related to biological capacities and characterized it as meeting basic human needs. Arendt makes clear the alienating potential of labor since it absorbs energy but leaves nothing behind. Labor is never-ending, reaches no goal and in effect produces nothing. Most of the women at the W.H.U. were involved in labor as the predominant form of social behavior. Each day they labored in the large institutional kitchen where food was produced, consumed, produced, consumed and produced again. Most of their activities in the kitchen were actually directed toward cleaning up. This is perhaps the extreme example of labor which produces nothing but must continually be repeated.

It was not simply that the women were involved in labor which enslaved them in necessity that was so potentially alienating at the W.H.U. Most humans are involved in labor to at least some extent. It was the compounding of certain characteristics of this labor which was so destructive to human nature.

In the first place, women prisoners did little else but labor. Their labor was necessary to support the complex

of state institutions of which the W.H.U. was only one part (Chandler, 1973, p. 52). For this reason they were held responsible for the labor of many more people than themselves. They ended up enslaved by the necessities of a very large group. This demonstrated clearly the relative position of these women prisoners. They were expected to deal with the labor necessary for the maintenance of the rest of the group, but no members of the rest of the group labored for these women.

In the second place, the labor at the W.H.U. was coerced. The women could refuse to labor only under threat of sanction. During the period of research, one prisoner did just that. At first she went through the motions of going to the kitchen, but did no labor while she was there. When threats and insults from the kitchen manager proved to be of no avail, she was told to leave. The administrator at the W.H.U. also used threats and persuasion in an attempt to get this woman to labor. She steadfastly refused. Finally, all her privileges were removed and she was sanctioned by a disciplinary committee.

Few of the women were willing to undergo such harrassment. Even more, they could not afford to give up their small income, canteen privaleges, shopping trips, or recreational activities. In addition, they

realized the boredom this prisoner experienced and felt that labor was preferable. Also, they knew that such refusal caused resentment among their fellow prisoners. They heard others say, "Why does she think she's too good to do what we all have to do?" Finally, few women refused to work because they were unwilling to take the risk that a major disciplinary report would be prepared for their records. Such a report would eventually be used against them at their parole board hearing. In a very real way, these women were forced to labor.

In the third place, labor at the W.H.U. was poorly rewarded. It is common in society that labor which is most aversive is also most poorly rewarded. However, at the W.H.U. the twenty-five cents per hour paid to the women was considered not simply inadequate, but an insult. This demeaning salary added to the alienating potential of their labor.

Finally, a fourth characteristic of the prisoners' labor created a great potential for alienation. In prison, women's labor was not considered on its own merits. Instead it was used as a part of a judgment of the moral character of the women. Women who labored well in the kitchen were said to be showing that they had reformed. This basis

for judgment rests on sexist assumptions that women are criminal because they will not fulfill their domestic roles properly (Klein, 1976). Labor and cooperation in the kitchen were used as standards for evaluating a woman's potential for returning to the larger society. It was presumed that women who would labor without complaining would be ready to fit into the roles available for them outside of prison. Prison labor reflected the sexual division of labor in the U.S. patriarchal society. It coerced women into maintaining their subordinate positions in it.

Work

Arendt designates work as activity which leaves some product behind. Work is utilitarian (p. 174). Work is less alienating than labor since the finished product remains and the worker need not repeatedly perform behaviors which show no results. For example, many of the women worked on needlework and handicrafts. By their efforts women produced products for trade, gifts and for their own personal use. Also, a few of the prisoners at the W.H.U. were involved in work and school release. However, this was only possible after a woman had first proved herself worthy by laboring well in the kitchen.

Women who were involved in release programs outside the prison were considered to be receiving privileges. Any infraction of rules might result in revoking these privileges. In addition, most frequently women had little autonomy over the choice of these activities. Jobs were difficult to locate and for the most part, "take what you can get," was the motto.

Many of the women were involved in a "work" release which really meant labor. The jobs which were available were often those which required cooking and cleaning and left no tangible product behind.

Experience in such occupations in the services sector of the economy relegated the women to marginality and perpetuated patriarchal divisions of labor.

While labor outside of prison lacked the potential for alienation of labor inside, it was still demeaning, coerced and used for moral judgments about the prisoners' characters.

Sometimes women were released to school. In some cases they were actually working in these programs rather than laboring. Their educational certification was a tangible product of their efforts. For these women, their endeavors were more utilitarian and less potentially alienating.

Even at the level of work, though, Arendt points out that work lacks potential for creativity. By definition, work is not performed for its own sake. This implies a degradation of effort into means, and devaluation of human activity into mere instrumentalization (p. 157).

Action

What was missing from the lives of the women at the W.H.U. was the potential for action; behavior which was not alienating. Arendt describes action as taking an initiative, the potential for beginning anew (p. 180). She says action is possible only in the public realm. It always establishes relationships and has an inherent tendency to force open all limitations and cut across all boundaries (p. 190). Action is inherently boundless and unpredictable (p. 191). This form of human effort is completely in opposition to the confines of total institutions. Action, while completely social, does not fit into the rigid form of "batch" living. It is spontaneous, reveals unique personal identities and transcends mere productive activity (p. 180). A person's actions tell us who she is, while "everything else we know of (her), including the work (she) may have produced and left behind, tell us only what (she) is or was (p. 186)."

Without action, the time spent at the W.H.U. alienated the prisoners. Much of the rule breaking behaviors of the prisoners could be described as attempts to create their own personal action. For example, in an interview in a local newspaper the administrator of the W.H.U. explained, from his perspective, why so few of the women took advantage of work and school release programs:

It's like casting pearls before swine...Other things become more important than school and work release - getting drunk, getting drugs, having boyfriends (Albuquerque Journal, Oct. 29, 1978, p. C-2).

The behaviors which the administrator cites are actions. In a prison setting, these may be a few of the only spontaneous, creative and purely personal actions the women experienced as long as they were doing time.

Past, Present, Future

In prisoners lives, time was not separated into past, present and future in ways which are common to people outside of total institutions. The present may be a singularly unpleasant reminder to the woman prisoner of the object she has become. The past and the future might lure her into fantasy and become the time-space

of dreams. This could be an important escape in an organizational arrangement which removed the abstract quality of time and concretized it.

The Past - "The Jacket"

A prisoner's past had the concrete form of a file of information about her. This was called her record or jacket. Any action she had performed which was known to officials may have been in this jacket. Often women were not really sure of how much information the authorities had about them, and it frightened them.

Helen was very worried before her parole hearing that an incident which happened long before her present case had come to the attention of the police might be included in her jacket. She did not know whether to try to explain the incident before she was asked, to avert suspicion; or whether to remain quiet about it hoping no one was aware.

Madge was denied furlough to visit her aunt. The administrator discovered from her jacket that Madge's aunt was a madam in a house of prostitution.

Besides these records of official action, jackets also contained behavior reports for women during all of their period of incarceration. Reports were used as punishment by the administration.

Rose remembered having been threatened with a report for having paraphernalia for the use of heroin. In fact, she said, the paraphernalia had really been part of her guitar.

Relationships with persons on the outside were also recorded in the woman's jacket. Judy was denied visits and letters from the man to whom she was committed. According to her jacket, she was officially married to someone else and therefore, she could not choose her own source of male companionship.

The Present - "The Number"

The day-to-day life of doing time for women prisoners is often boring and slow. Prisoners could often be heard simply wishing their time away. "I wish Christmas would be over... it's a drag." "I wish Monday would come so I can go visit my old man." "I wish April would get here so that I could go to my parole board." "I wish a year would pass so I could be with my little girl again," and so-on and-on.

Along with being boring, the present was also broken up into blocks and marked off into segments. Waiting for the next segment of time seemed to be like "watching the clock" making time pass even more slowly. Some of the matters which were routinely scheduled were shifts for kitchen workers, visits, phone calls, meals. In addition,

shift changes for the administration, especially matrons were also carefully noted and used to mark time.

The counts were one particularly concrete aspect of marking time for the women. Once every day each prisoner had to be officially registered as present. For this a meeting and roll call was held every evening around seven p.m. During the research period, no one was ever reported missing at a count. Often someone was in the bathroom or upstairs or somewhere else when the count was taken. But each evening the matron was responsible for determining that all twenty-four women were accounted for. A prisoner's sentence was marked off from count to count; another day of doing time. Whatever else may have gone on - that remained.

The Future - The Board

The future for a woman prisoner was usually ordered around "when I go to my board." A parole board hearing was a nebulous, anxiety producing event. Even though she knew when the hearing would be scheduled, the prisoner could never be sure of the outcome. Still, going to my board was the nearest place in time which one could think of as the time she might be able to start living on her own again.²

Even though a woman was paroled, the future outside the prison could also be controlled by the organizational arrangements of prison. In the first place each of the women was aware that the stigma of doing time would follow her into the future. In addition, each of the women had experienced some strain or conflict with her family and friends as a result of incarceration. Each knew that this strain was likely to lead to future problems. Finally, each of the women realized that the time spent in forced dependency inside reduced her ability to be independent outside in the future. The idea of getting out had many emotions surrounding it and fear was common. Ann feared living alone and worried about the threat of violence and physical harm. Madge feared loneliness and the destructive relationships she might enter because of it. Sonia feared what people would say. She dreaded meeting certain people on the outside who were instrumental in her conviction. Helen feared getting sent back again.

Each one was aware that doing time did not imply correction. Instead time spent in correctional institutions decreased the likelihood that a woman would make it in society outside prison.

Footnotes

¹ Since July, 1979, the state of New Mexico has been experimenting with a pattern of sentencing which is more determinant. Judges no longer will fix sentences within a range of years, but will give the convicted person a specific amount of time to be served. A period of parole will also be set prior to incarceration.

² The actual hearing seldom ended the ambiguity for a prisoner. When parole was granted at the hearing, a bureaucratic process was begun. The prisoner returned to the W.H.U. until the papers came down which signalled her actual release. Sometimes papers did not arrive until months after the hearing. At the least, the process took weeks. After each parole hearing, it was difficult to predict how long the process might take until the parolees would be able to leave this stage of suspended animation and re-enter society.

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A Place of Honor

Summary

Three ideas about women's criminality directed this analysis. Women prisoners have consistently been described as;

immoral, bad women

incompetent, mentally deficient

or sick, tainted.

A goal of this report has been to examine the social realities of these three ideas in the personal lives of women prisoners.

Morality

It was found that at the W.H.U. there was an emergent morality, a code of ethics and standards for behavior. Despite the heterogeneity of the prisoners there were expectations of right conduct which were shared and known by all the members of this sub-culture. The behavior patterns were a response to the goals and organizational arrangements of the corrections system. In the bureaucratic state prisons, incarceration has become a matter of management and organization.

In the public realm there is debate over whether criminals are to be deterred or rehabilitated (Tittle,

1978, p. 367). In their private lives, prisoners find that efficiency and management are the real goals of the corrections system. Such goals do not generally inspire the cooperation of the prisoner. Nor are they likely to lead to prisoner solidarity against a common threat. The response of inmates to such goals was individualistic and manipulative. In such a setting, honor became a matter of real question. Prisoners realized that expediency was the major criteria to determine what was right in the system of corrections. Prisoners based a system of human relationships on this exigency of their day-to-day lives.

The response was "the code". It was made up of every day expressions of speech by which women repeatedly reminded themselves of their common membership in a sub-culture. Common patterns of behavior emerged in this setting as similar responses to the same organizational arrangements. Values developed which were the response of the prisoner to the understanding she had of her incarceration. These values followed patterns found in the larger society. In prison they have been designated, conventional...snitches, situational...inmates, and counterconventional...convicts.

This last group, convicts, were those who were least likely to overcome the deprivations of prison life and

were most likely to serve several terms in it. According to Chandler, this group makes up approximately forty percent of the female prison population (1973). Fox also estimated that this group makes up around forty percent of the prison population (1976). He showed that tatoos were one way in which women demonstrated their identification with this exclusive group. Tattoos are visible expressions of the women's commitment to a counter morality; they are known to close off opportunities and relationships in the outside world from the tattooed woman prisoner.

It is possible that this group is growing as more and more women are involved in drug related criminal lives. Since the counter morality is developed and spreads inside prison and is taken into the life outside, it is likely that corrections perpetuates the very behavior it is ordered to change.

In prison, honor was a difficult characteristic to develop. The three conflicting value systems made a concept for understanding integrity and social respect difficult. Yet, even in such a diverse group of women there was a common idea of honor which reflected the group's general orientation toward the goals of administration held by the system of correction.

Devotion to the code of silence earned greatest respect. Talk was of the highest priority in the culture of the prison. In a society of women, talk was a meaningful form of behavior. What one said was as important as what one did.

Incompetence

Women's criminality has sometimes been explained as a personal lack of maturity. Women prisoners have been described as incompetent, irresponsible, children in adult bodies.

Hewitt describes this incompetence in a different way which shows the relationship of such incompetence to the social structure itself. He shows that it is fundamental that society contains some social arrangements in which participation is either normative or unavoidable, and that so inhibit development of adequate self-esteem as to produce poorly socialized people (1970, p. 41).

Social arrangements which inhibit the development of one segment of the population serve to maintain forms of domination by one sector at the expense of others. Prison is such a social arrangement. It coerces women into a position of submission and perpetuates the patriarchal division of labor in society.

The human relationships of prisoners are altered and many former relationships are strained and broken. Yet, women prisoners still place the highest value on family life and children despite the obstacles to such a life which are present in prison. A quote from a convicted woman called Soledad, interviewed by Pedro David, repeats the theme which was expressed again and again at the W.H.U.:

What I really want for a lifetime career--all I want is to live a normal family life, and you know, be happily married, take care of my husband and children (1974 , p. 167).

This highest value for women was given no priority in prison. The identity of mother was often lost to the convicted woman and only a negative stigmatized identity offered in its place.

Sick

It has often been assumed that women prisoners are dependent and seek the control of the staff to replace the control of males in their outside lives. Women prisoners are seen as weak and often drawn into crime by males. In the prison experiences of these women prisoners, dependency became a way of life and alterna-

tives were sanctioned. Action in the public realm was taken out of the hands of all group members but one; the administrator acted for them (Arendt, 1958, p.244).

All relations with social life outside the prison were made for the prisoner. Decisions which involved influence and control in public life were handled by the administrator. Prisoners were able to exert little control and submission was rewarded. Women prisoners' lives became routinized as a household. Women prisoners were bound up in lives of labor and their own actions played little part in human affairs. They were left with little that was personal, creative or spontaneous. This alienation was induced in total institutional life inside prison. Women simply did time, which was contrary to change and beginning anew.

In each of the three areas; morality, sickness, and incompetence, it can be shown that explanations of this behavior must take the structure of the setting into account as well as the personal meaning systems of the prisoner. From such a perspective honor became a matter of survival, incompetence was imposed by the situation, and dependency was related to alienation. Women prisoners could be sentenced to a variety of terms. Doing

time in a total institution is perhaps the least likely to be successful in adapting the woman to life in society. Membership in a sub-culture of prisoners is maladaptive outside of prison. Important social identities are destroyed by imprisonment making resumption of positive social identities outside of prison strained and difficult. The system of total control necessary for maximum efficiency and expediency in the bureaucratic system of corrections is destructive of creativity and the ability of the person to begin anew. The present system of sentencing persons to doing time is counter productive, inhumane and based on false assumptions. It cannot be justified as rehabilitative, deterrent or efficient. When time is the punishment, potential for correction is lost.

The Research Design

Convicted women represent only a small proportion of women, and an even smaller proportion of humans. They are easily overlooked in studies of human behavior. Criminologists have little information at hand for use in understanding this aspect of social life. Despite the dearth of information, women's criminal behavior may be an important aspect for understanding changes in sex roles. While changes in sex roles are often labelled

women's liberation, the lives of women prisoners testify otherwise. The realities of existence for convicted women derives from a patriarchal system of domination. They have seldom realized liberation.

Prior to this research the perspective of convicted women had never been explored in detail. This case study is offered as a description of the day to day realities of prison life. It portrays the social life there with an intimacy of account that was not possible from the data previously collected about convicted women in prison.

This research in prison was not designed or financed by the administration or the Department of Corrections for the state. Still, the women were called to a mandatory meeting to hear about it. Just this hint of coercion alienated many of the women for several months. The Human Relations class proved to be an excellent vehicle for gaining access to prisoners. Imposition of the research by the administration could have effectively cut off the opportunity to develop intimacy.

The researcher became known as a professor writing a book about women's prisons rather than a person with authority over the women. As a result, prisoners came to feel no need to hide their personal perspectives and were

willing to share their experiences.

The W.H.U. provided an excellent subject for a case study. It was small enough that one observer could be aware of most of the activity that went on there. It was a minimum security facility which eliminated many of the barriers to research found in prisons in which there is limited access to outsiders. The administrator welcomed the Human Relations Class and allowed open access to the prison under the auspices of an open corrections system in the state of New Mexico.

The prisoners in this prison were all felons, serious criminals, who had served time in another maximum security women's prison. These women were well aware of the realities of criminal life for women. Their reality became available for research only gradually. The prisoners devised small tests of the integrity of the researcher at each step in the development of familiarity. For information supplied, information was expected in return. For favors asked, favors were expected in return. In every case, each partner in the exchange was free to refuse.

In a short while it became an asset to prisoners to be a part of the research at the W.H.U. It meant

access to information and favors in the outside world. It was necessary to limit the number of sources of information if the process of exchange with them was to be maintained. The eleven research sources were a representative sample of the population at the W.H.U. in terms of age, charge and ethnicity. In addition, the sources were chosen for their unique potentials for adding to the intimacy of the account.

The description of the W.H.U. derives its intimacy from the explanation of these eleven prisoners themselves. Prisoners experiences were analyzed in form and detail to derive a realistic pattern for group life. There is an element of distortion which biases the report, however. This account is often based on the vivid and dramatic rather than the mundane. An overriding characteristic of prison life is boredom. For this reason, matters which would be insignificant and petty outside of prison take on importance and arouse interest. Adding drama to the narrative by selecting out incidents to report detracts from a real understanding of life for women prisoners. The real experience of prison is tedious and dull, for the most part. Understanding prison life must include a careful examination of the ways prisoners

manage their boredom and inactivity.

The case study of the W.H.U. was a unique opportunity to come to know prison life in a more realistic and in depth way. This research is based on an examination of the ways in which social structures are imposed in the lives of individuals. Many more such opportunities are open to researchers who are aware of the importance and need for microscopic analysis of all forms of social life.

Society of Women

Women prisoners are an interesting focus for studying aspects of strain in the social order. Study of convicted women provides an important source of information about social life. They form a subculture of women within the dominant culture controlled by men. Adaptations to life without men provide interesting insights about potentials for social life. Information about a society of women may help us to derive aspects of control which are more prevalent among women than men, for example. The women's prison remains a part of patriarchal society, but women develop the life styles found there in relation to other women. Many of the particularly masculine aspects of social life are seldom found in a prison for women and others were adapted to fit the particular needs of females.

Rape is rare in prisons for women. Rape among women was described as an attempt to humiliate the victim and frighten her. Since rape seldom occurs, however, it was difficult to verify reports about it. None of the eleven sources had ever seen a rape. One former prisoner who had done time in Santa Fe described an incident in which several black women jumped a white woman "to teach her a lesson." They taunted her, ripped her clothing and mishandled her roughly, but treated the rape as a joke.

The former prisoner did not consider the act to be sexual. She said the rape really was intended to scare the victim and "make her shut her mouth." Her description of female rape contrasts greatly with descriptions of male rapes (Johnson, 1977).

Rape is only one interesting aspect of a society of women. Sexuality in a homosexual institution is itself an interesting adaptation. At the W.H.U., there were few open lesbian relations. Women were aware of them but seldom brought up the topic spontaneously. Two women did talk openly of lesbian relations on the streets. Those who had been involved in sexual relations with women sometimes admitted their involvement if the topic of homosexuality came up. It was treated as a private matter

and not a subject for negative sanction from the group.

Of the eleven sources, Ann and Rose admitted they had had sexual relations with a woman for the first time in prison. Judy and Madge also spoke of homosexual relations. Gail and Dee never admitted nor denied sexual relations in prison. Each spoke openly and easily when the topic came up in conversations. Neither declared her own private position on the subject. Five of the eleven denied ever being involved with another woman sexually, but all five spoke about homosexuality with acceptance and without malice.

Judy mentioned playing the femme role on the streets to a stone butch, although she had played the butch role in the prison as well as the femme. Women agreed that the parts were quite flexible. But, there were women who consistently played the butch part. These were stone butches and had a somewhat masculine appearance. Women explained that the butch role did not automatically mean domination, though. Control over the relationship was dynamic. Either partner might take a position of domination or subordination. Control was based on personalities rather than sex role.

Other women formed affectionate relationships without sexuality. They openly hugged each other, nestled together

watching T.V., held arms while walking along, and patted one another affectionately. These displays of affection were public testimony of closeness between friends. Gail showed the breach in her friendship with another prisoner by reacting with hostility when the other woman tried to hug her. Caresses and a warm touch were the signs of real ties between women and were not often treated lightly. Some women had close touching relationships with several others. Some with none. Most became this close only to a select few. Breaking up such an important relationship was painful when prisoners were transferred or released. Many times women vowed never to make another close friend because of the pain of parting. Sonia said, "But for some reason, I keep making friends, and getting hurt. I guess you can't help it."

Sonia and Raye had declared themselves as close friends. They enjoyed each other's company and found many things to laugh about together. They made jokes about being two little, old ladies together some day.

When Raye was paroled, Sonia was several months away from her first board. Raye was determined to put prison behind her and begin a new life. During the last few weeks before Raye's release she and Sonia began to argue.

They were frequently angry with one another and refused to speak.

After Raye's release she did not write or communicate with anyone at the W.H.U. She dropped out of Sonia's life and was not heard from again. Sonia was left at the W.H.U. without a close friend and feeling very lonely. She reaffirmed her intention not to make any more close friends in prison.

Women to women relationships are a matter of great interest in understanding social life. Much of the literature on this topic is devoted to homosexuality. Relationships between women are complex and dynamic. An examination of homosexuality does not add information about the myriad of other forms of relationships between women. Focusing on sexuality distorts the explanation of social life in a society of women.

In the subculture of women at the W.H.U., talk played a much more important role than sexuality. It developed major importance. Talk was used to order groups, to sanction deviants and to reward conformity. Talk aroused strong emotions. Talk was remembered and what was said controlled behavior long after it was in the past.

Women were described with relation to talk. A woman

who talked about the affairs of others was deviant and was deprived of the support of the rest of the prisoners. A woman whose talk was insincere was considered a manipulator and looked down on. A woman who talked to the administration was called a snitch and she was avoided by other prisoners. Learning about talk was a major part of learning the culture of the prison. The prisoner "code" was predominantly devoted to talk. It was made up of rules about when to talk, and not to talk, to whom and about what.

The use of talk in social control is another interesting aspect of a society of women. This form of social control warrants closer examination and study. Its role in developing sex roles is unknown. The potential for talk in ordering human relations is an important priority for research in womens' prisons.

On Being Moral in an Immoral Place

Rosenhan has argued that sanity is relative (1973). It may not be possible to maintain conventional sanity in an insane place, and it is even more difficult to maintain conventional morality in an immoral place. The ordering of roles in prison society, the code of ethical behavior accepted there and the three groupings found there

all serve to demonstrate that the morality of prisoners was a response to the social situation of prison itself.

Prison is but one form of total institution. All forms of asylums have been related in their potential to institutionalize persons who undergo life in them. At the W.H.U., a woman was called institutionalized by the other prisoners when she had adapted so well to prison life that she was no longer interested in life outside nor able to enter into it. These were extreme cases, but all the women were institutionalized in small ways. Their various adaptations to life inside a total institution were appropriate only in this distinct setting. They developed few new behavior patterns which would meet their needs in outside life.

Prison may be an exceptional form of total institution because of the coercion and use of force which is found there. The separation between the administration and the prisoners was great. Women prisoners were sentenced to time in a correctional institution because they were considered wrong. The administrative staff was set up to correct the prisoners. Power and control were removed from prisoners who were wrong and placed in

the hands of the staff for correcting. Strain resulted from conflicts over the goals of correction: efficiency, restitution, or rehabilitation.

There are those who project that correction is most likely in a situation of rehabilitation. They feel that corrections are best obtained by giving therapy to help prisoners change their attitudes about crime.

Others project that correction is most likely in a situation of restitution. They believe that prisoners should be forced to suffer for their crime as a sign to everyone that criminal behavior is not tolerated in society.

In fact, the prison was neither effectively rehabilitative nor retributive. It neither helped prisoners nor acted as a consistent deterrent. The goal of correction was lost. Instead the goal of management became paramount. The director of the prison was an administrator. His control and directions were aimed at efficient management as a primary goal not therapy or punishment. Other personal concerns were secondary.

In total institutions the management of people is distorted by the control of the administration. In prison, total coercion is possible. This is a situation in which

much personal control may be lost by the prisoner, and an extreme of control may be granted to the administration. Toward the end of efficiency and good management, truly human relations may be lost. The potential for damage to the individual self is great.

Prison officials have indicated fear and concern about the "new breed" of prisoners incarcerated in the 1970's. This new kind of prisoner is described as more violent, manipulative and demanding (Mitford, 1974, p. 249, Bowker, 1977, p. 122). Yet the prison experts continually look for psychological explanations for an understanding of the "criminal mentality" (Yochelson and Samenow, 1978). The answer lies elsewhere. The prisoner of the 1970's is the direct result of ambivalence in prison goals between rehabilitation and restitution. This ambivalence have given way to goals of rationality and efficiency. Expediency on the part of the administration is met with expediency from the prisoners.

At the W.H.U., the goals of the organization centered around the efficient management of the prisoners. As a result the majority of the prisoners fit into the category of inmate. These women with situational values outnumbered the squares and the convicts.

Special circumstances have created a residue of convicts. Their values were the response to a long personal history of negative experiences with authority due to drugs.

The snitches at the W.H.U. were also the result of special experiences due to the nature of their charge. Since most snitches at the W.H.U. were convicted for child abuse, they were totally degraded socially. For these women, rehabilitation was the only alternative for salvaging an identity. The social climate of the times created an unbearable situation for a known child abuser and this made it likely that such a woman would seek treatment to save herself (Pfohl, 1977, p. 310). The majority of prisoners exemplified the rational goals which have come to fill the breach left between retribution and rehabilitation.

Goals for correction of prisoners were distorted and lost in a total institution. In such a "batch living" style, management overrode other needs. Asylums are one form of providing surveillance for persons who are designated as threatening or criminal. It is not the most effective form since the process of administration of large numbers of people adds expense and cuts efficiency.

Asylums cannot be legitimated as rehabilitative, they are not settings for adaptation to social life. On the

contrary, time spent in a total institution detracts from the ability to deal with life outside it. Nor can asylums be legitimated as deterrent. A person who has done time in a total institution is more likely to return to total institutions throughout life rather than less likely to return. Alternatives to total institutions are necessary if corrections is to become a meaningful goal. Women may be kept under careful scrutiny in their homes or at work. It is not necessary to confine numbers of women in close quarters without men in order to be sure that their behavior is not threatening.

Total institutions separate women from outside life, corrections must be concerned with life in society. Total institutions force women to give up control over their lives, corrections must be concerned with taking personal control and developing autonomy. Total institutions are concerned with efficiency and management, corrections must be concerned with personal needs and human relations.

The solution to criminality cannot come from better programs, added personnel, or improved facilities within total institutions. Corrections and total institutions are contradictory. The state director for corrections in New Mexico, Felix Rodriguez is quoted as saying,

"There are no experts in corrections. If there were experts in corrections, we wouldn't have prisons."

Organizational Threats to Identity

Separation from social life in prison consistently threatened women prisoners' ability to maintain identities as mothers. Participant observation data collected inside the prison cannot be used to determine mothering behaviors prior to incarceration. However, this analysis shows that loss of the major identity of mother is destructive to self esteem and is likely to interfere with any positive outcomes expected for released women prisoners.

Prison life threatened the identity of mother since :

Role Performance Was Limited Conviction as criminals posed constant threats to self-esteem and such minimal requirements of the mothering role as nurturing children could be met only with great difficulty (McCall and Simmons, 1978, p. 109).

Family Relationships Were Strained Familial life patterns conflicted with group life patterns of the organization (Goffman, 1961, p. 6). Visits were scheduled, ordered, and had to fit within specific guidelines. When Ann was reprimanded for returning thirty minutes late from a furlough, she complained, "It's really hard for our

families to arrange everything in their lives so that they can get us back here on time, especially when my family lives so far. But, here at the W.H.U. our families lives and needs aren't considered at all. I was late and that was that." Rules about visiting are quite specific, leaving little room for real family interaction. In substitution for authenticity, family members often share superficial and artificial interactions.

Gail found visits from her children less than fulfilling. The administrator forbade her from letting her small son run around outside in the yard. When the three children visited, they were supposed to sit stiffly on the couch near their family. The children found this confining and uncomfortable. They did not enjoy this highly structured interaction with their mother. Bowker points out:

The visiting room experiences of prisoners tend to confirm their deviant identities rather than to help in the resocializing process (1977, p. 66).

Visits sometimes added to the women's alienation from family life. The inability to meet minimum role requirements meant that commitment to social norms was constantly in danger and frequently pressures were so intense as to

encourage withdrawal from the performance of family roles altogether (McCall and Simmons, 1978, p. 109).

As Ann put it, "I just blocked the outside world out of my mind. I wanted to completely forget all about my people out there."

Decision Making About Her Children Is Left Out of the Hands of the Prisoner/Mother While losing the ability to control her own life in a total institution, a woman prisoner was also deprived of control over the lives of her children as well. Sometimes women had lost control over their children's lives long before their conviction. Others lost their children when they were incarcerated. In every case, prisoners could do little to re-establish control over decision making while they were in prison.

There were very few ways a woman could legitimate her identity as a mother. In reality, she played only a small part in the lives of her children, while she was incarcerated. Too frequently, even that part was a negative one since her incarceration brought sorrow and hardship to her children. In addition, the support of the children of women prisoners all too often stretched the resources of the mother's extended family to the breaking point. The child who was the source of the strain might be unwanted, abused, and feel

unworthy him/herself (Cottle, 1976, p. 516).

Certain Charges Limited the Ability of the Prisoner to Ever Sustain the Identity Again This was the case because of Judy's charges of lesbianism and drug addiction and Sonia's charge of child abuse, for example. In any case, the stigma of conviction posed social and economic problems for all women prisoners (Burkhart, 1976, p. 79). This stigma added to the difficulty of providing for their children when they were released.

Administrative Goals are Paramount Family life was not taken into consideration. Women were transferred from location to location without concern for maintaining visiting opportunities or ties to family and friends. Paroles were denied, furloughs cancelled, visits disrupted, phone calls refused and letters censored all in the course of keeping order and the management of a smooth running organization. The impact of such actions on the family relationship, and maintaining a major identity was not considered in these decisions.

No Outlet was Provided for Prisoners Experiencing Failure of Such a Prominent Identity This failure was likely to lead to desperate behavior as a response to the self-degradation and uselessness experienced by the woman

(Garfinkle, 1956, p. 420). While prison life deprived mothers of this prominent identity, no substitute was offered.

In a penal system directed toward retribution, such destruction of personal identities might possibly be explained as the price a convicted person must pay for her crime. But it is not clear how far punishing the criminal can go. Should the children be found guilty when the mother is convicted? (Burkhart, 1976, p. 264). Who else is responsible for restitution? Must the convicted woman's family be involved as well? Such questions could go on and on as the circle of retribution spreads outward to all in society who must pay for the outcome in human destruction.

In a penal system directed toward rehabilitation, such destructive treatment could hardly be called therapeutic. In prison the female prisoner often lost a major positive identity and was only offered a negative stigmatized alternative identity to replace it.

At the W.H.U., the administrators were not concerned with punishment. Nor was therapy considered the appropriate program for dealing with prisoners. Instead the W.H.U. was set up to manage the women. It was organized around

goals which directed energy toward smooth operation and lack of conflict. Although administration was the goal, often punishment was the outcome felt by the prisoner.

In each of the three cases, whether the organizational goals are retribution, rehabilitation, or administration, the result remains the same. Destruction of the major identity of mother, leaves women personally unfulfilled, causes family conflict and disruption and brings untold hardships to thousands of children every year.

Doing Time

The expression doing time is particular to prisoners. It implies a myriad of structural conditions springing from incarceration in a total institution for a sentence of time. In prison, time is the punishment. Felons must pay for their crime by serving a period of time. Such an arrangement is based on a false assumption. While criminal behavior patterns may change with time, they do not change simply because of the passage of time itself.

Forcing prisoners to do time is based on the assumption that corrections takes place when attitudes change. Doing time is supposed to give the person time to change her mind which will cause her to change her behavior (Rothman, 1971).

Attitudes are only one component of personality.

Each individual carries personal patterns of behavior as well as expectations in addition to attitudes. Correcting behaviors and expectations are every bit as crucial to corrections as changing attitudes.

It is clear that prisons actually do little to change attitudes in a positive way. Doing time increases potential criminality rather than lessening it. In addition doing time has a strong negative impact on behavior and expectations. Prisoners must be given many opportunities for performing constructive behavior. They must be given experiences which lead to positive expectations about social life. These are not possible when time is the sentence. Felons must be sentenced to change in behavior and provided with opportunities to make this change. Sentences of attending training, or work, or other contributions to society, are the alternatives to time.

Seriousness

In the present system, the more serious the crime, the more time the convicted felon is expected to serve. Yet, a murderer spoke of immediate remorse and thieves spoke of feeling justified years later in what they had done.

Recidivism

If a person has been convicted of several crimes

and has already served time, that person is given a longer sentence with each repetition of crime. Although time continually proves to be unsuccessful in deterring this person from crime, more time is the response given to the recidivists.

Further, it is clear that:

Learning to Do Time is Learning a Culture which is Distorted and Maladaptive in the Larger Society A woman who can do time without problems has learned to adapt to a total institution; such forms of behavior are rarely productive in life outside this setting.

Doing Time Sets the Prisoner Apart A woman doing time is set apart and outside of real relationships and interactions in the rest of society. Family life is curtailed in a way which accentuates failure and deprives the woman of important positive social identities. These identities are replaced by negative stigmatized ones.

Doing Time is Alienating Since most of their time is spent in labor which is destructive to the prisoners' potentials for beginning or creating new patterns of behavior.

Determinant - Indeterminant Sentences

A third assumption on which the present system is based is currently being challenged. At the present time,

the sentences are indeterminant, given in a range of years. The prisoner's behavior during this time is supposed to be used to determine how much of the sentence is actually served. However, in fact, powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation and self-estrangement removed the prisoner from a position of control over her own behavior. Prisoners knew that parole decisions were influenced in many ways and were based on many things. They believed that their own behavior and intentions might have very little to do with whether or not they were paroled. In such a situation, the focus was upon compliance at best. There was no basis for actual change of criminal patterns of behavior in such an ambiguous system.

Determinant sentencing is focused upon taking the ambiguity out of this situation. However, from the point of view of the criminal, determinant sentencing takes the ambiguity out of her number but simply adds to the ambiguity and the discretionary process of the courts.

Once convicted to a determinant sentence, the prisoner may begin to create a setting for doing her time. Determinant sentencing is believed by many prisoners to be beneficial. They see its potential for allowing prisoners the freedom to choose their own ways of doing time. However,

incarceration within the structural setting of total institutions makes the development of adaptive behavior patterns unlikely. As one former prisoner told me, "When determinant sentencing comes in, the first thing the convicts will do is get rid of all the snitches."

The conflict of values between snitches who support the administration, and convicts who deplore it can be expected to escalate. Convicts with scores of years to serve in prison are not likely to be deterred by the threat of more time. This prisoner predicted that violence will end the conflict on the convicts' own terms.

Violence is an extreme response predictable in such settings of close confinement, batch living and mortifications of the self. Increasing the amount of time spent in such a situation by prisoners should not be labelled corrections nor should such a practice masquerade as attempts to change criminal behavior patterns.

Women's Honor Unit

Women prisoners are given a dishonored place in society. Prison is a response for behavior which is deemed destructive. It imposes disculturation, mutilation of the self, and alienation. Sentencing women to time away from social life in total institutions is no more honorable than the behaviors it is designed to correct.

Confinement in a Total Institution

Surveillance is quite possible without confining criminals to asylums. It involves enlisting the support of families, friends and peers in corrections. When the correction of criminals is removed from the community it becomes isolated and distorted. Even in those cases in which close confinement is necessary to prevent destructive behavior, total institutions are counter-productive. Surveillance and security are best handled with fewer, rather than greater, numbers. Alternatives must be found for present settings of detention in total institutions.

Loss of Identity

A very large majority of women prisoners are mothers. Mothering is a highly valued role for them. It is destructive for these women and for their children when such a major identity is threatened. Women prisoners must be given support in their identities as mothers. Interaction must be encouraged and opportunities must be available to allow mothers to care for their children adequately.

Women prisoners pass on the products of their own socialization to their children. Often they cannot explain negative aspects of their own family lives. The socializa-

tion process of women prisoners is one aspect of corrections which should not be overlooked. Women prisoners at the W.H.U. often asked for lessons in childrearing and child development. They looked for help in analyzing the ways of caring for children they knew from experience. They sought suggestions for handling their children's problems and ideas for improving their relations with their children. Child rearing information and help should be openly available and easily attainable by convicted women. Both emotional and financial help with parenting should be an essential in corrections to lower the threat of future criminality. When mother is the major identity for a convicted woman, it must be supported rather than destroyed in the process of corrections.

Time is the Sentence

Criminals are sentenced to do time. Doing time is alienating and disruptive of individual productivity. Criminals ought to be sentenced to constructive activity. Alternative sentences are necessary which involve doing something. Doing time too frequently implies doing nothing. The passage of time is no indication of corrections. Change sometimes takes place overnight, and sometimes never takes place during a ten year sentence of time.

Sentencing convicted persons to perform behaviors is not a new idea. Alternatives to sentences of time are particularly desirable which remove criminals from total institutions. It is especially desirable that sentences do not detract from the criminal's ability to play a meaningful role in a family. Convicted women who express a desire to care for their children should be supported in their identity as mothers.

Sentences of time separated from social life and spent in a total institution are ineffective and cruel. They do not serve the needs of the criminal nor the needs of society for correcting destructive behaviors. The Women's Honor Unit was a microcosm of the destitution of the system of corrections in the United States. It was not a place of honor, but a source of dishonor to the society which supports such an institution.

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Digitization Information Page

Local identifier Mahan1979

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Content type Text
Source ID Gift copy from department; not added to MU collection.
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Date captured November 2023
Scanner manufacturer Fujitsu
Scanner model fi-7460
Scanning system software ScandAll Pro v. 2.1.5 Premium
Optical resolution 600 dpi
Color settings 8 bit grayscale
File types tiff
Notes

Derivatives - Access copy

Compression Tiff: LZW compression
Editing software Adobe Photoshop
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