CHAPTER ONE

Making It in the "Free World"

Women in Transition from Prison

Every day in the United States, women are released from state or federal prison, having served their time, to make their way in the free world. Often they have little more than a few clothes, coveted personal items, and the good wishes of buddies they leave behind when they embark on this journey of transition from prison. Each woman's route will take her in many directions, often without guidelines or a map to help her find her way, as she claims a new identity and discovers the normality of everyday life.

In this book, I will describe this journey for eighteen women who identified themselves as successful in making it after release from prison. Here too, these women will recount who and what made it possible. In this way, we get a sense of the woman behind the label of "ex-inmate." We also gain an understanding of the necessity to use our resources to make it otherwise for the thousands of women who linger in our prison facilities.

Since the naming of the "opportunistic" (Adler 1975) or "liberated" (Simon 1975) woman offender, contemporary concerned criminology has become more about lawbreaking women[1] and the correctional response to them.[2] In recent years, we have learned a great deal about the nature and extent of female offending as well as gender differences in crime. We know, however, far less about the aftermath of women offenders' conviction, incarceration, and return to the community.

The literature in criminal justice, criminology, and sociology has produced a litany of conclusions that overgeneralize men's experiences to women's

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experiences of release from prison. Chief among the many differences is the fact that when a man is released from prison, he typically returns to a home and a family (Belknap 1996; Fessler 1991; Johnston 1995), and has better opportunities for securing a sufficiently income-producing and legal job by virtue of his gender alone. When a woman is released, she often must reestablish a home and her family role. She is further challenged by the lack of income-producing employment with which she can support herself and her children. Other social, economic, and emotional situations she may face include the following.

1. Regaining custody of her children and reconstructing mother-child relationships severed and damaged by her absence (Baunach 1985; Bloom and Steinhart 1993; Dressel, Porterfield, and Barnhill 1998; Fessler 1991; Johnston 1995).
2. Establishing a new relational "web of connections" that reinforces noncriminal attitudes and behaviors (Covington 1998; O'Brien 1995a).
3. Finding shelter and meeting other basic needs (Austin, Bloom, and Donahue 1992).
4. Making decisions about continuing prior intimate relationships, which many incarcerated women characterize as exploitative and sexually or physically violent (American Correctional Association (ACA) 1990; Austin et al. 1992; Gilfus 1992; Harlow 1999; Robinson 1994; Sears, 1989).
5. Securing a job that pays a sufficient income, even though she may not have a legal means for supporting herself and her children prior to her being incarcerated (ACA 1990; Pollock-Byrne 1990), and even though she did not have access while in prison to vocational and educational programs to develop her skills (Feinman 1994).
6. Fulfilling the conditions of her parole plan if she has been released under the supervisory custody of the correctional system (Harris 1993).
7. Extending her sobriety (by virtue of the reduced accessibility of intoxicating or hallucinatory substances while incarcerated) to recovery from substance addiction (Arvantes 1994; Austin et al. 1992; Fletcher, Shaver, and Moon 1993).
8. Negotiating the stigmatized perception of her by others who fail to recognize her strengths and potential for change (Hoffman 1983; O'Brien 1994).

Although some of these barriers are similar to those faced by men exiting prison, many are more difficult for women, and others may have more detrimental effects on them. At the time of release, the typical female ex-inmate lacks a home, financial support, employment, socially legitimated and rewarded skills, practical knowledge about how to secure resources, and most lack a sense of hope

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for their future outside of prison. Contemporary feminist research has also contributed to our understanding of female experience of incarceration by not only contrasting it to that of men but emphasizing the role of patriarchy and sexual exploitation of women and girls to offending (Chesney-Lind 1989). These theories acknowledge female criminality as a reflection of the situations of women's lives, their attempts to survive sexism and racism (Arnold 1990), and the need for gender-specific treatment and services (Bloom and Covington 1998).

HISTORY OF WOMEN'S INCARCERATION IN THE UNITED STATES

Concepts such as vengeance, retaliation, penance, confinement, and rehabilitation are found in legal writings dating back to the ancient Sumarian Code. The first American prison was authorized by the Pennsylvania state legislature in 1790 for a design by the Philadelphia Quakers. They proposed that the Walnut Street Jail, built in the 1770s, be remodeled and opened as a penitentiary for children, women, and men. When opened, it contained separate facilities for women and children. By 1860 the county jail held fifty-seven white women and twenty-four black women, a female population of about 18 percent (Meranze 1996). These "custodial" institutions, derived from men's prisons and including regimes that stressed hard labor and harsh discipline, were the only type of penal units for women until the late 1800s. The first freestanding, independent prison for women was not built until 1874 in Indiana (Friedman 1993).

At the turn of the century, stimulated by the prison tours of social reformist Dorothea Dix, a movement began to promote the idea of a different and separate type of institution for women: the reformatory. Reformatories were based on the ideals of "true womanhood" that included religious uplift, an acquisition of domestic skills, and the ability to confine women for indeterminate terms until she was judged to be morally fit to reenter society. It was male protectiveness in the form of paternalism, when women are indeterminately sentenced to prison for reform of their deviant and unfeminine behaviors, that characterized early sentencing practices (Freedman 1981; Rafter 1990).

Dobash, Dobash, and Gutteridge note, "From the very beginning, women in prison were treated differently from men, considered more morally depraved and corrupt and in need of special, closer forms of control and confinement" (1986). Women were arrested for petty crimes or offenses "against Chastity." These crimes included fornication, adultery, and lewd cohabitation as well as "common night-walking" and required that women should be reformed as much as punished for their moral lapses (Friedman 1993, 233).

The allegedly more benign treatment of women was used to justify longer and indeterminate sentences when men received a definite minimum

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and maximum term at the county jail for the same offense. An interesting example is *State v. Heitman* (1919). In 1919 the Supreme Court of Kansas dismissed Mrs. Heitman's appeal of her indeterminate minimum sentence to the correctional state industrial farm for women for the offense of "keeping a liquor nuisance." The court saw no grounds for Heitman's appeal based on violation of the Fourteenth Amendment, the "equal protection" clause, opining that "the definite prison term was a relic of the stone age of penological theory and practice" while the treatment of delinquent women should rest on the "definite principle of reclamation as opposed to naked punishment" (634). Heitman would have the benefit of going to a separate institution in which she would work "in the sunshine and wind and free air" (633). Presumably this pastoral work would dissuade her from her depraved (albeit profitable) former occupation. No case of sentencing women superceded this decision until in 1973 the state statute was repealed by the Kansas legislature.[3]

Some scholars doubt that black women ever benefited from favorable sentencing practices (Collins 1997; Freedman 1981; Rafter 1990). Rafter notes, for example, that black women were put in chain gangs while white females were placed in reformatories. Black women historically were disproportionately committed to custodial settings as they are today, while higher proportions of white women were once sent to reformatories or, currently, to treatment centers.

The "reform" period for incarcerated women was relatively brief. Rafter (1990) notes that between 1900 and 1935, seventeen states opened women's reformatories. However, as both a response to perceptions about women's criminal behaviors and the belief that women were not being treated "equally" by the criminal justice system, the ideas that marked the reform period were diluted and the custodial emphasis reinstated. Chesney-Lind (1992) refers to this renewed emphasis and the increasing pace of prison construction as "equality with a vengeance," emphasizing the need to treat female offenders as though they were "equal" to male offenders. Rafter (1990) notes that by the 1980s, thirty-four women's units or prisons were established. This more punitive response to women's offending has not slackened in recent years as the surge in the numbers of women being incarcerated reflects a fundamental shift in our country's approach to women's offenses.

GROWTH IN THE FEMALE INMATE POPULATION

Since 1990 the number of people in U.S. correctional custody has risen more than an average of 1,708 inmates per week, resulting by midyear 1999 in nearly 1.9 million men and women in the nation's prisons and jails. Relative to their number in the U.S. resident population, men are sixteen times more likely than women to be incarcerated. However, since 1990, the female prisoner population has nearly doubled (92 percent) as compared to men (67 percent) and in

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each year since 1990, the annual rate of growth of incarcerated women has surpassed that of men (8.4 percent as compared to 6.5 percent) (Beck and Mumola 1999).

By the end of 1998 almost a million women were under some form of correctional supervision. Table 1.1 summarizes the category of supervision (probation, jail, prison, and parole) for both females and males, and indicates the percent increase in these categories from 1990 to 1998.

The data indicate that by the end of 1998 almost 150,000 women were incarcerated in either jails (63,791) or state and federal prisons (84,427) (Beck and Mumola 1999). Nine percent of the women on correctional supervision were on parole (82,300), while the bulk of women (76 percent) were on probation (721,400) (Bonczar and Glaze 1999). The total number of women under correctional control increased 57 percent in the eight years between 1990 and 1998 as compared to a 34 percent increase of men under correctional control

Table 1.1
INMATES UNDER CORRECTIONAL CONTROL BY SEX, 1990 AND 1998

	1990	1998	Percent Change
Probation			
Females	480,642	721,400	50
Males	2,189,592	2,696,213	23
Jail			
Females	37,198	63,791	71
Males	365,821	520,581	42
Prison (state and federal)			
Females	44,065	84,427[a]	92
Males	729,840	1,217,592[a]	67
Parole			
Females	42,513	82,300	94
Males	488,894	622,664	27
Total (all categories)			
Females	604,418	951,918	57
Males	3,774,147	5,057,050	34

SOURCES: Beck, A. J. (2000). *Prison and Jail Inmates at Midyear 1999.*
Beck, A. J., and Mumola, C. J. (1999). *Prisoners in 1998.*
Bonczar, T. P., and Glaze, L. E. (1999). *Probation and Parole in the United States 1998.*
[a]Estimated; see Bureau of Justice Statistics publication *Prisoners in 1999* for final 1998 count.

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during the same period. Population growth has occurred in each functional component of corrections since 1990—the number of women per capita under probation supervision climbed 40 percent; the jail rate grew 60 percent; the imprisonment rate increased 88 percent; and the per capita number of offenders under parole supervision was up 80 percent (Greenfeld and Snell 1999).[4] By midyear 1999, 154,686 women were in jails or under the jurisdiction of state and federal prison authorities (Beck 2000).

CHARACTERISTICS OF INCARCERATED WOMEN

Female inmates largely resemble male inmates in terms of race, ethnicity, education, and age. Most female offenders are in their late twenties or early thirties, at least high school graduates or holders of a General Equivalency Diploma (GED), and often members of a racial or ethnic minority.

African Americans have always represented a disproportionate number in our nation's prisons. African Americans have constituted more than 50 percent of the female prison population since 1996, far exceeding the roughly 12 percent of the general population they represent. Latina women are also disproportionately incarcerated in U.S. jails and prisons, but to a much lesser extent: In 1997 they constituted 13.9 percent of the female inmate population (Gilliard and Beck 1998).[5]

Women are, however, substantially more likely than men to serve time for a drug offense and less likely to receive a sentence for a violent crime, and, as a result, they generally serve shorter sentences than men. Recent statistics indicate that drug offenders accounted for the largest sources of the total growth among female inmates, 38 percent compared to 17 percent among male inmates (Beck and Mumola 1999).

Nearly six in ten female inmates grew up in a household with at least one parent absent, and about half of these women reported that an immediate family member had also served time (Snell 1994). Forty percent of female federal prison inmates and 57 percent of female state prison inmates reported physical or sexual abuse previous to their admission (as compared to 7.2 percent of the male federal inmates and 16 percent of the male state inmates) (Harlow 1999). This self-reported rate among incarcerated women is higher than the general population estimate of 12 to 17 percent (Gorey and Leslie 1997).

In a prevalence study of mental illnesses among male and female admissions in a large urban jail, Teplin (1994, 1996) found that 8.9 percent of males and 18.5 percent of females had diagnosable serious mental illnesses (dysthymia, anxiety, schizophrenia, bipolar-manic, major depression, posttraumatic stress disorder). A national survey of prison inmates found the highest rate of mental illness was among white females—29 percent (Ditton 1999).

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Nationally, the proportion of female inmates who are HIV positive/AIDS affected is increasing at a higher rate than that of men (Brien and Beck 1996). In a 1994 study of incoming inmates in New York, the rate of HIV infection among women was almost twice that of men (20.3 percent as compared to 11.5 percent) (ACE Program Members 1998). Smith and Dailard (1994) argue that the high incidence of HIV among women in prison can be explained by the similar factors that put these women at risk for contracting HIV or for being incarcerated: poverty, race, and drug use. Young (1996) found that women enter prison with a poor physical health status that derives from a combination of societal conditions and personal antecedents.

A major difference between male and female incarcerated offenders is the fact that most of the women are mothers. In 1991, more than three-fourths of the women in prison were mothers. Two-thirds of the inmates had at least one child under age eighteen. More than half of the female inmates reported their children were living with grandparents; a quarter with the child's father (Snell 1994). In a study of women in California prisons (where the largest number of incarcerated women reside), Bloom and her colleagues found that 80 percent of their respondents were mothers (Bloom, Chesney-Lind, and Owen 1994).

A conservative estimate extrapolated from the number of incarcerated women in 1998 suggests that at least 195,000 children younger than age 18 are impacted by their mother's incarceration (Young and Smith 2000). These mothers have to deal with the trauma of separation from their children that is usually compounded by the difficulties of maintaining their relationship via letters, phone calls (when available),[6] and visitation, depending on the distance of the facility from the children, the willingness of the caregiver to allow visitation, and the availability of transportation (Bloom and Steinhart 1993).

ETIOLOGY OF WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT IN CRIME

Although researchers are currently developing an epistemology of women's criminality (Daly 1994; Leonard 1982; Smart 1977), historically women's presence in the criminal justice system was often a footnote on works distinctly about men that claimed to cover criminality in general.

The earliest sociological writing purportedly about women's criminal behavior examined women's physiological or psychological nature as causative, to the exclusion of economic, political, or social forces. These deterministic theories include those of Lombroso (1903, 1916) who examined women's physical features to identify what he described as "anthropological anomalies" that led to women's abnormality; Glueck and Glueck (1934) who correlated "body types and feeble mindedness, psychopathic personality, and marked emotional instability" (299) to sexual deviance; Thomas (1907, 1923) who

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concluded that adolescent girls became "unadjusted" when they were deprived from making their wishes known or addressed by "socially useful" means (1923, 232); and Pollak (1950) who argued that it was women's intrinsic ability to conceal bodily processes that allows them to successfully commit crimes in stealth.

Common to this group of classical criminological writers is their heavily stereotyped view of women. Women are defined according to domestic and sexual roles; they are assumed to be dominated by biological imperatives; they are emotional and irrational. Because these writers see criminality as an individual activity, the focus is on biological, psychological, and social factors that would turn a woman toward criminal activity. These writings had a major influence on turn-of-the century reform responses to what were considered deviant and immoral women. They also provide the backdrop to more contemporary theories on female criminality, such as Konopka (1966), Vedder and Sommerville (1970), and Cowie, Cowie and Slater (1968), all of whom attribute delinquency in varying degrees to female emotions, dependency needs and sexual frustrations. They suggest that it is maladjustment to the feminine role that causes high rates of delinquency (Klein 1973).

More contemporary theories of criminology have produced a "sociology of deviance" (Heidensohn 1985; Leonard 1982) that has increasingly moved away from viewing deviant behavior through an individualistic lens of inherent abnormality and pathology. These theories see deviance as a normal response to structural demands and insufficiencies (Merton 1956), a process of role labeling created by those with the power to make rules about behavior (Becker 1963), and as learned behavior from relationships with others who define law violation as acceptable (Sutherland 1934).

Although these theories are useful for emphasizing that criminal behavior is not psychologically or biologically determined, it is men's experience that informs the findings. In this consciously new approach to deviance, women and girls are still not visible. Leonard (1982) critically examines the major sociological theories through a gender-specific lens to look at their fit for women's commission of crimes. She concludes that the theories of anomie (Merton 1956), labeling (Becker 1963), and differential association (Sutherland 1934) are all insufficient in that women, unlike men, are generally shielded from criminal learning experiences, more likely to learn values conducive to law-abiding behavior and so be at lower risk for labeling, and have different role-socialization.

Contemporary criminologists have provided a number of explanations for the increased conviction of women for crimes. Adler (1975) and Simon (1975) brought the issue of women's putatively increasing level of crime to the forefront by theorizing that the women's liberation movement that emerged in the mid- to late 1960s served as an equalizer, enhancing women's ability and ac-

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cessibility to participate in criminal behaviors. A number of other scholars have solidly refuted these theories.[7] Others have identified more stringent law enforcement and surveillance of women due to the "war on drugs" (Steffensmeier and Streifel 1993; Wilson 1993), and the significant increase in the 1980s of women's illegal and, in the case of crack cocaine, highly addictive drug use and consequent criminal activities (Mahan 1996).

Feminist theorists examine other factors that relate to women and crime including women's economic marginalization and dislocation (Carlen 1988; Carlen and Worrall 1987; Chapman 1980; Dressel 1994), the connection between victimization by abuse and criminal behavior (Browne 1987; Comack 1993; Gilfus 1992; Jones 1980; Robinson 1994), racism coupled with sexism (Daly and Stephens 1995; Hill and Crawford 1990), and adaptive resistance to victimization and/or oppression (Arnold 1990; Chesney-Lind 1992). These theories inform this study of former inmates to conceptualize the struggles that women surmount as they make the transition from prison.

Some studies (Arnold, 1990; Chesney-Lind and Rodriguez 1983; Robinson 1994; Widom 1989) have examined women's pathways into crime from early and repeated experiences of victimization. Chesney-Lind and Rodriguez described the existence of a systematic process of criminalization unique to women that magnifies the relationship between ongoing societal victimization and eventual entrapment in the criminal justice system. Widom (1989) found that both black and white women who were adjudicated abused or neglected as children had higher arrest rates as adults than women who had not suffered maltreatment as children. Robinson (1994) reported that girls' experience of sexual abuse and early sexualization produced increasing isolation and alienation from normative juvenile experiences and, hence, contributed to later criminal activities.

Structural sources of inequity play an even greater role in black than white women's crime. Chapman's research (1980) demonstrated that drug crimes are directly associated with economic need and, therefore, economic crime. Phillips and Votey (1984) analyzed participation in crime by black women who face problems common to all women in terms of unemployment, restricted labor market opportunities, and absence of a partner; however, they found that these problems are magnified for black women due to their status in society. Phillips and Votey (1984) also suggest that some crime is a consequence of disincentives created when former welfare recipients receive a less than a fair wage for their work and lose medical benefits.

Hill and Crawford (1990) found that a cluster of variables they term structural (i.e., unemployment rate and the gap between educational aspiration and achievement) more directly affected black women's lawbreaking, whereas, for white women, variables reflecting social-psychological processes (i.e., self-esteem and sex-specific goal attainment) were more influential. Dressel (1994),

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drawing from her work with mostly black incarcerated mothers in Georgia, described a kind of economic hopelessness in which the avenues for legitimate income-producing activities are becoming less accessible due to the interplay of racism, classism, and sexism.

Arnold (1990) suggests that this trajectory for young black girls from lower socioeconomic classes starts with precriminal behavior (i.e., runaway offenses) that in many cases represents resistance to victimization. These runaway girls are then labeled as "status offenders," and institutionalized in girls' homes, or imprisoned for vagrancy and other nonviolent crimes. Common to the girls' experience is a structural dislocation from the family, education, and legitimate and sufficient occupations. Arnold observes that once this process of criminalization is set in motion, "sustained criminal involvement becomes the norm as well as a rational coping strategy" (153). From interviews that Arnold conducted with fifty black women in jail, she concluded, "When not in prison, these women can be counted among the hard-core unemployed, the homeless, the drug addicted, and the sexually abused" (163).

Collins (1997) suggests that there are recurring variables in black women's lives that might in part account for the overrepresentation of blacks in the prison system. She contends that these variables constitute a "wheel of misfortune," including racism, sexism, poverty, and miseducation (37). Richie's work (1996) extends this contextual examination. Borrowing from the legal notion of "gender entrapment," she describes a cycle of vulnerability to men's violence and desperation that propels black women into a repressive criminal justice system.

The proportionately small number of women in the total inmate population can be best explained by the fact that historically and contemporarily, they commit fewer illegal acts (Simon and Landis 1991). Chivalry has also been discussed as a factor that has resulted in the lower representation of women among those convicted of crimes. The "chivalry" factor, defined by Raeder (1993) as protectiveness by male judges who wish to save women from the harsh reality of prison, has been thought to contribute to disparate and less severe sentencing of women. Research results are inconclusive about the extent to which chivalry has ever existed for women (Odubekun 1992; Visher 1983).

TRENDS IN WOMEN'S OFFENSES

Nearly one in three female inmates was serving a sentence for drug offenses in 1991, compared to one in eight in 1986. This increase in sentenced drug offenders accounts for 55 percent of the increase in the female prison population between 1986 and 1991 (Snell 1994) and 45 percent of the increase in the female prison population from 1990 to 1996 (Gilliard and Beck 1998). Uniform Crime Reports show a substantial increase of 176 percent between 1980 and 1989 of women arrested for narcotics and drug-related offenses from the previ-

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ous decade (Durant 1993). Inciardi, Lockwood, and Pottieger (1993) related women's use of highly addictive crack cocaine to the commission of illegal crimes to purchase the drug and to the fact that many women are convicted for drug offenses committed in the context of intimate relationships. Pottieger (in Feinman 1994) reported from her study that 29.6 percent of female heroin addicts relied on criminal activities, primarily prostitution, drug sales, and shoplifting, as their major sources of income. Pottieger also noted that "fewer women than men had steady employment and income, which might explain why more women than men relied on illegal means of getting money for narcotics" (Feinman 1994, 23). Women in state prisons (62 percent) were more likely than men (56 percent) to have used drugs in the month before the offense and to have committed their offense while under the influence of drugs (40 percent, compared to 32 percent) (Beck and Mumola 1999).

For every category of major crime for the period 1990–96—violent, property, drugs, and other felonies—the rate of increase in the number of convicted female defendants has outpaced the changes in the number of convicted male defendants. Property felonies, in particular, have evidenced a large disparity in rates of change; from 1990 to 1996, the number of males convicted of property crimes decreased about two percent while convicted female defendants increased 44 percent. The amount of violence committed by female offenders has attracted a great deal of attention over the past twenty years especially in media and popular culture depictions. Many assume that women are committing more violent and aggressive crimes than in the past but national statistics suggest otherwise. In 1998, 22 percent of women incarcerated in jails or prisons were convicted for violent offenses (Greenfeld and Snell 1999), compared to 32.2 percent in 1991, 41 percent in 1986, and 49 percent in 1979 (Snell, 1994). Table 1.2 provides the most recently reported numbers and percentages in each category.[8]

Table 1.2
OFFENSES OF WOMEN IN JAIL OR PRISON, 1998

	Jails	State Prison	Federal Prison
Violent Offenses	7,655 (12%)	21,056 (28%)	644 (7%)
Property Offenses	21,689 (34%)	20,304 (27%)	1,104 (12%)
Drug Offenses	19,137 (30%)	25,568 (34%)	6,624 (72%)
Public-order Offenses	15,310 (24%)	8,272 (11%)	736 (8%)
Total	63,791	75,200	9,108

SOURCE: Greenfeld, L. A. and Snell, T. L. (1999). *Women Offenders.*

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Murder accounted for about 30 percent of the women incarcerated for violent offenses in 1997. The victim-offender relationship differed substantially between female and male murderers. Of the 60,000 murders committed by women between 1976 and 1997, just over 60 percent were against an intimate or family member; among the 400,000 murders committed by men over the same period, 20 percent were against family members or intimates (Beck and Mumola 1999).

From 1990 to 1997 the number of female inmates serving time for drug offenses nearly doubled (99 percent) while the number of male inmates in for drug offenses rose 48 percent. Drug offenders accounted for the largest source of the total growth among female inmates (38 percent), compared to 17 percent among male inmates (Beck and Mumola 1999).

Steffensmeir and Allan (1998) propose a gendered theory of female offending that takes into account gender differences that "inhibit female crime and encourage male crime." These include: gender norms, moral development and relational concerns, social control, physical strength and aggressiveness, and sexuality. They argue that women's criminal lawbreaking parallels their economic marginality and different social context.

SENTENCING POLICIES

Despite the fact that every major type of crime measured has decreased significantly since 1993 (Rennison 1999), the general American fear of crime has remained. For example, in 1994, a Louis Harris poll found that 46 percent of a national random sample identified crime as the number one "serious problem facing the country" (Kagay 1994, 24). In 1997, an ABC poll found that 51 percent of respondents were more afraid of crime than five years before (Fear of Crime 1998).

This fear has fed a continuing "get tough on crime" campaign that has produced more punitive policies and more prison beds (Chesney-Lind 1991; Dressel 1994; Klein 1995). These policies are meant to make all of "us" feel more secure when "they" are removed from our midst. Rehabilitation efforts, as represented by programming within the institution for the offender, are eliminated by the competing (and growing) cost of putting people away for longer incarcerations, which have not been proven effective at deterring repeat offenses (Clarke and Harrison 1992).

State and federal jurisdictions have engaged in three decades of sentencing reform beginning with "indeterminate sentencing" in the early 1970s that empowered parole boards to determine an individual's release from prison up to "truth-in-sentencing" laws first enacted in 1984 that require offenders to serve a substantial portion of their prison sentences (50–85 percent depending on the state). Chesney-Lind (1991) has argued that the increases in

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women's imprisonment can be attributed to three major policy shifts: the "war on drugs," the implementation of mandatory minimum sentencing guidelines, and the "get tough on crime" attitude that has widened the net as a consequence of changes in laws and enforcement of penalties for less serious forms of lawbreaking.

These combined reforms have strongly influenced a nationwide response from that of rehabilitation of offenders to one that is almost exclusively punitive. Various state studies that indicate a sharp increase in women's incarceration rates for possession of drugs, as well as overlapping charges related to trafficking, support the contention that the putative war on drugs is a war on women that has clearly contributed to the explosion in the women's prison population (Bloom, Leonard, and Owen 1994; Chesney-Lind 1991; Gilliard and Beck 1998). In addition, Steffensmeier and Allan (1998), and Wilson (1993) argue that more stringent law enforcement and increased surveillance of women to gain information against associates in the drug-dealing network also results in their increasing conviction for drug-related crimes.

Mandatory sentencing for offenses at both state and federal levels also has affected women's increasing incarceration. Sentencing reforms were implemented to address race, social class, and other unwarranted disparities in the sentencing of men, but those reforms have operated in ways that distinctly disadvantage women, particularly in the federal system. Raeder (1993) found that in 1989, 44.5 percent of the women incarcerated in federal institutions were being held for drug offenses, and that two years later, this figure had increased to 68 percent. She also found that in 1991 only 28 percent of the women convicted of federal felonies were granted probation as compared to about two-thirds twenty years ago.

Judges in the gender-free world of federal sentencing guidelines have eliminated women's care for others as a relevant consideration for departing from the guidelines. In the past, these family responsibilities may have kept women out of prison. In 1988, before full implementation of sentencing guidelines, women constituted 6.5 percent of those in federal institutions; by year-end 1997, this figure had increased to 7.4 percent (Gilliard and Beck 1998). Not only do the guidelines contribute to the increased numbers of incarcerated women, they also ensure that women who are incarcerated spend more time in prison. For example, the mean federal prison sentence for drug offenders increased from thirty months in 1986 to a startling sixty-six months by 1997, after sentencing guidelines went into effect (Sabol and McGready 1999).

Finally, the proliferation of prison facilities for women as part of a "get tough on crime" public response may also contribute to the increasing use of facilities by judges and juries. When prisons are built, they tend to be filled, regardless of need as the net of social control widens (Chesney-Lind 1991; Harris 1987; Pollock-Byrne 1990).

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EFFECTS OF INCARCERATION ON WOMEN

Jo Ann Brown is a young African-American woman who was accused, convicted, and sentenced to life imprisonment for a murder she did not commit. Although she regained her freedom after nine years of imprisonment, her autobiography addresses the major "pains of imprisonment" that Sykes (1958) describes, such as loss of identity and separation from family and community. Brown summarizes some of these losses in the following statement from her book (1990):

> Remember that when you enter prison your individuality is immediately surrendered. From day one, you cease to be a person. You are a number, another head of cattle. All rights, privileges, and possessions belong to the prison administrators and, by their dictates, are doled out by their officers (119).

Goffman's (1961) observations of the daily regime in the "total institution" of the mental hospital have been used as an analog for the controlling features of prisons that effectively reduce to survival the inmate's exercise of personal agency and autonomy. These adaptive strategies usually do not address the personal and structural challenges of moving toward noncriminalized behaviors upon release. Jose-Kampfner (1990) notes, in a study of long-term incarcerated women, that they have to give up their concerns and relationships in the free world to a certain extent, so that they will not expose their vulnerability to feelings of grief and loss. She believes that exposure to external crises that the women have no power to manage could be counterproductive to learning what it takes to survive while incarcerated.

In the current climate, which has seen a huge influx of people incarcerated in state and federal prisons, there is little attention paid to the turn-of-the-century North American penitentiary ideal of rehabilitation or reform of the inmate's behavior (Faith 1993; Freedman 1981; Rafter 1990). Instead, the criminal justice system has two major purposes: protection of society by incapacitating the offender, and punishment of the offender.

Although lip service may be given to the ideal of rehabilitation, incarceration practices reflect the former view. For example, the implementation of sentencing guidelines, which standardize time served for all felony crimes, has effectively removed a powerful incentive for inmate participation in prison programs and avoidance of disciplinary problems, since there is no possibility of earning "good time" that might lead to early release from prison. Ultimately, the viability of the notion of rehabilitation is compromised both by the reality that most prisoners will return to the same social conditions that generated undesirable behaviors, and by the indisputably punitive nature of prisons as a measure and ex-

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pression of power relations within society. Foucault (1977) reflected this characterization of prisons as "the only place where power is manifested in its naked state, in its most excessive form, and where it is justified as moral force" (210).

Women who are incarcerated in the U.S. prison system have a variety of complex cognitive, emotional, and behavioral reactions to the constraints of the correctional environment (Baunach 1985; Burkhart 1973; Feinman 1994; Pollock-Byrne 1990; Watterson 1996).

Research shows that women, many of whom enter prison in poor health, experience more medical and health problems than male inmates (General Accounting Office 1979; Pollock-Byrne 1990; Sobel 1982; Young 1996). Women are more likely than men to seek health care in society at large and are no different in prison. Women have more medical problems related to their reproductive systems than do men. Women in prison also have a profusion of health problems related to their lives on the street. They may be pregnant on entering prison, increasing their need for medical services. They might also be suffering from sexually transmitted disease; they might be substance abusers, with all the medical problems associated with those addictions.

Comparatively, a smaller percentage of incarcerated men had children (63.9 percent versus 78.1 percent) and while only 25.4 percent of the incarcerated women's minor children lived with their father, 89.7 percent of the incarcerated men's children lived with the children's mother (Snell 1994). Because current demographics reflect a shift of the exclusive burden of responsibility of childcare onto a larger proportion of single women, a major source of trauma for women in prison relates to the effects of their separation from children, visitation with children, and custody during and after incarceration (Beckerman 1989; Bloom and Steinhart 1993; Dressel, Porterfield, and Barnhill 1998; Gaudin 1984; Johnston 1995; Ward and Kassebaum 1965).

Fessler (1991) found, in her study of both incarcerated women and women on parole, that long substance abuse histories had an effect on their reunification with their children after incarceration. Related to the needs of addicted women is the lack of drug-addiction treatment programs that allow women to have their children with them while in treatment. This policy sets up the woman to choose between continued separation from her children or her own recovery. Bloom et al. concluded from their evaluation of programs in women's facilities in California that even though 80 percent of the women prisoners are mothers, "There is a dearth of programs which address the critical parenting and family reunification needs of inmate mothers and their children" (1994, 14).

Turn-of-the-century prison reformers built women's state prison facilities in rural areas. The reasoning behind the choice of these pastoral settings is that they would inspire a sense of tranquillity and remove women from the

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corruption of the cities (Freedman 1981). The rural locations of prison facilities have also removed women from access to schools, training programs, and work-release opportunities usually found in cities (Pollock-Byrne 1990).

Educational programs for all inmates stop at the secondary level with the completion of the General Equivalency Diploma (GED) unless the inmate is able to independently pay for additional academic courses. A national study of prison programs by Glick and Neto (1977), as well as more recent surveys cited by Sobel (1982) and Pollock-Byrne (1990), indicate that women do not have vocational and programming opportunities equal to those of men, and that the available programs are limited to sex-typed, low-paying careers.

The lack of programs designed to prepare women for the transition from prison further exacerbates women's reentry challenges. Pre-release centers that provided support for male offenders proliferated in the 1970s, when federal funds were plentiful and faith in the rehabilitative ideal was strong. Although there is an insufficient quantity of pre-release programs and halfway houses for the men who need them, such services seldom even exist for incarcerated women, due to their smaller population.

A nationwide descriptive evaluation of 100 model programs that focus on women offenders in community settings found that the programs assisted participants in gaining self-confidence and successfully functioning within their communities (Austin et al. 1992). The effectiveness of the transition programs assessed in this study was strongly related to the individual program's attention to the participants' substance addictions, prior physical and sexual abuse, employment skills and aspirations, and familial relationships. Although the authors of the evaluation called for more commitment to funding such programs for addressing the "multidimensional problems of women offenders" (33), that commitment has not been forthcoming, except on a very limited and inconsistent state-by-state basis. When the necessary supports and resources are not made available to women leaving prison, the multitude of crushing realities and expectations for reestablishing their lives drug-free may send them straight to the corner dealer to begin the cycle again.

Although there have been improvements in the number and variety of programs offered in women's prison facilities, mostly due to litigation brought by women prisoners and their advocates (Pollock-Byrne 1990), meaningful and realistic programs designed to foster women's efficacy upon release are most notable for their scarcity. This significant lack of services for incarcerated women reinforces their relative powerlessness and economic marginalization in the free world.

Early studies of incarcerated women focused on their roles in prison and their development of "pseudofamilies" to compensate for their isolation from their "free world" families and intimate partners (Burkhart 1973; Giallombardo 1966; Heffernan 1972; Pollock-Byrne 1990). Each of these researchers found a

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system of kinship prison ties emanating from a dyad configuration of "mom" and "dad" and extending to a large network of loosely structured families. Gilfus (1988) found in her study of incarcerated women that these informal prison family systems are a gender-related response to the loneliness and deprivations of prison life and the loss of social status and roles; she also found that these families fulfill economic, relational, and protective purposes.

Although the dyadic relationships may or may not involve sexual activity, Pollock-Byrne (1990) discusses early investigators' overconcern with the "subcultural adaptation" of homosexuality in the women's institution (144). Robson (1992) notes prison administrators' fear of lesbian relationships within correctional facilities and the consequent discouragement and control of relationships by the "no-contact" rule (108). Men may also develop affiliations and relationships in prison as a subcultural adaptation to the prison experience. What is different about women's affiliations is that they intentionally replicate the family system from which they are separated, and seem to fulfill expressive rather than instrumental needs (Pollock-Byrne 1990).

The type and quality of relationships that women create with other inmates may be important for helping them survive the pains of incarceration. More important, the relationships may help model for them the possibilities and power that can be found in shared hopes. Ironically, a common parole condition mandates that former inmates not associate with other current or former inmates, even though other formerly or currently incarcerated women may have composed a former inmate's primary support system.

Finally, Jose-Kampfner (1990) provides eloquent testimony, from her qualitative study of seventy women serving long sentences, to the "existential death" that women experience from the day-to-day losses of self and their separation from the world outside the prison institution. Jose-Kampfner found that women who receive life sentences go through several stages of adaptation and response to the meaning of their own incarceration and, in order to cope with their sentences, experience an existential death that is similar to the stages of grief and loss described by Kubler-Ross (1969). If Jose-Kampfner's theory holds, women who are in transition from prison may need a process of rebirthing while they are still in prison. In other words, a woman who has experienced existential death would need to identify the parts of her former life she wants to resume as she prepares to resurrect into a world that has evolved in her absence (1990, 123).

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO WOMEN'S RECIDIVISM

There are various definitions for recidivism that often make it complicated to measure (Maltz 1984). One common definition is the resumption of an illegal pattern of behavior. Each recidivistic event or, more accurately, process reflects

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a combination of shifts in attitudes, thoughts, and behaviors that may culminate in eventual reincarceration, or some lesser sentence, (e.g., fines, additional parole conditions, jail time, changes in parole supervision from less intensive to more intensive, or other forms of community sanctions or monitoring). As represented by rates of recidivism, neither failure nor success are fixed outcomes.

Recidivism is the consequence of becoming reinvolved in a criminal activity that is reported and acted upon by law enforcement. While remaining uninvolved with the law is an achievement for a former inmate, it is only one criterion of community reintegration. Measures of success should be based on positive accomplishments, not simply on the absence of negative findings. From that perspective, the literature that describes how women make it in the community after release from prison is even scarcer than the literature identifying predictors of failure for women.

Very little research has focused on the identifying predictive factors for female reoffending and/or whether they differ from those that are predictive for male offenders. Recidivism is one of the most important issues facing those who formulate and administer sanctioning policies. Rates of recidivism are analyzed as an indicator of the effectiveness of correctional interventions to deter offenders from the commission of further crimes in the pursuit of public safety and optimally, to rehabilitate and restore individuals to the community.

A national report from a survey of adult releases in 1983 (Beck and Shipley 1989) identifies a number of variables that correlated with recidivism, including gender: men are more likely than women to be rearrested, reconvicted, and reincarcerated after their release from prison—the rate of rearrest is 11 percent higher among men than among women. Other findings indicated that recidivism rates are highest in the first year (25 percent are rearrested in the first six months and 65 percent within the first year); older prisoners have lower rates of recidivism; the more extensive a prisoner's prior arrest record, the higher the rate of recidivism and in the case of prior arrests, females with more than six prior arrests are just as likely to be rearrested within three years of release as are men; those who serve five years or more have lower rates of rearrest; and those released for property offense are most likely to be rearrested (Beck and Shipley 1989).

My analysis of the literature with male samples has produced sixteen variables in five categories that are associated with recidivism. Table 1.3 summarizes them.

Many of the state, county, and large city studies are consistent with Beck and Shipley's (1989) study. The single most salient variable for predicting recidivism among males is offense history, particularly the number of arrests prior to incarceration and the age when first charged with a crime as an adult.

In comparison to the studies on recidivism with men, there are fewer studies that have examined specific factors contributing to women's recidivism. Five prospective studies have identified several correlates of women's

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Table 1.3
VARIABLES ASSOCIATED WITH
RECIDIVISM ON MALE SAMPLES

Demographics

1.1 Age (Black and Gregson 1973; Blumstein, Cohen, Roth, and Visher 1989; Boudouris 1984; Carney 1967; Hoffman and Beck 1984; Ozawa 1994)
1.2 Minority status (Piper 1985; Beck and Shipley 1989)
1.3 Marital status (Curtis and Schulman 1984; Gunn, Nicol, Gristwoon, and Foggitt 1973)
1.4 Educational levels (Denver Anti-Crime Council 1974)

Family Dynamics
2.1 Victim of child abuse (Petersilia, Greenwood, and Lavin 1978)
2.2 Family criminality/incarceration (Blackler 1968)

Institutional Experiences
3.1 Education/Vocational Training (Boudouris 1984; Buttram and Dusewicz 1977; Cogburn 1988; Ducan 1977; Hassel 1988; Holloway and Moke 1986; Linden, Perry, Ayers, and Parlett 1984)
3.2 Maintenance of family contacts during incarceration (Adams and Fischer 1976; Glaser 1969; Holt and Miller 1972)
3.3 Relationships in prison (Adams 1979; Carney 1967)
3.4 Psychotherapeutic interventions (Carney 1971; Lindforss and Magnussen 1997)
3.5 Substance abuse treatment (Field 1989; Rouse 1991)

Life Contingencies
4.1 Employment stability (Curtis and Schulman 1984; Gunn et al. 1973; Petersilia et al. 1978)
4.2 Substance abuse (Petersilia et al. 1978)

Offense History
5.1 Juvenile record (Blumstein et al. 1989; Petersilia et al. 1978;
5.2 Younger at first adult arrest (Petersilia et al. 1978)
5.3 Previous arrests (Beck and Shipley 1989; Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority 1985)

post-incarceration recidivism (Bonta, Pang, and Wallace-Capretta 1995; Jurik 1983; Lambert and Madden 1976; Martin, Cloninger, Guze 1978; Robinson 1971). Other retrospective studies have examined factors contributing to recidivism after reincarceration. Table 1.3 summarizes the studies generated by research with female samples.

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The demographics for women recidivists are similar to those of men: they tend to be undereducated, low income, and unmarried. However, the studies indicate mixed findings for age and race. Jurik (1983) reports in her experimental study of female ex-offenders that older women have about the same probability

Table 1.4
VARIABLES ASSOCIATED WITH
RECIDIVISM ON FEMALE SAMPLES

Demographics

1.1 Age (Jurik 1983; Robinson 1971)
1.2[1] Minority status (Warren and Rosenbaum 1986)
1.3 Marital status (Long et al. 1984; Martin, Cloninger, and Guze 1978)
1.4 Socioeconomic status (Warren and Rosenbaum 1986)
1.5 Educational levels (Martin, Cloninger, and Guze 1978)

Family Dynamics
2.1 Victim of child abuse (Long et al. 1984)
2.2[1] Involved in spouse abuse (Bonta et al. 1995; Danner et al. 1995)
2.3 Family criminality/incarceration (Danner et al. 1995)
2.4[1] Broken home (Danner et al. 1995)

Institutional Experiences
3.1[1] Education (GED only) (Johnson, Shearon, and Britton 1974)
3.2 Maintenance of family contacts during incarceration (Bloom 1987)
3.3[1] Relationships in prison (Larson and Nelson 1984; Robinson 1971)
3.4 Psychotherapy (Banks and Ackerman 1983)
3.5 Substance abuse treatment (Fletcher et al. 1993)

Life Contingencies
4.1 Employment stability (Danner et al. 1995; Lambert and Madden 1976; Jurik 1983)
4.2 Substance abuse (Danner et al. 1995; Inciardi and Pottieger 1986; Lambert and Madden 1976; Lindstrom and Hallet 1992; Martin, Cloninger, and Guze 1978)

Offense History
5.1 Juvenile Record (Hamparian et al. 1985; Lindstrom and Hallet 1992; Warren and Rosenbaum 1986)
5.2 Age at first adult arrest (Beck and Shipley 1989; Danner et al. 1995)
5.3 Previous arrests (Beck and Shipley 1989; Bonta et al. 1995; Fletcher et al. 1993)

[1]Indicates inconclusive findings or findings that are inconsistent with those of men.

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for rearrest as younger women and Robinson (1971) found in her sample of former inmates that black women are less likely to recidivate than white women.

These studies also indicate that family dynamics have more of an effect on recidivism for women. For example, women's involvement in spouse abuse is a factor in several studies (Bonta et al. 1995; Danner et al. 1995). This is consistent with studies that estimate the incidence of spouse abuse to be much higher among women offenders than among women generally (Snell 1994; Harlow 1999) or among male prisoners (Snell 1994). Another unexamined area relating to family dynamics and possibly spouse abuse is the proportion of women who are convicted with a co-defendant or who commit a crime for, with, or because of a male intimate partner (see, e.g., Sears 1989 and Wilson 1993). Other relationships that women have while in prison seem to have mixed effects on recidivism: Robinson (1971) found that interpersonal competence in relationships reduces recidivism, while Larson and Nelson (1984) report that in-prison friendships lead to what they describe as a "criminal mind set."

Other differences in the findings (in comparison to studies of male recidivists) indicate that women who came from a broken home are more likely to recidivate. Surprisingly, women who completed their GED while in prison are only slightly less likely to recidivate than those who did not (Johnson et al. 1974). A follow-up study that tested the effects of a group psychotherapeutic approach during incarceration found a one-third drop in the recidivism rate among this small sample (Banks and Ackerman 1983).

A number of other studies that examine recidivism after the fact provide impressionistic findings that positive relationships (Schulke 1993), family support (Lambert and Madden 1976), and substance abuse treatment (Fletcher et al. 1993) may adversely effect recidivism. Only one experimental study tested whether economic support related to recidivism (Jurik 1983). In this controlled design with a subsample from the larger Transitional Aid Research Project (TARP), Jurik found a causal and negative relationship between economic support and rearrest for property offenses: as the women's income increased, the rate of arrest for property crimes diminished. In addition to the scarcity of prospective studies examining women's recidivism, many of the cited studies are methodologically weak using, for instance, nonrandom samples and retrospective impressionistic data.

INDICATORS OF SUCCESS FOR FORMER INMATES

Categories of findings were initially derived from the studies that have examined indicators of post-incarceration success for men, including family stability (Adams and Fischer 1976; Clarke and Crum 1985; DeVine 1974) and marital relationships (Burstein 1977; Curtis and Schulman 1984; Fishman 1986; Holt 1986). Table 1.4 summarizes the studies that have identified indicators of post-incarceration success or reintegration for women.

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Table 1.5
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS RELATED TO WOMEN'S POST-INCARCERATION REINTEGRATION

Category	Author/Year	Findings
Employment	Lambert and Madden 1976 Schulke 1993	Greater life-satisfaction and well-being found among former offenders with employment success.
	Koons et al. 1997	Acquisition of needed skills.
Family stability	Lambert and Madden 1976 Bloom 1987 Hairston 1991	Quality of life improved for women with close family ties; maintaining family ties of incarcerated women with children essential to post-release reunification.
Relationships	Schulke 1993	Relationships established during prison support post-incarceration efforts.
	Koons et al. 1997	Positive peer influences.
Self-efficacy	Hardesty, Hardwick, and Thompson 1993	Self-esteem related to perceptions of post-prison adjustment

These studies provide a starting place for identifying some of the elements that contribute to women's well-being after prison. Evaluations of community reintegration programs are also useful. For example, Banks and Ackerman (1983) suggest that important characteristics of a therapeutic program aimed at helping women make the transition from prison to the community include the development of socially appropriate coping skills, learning about community resources, and gaining a perspective on family and community roles. Gendreau (1996) notes that successful reentry programs emphasize teaching prosocial activities,

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utilizing cognitive and behavioral strategies, and facilitation of programs by sensitive and well-trained therapists. Bloom (1987) believes that increasing linkages with community resources and ameliorating negative factors in the social environments of former inmates are keys to the women's successful reintegration.

Internal perceptions about one's ability to manage daily life are related to the notion of self-esteem. High self-esteem has been found to be inversely related to recidivism (Fletcher, Shaver, and Moon 1993; Gendreau, Grant, and Leipciger 1979). However, Widom (1979), in her empirical study of incarcerated and non-incarcerated women, found that the assumption about offenders' lower self-esteem did not hold.

A review of these empirically derived findings indicate that successful reintegration is conditionally defined as: the former inmate's acceptance of adult role responsibilities according to her capabilities (i.e., economic sufficiency, parenting), the individual's perceptions of acceptance by the community despite what is often a stigmatized status, and the woman's sense of self-esteem or self-efficacy.[9]

Any complete effort to understand the causes of criminal behavior, and therefore to develop a helpful means of intervening and supporting behavioral and social change, has to examine all possible variables and individuals involved in the phenomenon, including both genders, all ages, all classes, and all ethnic groups. However, since the inception of the criminology field, research and correctional practices have focused almost exclusively on men, and much remains to be discovered about the impact of gender relations on social life, particularly in a field in which women's voices have not been privileged. As Daly and Chesney-Lind (1988) emphasize, feminist scholarship is not only about women; it is meant "to describe and change both men's and women's lives" (501). Perhaps as more is known about women and their needs, especially as they attempt to create a path for themselves out of crime, multiple perspectives can create a model of justice that is dignifying for all (Harris 1987).

As little as we know about women's pathways into prison, we understand even less about what happens to them after they are released from prison. The focus of this study is the discovery of those elements that support women as they reestablish their lives outside prison through legal means. Rather than measuring failure, I was interested in learning what contributed to the measurement of success as described by women who had served various sentences in prison facilities. The focus does not preclude the possibility that women will stumble along the way, that they will face barriers that they cannot surmount, or that they may in fact identify themselves as less than successful. However, there are women who make it in the free world despite these observed obstacles.

At the time that rehabilitation was recognized as a viable goal of incarceration (Maltz 1984), many studies examined the concept of recidivism and how to prevent it. Recidivism rates are a major, and usually the only, empirical

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demonstration of the effectiveness of the correction. However, for the most part, studies on recidivism have been conducted on all-male groups or mixed gender groups having a small female sample. Studies of women after incarceration have focused more on the cause of their previous criminal behaviors rather than on how they perceive the effect of incarceration on their current lives or the process of their reintegration.

Identifying at what point a person is determined to have recidivated is difficult when comparing findings across studies due to differing and overlapping definitions and inconsistent measurement.[10] In addition, there are a number of variations in post-release failure that relate to whether former inmates will become immediate or eventual recidivists (Glaser 1969). Maltz (1984) used statistical modeling to identify that a higher percentage of the sample "failed" within the first six months than in the following one-year and two-year observation periods. Reasons that have been given for early failure for women after release include family troubles, lack of employment or economic support, and drug abuse/addiction (Jurik 1983; Lambert and Madden 1976).

One national survey of women in state facilities that included juvenile history found that about 71 percent of all state female prisoners had served a prior sentence of probation or incarceration as a juvenile (Snell 1994). In Oklahoma, where more women are incarcerated per capita than in any other state in the country, 46 percent of a sample of incarcerated women had been imprisoned at least once previously (Fletcher et al. 1993). A study of jailed inmates in Ohio found that the average number of previous incarcerations among the women in the sample was 3.9 (Singer, Bussey, Song, and Lunghofer 1995). These high rates suggest that the previous methods of incarceration are not effective for ending women's criminal behavior. It is likely that many former inmates return to the streets facing the same issues they faced when they were sentenced, and with little choice but to use the same survival tactics that precipitated their incarceration.

A diverse sample of eighteen women in a midwestern area of the United States, who have been out of prison for at least six months, formed the basis of analysis in this study. The first six months of release from prison are crucial for the former inmate to reestablish her life, her relationships, and her well-being. The study provided an opportunity for each participant to reflect on what she had learned and experienced as she moved through the process of transition. In addition, the study facilitated each woman's examining future goals and needed resources to meet those goals. This study was significant in that no other work enabled former incarcerated women to discuss their perceptions of the process of reintegration as they moved from prison to the free world.

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