

HARD TIME(S)

Women's Pathways to Crime and Incarceration

Lillian Artz, Yonina Hoffman-Wanderer & Kelley Moulton



Gender, Health and Justice Research Unit
University of Cape Town

HARD TIME(S):

Women's Pathways to Crime and Incarceration

Lillian Artz, Yonina Hoffman-Wanderer & Kelley Moulton

With contributions from:

**Jeanne Flavin
Laura Huss
Gray Aschman
Talia Meer
Sally Pope**

Published by:



Published By:

The Gender, Health and Justice Research Unit
Faculty of Health Sciences
University of Cape Town
www.ghjru.uct.ac.za

© 2012 University of Cape Town

ISBN: 978-0-7992-2488-7

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without prior permission.

To be cited as:

Artz, L., Hoffman-Wanderer, Y., and Moulton, K., 2012. Hard Time(s): Women's Pathways to Crime and Incarceration.
Cape Town: GHJRU, University of Cape Town.

We gratefully acknowledge:

The Women in the “Pathways Project”

The members of the Pollsmoor and Worcester Correctional Service Centres

and

Professor Jeanne Flavin from Fordham University

for their participation, support and enthusiasm for this project

This study was funded by:



European Union



This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the Programme to Support Pro-Poor Policy Development (PSPPD), a partnership programme of the Presidency, Republic of South Africa and the European Union. The contents of this publication/report/ website are the sole responsibility of the GHJRU and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the Presidency (RSA) and the European Union

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

| | |
|--|-----------|
| INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT | 3 |
| The Need For Knowledge Of Women, Crime, And Incarceration | 5 |
| Life Course Theory, Pathways And The Relevance Of “Context” | 6 |
| The State Of Correction Facilities And Incarceration In South Africa | 9 |
| The Female Prison Population | 10 |
| Female Correctional Centres In South Africa | 11 |
| The Legal And Policy Framework | 12 |
| METHODOLOGY | 15 |
| Framing the Research Question(s) | 15 |
| Summary of Research Design | 17 |
| Project Sites | 19 |
| Recruitment | 21 |
| Specific Project Phases | 22 |
| OVERVIEW OF THE REPORT | 27 |
| PRE-INTERVIEW SURVEY OF WOMEN IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES | 28 |
| COMPARISON TO NATIONAL FIGURES | 28 |
| DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION | 30 |
| Residence | 31 |
| Education | 31 |
| Growing Up: Childhood and Adolescence | 32 |
| Offences and Experiences of Incarceration | 38 |
| THE PRISON CONTEXT | 43 |
| ARRIVING AT A CORRECTIONAL FACILITY: ENTRY AND ADMISSIONS | 45 |
| Classification and Assessment | 45 |
| Medical History and Interventions | 47 |
| Visitation and Contact with the Outside | 51 |
| HOUSING, WORK AND FOOD | 54 |
| Housing | 54 |
| Work and Education | 55 |
| Formal Education | 57 |
| Rehabilitation Programmes | 59 |
| Exercise and Leisure | 62 |
| Diet | 63 |
| EXPERIENCES OF “DAILY LIFE” IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES | 65 |
| Reflections on Incarceration | 65 |
| What have I done? | 68 |
| Fellow Offenders | 70 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| CONTEXT MATTERS: Families, Relationships & Traumatic Events | 74 |
| FAMILY BACKGROUND/ENVIRONMENT | 74 |
| Dislocation | 74 |
| The Effects of Dislocation | 77 |
| RELATIONSHIP WITH PARENTS | 79 |
| Disrupted and/or Damaged Relationships with Mothers | 82 |
| Non-Existent/Damaged Relationships with Fathers: | 88 |
| TRAUMATIC EVENTS & SIGNIFICANT LOSSES | 92 |
| Dealing (or Not Dealing) with the Trauma of Death | 93 |
| Rape | 95 |
| Adoption and Miscarriages | 95 |
| FAMILY, FRIENDS AND BEING DRAWN INTO CRIMINALITY | 97 |
| POVERTY AND CRIME | 101 |
| STRUCTURAL POVERTY | 102 |
| Access to basic needs | 102 |
| Education | 104 |
| Employment | 106 |
| Environment | 109 |
| THE IMPACTS OF STRUCTURAL POVERTY | 110 |
| Lack of support | 110 |
| Loss of Agency | 112 |
| Self-Esteem | 114 |
| CONCLUSION | 118 |
| HISTORY OF ABUSE | 120 |
| HOW THE THEME “HISTORY OF ABUSE” EMERGED | 122 |
| EXPERIENCE WITH ABUSE | 124 |
| Age of Abuse | 127 |
| Prior History of Abuse and Nature of Offending | 128 |
| Previous Arrests/Convictions | 131 |
| PERPETRATORS OF ABUSE AGAINST FEMALE OFFENDERS | 131 |
| Father Figures | 133 |
| In Those We Trust – The Incomprehensible Act of Collusion | 134 |
| From Outside of the Family | 137 |
| CONSEQUENCES AND IMPACT OF HISTORY OF ABUSE | 140 |
| Trauma and Mental Health | 140 |
| Relationships with Men | 144 |
| FINAL REFLECTIONS ON ABUSE | 146 |
| DOMESTIC VIOLENCE | 148 |
| VIOLENCE AND LEARNING | 149 |
| Learning Abuse And Violence In Childhood | 150 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| Experiencing Abuse in Adulthood | 152 |
| Cyclical abuse | 153 |
| LIMITED OPTIONS, SEVERE ISOLATION & ERODED SELF-WORTH | 155 |
| Failure by Friends, Family & Systems | 156 |
| Isolation and Entrapment | 158 |
| Infidelity and Relationship Security | 160 |
| ABUSE AND PATHWAYS TO CRIMINALITY | 162 |
| Battered Women Who Killed | 163 |
| INCARCERATION AS AN ESCAPE FROM ABUSE | 164 |
| CARETAKING AND RESPONSIBILITY | 166 |
| MOTHERING | 168 |
| Becoming a Mother | 169 |
| Pregnancy and/or Childbirth as a Turning Point | 172 |
| The Role of Motherhood | 175 |
| CARING FOR OTHERS | 192 |
| Caring for Partners | 192 |
| Caring for a Parent | 194 |
| Caring for Others | 195 |
| CHILDREN AS CAREGIVERS | 197 |
| CONCLUSION | 200 |
| ADDICTION | 202 |
| DRUGS AND CRIME: DIRECT CAUSES AND BACKGROUND CONTEXT | 204 |
| Early Influences of Alcohol and Drugs | 204 |
| Dealing with Trauma, Creating Escape and Release | 206 |
| Substance Abuse as Isolating | 208 |
| Substance-Driven Crime | 209 |
| Gambling | 211 |
| ADDICTIONS, ARREST AND INCARCERATION | 213 |
| DISCUSSION | 217 |
| REVISITING THEORY: PATHWAYS AND CONTEXT | 217 |
| THE SOUTH AFRICAN EXPERIENCE | 220 |
| Experiences of Race | 221 |
| Experiences of Violence | 225 |
| TOWARD A GENDERED UNDERSTANDING OF WOMEN'S CRIME AND INCARCERATION | 225 |
| Gender and Poverty | 226 |
| Gender and "Providing" for Others | 229 |
| Gender, Abuse, Relationships and (Self)worth | 230 |
| The Experience of Incarceration | 234 |
| RECOMMENDATIONS | 236 |

LIST OF FIGURES & TABLES:

FIGURES

| | |
|---|-----|
| Figure 1: Offences Committed (Categorised by DCS Offences Categories) | 29 |
| Figure 2: Self-Identified Race Group | 30 |
| Figure 3: Participants’ Age Distribution | 31 |
| Figure 4: Number of People Living in Household Growing Up | 33 |
| Figure 5: Age of First Consensual Sexual Intercourse | 36 |
| Figure 6: Offences (As per Criminal Records Categorisation of Offences) | 39 |
| Figure 7: Current Sentences | 40 |
| Figure 8: Number of Previous Arrests | 40 |
| Figure 9: Incarcerated Family Members | 42 |
| Figure 10: Comparison of Education Levels: Pathways Women and National Statistics | 105 |
| Figure 11: Women’s Employment Prior to Incarceration | 107 |
| Figure 12: History of Childhood or Adult Physical and Sexual Violence | 126 |
| Figure 13: Age of Childhood Sexual Abuse | 128 |
| Figure 14: Offences of Those Who Had Experienced Child Sexual Abuse | 129 |
| Figure 15: Sentences Of Female Offenders In The Pathways Project | 130 |
| Figure 16: First Time Alcohol Use | 143 |
| Figure 17: First Time Drug Use | 143 |

TABLES

| | |
|--|-----|
| Table 1: Parents Women Lived with Growing Up | 32 |
| Table 2: Type of House Before Incarceration | 37 |
| Table 3: Types of Offences for Which Previously Incarcerated | 41 |
| Table 4: Perpetrators Of Sexual Abuse | 132 |

SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

This section provides an overview of key research findings from the “Pathways to Crime: Women in Conflict with the Law” project. For background on the project and the research methodology, please refer to the Introduction to the research report (entitled: “Hard Time(s): Women’s Pathways to Crime and Incarceration,” pages 1-18).

The second and third sections of the research report describe the research context. The first of these sections, entitled “Pre-Interview Survey of Women in Prison” (pp. 19-27), describes the group of women that participated in our research (our sample), based on the surveys that each woman completed before their in-depth interview. The second provides an overview of the context of incarceration (pp. 31-49) in which the research took place. The information presented in these two sections is briefly summarised, followed by summations of our research findings.

Research findings are primarily found in six sections of the report, as follows:

- Context Matters: Families, Relationships & Traumatic Events
- Poverty and Crime
- History of Abuse
- Domestic Violence
- Caretaking and Responsibility
- Addiction

These findings are detailed and nuanced, and cannot be reduced to statistical data. This Addendum does its best to neatly summarise the findings without overly simplifying them. For a deeper understanding of the complexity of these issues, please refer to the complete research report.

The final section of the research report contains a discussion of the findings, focusing on the gendered nature of crime and incarceration in South Africa as it emerges from this research. An overview of this discussion is provided in the final section of this Addendum.

Pre-Interview Survey of Women in Correctional Facilities

This section presents a profile of the incarcerated women in our study sample, based on the data collected from the pre-interview survey. The findings are intended only to describe the women in our sample: they are intended to be background information to supplement the interview findings. Where relevant, these findings are referred to and analysed as part of the interview findings. They do not present a snapshot of national statistics on incarcerated women across the country, but do tell us more about the women from Worcester and Pollsmoor correctional facilities who elected to take part in our project. They provide some detail about their lives growing up and before incarceration.

Demographics

- 64% of the women in the sample were under 40 years of age. The largest age group was 18-29 year olds (33%), followed closely by 30-39 years old (31%).
- 46% of the women in the sample defined themselves as “Coloured.” This was the largest racial group in the sample.
- 35% of the women were married or in a long-term partnership at the time the study was conducted.
- 75% of the women had children; 45% of these women had their first child between the ages of 16 and 20 years.

Childhood features

- 85% of respondents reported living with their mother’s growing up, and 63% with their fathers (these are obviously not mutually exclusive).
- 50% of the women in the sample reported that they felt poorer relative to others in their neighbourhood growing up, with only 7% reporting that they felt wealthier.

- 26% of the women in the sample reported that, while growing up, someone in their household went hungry because of a lack of food. 54% of this group asserted that this happened often.
- Women reported feeling relatively safe whilst growing up, with 79% feeling safe in their homes, and 81% feeling safe in their communities.
- 9% of the women in the sample reported having experienced physical abuse often in their childhood. Another 19% experienced such abuse once or twice and 9% experienced such abuse sometimes.
- 6% of the women in the sample reported having experienced sexual abuse often in their childhood. Another 13% experienced such abuse once or twice and 9% experienced such abuse sometimes.

Socio-economic indicators prior to incarceration

- Most women (53%) did not complete their secondary education. Of these, 11% did not complete primary school. On the other end of the spectrum, 14% had attended a university or college.
- 46% of the women reported being the sole financial supporter in their household before being incarcerated.
- 50% of the women reported that they felt poorer relative to others in their neighbourhood before they came to the correctional centre, with only 9% having asserted that they felt more well off.
- 25% of women asserted that prior to imprisonment someone in their household went hungry because of a lack of food, with 29% of this group asserting that this happened often.
- 28% of respondents had no work at all prior to their incarceration, while an additional 5% had work only once in a while. 50% of respondents had regular paid employment, while the remaining women had part time or temporary work.

Alcohol and drug use

- Alcohol use was prevalent, with 16% having used alcohol often prior to incarceration.
- 11% of respondents reported using drugs often before being incarcerated.

Criminal history

- 45% of the women in the sample were imprisoned for “aggressive” offences;¹ 32% were imprisoned for murder.
- For 74% of the women, the sentence they served at the time the study was conducted was their first incarceration.
- The average sentence being served by the women in the sample was 8 years and 6 months.
- For 54% of the women, the arrest that led to their incarceration was their first arrest. Of those who had been in prison before, 44% had been found guilty of shoplifting, with 13% each having committed assault, murder and armed robbery.
- 47% of the women reported that they had family members who had been incarcerated and 27% reported having friends who had been incarcerated.

The Prison Context

In order to understand the experiences of the women in our study, it is necessary to understand the daily experience of incarceration in Worcester and Pollsmoor women’s correctional facilities, hence the section ‘The Prison Context’ (pp. 31- 49). It is important to remember however, that this study was not an exploration of correctional facility conditions but an effort to understand the life experiences, including incarceration, that inform their choices and experiences of criminality. Based on a series of

¹ This term is used by the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) in the statistics provided on their website (www.dcs.gov.za).

group discussions, interviews, personal journals, our own observations and conversations with DCS Members, this section highlights the following key aspects of the prison experience:

- Classification and assessment, including issues related to security classifications, the privilege system, the admissions process, the preparation of sentence plans and information on rules and regulations.
- Medical history and interventions, including issues and concerns related to health and mental health care, basic reproductive health and hygiene, and access to health care professionals and services.
- Visitation and contact with the outside, including issues related to contact visits and telephone use.
- Housing, including issues relating to life in a prison cell, overcrowding and living with others.
- Work and education, including concerns and experiences related to rehabilitative, educational, recreational and work programmes.
- Exercise and leisure within the correctional facility as well as diet and nutrition.
- Experiences of daily life, including how offenders feel about the experience of incarceration, the daily routine, the benefits and the difficulties of incarceration, and the impact of their incarceration on their families, and their children in particular.
- Fellow offenders, social interaction, friendships and support within the correctional facility.

Context Matters: Families, Relationships and Traumatic Events

This section (pp. 52-67) shows that women's familial and relationship histories and traumatic events in their lives, especially in childhood, shape their choices (or lack thereof) that lead to their involvement in crime. More specifically, our research found that many of the women in our sample

had unstable family lives where they had moved homes, or the adult/s responsible for them had suddenly become absent or handed-over their care to someone else. Many of the women had difficult relationships with their parents, where the relationship was disrupted by frequent or long periods of separation, and some women had had no relationship at all with one or both parents. Others had also experienced a major traumatic event such as the death of a central family member, the loss of a child or sexual assault. Key findings in this regard include:

- Almost half of our sample stated that they had lived with their parents **at some point** during their childhood, although many of them had been raised for large periods of time by extended family.
- For the women in the sample, the experience of moving from one home to another was characterised by feelings of impermanence, uncertainty and unhappiness. The effects of such dislocation included:
 - Leaving home prematurely, which led to various poor choices at an early age, including substance abuse.
 - A feeling of impermanence, instability and isolation that many women struggle to overcome throughout their lives.
 - High levels of violence and victimisation, possibly as a result of the weak bond between them and their caregivers (where they didn't live with their parents), which exacerbated feelings of isolation and despair.
- Many women's relationships with their fathers and mothers were characterised by instability and absence.
 - About 60% of our sample either did not live with their mother growing up or lived with her for only some part of their childhood. Many women's relationships with their mothers were characterised by their mothers being emotionally or physically unavailable, due to their mothers making selfish choices (choices that did not prioritise their children) or being forced to separate from their children due to difficult circumstances and limited resources.

- Almost 30% of the women's fathers passed away in their childhood, another third of women reported having no relationship with their living fathers, and a final 20% described fathers and step-fathers that were in and out of their lives.
- Choices by fathers and mothers, however constrained, were often experienced by women as abandonment and had severe consequences for the women's own sense of self, decision making abilities, coping strategies and participation in risky behaviours.
- Many women expressed skewed notions of what relationships should look like because of their parents', especially their father's, behaviour. This led them to make poor relationship decisions based on what they thought they should or should not expect from a male partner.
- Additional early trauma, such as the death of a loved one, sexual assault or the loss of a child through adoption or miscarriage are also pertinent factors in propelling women toward crime.
- The death of a loved one was the most emphasised event that signalled drastic change and insecurity. The inability to deal with the trauma of death led some women to participate in risky behaviour, such as substance abuse and crime.
- Family and friends seem to be an important influence in drawing women into crime, with 40% of the women saying that they had friends who had been in prison at one point, and 47% having family members who had been in prison.

Poverty and Crime

These findings (pp. 70-82) show how poverty, indicated by the absence of food in their homes, relatively low educational and employment levels, and the underprivileged or insecure environments in which they lived and socialised, influenced women's pathways to crime.

Key findings from this chapter include:

- The experience of poverty places severe stress on women's abilities to support themselves and their families.
- A number of factors worsen the experience of poverty and limit women's ability to cope with economic stresses and make ends meet. Among these factors are:
 - Loss of agency (the ability to make decisions for oneself or that impact on one's life).
 - Low self-esteem.
 - Domestic violence.
 - Childhood abuse and trauma.
- Loss of agency and low self-esteem, which were themselves linked with experiences of poverty, also impacted on women's choices to engage in crime in ways that were not necessarily related to financial stress, but to risky behaviour and criminality being an escape or an opportunity to make choices and have agency.

History of Abuse

The life stories of the women in our study reveal experiences of childhood and adult physical abuse (including witnessing and directly experiencing domestic violence), physical and psychological neglect, exposure to violent communities, witnessing and engaging in substance abuse, and unstable and troubled family lives. Key findings from this chapter (pp. 83-100) include:

- According to information from the survey, 37% of the women in the sample reported that they had been physically abused during their childhood.
- 29% of respondents reported some form of sexual abuse in their childhood.

- 67% of the women had experienced some form of domestic violence and/or rape in their adult life, which is three times higher than in the general population.
- Of the 16 women who discussed being sexually assaulted as children, 62% were assaulted over a period of time and 31% were assaulted by a number of different men.
- Of those who experienced sexual assault and/or rape during their childhood, 56% were convicted for murder, 38% for theft/robbery/fraud and 6% for drug related offences.
- History of abuse coincided with early drug use, with 39% of the women in our study using alcohol for the first time between the ages of 10-14 years old, and 44% using drugs between the ages of 11-15.
- 62% of those who experienced childhood sexual abuse were abused by a father figure or male caregiver, with only 12.5% stating that they did not know the perpetrator.
- For women who have experienced abuse, correctional facilities can be seen as a sanctuary. Sometimes women's lives outside of the correctional facility are so rife with violence that being inside is considered 'safe'.
- For other women, incarceration can re-traumatise them. The correctional system becomes an extension of the abusive domestic context, where the features of domestic violence are recreated through bullying in cells and other behaviours that represent the controlling, threatening, unpredictable and continuous disempowerment in their 'home' that they experienced on the outside, creating an effective domestic violence relationship.

Domestic Violence

The findings in this section (pp. 102-113) suggest that a very high proportion of incarcerated women have experienced some form of domestic abuse in their lives, and that for many women the experience of violence has become normalised. The study shows that domestic abuse is related to

female offending in both direct and indirect ways. Specifically, key findings from this chapter include:

- Almost 70% of the women in our sample had experienced some form of domestic abuse, usually by their husbands (n=18), boyfriends and partners (n=8). Several women had experienced violence at the hands of several partners (n=6).
- For seven women, domestic abuse was a direct cause of incarceration as they experienced such severe abuse that it motivated their killing or hiring someone to kill their husbands.
- Six women in our sample had been hospitalised at least once due to abuse that they suffered.

Worryingly, women seem to have become used to such violence, as demonstrated by the fact that in the survey 76% of the women said that they had felt safe in their homes before incarceration even though 90% of these same women had experienced intimate partner violence.

- The experience of violence and abuse is often carried from one generation to the next. Twelve women in this study spoke about growing up in homes where domestic violence was prevalent. In some cases, women who grew up around violence and abuse later became involved in violent relationships themselves, while others have perpetrated violence themselves, often continuing the cycle into the next generation by victimising their children.
- In some cases, when women tried to end an abusive relationship, this sparked more violence, which forced them to remain in the abusive relationship for fear of harm or even death.
- In instances of domestic violence, the women in our sample tended to feel trapped in their relationships due to:
 - Limited financial means.
 - A lack of support from friends, family and the criminal justice system.

- A feeling of worthlessness, powerlessness, isolation and entrapment due to ongoing physical and emotional abuse. In 10 cases, infidelity was also present in cases of abuse, which reinforced these feelings and compounded their husbands' controlling behaviour.
- Children being used as leverage to trap them in the relationship, or being made to feel responsible for the abuse themselves.
- In some cases, domestic abuse is directly related to criminality in the following ways:
 - Abuse in the home allowed women to be coerced into criminal activity.
 - Abuse in the home led to problematic coping strategies, such as drug abuse and/or gambling, which in some cases led to financial crimes to support these habits.
 - For some women, victimisation effectively separated them from mainstream avenues of support and livelihood and influenced their psychosocial functioning.
- For all the women in our sample that suffered domestic abuse outside, incarceration provided an escape from this abuse.

Caretaking and Responsibility

The findings reviewed in this chapter (pp. 114- 137) demonstrate the influence of familial relationships on female criminality and experiences of imprisonment. Key findings from this chapter include:

- Motherhood plays an important role in women's pathways to crime and in the way in which they experience incarceration.
- Experiences of childhood victimisation increased the women's vulnerability as young girls to early pregnancies, which impacted heavily on their relationships and support systems.

- Concern for the welfare of children acts as a constraint on women's choices and, within circumstances of poverty and poor support systems, provides a rationale for both non-violent and, when combined with other factors, violent crime.
- For some, motherhood featured as an important part of their narratives because of their failures to care for their children. Though some expressed guilt over these failures, they also asserted the strength of their bond with their children, which was an important source of self-esteem and the ability to cope with life outside and in the correctional facility and provides a reason for them to resist criminal behaviour in the future.
- Most incarcerated mothers struggle with the experience of separation from their children and the difficulties and fears they have in terms of maintaining their maternal ties.
- Other than children, the needs of people with whom women had important relationships, particularly partners and parents, also provided a rationale for crime. In most of these cases, women were motivated by the need to "fix" or protect a partner or a parent, or to otherwise satisfy their desires, in order to maintain the relationship. In some cases, these relationships also provided support for the women in prison.

This chapter (pp. 144- 137) also highlights the heavy burden of responsibility that circumstances of structural poverty, parental neglect and substance abuse place on children, as well as the gendered nature of the responsibilities placed on girls. The findings suggest that:

- The difficulty children have in coping with adult responsibilities, and their inability to express this difficulty, may silence them and/or drive them to risky behaviours that seem to offer a means of escape as well as physical and psychological support.
- Circumstances of poverty interact with the gendered messages inherent in the responsibilities assigned to young girls, as well as those that girls learn from their surroundings, in ways that may reinforce a sense of social exclusion and shame. These feelings may be associated with criminal behaviour.

Addiction

Internationally, substance abuse is a recurring feature of female criminality. It is, thus, not surprising that various forms of addiction – to alcohol, drugs and gambling – came up repeatedly in this study. Specifically, this chapter (pp. 138- 145) highlights that:

- Almost half of the women in the sample had histories of substance abuse or gambling addiction.
- Alcohol and/or drugs played a central role in 23.6% of the women's offending behaviour, and three women's gambling addictions were the cause of their offending.
- Addictions exposed the women in the sample to risky people, behaviours and situations, and combined with the following factors in ways that led to their incarceration:
 - Abuse.
 - Poverty.
 - Disempowerment and isolation from support networks.
- Substance abuse affected criminal behaviour both directly and indirectly. Criminal behaviour was "fuelled" by alcohol or drugs and crimes were committed in order to finance drug use. Substance use also constrained the choices and limited the opportunities that women had.
- Just over a third of the women who had a substance abuse problem (8 out of 23) grew up surrounded by substance use and abuse in their families and communities. Growing up in this environment affected women in different ways: it introduced them to drugs, normalised drug use and made drugs available and "cool".
- Substance abuse, as well as gambling addiction, damaged women's family bonds and support systems and isolated them from family and friends who might have diverted them away from criminal activities.

- Drug use excluded women from legal employment and provided an entry into criminal circles.
- For some women, the same factors that led to their substance use – experiences of trauma, lack of support and blocked access to legal employment – caused them to feel that they had no options other than crime.
- Women in our study who were addicted to or frequently used alcohol were likely to have committed violent crimes. Of the 11 women who heavily used or abused alcohol, seven fatally stabbed people in the course of drunken arguments.
- Of the women who abused drugs, one third (9% of the total sample) had committed financially motivated crimes (drug trafficking, robbery and fraud) as a means of financing their addictions (or in one case as a way to finance her rehabilitation).
- In four cases, it was not the women's own substance abuse that led to their criminal behaviour, but their partners'. Their stories illustrate how substance abuse combines with family responsibility, abuse and limited options to produce pathways to crime.
- For three women, the stress factor that led to their drug use was having committed or having been arrested for the crime for which they were incarcerated.
- Correctional facilities are difficult environments in which to stop using substances and deal with addiction, as apart from Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous meetings, which are not always held regularly, there appears to be little support for addicts going through withdrawal.
- For some women, however, incarceration had a positive effect as it stopped their substance abuse, gambling and related destructive behaviour.

- Fifteen women reported having participated in drug rehabilitation programmes while incarcerated, and one woman reported participating in an alcohol rehabilitation program. There are no support programmes for gambling addictions in Worcester correctional facility, which women with this problem considered problematic.

Discussion

The discussion section (pp. 148-159) shows how this study contributes to the international literature in the study of criminal behaviour by exploring the female experience of criminality in South Africa. The first part of this section explains the researchers' shift away from understanding a woman's progression towards criminality as a "pathway." Instead, the study points to the inter-relatedness of a range of factors and events that create a context that limits and shapes women's choices toward criminality. The second part of the discussion examines the ways in which the richly detailed and complex stories told by the project participants are deeply rooted in South African lived experiences, including experiences of race and violence. Finally, the discussion explores the gendered nature of crime and incarceration, including the gendered nature of poverty, care-giving and abuse, and the ways in which these experiences shape women's choices and interact with other life experiences and events in particularly gendered ways that may lead to risky behaviours, problematic coping strategies and the decision to offend.

INTRODUCTION

South Africa has been described as being amongst the most ‘crime-ridden and crime-concerned’ countries in the world (United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, 2002). Much of the violence is directed against women and indeed, most women offenders themselves are victims of violence (Chipkin & Bgqulunga, 2008). Yet what we know about crime, justice, and punishment in South Africa is based almost entirely on frameworks that have been developed to explain the experiences of men. Almost nothing is known about women incarcerated anywhere on the African continent, including South Africa (Haffejee, Vetten & Greyling, 2005; Hoffman-Wanderer, 2007; Vetten, 2008).¹ Little is known about the circumstances that lead women to commit crimes and the way in which these circumstances interact, leading to particular patterns of offending. Nor is much known about the way in which female offenders experience prison life or the impact of their incarceration on their health, well-being, and their connections to people in their lives.

Findings from other countries indicate that women’s experiences of crime and justice differ from men’s and that studies of male offenders have only limited application to women.² Similarly, findings from fully industrialised countries like the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada may not be replicated in South Africa, particularly given apartheid’s unique and lingering impact on social, economic, and political aspects of people’s lives (Seidman, 1999). To date, very few studies of women’s experiences of incarceration in South Africa exist, save largely descriptive efforts by government agencies.³ Those that do exist have given very little attention to the impact of incarceration on the women themselves as well as the people in their lives.

It is for this reason that in 2009, the Gender, Health & Justice Research Unit embarked on a study to explore the reasons why women come into conflict with the law and end up in the correctional system. We established

1 There are only a few studies of female criminality and/or on women in prison from other African countries. See, for instance, Modie-Moroka (2003) and Tibatemwa-Ekirikubinza (1999).

2 See Bloom et al. (2003); Chesney-Lind & Pasko (2004); Corston (2007); and Steffensmeier & Allan (1996).

3 See Judicial Inspectorate of Prisons (JIP) (2005); Haffejee et al. (2005); The Jali Commission (2005); Sloth-Nielsen (2005); Vetten (2008).

the *Pathways Project*, an innovative, multi-method project designed for women's correctional settings. Moving beyond classical criminological studies on incarceration – where positivist survey methods still dominate – our methods, culminated in 55 in-depth narratives of incarcerated women. The 'theoretical aim' of this project was to highlight the distinctive nature of female criminality, thereby shifting attention from the all-male focus on crime that has characterised most South African criminology (to date). The study aimed to generate new knowledge around women, crime and incarceration and to contribute to the formulation of more effective and appropriate correctional policies that take into account the particular context that shapes female criminality and the specific factors that inform women's experiences of incarceration.

While the background and methodology of the *Pathways Project* are described in detail below, it is worth summarising the project here. The *Pathways Project* took place in two correctional facilities: Pollsmoor and Worcester Correctional Service Centres, both in the Western Cape. It had three distinct phases. The first phase consisted of a number of rapport-building exercises aimed at securing mutual trust and understanding between the researchers and the offenders. It was also a method of securing full and informed consent for participation in the project. The process involved orientation sessions at both Centres, focus group discussions about the project and a documentary film about incarcerated women. Once the women 'signed up' for the project, activities such as "life mapping", journal writing and the creation of a "prisons dictionary" took place over the course of a year.⁴ The final phase consisted of a brief demographic and life history survey of 55 female offenders, followed by one-on-one, in-depth interviews with these women.

Before providing the details of the project design and activities, it is important to set out the theoretical and contextual background to the research. We begin with a brief background to the project, where we argue for the need for contemporary, South African-based knowledge about women and crime. We then provide a theoretical framework for the research, where we briefly explore 'life course' and 'pathways' theories about crime and the relevance of these theories to both this project as well as the discipline of

⁴ In practice, for a variety of reasons, additional activities were implemented during this phase.

‘South Africa criminology’ more broadly. We then provide a background on imprisonment in South Africa, including the legal framework that regulates it. This is followed by a description of our project design and methodology. A summary of the contents of the report concludes this section.

BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

Prior to the late 1970s, across the world women and girls were virtually invisible in the study of crime and incarceration. Female offending was considered unimportant as a social phenomenon and irrelevant to the development of theories about the etiology of crime. This began to change in 1975 when the women’s liberation movement prompted the development of new theories focused specifically on female offending. Feminist studies of women and crime began in earnest with the evolution of pathways research, which looks at life-history events and turning points and explores the relationships between these events and subsequent offending. This body of research has pointed to a number of key features that shape the contexts of women’s lives and impact on criminogenic behaviour, including experiences of coerced or incestuous sex during and after childhood, intercourse at a young age, abandonment, substance abuse, a lack of parental guidance, inconsistent and physically injurious punishment by parents, a lack of positive (good) relationships with men, poverty and marginality (Daly, 1992; Chesney-Lind and Rodriguez, 1983; Belknap, 2001). This body of literature – too extensive and varied to bear summary here⁵ – has also focused on patterns and rates of female offending, the types of offences for which women are routinely arrested, women’s motivations for and explanations of their offending, women’s entry into crime, women’s experiences of imprisonment, reintegration and recidivism.

However, research on women in prison has overwhelmingly been conducted in Anglo-American and other developed contexts. Referring to the South African context, Van Zyl Smit and Dunkel (2001) noted that “there has been no systematic study of the imprisonment of women in South Africa or of the regime to which they are subject.” A common reason given to explain this

⁵ For detailed reviews see Belknap (2001); Britton (2000); Kruttschnitt (1996); and Simpson & Hertz (1999).

omission is the relatively low percentage of female inmates incarcerated in South African Correctional Centres. The reasons for the relative invisibility of women in prisons research have also been ascribed to the fact that women offenders are less likely to challenge prison conditions and unfair treatment through the courts (Belknap, 2001).

The importance of our research, however, has nothing to do with numbers. It has more to do with the fact that knowledge about 'women and crime' and, more specifically, qualitative studies on women and imprisonment is simply lacking in the South African context. It is interesting that over the course of this project, we've had to justify our interest in female offenders, particularly since compared to men there are relatively few incarcerated women. It is significant that, although children make up an even smaller percentage of the South African prison population (as of February 2011, there were only 846 children under the age of 18 incarcerated in South Africa⁶), few question the importance of research and programming that focuses on juvenile offenders. Research in this area is relatively well developed. For example, as early as 1997, the Community Law Centre conducted extensive research on children in South African correctional facilities, and a number of non-governmental organisations, such as Youth in Prison and the National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Reintegration of Offenders (NICRO), devote substantial resources to special programming for this population. It is unfortunate – though perhaps not surprising – that female offenders are not perceived as an equally important sector of the prison population, with its own distinctive characteristics and needs.

This failure to recognise the category of female offenders as a separate and critical focus for research and programming efforts reflects a general tendency in criminological research to negate the importance of female criminality as a phenomenon. As the extent of this phenomenon grows, however, and research on incarcerated women accumulates, it is no longer possible to ignore this sector. What little is known about incarcerated women in South Africa suggests that they are among the most socially and economically vulnerable members of South African society. Their backgrounds – marked as many of them are by violence, extreme economic

⁶ All but two are between the ages of 14 – 18. Two offenders awaiting trial are younger than 14 (DCS, 2011).

deprivation, and household disruption – point to longstanding failures of social policies to adequately address the needs of poor women. The specific vulnerabilities that these women face, however, and the ways in which these vulnerabilities interact with other risk factors and shape the specific contexts in which women choose to commit crimes, are not sufficiently known or understood. Understanding these distinctive experiences and the needs of incarcerated women are crucial for the formulation of effective and humane responses to women's crimes and to minimising the damaging effects of incarceration on children, households and communities. A primary aim of the Pathways Project was to explore these contexts, and to understand the ways in which they constrain and shape the choices South African women make to engage in crime.

The Need for Knowledge of Women, Crime, and Incarceration

The South African Department of Correctional Services (DCS) is charged with the rehabilitation of female offenders in a way that is responsive to the special needs of women. Yet, many policymakers, scholars and practitioners lack an understanding of even the most rudimentary aspects of women-centred approaches, much less their relevance to criminal justice. As a result, the needs of incarcerated women are neglected. In fact, in the most recent White Paper published by the DCS (2011), the only gender-specific matters mentioned, besides issues of mothers and children, were obligations to incarcerate women as close to home as possible and to provide development opportunities on a non-discriminatory basis.

Although the number of incarcerated women in South Africa is relatively low, the potential impact of their incarceration, particularly on their children, extended families and communities is considerable. Around the world, women are vital members of families, communities, and economies. In South Africa, as elsewhere, women are not only mothers, wives and girlfriends but also household managers, breadwinners, and the ones who care for sick people, children and the elderly. Yet we know relatively little about the women we incarcerate. Who are they? How did they come to be in conflict with the law and incarcerated? What support do they need and where do they seek it? How have their lives changed since being incarcerated? How do they perceive their futures?

Our study focuses on how women end up incarcerated and how incarceration affects their lives. We aim to provide a better understanding of women and crime generally in the Western Cape and in South Africa. We hope that our findings can inform policies and programmes that seek to prevent women and girls from becoming involved in crime and to curtail the adverse effects of women's incarceration on homes, communities, and future generations. For instance, we expect the findings to inform sentencing policies (when is incarceration appropriate?), correctional policies (how can we minimise the adverse effects of incarceration, including those felt by family members and others outside the correctional facility? What services and reforms are most needed?), as well as policies that may have a direct or indirect impact on whether a woman or girl engages in crime (e.g., school attendance, support for kin who foster children upon the death or other absence of a primary parent). This project also stands to benefit female offenders and women and girls at risk for coming into conflict with the law in South Africa. Ultimately, we hope to improve women's access to justice and the standards set forth by government that women may expect from all role players in the criminal justice system, including the right to be treated with fairness and with respect for dignity and privacy, the right to protection, and the right to assistance.

Life Course Theory, Pathways and the Relevance of “Context”

Within the broader Anglo-American and other First World literature on women and crime, life course and feminist pathways theorists have attempted to understand the factors that impact long-term patterns of offending, including those that influence an individual to commit crime. These theorists identify certain life-altering events that are important in understanding criminality (and, in the case of life course theory, also desistance from crime). Life course theorists, who have focused overwhelmingly on male offending, underline the importance of family structural context; marriage/significant relationships; employment and residential change, and – for juveniles – the role of school, peers and siblings (Farrington, 2003; Sampson & Laub 1993, 2005a, 2005b; Laub & Sampson, 2003). Although there has been an increased interest in including women in large-scale prospective longitudinal studies (see Block et al., 2010 for a

comprehensive list) researchers such as Belknap (2001), Flavin (2001), and Block et al (2010) have continued to argue that the “landscape of research on women’s criminal careers is sparsely populated” (Block et al., 2010, p. 75).

Feminist pathways analyses have attempted to correct the male gender-bias in these studies by focusing on women and girls’ offending. In addition to some of the same factors highlighted by life course theory, pathways theorists have highlighted the link between negative childhood experiences and female criminality. These studies identify the importance of coerced or incestuous sex during and after childhood, intercourse at a young age, abandonment, substance abuse, a lack of parental guidance, inconsistent and physically injurious punishment by parents; a lack of positive (good) relationships with men, poverty and marginality as factors that are uniquely experienced by women, and that combine to produce pathways to criminality (Belknap, 2001; Belknap & Holsinger, 2006; Chesney-Lind & Rodriguez, 1983; Daly, 1992; McClellan, Farabee & Crouch, 1997; Reisig, Holtfreter & Morash, 2006). Rivera and Widom (1990) further identify a category of women for whom the risks of criminal offending are markedly increased – their so-called category of “sexual abuse plus” women, who experience both sexual abuse and a variety of other factors mentioned above.

Although these factors are not unique to women and girls, they are uniquely experienced by women. When combined with gender inequality and the disproportionate burdens of poverty and (child)care they produce multiple pathways to criminality that are different than those for men. Understanding female criminality is therefore more nuanced than simply identifying the presence of the factors listed above. Instead, what may separate women from men with similar experiences is a condition of gender entrapment in which the interaction of violence in women’s relationships (and particularly in their intimate relationships) and their gendered cultural identity combine to result in social and structural dislocation, and eventually in criminality.

There is a growing body of scholarship that argues that understanding women’s criminality (and indeed, men’s criminality as well) requires an account of stressful life even and extensive family dysfunction that goes beyond childhood experiences (Carlson & Shafer, 2010). These factors often

include both childhood and adult physical and sexual abuse, substance use, and other stressful life events such as significant losses (Carlson & Shafer, 2008; DeHart, 2008; Greene, Haney & Hurtado, 2000; Browne, Miller & Maguin, 1999). Wesely (2006) addresses this as the importance of ‘context’ – the complex nexus of events and conditions that make up lived experience – and how this constrained environment impacts on women’s decisions to commit crime. This paradigm emphasises the interconnectedness of events in women’s lives, and does not attempt to ‘pin’ causation onto isolated life events. Wesely’s context framework also works against the suggestion that there’s an “enduring reality” (p. 304) – a *singular* pathway to crime – that can be applied across women (and environments). Context, then, becomes the confluence of factors that shape and constrain the strategies and choices made by women.

The crux of Wesely’s argument is that women experience (and endure) a range of different events and institutional barriers and that these combine in multiple ways to affect their options of livelihood, coping strategies (including violence) and survival. She argues that to understand women’s criminality more adequately requires taking a more multidimensional approach “that encompasses the gendered complexity of women’s realities and allows for a more in-depth understanding of the nuances of their violence. She holds that (life) events are powerful personal experiences for women, but that they shouldn’t be “cleaved apart from the contexts that structured the environments of inequality and disadvantage” (p. 309) in which women grow up. She argues that women’s “lived experience” (p. 304) includes backgrounds of powerlessness, gender-specific sexualisation and exploitation, economic vulnerability and destitution, and social alienation and exclusion. These factors, then, set women up with social, behavioural and emotional deficits that impact and shape their later life decisions and choices.

We draw on this framework to identify the important family, relationship and trauma issues that come through in the lives of the women in our sample, and how they understood their own trajectories toward crime.

The State of Correctional Facilities and Incarceration in South Africa

In the last two decades, the correctional system in South Africa has been transformed from a segregated and militarised penal system to a correctional system that is consistent with democracy and aims to protect the basic rights of all citizens as entrenched in the 1996 Constitution. This process of transformation has been guided by two White Papers published by the Department of Correctional Services in 1994 and 2005, and by the new legislation enacted by Parliament, in particular the Correctional Services Act, 111 of 1998 (the “Act” or “CSA”). Under the new Act, the correctional system is understood as serving the primary purposes of enforcing the sentences handed down by the courts; ensuring that incarceration takes place under conditions of safety and the protection of human dignity; and “promoting social responsibility and human development of all sentenced offenders” (s.2 of the CSA). These roles are further elaborated upon in the 2005 White Paper, which places rehabilitation at the centre of the Department’s mission and provides a framework for realizing its vision.

The White Paper recognises many challenges that the Department faces in realising its vision. Among these are the state of DCS facilities, overcrowding and the needs of special categories of offenders, including women. Currently, there are 241 correctional facilities in South Africa. According to DCS statistics (as of February, 2011), these facilities are designed to accommodate 118,154 sentenced offenders and a further 25,000 awaiting trial detainees, whereas the number of offenders housed in these facilities in practice is a total of 162,162, of which 49,695 are awaiting trial. Correctional facilities in South Africa are overcrowded at a current level of 137.25%.

Out of a 90 page document, only a few paragraphs are devoted to the needs of women as a ‘special category of offenders’ and two of these relate to the needs of mothers of children. Although the Paper notes that “rehabilitation processes must also be responsive to the special needs of women” (DCS, 2005, p. 64) and that the Department’s “approach to Gender will inform the management of female offenders” (DCS, 2005, p.68) the Paper provides very little insight as to what those special needs are or what impact gender will or should have on the management of female offenders. The only specific issues mentioned in relation to women are the obligation to incarcerate

women as close to their homes as possible and the obligation to provide women with development opportunities on a non-discriminatory basis (DCS, 2005). For mothers of young children, the Department recognises the need to provide appropriate crèche facilities and mother-child units, as well as an appropriate environment for visitation, for those children not living with their mothers.

The Female Prison Population

There are approximately 4,000 women incarcerated in South Africa, including sentenced women and those who were awaiting trial.⁷ These women constitute 2.3% of the overall prison population in South Africa. This is similar to the proportion of female prisoners in other African countries, where the continental median is 2.65% (Walmsley, 2006), and lower than the proportion of women and girls in prisons in the Americas and Asia, where the median is 5.3% and 5.4% respectively, and in prisons in Europe and Oceania, where the median is 4.4% and 4.8% respectively.

There has been significant fluctuation in the rate of female incarceration in South Africa during the last decade and it is difficult to identify a clear trend. According to the 2009/10 Annual Report of the Judicial Inspectorate of Prisons, there was a 30% drop in the rate of awaiting trial female offenders and a 17% drop in the rate of sentenced women between 2003 and 2010. This can be partially attributed to the release of 853 women in “Special Remissions” in 2005. Statistics from the Department of Correctional Services, however, show an increase of approximately 10% in both the number of sentenced and unsentenced female inmates between January 2007 and February 2011.⁸ While we should be concerned about this increase, it is very low compared to increases in the rate of female incarceration in countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States, with an increase in the number of women prisoners in England and Wales of approximately 170% between 1993 and 2006 and an annual rate of increase in the United States of 4.6% between 1995 and 2005 (Godin & Kendall, 2009).

⁷ To be precise, 3,762 female inmates, including sentenced and unsentenced offenders, as of February 2011 (DCS, 2011).

⁸ The number of sentenced women grew from 2,410 in January 2007 to 2663 in February 2011 and the number of awaiting trial female offenders grew from 994 to 1099 during the same period (DCS, 2007; DCS, 2011).

According to DCS, the largest percentage (45.2%) of female offenders are in correctional facilities in relation to economic crimes, with the percentage of women convicted of “aggressive” crimes a close second, at 36.6% (Oppler, 1998). The remaining 18.2% of female offenders are incarcerated for narcotics crimes (10%); sexual crimes (1%) and “other” (7.2%) (DCS, 2011). These statistics reflect a very high proportion of aggressive crimes in comparison to the United States, for instance, where violent crimes committed by women make up only 10-15% of female offences (Huebner, DeJong & Cobbina, 2010; Holtfreter et al., 2004; Folsom & Atkinson, 2007). In this regard, O’Donovan and Redpath (2006) have noted – in relation to men and women generally – that “[t]he evidence suggests that lesser offences are being ‘crowded out’ in courts and prisons by more serious offences and offences that attract heavy sentence” (p. 64). The applicability of this claim to women, however, requires further research.

Given the high level of aggressive crimes, it is not surprising that women in South Africa also serve much longer sentences than women incarcerated in countries like the US and the UK. Women in South African Correctional facilities serve an average sentence of nearly 6 years (JIP, 2004), whereas most women incarcerated in the United Kingdom in 2009, for example, served a sentence of 6 months or less (Prison Reform Trust, 2010).

As in the United States and the United Kingdom, a high percentage of incarcerated women are mothers. In the US, 62% and in the UK 66% of female offenders are mothers (Correctional Association of New York, 2009; Women in Prison Trust, n.d.). The percentage of mothers in our sample was 75%, which is similar to the national statistic, which stood at 84% in 2004. The impact of their incarceration, particularly on their children and extended families, is considerable.

Female Correctional Centres in South Africa

Only eight of the correctional facilities in South Africa are female-only correctional centres, while 91 facilities have special sections for female inmates. Because there are so few female facilities, women are more likely to be incarcerated far from their homes and families. According to the 2004 JIP report, 63% of female inmates were incarcerated more than 100km

from their home towns (JIP, 2004). The level of overcrowding in women's Correctional Centres varies, with overcrowding levels in 2004 at Pollsmoor and Worcester female correctional facilities, where the research for this project took place, at 129% and 140%, respectively.

The Legal and Policy Framework

This project was not intended as a study of prison conditions or an audit of the rights of female offenders. At the same time, it is impossible to speak to women about their experience of incarceration without some discussion of the conditions under which they are incarcerated, including the extent to which they feel safe and secure, and the extent to which they feel their rights are protected. It is, thus, important to understand the legal framework that governs incarceration in general, as well as the specific provisions and instruments that relate to female offenders.

Constitutional Rights

Chapter 2 of the South African Constitution (the Bill of Rights) protects a number of basic rights relevant to the study of 'women in prison', including, without limitation, the rights to equality (s. 9) human dignity (s. 10), life (s. 11), freedom and security (s. 12), healthcare (s. 27) and education (s. 29). In addition, section 35(2) recognises a number of more specific rights held by 'detained persons' with respect to prison conditions. Pursuant to paragraphs (2)(e)-(f), incarcerated offenders are entitled to 'conditions of detention that are consistent with human dignity, including at least exercise and the provision, at state expense, of adequate accommodation, nutrition, reading material and medical treatment' and to communication with and visitation by family members, religious counsellors and medical practitioners. In addition to these rights, child prisoners are further protected by section 28 and have the right to be detained only as a last resort and for the shortest period of time. They must also be held separately from adults and be cared for in an age-appropriate manner.

Legislation

The main pieces of legislation relevant to this study are the Correctional Services Act 111 of 1998 (the “CSA”) and the Correctional Services Regulations (the “Regulations”).⁹ The CSA includes a number of provisions that relate specifically to female offenders, including the obligation to separate between male and female offenders – not necessarily in separate facilities (s. 7(2)(b));¹⁰ the obligation to accommodate nutritional requirements of pregnant women (s. 8(2)); the obligation to create a gender-sensitive environment (s. 16(4)); the right to have children up to age two live with their imprisoned mothers (s. 20); the right to same-gender searches (s. 27(2)(3)); and the right to non-discriminatory and gender responsive programs (s. 41(7)). Some of these rights are further elaborated in the Regulations, including anti-discrimination provisions on the basis of gender; same sex searches (reg. 16(1)(c)); rules related to locks, keys and visitation in terms of separate female facilities (reg. 3(2)(f)); and a rule related to nutrition (reg. 4(1)(a)).

International Agreements and Human Rights Standards

While there are a number of international instruments that are relevant to this study, including the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners; the United Nations Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons Under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment, 1988 and others, the most important international instrument related to the incarceration of women is the *United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders* (2010), also known as the Bangkok Rules.¹¹

The Bangkok Rules were approved in 2010 in light of an increasing incarcerated female population worldwide and a recognition of the lack of specific attention to the needs and rights of female prisoners in the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (1955) and the

9 Government Gazette Vol. 469, No. 26626, July 30, 2004.

10 Exceptions may be made to this rule for particular purposes but not in respect of sleeping accommodation (s 7(3)).

11 UN Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-Custodial Means for Women Offenders. General Assembly Resolution A/RES/65/229 of 2010/16 of 22 July 2010.

United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for Non-custodial Measures (1990, also known as the Tokyo Rules¹²). Meant to be used in conjunction with the Tokyo Rules, they represent the global goals of justice for female prisoners.

Included in the Bangkok Rules are rules related to admission procedures (including rules related to family contact, legal advice and the receipt of information on prison rules and the prison regime and provisions related to caretaking arrangements for children), personal hygiene, health care, safety and security, contact with the outside world, prison staff, classification of prisoners, prison regime, prison visits, reintegration upon release, minority needs and non-custodial measures. Among the specific rights that are established are the right to “facilities and materials required to meet women’s specific hygiene needs,” including sanitary towels (free of charge) and a regular supply of water (Rule 5); health screening, including mental health and screening related to sexual abuse and other forms of violence (Rule 6); immediate access to specialised psychological support for a woman who experienced sexual abuse or another form of violence before or during detention (Rule 7); gender-specific health-care upon request (except where urgent intervention is required) (Rule 10); “individualised, gender-sensitive, trauma-informed and comprehensive mental health care and rehabilitation programmes” for women with mental health care needs (Rule 12); access to specialised substance abuse treatment programmes that take into account prior victimisation and other special needs (Rule 15); the development of alternative screening methods that will replace strip searches and invasive body searches (Rule 20); the right to not have disciplinary actions that prohibit family contact, especially with children (Rule 23); the right not to have restraints used during childbirth (Rule 24); encouragement and facilitation of family contact, including measures to “counterbalance disadvantages” faced by women incarcerated far from home (Rule 26); open contact during visits between mothers and children (Rule 28); and gender appropriate programming and services (Rule 42).

The Bangkok Rules also require states to organise and promote research on female criminality, including the “reasons that trigger women’s confrontation with the criminal justice system” and on programming designed to reduce

¹² United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for Non-Custodial Measures (The Tokyo Rules), G.A. res. 45/110, annex, 45 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 49A) at 197, U.N. Doc. A/45/49 (1990).

recidivism rates among female offenders (Rule 67). States are further mandated to publicise some of this research with the aim of reducing the stigma associated with incarceration and facilitating the social reintegration of female offenders, in order to reduce the negative impact of incarceration on them and their children (Rules 69-70).

METHODOLOGY

Framing the Research Question(s)

We consulted and, to some extent, relied on existing literature to frame our research. As noted, most of this literature is generated by scholars in North America and Europe where the social and cultural context is quite different. For this reason, we avoided restricting ourselves to questions and avenues of theoretical inquiry that have been considered in that literature but instead will respect the unique context presented by the African continent in general, and South Africa in particular. To illustrate why this is important, consider Lillian Tibatemwa-Ekirikubinza's (1999) study of incarcerated women in Uganda.¹³ Her study focused mainly on the circumstances that led women to commit the violent crimes for which they were incarcerated. Women's responses revealed that polygamy, patrilineality, legal barriers to divorce, and rights to ownership of land all influenced the nature of the crimes the women committed, including their choice of victims. Many women also cited witchcraft as both a motive and defence for their crimes. Such assignments are virtually never mentioned in mainstream North American and European literature on women's violent crimes because they are less often part of the lived experience of the incarcerated women in those countries (and perhaps, because scholars of penology have yet to seriously consider African women detained and incarcerated in the West).

We aimed to develop a creative methodological design that did not treat participants as 'research subjects'. A design that would move beyond the obligatory in-depth interview that would explore different dimensions of women's lives, and that would force us to draw on the physical techniques

¹³ This study was part of her 1995 doctoral thesis; her findings were eventually published in the 1999 book, *Women's Violent Crime in Uganda* (Kampala, Uganda: Fountain Publishers).

and analytical contributions from other disciplines. Most importantly, a design that would draw on incarcerated women's subjective experiences to build alternative knowledge about women and crime while simultaneously legitimising (these) women, through their experiences, as producers of 'new knowledge' about women and crime.

There were interminable tensions between institutional interests, offenders' interests, research interests and our own moral duties to 'do no harm'. We were deeply conscious of avoiding being identified as part of the correctional system, but also careful to be non-threatening to the system itself. These tensions became amplified within a climate of regulation, order, disorder, crowded facilities, rules – both rigid and shifting – and limited privacy. The limitations to our privacy extended to both group work and individual contact with offenders. Our activities and contact time rarely went as scheduled. Offenders were moved around within the correctional facility, were committed to 'paid work' or transferred. Schedules within the facility seemed to constantly shift. Despite our attempts to set concrete contact times within the prison schedule, events were always clashing.

The research process was also marred with conversations and anxieties about 'ethical boundaries' and our responsibility to offenders. Questions relating to whether our research may result in direct, indirect or even *unknown* adverse effects, exploitation or collusion (not only with the offenders or with the correctional facility, but with 'feminism') were persistent. Working with scant methodological offerings from our discipline resulted in prolonged periods of reflection about risk, outcome and meaning to the outside world, but more importantly about what the research would mean to the women themselves – in other words, "what's in it for them?" In the end, we chose a complex multi-method design that put the women at the centre of the research process. We took contemporaneous notes, observational during interviews and of our experiences, digitally recorded interviews to capture women's real words and wrote post-interview summaries and reflections. We also promoted writing, journaling and other artistic activities to assist women with articulating their perspectives.

In sum, we resisted the assumption that findings reported in the literature will be replicated here while remaining optimistic and excited about the

prospects of gaining new theoretical insights. The same applies to our view of methodology and research methods. Sound, credible methodology and culturally sensitive methods (e.g., those that establish rapport and trust, avoid traumatising the subject) need not be mutually exclusive concerns. The process of planning the research led to messy, sometimes heated, and yet always and ultimately fruitful discussions of what information to solicit and how best to interview women, given for instance, the challenge language poses and the limited availability of counselling staff at the two correctional facilities where we have been granted access. The insights we gained from these discussions and our experiences carrying out the research were every bit as important to us as the theoretical developments and the empirical findings that we expected our study to yield.

Summary of Research Design

The project took place in two correctional facilities, Pollsmoor and Worcester Correctional Service Centres (both in the Western Cape), and had distinct phases. The first phase consisted of a number of rapport-building exercises so that we could get to know the incarcerated women better and secure their trust in ourselves and our research process. This rapport-building process involved orientation sessions at both correctional facilities, focus group discussions about the project and a documentary film about incarcerated women. Once women were recruited for the study, we engaged in activities such as “life mapping”, journal writing and the creation of a prisons dictionary.¹⁴ The second phase consisted of a brief demographic and life history survey of 55 female offenders, followed by one-on-one in-depth interviews with these women.

The first activity was designed to initiate a conversation about women, crime and incarceration and to begin to create a safe-space in which an exploration of these issues could take place. Through a discussion of characters in a documentary film, the researchers hoped that participants would begin to reflect on their own life histories and experiences of imprisonment. The life mapping activity was artistic in nature and asked the women to focus more openly on their own experiences, but allowed them to do this alone. For this exercise, the participants were asked to identify important turning points

¹⁴ In practice, for a variety of reasons, additional activities were implemented during this phase.

in their lives and to visually represent the tangible and intangible impacts these experiences had on the courses their lives took and on their paths to incarceration. In the “journaling” stage we encouraged women to write on or draw about certain themes in their lives. The goal of this exercise was to further develop and deepen the participants’ understandings of their pathways, as represented in their life maps, by focusing on particular aspects of their lives. During this exercise, women were also asked to reflect upon the experience of incarceration and on the changes this has wrought in their lives, as well as their hopes for the future. Thematics for writing included, for instance: ‘childhood’, ‘a favourite song and its meaning’ to the offender, ‘a critical life-altering moment’, ‘fondest memory’, ‘first night in prison’, ‘longing for’ and ‘the future’.

In the final and central stage of the research process, our commitment to the offenders was to create an environment where they could tell their own stories, in a private space, in their own words, uninterrupted, apart from a few questions of clarification. In discussing this process with them, they encouraged us to ask a few key questions to help them ‘organise’ their narratives and to see whether there were any similarities in their stories. The in-depth interviews thus explored a range of questions, beginning with ‘how did you end up in prison’ and ending with thoughts about the future. Other key themes included: family and intimate relationships, childhood, turning points, impact and experience of incarceration, prison conditions and personal reflections. Each interview, however, was shaped and driven by the woman telling her particular story, such that each narrative focuses on those aspects of her experience that she felt were salient and reflects the way in which each woman made sense of the events in her life.

Our analysis strategy began with each of the researchers familiarising herself with the interviews, which had been fully transcribed.¹⁵ We aimed at achieving a deeper understanding of the narratives as a whole and of the key experiences within and across the interviews we felt were most salient. Participants also contributed to an analysis of the findings and, once the interview thematics were established, contributed to discussions surrounding how incarcerated women, and their lives, are portrayed.

¹⁵ Interviews were conducted in three languages – English, Afrikaans and Xhosa. The Xhosa interviews were only transcribed in translation to English.

Project Sites

The project took place in two correctional facilities: Pollsmoor and Worcester Correctional Service Centres, which are both located in the Western Cape. They are described below.

Pollsmoor Correctional Centre

Pollsmoor Correctional Centre is located in the southern suburbs of Cape Town in Tokai and has female, male and juvenile sections. Established in 1978, Pollsmoor's female section is a medium security level section, where women are housed in one of either 85 single cells (which can hold up to three women each) or 12 communal cells, which, according to the incarcerated women that we interviewed can house up to 30 women. The present occupancy rate at Pollsmoor is 168%. While Pollsmoor is designed to accommodate 4 252 offenders including those in the male, female and juvenile sections), at present the facility accommodates 7 296 offenders in total. Of these, 4 823 (66.8%) are awaiting-trial offenders. At the Female Centre, there are 397 (possibly more) offenders, of which 47% are awaiting trial. The occupancy rate is 162%. Privacy in the communal cells in particular is very limited, as toilets and showers are not fully enclosed. The women's section does not have its own kitchen and food is prepared and delivered by the neighbouring, medium security male section.

The majority of sentenced women in Pollsmoor (218 in total as of 2004) are serving sentences of less than five years.¹⁶ Most sentenced and awaiting trial women are between the ages of 22 and 39. Women receive medical care in the hospital section of the correctional facility, but are referred to Victoria, Groote Schuur and Tygerberg hospitals for serious conditions. The hospital section of the Correctional Centre is operated by four nursing sisters¹⁷ and one administrative assistant. A doctor is available once a week, whereas a dentist and psychiatrist are each available once a month. A psychologist is theoretically available on request, though the findings from this research suggest that such requests take time to process

16 The information in this paragraph – and in the next description on Worcester Prison – is based on the 2004 survey conducted by Judicial Inspectorate of South African Prisons.

17 Based on personal conversations with DCS representatives. This is reportedly double the staffing norm.

and schedule. Women are offered recreation and sport activities, job opportunities, library access for sentenced women only and a range of programmes from outside organisations (JIP, 2004). Previous research conducted with female inmates in two South African Correctional Centres, however (one in Durban and one in the Western Cape Province), found that limited job and education opportunities are available for incarcerated women compared to those available to men (Gibbons, 1998).

Worcester Female Correctional Centre

Situated nearly 120 kilometres outside of Cape Town, Worcester Female Correctional Centre is an all-female correctional facility, with a male facility operating on the same grounds. The Correctional Centre has ten single and ten communal cells for the women. At 140% overcapacity, it accommodates a total of 211 women (JIP, 2004). Similar to Pollsmoor, the Worcester female correctional facility has no kitchen and receives all meals from the neighbouring male prison. Here too, toilets and showers are not enclosed and thus are lacking in privacy. Just over half of the women at Worcester (120 out of 207 in 2004) are serving sentences of five years to life,¹⁸ with approximately 13% serving sentences of up to two years.

All but two women at Worcester Correctional Centre in 2004 were over the age of 22 and Worcester does not have a crèche. The largest age group represented was between 30 and 39 years of age. Worcester Correctional Centre has no hospital on site and all serious medical conditions are dealt with by Eben Donges, Tygerberg and Groote Schuur hospitals. Medical personnel are available in the same frequency as Pollsmoor, and three nursing sisters, one contracted member and one administrative assistant provide primary health care are available at the consulting room and sickbay on site. Recreation and sport activities, job placements, a library (for sentenced inmates only) and programmes run by outside organisations are available to the incarcerated women (JIP, 2004).

18 Only five women were serving life sentences as of 2004 (JIP, 2004).

Recruitment

The researchers' original intention had been to obtain a list from each correctional facility of all of the incarcerated women that met the eligibility conditions that we had identified and select women that we would present the project and invite to participate. The eligibility conditions included that: (i) offenders had at least six months left on their sentence; (ii) they were adult women (18+); (iii) there was no direct evidence of mental illness, profound trauma, acute depression, drug detoxification/severe drug addiction; (iv) they were literate to some degree ('semi-literacy' was an *inclusion* criteria); (v) they did not have any marked physical illness which would preclude them from the project activities.

For a number of reasons related to prison logistics, the original selection process we created was too complex to ensure the recruitment of a sufficient number of participants. We sought the advice of Correctional Services authorities as to a practical recruitment method. The head of the correctional facility suggested that we present the project to all of the offenders and ask those who are interested in participating to sign-up. This was a practical and efficient way of recruiting participants for the project.

The project was presented to all of the female offenders at Worcester correctional facility in September 2009. Following the presentation, which included a review of eligibility criteria, 58 women signed-up to participate in the study. This was considered a very successful recruitment drive as the researchers had hoped to begin with a group of 45 participants. Given the excitement demonstrated by the inmates for the project, the researchers decided to include all of those who signed up, in the hope of interviewing as many as possible and taking into account possible attrition during the course of the project. As noted in relevant places below, attrition did occur and the large number of initial volunteers ensured that an adequate number of participants remained throughout the process.

It was difficult to assess the reasons for attrition throughout the project, particularly as we were not able to contact offenders directly unless they showed up for activities. In some cases, in spite of the eligibility criteria that were stipulated, we found that women had signed up for the project even though they were due to be released within the six month prescribed

period. In addition, for a variety of reasons, the pre-interview activities (such as the life maps) took place over a longer period of time than was anticipated, such that the six-month period prescribed for eligibility was insufficient. As a result, the in-depth interviews only began in Worcester in the seventh month following recruitment. At the same time, throughout the process women who had not signed up during the initial recruitment asked to join the project. Although the importance of the trust-building aspect of the activities was noted, the researchers decided to include these additional women in the process.

The project was presented to a much larger group of offenders in Pollsmoor – approximately 400 women in October 2009. Following this presentation, which was similar to that used in Worcester, 40 women signed-up to participate in the study. Though this recruitment effort was not as successful as that which took place in Worcester, it was considered adequate. During the course of the activities that took place in 2009, however, it became clear that in Pollsmoor, too, some of the offenders who had signed up had not adhered to the eligibility criteria and were due to be released (or had already been released) and/or were juveniles. Attrition was also a considerable problem due to the fact the Pollsmoor acts as a remand or short-term facility and women get transferred or are sentenced to shorter periods of time.

Informed consent was established prior to each activity, including, life mapping, journaling, the pre-interview survey and the in-depth interviews. The latter two activities had a much more detailed informed consent process, which included a written description of the risks of participation as well as requiring women to sign consent forms.

Specific Project Phases

Film screening activity

Following numerous debates among the researchers, the film “Girlhood” was selected and purchased for the film screening activity. “Girlhood” is a documentary film about two young women incarcerated at a juvenile facility in the United States. The film documents their lives both inside the facility

and for a period following their release. Because the correctional facilities were unable to allocate more than a two-hour time slot for the activity, it was impossible to screen a full-length feature film and still allow time for discussion. The format of the “Girlhood” film, which moves between scenes focused on each of the two young women, allowed the researchers to select a number of scenes that focus on one of the protagonists and to use only those as the basis for discussion. The researchers, thus, chose a number of scenes for screening, highlighting those that illuminate the protagonist’s relationship with her mother and grandmother (and the relationship between mother and grandmother), the cycle of neglect, alcohol and drug use, the young woman’s aspirations for the future and other aspects of the film that the researchers thought would provide a useful starting point for discussion. The researchers co-facilitated the film discussions, with one researcher acting as the main facilitator for each group and the remaining researchers taking notes. Other than prepared discussion questions, there was no specific data collection instrument prepared for the film discussions as they were intended to “get a conversation going,” raise topics that might be of interest to explore further in interviews (especially issues that might be particular, in some respect, to the local South African context) and build familiarity and trust among the participants and the researchers.

The activity was considered successful as the researchers began to build a relationship with the participants and the discussion touched on some of the elements that the projects sought to explore, e.g., family histories and relationships; life choices; and the experience of incarceration. Though we had had some concern that language would be a problem – primarily in terms of understanding the film, which was in heavily accented English without subtitles – this proved not to be the case. However, when necessary, the researchers used fellow participants as translators to ensure that all participants could understand the facilitators and could participate fully in the activities.

Life Mapping

The purpose of the mapping activity was twofold: to build trust among the researchers and the project participants and to encourage participants to begin reflecting on their life journeys and on the relationships between

events and turning points in their lives, the choices they made and the paths their lives have taken. An additional aim was to highlight aspects of the participants' experience that we might not have thought to ask about during the interviews. Life mapping, a form of journey mapping, was selected as the specific mapping activity to be used for this purpose, as it evokes precisely these things, by asking participants to depict their life histories, from birth until the present (i.e., incarceration), using language, images and symbols to indicate important events (e.g., the death of a parent, illness, etc.) and turning points in their lives, as well as the feelings and associations that these arouse. An experienced facilitator was retained to facilitate the mapping workshop and an informal "training session" was held to discuss and review implementation of the activity.

The life mapping activity was implemented in Worcester in November 2009 and in Pollsmoor in February 2010. The offenders engaged readily with the activity. The maps that were made varied widely in the extent to which they reflected the kinds of events and turning points that we had hoped. Some were quite detailed and reflective, highlighting formative experiences such as the loss of a child, an abusive or alcoholic parent, divorce, illness and so forth. Others seemed unwilling to touch on any of the more difficult aspects of their lives. The more reflective and detailed life maps, and the kinds of events and experiences that they depicted, helped to inform the final interview schedule and also served as an important reference point when discussing turning points during the interviews already conducted in Worcester.

Writing Exercises and Other Group Activities

The first phase of the project originally included two activities: a film screening and mapping exercises. The plan changed to include a number of additional group activities for a few reasons. Because we were unable to speak directly to the participants in between workshops, it was important for us to maintain a periodic presence at the facility and we wanted to maintain the momentum we had started to build with the presentation and the film screening. Beyond these concerns, we were also interested in using writing as part of our research methodology. The idea of handing out journals for the women to write in had been considered during the proposal

phase, though it had raised concerns such as privacy and literacy. Concerns regarding the latter were largely alleviated in Worcester and we decided to discuss the privacy matter with the women themselves. We, therefore, added a journaling workshop between the film screening and life-map activities. The first part of the session was devoted to a group discussion, which enabled us to address the privacy issue and also to cover topics such as communication with the participants, the facilities' schedules and the availability of counselling. We put forth our desire to provide them with journals in which they would write on a variety of themes and this idea was met with willingness. The remaining part of the session was devoted to word exercises and free-association exercises aimed at getting the participants to think about the world in different ways and creating a list of themes that they would later write about in their journals. Journaling, generally, was successful in the sense that the researchers received a number of full journals in which participants have written out their life stories, described what they had depicted in their life maps, written poetry, drawn pictures, drawn a social support map and more. The journals were used to clarify and supplement the information obtained in the interviews.

Additional activities that were conducted included poetry writing, an exercise on "If I had a giant eraser, I would erase ...", writing a "prison dictionary," making "secret postcards" (anonymously revealing a long-held secret on a postcard, using language and images), painting a mural and thematic writing. All of these activities were aimed at reflecting on life choices and on the impact and experience of incarceration. They also sought to encourage the women to make connections between their experiences and their choices. Some exercises were more successful than others. Participation in exercises about the experience of incarceration tended to be greater than those that addressed their life history. This can partially, however, be attributed to the group nature of these activities.

Pre-Interview Survey

A structured, close-ended, pre-interview survey was conducted with the participants of the *Pathways Project* (n=55). The survey questionnaire was primarily created to capture basic demographic information and information on criminal history. The decision to collect some data using a close-ended

questionnaire was intended to save time during the interviews and as a way to check and clarify information provided during the interviews. The survey questionnaire was developed by the research team and translated into Afrikaans. The questionnaire was later translated into Xhosa for use at Pollsmoor.

In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted with 55 female offenders at the two correctional facilities. The open-ended interview schedule was developed in two stages. A number of extensive, very detailed draft questionnaires were prepared in 2009, based on a number of sources, including poverty measurement instruments and other pathways studies. These drafts were later consolidated into a short interview schedule, organised around seven themes, including: criminal history, family and intimate relationships, childhood and growing up, turning points, impact and experience of incarceration, institutional conditions and personal reflections on the future. Within each theme, the schedule identified key questions to be explored. These “themes” were discussed and agreed by the *Pathways* participants. Given the nature of the open-ended questions and the research aims – e.g., allowing the women themselves to inform the process and to shape the questions asked – the interview schedule served as a guide rather than a formal interview script. Whereas some of the women spoke continuously after the first question, covering many of the research themes without additional prompting, others gave short answers that required substantial probing and questioning.

Each interview lasted for a period of about 2-3 hours. Where necessary, follow-up interviews were conducted on the following day. The project participants were very open during their interviews, providing in-depth information on a range of topics covered in the interview schedule. In addition to recording the interviews, contemporaneous notes were taken both during and after the interviews. The interviews were transcribed and analysed thematically.

OVERVIEW OF THE REPORT

The narratives collected in this project point to a number of important risk factors and turning points in the lives of incarcerated women. We begin the next section of the report by sketching a picture of the institutional context. The findings are then presented grouped under six main themes, including the importance of background context, history of child sexual abuse, domestic violence, poverty, substance abuse and addiction, trauma and family dysfunction and caretaking responsibilities.

Although further research is necessary, these findings help us to understand the contexts and constraints that shape the lives of South African women and to identify how social policies and programmes can better respond to the experiences and responsibilities that women face. The discussion section, which follows the findings, looks at the ways in which female criminality and women's experiences of incarceration in South Africa are affected by gender and by the specific historical and cultural context in which the women in our sample live. Understanding these distinctive experiences and the needs of incarcerated women is crucial for the formulation of effective and humane responses to women's crimes and to minimising the damaging effects incarceration has on households and communities.

PRE-INTERVIEW SURVEY OF WOMEN IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

This section sets out the findings from our pre-interview demographic survey. Where relevant we reflect on national data from the Department of Correctional Services and the Office of the Inspecting Judge of Prisons. At times, these findings are at odds with what we learned through the in-depth interview process. This is because the interviews resulted in higher levels of disclosure, particularly in relation to ‘personal histories’.

Despite successful efforts in recent years to reduce the number of persons in custody, South Africa’s incarceration rate remains the highest in Africa at 3.5 per 1,000 and is currently among the highest in the world (Van Zyl, 2010). There are currently 239 Correctional Centres under the control of the Department of Correctional Services. Eight of these are female only facilities, while 86 house both men and women (DCS, 2008). In 2008, female offenders comprised 2.2% of South Africa’s prison population, with 2,516 sentenced female offenders nationally and 426 in the Western Cape alone (DCS, 2008). Although the inmate population numbers have decreased, sentence lengths appear to be increasing (Van Zyl, 2010). In 1995, the average sentence served by female offenders was 3 years and 2 months, increasing in 2004 to 5 years and 10 months (JIP, 2004). The demographic information in our own study produced average sentences for women of 8 years and 6 months.¹⁹ National averages for the total offender population (male and female) are between 10 to 15 years (DCS, 2008).

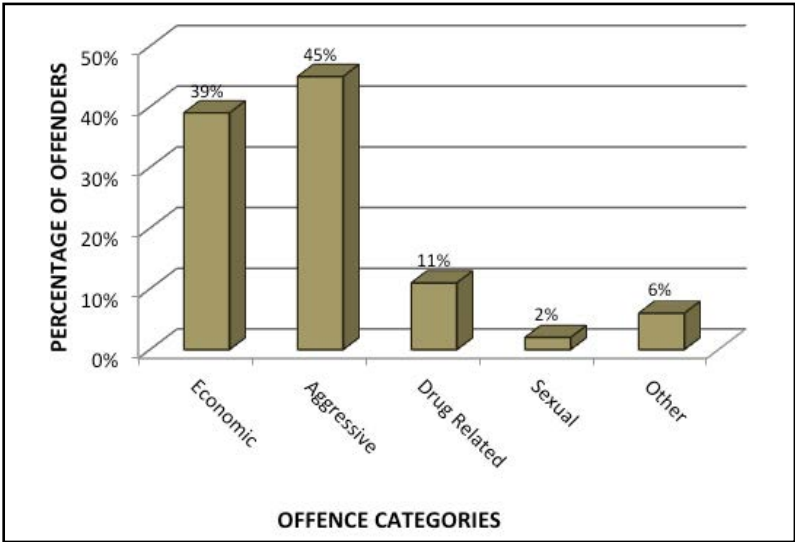
COMPARISON TO NATIONAL FIGURES

Using DCS offence categories, we found that the most common offences committed by women coincide with those reported by DCS in 2004 and 2008. Aggressive crimes (45%) were the most prevalent followed by economic crimes (39%). Sexual crimes (2%) were reportedly low among the study sample in contrast to national averages that place it third behind economic

¹⁹ It should be noted, however, that the participants in our study self-selected and may represent a cohort of offenders serving longer sentences than the average female offender.

crimes (DCS, 2008).²⁰ Drug related crimes (11%) ranked after aggressive and economic crimes in both this study and the 2004 statistics compiled by the Judicial Inspectorate of Prisons (2004).²¹

Figure 1: Offences Committed (Categorised by DCS Offences Categories)



The racial profile of women involved in our study differs from the national female offender racial profile in 2008, where the female sentenced offender population was predominantly black followed by Coloured and then white (DCS, 2008).²² It is worth noting, however, that we conducted the research in two correctional facilities in the Western Cape, where racial profiles are different than the national profile. Figure 2 shows that Coloured women comprise the largest racial group in our sample (46%). White women represented the second largest group at 24%, black women followed with 19%, and the ‘other’ category accounted for the remaining 7%. The ‘other’

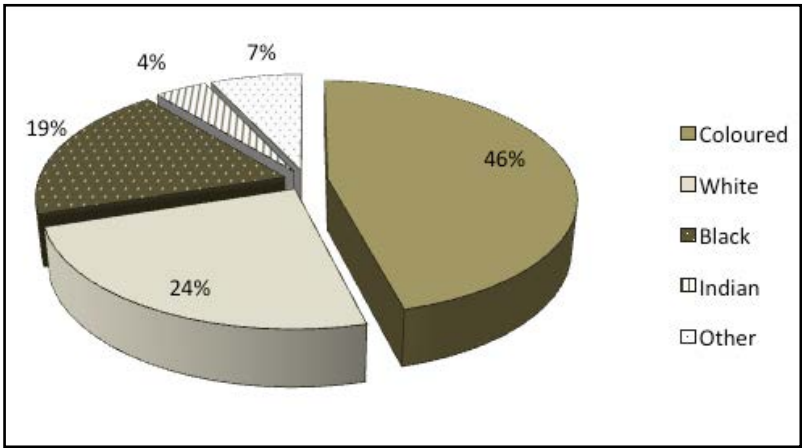
20 It is important to note that the 2008 statistics are for female and male offenders combined, whereas the 2004 statistics are female offenders only, possibly explaining why sexual crimes, more commonly a male perpetrated crime, were not as prevalent in the 2004 statistics and this study’s findings.

21 2008 national categorical crime statistics for the offender population: 56% aggressive crimes, 22% economic crimes, 16% sexual, 4% other, 2% drug related. 2004 categorical crime statistics: 52% aggressive crimes, 33% economic crimes, 8% drug related.

22 2008 sentenced female offenders by racial group: 71% African, 19% Coloured, 9% White and 2% Indian/Asian.

category included women who self-reported that they were Spanish/Hispanic (n=1), Muslim (n=2), and Latin American (n=1).

Figure 2 Self-Identified Race Group



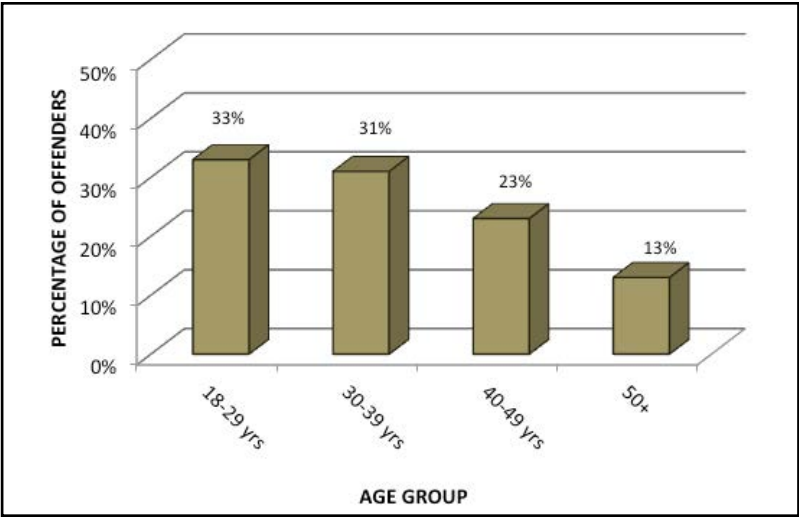
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

One of the study’s (various) data collection instruments was a brief, self-report survey administered to the women before the in-depth interview, and which collected profile information on the individuals within the study sample. Information gleaned from the survey provided important background on the lives of the individual women which helped direct researchers’ questions and topics discussed in the interviews. The survey was comprised of four main sections including (i) demographic information, (ii) life before incarceration, (iii) childhood and growing up and (iv) criminal history. The questions within each section covered topics such as quality of life, childhood physical and sexual abuse, feelings of safety in the home and community, family and children, work history, home life, crime and incarceration, and involvement in correctional programmes.

The total study sample (n=55) consisted of 37 women from Worcester Female Correctional Centre (67% of the total sample) and 18 women from Pollsmoor (33%). As represented in Figure 3, the majority of the women fell

into the age groups of 18-29 years (33%) and 30-39 years (31%), with 23% of women between the ages of 40-49 and 13% being 50 years and older.

Figure 3: Participants' Age Distribution



Residence

Ninety-three per cent of the total sample lived in the Western Cape before incarceration for their current sentence, 5% lived in other provinces, and only one woman (2%) reported having lived outside of South Africa. Thirty-seven per cent of the women lived in those provinces for 1-10 years, 21% for 11-20 years, and 41% lived there for 21 years or more.²³ During adulthood, a majority (80%) of respondents moved home 1-5 times, 12% made 6-10 moves, and 8% made over 10 moves.²⁴

Education

Forty-two per cent of the women's had achieved some high school (but not Matric) as their highest level of education. Two per cent had no formal education at all, 11% received only some primary schooling. At the higher end of the scale, 9% had completed Matric, 14% went to university/college,

²³ Data missing in 1 case (2% of the sample).

²⁴ Data missing in 3 cases (6% of the sample).

a further 5% finished university or college and the remaining 2% went to a technical/trade school. The most common reasons given for not continuing education included a lack of money, traumatic life events, having a child, and moving. Two women dropped out of school after experiences of rape while two other women left after the death of family members.

Growing Up: Childhood and Adolescence

Household

As seen in Table 1, 85% of respondents reported living with their mother growing up²⁵ and 63% indicated living with their father.²⁶ Over half of the women who did not live with their mother growing up stated that it was as a result of divorce or separation (55%), while the remainder (45%) cited “other reasons,” including having foster parents, other family members caring for them or because their mother worked in another city. Reasons given for not living with fathers included divorce/separation (50%), the fact that he was deceased (25%) and other (21%). One woman reported that her father was incarcerated for attempted murder.²⁷ Two of the women noted that they were separated due to their fathers working in another city. One woman left this question blank, but she later wrote that she had a stepfather, but that she did not grow up with him due to drugs (in her interview she told that her stepfather was a drug dealer).

Table 1: Parents Women Lived with Growing Up

| Lived with growing up | Percentage |
|-----------------------|------------|
| Mother | 85% |
| Father | 63% |

Figure 4 shows that the average number of people living in a respondent’s household growing up was seven people. Thirty-eight per cent lived with 1-5

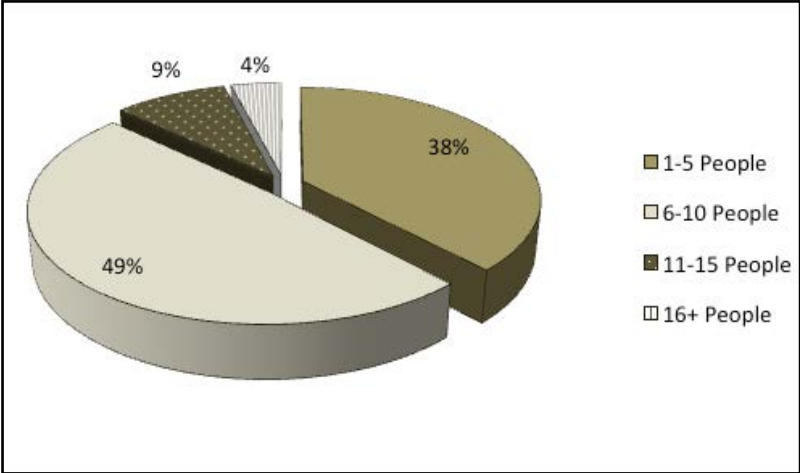
²⁵ Data missing in 1 case (2% of the sample).

²⁶ Data missing in 4 cases (7% of the sample).

²⁷ The number of women who had family members who are or were incarcerated at some point was much higher (47%).

people, almost half (49%) with 6-10 people, 9% with 11-15 people, and 4% with 16 or more people.²⁸ On average, women reported having three siblings (including half-siblings), with 85% reporting 1-5 siblings, 10% with 6-10 siblings, and 6% with 10 siblings or more.²⁹

Figure 4: Number of People Living in Household Growing Up



Recognising the limitations of, and indeed the highly gendered nature of, conventional social indices such as ‘household income’ and ‘crime rates’, we approached these social factors by inquiring about women’s lived experiences and perceptions of their social and physical security. Questions about poverty, access to food, and feelings of safety in the home (and within the community) were asked in order to see how the women experienced and perceived their surroundings while growing up.

Exactly half of respondents indicated that they felt poorer relative to others in their neighbourhood while growing up, while only 7% thought that they were better off.³⁰ Twenty-six per cent of the total sample reported that people in their household went hungry due to a lack of food. Of the 26% of women who reported that people in their household went hungry due to a lack of food, over half (54%) noted that this happened often and the other

²⁸ Data missing in 2 cases (4% of the sample).

²⁹ Data missing in 3 cases (6% of the sample).

³⁰ Data missing in 1 case (2% of the sample).

46% indicated that this happened sometimes.³¹ One woman, who indicated that someone in her household went hungry due to a lack of food growing up, did not report the frequency of this lack of access to food. Instead, she wrote in that there was enough food in the household, but that the food was locked away from her specifically.

Personal Safety

Most women indicated that they felt relatively safe in their homes and communities while growing up: 79% of respondents reported feeling safe in their home,³² while 81% reported feeling safe in their community.³³ Two-thirds (63%) of women reported that they had never been physically abused during their childhood.³⁴ Nineteen per cent were victims of physical abuse once or twice while growing up, 9% has experienced physical abuse 'sometimes', and another 9% were 'often' physically abused.

Seventy-two per cent of respondents reported no sexual abuse³⁵ as a child, with 13% having experienced it 'once or twice', 9% 'sometimes', and 6% 'often'.³⁶ Of these women reporting childhood sexual abuse, the majority were between the ages of 6-10 years (40%). Each of the remaining age groups (1-5 years, 11-15 years³⁷, and 16-20 years) reported equal percentages (20%) for the age of the onset of abuse.³⁸ The average age at which sexual abuse began was 10 years old.

Not only are these self-reports of victimisation surprisingly lower than victimisation studies in South Africa have produced, they also conflict with later findings from our study where the process of in-depth interviewing

31 Data missing in 1 case (8% of the sample reporting a lack of access to food).

32 Data missing in 2 cases (4% of the sample).

33 Data missing in 1 case (2% of the sample).

34 Data missing in 1 case (2%). For the purpose of this study, physical abuse as a child committed by a caretaker included any of the following: twisted arm or hair, slammed against the wall, punched or hit, choked, beat up, burned or scalded on purpose, kicked, used knife or gun, caused sprain/bruise/cut, caused to pass out, caused to go to a doctor.

35 Sexual abuse as a child, in the terms of this study, included: showed or were shown sex organs, fondled/touched sex organs or was fondled/touched, attempted intercourse, intercourse.

36 Data missing in 2 cases (7% of the sample). Important to note: one respondent indicated that as a child she had never been sexually abused, but that she was raped at the age of 18 years.

37 One woman reports having escaped an attempted sexual abuse at the age of 12 years.

38 It is possible that the wording of the survey question: "When you were a child, were you ever **sexually** abused?" may have led some women to not include abuses received after the legal age of adulthood of 18 years.

resulted in a high level of disclosure of both child and adult sexual and physical violence. This will be addressed in greater detail later in this monograph.

Marriage, Sex and Children

Thirty-five per cent of the women in our study were married or in a long-term partnership. One-fifth of those women were in a civil/religious marriage, 5% reported a traditional/customary marriage, and the remaining 5% had a long-term partner to whom they were not married. Over a third of women (37%) said they were never married or were single.³⁹ Eight women (15%) answered that there had been a change in their marital status since incarceration, citing divorce, separation, and alcohol and drug problems as the nature of the change.

Seventy-five per cent of the women in the study sample had children, for which the average number of children per woman was three. Almost half (45%) of women had their first child between the ages of 16-20 years, 7% at the very young ages of 10-15 years and the rest of the women (48%) had their child in their 20s.⁴⁰ While the mothers were incarcerated, they reported that their children were currently living with their: mother, sister, parents (one or both), child's father, friends, foster care, mother-in-law, or the child was living on their own. Four of the women (10%) have five deceased children between them. Two of the women had three of their children die from the illnesses HIV, jaundice, and pneumonia (the last two of who belonged to the same woman). One woman's son committed suicide. The final woman's son was murdered, but she did not provide details on the circumstances of his murder.

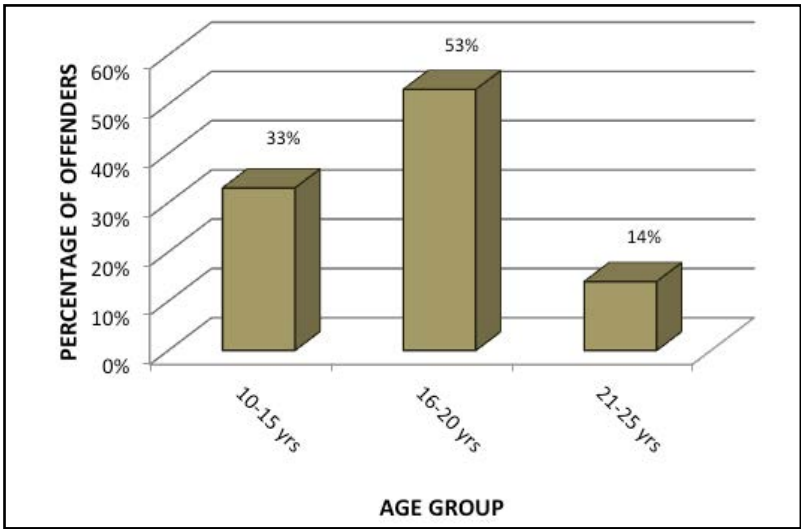
In this study, we define 'consensual sex' as sex in which there was willing participation, meaning that the woman experienced no coercion to participate by threat, force or violence. As Figure 5 indicates, about half of the sample (53%) first participated in consensual sex between the ages of

39 Four women checked two or more categories on their marital status. Remaining responses: 15% divorced, 3% other, and 2% separated.

40 Data missing in 1 case (2% of the sample). Women in their 20's age at first child: 38% 21-25 years and 10% 26-30 years.

16-20 years. One-third (33%) consented between the ages of 10-15 years and 14% between 21-25 years.

Figure 5: Age of First Consensual Sexual Intercourse



Life Before Incarceration

Before incarceration, 72% of respondents lived in a brick house on a separate plot. Twelve per cent lived in a traditional house/hut, 8% lived in a townhouse/cluster house or lived in a room in a house⁴¹ and the remaining 8% lived in a Wendy house or an informal house/shack.⁴² More than half (56%) of the women owned the house they were living in before incarceration,⁴³ while a third (31%) rented their housing, and 13% lived in someone else’s house.⁴⁴

41 Four of the women who reported renting a room in a house noted that these houses were the Asla and Council houses.
42 Data missing in 2 cases (4% of the sample).
43 Ownership includes the women’s direct ownership of home or that her home was owned by an intimate partner or immediate family member who was also part of the household.
44 Data missing in 7 cases (13% of the sample).

Table 2: Type of House Before Incarceration

| Type of Dwelling | Percentage |
|------------------------------|------------|
| Brick house on separate plot | 72% |
| Traditional house/Hut | 6% |
| Flat/Apartment in a block | 6% |
| Townhouse/Cluster house | 4% |
| Room in a house | 4% |
| Wendy house | 7% |
| Informal structure/Shack | 1% |
| Homeless | 0% |

Over half (52%) of respondents lived with their partner (husband, fiancé, boyfriend/partner) prior to incarceration.⁴⁵ One of the survey questions asked how many people the women were living with, other than their children, that they were supporting financially. This question aimed to understand the potential impact of who, aside from children, were affected by the loss of the female breadwinner as a result of incarceration. Within their household, 46% of respondents reported that they were the sole financial supporter prior to incarceration,⁴⁶ whereas 39% of the women contributed 'some' financial support.⁴⁷

Similar to the way the women perceived their poverty status growing up, approximately half (51%) of the total sample perceived themselves as being poorer relative to others in their neighbourhood prior to incarceration. Forty per cent thought that they were about the same and 9% considered themselves better off than other people in their neighbourhood. Three quarters of the total study sample reported that no one in their household went hungry due to a lack of food. However, of those who did report household hunger due to lack of food, half said that there was 'sometimes' not enough food in their household, 29% said this happened 'often', and 21% indicated this 'almost never' occurred.

Half of the respondents had permanent or regular jobs before incarceration, while 17% had part-time/temporary work. Five per cent only had work

45 Data missing in 11 cases (20% of the sample).

46 Data missing in 9 cases (16% of the sample).

47 Data missing in 9 cases (16% of the sample).

‘once in a while’ and 28% reported having no work at all.⁴⁸ Twelve women (22%) indicated that they had done work for which they received no pay.⁴⁹ This question was designed to determine if these women were caretakers, of whom they were taking care of at the time of incarceration, and the potentiality of the loss of this care for these people upon imprisonment. Upon release, about half (45%) of the women had a job or work to which they would definitely return.

Alcohol use was reported among the majority of women, with 28% having used it once or twice in their lives, 28% used sometimes, and 16% used it often.⁵⁰ Forty-three per cent of women first used alcohol at 16-20 years, 33% at 10-15 years, 16% at 21-25 years, and 8% at 26 years or older.⁵¹ Seventy per cent of respondents reported never having used drugs. Fifteen per cent used sometimes, 11% used often, and 4% used once or twice in their lives.⁵² Of the women reporting drug use, most (44%) started using at the ages of 11-15 years, 25% at 21-25 years, 19% at 26 or older, and two (6% each) women started in the age groups of 16-20 years and 5-10 years. Tik, mandrax, dagga, crystal methamphetamine, and cocaine were listed as the types of drugs respondents regularly used.

Offences and Experiences of Incarceration

For 74% of respondents, their incarceration at the time of the study was their first time in a correctional facility.⁵³ As shown in Figure 6, murder was the most reported offence for these women at 32%, with fraud/ forgery as the second most reported at 20%. Shoplifting and theft tie in third with 14% followed by robbery/armed robbery and drug-related offences both with 11%.⁵⁴

48 Data missing in 1 case (2% of the sample).

49 Types of unpaid work reported included: food kitchen, helped family members, watched other people's children, painted, teacher, projects that helped offenders, community worker, worked at an elderly home, worked with youth at a church, and worked at a church food bank.

50 Data missing in 1 case (2% of the sample).

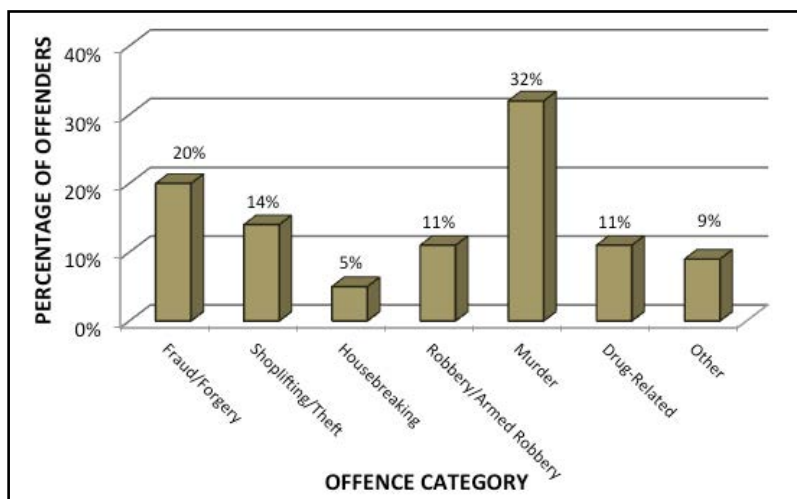
51 Data missing in 2 cases (5% of the sample that reported alcohol use prior to incarceration).

52 Data missing in 1 case (2% of the sample).

53 Data missing in 1 case (2% of the sample).

54 Remaining offences for current incarceration: 6% each for shoplifting; 5% housebreaking; 3% for robbery; 2% each for forgery, hijacking, rape, attempt of kidnapping, conspiracy to commit murder, conspiracy to commit offence. Note: some women were charged with multiple counts.

Figure 6: Offences (As per Criminal Records Categorisation of Offences)



It is important to note that 76% of our sample came from Worcester – a facility with longer-term sentenced offenders. With that in mind, Figure 7 shows that 39% of the women were serving current sentences of 1-5 years, 35% 6-10 years, 9% 11-15 years, and 6% 16-20 years. Only one woman (2%) was serving 21-25 years (for murder) and the remaining 9% were serving sentences greater than 25 years (one woman for murder and armed robbery and one woman for five counts of robbery) or life sentences (each for murder).⁵⁵ The average sentence was 8 years and 6 months.⁵⁶ Sixty per cent of the women had already served 0-2 years of their sentence, 29% had served between 2-5 years, 9% had served between 5-9 years and one woman had served more than 9-15 years. In relation to the number of previous prisons the women had served time in before serving at their current place of incarceration, 65% had been to one other correctional facility during their current sentence, 26% two, and the remaining 6% had been in 3-5 correctional facilities.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ The 25+ / Life Sentence category is comprised of 3 life sentences, a 35 year sentence, and a 30 year sentence.

⁵⁶ Excluding the life sentences as outliers.

⁵⁷ Data missing in 4 cases (73% of the sample). Two percent each for three and five correctional facilities, 4% for four correctional facilities.

Figure 7: Current Sentences

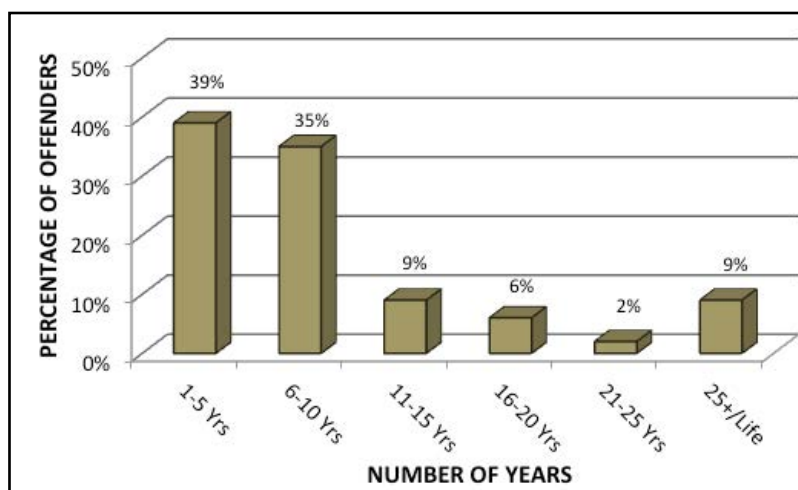
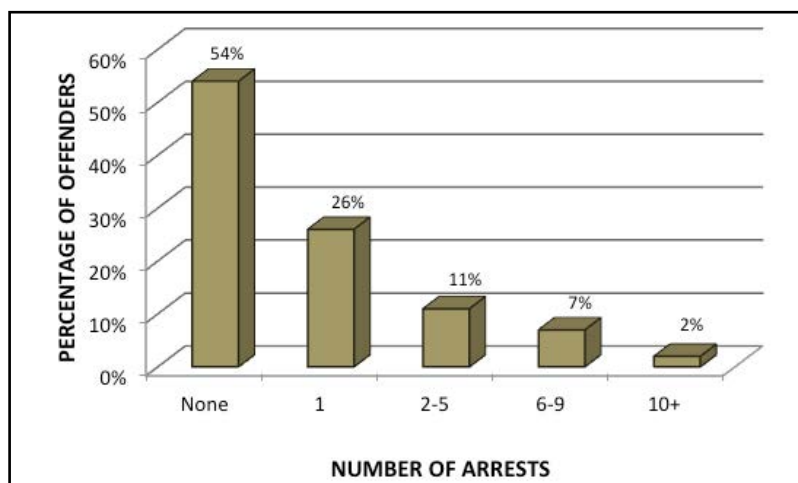


Figure 8 shows that for over half (54%) of the respondents this was their first arrest, while another quarter (26%) had been arrested once before.⁵⁸ Previous offences spanned the gamut from more to less serious, and included: armed robbery, murder, common assault/assault, hijacking, housebreaking, drugs, fraud, theft, possession of firearm, shoplifting, and disturbing the peace.

Figure 8: Number of Previous Arrests



⁵⁸ Data missing in 9 cases (16% of the sample).

Sixteen per cent of respondents with previous incarcerations reported one previous period of incarceration, 11% reported two previous periods of incarceration, and 6% reported 3 or more periods.⁵⁹ As listed in Table 3, common assault/assault, murder, and armed robbery each account for 13% of respondents' offences for previous incarcerations. Forty-four per cent reported shoplifting, 9% reported drug related offences, and theft and possession of a firearm each constitute 4%. The majority (71%) of previous sentences were 0-2 years, 18% were between 2-5 years, 6% between 5-10 years. A further 12% were under correctional supervision.⁶⁰ Thirty-nine per cent of respondents had previously received a suspended sentence.⁶¹

Table 3: Types of Offences for Which Previously Incarcerated

| Type of Offence | Percentage |
|------------------------|------------|
| Common Assault/Assault | 13% |
| Murder | 13% |
| Armed Robbery | 13% |
| Shoplifting | 44% |
| Theft | 4% |
| Drugs | 9% |
| Possession of Firearm | 4% |

Almost half (47%) of the women reported that they had family members who had previously been incarcerated.⁶² Brothers were the most commonly reported family member with previous incarcerations (28%). Two (5%) of the women had daughters who had been incarcerated.⁶³ Table 4 depicts the breakdown of immediate and extended family members whom these women reported as previously incarcerated. It is also interesting to note that over half (58%) the women in the study indicated that they did not have any friends who had been previously incarcerated. Almost a third (27%) had a few friends with previous incarcerations.

⁵⁹ Data missing in 18 cases (33% of the sample).

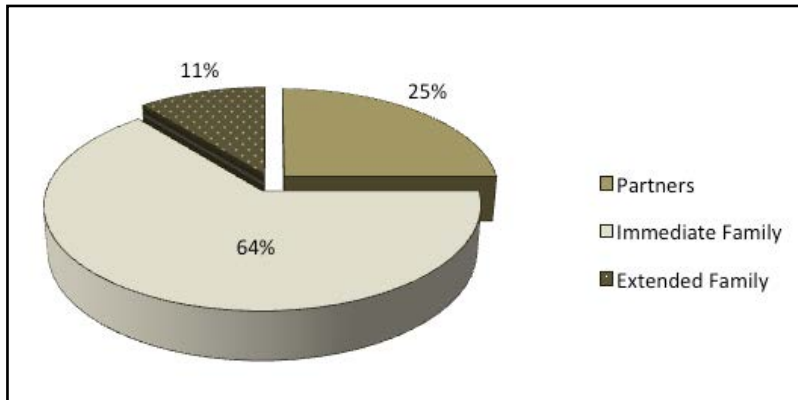
⁶⁰ Correctional supervision sentences were for 2 and 3 years.

⁶¹ Data missing in 4 cases (7% of the sample).

⁶² Data missing in 2 cases (4% of the sample).

⁶³ The remainder of incarcerated family member was father (15%), husband (10%), boyfriend (8%), cousin (8%), child's father (5%), son (5%), stepfather (3%), uncle (8%), step-grandfather (3%), and brother-in-law (3%).

Figure 9: Incarcerated Family Members



Partners includes: husbands, boyfriends, and children's fathers.

Immediate Family includes: stepfathers and brothers-in-law

Two of the incarcerated women in the study were charged and sentenced in the same criminal cases as their sisters. Both women served their sentences with their sisters and both would later come to lose their sisters while still serving their sentences. The first woman's sister was released on medical parole due to health issues where she later died out of prison. The still-incarcerated woman in our sample lamented that she was still not sure when her sister died because she did not find out about the death until months after her sister was already buried. The second woman's sister developed cancer during their incarceration. As her sister's health deteriorated over a six-month period, the woman cared for her sister until she eventually died in prison.

THE PRISON CONTEXT

Understanding what it means to be an incarcerated woman means understanding the experience of incarceration. The intention of the research was not to monitor, document or explore conditions of imprisonment of South Africa, as we were cognisant of the fact that this would constitute an entirely different kind of project.⁶⁴ It would have also distracted the core project of exploring women's pathways to incarceration. While we asked women how they *experienced* incarceration – for instance, what impact incarceration has had on thinking about 'offending' and on family life – we did not specifically ask about *prison conditions*, per se. However, asking offenders to reflect on the experience of incarceration inevitably raises issues about the correctional system and their experiences within it. Drawing on a series of focus groups, interviews and personal journals, we provide a background within which to contextualise women's collective experiences and individual stories of life while incarcerated. Our own observations and conversations with DCS Members are also used to provide some understanding of this context. This section is derived solely from these sources, as they naturally emerged during the research process, and not any other systematic method of documenting institutional conditions. Accordingly, the findings in this section relate to particular times and places, and may not accurately reflect DCS policy or be representative of the system more generally.

There are largely similar experiences of incarceration between Worcester and Pollsmoor Female Correctional Centres, barring some institutional differences in the way women are managed. This is partly because the two facilities are regulated by particular procedures and practices prescribed by legislation and corresponding regulations (i.e., admission procedures) and partly because many of the women from the Worcester facility had previously spent time at Pollsmoor. Others had either been transferred from other correctional facilities from outside of the province or had been incarcerated for other offences, in other facilities, at some point in their

⁶⁴ Researching the subject of 'prison conditions' would not only have involved the development of a much different research design and protocol, but it would have involved securing a very different level of access with the Department of Correctional Services.

lives. As a result, they were able to compare and contrast their experiences of the various facilities.

In describing women's experiences of incarceration, we use the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-Custodial Means for Women Offenders – known as the Bangkok Rules – as a structural framework. The Bangkok Rules recognise that the Tokyo Rules on the standard minimum rules for the treatment of prisoners, do not pay sufficient attention to the specific needs of women [1, annex], and are also cognisant of the fact that 'not all of the rules can be equally applied in all places and at all times' [11, annex]. Most importantly, they are inspired by the principles contained in various international conventions and declarations relating to women – many of which South Africa is a signatory. The Bangkok rules is a useful framework to articulate women's experiences in that they provide basic principles and general rules about the admission, health, treatment, discipline, regimes and social and educational opportunities for incarcerated women. The Rules also pay special attention to the heightened vulnerabilities of incarcerated women, including: mental health, family, pregnancy and childcare, reduced access to justice as a result of economic and social disadvantage as well as specific health care and hygiene needs.⁶⁵ Our discussion of women's experiences of incarceration follows this general framework.

We start with the admissions process, working towards a description of 'life in prison', for incarcerated women. Most of the information for this section was collected from focus groups conducted at the correctional facilities with offenders between December 2009 and June 2011 and supplemented with information provided by DCS Members during the research period.⁶⁶ Excerpts from interviews are also included. The findings were verified against available documentation and research on South African correctional systems.

⁶⁵ The *White Paper on Corrections in South Africa* (2005) does consider, to a very limited extent, the needs of female offenders. It highlights an obligation to incarcerate female offenders as close to home as possible, thus minimising the negative impact on family life (s. 11.4.1) and recognises that training facilities offered to female offenders have been historically poorly resourced and that this requires remedy (s. 11.4.2). There is evidence that DCS have indeed begun to achieve the third objective of the White Paper's provision of services to women, the establishment of appropriate "mother and child units" (s. 11.4.3 and 11.4.4).

⁶⁶ DCS Member quotes have been coded according to the facility at which the interview was conducted, and the order in which they were interviewed. For example, WDCS1 refers to the first DCS Member interviewed at Worcester Female Correctional Centre.

ARRIVING AT A CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CENTRE: ENTRY AND ADMISSIONS

Classification and Assessment

When women offenders arrive at a Correctional Centre they are searched, their belongings are removed and stored in the property room, and they are issued uniforms. One of the correctional facility's case officers completes an admission risk and needs assessment document⁶⁷ within six hours of the offender's admission to identify emotional vulnerabilities such as depression or suicidal behaviour, as well as the security risks that the offender poses to staff and other offenders. In accordance with international practice, this information is used to classify the offender as a maximum, medium or minimum security offender and to allocate them to the relevant section of the correctional facility (DCS, 2008a).

Although Worcester mainly houses offenders with long sentences, Pollsmoor receives many offenders that have short sentences. Offenders may be re-classified into the minimum, medium, and maximum categories after they have fulfilled part of their sentence.⁶⁸ In addition to security classification, all offenders within the DCS system are placed into groups within the privilege system depending on their cooperation with their sentence plan and behaviour during their period of incarceration. These privileges include contact with the outside world through recreational activities (for example radio and television programmes, and inter-facility sporting contests and concerts) and contact with friends and family through telephone calls and visits in order to maintain social skills and maintain family ties in the interest of rehabilitation. On incarceration, all inmates are allocated to the less privileged B-Group, and may move to A-Group after six months depending on

67 DCS Comprehensive Risk and Needs Assessment (G303).

68 Offenders serving effective sentences of 20 years and longer will be considered for reclassification after serving a five years and thereafter reclassification will be considered bi-annually; offenders serving effective sentences of 15 to 20 years will be considered for reclassification after serving three and a half years; those serving effective sentences of between 10 and 15 years will be considered for reclassification after serving a period of two and a half years; and offenders serving effective sentences of between five and 10 years will be considered for reclassification after serving a period of one and a half years; offenders serving an effective sentence of less than five years will be considered for reclassification after serving a period of one year (DCS, 2008).

their conduct (DCS, 2008a).⁶⁹ Any conviction for criminal activity or disciplinary infringements committed during an offender's sentence automatically demotes an inmate from A-Group to B-Group.

The admissions process also involves a *comprehensive risk and needs assessment*⁷⁰ which must be completed within 21 days of admission, and an *offender profile*⁷¹ in order to develop a more complete picture of the offender's history, needs and interests. The intake documents are standardised throughout DCS facilities. Parts of the offender profile document and comprehensive assessment also requires the input of a social worker. A correctional facility social worker visits offenders during the admission process or as soon as possible thereafter. In order to make an assessment of the offender's 'social well-being' inmates are asked questions about their childhood as well as existing familial structures, interests and employment. They are also encouraged to write down their life stories. Once the DCS documents are completed by the case officer and the social worker, a sentence plan is developed and recorded in the inmate's case file. This sentence plan is used to monitor the rehabilitation of the offender over the duration of their sentence and is used to assess eligibility for parole at a later stage.

However, the sentence plan is often partial or incomplete. As the plan is drawn on the basis of the initial admission interview – which is often stressful time for incoming offenders – the information provided by the offender may not be sufficiently detailed to guide the inmate's rehabilitation plan. The women in our study reported that, when asked to record their life histories, they tended to write more about recent events or issues immediately related to their incarceration. Historical experiences with violence and trauma, for instance, were not often documented at this stage of the process, as the women themselves did not consider these experiences to be related to their crimes or incarceration, or did not trust members enough to disclose this information.

69 According to the DCS Strategic Plan 2008/09 - 2012/13 there is also a C-Group, however none of our participants were placed within this category of offender, nor made reference to it.

70 DCS Comprehensive Risk And Needs Assessment (G303A).

71 DCS Comprehensive Risk and Needs Assessment (G303C).

The Bangkok Rules state that ‘newly arrived women prisoners shall be provided with ... information about prison rules and regulations, the prison regime and where to seek help when in need...’.⁷² Some women expressed their concern over the fact that they were not fully informed of the prison rules and regulations during the admission process. While these rules are available in the correctional facility’s library, this information was often only received when problems arose, for instance, when their actions were in conflict with “the rules.” It is therefore only when the rules are brought to their attention, or when a privilege is being revoked, that they are made aware that certain things are privileges and not a right. It was suggested, however, that officials do make an effort to explain the rules, cell by cell, when the DCS Members have the time to do so [DCSW1, 2011].

Each woman (at Worcester – the longer term facility) is issued with two sets of uniforms comprising a denim dress or skirt and a pair of denim pants. They are also given a denim jacket, a jersey, a navy tracksuit, one vest, one spencer (long-sleeved) and one pair of underwear. Women wear their own shoes, white tee shirts, socks, pyjamas, and underwear. Some inmates noted that they used to be able to wear denim clothing of their own design (that they sewed themselves in the workshop) but this is no longer permitted.

Medical History and Interventions

Another key feature of the admissions process is a visit to the on-site nursing sister.⁷³ Here offenders’ medical history and allergies are recorded, along with their blood pressure and weight. Inmates reported that the nurse did not ask any questions pertaining to their reproductive history or mental health. The Bangkok Rules⁷⁴ provide that:

- (6) The health screening of women prisoners shall include comprehensive screening to determine primary health care needs, and also shall determine ... (a) the presence of sexually

72 Rule 2 (Admissions). United Nations Resolution 2010/16, Annex: *United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders* (the Bangkok Rules), Preliminary Observations.

73 The 2004 JIP report states that both Pollsmoor and Worcester prisons have two permanent nursing sisters on site. Pollsmoor has its own small hospital unit, but Worcester does not. Pollsmoor also has its own pharmacy, whereas Worcester receives its medication from the Brandvlei Prison pharmacy.

74 Rule 6a (Medical screening on entry). United Nations Resolution 2010/16 (the Bangkok Rules).

transmitted diseases or blood-borne diseases ...; (b) mental health care needs, including post-traumatic stress disorder and risk of suicide or self harm; (c) the reproductive health history of the woman prisoner, including current or recent pregnancies, childbirth and any related reproductive health issues; (d) the existence of drug dependency; [and] (e) sexual abuse and other forms of violence that may have been suffered prior to admission.

This ‘hands off’, perfunctory approach to women’s health and mental health care in correctional facilities is of grave concern, both at admissions and throughout the course of women’s incarceration. Offenders reported that they did not receive annual general medical check-ups, routine pap smears or mammograms. In fact, even basic reproductive health needs are not fully met. To illustrate this, one of the most common complaints amongst all of the women offenders in our study was that they were only issued *two* sanitary pads for every day that they were menstruating and that correctional facility nurses rarely supply them with painkillers for menstrual cramps when they request them. This senseless limitation of basic access to hygiene is not only a source of great distress and embarrassment amongst female offenders, but it also goes against international norms for the treatment of women in correctional facilities. These require, for instance, that women offenders have the ‘facilities and materials required *to meet* women’s specific hygiene needs, including sanitary towels provided free of charge.’⁷⁵ Two sanitary pads per day most certainly do not meet women’s hygiene needs.

For the most part, major illnesses are dealt with appropriately, but the women reported that they frequently suffered less serious pains and discomforts which were not well attended to. If female offenders are feeling unwell or depressed they can use the morning’s *Complaints and Requests* procedure to ask for assistance. For medical problems, female offenders are referred to the on-site nurse (for other matters, the case officer will see them the same day, or will let them know that s/he will see them as soon as possible the following day). In the event of a health complaint, offenders are monitored over a few weeks, after which the sister may refer them to the visiting doctor. If the ailment is serious or requires specialised expertise,

⁷⁵ Rule 5 (Personal Hygiene). United Nations Resolution 2010/16 (the Bangkok Rules).

doctors at both correctional facilities refer patients to Tygerberg and Groote Schuur Hospitals or to Victoria Hospital from Pollsmoor and to Eben Donges Hospital from Worcester. Offenders report that this does, however, not happen in practice.

Getting prescription medication is reported to be difficult and unreliable in both facilities.⁷⁶ However, at Pollsmoor, offenders' families can give prescription medication to the sister who then dispenses it to the patient. This is not the case at Worcester. The women also explained that the health service often refused to provide even simple over-the-counter medication for cramps and headaches. A DCS Member [DCSW1, 2011] asserted that there are three reasons for this: (i) medication is expensive; (ii) health care practitioners try to avoid giving out medication unnecessarily, especially in an environment where many women have histories of substance use and abuse; and (iii) because drugs of all kinds are highly coveted in a prisons context.

Gender specific health care is one of the issues that gave rise to the Bangkok Rules. Rule 10(1) states that 'gender-specific health care services at least equivalent to those available in the community shall be provided to women prisoners.'⁷⁷ However, there are a number of obstacles, aside from those set out above, experienced by offenders in accessing health care services. These range from the attitudes of health care providers to the expense of securing some medical services. For instance, offenders complained that nurses in the correctional facilities did not exhibit the kind of compassion and sensitivity expected of health care workers. At one of the facilities, the women complained that the nurse tells them to "drink water" no matter what the medical complaint is. It was reported that a particular nurse did not like making physical contact with offenders, touching them as little as possible. Anxieties were also expressed about visiting the dentist, who they reported was "very rough" (and popularly referred to as the "Terror Doctor"). The dentist visits once a month and the women must make an appointment to see him in advance. The consultation is free, but prosthetics such as dentures must be paid for by the patient/offender. While an optometrist

⁷⁶ One participant relays a story from one of the correctional facilities where the sister did not give her medication for her high blood pressure, stating "When you were doing your crime you weren't thinking of your high blood pressure."

⁷⁷ Rule 10 (Gender-specific health care). United Nations Resolution 2010/16 (the Bangkok Rules).

is arranged when required, they are not employees of the state and thus, each consultation is R240 and glasses must be paid for by the patient (or their family). According to participants there are currently six people at Worcester that need spectacles but cannot afford them [DCSW1, 2011].

Rule 12 of the Bangkok Rules states that “individualised, gender-sensitive, trauma informed and comprehensive mental health care and rehabilitation programmes shall be made available for women prisoners.”⁷⁸ These programmes are available to some extent in the correctional facilities, although not to the extent the Bangkok Rules envision. Women at both Pollsmoor and Worcester have access to a psychologist on request (JIP, 2004). The Pollsmoor women, however, felt that psychological and counselling services were severely lacking. Pollsmoor has one psychologist that serves about 200 sentenced offenders, and is only available twice a week. This means that waiting times can be very long. However, participants at Worcester who had previously been at Pollsmoor noted that in Pollsmoor access had been much easier. It was reported that at Pollsmoor, the social worker referred women to the psychologist when necessary or women could themselves request to see a psychologist. At Worcester, it appears that the social worker provides most counselling, as there is no resident psychologist. Unfortunately, there is only one social worker who has to attend to the needs of 240 offenders, which includes making assessments on admission, providing individual counselling services, and running various rehabilitation groups. When asked about what they do if there is a mental health emergency (i.e. when someone is feeling severely depressed or suicidal), we were told that even emergency situations are not treated as such. The incident or complaint must be reported to a member, who then requests for a psychologist. The psychologist does indeed come, but it could take days or even weeks.

With that said, some women reported that the correctional facility provides an opportunity to seek counselling, psychological and psychiatric services that they may not have been able to access outside of the prison context. Those who have been able to maintain an on-going relationship with a mental health professional – either a DCS appointed psychologist or a private one – emphasise how significant these relationships are, particularly as a

⁷⁸ Rule 12 (Mental health and care). United Nations Resolution 2010/16 (the Bangkok Rules)

major form of support in correctional facilities. DCS appointed psychologists and social workers have also been credited with assisting with addiction, depression and anxiety, dealing with childhood trauma and abuse as well as preparing women for family visits and contact with children and court cases over access or custody of children. However, the fact that some women have to wait weeks to secure an appointment with DCS psychologists is highly concerning, particularly when mental problems are acute. Long waiting times for appointments with psychologists discouraged women from making such appointments. Due to the lack of consistent and timely mental health support services at DCS facilities, religious groups also seem to provide some on-going support. The women mentioned various 'healing groups', clergy members, as well as church volunteers as forms of support during incarceration. Spiritual and religious meetings and groups also seemed to provide counselling and helped inmates to meet like-minded inmates.

Specific rehabilitation efforts recommended by the Bangkok Rules also exist, to some extent. HIV prevention and treatment (Rule 14) substance abuse programmes (Rule 15) and education and information about preventative health care measures (referred to as "preventative health care services" in Rule 17) seem to be implemented both internally and by outside organisations on an on-going basis. Some women – notably those who had abused substances – noted that their health had improved since coming to the facility, either because they were now eating regularly (despite the complaints about the quality of the food), or because they were no longer taking harmful substances. More than one woman who had been dependant on substances said that had they not been stopped (by being arrested and imprisoned), they would have died as a result of their substance abuse.

Visitation and Contact with the Outside

According to the DCS Strategic Plan for 2008/09 - 2012/13, A-Group offenders across all facilities, are allowed 45 contact visits per year with no more than two adult persons at a time. Each visit is to be 60 minutes and no more than five visits are to be taken per month. By contrast, those in the B-Group are only allowed 36 non-contact visits per year. Each visit is to be 45 minutes, with no more than four visits per month. As all inmates begin

in B-Group, all inmates do not enjoy contact visits for at least their first six months of incarceration.

DCS Officials at Worcester said that it was common for offenders to take their visits consecutively on one occasion, especially where visitors had travelled from afar and wanted to spend a longer time with the inmate [DCSW1, 2011]. At Worcester, visitors are allowed on Saturdays and Sundays, and at Pollsmoor visitors are allowed on the weekend as well as on Wednesdays. At Worcester, female offenders were emphatic about the high quality of their visits, stating that they are allowed lots of space for contact visits, and often enjoyed playing with their children on the lawn of the courtyard [FGW 07-06-2011]. They are also allowed to consume food and drinks brought by their visitors but were not allowed to return to the cells with the items [DCSW1, 2011]. At Pollsmoor, however, women felt that their visits could be improved by allowing them to take place in a more 'normal' environment, and allowing them to sit in the grass with their children, which they are not currently permitted to do [FGP 13-02-2010].

According to the DCS Strategic Plan for 2008/09 - 2012/13, all inmates are permitted to make telephone calls instead of visits during office hours, on weekends and public holidays, although inmates are given preference according to the privilege system. In addition, those in A-Group are allowed 24 additional phone calls per year, and those in B-Group are allowed six additional phone calls a year. Phone calls are to be limited to 10 minutes per call (DCS, 2008a). However, inmates at Pollsmoor indicated that they usually only made phone calls once a month, which was insufficient, whereas those at Worcester had greater access to the telephone and did not have any complaints. Visits and phone call privileges can be revoked in accordance with demotion in the privilege system if an inmate is seen to be transgressing or un-cooperative.

Contact with loved ones from outside of the correctional facility through visits, letter and telephones calls is the most important form of support, as expressed by offenders in this study. Offenders, such as Kerri-Anne, even assert that they have become closer with their families during their incarceration. This is likely because the difficulties of incarceration and the physical separation from loved ones have strengthened familial bonds or

because incarceration has provided the opportunity for offenders to work through childhood trauma and conflicts with family members. In addition to emotional support friends and family often provide vital material support for incarcerated family members, by providing money, or goods such as toiletries, underwear and telephone cards. Those without such support are at a considerable disadvantage. For example, Bessie and Jennifer explain that because their families do not or cannot provide any financial support, they have to rely on others, such as church organisations, to provide phone cards in order to contact their loved ones.

The amount of contact through visits, letters and telephones calls varies greatly from inmate to inmate. Unfortunately, a chief concern for offenders was around families that do not visit regularly or at all. According to Lungelwa “what hurts the most [in prison] is that ... my family doesn’t come here ... So it’s hurting when you don’t see them.” Absent families also cannot or do not maintain contact by phone, often because of economic difficulties. Inmates expressed an acute awareness and sympathy for difficulties that individuals on the outside faced when trying to visit their loved ones. In this regard Lungelwa added: “they don’t have the money to come here. The money that they have is the money for them to buy food. They don’t have money, it’s not that they are not allowed [to visit].” Such feelings can be worsened when other inmates receive frequent phone calls, visits and financial assistance. When asked how seeing other inmates receive visitors affected her Lungelwa answered: “It is hurting, it is hurting a lot. Yes I grin when I see them, play with my face but when I go to my room all that comes back. But I don’t want to show it to other people what really hurts me.”

In addition to, and because of, economic circumstance, the frequency of visits is often related to the how far offenders are imprisoned from their families. Liesbeth and Ester both received very few visits at Pollsmoor because of the distance that their families had to travel and the difficulty in finding suitable transport. As a result Ester requested to be moved to Worcester, which is closer to her family, and they now visit much more regularly. Phino however has had the opposite experience. She was transferred from Oudtshoorn to Worcester Correctional Centre, which is further away from her family. At the time of interviewing she had not had a visitor for three months and had lodged a complaint with the Independent Prisons Visitor (IPV).

HOUSING, WORK AND FOOD

Housing

Inmates at Worcester are allocated to cells according to their security categorisation and the availability of space. When possible, offenders have the option to reside in non-smoking cells, or to be moved to a cell where they feel more comfortable with the inmates. At Pollsmoor there are 85 single cells, which are often allocated as a reward for good behaviour or for working while incarcerated, as well as for inmates that are studying or who require quiet or religious meditation. In contrast, there are only eight single cells at Worcester Correctional Service Facility, and they are consequently used as needed for inmates that are ill (especially if they are contagious), disruptive in larger cells, or for juveniles [DCSW1, 2011]. Young offenders are usually sent to Pollsmoor Correctional Service Centre (CSC), unless they reside in or near Worcester or their sentences are particularly short. At the time of the study, there were six juveniles at Worcester CSC. According to inmates, the largest cell at Worcester houses 43 offenders. It has two toilets (although at the time of interview only one worked), and one shower.

The ablution facilities are reported by offenders to be totally insufficient, with communal cells having only two showers, two sinks and two toilets (at least one of which is almost always not working) for 30 or more women. Many women found this extremely difficult to adapt to, as they were accustomed to cleaner and more private ablution facilities. It was consistently reported that women start waking at “2 or 3 a.m.” in order to shower and be ready for 6:30 a.m. parade.⁷⁹ When a sink, shower or toilet is not working, stress levels in the cells rise, as there is increased demand for the working facilities.

Living in overcrowded communal cells is problematic for women on a number of levels. The problems most frequently cited are the lack of privacy and personal space, noise, culture clashes, other people’s habits (such as public nudity), other people’s mess and fighting between inmates (although

⁷⁹ Offenders must be dressed and ready at 6.30 a.m. every day for parade. At parade the offenders are counted and the cells are inspected. At this time offenders have the opportunity to voice complaints or concerns that they have. These are documented and followed up by a DCS Official. Between 8 and 11 a.m., offenders are free to pursue individual activities. During this time offenders attend the various group activities available at Worcester, voluntarily, or as part of their sentence plan. These groups range from drug rehabilitation workshops to theological studies, and skills training.

this seems to be more of a problem at Pollsmoor than at Worcester). It was also reported that women are frequently moved between cells, making settling down in a space and with a group of people difficult. Women at Pollsmoor indicated that inmates who were there for very short sentences – 15 to 30 days – had no stake in integrating into the offender community, and thus tended to break cell rules, abstain from bathing, provoke other offenders and “mess with everyone’s heads” [PFG2, 2010]. This was very disruptive for longer-term offenders, and it was suggested that they should be housed separately.

Many women had developed coping mechanisms to deal with cell life, such as ‘switching off’ and keeping to themselves, or getting up very early to beat the queues for the showers, and found that they had learned to ignore the unpleasant aspects of being in communal cells. Several women kept diaries and wrote to pen pals to express their feelings as a form of release. For others, communal cell life was collegial and friendly. Some women reported enjoying the company of their cellmates and felt that they had learned valuable things about other people and cultures. One woman said that the exposure to new languages had made her realise that she would like to study linguistics when she was released. Another relatively privileged woman described how at first she had been impatient with another inmate who had been particularly disruptive and difficult to live with, but once she heard the woman’s life story of abuse and neglect, she came to understand her, and began to feel that her own life (despite the years of domestic violence she suffered) “wasn’t that bad” [Morag]. For her, living with a group of women from diverse cultures and backgrounds has been a lesson in tolerance. Others reported having helped new inmates to settle in, because they would have liked it if someone had assisted and welcomed them when they first arrived.

Work and Education

Pollsmoor and Worcester both have a number of rehabilitative, educational and work programmes for offenders to participate in, but the distinction between “work” and “rehabilitation” is difficult to make in the women’s correctional system. Workshops – sewing, for instance – were variously referred to as ‘work’ and ‘rehabilitation’ by both offenders and DCS

members. Thus “workshops” were considered both “shops for work” as well as “skills workshops” where discipline and technical skills are developed. Each offender at Worcester receives an allowance of R400 a month (for those in A-Group) and R300 a month (for those in B-Group). Many women chose to use their mornings working to earn additional income. It is worth noting that access to affordable goods is a real concern for many women. The allowances have remained the same for several years, whilst inflation has seen the prices at the correctional facility’s shop rise steadily.⁸⁰

Forty-six women in our sample (84%) work while incarcerated. The fields of work vary greatly, and include: needlework and textiles; food preparation; cleaning; library work; office work; peer education and counselling; laundry; crèche care (at Pollsmoor, where some offenders’ young children live with them); hairdressing; and agriculture. Work in the correctional facility is remunerated for only a few Rands a day – between R2 and R5 – depending on the type of work. While we do not have records of the earnings at Pollsmoor correctional facility, at Worcester offenders can earn R2.60 a day for sewing denim in the workshop, which averages out to about R49 per month. The highest paid inmates earn R99 per month in the workshop. They have to work every day of the week to get paid.

Unfortunately, women offenders are still subject to highly gendered regimes when it comes to opportunities for work in the correctional system. Fewer educational and training opportunities exist for women than for men, and women are more likely to have to perform domestic-related or conventionally ‘female’ activities (Wahidin, 2004:153). Not unlike other contexts, educational programmes still focus on activities traditionally thought to be ‘women’s work’. This is probably an attempt to promote ‘feminine’ behaviour (Bosworth, 1996:10). Domestic activities such as cleaning, and salon work reinforce sexist notions that women are incapable of competing with men in the workplace (Wahidin, 2004:158-9). This seems to also be the case in South Africa, especially at Worcester, where women said that they would also like to be offered courses on small business development, financial management and bookkeeping, entrepreneurship,

⁸⁰ Offenders at both Pollsmoor and Worcester were also unhappy that the correctional facility shops were more expensive than regular shops outside. Although many women work while incarcerated and earn wages that supplement their allowances, this does not generate sufficient income for them to live as comfortably as they would like. Worcester officials have written to DCS requesting an increase in allowances, although there had not been any further developments at the time of our research.

catering, car mechanics, carpentry, bricklaying, photography, and interior decorating, among other activities. There does appear to be a wider range of courses offered at Pollsmoor, although it is by no means comprehensive or consistently offered. For some women, domestic skills will be useful on release, as available employment opportunities will probably involve domestic work, but work programmes are rarely presented this way. Wahidin (2004) makes the valid point that while the skills taught to men are generally framed in terms of preparation for employment on release – training as a mechanic, gardener, or carpenter – those taught to women rarely are. The lack of appropriate work opportunities is especially painful for women who *do* have the capacity to achieve success in the workplace, or who were professionally successful before incarceration, as they feel that time spent in the correctional system is wasted time, intensifying “the loss of self, individuality, [and] affirmation by others” that some women offenders already experience (Wahidin, 2004:155). Further, the lack of work and skills-development opportunities in women’s correctional facilities reinforces women’s dependency on men; once released they may be unable to find gainful employment, and in many cases will have to resort to depending on a man to provide for them. This is unacceptable in its own right, but especially so when women’s histories of abuse, often by men, are taken into account.

Although the opportunities for appropriate, skill-building work, is not ideal, it is – as the women say – “a way to keep busy”, and for some women, is a stable source of income that they had not had access to outside. However, for women who had worked in jobs they enjoyed before being incarcerated, this is no substitute for true job satisfaction. Of those women who do work, 28 (61%) said that they were happy with the work they were doing, and 18 (39%) said they would prefer to do something else.

Formal Education

In the afternoons, after “work” is concluded, those offenders enrolled for classes attend school. Education is free for offenders up to Grade 10. This is in accordance with the *South African Schools Act of 1996*, which makes education compulsory for all South Africans from the age of 7, or Grade 1, to age 15, or the completion of Grade 9. After Grade 10, offenders must enrol

in independent correspondence colleges and universities to study further and must pay for it themselves. Both correctional facilities have a working library. Worcester offenders may visit the library twice a month, although officials acknowledge that their library is very limited and out-dated. Participants at Pollsmoor indicated that they only visited the library when a DCS Member is available and willing to take them, and felt that members were simply disinclined to do so. Thus, even attempts to self-educate are blocked by disinterested members and the lack of updated resources and facilities.

Completing or furthering education while incarcerated was important to some of the women, both as a way to keep busy, and because they had been unable to do so outside. One offender relayed how she had dropped out of school in Grade 8 because her home life was too disruptive for her to study, but managed to complete her Matric while incarcerated. Another offender expressed her appreciation for the skills she had learned in the more practical programmes, like computer literacy and sewing:

And I have learned a bunch of things, like computers – I would really like to do computers outside, but outside you must pay for a computer, whereas inside you can have them free. Lots of other opportunities, my school work and [learning] to make denims, and sweaters, and communication skills, everything, lots of skills ... [Rose].

However, Worcester offenders, who are more likely to be offenders with longer sentences, felt that there were too few and insufficiently varied recreational and educational opportunities for them. They particularly emphasised learning more practical skills – those that could be used in the contemporary outside world – as well as a desire for more activities like arts and crafts and music as a creative outlet and to keep them busy. Those that had previously been incarcerated at Pollsmoor agreed that there are many more relevant, less ‘gendered’ activities available to Pollsmoor offenders, such as welding and carpentry. Women offenders are also keen to engage in community work and, although impractical from a security perspective, asked if it would be possible for them to do volunteer work outside of the correctional facility (like painting a school or planting a community garden).

They felt that working outside of the facility would not only be enjoyable, but a way for them to contribute to society in a proactive and meaningful way. They also felt that slowly engaging in community work would help them slowly (and positively) integrate into community life upon release. For these women, the pre-release programmes did not even remotely cover the wide range of women's needs when considering their re-entry into "the modern world." Knowledge about technology are high on the agenda for incarcerated women, but knowledge about the basics in "surviving out there" was also of great importance: how to open a bank account, how to use an ATM, how to get a cell phone contract, what to put in a CV or apply for a job with "missing years," how to apply for social grants and seek other support services, how to secure housing and handle rental contracts, and more generally, what to expect when (re)entering the job market.

Rehabilitation Programmes

There are a variety of rehabilitative programmes at both correctional facilities. However, they are not offered consistently across facilities or within them. Most are offered by external professionals, volunteers or agencies and are dependent on external funding and support, which means that they are not offered as "core" rehabilitative programmes provided by DCS. Just a sample of these programmes include: *educational and skills-development programmes* (adult basic education, computer classes, life skills, business skills, cooking and catering, home care, drug peer facilitator, HIV/AIDS peer facilitator and peer educator skills); *social skills and development programmes* (Alpha, boundaries, character building, aggression management, teamwork); *personal and social support programmes* (inner healing silence and violence, restorative justice, young in prison, HIV/AIDS support and abuse support); *drugs and alcohol rehabilitation*; *arts and culture* (needlework and sewing, textiles, hairdressing, painting and drawing, leatherwork, flower arrangement); and *religious studies* (theology, Bible study, Muslim classes). Although there were some complaints about the availability and continuity of these programmes, they do appear to play a positive role in some women's experiences of incarceration, at least so far as they keep them active, and keep their "minds busy."

Programmes such as “inner healing” and “self-management” are popular, being credited for giving women insight into their lives and actions as well as teaching them how to talk about their problems and experiences. Many women talked about learning to forgive people who had wronged them, and learning to forgive themselves for some of the things they had done, and feel that this will help them on release. One woman found Inner Healing and Heartlines to be particularly helpful in coming to terms with herself:

Yeah, especially the groups that I’m doing here ... helped me a lot. Especially the Inner Healing [and] Heartlines. Heartlines, it’s where you ... talk about your heart. What really happened in your heart. I mean the hatred and all those things that you have, you have to talk about it and then you get advice, then you get healed and you, you learn to forgive yourself. Because you have to forgive yourself before you go and do other things ... it helped me a lot, man [Princess].

Another said:

Yes, I have forgiven [my family] because I have learned. I’ve had lots of groups that have helped me, wellbeing groups. [...] And aggression groups. I did not know what aggression was, what induces it, it’s what I also experienced in my crime, because aggression had a big role to play in my crime [Rose].

One woman mentioned that the life mapping activity that we had conducted helped her to talk to her family. Previously, she had always been uncomfortable talking to them because she didn’t know how to explain how she felt, but the activity helped her sort through how she felt about her childhood and family life. Another woman felt that the Pathways activities were useful in encouraging her in reflecting on her life and felt that these activities should be expanded to all offenders.

It is worthwhile at this juncture to reflect on the experiences of international contexts that have grappled with the question of appropriate rehabilitation responses in women’s correctional facilities. Unlike research in South Africa (including this study), international studies in have systematically engaged with the relevance and impact of rehabilitation of women. A British review of

rehabilitative and educational programmes for female offenders concluded that the most successful programmes addressed interpersonal criminogenic needs, with a special focus on family (Harper et al., 2005). Almost all UK rehabilitative programmes for offenders are designed with men as their primary targets, and then adapted to other populations, ignoring the fact that similar needs operate differently for men and women (Cann, 2006). In taking women's needs seriously, programmes need to be properly adapted – or designed from scratch – for women, using language and case studies that resonate with women's life experiences (Carlen & Worrall, 2004). As women are not one homogenous group, differences of age, race, class, religion, and education level must be considered. Despite cognitive-behavioural programmes' high success rates with men in the UK (Hough, 2008), they have not been proven to be very successful with women. These programmes hold participants' inadequate thinking skills responsible for offending, paying insufficient attention to the histories of abuse, mental ill-health, substance abuse and financial difficulties that frequently lead to women's offending.

Many programmes actually refuse to acknowledge such factors as criminogenic, insisting that participants accept full responsibility for their actions (Pollack & KendallRivera, 2005). Women are not exempt from cognitive deficits, but it is unproven that such deficits are criminogenic for women, as they frequently are for men (Cann, 2006). Carlen and Worrall (2004) write, "... women already know how to *think* about their problems, their failure is to *act* or to have the opportunity to *act*. Hence feminist criminologists' emphasis on assertiveness training programmes for women, on anger management and on activities which enhance women's skills and experiences" (p. 99). Similarly, Baroness Corston's (2007) review of educational programmes for women in British prisons found that literacy and numeracy were over-emphasised, with insufficient focus on 'emotional literacy', and suggests that the skills women are most in need of developing are those that will help them gain self-confidence and maintain positive relationships. A similar approach to rehabilitative and skills-building programming for women in South African correctional centres could be taken. This, however, does not exclude the need for literacy and numeracy training specifically required in the South African context.

Exercise and Leisure

Offenders at Worcester are permitted to walk in the spacious main courtyard for exercise several times a day. In contrast, at Pollsmoor there are several smaller courtyards allocated to specific sections and women are only permitted to walk in the courtyard once a day for up to an hour. Sports such as soccer and netball are available to them when members have the time to supervise these activities, but this is not very often. There is a gym at Pollsmoor, but while some of the machines are still in working order, they are rarely used, because there are only two members specifically employed and trained to instruct and supervise sports and exercise for offenders. This is insufficient given that they have to attend to the entire prison population and the size of the groups that they may engage with is restricted for security reasons. Women at both Pollsmoor and Worcester Correctional Centres felt that the men's sections were provided with more and better opportunities for physical activity. Pollsmoor offenders specifically expressed frustration that although they used to play soccer, they were no longer able to do so, as the external organisation that ran the soccer programme had discontinued the women's sessions, while the men's sessions continue. This lack of organised physical activities is especially problematic in winter, when it is often too cold to go outdoors to walk around. Although inter-facility tournaments are encouraged in the privilege system in order to maintain social skills and interaction, one offender noted that the last time that she had left the prison to play netball was in 2006.

Conversations with DCS Officials provided further insight into these issues. Although DCS policy on "Offender Sport, Recreation, Arts and Culture" insists that these activities "should not be regarded as an optional extra,"⁸¹ correctional centres face a number of implementation challenges. These include structural constraints (e.g., the physical layout of the correctional facilities); the voluntary nature of recreational activities; constraints related to the personal interests and abilities of DCS Members who are required to implement some of these activities; constraints related to the process by which some recreational activities are selected (i.e., selection by an offender-led committee); and constraints related

81 Department of Correctional Services (n.d.), Policy Procedure: Offender Sport, Recreation, Arts and Culture.

to the choices made by external organisations who fund and implement certain recreational activities within the correctional facilities.

At Worcester the inmates have to return to their cells by 5:00 p.m. Each cell has one television and usually inmates watch television in their cells until 10:00 p.m., when the lights are turned out in the Medium and Minimum Sections. In the Maximum section the lights are on all night. Conflict over what TV shows to watch is minimised by rotating amongst popular shows. Inmates used to be allowed to keep stuffed toys and hot-water bottles, however, due to the risk of smuggling goods in stuffed toys, and burning each other with boiling water from water bottles, these privileges have been revoked. Inmates mentioned that this was especially difficult in the cold winter months. Further, inmates at Worcester are not provided with additional blankets in winter, and many women stated that this was problematic as they were uncomfortably cold at night.

Diet

The lack of adequate physical exercise and leisure activities is compounded by what participants perceive to be the poor quality of the food in the correctional facility. Mealtimes are scheduled according to DCS Regulations. At Worcester, for instance, participants reported that breakfast is served at 8 a.m. and typically consists of a cup of coffee and as much porridge as they would like, although they must ration one cup of milk, and a spoonful of sugar (to share between the coffee and porridge). At 11 a.m. inmates receive a lunch of stewed pork, chicken or scrambled eggs, two kinds of vegetables, and four slices of bread. At supper, served at 5 p.m., offenders received four slices of bread, a cup of soup, tea or soft drink, a spoon of jam or syrup or occasionally peanut butter.⁸²

The women's limited diet, especially at Worcester, is a major source of discontent. The main complaint about the food at Worcester was that the meat in their lunch was of a very poor quality, and mostly consisted of skin and fat. Offenders also complained that the vegetables were often 'smelly' or 'rotten.' A DCS Member [WDCS1, 2011] explained that this was largely

⁸² According to the Department of Correctional Services' Therapeutic Diet Manual, the normal correctional facility diet is based upon the South African Food Based Dietary guidelines and is nutritionally sound. *Therapeutic Diet Manual: Nutritional Service 2009*, DCS, p.8.

because food is prepared in the men's prison kitchen by male offenders who select the choice meat and vegetables for themselves, leaving the less desirable food for the women. Offenders at Worcester reported that they very rarely receive fruit; only when excess is sent over from Brandvlei Correctional Service Centre, and even then the offenders with HIV/AIDS and other health problems receive the produce first, and the others do only if there is enough left over. If this is the case it is problematic, as research has shown that fresh food can help alleviate depression and make women feel more physically comfortable, which is especially important in an already stressful correctional facility environment (Carlen & Worrall, 2004).⁸³ Offenders used to be allowed to 'cook' in their cells,⁸⁴ but since an offender attacked another offender with boiling water, their cooking facilities have been removed. This also means that they cannot make their own tea or coffee, which is especially frustrating in winter. Most offenders agreed that the food at Pollsmoor was more varied and far more appetising than at Worcester. This may be because Pollsmoor out-sources its meal preparation to an independent company.

Despite the poor quality of the food, participants almost universally agreed that Worcester was a more pleasant facility in which to be incarcerated, compared with Pollsmoor and Johannesburg prisons, and compared with awaiting trial facilities. The following reasons for this were given: smoking is permitted at Worcester (Pollsmoor is a non-smoking correctional facility, which is difficult for many of the offenders); the Worcester cells have reasonably large windows and are tidier than cells in other correctional facilities; there is less racism and fighting between offenders, which may be a result of the Worcester inmates being women who are serving longer sentences, and thus a greater sense of community is able to develop; and although some women find the Worcester members' strict enforcement of discipline too restrictive, it greatly reduces the availability of drugs.

⁸³ In personal conversation with the researchers, officials from the Regional Office of DCS reported that the mandated prison diet does include fruit, and that this issue has been given attention and has been resolved.

⁸⁴ For example, boiling water and noodles in flasks and kettles.

EXPERIENCES OF “DAILY LIFE” IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Incarceration means very different things to different women. For some, it is a scary, dangerous place from which women cannot wait to be released: “Oh it’s bad. It’s very bad. I wouldn’t wish my worst enemy to come here” [Nontombi]. For others, incarceration is tolerable, some even referring to the correctional facility as a place of relative comfort and safety. These diverse experiences of incarceration depended on the women’s histories, families, physical and emotional needs, and ability to adapt.

Most women – unsurprisingly – were unhappy about being incarcerated. They acutely felt the impact of having lost their freedom and of being ‘closed in’. They expressed feeling restricted, bored, lonely, homesick, held back from achieving their goals and missing out on their lives outside. Many women said that they had been terrified when they first arrived – of violence, of having their property stolen, of sexual assault – and while some had never become accustomed to being incarcerated, others felt that “every day it becomes a little easier” [Bilquees]. Almost everyone was looking forward to being released, although many women noted the positive impact being incarcerated has had on them.

Reflections on Incarceration

While the daily routine in correctional facilities is cumbersome and restrictive for some women, others find the order and routine somehow comforting, giving their lives structure and stability; where incarcerated life can be depended upon to remain consistent:

Life is really easy in prison. There are no decisions that we have to make. [...] You know, you just get up in the morning, you shower. You’re like robots, you’re like sheep, you know. You be counted, you go and you eat, you come and you lay down [Cynthia].

For some very poor women who come from impoverished backgrounds, incarceration is ‘not so bad’, at least in terms of physical space and resources, and some even said that “we are living nicely here” [Bilquees]. While outside they had struggled to make ends meet, in the correctional

facility they at least had a secure place to live, and enough food to stay healthy. One woman said that she was grateful to have food every day, and was concerned about how she would survive upon release, as outside there will be no guarantees like there are inside.

These findings are contradictory to what we “know” about incarceration. The depravation of liberty, the overcrowding, the lack of privacy, the endless hours and days spent idle seem nothing but undesirable. It mostly is and the women are clear about this. But there are – and we have our own inherent reservations about stating this – some positive aspects to incarceration. Or at least, the women that we have interviewed have found something about incarceration to be ‘valuable’ in their lives. Although no women reported actively enjoying being incarcerated, several said that they were glad that they were incarcerated, or that they had learned valuable lessons while in the correctional system; “I would either have been much worse off, or dead, if I didn’t end up here” was a popular response. Several women felt that they have become ‘better’ people, by learning to control their anger, to be calmer, to be patient, to be disciplined, to respect others, to respect people’s boundaries, to be honest, to communicate, to be assertive, and to appreciate the small things in life. One said “for me it’s a blessing to be here. I’ve learned things that I, I know that I not gonna learn outside...” [Jennifer], while another said “if you misbehave outside, come to jail to change your life. You dream and feel that your life is better here in jail” [Bilquees]. Leonie described herself as now being “conscious” of what it was to be the person she was “before”, while Fancy Face described her incarceration as a positive thing:

I will say the prison was a positive thing because if I did not end up here, I would never be the person I am now. So I already told you I was a very aggressive person. I thought nothing of taking someone else’s life in my hands and to do what I like. So programmes that I have done here, I’ve learned a lot from them.

Several women mentioned having learned to deal with confrontation, and to express themselves and communicate better. For Ester, this meant learning to be more assertive: “I have also learnt you mustn’t let people walk over

you, you must stand up for yourself because if you not gonna stand up for yourself ... who is going to stand up for you?" For Dawn, this meant learning when not to respond to provocation, so as to avoid unpleasant confrontation: "Here I learned to be quiet. If anyone says anything to me, or what, I stay quiet. Outside you can walk away, here you can't."

Others mentioned that since their incarceration, they were struck by the realisation that the relationships they were in had been bad for them, or that they will no longer tolerate abuse, and have ended or plan to end the relationships. Being incarcerated removed them from their (often violent) situations, and they were subsequently able to see that those relationships had been unhealthy. Women reported having learnt about how they could have, or can in the future, deal with domestic abuse, and these lessons may serve them well once they are released. For others, incarceration was a straightforward method of escaping abusive relationships:

You know I was very scared of my husband, but now I'm not scared of him anymore. Cause I learn a lot [in prison], see. Sometime I see him I just crying. But not now. I'm strong now [Sandra].

Some women found that the correctional system had rehabilitated them, in that they felt strongly that they did not want to commit further crimes when released, and that they want to stay away from their friends (or gangs) who had encouraged their criminal activities. Jennifer, who had smuggled drugs into South Africa, felt bad about what she had done when she came to the correctional facility because she saw other offenders who were badly addicted to drugs, and realised the impact her actions had had. Sybil doesn't want to return to her lifestyle of drugs and crime when she's released, and hopes to find a legal way of making money: "I'd just love to go and find an honest job."

For many, the changes they have undergone psychologically and emotionally since incarceration are simply a result of having enough time to themselves to think and reflect: "But here it's right, my life really started to change. Here you get the time to think" [Annie]. Catnip said:

... being in prison is, is part of healing. [...] Because if I was outside today maybe I wasn't ready to be able to get help and talk about things that I never spoke about. So yes, prison ... is not a nice place to be but it helps you to get over things that you need to come over, to work things through, to get to understand yourself [...] Why you did certain things and why certain things did happen to you and all that.

Some women felt that although their lives in the correctional facility were difficult, this was not necessarily a bad thing, because incarceration is meant to be unpleasant, as it is a punishment. Some women did feel that what they had done was inexcusable, and that they should be punished accordingly, so for them incarceration was a natural and necessary result of their actions. Barbie felt that being incarcerated allowed her to come to terms with what she did, and make peace with herself: "I am here to change my life and that's what I am doing." Rasta noted that although she sometimes regrets turning herself in, she did not want to live her life in fear of being caught: "Yeah, but I wanted to like get the slate clean. I don't like looking over my shoulder."

Some women felt that incarceration is what you make of it, and that if you choose to, you can gain something from it. Jana believes that incarceration itself cannot help people to change; only people can change themselves:

Prison can't help you. [...] [I]t depends on yourself. *If* you want to change ... I believe if you want to change you can't go out the way you came in to prison. Then you're going to come back again.

What have I done?

Most women we spoke to discussed their deep concern about the impact of their criminal activity and their incarceration on their families, especially their children. They felt that they had let their families down, both by committing a crime, and by now being separated from them. For Loli, this was the primary incentive for never coming back:

Outside you have a family who adores you. You have your children ... there's a lot that you lose. [...] And it's not a right thing to be in prison because you are not a good example to your children and even to people around you. I for one I will make sure that I never ever come to jail again.

Women who were mothers also felt a sense of helplessness at being incarcerated while their children were outside, and being unable to care for or protect them. For Nontombi, this was a source of great shame:

[Prison] is not a place for women to be, especially a woman who left children back home. For a woman it becomes a disgrace because you left children! When you get out of here you will find your children being raised by someone else, and you wanted to raise them your own way. For you it will always be an insult as the child would ask you ... 'I am like this today, and where were you mama?'

However, some women's relationships with their families have improved since their incarceration. This came up repeatedly among women whose substance abuse had badly damaged their relationships, but also among other women. Rose reflects on this:

I learned how to restore your family, how to talk with your family. And so before I never spoke to my father; we lived together in one house, but he stayed in his room, I in my room. We never spoke. And when I came in here, I learned how to talk – to talk openly. When I feel bad then I can say to him he makes me feel bad.

Women worry not only about having disappointed their families, but also their friends. Since coming to the correctional facility, many women have discovered who their 'true' friends are, as many of their friends outside have cut ties with them, but some close friends have remained a source of support.

Fellow Offenders

Other offenders are the main source of social interaction for incarcerated women, and, as one would expect, they can also provide considerable support to each other. However, this is not always the case. Whilst some women experience fellow offenders as a source of comfort, friendship and protection, others are afraid that those who appear friendly may have ulterior motives, such as material gain, or if trusted may disclose personal information and make them the focus of gossip in the correctional facility.

The first few days of incarceration are often the most daunting, and cellmates can provide valuable information and assistance to orient new inmates in the prison environment. For instance, both Rose and Dawn described how on their first day they were assisted by other inmates in finding a bed in a crowded cell. Kerri-Anne also recounts how she learned about prison life: “An older lady told me how things worked on my first day here. She gave me the prison rights and rules. She managed to keep me away from other people who would be dangerous.”

Furthermore, several women asserted that they had made close friends in the correctional facility and that these friends were an integral part of their daily support structure. Nazley shares a cell in Worcester with four friends that she met in Pollsmoor, and that she has known for many years. Speaking of one cellmate in particular she says:

We’ve been together at Pollsmoor for a very long time. I’m very open with her and we all have very good conversations with each other. We are, they have a fantastic understanding, we have a, there’s a bond, you know like that sister bond.

By contrast, due to the nature of incarcerated life, most participants felt that relationships between offenders are often based on individuals being able to derive benefit from each other. Illustrating this, Diane stated that although she did receive assistance when she first came to prison, those that had helped her settle in ultimately claimed payment in goods. Cynthia similarly explains:

There are no friends in prison. The whole, the whole of prison revolves around benefit. In other words how much money you have on your property, what benefit you can be to the next person financially, how many toiletries you have in your cupboard.

While these kinds of exchanges are common in the correctional facility environment, individuals can often use more coercive measures to get what they want. Several women reported instead of receiving any support from fellow offenders, they had rather been the victims of bullying and abuse. Women reported having to be constantly on guard because fights start over small things like waiting for a shower, and that they could never relax, lest they be challenged in some way. Loli described how quickly fights can start: "They just fight over nothing ... just like small children. By just looking at each other, and she will ask, 'why are you looking at me?' and that would be a big fight." Queen said that this has made her more aggressive: "I never thought I am an angry person till I came to this place. I never knew I know how to fight until I came to prison. I never knew I know how to shout and yell."

Some women felt that they could not report other offenders' misconduct (such as smoking, which is prohibited in Pollsmoor; violence; theft) for fear of retaliation, especially from women who were gang members.⁸⁵ Kate's story seems especially pertinent. She describes how fellow offenders thought that she was working with the DCS Members, and so would physically and emotionally abuse her. As a result she was moved from cell to cell, but people already knew about her and the mistreatment continued. Subsequently she claims that other offenders have vandalised a toilet and blamed her for it, so that she was demoted from A-Group to B-Group for a period. As a result she does not trust other offenders, and says that she has no real friends.

According to some offenders, the almost exclusively female environment of women's correctional facilities also creates specific challenges for inmates. Many women stated that they were afraid to share their personal histories and problems with fellow offenders because women inmates often broke

⁸⁵ Gangs were only reported to be a problem in Pollsmoor where there was some, albeit limited, gang activity. There was no reported gang activity in Worcester.

confidences and gossiped about each other. They seemed to feel that this is a particularly acute problem amongst women. "There are no secrets here in prison. And there is nobody that you can really confide in" [Cynthia]. She seems to suggest that all women cannot be trusted when she adds, that as much as she confides in her friend/partner, she has to remember that even she is a woman, and when they fight she can use her secrets against her. Thus, due to fear that friendships are founded in the hope of material gain, or that they will fall prey to gossip, many women tend to be cautious and maintain a distance, even with those that they consider their friends.

For some offenders however, this simply meant that they had to be very selective about "looking for [the] right friend[s]". For this reason a few inmates, such as Barbie said that although they do not have many friends in the correctional facility because it is difficult to trust people, they have a few close friends that they really rely on. Similarly, Cheryl has two close friends, who she refers to as her sisters. She has known them longer than most other offenders as they met when she was at Pollsmoor and were all transferred to Worcester at a later date.

According to one offender these friendships are often formed along racial lines: "Coloureds they stick to Coloureds, the Whites they stick to the Whites, the Blacks stick to the Blacks" [Queen]. She explains that although people are generally friendly, different race groups take care of their own, and if a new Black person comes in, she will invite her over and explain how things work, but that she would not do it for a person of a different race. She suggests that this kind of racialised treatment is stronger in the correctional facility than outside, and stronger amongst women, although she does not provide any explanation as to why.

Despite the nature of friendships in the correctional facility, several women seemed to see the friendships that they form in prison, however close, as temporary and simply useful to ease the loneliness, discomfort, or boredom of life in prison, contingent upon both parties being incarcerated. When asked if she has friends in the correctional facility, one participant expressed her understanding of the transient nature of prison friendships after a disappointing experience with a friend that was released:

Yes I have people I talk to. I would say acquaintances. But I always bear in mind that once I get out they may not be friends because people I think behave differently in prison to being outside and I have also had an experience where I was very friendly with a lady from April until she was released in September. And she promised to phone my daughter; I never heard another word from her [Laurene].

Jana however, seems to have had a very different experience. She became friends with another offender whilst she was awaiting trial, and despite her expectations that the woman would not keep her word, she stayed in touch, visits her occasionally and wants to help her when she is released. Other offenders also expressed the desire to maintain friendships after one or both individuals had been released. Kerri-Anne said that she had a close group of friends, and would be sad to leave them when she was released. Similarly, Bilquees said that she had exchanged contact information with her friends who had been released in order to stay in touch during the rest of the sentence and once she was also released. She also expressed concern about parole, as she felt that compared to the correctional facility environment; she had very little support in the outside world.

CONTEXT MATTERS: Families, Relationships & Traumatic Events

Our interviews began with an invitation for women to “tell us the story of how [they] got to prison”. Regardless of whether the stories were long and winding, or short and to-the-point, they all involved a multiplicity of sub-stories, characters and events, often weaving backwards and forwards in chronology. We heard time and time again “I forgot to mention that” or “it’s complicated” or “I’ve just gone back because I forgot to tell you this...” One participant wrote in her journal “I want to write my story, but I don’t know where to start.” They reflect the complexity of life; the messiness and greyness that makes up our interactions with others, our choices and our influences.

It also illustrates how multiple factors and events – that are sometimes seemingly unrelated – may form the backdrop to a story. As the women told us their stories, it became clear to us that the details of their lives were more than just background – they impacted and shaped the women’s feelings and choices, and in some cases propelled them towards the events for which they ended up incarcerated. They provided the context within which their crimes happened. For some women, these connections were more immediate, for many others they had been building their whole lives. They articulated layer upon layer of marginalisation, dislocation, hurt and abuse. The ubiquity of these experiences was, indeed, striking.

FAMILY BACKGROUND/ENVIRONMENT

Dislocation

Literature tends to suggest that incarcerated women come more often from broken homes and single-parent households (Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2003; Belknap, 2001; Gilfus, 2002; Daly, 1992; Ritchie, 1994). Our survey data showed that 85% of the respondents reported living with their mother and 63% with their father growing up.⁸⁶ However, probing during the interview

⁸⁶ These categories were not mutually exclusive, and do not, therefore, add up to 100%.

process showed that for many women, their family lives were, in reality, much more complex. Although almost half of the women lived with their parent(s) *at some point* during their childhoods, many of them were raised for large periods of time by grandparents (n=9), aunts and uncles (n=5), family members and/or friends (n=5). A number of the women who lived with their parents (or at least one parent) revealed that they had also lived with their grandparents, who shared the childcare responsibilities. In some cases, living with both their parents meant being shuttled between their parents – either, as Cynthia described, moving more permanently between homes because of her own wishes, custody battles and maintenance issues, or as Jana described, staying in one household during the week, and being sent to another on the weekend.

The stories of the women's childhoods carried a common thread of (often cyclical) impermanence and dislocation created by shifting living arrangements within families (and extended families) and abrupt changes in the lives of the women and the people who cared for them. For a number of these women these changes were significant turning points, and marked the end of what they can recall as happy family life. Two stories provide illustration of how these events often triggered a series of moves for our participants, which in turn underscored the feeling that they could rely on care from no-one but themselves. Lungelwa told how, as a child, she first lived with her grandmother, then with her mother, and was then sent to live with an aunt when someone who wanted her father's affections poisoned her mother. Ntombikayise was left in the care of an "old woman, not my family" in her extended clan because her father died when she was young, and her mother could not be found. She was shuttled first to an aunt, then to an uncle's house, where the uncle's wife made her feel unwelcome to the extent that she fled after two weeks. After that, Ntombikayise lived for periods in a boarding house, with friends, to her brother's place (where his wife "treat[ed] me like a small baby") until she eventually built herself a shack and lived on her own.

Whether they initially lived with grandparents or other extended family members, many of the women described how happy periods in their lives were abruptly ended when they were moved from one home to another as a child. This often occurred when grandparents passed away or became

ill, or when other family members could (or would) no longer shoulder the burden of caring for them. Sometimes these events were violent, and created deep emotional scars for the women who, as children, struggled to understand why their caretakers had turned against them, or why they deserve such treatment. Queen, for example told how, after her father's death, her (immediate) family members turned against her and her mother, eventually kicking them out. She described the violence in the last eviction, where her uncles beat her, her mother and her disabled aunt, and accused them of being witches. She said:

When my father died, my older brother kicked us out, accusing my mother of killing my father. Then we moved ... and then the family, they sorted it out ... and then we stayed there again [moved back]. Then my father's brothers came and they chased us out again [...] My heart was broken because, my dad's brother used to come to my house ... we could sit on his lap and he would give us Chomp chocolates. Then when my father died he became a stranger. I remember him one time when I went to him he pushed me away. I couldn't understand what happened now because he was a loving uncle, and then he *sommer* turned into a monster. They hated us.

Interestingly, some of the women described that these problematic periods were triggered when they were forced to leave the care of grandparents and other family members, and return to their parental homes (often their mothers' homes). For these women, the transition meant crossing from an environment of safety to one of abuse. Marie, who had been living with her grandparents, and then with a great aunt, was forced to move back to her mother's house when her grandparents died. Her stepfather had been sexually abusing her since the age of ten (about three years earlier). She described the dread she felt at knowing she had to go and live with her abusive stepfather: "It was terrible ... because I know exactly what's going on that side." After her grandmother's death, she "couldn't take this secret anymore" and disclosed to a church member about the abuse. She was then sent to a children's home where she lived for a year and a half. In the interim her mother had moved in with a new man, and she was sent home to live with them. She decided to rather move out and, as she puts it, "find [her] own way."

Whether the women moved a couple of times, or many times, they all described these periods as characterised by feelings of impermanence, uncertainty and unhappiness. For some of them, these changes also meant moving from carefree environments (some even described themselves as “spoiled”) to other homes where they were forced to take on responsibility for other family members such as sisters and brothers. For others, moving home also meant leaving school. Sandra, who described both a loss of agency and resignation that she felt at not being able to choose otherwise (“I [felt] sad, but I must do it. What can I do?”), explained that it left her feeling like she fitted in a no-man’s-land between being a child and adult – and underscored for her how her mother failed her (and her siblings) as a parent.

These experiences, and the additional responsibilities and stressors that they brought with them, compounded the women’s feelings of helplessness and strain, and as will be shown in due course, formed part of the ‘background’ that contributed to the choices that ultimately led to the women’s incarceration.

The Effects of Dislocation

The stories that we heard illustrated the way that the women’s experiences of being abandoned into the care of “others” – and the abuse that they endured there – undermined their faith in family, parenthood and relationships. It also taught women that they could rely on no one but themselves. International research (for example, Chesney-Lind & Rodriguez, 1983; Simpson, Yahner & Guban, 2008; Daly, 1992; Gilfus, 2002) has highlighted that many women in correctional facilities lack emotional attachment within their families of origin (both to their parents and from their parents), and that many women leave home prematurely to escape the pain and alienation, get caught up with the wrong influences and may become involved in drugs and other problem behaviours. Marie followed just such a path: she moved in with a boyfriend at a young age, fell pregnant at 17, and became estranged from her boyfriend, who refused to pay maintenance for her child. Marie, who was by this point isolated from all systems of support, started stealing because she couldn’t find work, and had no other way to provide for her young child.

Being raised by others or without parent(s) engendered a feeling of transience and instability that the women found difficult to overcome. Growing up in other people's homes – whether they were neighbours, grandparents, or aunts and uncles – left the women without a sense of belonging, and made them feel like they never fitted in. These feelings of 'not belonging' were underscored when they were blocked from taking part in those things that symbolise having a place as a 'normal' member of a family and/or community – for example, being treated differently than other family members, being excluded from key events in family life and being prevented from attending school. Ivy, who had lived with her father and her grandmother, and was sent to live with a cousin at age 14 when her grandmother died, illustrates this well. She told of how she "struggled to adapt and my life was not nice. It was the first time I had come [to the place that they lived] ... I did not have a school, a place in school, and so I had to wait long." She was mistreated at her cousin's house and "chased out of the house because she didn't want me, and blamed me for my grandmother's death. It was very hard. I haven't forgotten it." A few women told of how they (and sometimes their siblings) were excluded from events and gatherings, or were not given the same material things that other children in the household were given (for example, food, school shoes and school supplies). Marie, describes, for example:

They would go and visit friends ... it's only my brothers and my sister ... I must stay behind [...] When they needed school shoes, then tomorrow they will get it. When I'm asking for school shoes or whatever, then I must wait for two months, three months."

These abusive incidents at the hands of those entrusted with the women's care exacerbated their feelings of isolation and despair, and heightened their sense of vulnerability. They described how they felt like they had to 'hide' in their home environments from parents and from caregivers, and in some cases, were subjected to appalling levels of violence – perhaps because of, or at least facilitated by, the tenuous connections between themselves and their 'host' families. Zizipho provides a poignant illustration of this. She described feeling excluded from family life in her uncle's house, where she lived with her siblings and her grandmother. She described how her uncle

would beat her, how he tried to sexually abuse her, and how – when she screamed for help one day – he “hung me up with a rope and he left me there. And I was crying, and when he saw saliva come out of my mouth, then he released me.” She was eight years old at the time.

These experiences raise important implications for the women’s self-worth, behaviour, and positive role socialisation. In line with findings from studies in other (developed) contexts (Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2004; Gilfus, 2002; Harlow, 1999), the women in this sample began to engage in risky behaviours and started taking alcohol and drugs as a result of their experiences. For some, the abuse and dislocation provided a pathway into homelessness, as Catnip explains: “Because I was tired of being abused ... You see, and that’s how I ended up on the street.”

RELATIONSHIP WITH PARENTS

Experiencing distressed or disrupted bonds with parents is among the most important factors highlighted in the literature on pathways for crime (for women and men alike) (Farrington, 2003; Sampson & Laub 1993, 2005a, 2005b; Laub & Sampson, 2003; Belknap & Holsinger, 2006). International studies have shown that most women offenders come from dysfunctional family environments, and that dysfunction contributes to placing them on a path to being incarcerated (Belknap & Holsinger, 2006; DeHart, 2008; Gilfus, 1992). Many female offenders report their first arrest came after running away from home to avoid abuse by their parents (Chesney-Lind & Sheldon, 1992). Similarly, research has shown that girls from violent homes are also at heightened risk for delinquent behaviour, such as sexual promiscuity, substance abuse, truancy, running away, and property crime (DeHart, 2008, Belknap, 2001). Drugs and alcohol become an ordinary part of these dysfunctional, stressful, violent, and abusive environments (Harlow, 1999). This was certainly borne out by our findings.

Even the women who grew up in more affluent circumstances, or with both their parents experienced difficult upbringings. It was striking to researchers how the women themselves were sometimes not cognisant of the degree to which the ‘normal’ childhoods and families that they described were anything

but normal. For example, Elize, who is incarcerated for housebreaking and theft, described her childhood as “relatively normal.” In her story, however, she related that her father and mother used drugs all her life, that her father spent “a long time in prison” for murdering someone in a bar fight, and that her brother had been in and out of the correctional system since he was nine years old. She seemed unaware of the striking contradictions in her narrative, describing her father as “a very soft, sweet person”, and minimised the severity of her parents’ drug use. She explained that “my mother and father, they only smoke one button. They share one button every night. So they’re addicted, but they’re not misusing.” Elize’s explanation of her parents’ mandrax use as “not misusing” powerfully illustrates the way that the women underestimated the problematic environments in which they were raised, and the impact that these environments had on their values, coping strategies and choices. These experiences became part of the background their lives – the context of lived experience – that combined to push them toward the choice to engage in criminality.

For others, the paradoxical descriptions of their so-called “normal” childhoods are an illustration of the harshness of life for many South African children – characterised by hunger, poverty and abuse. Queen, for example, describes her life at school as “very nice ... they were beating us, but it was very nice.” She then recalls how she stole bread at school because she and her siblings were hungry:

There was no food in my house for two days [...] We were used to it. We will drink water. We, they, ja, my family ... I think that they had pride because they didn’t want us to go to other houses to beg. We had to stay home even if we were hungry [...] Sometimes they will buy half a bread, they must give it to the younger ones. They tell you if you’re hungry just drink water.

Even among the most horrific stories, some women seemed (sadly) willing to gloss over their parents’ shortcomings. For example, Laurene, who described a distant mother and an abusive, alcoholic father explained: “My mom was a very good woman, but a cold woman [...] And my dad of course was so caught up with what was going wrong in his life that you know I don’t

think they ... I don't think they realised they were doing anything wrong." Lungelwa similarly described how she and her sisters had a greater bond with their aunt than with their mother because her "mother was still young, so she valued friends ... not that she didn't value us, but she was busy with her friends, going out with them and all that. She was younger than my aunt." The women highlighted their parents' own problematic upbringings, poor parenting skills and their preoccupation with their own problems as contributing to this problem.

Alcohol and substance abuse also contributed to the problematic relationships between the women and their parents – eroding the relationship between them, isolating the children, and creating a sense that no one cared for them. Catnip said that her "mother and father, was drinking *a lot* [sic]. Weekends they will drink from Friday until Sunday [...] there were a lot of times we went to bed and there was no food." She would run away to friends' houses on the weekend because she "felt safe there," away from her sexually abusive father. She said that it used to upset her that her mother never worried about where she was during those times: "But it's like my mother didn't even care, she didn't even worry where. She never even came and looked for me over the weekend's time, and see if I'm OK." Leonie described how her mother's drinking pushed her from her home, which in turn created an entrée into drugs:

My mom was like that ... she drank. Weekends [...] when my mom got home then she would [start trouble] with us, or she will just want to hurt you because she is drunk. My little sister and I started sleeping out [away from home] and then we started ... I started drugs, and then I started with buttons.

Whether the women's ability to make peace with the contradictions in their relationships with their parents comes from their own cognitive dissonance with their experiences growing up, or is evidence of a coping mechanism, or is simply how children deal with (and minimise) their life circumstances in South Africa is an open question. As will be seen below, the women's damaged and disrupted bonds with their parents – for whatever reason – did, however, have significant impact on their own ability to develop lasting relationships, to feel supported by the people around them, and to trust others.

Disrupted and/or Damaged Relationships with Mothers

Roughly sixty per cent of the women in our sample either did not live with their mother growing up, or only lived with her periodically. There were run-of-the-mill reasons for these separations – divorce/separation or the fact that mothers worked in another city. Some of these women felt less affected by these separations, and had close, loving relationships with other female family members who substituted for mother figures. Queen, for example, mentioned that “My aunt was more like my mother because she wasn’t working. She was always in the house.”

For others, the realities of work for many women in South Africa, which meant that their mothers had to be away from their families, created a separation that was painful, and heightened the women’s sense of isolation and hurt. For example, Marlene was away from her parents a lot during childhood. Although they had family to take care of her and her siblings because her mother worked, she says that she “felt alone many times growing up. I didn’t know my own father, and I almost never saw my mother. I had friends, people around me, but I never felt happy.” Marlene clearly understood that she was separated from her mother for ‘good reasons’ - her mother was working to support the family, and had left her with relatives that cared for her. Yet despite being able to understand these reasons, she still felt lonely and unhappy as a child because of the separation from her parents, which damaged the bond between mother and daughter.

Even where the women had adequate or even loving care from fathers and other family members, these relationships were not able to make up for the missing mother-daughter bond. Jennifer described that living away from her mother while she took care of her sick father in another city left her feeling isolated and without the guidance and support that a young woman needs. She explained: “I was so sad, though, because I needed my mommy. When the time that you’re falling in love [...] when you get your period, you not going to talk to your daddy, because he’s a man.” Despite being close with her father, the absence of her mother’s care and guidance was turning point in her life.

Many women described intensely problematic relationships with their mothers. Eight women had mothers that were physically abusive towards

them: Madame Butterfly endured violence and abuse from her mother throughout her life, Marie had an altercation with her mother when she was 21 where her mother was physically violent toward her. Leonie was beaten and raped by her stepfather, and also physically abused by her mother. Annie had a physical altercation with her mother when she moved back home. Melly endured physical abuse by both her foster parents. Phino's mother used to beat her regularly. In addition to physically violent relationships, the women in our sample described a variety of eroded and damaged relationships with their mothers that contributed to an inability to negotiate their lived realities without engaging in crime.

Cold and distant mothers

For some of the women, there was simply no warmth, emotion or support in the relationship between themselves and their mothers. For example, Elmarie described how, after her father's death in an accident her mother "just turned her back on all of that," placing most of her children into an orphanage. Even though Elmarie lived with her mother again later during her childhood, she described being " ... very, very afraid of her. She never hugged me or said that she loved me." When asked what she considered to be the most important factors that led to her incarceration, she said without hesitation:

Not getting love from my parents. That's the biggest thing. I think that's it ... I don't know a mother's love. My children too, they don't know a grandmother. A grandmother is a person that gives you nice present, holds you and says she loves you. I can't go to my mother and say "Ma, help me out this time, things are bad." She will never do it for me, or help my children, or give us anything ... shelter, anything. I have asked her many times: "Am I really your child? That you treat me this way? Why didn't you leave me for dead when I was born? Or why didn't you give me away?" [...] She says nothing. She doesn't give me the answer. She says: "Are you crazy, you are my child." Then I say, "Then, Ma, but I wasn't treated as your child".

The women's own damaged relationships sometimes contrasted with the mother-daughter relationships that they saw among their friends: "I wanted to be supported like my other friends parents supported them" [Jennifer]. Nontombi also described growing up in a home "where there was no support ... What my mother wants is money, she doesn't have that ... [feeling of] 'you're my child, I will sit down with you and show you how to do things.'" Catnip explained how, when she would run away to friends' houses, the deficiencies in her home life became apparent:

Just to see how that mother go on with her children and play with them and then I will always sit and just look at them playing and do all kinds of things. And they used to tell me I'm so quiet because you know, when you're not used to something you actually afraid to join in because you don't really know how to play.

Laurene recalled how, despite seeming to conform to the model of a 'good mother' she never remembers any closeness in their relationship. This dichotomy of appearing to be a good mother by conventional standards (as Laurene describes, "She was a very good cook. She was a very good mother..."), while not being nurturing or warm toward her daughter left Laurene confused as to how bonds between mothers and children should be formed. She describes:

But I never remember my mother ever telling me she loved me or cuddling me [...] She built a shell, she built ... she built this ... these peels of onion around her that eventually you didn't know who the real person was. And I ... just before she died or a while before she died I thought to myself 'if only the real person could've come out she would've been a very wonderful person. But you know [she was] very short on the emotion and the warmth that a mother should give ... I don't know if we ever cuddled. [crying heavily] Nobody ever cuddled with me. [crying].

Mothers' 'selfish' choices

Much of the damage to the relationships between the women and their mothers was caused by separation due to 'selfish reasons' – for example, not wanting to be tied down by their children, wanting to enjoy life, take drugs and drink. (Ironically, a number of women described having modelled this same behaviour in their own relationships with their children.) Fancy Face lived with her father from a young age when her mother and father split up, in part because of her mother's severe drinking problem, and in part because her father had affairs with other women. She explained that:

My mother went to live on her own, and my father kept her away from us because of her drinking problem. But she came to visit us and so, but he didn't let her into the house where we lived. [...] We saw her very seldom ... sometimes not for two or three years, then she's drunk and we don't know if she's alive or not [...] It hurt me in the end of the day because I know that I have a mother, and she's not there as a parent figure for us. My oldest sister stood in as things came up that a mother must do.

Women in our sample described being displaced and replaced in their mothers' lives by new families and new husbands. For example, Cynthia explained how "after my mom and my dad got divorced she had a lot of men in her life. Um, I always felt like I was pushed one side, I had to take care of my brother, and these men always came first in my mom's life." Cynthia described how the displacement that she felt in her mother's life, coupled with the responsibility for taking care of her brother at a young age prompted her to move in with her father, a drug dealer, where she experienced many of the same problems. This is an example of how being shuttled between problematic homes weakened the women's social bonds, disrupted relationships with their parents, and led to engagement in risky behaviours. Cynthia became involved in drugs, and fell pregnant at a young age. These factors weighed heavily in Cynthia decision to commit crime.

The women's narratives painted heart-wrenching pictures of how their mothers' choices deeply affected them. Key among this group were the mothers who were complicit in their daughters' abuse - mothers who "knew

what was going on” but did nothing about it – and the distrust and distance that these choices created in their relationships. Although the issue of child sexual abuse (and the complicity of mothers in covering the abuse up) is discussed in depth elsewhere in this report, it bears mention here because of the critical role it played in eroding mother-daughter bonds for the women in our sample. For these women, the fact that their mothers sided with the abusive men created a sense of abandonment and anger. Catnip for example described how her mother didn’t “want to hear stories about my father and things ... she will always cover for him.” Similarly, Marie’s mother also sided with her partner, saying to the social worker “she’s lying.” Marie was sent to live at a children’s home, and her mother only visited her once during the eighteen months that she was there. She described feeling at that time that no one cared about her, and that nothing mattered anymore. She says: “So when I came out of the children’s home I decided to start stealing.”

Mothers’ constrained choices

Certainly, circumstances constrained the choices of some of the mothers who were separated from their children. However understandable these decisions may be, the consequences of their mother’s choices remained significant and damaging for many of the women. For example, Lena’s mother “lost the house because she couldn’t afford to pay the house anymore ... the Council took the house.” Her mother met another man, and the family moved in with him, but as Lena explained: “he don’t have children and he wasn’t nice with us. So my dad took me and I was staying there for about a year and I couldn’t handle the woman ... because she’s like my sister’s age and I can’t handle respecting her because she’s the reason my mother and dad separate. And I run away from home.” Lena’s mother’s choice of a new man (which was perhaps a ‘survival’ choice) only option appeared to be to flee her problematic and abusive home environment, which placed her in an extremely vulnerable and marginalised position, and eventually on the path toward the events that would eventually bring her to prison.

A few of the women recounted how their mother’s own experiences of abuse impacted their lives by creating separation and left the women feeling abandoned. These weakened bonds in turn impacted the women’s own

emotional development, resulted in deficiencies in their self-perceptions and coping abilities. For example, Ntombikayise described being nineteen or twenty years old when she met her mother for the first time. She explained that on meeting her:

[My mother] cried and said, 'I apologise my child, but your father chased me away and we were separated. That's why you grew up without me ... and I apologise for that' [...] I was happy, I felt happy to finally saw her, and I had been longing to see her.

Unfortunately, circumstances intervened, preventing them from reuniting for long: her mother left after that visit, and died later that year. Ntombikayise remembered how this loss intensified and prolonged her feelings of abandonment: "I felt hurt ... I was hurt. I only saw her once, and that was the last. I was hurt for the rest of my life."

For other women's mothers, leaving their children was question of life and death. Although Dawn could intellectually understand that for her mother it was a question of survival as she tried to escape her alcoholic, abusive father, she broke down in her interview as she described how her mother fled, taking her mentally disabled sister with her (who still lives with her mother now). Her sense of abandonment was palpable as she described "when my mother left ... I am the youngest, [but when] my mother left my father there and went with my sister, she didn't take me with her." She recounted how her father would promise her mother that he would change, how her mother would return, and then "its three weeks or a month ... not long, then my mother left again. Then I was left alone again." The instability of her home life, coupled with the abandonment and ongoing, severe abuse that she witnessed as a child left her with distorted perceptions of love, family and relationships. Dawn turned to alcohol herself, and became involved with an abusive man. She killed him after it was alleged that he had sexually abused one of the children with whom she was close in the neighbourhood.

Similarly abandoned by her mother after her father's death, Catnip perceptively described the emotional stagnation that she experienced as a result. This is key in terms of women's pathways to crime, since the

emotional (and cognitive) deficits that are illustrated in Catnip's account of events reduce women's ability to cope and limit their perceived options for survival:

I was feeling so alone, so full of pain, so full of anger [...] I saw my mother, my real mother, on my father's funeral for the last time. Since today, I don't know where she is, or if she's alive or what. [...] Because me and my sister we went and stayed there, my mother took my brothers and she was staying in Villiersdorp ... we went, and she promised she's going to sort things out, everything, the house and then she's going to come and fetch us, and things will be okay again. But she never did, she never did. She never kept that promise that she made to us. And um ... I'm still waiting for that promise, but I don't know when that's going to happen. Maybe because I'm still thinking ... I'm still sitting with that mind of a child.

Non-Existent/Damaged Relationships with Fathers:

Our survey data showed that 63% of respondents lived with their father while growing up. However, when taken with the interviews, the data suggests that these figures should be interpreted with caution. It appears that this number may include some women who lived with their fathers *at any point* during their childhood, as well as women who lived with stepfathers or other men who acted as a father figure in their lives. Their narratives painted a picture peppered with absent or distant fathers and problematic choices, which prompted some of the women to look for love in 'all the wrong places'. Even where the women described their relationships with their fathers as close (six cases), these were not necessarily always positive role models or the women. For example, Linda describes that she was her daddy's "blue-eyed girl," but relates how he was unfaithful to her mother in front of her. Phino told how she was her father's "favourite," but also described how he was physically abusive toward her mother. Both women related during their interviews how their father's problematic behaviour created a dissonance with the 'picture' that they had of their fathers, which in turn undermined their trust in relationships.

Absent, transient or distant fathers

Almost 30% of the women's fathers passed away when during their childhood. The interview data showed that an additional third of women had no relationship with their fathers, even though they were alive. Indeed, some of these women didn't know their fathers at all, and their mothers simply never talked about them. For example, Marie describes that she knew that her father had died when she was young, but that her mother had never told her any more than that. She explains that she found out recently prior to her interview that he had died of cancer: "I found out this year how he died [...] Until now, because I did find out in prison that I've got cancer in my womb, so then I asked ... I asked my mother 'from what did my father die' and she tell me, no he also had cancer."

A further 20% of the women described transient fathers and step-fathers who drifted in and out of their lives, and who provided little stability, support and guidance for the women growing up. Queen's father was largely absent because of work: "I don't remember my father very much because he was a working man. He used to come when we were sleeping, he leaves when we were sleeping. So I don't know much about him. After he died, my mother told us how good he was." Despite being absent for the 'right' reasons, Queen felt that his absence created a 'hole' in her childhood, saying that she "always felt that a part of me was not complete because of a father figure that was missing." Lena also described keenly feeling the absence of her father, and the hurt and abandonment that his absence created. "I always feel like I don't fit in here because I don't have ... I have a father, but I don't know where he is and children would say like yeah, my father don't love me and that's the reason why he's not with me. So I don't ... didn't have a *lekker* childhood." Lena's father showed up after 24 years' absence for a visit at the correctional facility (without contacting her first). She described feeling suspicious of his motives, ambivalent towards rekindling a relationship, and still angry at his abandonment and the impact it had on her life. She related: "I ask him ... why you never came to look for me, I'm your child. Because if it wasn't for him [pause] I would never be [pause] the person that I am now."

Other women had weak and damaging relationships with their fathers - even where their fathers were in their lives. Nola described the absence of love

and emotion in her relationship with her very abusive and controlling father, saying: “there was never ... between any of us children and my father ... a father-daughter relationship. No hugs, no ‘I love you’, no goodnights, put you into bed, read you stories. Does that ever happen?” Her words illustrate how her problematic relationship with her father has made her question whether good relationships with fathers ever exist. Nontombi described how she didn’t feel that she could count on her father: “My father ... when you are in trouble he wouldn’t give you any support. He would just look at you and do nothing.” Dawn described how, after her mother left her father, leaving Dawn behind, she had to assume responsibility for herself and her father’s household despite her young age: “Then I always had to take care of myself, clean the house and so on.”

The women described significant consequences in their lives resulting from their fathers’ absence. Elmarie said how, as a seven-year-old girl, her life fell apart when her father died. She described not only the trauma of his death, but the lingering loss and dislocation she has felt ever since:

I had a good life when my father was alive ... my father was so important to me. [crying] I was seven, my mother was fixing my hair for school, and my father just didn’t come [he used to come and take her to school on his motorbike]. The police car came and said my mother must go with them. My mother went in [to the police station] alone, and I got out and looked in the police van. And there I saw my father’s bike lying there, and he is not there. And my mother comes out with his clothes [crying hard]. And I asked ‘he is dead, no?’ I had seen it there. His bike. And we went to identify his body and I saw him then the last time. And just like that my father was dead. My mother just turned her back on all that. My mother didn’t put up a gravestone for him. I can’t go and visit his grave. I don’t even know where it is.

Fathers' choices, daughters' choices

Much like with their mothers, some of their father's behaviour created not only abandonment, but entrenched violence, and damaged father-daughter relationships. Cynthia described that her father had a heavy drinking habit, and he used to do drugs: "I would go with him to the merchants and whatever. I was small, but I remember the smell, and I remember how it made him, how ... how he changed." Nola similarly described how her father's alcoholism and abusive behaviour has damaged her and her siblings alike:

We're all fucked up ... we all have a screw loose ... Growing up my father was an alcoholic, he used to beat the shit out of my mom. He'd come home and decide tonight's the night we're playing Russian Roulette – with [my] mom sitting at the table ... he was very violent, it was a nightmare [...] If he couldn't take his frustrations out on my mom he would take it out on us. We'd get a hiding for no reason. Or 'go dig a hole for your dog, I'm going to shoot your dog now.' A lot of mind games.

These disrupted bonds had severe consequences for the women's own risky behaviour choices, their sense of self, and the development of coping strategies. Barbie explained how she "didn't have a nice childhood. I had no [real] father ... My father was very mixed up." She described how he was in and out of the correctional system, and then died shortly after being released. It was not only his transience and absence that impacted her, but the sense of loss when he died suddenly. She said that because of this she "just grew up wrong." Lena's father got romantically involved with a girl that was in the same class as her elder sister, and left her mom and the children as a consequence. She illustrated how his abandonment increased their vulnerability, and shaped the choices for herself and her siblings:

We had a good family, a nice stable home until I was six years old ... And [when he left] we struggled a lot ... we had to move from one place to another to survive. And my two sisters got married at the age of 14 and 15 because things weren't *lekker*. And um, my brother ran away from home when he was 13, and after like five years we found out now that he's in prison.

Looking for love in all the wrong places

Other women also described how their fathers impacted their life choices. Jana, who was convicted of armed robbery found out that the man she knew as her father her whole life was, in fact, not her biological father, but her brother's. She said: "I think that's when I started to become aggressive ... I felt he lied to me and ... I felt very confused and angry." Catnip noted how the absence of a father figure, and a father's love, made her look for what she describes as "the wrong love":

To be honest, at that moment in time I needed love. I needed someone just to say 'I love you'. Don't get me wrong, not *wrong* love. I went and looked for *wrong* love. I went and looked for love by a man. The love that make things worse. If people, if family came and said that 'we love you' things might have been different today.

This sense of 'looking for love in the wrong places' was a common theme expressed by the women in our sample as they described how their father's absence or the damaged bond between them shaped their own behaviour and choices of partner. Women described becoming involved in sexual relationships early on, confusing sex and love in an attempt to fill the void left by their fathers. Other women described how their abusive or absent fathers left them with skewed notions of what relationships should be like, what they could (or should) expect from their boyfriends and husbands, and the way that women should be treated. As Catnip explains, she got involved in bad relationships because she "thought that there won't be a man out there who will love me the way I wanted to be loved." These intensely gendered messages had disastrous implications for the women's notions of their own self-worth.

TRAUMATIC EVENTS & SIGNIFICANT LOSSES

The life maps that the women created, as well as their journals and interviews, underscored the importance of traumatic events in propelling their lives toward the circumstances that would eventually lead to their incarceration. Above all other events, the women highlighted how the death of significant

people in their lives (parents, siblings, children and/or caretakers) signalled dramatic changes, and which undermined their security and placed them at risk. For some, these traumatic events meant losing the people to whom they were closest – for example Rose, whose “gran was [her] everything,” felt a profound sense of dislocation and abandonment. This was particularly damaging for women who had been placed with these caretakers because of an earlier death (e.g. of parents), divorce or absent parents. Rose described that when her grandmother died when she was 16 years old, “everything changed for me. Nothing was the same again. At my gran’s house I felt free ... not to do what I wanted ... but at least they didn’t shout at us.” She told of how difficult life got for her when she had to go and live with her mother again when her grandmother passed away, especially since her mother’s husband was molesting and had raped her.

Women described intense feelings of anger at these (often traumatic) significant losses, but did not know what to do with these feelings. Lungelwa said that the anger she felt at death of her mother made her turn against her aunt – with whom she was very close, and who had raised her. She explained: “The death of my mother ... [then] I never wanted to listen to anyone. My aunt would stop me [from going to *shebeens* with boyfriends] and I would tell her that she is not my mother. But all that got back into me because I am where I am now.” For Nontombi, who had never had a good relationship with her parents, the death of her sister not only created a massive void (“the only person I was depending on was my sister who passed away”), but added responsibility for which she was unprepared. She explained that her sister “left two children and ... [She begins to cry] ... I thought of how I was going to raise those two children ... they were my responsibility [...] My life changed when I lost my sister. If she were still alive I would have studied, and got a job. I wouldn’t think of going to steal. My life changed completely because of that.”

Dealing (or Not Dealing) with the Trauma of Death

The repercussions of these events caught some women by surprise, and some participants described dealing with the trauma (or perhaps more accurately, not dealing with it) in ways that placed them on a collision course with the law. Laurene described how the death of her son impacted her in

ways that she didn't fully realise at the time, and how she began gambling (and defrauding her company to fund her gambling) as a result:

My life had always been traumatic and I'd always coped I never saw uh the devastation that um his death would have on me [...] It was like someone had glued me in place and all I could do was wake up, eat, go to work, go back to sleep, and I was like, I would say I was like a robot for the next five years. I went through a lot of different emotions. I went through anger, hate. I, I hated God for taking my son. I said, 'Why couldn't you have helped him? Why couldn't you have warned me?' I hated myself for not knowing and not protecting him. [...] And because I was busy and I thought I could cope with it I didn't go [to get help]. And I after five years I slowly came unstuck. And I was by this stage I had been gambling since I'd got divorced and um I slowly ... [started stealing].

The women described the collateral costs of these events (and indeed, of their crimes) in different ways. For some, relationships have suffered. For example Cheryl described the death of her child's father (whom she met and fell pregnant by at age 15) as a key turning point in her life. She called it "a bitter part of my life when he died, because I was so young [...] And I don't know how my life would have turned out if he still had to be alive". She said that his death changed her relationship with her son, who she pushed away as a way of dealing with the pain. As a consequence her son sees her own mother (his grandmother) as more of a mother than he does her.

Two of the women described the profound and lingering sense of loss at the death of a significant person in their lives. Zameka, who is convicted of shoplifting, described how the death of her two children (one from pneumonia and another from jaundice) still upsets her: "It affects me even now. If I count my babies. Even my friends, my prison friends ask me how many children I got, I say five. Because I can't say three. Because that was my child also." Morag talked about the deaths of her father and her brother and says: "there was times when I think isn't this the cause of my downfall? Cause those were the two people in my life, I was very attached to them ... I don't know ... I'm still trying to figure it out and I'm 50 years old now."

Rape

Deaths were not the only factors which women identified as turning points. Two of the women in the sample identified rape as a traumatic event that had changed their trajectories forever. Lindiwe cried heavily as she described witnessing the rape of her mother, who had also been gang raped when Lindiwe was three years old. The earlier rape had caused Lindiwe's father to divorce her mother because "he didn't want her back ... and so he left her there." Lindiwe trafficked drugs as a way to make enough money to build her mother a house in the Eastern Cape, and was caught on her first trip. She said:

She was raped in the house while I was there ... [He] came in. So my mom was trying to protect me cause she didn't want him to rape me ... she didn't want that guy to rape me, she said that ... she just ... I mean ... allowed the guy to rape her because she was trying to protect me ... I wanted to make it better for her ... I mean a nice house there in the Eastern Cape ... I wanted her to be safe.

For Marlene, who was raped in 1994 along with her Ouma by her stepfather's friends, the rape represented a turning point where things started to go wrong: "I was in high school, in Standard Six. I left school a few weeks later, I wasn't myself anymore, I had lost faith in people, I blamed myself for what happened to us." Marlene suspected that her stepfather had something to do with the rape, and it turned out that that was, indeed, the case. This further undermined her faith in people, and alienated her from the family as a support system.

Adoption and Miscarriages

Finally, a few women identified miscarriages and adoption as turning points in their lives. For these women, these events were not only intensely painful, but left unresolved grief that has had wide-ranging impact in their emotional development and well being. Elize described her miscarriage at eighteen years old as a painful turning point for her: "I was very, very happy [when I found out I was pregnant]. When I lost the child I just ... that's when my attitude changed about life."

Jo, who was sentenced for fraud, also gave a baby up for adoption at age seventeen. She said that she thinks constantly about the child that she gave up for adoption, and wonders where he is, what he is doing, and “if he likes the same things as me.” Although she knows that giving him up for adoption was “the right thing for me and him” she still finds this a difficult issue, and one which she feels is unresolved and has impacted her ability to form strong family bonds for herself again, or to allow herself to take on the responsibility of having another child. This sense of longing – of having something missing in one’s life – was similarly expressed by Laurene, who had offered to raise her youngest brother’s child, which was to be born out of wedlock. She explained how the baby’s mother’s decision to give it up for adoption – or perhaps her own perceived failure to take care of this child – has worn heavily on her ever since:

She didn’t want to keep the baby and um so my mom and I both tried to, we tried to encourage her to let us have the child. She didn’t want to hear anything of it. And the baby was eventually adopted. Uh she had a little girl. She came to stay with me while she was pregnant so that her family wouldn’t know. She didn’t want her mom to know she was pregnant. I mean it was a big disgrace in those days. So only her sister knew about it. So that was my brother’s first child that was given out. And I always look in the *You Magazine* to see if she’s desperately seeking the family because [crying] you know we don’t even know who she is or where she is. And it’s, it’s a tragedy and one day if I ever have the time I’d like to try and trace her.

These losses and trauma – caused by death, rape, adoptions and miscarriages – were clearly highlighted by the women as events that impacted the path of their lives. Whether they recognised this fact at the time that events unfolded or not, the effects were lasting, and perhaps created deficits and scars that the women have yet to fully recover from.

FAMILY, FRIENDS AND BEING DRAWN INTO CRIMINALITY

Peripheral, but seemingly relevant to the notion of intergenerational transmission of the values and norms that support criminality, is the number of women who have family members in the correctional system. Adding to broader criminogenic factors of the family environment is the exposure to imprisonment of friends and family members; and in some instances, the loss of siblings and parents to incarceration.⁸⁷ Over 40% of the women in our sample indicated that they had friends that had been incarcerated at some point, and 47 per cent had a family member who was incarcerated at some point.

Through the women's stories it became patently clear that the impact of these incarcerated family members on the women's lives was both varied and profound. Interestingly, though, few of the women described having criminal parents, siblings or friends as a 'turning point' in their lives, or as something that definitively lead to their own criminality. For example, Cynthia, who is incarcerated for fraud and forgery, mentioned half-way through her interview that her father was murdered, and that her brother was in drug rehab:

My father was a dealer as well. And, um, he was murdered by two of his clients [...] They stabbed him more than 26 times. They tried to decapitate him but they left him lying in the gutter [...] My brother went to identify his body. My brother was using drugs at that time [...] and after he ID'd my father's body he just went into a downward spiral and became a heroin addict.

Her children's father had also been incarcerated for thirteen years for fraud, possession of an unlicensed firearm, and two escapes from custody. He was, in many ways, exactly the same kind of problematic father figure that Cynthia had herself had. Yet for Cynthia, it seemed that these experiences of being surrounded by criminal activity, drugs, addiction, violence and death simply formed the back story – the context – to her own choices.

⁸⁷ Greene, Haney & Hurtado (2000, p.4) define criminogenic conditions as "environments and experiences to which people are exposed that increase the likelihood that they will engage in criminal behaviour."

Having family members involved in crime transmitted to women the idea that crime was normal and legitimate means of creating income. Elize, Cynthia and Fancy Face (who all reported drug use that led, at least in part, to their incarceration) described how their fathers were involved in the drug trade. Fancy Face's entire extended family was sustained by dealing drugs: her brother was one of the biggest drug merchants in the area that she lived, and her sisters lived from the proceeds of the trade. Her father also was involved with the drug trade, but maintained a façade of respectability by having other "guards" that did the actual 'work' of dealing for him: in her words, her father "only collected the cash." While she initially described (with some pride) how her family lived a 'high life' because of the income from drugs, and that she, her father and her brother were "respected" in the community, she admitted later that their involvement in the trade had severe implications for her family. She said "the truth of the matter is that my father was in prison ... he was in prison for 12 years and [the children] were divided up in the family." She made a distinction, however, between the drug trade (as more 'respectable'), and her own violence (she was convicted, with her brother, of contracting to kill a friend's husband). She described how her family was shocked when they found out about her crime, and how it was "very, very difficult for them to accept it. We did not grow up like this." She described both herself and her brother as "*griewelik*" (translation: horrible or dreadful) – indicating that she views this kind of criminality as vastly different from her family's pseudo-legitimate engagement in the drug trade.

For others, their husbands, fathers and partners compelled them to become, at first, complicit in "covering up" their criminal activities, which in turn normalised criminal activity and opened doors to becoming criminal themselves. When these women are abandoned with no apparent means to support themselves, crime became an option. Nazley, who was married into an arranged Muslim marriage by her parents at age 14, realised later in her marriage that her husband was a criminal: "... they used to rob banks, but at the time I wasn't aware of it. I guess things were always just hidden from his parents. But when I married him I started seeing things, and I always had to cover ... I was always pregnant and he was always in prison". She described how her husband eventually got a long sentence for armed robbery, which

left her struggling financially. She had a chance meeting with a man, who eventually invited her to become involved with armed robberies.

Some of the women pointed to the 'mixed messages' that they received from significant others regarding the acceptability of crime. For example, Nontombi described how her father, who was very strict with her, "didn't like someone who is a thief. But you will find out that he eats things that he knows are bought with stolen money." Similarly, Claire, who is in for defrauding her company to support her gambling, described how she used to see how her boss cheated the system and engaged in criminal activity – even making her complicit in her acceptance of his fraudulent practises. She said "I saw what my boss did. I saw my boss steal. I saw him rob the Receiver [of Revenue/SARS]. And I went along with it ... And I see him selling money on the black market." Although she identified that watching her boss engage in illegal activity normalised the idea of cheating the 'system', she maintained that this does not provide justification for her own actions, saying: "you can't justify a wrong with a wrong."

As is suggested in criminological theory on learning, some women highlighted the role of their friends in socialising them into crime by providing the norms and values that underpin criminality, and engaging in risky behaviours that separate them further from their already fractured family support systems. For example, Lungelwa, who was sentenced for three years for fatally stabbing a woman in a shebeen fight, described how, after the death of her mother, she started following her friends, drinking and playing truant from school. She explained: "I just thought that I don't have a mother ... I won't ever see my mother and so no-one would ever tell me anything. But I was fooling myself." Zizipho similarly described how her friends get her involved in a gang as a teenager, and how this put her at odds with her family. She served time in 2005 (as a juvenile) for being peripherally involved in a murder (she took part in the beating, but not in the killing of the victim). Her friends lured her back into her 'old life' by introducing her to a man, who as she describes compelled her continued criminal activities through fear. As she said: "I am scared of [that] man ... until now I am scared of that man, [even though] he is here in prison now."

Some friends facilitated the women's entry into criminal activity by teaching techniques for committing crime, or by providing examples that 'crime pays'. For example, Queen described how her friend, "who always had money" would help others in need, and be generous in providing holidays and gifts for friends – seemingly without the means to do so. This intrigued Queen, who became involved in fraud by eventually teaming up with the woman:

I had a friend ... she worked for SARS. She always had money ... We asked her how she was doing it, she never told us. And then she eventually asked me one time she want to use my account and then I allowed her to use my account. Then I saw the transaction in the account, and that's when she told me. Then I started to do it with her, and then I told another friend. That's how it started ... it was fun at the time.

Nwabisa related how her criminally involved friends provided her with the techniques to succeed at shoplifting and to evade detection. She described how, after shoplifting the first time she was "terrified at first ... doing this. But my friends encouraged me, they said we should go, they will be by my side." After her first arrest, her friends "advise[d] me that, when I'm arrested again, I should not give them my real name. I should give them a false name so that they get me out of the court."

While none of these women pretend that they lacked agency in their own crimes, the ways that they were surrounded by criminality were certainly interesting. Again, taken as a factor that combined with other personal, familial and structural factors to create a context that shapes attractive and available options, the presence of criminal family members and peers cannot be discounted.

POVERTY AND CRIME

The legacy of apartheid in South Africa has influenced the nation vastly. Structural poverty⁸⁸ and inequality are widespread repercussions of this legacy that continue to permeate the country and influence lives. As Frye has noted, "...we have seen levels of unemployment almost double since 1994, and the broad consensus is that levels of poverty and inequality have correspondingly risen" (Frye, 2006, p.1). Women in South Africa experience particular vulnerabilities relating to structural poverty for a number of reasons, including lower educational achievements and a higher rate of unemployment, and the percentage of female-headed households.⁸⁹ International literature indicates that incarcerated women are poorer than those in the general population, often coming from disadvantaged and poverty-stricken backgrounds (Holtfreter, Reisig & Morash, 2004; Owen & Bloom, 1995; Richie, 2001; Lin, 2000 as cited in Salisbury & Van Voorhis, 2009). It has also been found that female heads of households are at a higher risk for engaging in criminal activity, as added financial pressures and responsibilities can push women to commit crime (Brown, 2001). It was clear that poverty would be a key feature of the lives of women in our sample and would emerge as an important factor in terms of their criminal paths.

The pre-interview survey addressed a number of features of structural poverty, keeping in mind the widespread influence that structural poverty has on people's lives. Questions were thus asked about access to food, type of dwelling where women lived, education, and employment history and regularity. The researchers further enquired about personal perceptions of wealth, prior to incarceration and during childhood, in comparison to neighbours. The interviews further explored these issues.

88 Structural poverty is a dynamic feature of people's lives that refers to an individual's social position, as well as the way in which this position affects their access to resources and social incorporation (Du Toit, 2005).

89 In South Africa, the percentage of female-headed households continues to increase, "with almost 40% of households headed by a woman in 2003, compared to 36.2% in 1998" (Ellis & Adams, 2009:13). In addition, it has been determined that female-headed, South African households are at a greater risk for vulnerability and hunger (Statistics South Africa, 2010).

STRUCTURAL POVERTY

As expected, the findings suggest that the lives of many women in our sample were characterised by extreme structural poverty. Half of the women (n=27)⁹⁰ in our sample indicated feeling poorer in relation to their neighbours growing up, while 51% (n=28) felt this way prior to incarceration. These perceptions are corroborated by the women's narratives, which were riddled with stories of extreme economic hardship. While poverty levels were not measured as such, the data collected in the pre-interview survey suggests that many of the participants did not have regular access to basic necessities, such as food and shelter, and had limited access to education and employment. This lack of resources marginalised women, excluding them from supportive social networks, and limited their opportunities to support themselves. Within this context, the options women had for survival were constrained in particular ways, leading to the possibility of crime.

Access to basic needs

Food is essential for survival, being one of our most basic needs. The findings show that more than a quarter of the women in our sample grew up in homes where there was a lack of food and continued to live in such conditions prior to their incarceration. Twenty-six per cent of the women in our sample indicated that someone in their household growing up went hungry due to a lack of food. Within this group, six women noted food not being available sometimes, while seven women indicated the absence of food often. One participant, Queen, revealed how desperate her situation was, as she recalled the strategies she was taught for coping with extreme hunger: "...then they tell you if you're hungry drink water and then you drink water with sweet-aid in it. Then you drink, every time you're hungry you must drink water." Because of the family's desperate need for food, Queen brought a large bucket to school on Fridays, taking leftover soup and bread home for weekend meals. The details of Queen's narrative show how she came to associate these experiences of poverty with feelings of shame. At one point, she suddenly recalled how she once stole extra bread from school, for which she later received a beating. At another point in the

⁹⁰ Data missing from one case.

interview she noted how her aunt used to scold her younger brother for embarrassing the family by standing in the street proclaiming his hunger:

He used to stand in the street and cry and say, 'I'm hungry, I'm hungry.' So he used to embarrass us 'cause my aunt used to say, 'You embarrass us.' So uh we used, we used to make sure that he always got something because he, he couldn't tolerate being hungry. So I never felt bad about it.

As discussed further below, this perception of poverty as something shameful, combined with social factors and gendered messages about womanhood, deeply affected Queen's self-esteem, which was strongly implicated in her decision to engage in crime.

As noted above, lack of food continued to be a problem for women in their adulthood. Twenty-six per cent of women noted a lack of food in their home prior to incarceration. Seven of these women indicated someone in their home going hungry sometimes, while four women noted this happening often. For a number of women who saw their crimes as a means of support, the lack of food (as well as shelter) exemplified the desperation of their situation. Thus, as Lusandre described the moment she decided to start trafficking drugs, she explained:

I was really in a bad spot because I was um, I was on the verge of losing my head over my roof [sic] and it was so bad, it really was. I mean I, I didn't have bread in my house. Now how can I tell my kids, listen mommy doesn't work, there's no money, I can't buy any food. What must I do?

As discussed further below, the need to provide for children compounded the desperation these women felt, and constrained the options they had for survival. A lack of social support, together with other factors, such as an encouraging social environment, created a context in which crime became an attractive and acceptable option.

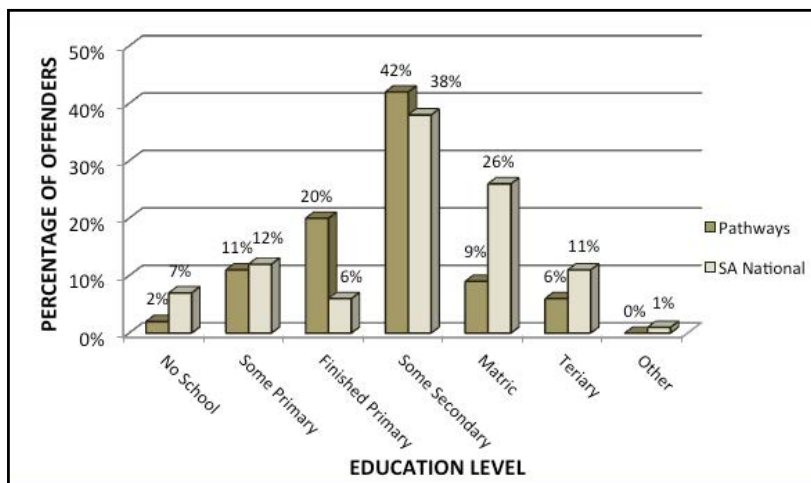
Housing is another important need with respondents identifying the type of housing they lived in prior to incarceration. Seventy-two per cent of respondents lived in a brick house on a separate plot, 12% lived in a traditional

house/hut or a flat/apartment in a block, 8% lived in a townhouse/cluster house or lived in a room in a house, and the remaining 8% lived in a Wendy house or an informal house/shack (see table 2 above). Although these numbers do not point to extreme levels of poverty with most women living in secure dwellings, the high number of people living in these households added stress. On average, women lived with three additional people in their homes besides their children (and partner if he was present), with sixteen women indicating more than three additional household residents. Although women were not asked about the type of dwelling they lived in while growing up, household size, once again, points to increased stress in childhood homes. Forty-nine per cent of women lived with 6-10 people in their household growing up, with the average number of people being seven (see figure 4 above). One woman, Queen, whose story of extreme childhood poverty is mentioned above, indicated living with 16-17 people in her home.

Education

Although the women in our sample demonstrate having a higher education level compared to national statistics of incarcerated women compiled in 2004 (JIP, 2004), a small percentage matriculated from secondary school (9%) and less than a fifth went on to pursue higher education (14% attending university with only 5% completing, and 2% completing tech/trade school). These statistics indicate very low education levels when compared to the general South African population (see figure 10 below). This is consistent with international research, which has shown that female offenders, compared with men and the non-incarcerated population, have inferior educational attainments and employment records (Moloney, van den Bergh & Moller, 2009).

Figure 10: Comparison of Education Levels: Pathways Women and National Statistics



The findings demonstrate how financial constraints, as well as other factors, contribute to low educational achievements and how limited access to education further perpetuates circumstances of poverty. Although the 2009 Household Survey points to the inability to pay school fees as the primary reason for the failure of youth to attend school (Stats SA, 2010), only one woman in our sample indicated this as the reason for dropping out of school. Four additional women, however, noted how their family's lack of financial resources (e.g., for food and electricity necessary for studying) and inability to purchase school supplies (e.g., books and uniforms) infringed on their success at school. The story of Nwabisa illustrates this point:

I did Standard Eight and I passed. I did Standard Nine and I failed in 1998. And it was these financial problems. At home there was no ... there wasn't even soap for washing uniform. Sometimes there's not even food at school. When you want to study, there's not money for electricity.

Other women had to sacrifice their education entirely, or had little time to devote to their studies, because they had to help at home, while their mothers, parents and sometimes brothers, worked to support the family.

While this clearly impacted on employment opportunities later on, it also shaped the choices (or absence of choices) women could envision for their lives in other ways, as discussed in greater detail below.

Women also spoke of having little encouragement to further their education. For Princess, her father was her main source of support and encouragement. Although she came from a poor background, Princess succeeded in school and was wait-listed for nursing school. After her father's death, however, there was no-one to encourage her along this path and she could no longer see a future for herself:

So after my father was buried, so everything now was so useless for me, so I couldn't see my future because I put my, I was, I put my hope *mos* to my father and he was the one who was uplifting me and whatever I want to do, he was the one who always encouraged me and those things. So after that I didn't see light after that.

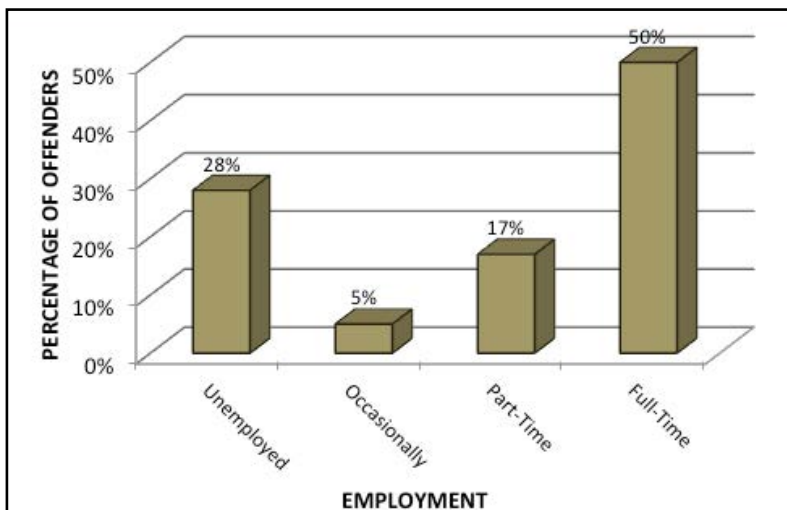
Having lost her sense of direction, Princess failed to pursue her further education and ended up with a variety of jobs that did not last. The birth of her first child, and the failure of the child's father to contribute financial support (as well as his subsequent withdrawal from their relationship), which further isolated her and created greater need, formed the context in which she chose crime as a means of support. Other notable reasons that emerged for why women left school were pregnancy, drug addiction and general poor performance. These narratives and others like it, show how poverty – alone and in combination with other factors - affects an individual's access to education, which in-turn has the potential to affect employment opportunities, perpetuate poverty and limit perceived options for survival.

Employment

Unemployment in South Africa is high, with women disproportionately affected by the lack of employment opportunities. The country stands with an unemployment rate of 24% (Stats SA, 2011), with youth and women making up the highest percentage (Stats SA, 2011). Relative to these statistics, the

rate of unemployment among the women in our sample was not very high, with half of the women having indicated that they had permanent jobs before being incarcerated, 17% having had part-time/temporary work, 5% having had work once in a while and 28% having been unemployed.

Figure 11: Women's Employment Prior to Incarceration



A 28% unemployment rate, however, is still high. Moreover, for women who worked, low wages still made it difficult to survive. Although we did not specifically inquire about income levels, findings from national research on incarcerated women suggest that most women (64%) who were employed prior to incarceration earned less than R1 000 per month (JIP, 2004). By comparison, the income that could be generated through crime was very attractive. In one day of shoplifting, one woman indicated making R1 500, which is in line with monthly minimum wages in numerous sectors in South Africa. A different woman noted earning R50 000 in her first act of fraud, a profit that would take months to earn in most industries.

The findings suggest that the women's lack of employment was not necessarily or exclusively the result of a lack of employment opportunities. Besides limited access to education, as noted above, women faced additional obstacles when trying to find work. The search for a job in and

of itself requires money and is more difficult when already in a situation of economic hardship. As Nwabisa noted:

I do want to change when I get out of here. When I'm out there and find out it is dark. If I want to go look for work, I would not have a taxi fare. I need to ride a taxi when I go there and I don't have that money.

Another factor that affected this same woman's ability to find work was her lack of a South African identification (ID) book – a problem related to the legacy of apartheid, which was not uncommon. Due to institutional and application complications, Nwabisa could not obtain her ID book, although she attempted to do so for nearly a year. This posed difficulties when looking for work, as most application forms require ID information. While another person may have looked for a way around this problem, Nwabisa's narrative suggests that she saw this as an insurmountable problem: "I once went to Shoprite. I filled the form and there was a place for an ID ... I couldn't fill it, because I don't have an ID." For her, the inability to get an ID seemed to reinforce the message she – and others discriminated against under apartheid - had received from infancy; because of who she was (or wasn't), she was not entitled to work. Though she did eventually receive her ID book, she had already chosen shoplifting as the only alternative she felt was available for her support.

Childcare was also mentioned by two women as an important obstacle to employment. Due to the high rate of single mothers in our sample,⁹¹ as well as the way in which women – and men – perceived their roles and responsibilities as parents, women were often solely responsible for childcare. When income was not reliable, childcare options were limited. Princess, whose husband's salary was inconsistent and inadequate, noted the difficulty of simultaneously looking for work and caring for children:

He got a permanent job, but his money was never right. We could never say okay I'm earning this amount of money this month and I'm gonna budget or I'm gonna do this or that. [...]

⁹¹ It is difficult to tabulate precisely the percentage of single mothers in our sample due to the fluidity of this role. Women left without support from fathers were often provided childcare and/or financial assistance from nuclear and/or extended family.

Now if I had to ask somebody to look after my kids so that I can go work, you have to pay that someone, you can't just, um, do it for free.

This difficulty pushed Princess to send her child to be raised and cared for by her sister, while she worked to provide financially: "Okay I decide that now, my child was a year and two months and I gave it to my sister and find a job." This type of arrangement, where children are raised by other family members while parents are employed far from home is a common experience in South Africa, which also featured in the lives of some of the participants.⁹²

These narratives demonstrate how women find themselves within a vicious cycle of poverty, where poverty impacts tangibly and intangibly on a woman's access to employment and where this inability to access employment further perpetuates poverty. As discussed in more detail below, trapped within their circumstances, these women were unable to perceive alternatives for support.

Environment

The findings suggest that some women who came from poor families lived in communities that increased their social vulnerabilities and encouraged criminal involvement. Five women indicated that their neighbourhoods and school environments encouraged criminal activity, including gang involvement. Nazley's non-criminal work (as a taxi owner and driver) and social environment was heavily influenced by gang involvement. Her husband was a "general" of a gang and additional members of her family and friends were gang members. Gang activity was probably normalised for her by the daily exposure to gangs in her everyday life and as an option for generating income. When confronted with the opportunity to support her family through gang activity, it became a viable option. Loli also described how common and accessible drug-dealing was in the township where she lived:

⁹² During apartheid, laws that restricted the rights of Black and Coloured people (as well as others) to live with their families in the areas in which they found employment meant that breadwinners were often separated from their families. This phenomenon continues to some extent as breadwinners leave the rural areas in search of work, often leaving their families behind and sending them money for their support. Common within the framework of migrant worker employment is the reliance on extended families to provide support and care. In the case of Phino, for example, she and her siblings lived with her aunt in Transkei while her mother worked in Cape Town and her father lived at a hostel for male migrant workers.

It's the township style. Everyone in the township is selling; people live the way they want to live. And then you think 'Maybe it will be good for me too.' And then you try it and you see that you ... things go well.

The findings presented in this section show how many of the women in our sample grew up in – and in some cases continue to occupy - a social position that is characterised by extreme poverty. This position marginalised them and affected their access to important resources, such as education and employment. They further suggest how the structural poverty that characterised the lives of many women in the sample informed their experiences and shaped the contexts from which their life choices emerged. The next section elaborates on this process.

THE IMPACTS OF STRUCTURAL POVERTY

The most tangible and obvious impact of structural poverty is the way it impacts on one's ability to support oneself and one's family. Beyond this obvious effect, the particular ways in which the participants experienced poverty shaped their self-perceptions and support systems in critical ways that constrained the choices that women were able to envision when faced with adversity.

Lack of support

The most obvious impact of poverty is the inability to provide basic needs for oneself and one's family. Nine⁹³ women in our sample that were in positions of poverty explained their crimes as being the only way for them to meet their daily needs for survival. The story that led to Daleen's first experience of incarceration is a good example. After Daleen's father died, her family moved in with her grandmother and aunt, but soon had to leave because these relatives were unable to support them. Living on the street, Daleen and her family struggled to access food until her brother began selling drugs as a means to survival:

93 This number was found based on women who explicitly noted their crime was motivated by the need to pay rent, buy food or "survive."

And it was my brother's dagga ... he used to sell it so that we could buy food. And then on a day he gave me two "stoppe" [packs of dagga] to keep for me. And that day the police came to shake us down, and they found the dagga on me.

After serving a month in jail for this first crime, Daleen didn't think she would be incarcerated again. Although she was eventually incarcerated again for theft, this crime was committed with her boyfriend, who was heavily abusive: "I knew it was wrong, but he was abusive and he hit me."

The obligation to care for children is an added source of stress for women struggling to survive. Thus, thirteen women in the sample pointed to their children's needs, and their responsibility to provide, as the reason for their crime. Shereen, for example, opened a car repair business with her husband, where they committed fraud by repairing cars with used parts. Although she felt what they were doing was wrong, she felt unable to insist that they change their practices because she saw no other way to feed and support her family: "And I used to complain about it but I couldn't do anything cause my children had to eat and we had to have a roof on our heads."

Many of the women in this group pointed to the absence of their children's father, his failure to pay maintenance money, as well as general financial hardship in their homes as factors that contributed to their sense that they had no other option. Indeed, nearly half (46%) of the women in our sample (including mothers and women without children) noted being sole financial providers in their homes, while 39% reported being contributors to their household finances. These contributing factors are consistent with international literature, which points out that most incarcerated women in the United States are the sole providers for younger children (Bloom, Owen & Covington, 2002).

In addition to financial responsibilities associated with motherhood, a number of other factors limited women's options to support themselves, including caring for relatives and aging family members, as well as being in situations of domestic abuse. As discussed elsewhere (below), 37 women in our sample (67%) were in abusive intimate partner relationships. The connection between financial troubles and domestic abuse was a key feature pointed out by nine women. Two women noted in their interviews that

they fell into impoverished conditions as a result of escaping these abusive relationships or situations of childhood abuse. The remaining seven women identified being involved in an abusive intimate partner relationship, but felt unable to leave as a result of financial hardship, or the fear of losing financial support. Poverty was thus a fundamental part of the lived experiences of these women that shaped and constrained the context within which they were able to make decisions about their lives. The sections on domestic violence, childhood abuse, family dysfunction and care-giving all provide further analysis as to how these decisions, constrained as they were by poverty, further impacted on women's coping and survival strategies and their eventual decisions to engage in crime.

These strategies were also influenced by less tangible impacts of poverty which interacted in various ways with other circumstances of women's lives to open up the possibility of crime. These other impacts include loss of agency and lowered self-esteem. These impacts are discussed in the following sections.

Loss of Agency

Some women in the study expressed the idea that crime was not something that they chose but something that was forced upon them by circumstances. For some, this loss of agency mirrored experiences of poverty that occurred early in life. The story of Sandra, who was forced to leave school in order to care for her younger siblings at home, exemplifies this point. Asked how she felt about this responsibility, she replied: "But I must do it. I must do it. I can't complain, my mother's working for us. She's the only one who's working for us." This feeling of being silenced, of being unable to complain or resist the injustices of poverty, is one which is echoed later in Sandra's silence and inability to seek help when faced with her husband's violent abuse. In this case, Sandra's loss of agency, combined with her well-founded fear of abuse, created a context in which she was unable to resist her husband's demands that she shoplift and commit armed robbery in order to support their family.

A sense of helplessness and passivity was also noted in relation to employment. The case of Nwabisa, discussed above, illustrates how

structural obstacles to employment reinforce the exclusion and helplessness that people experienced under apartheid. Four other women, who all grew up in circumstances of extreme poverty, mentioned not perceiving employment as an option. For Nontombi, for example, who lost her source of support when her older sister died; the prospect of looking for work to support herself and her sister's children was too difficult to contemplate:

I was struggling, and I decided to go and steal. I never thought of going to look for work, it was like a difficult thing for me to do. I thought that the easiest way was this one ... I thought about how I was going to raise those children, I thought of going to shoplift. I never thought of going to look for work.

For Jennifer, too, poverty dictated her choices and silenced her ability to complain or resist her circumstances. Jennifer, incarcerated for trafficking drugs in order to pay for her father's medical bills, grew up in a poverty stricken home in Latin America, where she struggled to complete high-school while burdened with numerous domestic responsibilities. She wanted to go on to "be someone" but her parents could not afford to send her to university. She tried not to blame her parents and to resign herself to her lot, but her sense of injustice continued to grow:

So when I finished my matric, my high school, my father said, I was so excited to go to some university or do something with my life and he said to me you cannot go, you cannot study because we don't have money to support you so I think you must work. And for me it was like *yo*, was like a shock. Was like no can't be, I want to be someone one day, I want to be like my other friends also, I want to be supported like my other friend's parents support them. I don't blame them, I'm not, I never got the feelings to blame them. Sometimes life is like that, I have to understand but always I was blaming life, I was blaming god for what he gave me for nothing.

Her choices for work (real or perceived) were limited and she ended up working as a nanny, which further contributed to the sense of injustice, which she associated with being poor:

When you are poor the people don't care about you. They just use you. Because they think that you're not enough for our good. They don't have money, that you really need money you gonna do anything for money ... They just using you. They don't care if you're tired. They don't care if you need something. They don't care if you want to do something else. They just think their own needs.

Ultimately, it was her inability to express this overwhelming sense of injustice that led her to engage in risky behaviours, such as substance abuse. The friends with whom she drank provided her with necessary emotional support but also became a bad influence, introducing her to drug trafficking:

When I feel sad, I go and see my friends, go to the pub they gonna drink. I gonna cry, I gonna say things that I couldn't say to my family because I was like always I was showing a beautiful face, a smile, you okay? Yes I'm okay, all of it with a smile on my face. They gonna see me no Jennifer's not happy, Jennifer's this type of person. But when I'm drink I gonna, I gonna talk. I gonna cry, I gonna show that person the one who's suffering inside of me.

These narratives reflect how some women who experience poverty-related injustices, including discrimination and oppression, in which they are silenced, internalise a sense of helplessness in the face of injustice that limits their agency. The story of Jennifer further demonstrates how the need to be silent in the face of overwhelming injustice can become so oppressive that one must find a way to escape, such that risky behaviours such as substance abuse become attractive options. Under these circumstances, the prospect of crime that provides a way out of the poverty-trap may prove irresistible.

Self-Esteem

As indicated above, the narratives collected in this study revealed a further association between experiences of poverty and feelings of low self-esteem. Thus, women described how not having the material goods that others had, nor being able to maintain themselves to a certain "feminine" standard,

made them feel marginalised, unworthy and embarrassed. This association comes through strongly in Queen's story, discussed above:

In high school all the girls there used to go to the shops and buy and then they always had money. And then I could never go and buy. When the girls go I must go hide behind the toilets. I sit there or I get busy with my schoolwork but I know I'm so hungry then I act like 'no I don't want food.' I think I started then to notice the difference. Then the girls at that time they wear jeans, they wear jeans and boots. They used to wear that were in fashion. I couldn't buy the fashion and then that's when I started to notice. That time I was good looking, I was beautiful. And the guys they used to look at me but I know they will pick you rather than me because you've got, you were having a special [inaudible word 25:02] and you look nice and stuff and me I was always at home cooking and cleaning. Ja, I think that's when I started to notice, in high school ... I couldn't have friends because I was, I wasn't in that level ... They had everything. There was, they called uh that time we used to take a, a sheen straightener to relax their hair and then use a, a brick to straighten your hair. Then you look sexy, stunning. I couldn't even buy a sheen straightener to relax my hair so I used to plait my hair.

The details Queen chose to recount suggest her need to distance herself from her 'shameful' impoverished past. Thus, although she had a good, if somewhat fraught, relationship with her mother, Queen has not returned to the township where she was raised (only a short distance from where she lived), except to attend funerals: "That's the only times I went home to my mother's house. After I moved out, I move out completely." She has also not taught her son to speak Xhosa, her mother-tongue. Although she explained this decision in practical terms – her son attended an English speaking school and her close friends did not speak Xhosa - one gets the sense, looking at her narrative as a whole, that this too was a way to distance herself from the poverty of her home. This sense was reinforced by the determination Queen expressed to make sure that her son does not grow up like she did: "... I vowed myself that I will never put my child through what I went through

growing up.” She recalled making this vow during high school, as she was experiencing the physical depravity and social exclusion described above.

Queen was smart and lucky; she did well in school, had an employer who paid for her further education and was able to get a good job as an accountant. She explained her crime as a manifestation of greed; she didn’t commit fraud because she was poor (at that point she wasn’t) but because money empowered her and made her feel good. It is also possible to see this as the mirror image of her internalised association between poverty and low self-worth and to understand her crime as being driven by the never-ending need to put more and more distance between herself and her past and, therefore, feel better about herself and her social position.

The findings suggest that the same association, between poverty and low self-worth, was made by other women as well, though their eventual pathways to crime were very different. Phino, who lived with her aunt while her parents were migrant workers, felt marginalised by her aunt’s unequal treatment of her and her cousins, and embarrassed by the funny home-made dresses she was forced to wear:

Sometimes my mother didn’t come back December, my mother will send money, they won’t go to buy for, for us Christmas clothes, my mother, my aunt was a designer ... she was doing sewing, my mother will just buy me a big cloth and sew for us dresses, but for her children they will go to town and buy beautiful dresses. And I didn’t want to wear that dress because it was very funny.

The findings suggest that for both Queen and Phino, the way in which their experience of poverty impacted on their self-esteem was also closely related to their perceptions of themselves as women. Thus, it was the gendered messages they had internalised – that a woman’s worth is measured by her appearance – that caused them to feel unworthy simply because they were unable to dress or style their hair in particular ways. Indeed, the story Phino told reflected the belief that her beauty, as well as her ‘feminine’ talents, were her only real assets and her best means of survival. Thus, after an initial bout of shoplifting meant to support her children and other members of her extended family, the first option she pursued was an unrealistic

singing, modelling or dancing career in Johannesburg. Her belief that her body was her only asset was reinforced by her 'friends' in Johannesburg who thought it would be useful to have a pretty woman with them when they committed robbery:

And then those ladies used to tell me here we do things, we are going for robberies, and you are so beautiful and you are so nice we can take you with the guys of those ladies, we can take you and go and robbery with you, they never suspect when there's a lady in between us.

Thus, not only were Phino's experiences of poverty shaped by her self-perception as a woman, but her attempts at overcoming poverty were also shaped by how she perceived and promoted herself as a woman.

Ester's story reiterates the idea reflected in both Queen's and Phino's narratives that wealth is a means to beauty, which is a means to happiness. Recalling what she referred to as the "best part" of her childhood, Ester described how, after her father's death, one of her mother's boyfriends used to take her family to a hotel, give her pocket money and buy her pretty dresses:

When I was still really little my mother met a man that had a butchery, he had a shop ne. He was from the Cape, a really rich man. He was also so light in colour like us and um ... he would take us every weekend to the hotel nearby, there at Montagu Springs. That was for me the best part of my life. We stayed at the hotel and I always had a dress a colourful dress, that he had put R100 in my pocket for, then he would say to my mother, that is my money, my pocket money, just for the day. That was the best part of my childhood that I can remember, but after that it was alright.

The way she refers to the man's skin colour suggests a further association related to race, as if light-coloured skin was also an important part of this man's value. Later in life, Ester's financial situation worsened, although she never experienced poverty like that described by Queen or Phino, and she felt deprived of the nice things her friends had. She described how she

attacked and hurt an innocent person because she “wanted to look pretty for the neighbourhood...”. Her preoccupation with appearance as a measure of worth and, therefore, a means to social acceptance was exacerbated once she had a boyfriend:

You know, if you have a boyfriend you don't want to scrimp. You have to think of everything and so on, and I think that is the reason I committed the crime, it was for him...because my mother had given me, but she didn't give me enough for what I wanted to have.

When she committed robbery, Ester had a boyfriend who was not faithful to her. Her desire to impress him physically, by means of material goods, was the driver for her criminal activity: “what had inspired me to do that. I know what had ok, a boyfriend yes, a guy.”

In all of these stories, women experienced poverty in particularly gendered ways that lowered their sense of self-worth and made them feel ashamed and lacking in value. Paradoxically, they also placed tremendous importance on their appearance and saw this as a measure of their worth. While the circumstances of Queen's adult life, which was privileged and provided opportunity, enabled her to overcome her shame and improve her self-perception by distancing herself from her past and acquiring material goods (which made crime attractive), the only asset Phino thought she had was her body - which she tried to use legally, and then illegally, to improve her situation. While Ester did not experience the same level of poverty, she clearly measured her worth by her appearance, and needed money to feel valued and accepted.

CONCLUSION

This section has shown how structural poverty influences women's pathways to crime. The findings demonstrate that the incarcerated women in our sample lived in conditions of structural poverty indicated by the absence of food in their homes, education levels, employment attainment and the environments where they lived and socialised. The implications of these lived experiences are numerous. This section highlighted ways in which

these experiences of poverty shaped the choices that women perceived as options, making room for the possibility of crime to emerge. Most obviously, the experience of poverty placed severe stress on a woman's ability to support herself and her family. This stress combined and interacted with other factors, such as loss of agency and loss of self-esteem – which themselves were associated with experiences of poverty – as well as factors such as domestic violence, childhood abuse and trauma, to further constrain and shape coping and survival strategies in ways that, for the women in this study, led to crime. Loss of agency, self-esteem and support also impacted on their own – without being necessarily related to financial stress – on women's choices to engage in crime.

HISTORY OF ABUSE

It is widely accepted that, in comparison to literature on the reasons for men's offending, there is a paucity of research aimed at understanding the reasons *why* women engage in criminal offending (Grella et al., 2005; Moloney et al., 2009), and more specifically historical factors that influence offending behaviour. The shortage of any detailed theoretical (or deeply empirical) analyses about incarcerated women means that our understanding of the *etiology* of female crime is largely based on either theoretical frameworks developed for understanding men's offending or on an assortment of discipline specific, pre-determined micro-studies on women's offending in a variety of contexts. Although we can piece together these disparate works to build theory on women's offending, criminology has yet to develop a cogent analysis about women and crime. Contributing to this is the lack of systematic theoretical and methodological developments on female offenders.

Advancement of theory has also been hampered by the lack of commonality across existing studies, making comparisons between studies difficult. Literature on abuse histories of women in prison is a prime example of this. Divergent and nuanced methodological approaches, a lack of consistency in general population characteristics, (super)specialised areas of interest as well as an overall absence of systematic theory building through reflective, comparative, research are all implicated in our inability to gain traction with the development of a theories surrounding history of abuse and subsequent offending by women. On feminist approaches, DeVault (1996) argues that "like outsiders to this body of writing, feminist methodologists themselves often rely on competing or simply unarticulated assumptions about what does (or should) hold this body of work together, and those working to develop feminist methodology sometimes seem to write a cross-purposes"(p. 35).

Although this study draws on methodological approaches developed in other contexts, it too is guilty of 'nuance' – of a context-driven approach to methodology as well as being subject to the usual trappings of participative research design and thematic analysis. Working with scant methodological

offerings from our discipline, we approached the work with the knowledge that we wanted to work directly with female offenders in developing theories on women, crime and incarceration, rather than to simply write about them. This resulted in an eclectic but well-related range of research activities, including: social mapping activities; prison journal writing; in-depth interviews and; a demographic and life history survey. In spite of this largely organic, but semi-structured approach to the study, key themes, consistently reflected in international research, emerged powerfully through our own findings. One of these themes is that of a history of childhood violence and trauma. The emergence of this theme was inevitable, almost predestined, so it did not surprise us to hear stories of abuse and trauma. It was the extent and brutality of lifelong abuse as well as the cumulative effects of this abuse that we found surprising, even relentless, in some instances.

There are number of different forms of violence experienced by incarcerated women, and of course, women outside of the correctional system. There is no comparison. Both women inside and outside of the prison context experience extreme forms of physical, sexual and psychological abuse, from childhood to adulthood and are forced to live with consequences and the effects of these violations. During childhood, these violations include, physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, exposure to addiction, sexualised environments and erratic parenting. In adulthood, women experience domestic violence, sexual violence and a broad range of controlling behaviours by partners and family members. Although women in this study spoke of adult forms of abuse, particularly domestic violence, childhood violence and trauma featured prominently within the life stories of female offenders. The former, domestic violence, was often discussed as “a part of life”, as though it was just an inevitable part of being a woman. Sometimes during the interviews, when situations of domestic violence were gently probed, the interviewers were dismissed with “it’s not important” or “it’s part of life”. As one woman put it:

You only realise once you get here and reflect and talk to other people that you’ve been through a lot. You thought it was normal before [FGW June 2011].

It is also relevant that while some of these stories of abuse are disquieting to the interviewer, they are not nearly as disturbing to the women telling them. For some, (domestic) violence is the norm. Managing the violence is the challenge; it becomes a life method, a way of being and, for those of us on the outside of the stories, an indicator of resilience.

As domestic violence has been addressed elsewhere in this report, this section will largely focus on the extent and the effects of childhood abuse, trauma and neglect and will be referred to as *history of abuse*.

How the Theme “History of Abuse” Emerged

Despite the significant levels of disclosure of abuse – levels which are comparable to international studies specifically focusing on abuse history – the true extent of women offenders’ histories of abuse was difficult to establish. The reason for this is that we did not specifically ask them to discuss their experiences of physical and sexual violence over the course of their lifetimes. Instead we asked about *family and intimate relationships* and *childhood and growing up* based on a pre-agreed set of interview themes.⁹⁴ If the women disclosed experiences of child or adult sexual or physical abuse, we allowed them to speak about these events on their terms, with limited probing and only when they disclosed these experiences. The interviews did not only have the (universal) limitation of retrospective ‘self-reporting’ of life experiences, but also of ‘self-initiated’ ones.

There was a reason for this approach. The purpose of the interviews was to allow women to describe their pathways to crime and incarceration on *their* terms, based on a series of thematic questions developed in conjunction with these women, before the individual interview process commenced. The conversations with the women during the interviews were therefore inherently individualised and interviewee-driven. While some women disclosed and discussed detailed experiences of child and adult victimisation, others made reference to or inferences about abuse, but chose not to proceed with disclosing these experiences. These attempts

⁹⁴ The themes included criminal history, family and intimate relationships, childhood and growing up, turning points (when life took a new direction), impact and experience of incarceration, correctional facility conditions and reflections on the future.

to ‘bypass’ references to abuse were respectfully not pursued by the researchers conducting the interviews. While some women were eager to provide some detail about these experiences, they did not consider these experiences with abuse or violence “relevant” to why they ended up in prison. In fact, in some instances, the notion that a ‘history of abuse’ could be an antecedent to criminal behaviour was considered nonsense. In fact, very few women even made the connection between childhood trauma and their current adult lives or the life choices they made. ‘Damage’ that exposure to violence can have was dismissed in some instances. Violence was inevitable – a “part of life”. We reasoned that this contention was based on the fact that violence – particularly domestic violence – is so widespread and so pervasive, and in effect, tolerated in some communities or contexts, that abusive (intimate) relationships were considered the norm.

McCartan and Gunnison (2010) make the important point that “the link between prior sexual abuse and female offending is one of the most consistent findings within the etiology of female offending. It is not, however, part of every female offender’s life history” (p. 1449). Similarly, not all girls who experience abusive and traumatic home situations become involved in criminal behaviour (Salisbury & van Voorhis, 2009). It is therefore important to note that although a considerable amount of abuse and trauma is found in the lives of the women offenders in this study, not all of them have been abused. In fact, at least a third of the women in this study stated that they had ‘good relationships’ with family members or recall generally ‘happy childhoods’ and that they felt safe in the homes.⁹⁵ However, the evidence – from this study and others – about child sexual and physical abuse as an antecedent to anti-social and criminal behaviours is overwhelming. Most importantly, it is the nature and pervasiveness of these women’s experiences of violence and vulnerability that may distinguish them from women on the outside. DeHart (2008) found herself similarly attempting to make the cautious distinction:

Incarcerated women experienced some of the same violence as experienced by other women, and they experienced some of the same effects. What is remarkable within this sample is the cumulative impact of victimization over the life span.

95 In our pre-interview survey, 79% of women said that they felt safe in *their* homes.

Most of the women suffered multiple traumas and were victimized in multiple ways (e.g., child abuse and neglect, adult relationship violence, sexual violence). The varied impacts of polyvictimization (i.e., experiencing simultaneous episodes of different types of victimization; Finkelhor, Ormrod, & Turner, 2004) had potential to create ripple effects in multiple arenas in the women's lives, causing overall disruption and pushing the women out of the mainstream. Often, the intersection of losses seemed to create uniquely difficult situations (p. 1374).

It could be argued that (a) the frequency of physical and sexual assault amongst incarcerated women is high or (b) that the frequency of physical and sexual assault does not seem much higher than that experienced by the general population. Both can be true. Our research has shown both, if not a slightly higher level of abuse experienced by women offenders. It also shows something that victimisation surveys conducted with women in the general population struggle to reflect: the life long, multiple victimisations of women, by different people, that have different levels of responsibility and attachment to women, over the course of their life-times. Thus it is the sequelae, not the presence of, of victimisation that we should be paying attention to.

Below we present our findings about this history of abuse experienced by incarcerated women. These findings are coupled with reflections and findings from international research that supports, and in some instances, contradicts our findings.

EXPERIENCE WITH ABUSE

It is well known that, outside of the correctional system, significantly more women than men are reported as being victims of sexual abuse as children and as adults as well as being victims of physical and emotional abuse during their adult lives (Sheridan, 1996). Within the prison context, child and adult experience of abuse is probably the single, most important factor that distinguishes female offenders from male offenders. Anglo-American research has found that female offenders are three times more

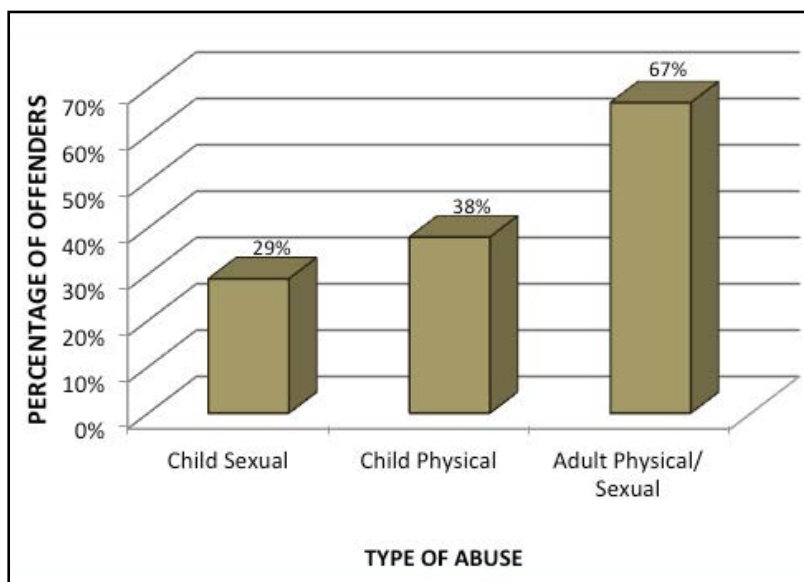
likely than their male counterparts to have been physically or sexual abused in their past and twice as likely as women in the general public to report childhood histories of physical or sexual abuse (Women in Prison Project, 2009).⁹⁶ Greene et al. (2000), in particular, found that a staggering 86% of incarcerated women had, as children, suffered either sexual or physical abuse or witnessed violence at home and that about two out of three incarcerated women (65%) had been subjected to physical abuse as a form of punishment.

The pre-interview survey data from the Pathways Project indicated that two thirds of women reported that they had *never* been physically abused, with only 37% indicating that they had. Twenty eight per cent (28%) had admitted to some form of sexual abuse over their lifetime. Thematic analysis of the interview transcripts – with specific attention to themes relating to ‘history of abuse and trauma’, ‘familial relationships’, ‘abusive/abuse in relationships’, ‘relationships with partner’ and ‘relationship with father’ – reveals very different results. Thirty eight per cent (n=21) of women discussed their experiences with *childhood physical abuse*, with one third of women (29%) discussing their experiences of *child sexual abuse or rape* in any real detail. Further analysis of the interview transcripts reveals that 67% (n=37) of women had experienced domestic violence and/or rape sometime *during their adulthood*, which is three times the rate of abuse reported in the general population.⁹⁷

96 Other studies have similarly found that physical and sexual abuse histories among incarcerated women that exceed those of women in the general population (Browne et al., 1999; Owen & Bloom, 1995; Singer et al., 1995). Cited in Grella, Stein & Greenwell (2005).

97 It is estimated 1 in 5 women are victims of domestic violence and that 1 in 4 women have been victims of a sexual assault/violation over their lifetime.

Figure 12: History of Childhood or Adult Physical and Sexual Violence.



These levels of violence are similar to Grella et al.'s (2005) research which found that of 440 female prisoners, 34.7% had experienced sexual abuse (28.7% experiencing rape). Forty-eight per cent of Green et al.'s (2005) sample of 100 female prisoners had experienced childhood sexual abuse. Zlotnick (1999) found similar levels of abuse history: 40% had experienced childhood sexual abuse, 53% were raped in adulthood and 65.9% reported a history of child sexual abuse or physical abuse before 13 years of age. Another study by the Bureau for Justice Statistics found that 47% of women in prison were physically abused and 39% were sexually abused in their lifetimes (see Harlow, 1999).

It is critical to mention here that the studies cited above *specifically* examined, questioned or assessed the level of previous sexual and/or physical victimisation of incarcerated women over their lifetimes. Our study, however, left the disclosure of victimisation up to the women themselves. At no point did we expressly inquire about experiences with violence and abuse. It is highly probable then that the levels of sexual and/or physical violence experienced by incarcerated women in their childhoods or adulthood could be much higher than was revealed through the analysis of the interview transcripts.

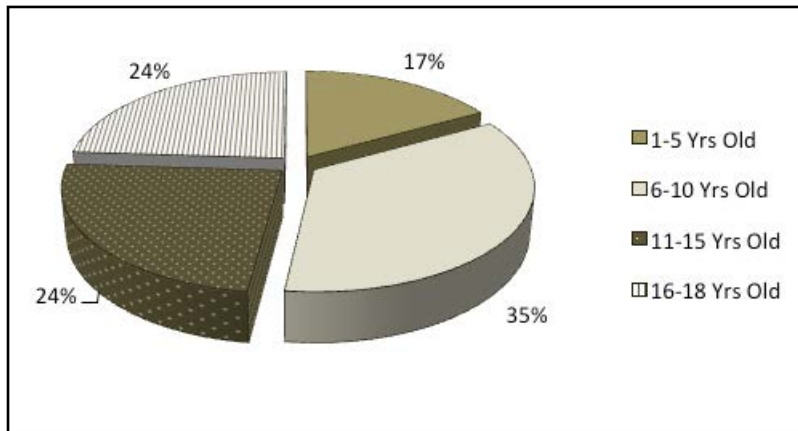
Age of Abuse

Researchers attempting to develop pathways or life-course explanations of female offending have suggested that both child and (early) adult sexual abuse is a significant, if not strong, predictor of female criminal offending.⁹⁸ Exploring empirical works on child sexual abuse, Greene et al. (2000) maintain that “studies have consistently found that sexually abused children manifest significantly more symptoms of aggression, acting out, anxiety, depression, sexualized behaviour, withdrawal, severe internalizing, low self-esteem, self-destructive behaviour, and substance abuse” (p. 5). James (2004) established additional manifestations of early childhood trauma and intimate partner violence which they found can lead to criminal activity, affected employment and job loss, and evolved into substance dependency. Greene et al. (2000) reminds us, however, that the unique effects of physical and sexual abuse are difficult to isolate because they often co-occur with poverty, substance abuse, and witnessing violence.

Of the 16 women in our study who discussed being sexually assaulted as a child, two were 18 years of age. The average age of victimisation by sexual assault and/or rape was 7 years old, with the earliest age of victimisation being 3 years old and the highest (of those under the age of 18) was 16 years old. It is important to note that many of the women were sexually assaulted over a period of time during their childhood (n=10; 62%), with several being sexually assaulted by different men over the course of their childhoods (n=5; 31%).

98 See for instance Comack (2005); Goodkind et al. (2006); McCartan & Gunnison (2010); Becker & McCorkel (2011).

Figure 13: Age of Childhood Sexual Abuse



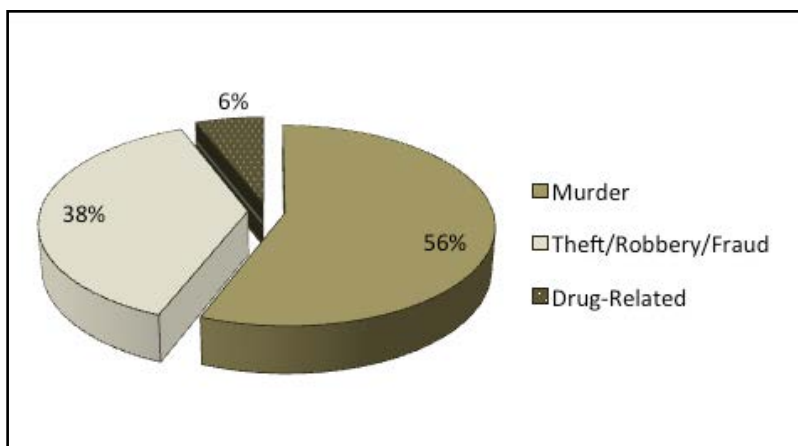
Prior History of Abuse and Nature of Offending

Examining the impact of sexual abuse on female offending by exploring the differences between female offenders with and without histories of sexual abuse (n=131), McCartan and Gunnison (2010) found that offenders with a history of prior sexual abuse were significantly more likely (than those that did not have a history) to end up in abusive relationships and to have friends who have also been arrested and to have been incarcerated for three primary types of offences: violent offences, drug-related offences and property-related offences (presumably meaning 'economic offences', such as robbery or theft).⁹⁹

Our study found remarkably similar findings. Of those who experienced sexual assault and rape during their childhood (29% of the total sample), 56% were convicted for murder, 38% for theft/robbery/fraud and 6% for drug related offences. These were the 'top three' offences committed by victims of child sexual abuse or rape.

⁹⁹ Gunnison and McCartan (2005) also found a connection between prior sexual or physical abuse and 'delinquent' associations. They also found that the link between abuse and persistent offending was significant.

**Figure 14: Offences of Those Who Had Experienced Child Sexual Abuse
(29% of Sample)**

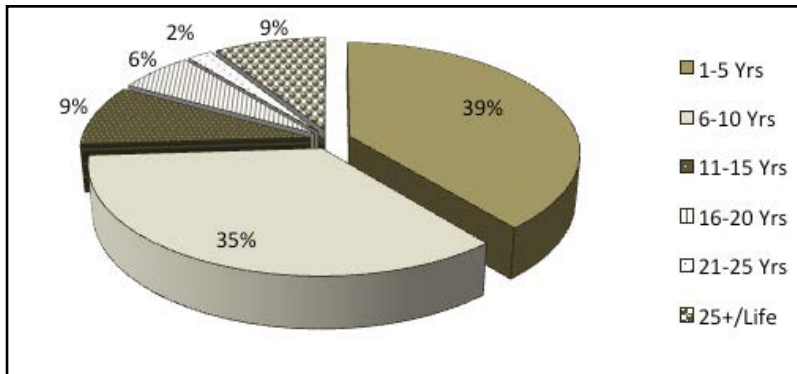


Surveying 16 key studies on female offending and recidivism, Artz (2011) found that women in South Africa serve an average of 8.5 years in correctional centres, for largely ‘violent offences’ whereas Anglo-American studies report sentences averaging just under 2 years for largely ‘economic offences’. Amid the background of disadvantage and abuse, researchers in Anglo-American contexts have also suggested that women largely commit non-violent or property related crimes which are often directly related to family poverty and the need to care for children (Moloney, van den Berg & Moller, 2009). The South African context is inclusive of women who commit ‘economically-driven’ crimes, but the profile of our female prison population is radically different.¹⁰⁰

International contexts also seem to suggest that 10-15% of the women’s prison population are incarcerated for violent offences (however that is defined), whereas, according to a 2008 DCS report, approximately 38% of the South African women’s prison population are incarcerated for murder/attempted murder. Comparatively, in the US, non-violent drug related offences make up 38% of offences committed by women (Richie, 2001), unlike here where they make up about 8%.

¹⁰⁰ Our study also found that women offenders are the sole financial supporters of families (46%). Having been asked about their perception of poverty prior to incarceration 51% felt poorer, 40% felt about the same and 9% felt better off.

Figure 15: Sentences of Female Offenders In The Pathways Project



Contrary to international literature which suggests that the types of offences that women engage in are typically “less serious, violent, and profitable” (Becker & McCorkel, 2011, p. 79) and leading theoretical frameworks by feminist criminologists that argue that certain offences are expressly gender-related (Belknap, 2001), our findings show that South African women are largely being sentenced for violent offences such as murder (32%) and armed robbery (11%), constituting almost *half* of the female prison population. The only commonality between the Anglo-American context and South Africa is that murder is mostly committed against someone women know or were intimately involved with (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2000). On this, the National Commission on Correctional Health Care (2005) in the U.S. reports that:

One-third of all female inmates serving time for a violent crime had victimized a relative or intimate, and of these inmates, two-thirds had victimized either their spouse or a family member such as a sibling or even their own child (Snell & Morton, 1994). Women incarcerated for a violent offense were the most likely to report having experienced physical or sexual abuse; and among women incarcerated for a violent crime, those who reported having been abused were more likely than other inmates to have victimized a relative or intimate (Greenfeld & Minor-Harper, 1990).

Previous Arrests/Convictions

Another inconsistency with international examples of offending types, where previous sexual history is strongly associated with juvenile female offending/conflicts with the law, is illustrated by our finding that many of the women in our study were first time offenders. In terms of previous arrests: 54% had none; 26% had one; and 9% had more than 5. Sixty seven per cent (67%) reported that this was their first time in a correctional facility. Of those who had been incarcerated previously: 16% was incarcerated once before; 11% had been incarcerated twice before and 6% had been incarcerated 3 or 4 times previously. These statistics are similar to those that have been presented by the South African Police Service criminal records department who in 2010 reported on the convictions of female offenders (SAPS, 2010)

PERPETRATORS OF ABUSE AGAINST FEMALE OFFENDERS

If I knew then what I know now, “I would have kicked the shit out of him”, I wouldn’t have let him hurt me.

While there is an increasing amount of literature that examines the frequency and impact of childhood sexual or physical abuse amongst women offenders, very little of this literature goes into any real detail about the nature of the abuse that women face. On the whole, the literature assumes a standard template of offences against children (all equally ‘damaging’), and largely ignores information about whom the offending parties are and under what social, environmental or familial conditions these abuses take place (for instance, the factors that make children vulnerable to these abuses, and of course, to subsequent offending). While literature about child abuse and its effects on children and women (‘on the outside’) is abundant, it seems important that we begin examining the connection between the nature of these offences and the developmental effects on women in conflict with the law. For instance, while it is well understood that childhood sexual abuse is a significant factor in the development of many psychological problems such as substance use, posttraumatic stress, anxiety and relational problems for incarcerated women (Buchanan et al 2011), it is equally well argued that socio-economic deprivation, mental and physical ill

health and traumatic family dysfunction have been cited internationally as antecedents to offending. Thus any ‘abnormal’ or ‘traumatic’ event can be seen as a powerful antecedent to offending.

The nature of abuse disclosed by women in this study, provide us with a dimensional perspective of vulnerability. Women describe the death of parent, divorce and a parent’s taking up of new partners or lovers as a precursor to sexual vulnerability. They also describe home environments that are safe, but naive, where family members do not question or are apprehensive about questioning peculiar behaviours by extended family members/friends. They also describe situations where parents collude with, and sometimes participate in, abusive physical or sexual violations. Most importantly, they remind us that child abuse happens within the family and by those outside of it.

The majority of the perpetrators of sexual violence against the women in our study were “father figures” or “care takers”. The majority of these were “stepfathers”, often referred to in the interviews as “my mother’s husband” or “my mother’s boyfriend”. Biological fathers, grandfathers (living in the same household) and foster parents were also considered *father figures*. *Other male relatives* included uncles (whether biologically related or close family friends considered as uncles) and cousins. One woman was sexually abused by both her father and uncle, but this has been noted as “father figure”.

Sixty two per cent of those that experienced child sexual abuse were abused by a father figure, while the remaining (38%) were sexually assaulted by someone other than a father figure, but typically someone trusted or known well to the family.

Table 4: Perpetrators Of Sexual Abuse

| Perpetrator | Number | Percentage |
|------------------------------|--------|------------|
| Father Figure/Male Caregiver | 10 | 62.5% |
| Other Male Relative | 2 | 12.5% |
| Neighbour/Friend | 2 | 12.5% |
| Unknown | 2 | 12.5% |
| Total | 16 | 100% |

Father Figures

There are abundant, tragic stories of sexual violence against young girls in South Africa, but when sexual violence occurs in context of trust, within “families” and in an indescribably brutal manner, it makes it difficult not make connections between early childhood sexual trauma and future (self)destructive behaviour. Take the example of 19 year old Leonie who was raped as a child by her stepfather. Having only completed Standard 5, Leonie was convicted of stabbing her aunt as her aunt tried to break up a fight between Leonie and her cousin. She did not admit to being “raped” in her survey, but did admit to being sexually molested at the age of 11:

He was my stepfather ... we got to know him ... and we called him daddy and what. And *then* my mom said we must go to town... He said ... we mustn't walk along the road we must walk in the bush because it is warm and I am scared to walk in the bush because of the snakes. So we went through the bush, when we got to the middle of the bush I saw he was opening his knife. I still asked, 'Daddy what are you going to do the knife?' Then he said, 'Don't ask me shit.' He put the knife to my throat and I made a noise and he put his hand on my mouth. He pushes himself into me and then he starts beating me with a brick and when he finished beating me he ran into the bush. There was a white little dog that was there by me. I smeared my blood on the dog and I put my underwear around his neck and I told him he must go to mommy and he must show mommy. So the little dog went to my mom and then my mom followed the little dog, when they got there I was lying there, I couldn't do anything, I can't - I was very clever - but I can't think anymore, so and my ears bled and everything.

This story is somewhat unique in relation to the other stories were heard in that the rape was not only physically brutal, but happened outside of the family home context. It is similar, however, in that many of those who were sexual assaulted by stepfathers or other father figures, were extremely vulnerable to abuse after a divorce, a death of someone 'protective' in the family and co-occurred with substance abuse and economic difficulties of parental figures.

In Those We Trust – The Incomprehensible Act of Collusion

The irony of these cases is that the parents or caregivers of these children would often have suspicions about the abuse, but would not act on them. Many women had reported that their mothers colluded with the abuse or denied that it happened. In some instances, mothers had witnessed the abuse, but had turned a blind eye to it, either choosing to maintain the status quo or blaming the child victims for their predicaments. There was also something disquieting about the fact that some of the women we interviewed had never spoken about their experiences of child abuse until we interviewed them. We were the first point of disclosure. Others had mentioned their experience to someone they trusted, but had never spoken to anyone, in any real detail, about these events. Only one woman we interviewed had sought counselling support during her lifetime to address her feelings about the abuse. Most felt that they would not be believed and even when they tried to disclose abuse to someone they trusted, like a mother, they were largely, but not exclusively, met with disbelief. One woman reflects on victimisation and ‘home’:

Even if you’re abused at home, you have nowhere else to go; eventually you have to go home. It’s not easy to start again; you only know what you’re familiar with and you don’t know how to change it [Focus Group, June 2011].

Another realises during the interview that her parents should have been suspicious of the abuse. She’s startled by the fact that they weren’t and this brings her to tears:

My uncle used to come with my aunt to visit. And here is where the sexual abuse came in because he was a, a deacon in the church, they were regular church goers. My dad and my mom were not regular church goers although I always went to Sunday school. She sent me to Sunday school. [T]his uncle used to visit ... and while they were all having tea he used to take me by the hand, and I don’t know how they ever let him do it because didn’t they, weren’t they suspicious of him taking me off? I don’t know if they expected me to show him something because I, I was very young, 8, 9 years old and I

didn't know what it was all about. But he used to sit in the, we used to have tea in the dining room, he used to sit on the couch where nobody was and make, make me sit on his face and he had his nose inside my panties. I mean that's sexual abuse (Laurene).

Another woman, Nola (32, convicted for fraud) talks about her uncle, who used to take her and her sister on the weekends for 'visits'. These visits sometimes involved providing them with alcohol as young as 13 years old. That weekend her sister went skating:

So my uncle took me back alone. And um we walked into the house and next minute he just pushed me down on the ground and he raped me. Um I wanted to come home, he said: 'No you can't go home, you can't tell your parents.' Then they start with this whole psychological - your mother's not gonna believe you and if you do ah I'm gonna go to prison and the whole family is gonna be cross with you, it's all your fault, it's all your fault. That was the game he started playing with me. **Was that your first sexual experience?** Yes. Then he would start showing um [porn] ... he would rape me in the pool – at every given opportunity. I wasn't eating, my parents picked up that something was wrong but they didn't ask, they didn't, they knew but they didn't want to know.

Sometimes the knowledge of sexual abuse by parents or other caretakers was based on more than suspicion. Twenty eight year old Marie (convicted for housebreaking and theft) describes the response of her mother when she witnessed her father sexual assaulting her.¹⁰¹ She describes both sexual and physical abuse from the age of 8 in her interview:

Because of my um, because of my mother's husband who had sex, sexually abused me so the first, the first time when it happened so he was busy doing it then, then she came over, so then she saw what happened, but she never say something or do something.

101 Gwen's biological father was deceased at the time.

Others, like Melly (27), convicted of murder and housebreaking, did speak out. Melly's story is typical of those where a mother's addictions and grave neglect combined multiple foster home transfers resulted in on going exposure to abuse, violence and neglect, including being sexually abused from the age of 7 by a caregiver. However, from an early age, Melly understood the way she was being treated was something she should do something about. Sadly, the system responsible for ensuring her safety as a child did little to intervene. As one woman from a recent focus group argued "the system fails people who have already suffered from being failed by their family, community school". Despite taking the bold step to protect herself from further violence, Melly's life story features pre-pubescent (consensual) sexual intercourse, early drug and alcohol abuse (aged 13), years of working as a sex worker, and giving birth to her first child at the age of 14:

I was sitting in front of the social worker's office up until nine o'clock when they open. She came there, she asked me, 'What are you doing here so early?' I told her, 'No, I know my mother is alive and I want to go to my mother, I'm not staying there [foster care] a day longer.' She asked me why. Then I took off my shirt and I showed her the marks on my body, the bruises and stuff. She asked me, um 'For how long has this been going on?' And I just, I was just looking at her, I couldn't answer her. She took me to the car, she got back into the car and she took me back to the foster parents. She asked them, um 'What is this? For how long is this, this abuse been going on?' Because as far as she know there never were complaints of them and this is the first time this stuff like that. And the men tried to cover up so I told them, 'No, it's been going, it's been going on for a couple of years now. And if I'm right it's been going on ever since we've been living here because that is one of the reasons all of the other children left.' And that was the first time that a social worker found out that none of the seven children was there was living there anymore.

From Outside of the Family

Abuse by those outside of the family can be just as damaging as abuse by parents, guardians and immediate family. One woman from our study, Annie, does not disclose her experience of sexual abuse in her pre-interview survey form or in her interview, but in her journal she writes:

My life-map starts with a picture of a child holding a little blanket tightly. S/he looks afraid or ashamed of something. The reason for that is because from a young age I was molested by a man that lived next to us. I never spoke about it and was too afraid to tell anyone. I felt alone, scared, I trusted no one and I felt like I didn't "fit in" with any of my friends. Through everything I still had the dark secret that plagued me and kept me lying awake at night, because I was too afraid to go to sleep because of the nightmares of the Monster that had taken my '*menswees*' [humanity] away haunted me. Are all men like that or was I in the wrong place at the wrong time?

She describes how it affected her life over the next few years:

I had pent it up [sic] and did not know how to tell them and through the years the hate and the nightmares just got worse. My parents had allowed to me to sleep with the light on in my room, but if it wasn't on, I'd wake up from a nightmare and go and sleep in their bed from fear. The bathroom light had to be on so that I could see that there was no one in the passage. It's an awful feeling to lie in your bed and feel as though you are paralysed. You can't move a finger, and your voice does not come out when you try to call for help, and the great pitch-blackness is before and wants to suck your soul out.

By the age of 13 Annie was drinking, smoking and smoking dagga. She describes clubbing at this early age wearing make up, high-heeled shoes and "fancy clothes" so she could get into the clubs. During the interview she starts to make connections between her experiences of sexual abuse, the way her relationships with men began to develop in early adolescence and the consequences of these in her later life:

[I] became familiar with the older men and they always took us in. I didn't care about which man I 'vry' the evening with, and I drank and took drugs, because I had already lost respect for myself and for men, due to my past experience as a child. At the age of fifteen I became pregnant, but to this day I am not certain who her father is. It was a very big shock for my parents and I was shut in for the duration of my pregnancy. I could not go back to school.

Annie's life unfolds with stories about neglecting her own child – “that was the time that I forgot that I was now a mother because my mother was there for my child” – with cocaine and mandrax use featuring when her child was only a toddler. This was followed by a job loss, addiction, illness from the addiction – “I was so thin that my own mother did scarcely recognised me” – and eventually running away. This manifested in a second child, an affair by her boyfriend, domestic violence, more drugs (this time ecstasy, LSD/acid and crack featured), sending her second child back home for her mother to take care of and “falling from one man to another”. Until she met a Nigerian, Ben, who offered her R15 000 to retrieve cocaine for him from Ecuador/Quito (in South America):

I didn't care about what happened to me, because I was just a burden to my family. I fought with them regularly and I would threaten to commit suicide but the one time I was pregnant with Dylan. I wanted to just get out of the life I was in. I went to South America and when I came back I was arrested in Johannesburg Airport with 2kg of cocaine.

Edna whose father died in an accident when she was seven and whose mother was both physically abusive and neglected her physical needs, was arbitrary but exacting, and effected cruel punishments – “if I didn't want to help my mother she would hit me with the broomstick or throw ashtrays at me, or anything else that she had in her reach” – added to Edna's state vulnerability by marrying another man who was a driver, leaving Edna “with nothing to eat or money”, even “locking the fridge” while they travelled. The combination of these events led to Edna running away from her home at an early age:

My stepfather drank a lot and would to touch me and when I said no he would chase me away and say that I wasn't his child so why did he have to take care of me. I was 13 years old when I left my mother's house. I had told my mother what my stepfather did and she did not believe me, she said that I wanted to make difficulty between her and my stepfather and they were happily married. She did not believe me. I was in Std 6 when I left my parents' house.

The impact of sexual and physical on children and the conscious choices these children make to escape abuse – for other situations of endangerment – have been associated not only with increased vulnerability, but increased risk for committing more violence-related offences. In their study of 411 women – 206 of which reported child sexual abuse (with penetration occurring in 67% of cases) and 205 with no recorded child sexual abuse history) – Siegel and Williams (2003) found that the relationship a female victim of sexual violence has with the perpetrator of her abuse has a significant association with running away. Nearly twice as many of the victims of child sexual abuse that they followed over 20 years were arrested as adults and were twice more likely (than women with no reported sexual abuse history) to commit violent offences.

But there are other effects of early childhood trauma and abuse – cumulative effects which impact on each subsequent event. Edna's story continues:

I had my first child at 19 years old. It was a boy with the name Johannes Jacobus. My husband began to hit me a lot because he was very jealous. He had already tried to kill me, I ran away from him to my mother, then he put a gun to my head and said that if I didn't go home with him he would kill me in the bathroom in front of my mother. My husband tore my Bible in half and said I was hypocritical. He also said I was ugly, no one would look at me. I would always say the Lord loves me, you can say what you like, the Lord created me as he wanted. I wanted to divorce him and went to [my Auntie's]. One day he got a hold of me and raped and hit me. My second child was a daughter, she was in the hospital for malnourishment (underfeeding).

Edna eventually re-married and had two more children, but discovered that her second husband was sexually abusing her daughter from her first marriage and he had accused the child of “coming on to him”.

This ‘intergenerational’ violence manifests itself in a number of ways. Female offenders who are mothers speak of the vulnerability of their mothers and their own daughters. From the life maps that the women completed in one of our workshops, there is a photo of a crying child. The script underneath this offender’s image of the crying child says: “I’ve really hurt my child and I hope that one day she’ll be able to forgive me all the years of pain”. Another woman speaks of the guilt and shame and pain of leaving her household to go seek work in another province. Her mother was raped on two separate occasions.

CONSEQUENCES AND IMPACT OF HISTORY OF ABUSE

If you being sexually abused, especially through um family members or father. You feel ashamed. Because for me it’s like, what are they gonna think about me when it’s my father? You’re supposed to look up to your father. So how can you tell someone that your father had sex with you. I mean to have sex with your daughter and just let your daughter, if you – sex is a thing on its own and just let your daughter touch you then it’s something.

Trauma and Mental Health

In a seminal study on antecedents to criminal offending Rivera and Widom (1990) explored the criminal histories of 1 575 male and female children. They found that *any* type of childhood abuse (whether physical, sexual, or neglect) served as a predictor of being arrested for a violent crime in adulthood.

Sometimes the impact of childhood abuse is greater and more direct than we can empirically demonstrate. There are examples in this study where the impact of earlier violence resonates in later events. Nineteen year old Leonie, who was convicted of stabbing her aunt, talks about harming the stepfather that violently raped her when she was a child:

Yes, my mom and them made a case against him and he went to jail, but then in 2009 he was released again. And he provokes/teases me all the time. When he sees me, he will ask, 'How are your private parts feeling' and what what. And then I was in this case, the murder case, and I had a knife on me and had my dad not grabbed my hand I would have stabbed him too. I was very angry, he asks me all the time and he asks me in front of other people.

She goes on to say:

As I, even when I lie down and I think, then I think I see, it is almost as if I can see everything happening and I think about my stepfather and what he did to me. He hurt me very much. It feels like he took my whole life away from me. So and then, then I change my mind, then I think about the murder that, then I think about the murder that took my life away ... and ... took my auntie away.

Other studies have taken a more clinical approach to understanding female offending and have suggested that high rates of borderline personality disorder, antisocial personality disorder, substance abuse, and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among women inmates are caused in part by their exposure to extreme, traumatic events in their past (Jordan, Schlenger, Fairbank, & Caddell, 1996 cited in Greene et al, 2000).

The majority of the studies attempting to link *history of abuse* with *adult female offending* are, however, less inclined to 'pathologise' women's offending. Sexual and physical abuse is consistently presented as a factor that has long-lasting effects on adult offending behaviour (Gunnison & McCartan, 2005).¹⁰² Victimisation is also seen as something that can have an impact on future decision-making, functioning and opportunities. DeHart (2008), for instance, found that victimisation in the lives of incarcerated women "influenced their physical or mental health, had effects on their psychosocial functioning, or influenced involvement in private and public systems such as family and work" (p. 1366). Others have gone halfway,

102 Clinical research in correctional facilities has had contradictory findings about the association between history of childhood abuse and 'anti-social' personality disorders. See Zlotnick, C. (1999).

attributing female offending to Post-Traumatic Stress, but avoiding referrals to the development of disorders or attributing offending to the existence of a disorder. For instance, a study by the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (Reichert& Bostwick, 2010) reported that female offenders who experienced childhood sexual abuse were more likely to have greater levels of PTSD symptoms. Seventy-one per cent of the sample was troubled by repeated, disturbing memories of a stressful past experiences – just a few of the many dimensions of the post-traumatic stress *disorder*. This was evident in our own study:

Now I can see everything, I can see [a] ghost, I can see dirt too.
So I was lying there and I felt something was not right in the room. I heard the door open and then, but I don't worry, I hear someone coming in. I turn slowly. Now I don't want to show my face from under the duvet immediately, so I stare at him from under the duvet. Then I see this thing coming towards me, I look at everyone around me, he looks at everyone around me, then he comes towards me... [Leonie]

Other research has developed connections between child abuse, subsequent substance abuse and offending. In their study with 440 substance using women in federal prisons, Grella et al. (2005) found that “varied experiences of childhood abuse and trauma were related to their adolescent problem behaviours as well as later adult manifestations of psychological distress and criminal behaviour” (cited in Buchanan et al., 2011). Our own study reflected similar co-occurring factors. History of abuse coincided with early drug use, with 39% of the women in our study using alcohol for the first time between the ages of 10-14 years old and 44% using drugs for the first time between the ages of 11-15 years old. The women’s drug use (in order of preference) included mandrax, tik/crystal methamphetamine, cocaine, dagga.

Figure 16: First Time Alcohol Use

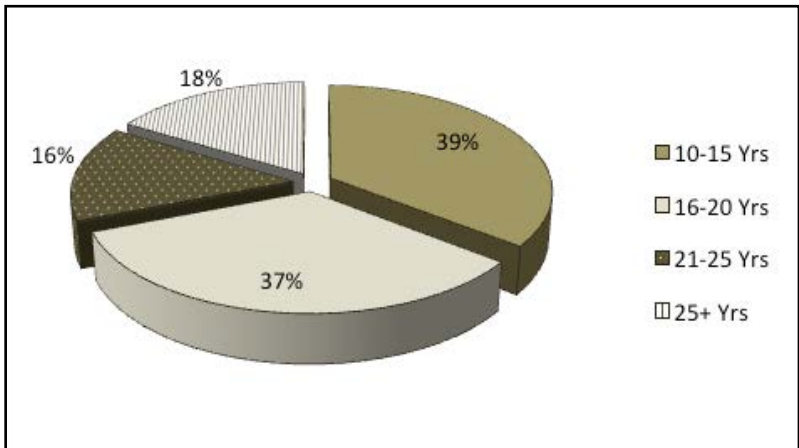
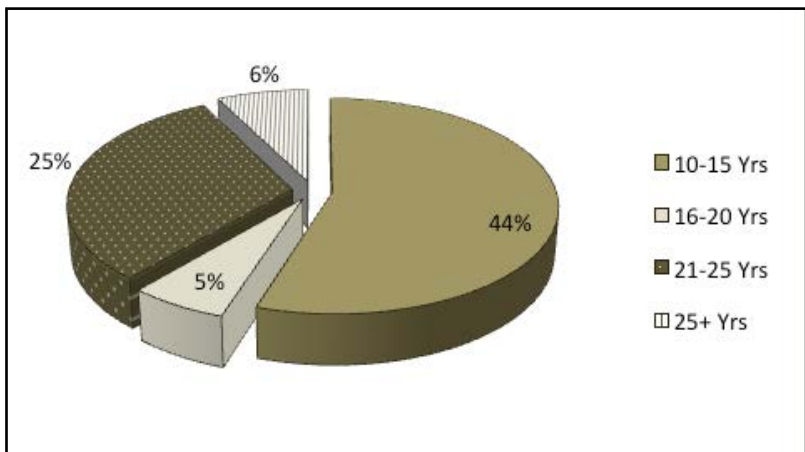


Figure 17: First Time Drug Use



Research from New South Wales (NSW Aboriginal Justice Advisory Council, 2001) found that at least 80 per cent of the women who were surveyed said that their experience of abuse had a direct effect on drug taking and criminal behaviour, in large part because of an inability to adequately deal with child sexual assault (in particular). However, it is difficult for our study to conclude that one factor (history of childhood abuse) positively correlates with another (early drug and alcohol abuse). What we can say, is that these two factors were co-occurring. However, it is important to note

that many of the women in our study experienced several co-occurring traumatic events before adulthood. This includes exposure to violence or direct physical or sexual abuse, inconsistent parenting and harsh methods of punishment (or lack of boundaries), exposure to addiction in the family and childhood neglect. When these factors co-exist with poverty/economic deprivation, instability and poor parenting, it can have severe developmental consequences on children.

Relationships with Men

I can't trust a, a man in my life because now my mother's first husband sexually abused me [...] what is this [guy] now gonna do. So then I decided that I'm gonna take a boyfriend and I was staying at his while I, while I was still in school. So then in 1998 then I fall pregnant and then my whole life was a messed up from there [Marie].

Another interesting consequence of women's history of abuse – both childhood and in adulthood – is their relationship with men. Our study found that marriage was an important turning point in women's lives. For some, early marriage became an escape from an abusive childhood environment.

For others, marriages quickly became another site of abuse and control. In some instances, the intimate engagement with a man created the conditions for substance abuse or facilitated involvement in criminal activity. The latter manifested in criminal activities linked to a partner: fraudulent business practices; crime motivated by feelings of responsibility to a husband; involvement in gangs, drugs use or trafficking; and even when women were already offending, involvement with a man meant involvement in more serious offences, like armed robbery and murder. Often this co-offending would happen under conditions of duress or intimidation; sometimes just out of guilt or a feeling of responsibility. In other instances, men were the root of a first offence, including the murder of an abusive partner or the abduction of their own children in order to protect them from an abusive father.

Unfortunately, there is little literature that reveals the nature of women's relationships with men either in contexts of intimate relationships or their influence on women's offending behaviours. Instead, the literature largely either explains (a) the differences between male and female offending or (b) women's relationships with their families, for instance, 'managing incarcerated families', 'mothering from the inside' and 'prison families.' McCartan and Gunnison (2010, p. 1453) neatly summarise the shortcomings of the available theory on the subject:

Within criminological theory, relationships are often identified as being critical in the occurrence of criminal behaviour. Within these theories, however, the focus tends to be on a child's attachment to a parent (Hirschi, 1969), a parent's level of supervisions of a child (Hagan, 1989), or the development of friendships with criminal others (Sutherland, 1947).

Others like Becker and McCorkel (2011) have explored 'co-offending'. They argue that criminal activities such as drug trafficking, robbery and burglary are predominately "enacted through male dominated social networks" whereas women's participation is often "temporary and peripheral" (p. 81). They also found that: both men and women primarily co-offend with men; co-offending with men has a disproportionate impact on women's offender, making them much more likely to be involved in atypical gender-related offences such as robbery, homicide and burglary; and that the presence of men not only broadens criminal opportunities but the severity of criminal behaviours women engage in. There is therefore a need to explore, in-depth, the role that men have played (historically) in female offenders lives and the role that they play, or have played, in facilitating women's offending in adulthood. Our research has shown that the role of men is critical in understanding women's offending behaviours. Whether through victimisation, facilitation, or even 'love', the influence of men on women's offending behaviours is unequivocal.

FINAL REFLECTIONS ON ABUSE

Irrespective of how they treated me and the fact that they kept my own mother secret from me for all those years. I, I've come to love them because if it wasn't for them I wouldn't have still been here today. So I think that would be all I had to say to them 'cause there wouldn't be much [more to say] [Melly].

These findings provide a basis for which to support more focused and in-depth research to explain why previous victimisation – specifically either early childhood abuse – is an important etiological factor in women's offending. We have seen that history of abuse is a statistically significant predictor in a number of international studies, particularly in relation to 'aggressive' or 'atypical female offending' such as drug dealing and armed robbery. However, by all accounts, the link between child sexual and/or physical abuse and violent offending (attempted or actual murder) has not received much attention, even internationally. This may be because of the significantly smaller number of female violent offenders in international contexts. However, with over one third of South African women sentenced for murder, the connection between early sexual victimisation and adult violent offending is worth examining in detail. The fact that our initial (and admittedly cautious) findings on previous victimisation are similar to the work of Baskin and Sommers (1998) – who conducted life history interviews with 170 violent female offenders revealed that 36% had been sexually abused by a member of their immediate family – makes the frequency and impact of child sexual abuse and vulnerability worth exploring in detail within the context of South African women's correctional facilities.¹⁰³

With that said, the life stories of incarcerated women also reveal experiences of child and adult physical abuse (including exposure to and direct experience of domestic violence), physical and psychological neglect, exposure to violent communities, witnessing and engaging in substance abuse, the fragmentation or total breakdown of family life and the nett exposure of multiple victimisation and physical vulnerability over their

¹⁰³ Cited in Siegel and Williams (2003). Siegel and Williams similarly found that about one third of their sample (n=411) were sexual violated by immediate or extended family members.

lifetimes. It is evident that some women are incarcerated because they were forced to make difficult choices under difficult circumstances, while others are there because of less complicated reasons. As one woman put it: "Greed: the more you get the more you want" (Focus Group June 2011). However, even greed as an underlying contributor to women's offending does not discharge the notion that women often come to decisions and choices in the context of complex and damaging personal life histories. For these women, the correctional facility environment can be seen as a sanctuary from abuse or can re-traumatise them. Sometimes women's lives outside of prison are so rife with violence that being inside is considered 'safe'. Other times, the correctional system becomes an extension of the abusive domestic context, where the features of domestic violence are recreated through prison controls and other behaviours that represent the controlling, threatening, unpredictable and systematic disempowerment they experienced on the outside; replicating a de facto domestic violence relationship.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

My house was actually my prison. I've lived in prison all the time [Diane].

Sixty-seven per cent of the women in our sample mentioned having been subjected to some form domestic abuse. This violence in their adult relationships was most often at the hands of husbands (n=18), boyfriends and partners (n=8).¹⁰⁴ The transcripts of their interviews contained detailed accounts of the violence that they endured – sometimes at the hands of more than one partner (n=6). Sandra, Marie, Jesse and Nazley were all hospitalised with injuries inflicted by their intimate partners. Cynthia was stabbed eleven times by her husband. For seven women, the abuse became so severe that they murdered their husbands or contracted someone to do so. For one woman, intimate partner violence even followed her into the correctional facility – the same sex (*slanga*) relationship that she became involved with after her incarceration was abusive, controlling and culminated in her being stabbed in the correctional facility courtyard.

Yet, despite these disturbingly high numbers, most women did not directly identify their violent relationships as a turning point in their lives. This is not to say that the women dismissed the abuse. Rather, their experiences of violence were so deeply woven into their narratives that they formed the background to, rather than a feature of, their story. Domestic violence had become so normalised that it didn't seem to strike them as salient to understanding how they had landed in the correctional system.

Furthermore, pre-interview data supported the fact that the women didn't view violence in their intimate relationships as noteworthy. We asked in the pre-interview questionnaire whether the women had felt safe in their homes prior to incarceration. Seventy-six per cent of the women in our sample answered that they had felt safe – a figure that stands in stark contrast to the finding that 67% of them had experienced intimate partner violence. We suggest, though, that the women's responses about perceptions of safety in their homes addressed their concerns about safety from stranger violence, rather than fear of a threat from within their

¹⁰⁴ We refer to the father of a woman's child as a partner (or ex-partner, as appropriate).

intimate relationships. This is perhaps underscored by commonly held misconceptions about the disproportionate risks to women of violence (including sexual violence) from within their homes and close circles. The pre-interview survey did not ask about whether women had experienced physical or sexual violence during adulthood, and we similarly did not ask a question during the interview process that inquired as to whether our interviewee was a victim of domestic abuse. Instead, the cases addressed here (which still staggeringly account for almost 70% of the sample) include only those where the women raised the issue themselves.

The 'normality' of domestic violence among our sample of women is indeed striking, given the graphic and often-horrific accounts of severe and ongoing abuse that we heard. Importantly, though, it points to the very endemic nature of violence against women in South Africa, and raises important questions about how our failure (as a society) to address the issue intersects with women's criminality.

VIOLENCE AND LEARNING

There is a wealth of North American scholarship that shows that the majority of the women in prison have histories of childhood abuse and have experienced violence in their adult relationships with men (Pollack, 2007; Chesney-Lind & Rodriguez, 1983; Daly, 1992). In the United States for example, between 43% and 57% of incarcerated women have been victims of physical or sexual abuse during their lifetime (Harlow, 1999; Greenfeld & Snell, 1999; Snell & Morton, 1994). Similarly, South African research in Gauteng estimated that 78% of the women in their sample had been victims of intimate partner violence before going to prison (Haffejee et al., 2005). Indeed, these studies have shown both nationally and internationally that the incidence of domestic abuse among female prisoners is higher than for women who are not in prison (Haffejee, Vetten and Greyling, 2005; Kruttschnitt & Gartner, 2005).

Many of these women report histories of multiple abuse (Gilfus, 2002). These experiences shape women's coping strategies, increase their risk of being abused by (other) male partners, of running away from home

(to escape the abuse), living on the street, addiction, and poverty (Gilfus, 2002; Belknap, 2001). This experience of abuse also has severe and lasting impacts on families and on the women's mental health, increasing the risk for PTSD, depression, anxiety and the like. The experience of abuse is not only extremely traumatic, but is cumulative over the women's life course (Gilfus, 2002).

Violence is also transmitted across generations. Early experiences with abuse impact children's loyalty and desire for affection, and leave children confused about social relationships, and the distinctions among sex, love and violence (Gilfus, 2002). Particularly in the absence of one caring adult or a stable family life increases the likelihood that a child will not be able to overcome the history of abuse, especially where the child lives in circumstances of poverty, racism and social disorganisation (Gilfus, 2002). Children who witness family violence, generally aimed at the mother, may be developmentally impaired and suffer severe and specific stress-related disorders and daughters of battered wives are less likely to leave their own abusive husbands (Lerman, 1981).

Domestic violence is furthermore intensely gendered: it is perpetrated overwhelmingly by men against their female intimate partners, and is rooted in the patriarchal gender hierarchies that pervade our society (Ferraro, 2001). These experiences also have profound consequences for the women's mental health (Laishes, 2002 cited in Pollack, 2007). Indeed, relational psychology has posited that women's sense of self is cultivated through the connection with others, and is damaged by the disconnections caused by abuse and violence (Pollack, 2007).

Learning Abuse and Violence In Childhood

The experience of violence and abuse is significant in that it is transmitted across generations, creating a 'context' for women that normalises living in violent and abusive homes as 'just something that happens.' This 'intergenerational' violence manifests itself in a number of ways: women's internalisation of abuse as normal, their guilt at raising their children in violent homes, and the impact that this has on structuring their choices. Female offenders who are mothers spoke of the vulnerability of their

mothers and their own daughters. From the life maps that the women completed in one of our workshops, there is a photo of a crying child. The script underneath this offender's image of the crying child says: "I've really hurt my child and I hope that one day she'll be able to forgive me all the years of pain". Another woman speaks of the guilt and shame and pain of leaving her household to go seek work in another province. Her mother was raped on two separate occasions, and she went to work in the city as a way to provide a safe home for her mother.

Twelve women in this study indicated that they had grown up around domestic abuse, either directed against them or others in their households. The women gave poignant descriptions of their experiences of parental violence and the impact it had on their lives. Dawn describes, for example, that "It was very difficult because I was just little, and the things I saw ... I was forced to become an adult. Others described how they would intervene in their parents' arguments, often getting in the way to stop parental violence. For example, Laurene describes how she "wouldn't let me dad hit my brothers ... I must have been eight, nine, ten. I used to wake up and hear them fight ... I used to get up [... and] say 'leave my mother alone. [...] I protected my mother under those conditions." She explains later in her interview, however, how she ends up in an intensely violent marriage herself, and how in the end, how her own children "witness[ed] a lot of ... I would say violence in the marriage. Times when they had to hide underneath the dining room table. As I said, times when he smashed things ..."

For some women, moving from one household to another did not allow them to escape the abuse. Marie, described moving from her mother's home where her stepfather sexually abused her and isolated her by not giving her food, and leaving her behind when the family went on outings, to her boyfriend's mother's house where she was stabbed twice: "It was like I must do everything that, what she tells me, [and she disobeyed] and then she stabbed me twice in the arm." Elmarie similarly describes being victimized in her parental home, and then later in her own relationship. Her stepfather attempted to sexually assault her and he "chased her away" at age thirteen. She lived with a friend until she was in Standard Eight (16 years old), and then met her first husband with whom she had a child at a young age, who was severely abusive, and who raped her after she had finally left him.

This experience of going from one abusive home to another intensified their sense of isolation, reinforced instability and undermined their ability to address the violence. Indeed, their experiences mirrored and perpetuated many of the same problems that women had experienced growing up including economic instability, drug and alcohol addictions, violence (physical and sexual). For some of the women, their only choice was to land up on the street. Melly explains how, following a childhood of being abandoned (she mentions living in a foster home, of her mother dying, of never having seen her father, only “hearing about him once or twice”), how she ended up with an abusive man. She explains that when he started abusing her, they had a small child, and that she “one day decided to ... I just left the child there and I just left the house and then I ended up on the street where I was living for, say, round about four or five years.”

For these women, this violence was cumulative. In addition to the large number of women who suffered childhood abuse and who were abused in their own relationships in later life, eight of the women reported that they had experienced abuse at the hands of more than one intimate partner. Marie describes, for example, how “My other boyfriends ... how can I say it ... it was from bad to worse.” The effects of this cumulative victimisation intensified their experiences of the abuse, and provided them with few resources for escaping their violent homes.

Experiencing Abuse in Adulthood

Unsurprisingly, the violence that was candidly and graphically described by the women in our sample spanned the range of abusive behaviours from verbal abuse to (often severe) physical abuse. Indeed, many of these women had experienced many different forms of abuse – as Daleen says “I have experienced all the kinds of abuse you can think of.” Women who reported being physically abused described being hit, stabbed, shot, beaten, slapped, punched and pushed. A number of women described being forced to have sex. Linda describes how “he usually forced himself on me ... and I had to tell my daughter that I fell pregnant because he raped me.” In addition to emotional, verbal and psychological abuse, women described being financially abused by being refused access to the family coffers to buy necessities, by partners not providing food and/or money to the family. The women also described a

range of other controlling behaviours that their intimate partners did toward them, including not being allowed to have friends, not being allowed to leave the house, not being allowed to speak to or look at other men, being cut off from friends and family. Ruby describes that she was “not allowed to look anyone in the eye, especially a man. I always had to look down.”

Six of the women in our sample had been hospitalised at least once as a result of the abuse that they suffered. Unfortunately, it appeared from these stories that their injuries were not identified as part of a pattern of abuse by the health care facilities to which they presented. In the six cases where the women were hospitalised, none of their abusive partners were arrested or charged for the assaults. Marie, for example said in her interview that she went to the hospital “a lot” while she was with her abusive boyfriend, and that she told them that “it was my boyfriend [who hurt her]” but that they never involved the police. For many of these women, they bear the scars – both physical and emotional – of their continued abuse. Sandra explains for example, how twenty five years of abuse (and hospitalisation) has scarred her physically: “I was many times in hospital ...That’s why my eye’s so like this. I can’t see a lot.”

Cyclical abuse

For some of these women, their threats to leave their abusive husbands were the catalyst for the potentially lethal violence that landed them in hospital. Nazley describes how she was married at age 14 (under Muslim rites) to a man who was not only extremely violent, but also involved with drugs and crime. At one point, Nazley decided that she could not endure the abuse any longer, and told her husband that she was leaving him. After threatening to kill her if she left, he pursued her as she was reversing her car out of the gate. She describes:

And he came and [...] he gun-pointed me and he said I’m going to shoot you. And I said well then you have to shoot. But then I thought he’s not gonna shoot cause I’m pregnant and I’ve got [Daughter] on my arm, he won’t shoot. And then he shot. Shot past here, I still have a thingy [scar] here from the shot and then um I fell and I woke up in hospital.

Just as for non-incarcerated women who experience domestic abuse, the women in our sample described how the violence they endured was cyclical. The women related how they would threaten to leave their partners after an abusive incident, how they would be persuaded to stay, and how during the so-called 'honeymoon phase' things would be better. Tokkie described: "After he abused me he would be the best husband, he will ask for forgiveness and [say] 'I won't do it again' and 'please don't go to the police' and OK, I'm his wife and I give in." This period of calm was short lived, though, as their partners inevitably spiralled back into abusive behaviours. Nazley who described (above) how she was shot by her husband provides an excellent illustration of this point. In her interview she told how she reunited with her husband after her hospitalisation, but that the abuse soon continued. She successfully applied to the court and was issued a domestic violence protection order against her husband, but the order was served on him before she could protect herself adequately. Her husband reacted violently, stabbing her. She was pregnant (again) at the time of the attack. She recalled:

I just got out of the shower and then he grabbed hold of my hand, he started pulling my hair. And I said are you, are you crazy? Why are you doing this? [What about] the baby? And he said to me "you, you're worried about the baby but you want to leave me?" And then he started fighting with me and pulling my hair and I remember him pushing me [...] And the next minute [...] I saw the knife and I said "what are you doing?" and he said to me "I'll show you." And then I just felt the [cuts]. And I fell to the ground and [...] I just felt him kicking me and kicking me. [...] And then I woke up in hospital [...] he stabbed me 13 times down here [shows to her lower body] [...] I was seven months [pregnant] at the time.

Nazley's baby was delivered by emergency caesarean, and she remained in the hospital for a long time after this attack. She was required to appear at court to finalise the protection order just after she left hospital, and her husband intercepted her before the case by pouring a bottle of petrol on her threatening to set her on fire. He abducted her and locked her up in a house in Hanover Park for three weeks. She eventually escaped and finally

received the interdict, but his abusive and controlling behaviour continued until he was finally arrested and incarcerated almost a year later.

Nazley's case is undoubtedly an example of a profoundly violent case – more so than for most of the women in our sample. But it illustrates the way that women who are abused are often failed by the criminal justice system, despite attempting to access legal remedy. Some of these failures are problems in implementation (for example, response by the police and the courts). Others are perhaps more intractable: they relate to the limits of the law in dealing with domestic violence, and the fact that changing one's household status (through a protection order, leaving the abusive home or divorce) is often the catalyst for turning an abusive environment into a lethal one.

LIMITED OPTIONS, SEVERE ISOLATION & ERODED SELF-WORTH

Nazley's case also illustrates how an abused woman can become increasingly isolated and emotionally broken as the systems that are in place to protect her fail. She describes, for example, how she often considered leaving her husband and filing for a divorce, but that she was always worried about the well-being and financial support of her children if she left. This was a sentiment shared by a number of other women. For example, Cynthia explained that despite her husband's severe abuse "it [was] difficult to just pack [her] bags with four kids. And I stayed with him longer than I should have." Tokkie agreed, and said that "[she had to] think of the kids, I'm unemployed, I'm fully dependent on him." Jesse similarly described how her husband would "play games with [her] ... belittle [her]... and why I allowed it it's because, like I said, I didn't have anywhere to go ... he controlled the money." These women's financial dependence on their husbands left them feeling like they had little option but to endure the abuse. (This issue is discussed further in the section on poverty and crime).

Failure by Friends, Family & Systems

For some women in the sample, their own perceptions of the limited scope for survival were underscored by others: the criminal justice system, family, friends and others to whom they turned for help and advice. Elmarie, for example described how she divorced her husband because of the abuse, remarried him, and decided to divorce him for a second time. Throughout this entire period – two divorces and realising that he was sexually abusing their daughter – her husband remained living in their home at the suggestion of the court. She explained that:

He wouldn't leave the house with each divorce. And what did the court say? 'Leave him be, leave him be' ... the reason being that he paid for the house and everything. [The court said that he] looked after me ... [so I must] allow him to stay, lodge with me.

The failure of the criminal justice system to protect the women (when they turned there for help) created the sense that their abusers could act with complete impunity. This heightened the women's sense that they could rely on no one other than themselves for survival, and created the perception that their only option was to fight violence with violence. Barbie, for example, describes how she felt that her husband could do whatever he wanted, and how this led to her incarceration for his murder:

He would always insult me in front of other people, in the road ... he would assault me in front of other people. In front of my mother, sometimes in my mother's house, he would come and assault me. I got an interdict against him, my mother and my older sister also had an interdict against him [...] So I started to carry a knife for protection because [he's] a gangster ... I know he always carries a knife and I've always been afraid of him because he's told me before that he's gonna stab me. And he walked towards me and at that time I took the knife out and I stabbed him, because I thought that before he stabs me I'm gonna stab him. And then I actually stabbed him to death. It just ... it just happened so simply ... I just stabbed him once with the knife.

Other women described how isolated they felt as family and friends failed them. Linda described how she tried to reach out to her sister and her brother for help. Her sister never showed up at the house, and her brother told her to “work [her] stuff out and go home.” She describes the profound loss of support and helplessness she felt: “I decided why must you talk to anyone because nobody wants to help. They’re too busy with their own lives. They don’t have time for you[r] problems. So I just went on with my own.”

For some, this failure came when their confidantes failed to believe that the abuse was happening. Dawn for example recalled how she “phoned [his mother] and told her ... but she couldn’t believe it because he never performed like that with them [...] he never acted strangely or misbehaved with his parents.” Numerous other women described how their outwardly “perfect” relationships hid a much darker reality. Cynthia told of how no one knew of the abuse, and how she felt like a failure because she could not admit to anyone that her husband was violent towards her:

His abuse was always in the confines of our home. Nobody knew about it, and I was always too embarrassed to go ... I would never tell my mom. As far as my mom was concerned I had this perfect marriage and everything was wonderful. I would never [tell her] ... because they never wanted me to get married, and I could never go and tell her ‘mommy you were right.’

For other women, friends and family played a more direct role in their isolation. Elmarie, for example described how her family could not understand why she remained in her abusive marriage, and how they consequently severed ties with her. This left her feeling even more trapped and lonely, and without any other survival strategy other than to hide in her bedroom. This feeling of helplessness and avoidance likely contributed to the fact that she did nothing when her daughter arranged a friend to kill Elmarie’s abusive husband. She was convicted for knowing of the plot, and failing to stop his murder. Jesse’s father-in-law persuaded her to drop the assault case that she had opened against her abusive husband after he stabbed her eleven times and “left her for dead.” She describes how this was “the worst thing” she could have done:

I went to the police, and then he tried to commit suicide with the kids [...] and his father came to me said if I don't drop the case ... then he does something to the kids, or he does it to himself then I will get the blame for it. And trying to make me feel guilty. And he used the kids as leverage ... and so I said to me father-in-law okay, I'll drop the case against him, which I shouldn't have done ... it was the worst thing I could have done."

Isolation and Entrapment

The women described a loss of agency and self-worth as a result of the ongoing abuse. Diane summed it up as follows "I [was] abused and trampled. I know that ... that in the end I just became nothing." This in turn reduced their ability to negotiate leaving the abusive relationship, or to seek help. Daleen, for example explained that she "knew that [the abuse] wasn't right ... I just didn't know what to do about it." Morag felt that her culture and upbringing further underpinned this helplessness as the cultural beliefs and values she had grown up with prevented her from seeking help from her husband's abusive behaviour. She explained, for example, that she was raised to "not involve the police in your marriage, or interdicts ... I just faced the whole thing myself."

This profound sense of isolation and helplessness that the women felt was exacerbated when their abusive partners used coercion to cut them off further from mechanisms of support and care. Ruby described "realising I [had] nowhere to go." These coercive and controlling behaviours spanned the range from physical to psychological isolation. Tokkie's husband would physically isolate her after the abuse: "Whenever he abused me, he locked me up ... after I've been abused, after he's smacked me or hit my head against a wall." For others, the isolation was more emotional than physical. Elmarie, for example explained that she could not have contact with anyone, saying "if my cell phone beeps or rings then he will take it and see what it is. No one was allowed to phone me." Cynthia's husband would check up on her at random times during the day, which strengthened the feeling that she could not get away from him and embedded his control over all aspects of her life. She told us:

He was the sort of person that would phone and he'd say to me "I'm giving you five minutes, go to a public phone and I'm going to phone you on your cell and you give me the landline number. I just had to drop down tools and run to a phone, and then he'd phone me on my landline to see if I was where I said I was.

Cynthia described how her husband's controlling and abusive behaviours caused her to lose two jobs – one because her husband phoned and threatened her boss and co-workers, and the other because she was unable to cope with his controlling demands. The loss of her employment in turn underlined her inability to cope financially, undermined her self-confidence and negated her ability contemplate leaving her abusive marriage. Jesse similarly described how the years of controlling behaviour, isolation and abuse eroded her self-worth and her coping strategies. She said: "My ex-husband told me I wouldn't make it ... you know, the things to make you think you're not going to cope and I ... I had a lot of confidence in myself, but you start to think maybe he's right ..."

A number of the women described how their abusive partners used their children as leverage to ensure their silence, both entrapping them further and making them feel responsible for the abuse. Linda's husband would "threaten [her] family and my mother ... and he knows where it hurts me the most." Cynthia's husband would use her children as a means to keep her in the relationship: "He said to me, it's his son, and if I want anything to do with him or if I want him in my life then I stay in this relationship." Tokkie's husband, who frequently threatened to commit family suicide ("I'll blow their brains out"), similarly used their daughter as a pawn to keep his wife in check:

He said to me, 'if at any point you won't sleep with me, I will make sure that I sleep with [our] daughter.' And I said to myself I will *never ever* over my dead body allow that to happen, because [he] slept with my best friend, and my mom told me [he raped] her, so [he] won't think twice or thrice to do it with my kid."

Infidelity and Relationship Security

Ten of the women in our sample who were abused by their partners also described that their partners were (often openly) unfaithful to them. These affairs significantly undermined the security of the women's relationships and increased their vulnerability given the breakdown in trust that infidelity brings. All the women described the infidelity was one sided. Laurene for example said: "If I think back he had a few [affairs]. He wasn't faithful ... I was." This points to the highly gendered nature of this form of coercion and control. It became another mechanism through which the women's partners could assert their power, and through which they could erode the women's self-worth.

A number of the women normalised their partners' adulterous behaviour. Some intimated that they should have expected him to behave in that way, for example, Linda who said that her husband had affairs before they were married: "If you decided to marry a man who is not faithful then you have to live with that." Others provided excuses for the affairs. Tokkie excused the affair because she knew her husband's mistress: "I said to myself I'll forgive him, that's fine. It was my friend [the mistress], nobody needs to know." Jesse for example cited the fact that she has given birth to a premature baby and the stress of running their own business as contributing to his infidelity. She illustrated how the affairs undermined her self-image and self-esteem, and fostered a feeling of self-blame when she confronted him:

I confronted him and he told me I'm a total liar ... People are lying [...] So I, I, I, laid it off said okay I'm leaving it. And I actually took the blame for myself I started blaming myself because he always used to tell me [...] "I'm only with you because nobody else wants you, you're ugly, you're this and you're that." And I started to believe him, you ... you know you start figuring out you actually are this person. And I you know I said geez I'm actually this bad person and I thought it's me.

On the other hand, accusations of *her* infidelity were also a tool that her abusive husband could use to maintain his coercive control over her. Jesse said that she "wasn't really allowed to go to the shops or things because he was scared that I was going to have an affair." This effectively isolated her,

and reduced her options for dealing with her problems. Linda described how her husband used to accuse her of having affairs with other men, and then use that as an excuse to sexually abuse her. She described: “Usually he forced himself on me after that because he wanted to see why ... if I’m sleeping around because I’m not sleeping with him.”

A number of the women pointed to the fact that their partners’ infidelity combined with other factors (for example, long histories of physical abuse, financial control over joint resources and belittling) to create an environment where they had few resources for coping, which in turn made them susceptible to committing crime. Jesse explains how, after suspecting that he was unfaithful for a long time, her husband’s infidelity was confirmed when finally made someone else pregnant. She described how she was dealing with a sick baby, a struggling business and the death of her parents when she found out, and that “it was too much ... trying to deal with everything was too much.” Feeling that she had few options, Jesse took money out of their shared business and tried to flee the country with her children. She was convicted of theft and kidnapping, having been arrested at the airport trying to leave.

In two other cases the infidelity was more directly related to the crime. Both of these women murdered their partners’ mistresses. Lena explains the humiliation she felt: “when I caught them the first time we split up. And we made up again after like two, three years. [And then] it happened again with the same girl. So he never ... he never did leave her. They were having a affair all along and, and I couldn’t take it anymore.” She came home from work one day and found her husband and his mistress in bed together. She described:

I came home from work and I caught them there ... I first like shouted and then I went to the kitchen and I [went to] fetch the knife ... And she was still there. And I stabbed her ... All I can remember, I was sitting on top of her and just stabbing her... I was in shock.

ABUSE AND PATHWAYS TO CRIMINALITY

In trying to understand women's pathways to crime it is not only important to appreciate how women's experience of abuse at the hands of their intimate partners shapes their perceptions about relationships and the normality of violence, but also their reactions to their abuse. Existing literature (for example, Daly, 1992; Belknap, 2001; Simpson, Yahner & Dugan, 2008) and our data have shown that domestic abuse eroded women's positive self-concept, destroyed their sense that they are capable women (capable of caring for their families, capable of managing their lives) and damaged their hopes for a 'normal' life. Richie (1994, p. 226) describes how women in this position feel "betrayed, abandoned, disorientated and ironically loyal" to the men that are abusing them. The women's experiences of abuse created a lingering fear for their own safety (and that of their children), which in turn compelled them into a variety of illegal behaviours – including murder – as a way of coping.

For some of the women in our sample, the abuse that they endured in their homes allowed them to be coerced (or perhaps more accurately, made them unable to refuse) into committing crime with their partner. Sandra, for example, reports being forced to commit armed robbery with her extremely abusive husband, who used most of the proceeds of their crimes to support his alcohol and drug use. She explains: "And I, if I didn't give him money then he hit me ... But I must do it otherwise he hit me." Similarly, but perhaps not as directly, Diane described how she stole money from her company to keep her husband in the lifestyle to which he was accustomed so that he would be less abusive towards her. She says: "He was very volatile, he can explode. So I don't want a fight, I just want peace and quiet. So for the sake of peace and quiet I would just make sure if he [wants] to buy this, there is money."

For others, abuse led to problem behaviours such as drugs, alcohol, and gambling as a way of release or dealing with their experiences. Ruby for example, describes how "I just ... because I just kept quiet ... you must cope with this and then I started with all the sleeping tablets." This led them to commit (often financial) crimes to support their habits, and to dull the pain of their abuse. The link between addiction(s) and criminality is discussed in greater detail elsewhere in this monograph.

For a group of the women the connection between their experiences of abuse and their crimes were less direct. For these women, their victimisation affected their life circumstances in ways that effectively separated them from mainstream avenues of support and livelihood, and influenced their psychosocial functioning. In addition to physical (for example scars, pain and permanent disabilities) and other health-related consequences, the women internalised their abuse and experienced feelings of distress, worthlessness and withdrawal. These feelings of dislocation and disruption pushed women out of the mainstream and provided the impetus to engage in criminal behaviour in order to cope. The accumulation of abusive and negative life experiences shape their perceptions of available options, and as DeHart (2008, p. 1377) points out, results in them doing just about anything to “keep their heads above water.”

Battered Women Who Killed

A final group of twenty-one women in our sample (38%) were incarcerated for murder or conspiracy to commit murder¹⁰⁵. Seven of these women were convicted of murdering or contracting to murder their abusive husband or partner. Three of these women committed the murder themselves, while the remaining four arranged for someone else to carry out the killing.

For these women, the crime for which they were incarcerated is a direct result of their experiences of abuse. They described how the abuse became too much to bear, until, they perceived that there was no other option but to kill their abusive partner. Morag, for example, tried to end the relationship through legitimate means (divorce), but when her husband saw the account for her consultation with a lawyer in the house, he became severely abusive. She related:

He wanted to know what was that thing. [He] chased me around in that house, he wanted to kill me. He wanted to burn down the whole place. [And I thought] what if a summons should have appeared ... at his work? He hated embarrassment. He would have killed me. So [his] death was the only way out.

¹⁰⁵ One case is a case of conspiracy to murder, two are cases with joint crimes of murder and armed robbery, and one case is that of murder and housebreaking.

For Barbie, the years of humiliation by her abusive husband simply became too much one day when he confronted and degraded her in the street in front of other people – despite the fact that she had a protection order against him. She told us: “For all the time that I ate it up and [pause] the day that I stabbed him I could not keep it in any longer.” Tokkie similarly described a moment of realisation that “It was either him or it was me.” Tokkie felt profoundly trapped by her husband’s abuse and threats: he was constantly armed, had raped both her and her mother, and had threatened to rape their daughter. She said:

I could never sleep in peace because I was too scared I would never open my eyes again. What’s going to happen with my kids? Will he do the same to them or what? So I just felt that I have to do something about it [...] Sometimes I’m proud I’m in prison because I’d rather be in prison than watch him rape [my daughter] ... Being the mother and then just looking and there was nothing I could do because I knew.

Tokkie described how her husband’s death freed not only herself, but her children as well. She said: “Freedom ... the three of us were like birds that you could actually open out of a cage.”

INCARCERATION AS AN ESCAPE FROM ABUSE

For almost all of the women in our sample, incarceration was their way out of their abusive relationships on the outside – at least for the time that they are incarcerated. Marie describes for example: “When I was outside I want to leave him but there what wasn’t ... uh, how can I say it now? There was no way of me of [getting rid] him. So to be here in prison it was like ... to go away. Yes.” Linda describes her arrest as “God saved me ... I couldn’t anymore.”

A number of the women cited their removal from their abusive contexts as life changing. Jesse, for example said: “Coming here to Worcester and being away from, totally taken away from him and knowing that he can’t do anything to me anymore ... that’s changed me.” For others, the correctional environment and the classes that they had taken had not only begun to

repair their damaged self-perception, but had also taught them that abuse was not acceptable and had given them vital coping skills. Daleen, for example, says:

I have told [my boyfriend] that if it happens again I am out [of the relationship ...] I am a different person. The classes that I have taken have helped me ... for example in reference to my boyfriend that hits me like that. I have learned a lot about that. I know now to say no to that. I never could say that before. And if he tries to do that now I will go straight to the police. But one thing I am sure of, and that is that I will never allow him to intimidate me again."

Of course, for many of the women the true test of whether they have fully escaped their abuse will only come when they are released, and when they have to return to their boyfriends and husbands, or have contact with them in relation to their children. Diane summed up how challenging that may be in reality:

[I think there will be] a lot of tears and fight. But I'll just have to stand up to it ... for once stand up and be strong, and say I've come this far ... I've lost my freedom, I've paid for that. I've got to know myself ... [how] I want to live my life now ... I must be more assertive. And tell him, as hard as it is, that he must come to the party. He must address his issues as well. I've addressed mine in prison, I've learned a lot. But I can't ... I can't really make him see that or do it on my own.

CARETAKING AND RESPONSIBILITY

Early on in the project, the researchers observed the central role that motherhood played in the lives of many of the participants. During a group session in Pollsmoor, for example, when the women were asked to suggest themes for a poem to be written by the group, one woman immediately proposed - and won unanimous approval for - a poem entitled "My Child." Later, when the women in Worcester were asked to paint a mural that represents their thoughts and feelings about incarcerated women, one woman painted a beautiful image of a woman carrying a child on her back. Throughout the group sessions in both correctional facilities, women spoke frequently about the difficulties involved in maintaining contact with their children through limited phone calls and brief visits and pointed to separation from their children as one of the most difficult aspects of life in the correctional facilities. This is consistent with the international literature on incarcerated women, which has found that "mothering is a central concern of incarcerated women and that correctional facilities have failed to respond adequately to this concern." (Bloom, 1992; Bloom & Steinhart, 1993; Watterson, 1996; Henriques, 1982; Snell, 1994; Enos, 2001; Baunach, 1985; Stanton, 1980; Zalba, 1964; and Glick & Neto, 1977 cited by Ferraro & Moe, 2003, p.13).

We specifically asked about relationships with children and parental responsibilities in both the pre-interview survey and in the interviews themselves. In the pre-interview intake survey, participants were asked whether they had children and at what age they had their first child. With respect to each child, the women were asked the child's age, whether the child was living and where the child lived prior to their incarceration. In the interviews, the researchers explored the women's relationships with their children as well as the impact of incarceration on their children and on the mother-child relationship.

Most of the feminist pathways studies that were undertaken in the last thirty years did not identify motherhood - or caretaking responsibilities more broadly - as a specific pathway to female criminality.¹⁰⁶ Where motherhood was examined in relation to incarcerated women, the focus,

¹⁰⁶ Based on the review of feminist pathways studies in Belknap, 2001, pp. 61-71.

both internationally and in South Africa, was mostly on the negative impact this has on children.¹⁰⁷ Researchers who focused on the mothers, looked mostly at the way in which parental concerns impact upon women's experiences of incarceration, noting specifically that "concerns about their children's well-being, as well as their distress at separation, are the most salient features of incarceration for women with children." (Boudin, 1998; Enos, 2001; Henriques, 1982; and Watterson, 1996 cited by Ferraro & Moe, 2003, p. 13). According to Ferraro and Moe (2003), although a number of previous studies had reported that women used minor property crimes as a means of supporting their children, they pointed to the absence of "systematic data on the prevalence of this influence on women's crimes" (Henriques, 1982; Watterson, 1996 cited by Ferraro & Moe (2003), p. 13).

Owen (1998) was the first to identify "children" as one of five pathways to imprisonment.¹⁰⁸ She asserts the centrality of children to the lives of many female prisoners and argues that: "The presence of children in the lives of these women shapes their pre-prison experience, as well as how they serve their time" (cited by Belknap, 2001, p. 70). Ferraro and Moe (2003) and Moe and Ferraro (2006) reached a similar conclusion, highlighting the relationship between economically motivated crimes and the financial burden of motherhood. Based on a volunteer sample that included both sentenced and unsentenced female prisoners, mostly charged with drug, prostitution or property offences,¹⁰⁹ the researchers found that only women with children in their custody discussed the "relationship between economic survival and economic crimes" (Ferraro & Moe, 2003, p. 19). These women "viewed non-violent crime as a rational, responsible action taken to meet their children's needs" (Ferraro & Moe, 2003, p. 19). Moe and Ferraro (2006) further explained how women perceived motherhood as a "valuable social status" and how, by speaking of themselves as mothers, women in prison "were able to think of themselves as something other than criminal – an asset and a valuable member of society" (p. 143).

107 Regarding the US, Ferraro and Moe (2003), p. 10; In South Africa, see for example Eloff and Moen (2003), Gibbons (1998) and Luyt (2008). While Luyt (2008) does briefly discuss the impact of separation from children on incarcerated mothers, the findings are mostly quantitative and do not provide an in-depth understanding of this experience.

108 The others are: (1) the multiplicity of abuse; (2) early family life; (3) the street life; and (4) spiralling marginality. Based on the review of pathways studies provided by Belknap (2001).

109 Two women were awaiting trial on murder charges.

It was during the interview with Bilqees, who defrauded the company she worked for in order to pay for her husband's drug rehabilitation, that it struck the researchers that the responsibility assumed by women who are mothers was but one example of a more general tendency of women to assume responsibility for taking care of others. Using both "children" and "responsibility" as themes during the coding process, the caretaking role that women fulfilled vis-à-vis their children, partners, parents, grandparents and siblings, and its relationship to women's decisions to commit crime, emerged as an important finding. The coding process also highlighted the caretaking responsibilities assigned to the women as young girls, and the ways in which these responsibilities impacted upon their pathways.

Modie-Moroka's discussion of women and criminality in Botswana (2003) provides a useful framework for thinking about the caretaking role that women assume vis-à-vis other members of their family. Citing the "self in relation theory" - now known as the "relational-cultural theory" (Covington, 2007) - which "suggests that women organise themselves around relationships and the ethic of responsibility, care and nurturing others," she found that "women who were in relationships that were not connective and mutually satisfying found themselves de-selfing to retain these relationships and sacrificing and compromising their own values so that other people could benefit from encountering them" (p. 173).

Women thus occupy a number of different roles in relation to the important people in their lives, including mother, daughter, wife/partner, granddaughter and sibling. These roles have important implications for the decision to get involved in crime as well as for the experience of female offenders once incarcerated. This section explores the ways in which these roles are related to women's decisions to offend, to their experience of incarceration and to their thoughts about the future.

MOTHERING

In our sample, the most salient caretaker role was that of mother. Seventy-five per cent of the women in our sample were mothers. This is somewhat lower than the percentage of mothers in the general female offender

population in South Africa, which was 84% in 2004 (JIP, 2004). Although 2 women gave birth during their incarceration, and a total of three women had children under the age of two,¹¹⁰ none of the women in the study had children living with them while incarcerated.¹¹¹ Most of the mothers in our sample had their first child before they were 21 years old: 7% (n=3) had their first child between the ages of 10 and 15 and an additional 45% had their first child between the ages of 16 and 20. A further 38% had their first child between the ages of 21-25 and only 10% of the mothers in the sample (n=4) had their first child over the age of 25. The percentage of mothers who had their first child by the age of 15 is high compared to national statistics, which indicate that 15 year olds represent only 1% of teenage pregnancies (Pettifor et al, 2003).

The crimes committed by mothers were not much different from those committed by women who had no children. More than two-thirds of the women convicted of murder, or conspiracy to commit murder, are mothers. Of these, five were cases in which the offender was involved in the murder of an abusive husband. Fraud, theft, armed robbery and drug-trafficking were all offences committed by women both with and without children. The one exception was shoplifting, which was committed only by mothers (although in one of these cases the shoplifting began before the birth of her children, while she was still in school). This is consistent with international research, which has found that petty theft is often directly related to family poverty and the need to care for children (Corston, 2007; Taylor, 2004; cited by Moloney et al., 2009).

Becoming a Mother

In an ideal world, the birth of a child is the end-result of a long process of deliberation, discussion, decision-making and conscious action. It should be a joyous occasion that is marked by celebration and hope, and wishes for a healthy, happy and long life. For many women, however, the road to motherhood is a far cry from this ideal. As noted above, three of the women

110 According to section 20 of the Correctional Services Act 111 of 1998, children may live in prison with their mothers up to age 2.

111 Of the two women who gave birth while incarcerated, one baby was still in hospital at the time of the interview. The other woman had initially decided to give the baby up for adoption but then changed her mind and the baby is being cared for by her mother (the baby's grandmother).

interviewed for this study were pregnant by the time they were fifteen. The story of Zizipho, who got pregnant when she was 13, exemplifies the vulnerability of young girls and the importance of age-appropriate education about sex and reproductive rights. When Zizipho was eight years old her uncle began to physically and sexually abuse her. She told no one, and the abuse continued until she was ten, when her family moved to the Western Cape. When she was 13, she got involved with an 18 year old man and two months after this relationship began she got pregnant. Asked how she felt about entering into a sexual relationship with her boyfriend, she replied:

I didn't want, I didn't want you see, but he said to me, "No, it's gonna be fine." And I kept saying, "No I don't want, I don't want." And he said, "No, don't be like this." And she [sic] always told my how much he loved me. We slept there during the day.

She knew nothing about sex, birth control or pregnancy. It was her mother who realised she was pregnant but would not let her abort the child. This is how she described what happened:

That time when I was two months I used to bath in front of my mother. And then my mother told me that, "Hey what's going on?" and I said, "What, nothing." My mother said, "No, no something is going on you must go to the clinic." And I asked what I was going to do at the clinic because there was nothing going on with me. But that time we were having sex with my boyfriend I did have a lot of blood. And then he bought me pads, I didn't know what pads were for. What I must do with pads. And then he bought me. My mother took me to the clinic, and they checked me and they told my mother I was two months. I asked my mother, "Two months of what?" she said she was gonna tell me at home. We came home with my mother and we were at home when she told me. "You see now you are big, you gonna have a baby." I said, "A baby? No I'm still young for a baby." My big brother insisted that I should make an abortion because I was still young to have a baby. And my mother said, "No, she cannot do that."

Annie had her first child when she was 15 and living at home. She already had a drug habit, which she understood as her way of dealing with her experiences of childhood abuse. Her parents made sure she did not use drugs during her pregnancy but when her daughter was a year old she went back to school and resumed her drug habit. She doesn't mention her child's father¹¹² and one gets the sense that he was not an important person in her life. Her second child was born when she was 17. As was the case for many of the women in this study, becoming pregnant appears as an inevitable consequence of a relationship; as something that just happens: "Then I met my son's father when I was 17 and we went out for a while and then I got pregnant with my second child and he was a biker." Both children were raised by her mother.

For Melly and for Marie, moving in with their boyfriends' mothers offered a safe haven. Melly, who had her first child when she was 14, was abandoned by her mother when she was ten months old and spent the first 12 years of her life in foster care where she regularly suffered physical abuse. She was reunited with her mother for a two-week period, at which point her mother died, leaving her all alone with two young brothers. She met the father of her eldest child when she was 13 and moved in with his family. By the time she gave birth, at age 14, her relationship with the father had broken down and, within a few weeks of giving birth, she left, leaving her daughter in her grandmother's care. When Marie moved in with her boyfriend, it was to escape her fear of sexual abuse by her mother's new boyfriend. She had been sexually abused by her stepfather from age 8, which her mother denied, and did not feel safe at home. She was 15 when she moved in with her 28 year old boyfriend and also "fell" pregnant almost immediately:

So then, so then I started, then my mother had a, another, a boyfriend. Then, eventually then I tell myself that here I must go and find my own way because you understand? Because I can't trust a, a man in my life because now my mother's first husband sexually abused me, what is this one now gonna do. So then I decided that I'm gonna take a boyfriend and I was staying at his while I, while I was still in school. So then in

¹¹² She notes earlier in the interview that her children's father is dead but this may refer to her son's father, whom she met when her daughter was two.

1998 then I fall pregnant and then my whole life was a messed up from there. So in 1999 my child was born and when my child was 2 years old then I leave my, uh my father of my child because he was like mommy's boy, he do everything what his mother's told and he don't want to pay maintenance money and all that kind of stuff.

Unlike Annie and Melly, Marie assumed responsibility for her child. It was this burden, that she saw as inextricably linked to her offending, that led her to conceptualise her pregnancy as the point at which her life got messed up.

Pregnancy and/or Childbirth as a Turning Point

Indeed, pregnancy and/or becoming a mother was a turning point in the lives of many women, though not all identified it as such. For a few women, having children brought positive change in their lives. Motherhood, for these women, was conceived as an achievement; something to be proud of. The experience of having children, raising them and keeping them alive was seen as central to these women's lives. Asked about the important things that have happened in her life, Liesbeth expressed a sense of thankfulness for having found a good husband and having 'normal' children. It is interesting that she seems to see a "good husband" almost as compensation for having not received a good education. The implication seems to be that this is the lot of women: the most we can hope for is a good husband. She recognises the survival of all of her children, however, as an impressive achievement, highlighting the precariousness of life and the vital role that a mother plays in keeping her children healthy and safe:

The most important things that happened in the years, that I have a good husband, since I didn't get such a good education, I got a good husband. And that my children are normal, in everything, all five are alive, I have never had a death.

For most women, however, having children also brought many complications. A couple of women remarked explicitly upon the increased responsibility they felt upon the birth of their first child. Lena explained: "Um, the day I gave birth to my first child, my whole life changed. Because then I realised

that I am a big woman now. And I have to take responsibilities because I have a child to raise.” In practice, Lena failed to live up to this realisation and waived responsibility for her children in favour of her mother. Similarly, Madame Butterfly compared the freedom she had before she became a mother to the responsibility she assumed when her daughter was born. Although this responsibility was related to her decision to become a drug courier, she did not see her child as the root of her troubles, as Marie did. In fact, she suggests that the traits she developed in order to deal with this responsibility became a source of resilience and strength in her life:

The other turning point um when Rachel [name changed] was born, my daughter. Now I had responsibilities and then I was like a carefree person but then I became as now, what does my ex call me ‘paraat’ [well-prepared/ready], is you know very ... all T’s are crossed and I’s dotted and everything must be just so. And he found it very irritating. But I said that’s, I feel safe that way it gives me a sense of stability.

Pregnancy or having children was also a turning point for several women because of its impact on their relationships with the fathers. For some, becoming pregnant was the reason they got married. These women felt they were expected to “do the right thing.” Nola, for example, began a sexual relationship with a new boyfriend after years of sexual abuse by her uncle. She “fell” pregnant when she was 18 and did not believe in abortion. While discussing how she ended up incarcerated, she notes her marriage:

Um I was raped and sexually abused as a child and um my parents never knew. They only found out a good couple of years later when I fell pregnant. And um I never ever went to therapy or anything like that and after I had my son I got married, or my parents forced the issue. Do the right thing. And um somewhere along the line I just had a breakdown.

Nola’s pregnancy also triggered the disclosure of her uncle’s abuse. Reflecting later on the factors that led to her breakdown, she reveals how constricted she felt by marriage and motherhood:

And here I, I was twenty three, I had my whole life in front of me but I'm stuck with a child, I'm in a marriage that yes, I did love my husband but I'm not in love with him. And all these youngsters around me are living a life and I didn't have a life.

The obligation to “do the right thing” was also the reason Tokkie married her abusive husband, who was 15 years her senior. She recalls blaming her mother when things went wrong:

I was only 23 when I got married because I was pregnant with Tina [name changed]. So it was like I had to get married. But it was, in the old times the old people used to say: ‘There where you dirty, you must clean it up.’ ... So I got married because I always, when my, my when my marriage was like up and down I used to blame my mom. I used to tell her it's because of you that I got married.

For others, pregnancy had the opposite effect, marking the breakdown of the woman's relationship with her child's father. This was manifest in the onset of physical abuse or in the father's withdrawal from the relationship, physically or otherwise. For Phino, pregnancy marked the onset of abuse by the father of her second child: “but I was staying with this guy and then I was pregnant by his child and then when I was pregnant he started to do violent things for me. He's starting to abuse me ...” Phino was already involved in crime at this point, which was motivated by the need to support her first child and other members of her family. The father of her first child had also been abusive and did not want to support his child. She left school because of this pregnancy but the jobs she found provided inadequate support.¹¹³

When fathers withdrew from their relationships with their children's mothers, this was usually related to the question of support, which became a source of stress for the mother. When Princess got pregnant, for example, her boyfriend “didn't want to work as he used to work.” Princess sent her child to live with her sister so that she could find work to support her child. Although the child was not living with them, her boyfriend also started partying and having affairs with other women but she continued to live with him because she thought she owed this to her child. For Nwabisa, the break

¹¹³ Jesse also described physical abuse during pregnancy.

with her child's father was more drastic, as he left her when she was four months pregnant because he did not want to support the child. While this certainly created financial stress, Nwabisa also felt anxiety about the child not having a father. This concern echoes her own experience of her father's abandonment and may also be partially rooted in cultural practices based on African customary law which "assign" children born within marriage to their father's family and may disadvantage the children of a single mother.¹¹⁴

The stories described in this section illustrate how childhood sexual victimisation increases a young woman's vulnerability to and within 'consensual' sexual relationships and how this vulnerability, combined with poor education and institutional support, as well as factors related to parental control, result in unplanned pregnancies for which the young mothers are ill-prepared and for which they are unable or unwilling to take responsibility. These narratives also demonstrate the ways in which pregnancy asserts control over the relationships women have with men, resulting in relationships that are restrictive and/or abusive, or in the loss of critical resources for support. As described in great detail in the section of this report dealing with domestic violence, abusive relationships tend to isolate and marginalise women in ways that place severe constraints on the way they perceive their options for survival, leading in some cases to murder. Where a woman is able to leave an abusive partner, she may lose her only source of financial support. Left without the means to purchase basic necessities for herself and their children, and in the absence of a mother/grandmother or other social or institutional support systems that are able to help, crime may emerge as the only possibility the mother can see for coping with the financial and psychological burdens of motherhood. This process is further elaborated in the next sections.

The Role of Motherhood

Motherhood featured strongly in the narratives women told about their lives both before and after their incarceration. For some, motherhood was a crucial part of the context in which women made choices about their lives. These women spoke about maternal stress and about the impact their

¹¹⁴ For a discussion of some of these practices see Burman (1991). It should be noted, however, that customary law and practice is constantly changing and localised.

children's welfare had on the decisions they made. For others, it was their failure to live up to the responsibilities of motherhood that shaped their self-perception.

Caring for children as a pathway to crime

Caring for children featured extensively in the way women explained their behaviour and the decisions they made at different points in their lives. Many of the decisions made by women in abusive relationships, for example, were motivated by their expected impact on children. In particular, concern for their children's welfare and/or the need for financial support were cited by a number of women as the reason they stayed with, got involved with, or did not file charges against an abusive partner; and the reason they became involved in a gang (which then led to crime) or continued their gang-related criminal activities. The story of Cynthia illustrates this point. When her abusive husband was incarcerated, Cynthia was left with three children to feed and no means of support. She found the support she needed by marrying a second (abusive) husband. Because he treated her children poorly, she decided to have a fourth child, which she thought would make her husband a better father. This strategy didn't work and when her husband's abuse of her first three children grew worse, she left him, leaving her youngest son with his father. The problem of supporting her first three children, therefore, resurfaced. What began as periodic drug use became a serious drug habit after two related events: her ex-husband stopped paying her rent because she stopped visiting him in prison; and her landlord's son molested her three year old boy. The combined effect of these events was that she was evicted from her apartment. Within this context, she attributed her eventual decision to commit fraud to the need to support her children, though it seems likely that her financial need was also motivated by what had become a serious drug habit. This story shows how the need to provide for and protect children acts both as a constraint and as a catalyst for action in ways that impact significantly on a woman's life choices.

In some cases, children feature as more active role-players who interact with their parents in ways that impact upon their parents' decisions. In the case of Linda, the dynamic that her husband's domestic violence created between herself, her husband and her daughter led to a decision that had a

direct impact on her incarceration. Linda was convicted of rape because she failed to report her husband's rape of her daughter. It is an interesting story because it provides a mother's perspective on the abuse of her daughter by her husband, which is often not heard. Her story illustrates the conflict she felt, caught between the abuse inflicted upon her by her husband, his abuse of their daughter, her daughter's actions and the feelings in her that all of these generated. She described the day she found out her husband had raped her daughter and how her daughter discouraged her from reporting his abuse because they feared for their lives, but also the resentment she felt toward her daughter who she felt manipulated the situation to her advantage:

And I SMS him and told him that I knew he raped my daughter and I'm phoning the police right now. So in seconds he was in the house, he was like a mad man. This is the first time the children see him like a mad man. And um then my daughter get afraid of him and she said to me no you can't go. Because I said to her come let's go, I want to go and I want to report it because he has to be locked up for what he did. So she says no we can't do it because he will come back home on parole or, or, or on bail or what what and then he will come kill us and we can't do that. And since then she used to say no if she had enough she we will talk. And she was the one who get a benefit out of it because um I'm not, I'm not talking right now but that is, I, it's just that I see it because if she wants a new cell phone she got a new cell phone. If she wanted to go to that party and want some new purse, doesn't matter if there's money or not, mommy, she will have it... So Nolene [name changed] always get everything she wanted and just as long as she give him what he wanted.

In other cases, threats of violence against children were used to manipulate women. Nazley, for example, who had 11 children, recalled a moment in the middle of a hijacking when her accomplices began shooting and she wanted to pull out:

And then I wanted to wee and I had to just go on the other side of the road and I was nervous and I stood like behind the tree cause it was like a, a bush and I stood there. And I said: “No I can’t do this.” And I started crying. And I said: “No.” And she said: “You can’t pull out now.” Then she said, then when she told me “Remember you got children. What if David [name changed] turns on you now? We can’t leave this truck and just take the one truck” And I said: “Okay. I’m gonna cool off.”

In the cases discussed above, the need to care for and protect children acted both as a constraint that limited women’s ability to make good choices as well as a catalyst for action with both positive and negative effects. In effect, the context of motherhood brings with it a second set of interests and needs that must be taken into account. In some cases, the interests of mother and children may coincide but in others, as Cynthia described, they come into direct conflict. The way women described their situations in each of the cases discussed above reflects their recognition of the conflict and the way they negotiated and resolved the matter internally. It is interesting that in each case the women represented their decisions as being determined by their children’s interests rather than their own, although the truth is probably far more complex. In certain cases, the decision to offend was conceptualised as a direct response to the offender’s need to support and care for their children. These cases are discussed in the next section.

Financial crimes as support strategy

More than 25% of the women in the sample (n=13) conceptualized their offending as a direct response to their responsibility to support their children, including children from their extended family who were in their care. One woman had her first thoughts of offending after having a baby and being denied support by the baby’s father. She described the thought process that led to her first experience of shoplifting:

I fell pregnant, and my boyfriend denied that the child was his. He didn’t want to support the child. I didn’t know who was going to support the child because my brother is not working, and my sister is not working – we are all not working. I ended

up thinking that I should meet with my friends to advise me as they are also doing this. They said, “The best way ... to be able to support your child lets go to town we will show you what to do.”

Although Nwabisa recognised that what she had done was wrong, she explained that, at the time, she felt she had acted correctly in order to support her child:

The most important thing was my child. And when I went to do that, my mind was not telling me I was going to do the wrong thing. I thought I was doing the right thing to raise my child.

In her interview, Nwabisa did not speak much about her child and did not express guilt over the impact her incarceration was having on his life. He was living with her mother and she thought he was happy. She felt, however, that incarceration was a particular hardship for mothers, because of their love and ability to care for their children. She implies that, in her experience, it is only women who have these qualities.

In other cases, the child’s father contributed to his or her support but did not provide adequately for the child’s needs. Loli explained that her husband was earning a good salary but did not give her enough to provide adequately for her children. She felt that she could not control – and perhaps did not have the right to decide – how her husband’s salary was spent because he was the one working. The irritation she felt in always having to ask her husband for money led to her decision to earn her own living by selling drugs. While Loli did not express remorse about her criminal activities, she regretted the impact that her incarceration was having on her son:

Because I managed, but you sometimes think about ... at the end your children become on risk because when you are arrested – as I say now they are not with me, so things like that. Because now they are the ones who are suffering. So now they had to change life to live with their grandmother.

In another case, the decision to offend as a means of financial support was a strategy accepted by the woman's husband, who worked and contributed to the household but was unable to provide adequately. Lusandre explained how her husband's salary was never enough and fluctuated because of commissions and overtime such that she could not budget. Having overcome the child-care hurdle and found a job of her own, she then lost her job together with her friend and co-worker who was also involved in drug-trafficking, leading to her own decision to offend:

Then I was really in a bad spot because I was um, I was on the verge of losing my head over my roof and it was so bad, it really was. I mean I, I didn't have bread in my house. Now how can I tell my kids, listen mommy doesn't work, there's no money, I can't buy any food. What must I do? So I said to her, yeah...

In this case, her husband knew about and accepted her decision to offend but Lusandre was the primary offender. The reverse was true in the case of Shereen, who worked with her husband in the family's car-repair business. She and her husband lost everything when her brother-in-law, who controlled the family business, went into liquidation. When they re-opened their own business, her husband started using second-hand parts which were sold as new. She knew this was wrong and was not happy about their business practices but felt that she had no choice in this matter: "I wasn't happy about it. And I used to complain about it but I couldn't do anything cause my children had to eat and we had to have a roof on our heads." When she spoke of her children – which she did a lot – it was not to express guilt regarding her actions, but to talk of how difficult it was for a mother to be incarcerated, away from her children:

But the worst thing is, staying in contact with your children. It's very hard here ... You can only make two calls a month. And every morning I wake up, I mean I think every mother is like that. And even in the afternoon I sit and I say is my children safe?

The literature on motherhood and crime describes how women with children in their custody conceptualise their non-violent, financially motivated crime as “an alternative to hunger and homelessness” (Ferraro & Moe, 2003, p. 19). The findings of our study show that this rationalisation is also used by women who commit more violent crimes. Three women in our study, who were convicted of armed robbery, related their initial involvement in crime to their need to support their children. In one case, the woman began her criminal career committing fraud, for which she was not caught, but then got involved in robbery with the same friend who had approached her about committing fraud.¹¹⁵ She continued to see her actions as motivated by her need for financial support but also explained her involvement in robbery in terms of her relationship with her initial partner in crime and the absence of alternative support structures:

I was involved with other robbery with her and the other guys from other friends now of hers where she was working. So when we went there and those guys were doing robbery. And it was my first time to do robbery as well. So it is where we did, we got there and they told us where we, way we to act and do like this and they going to do like this, all those things. They were going to gunpoint the people, those things. So I was just doing things that I was not capable of, but because of we need money and because of, I was struggling and I had no one.

The other two stories were associated with domestic violence and/or gang involvement. Sandra spoke little and with difficulty about the domestic violence she suffered and about her participation in armed robbery. Her story was straightforward; she was forced by her abusive husband to commit crimes in order to provide financially for him and her children. He committed these crimes with her and was also incarcerated, though he received a lesser sentence than she did. Separation from her four children had a strong impact on her experience of life in the correctional system. Asked why she described herself as aggressive when she first came to the facility, she replies: “Because I can’t understand, I got 17 years how long can you without my children, I was crying a lot.”

¹¹⁵ This woman’s 30-year sentence prompted further investigation of her story through available media reports, which suggested that she was also sentenced for the murder that took place during the robbery.

The story of Nazley was very different. Although she also had an abusive husband, he was incarcerated at the time she got involved in crime. While she was no doubt struggling to support a large family (she had four children when she began her criminal activities and 11 children at the time of the interview), her decision to join the gang and commit armed robbery was not coerced. The fact that her husband was a gang “general” suggests that she had previous exposure to gang life, which made it possible for her to envision this type of criminal activity as an option. The descriptions of her crimes are very detailed and suggest an element of pride in her accomplishments. Her children, however, seem to see things differently. She describes the impact her incarceration has had on them and how her children’s attitude towards her has changed; even her “favourites” are “totally off from” her. It is her children’s reaction that has perhaps led her to take responsibility for her agency:

And then sometimes I tell myself you had choices and you chose the wrong, you made the wrong choices and it’s not your family that put you here, you know. And maybe if I was open about my financial problem, my dad would definitely have helped me and my mom. But I chose to do my own thing you know. And um it’s hard for my kids now because my, you know we have apple of the eyes and I’ve got my favourite boys and my favourite girls, but my favourite boys are totally off from me and my daughter, she’s totally, totally off from me

As noted above, Moe and Ferraro (2006) point out how conceptualising crime as a means of fulfilling maternal obligations enables women to see themselves as valuable assets of society rather than as criminals. Nazley’s insistence on conceptualising her crime in this way, while showing obvious pride in her criminal achievements, seems to exemplify this point. Her desire to draw on her maternal identity in this way, however, is undermined by the criticism she faces from her children, which forces her to re-evaluate her actions. She is reminded of her daughter’s words:

My daughter would always say, what’s the use we have everything but there’s no mommy, you know we’d rather have nothing than not [have] you mommy.

Compounding Factors: Lack of Social Support

This desire to offset the women's self-perception as criminals with their more positive maternal identities is less apparent, perhaps, in the other stories described above. Those stories too, however, suggest the importance of other key factors, besides child-support, that contributed to their decisions to offend. Most common was the absence of a strong social support system and/or a social environment that encouraged and/or facilitated criminal behaviour. In some cases, this was because of the poor relationships many of these women had with their mothers. Madame Butterfly grew up with an abusive mother with whom she continued to have a poor and unsupportive relationship. She had no relationship with the father of her child and lived with an abusive man with whom she shared a platonic relationship. Though this arrangement began as one that offered financial support, her partner was an alcoholic and did not provide adequately. While she attributes her decision to become a drug courier to the need to provide food and other necessities for her daughter, she also asserts that if she had "love and respect" she would never have turned to crime.

Marie's mother was more active in her lack of support. She not only accused Marie of lying about her stepfather's abuse, and refused to help in any way with her granddaughter's care, but actually suggested to Marie that she should use crime to get what she needs. Compared to Madame Butterfly and Marie, Princess had a reasonable, though not close, relationship with her mother. It was her father who was her primary source of support and encouragement but he died when she was 20 (several years before beginning to commit fraud, which later evolved into robbery). She described how lost she felt after her father's death. She had no close friends besides her boyfriend and her relationship with him deteriorated after the birth of her child; he began to cheat on her with other women, and did not provide financial support. While she identified her financial need as the reason for her decision to get involved in fraud, she also suggested that if her father had not died or her relationship had not broken down she would not have ended up incarcerated.

For Lusandre, it was her move to Cape Town that caused her to lose her support network. She described how alone she felt without family support and how difficult she found it to make friends:

No that is, that is the thing that I went through hell in this place, I never get to make any friends. Um if the people want to help you, you have to give money up front, they won't help you because they don't know you. And uh it was difficult just to survive. I mean um, I mean it's easy, the people don't know how happy, uh, happy, privileged they are if they've got a family with them.

For her, this lack of support was directly related to the need for child-care that would enable her to find work that could supplement her husband's unsteady income. The one friend that she finally made in Cape Town, who helped her find a job, was also the one who eventually introduced her to crime.

In all of these cases, although the need for financial support was the reason given for the decision to offend, the poor social support structures that these women had was an important contributing factor. A related factor was the social environment in which women lived and the opportunities they had to engage in criminal activity. Many of the women were encouraged by female friends to join in their illicit activities. These women provided the support that women did not get from their partners or families but also paved the way to criminal behaviour. For Loli, illicit activity was simply everywhere; she referred to the sale of drugs as "the township style," noting that "[e]veryone in the township is selling."

Compounding factors: obstacles to employment

Another contributing factor that features in several stories is the structural obstacles that women face when they try to access legitimate employment. Thus, a few of the women who conceptualised their offending in terms of the need for financial support explained why they chose crime over legitimate employment as a means of earning a living. This choice was not generally attributed to the lack of employment opportunities as such, but

to structural obstacles they faced in finding work, the types of work that were available, or to their attitudes about work. As noted above, a couple of women highlighted the problem of finding work without affordable child-care. One woman solved this problem by asking her sister to raise her child – a solution which has serious implications, if applied generally, for the welfare of children. Nwabisa described the difficulty she had obtaining an identity card and her inability to complete a job application form without this information.¹¹⁶ She also had a disability that made it difficult to stand for long periods, thus restricting her job opportunities. Once she began to shoplift, she realized that she could earn as much in a day shoplifting as she could in a month of legitimate work. Nazley, too, saw how much she could earn through crime and learned that “crime pays.” Other women, such as Nontombi, never looked for work, which they considered difficult, as opposed to crime, which was easy. For Loli, the fact that she had never worked before was perceived as an insurmountable obstacle. She maintained this perception while incarcerated; asked about her plans after her release, she responded: “I can’t work because I never worked. I would may be... what I can think of is doing a business, but a legal business.” For reasons explored in more detail in the section on poverty, these women perceived legitimate employment as being out of their reach and/or perceived crime as an accessible, acceptable and lucrative alternative.

The findings in this section suggest that while these women certainly needed to support their children, the decision to offend was taken in a more nuanced context, in which supportive (or abusive) relationships, attitudes and obstacles to employment and access to criminal opportunities played important roles. Ultimately, the use of crime as a means of support was seen as the only viable option these women were able to envision from within the particular context in which they were situated.

“Bad Mothers”

For many women, motherhood featured as an important part of their stories not because – or only because – of the way it shaped their criminal choices, but because of their failure, in their own eyes, to live up to the

¹¹⁶ It is not clear whether she tried, but was unable, to overcome this problem with potential employers.

responsibilities of this role. The extent of this phenomenon reflects the importance, for these women, of their maternal identities. Some of these women, who were not there for their kids and did not share in the daily routine of their lives, spoke of their guilt and sorrow for having missed out on this experience and expressed the desire to make up for this upon their release. With the remarkable assistance they received from their mothers (as well as others, such as DCS social workers), a number of these women were slowly rebuilding their parental relationships.

Some mothers were simply absent from the lives of their children prior to their incarceration. In 12 cases, the women became mothers when they were too young to care for their children on their own or failed, for other reasons such as substance abuse, to take full parental responsibility.¹¹⁷ In 9 of these situations, parental responsibilities were assumed by the grandmothers (together, in some cases, with grandfathers) and in another two cases by other close relatives.¹¹⁸ Lena, for example, who had her first child when she was 18, explained how her mother “spoiled” her, allowing her to maintain an unencumbered lifestyle while her mother raised her kids. Lena had a happy, stable home until she was six, when her father became involved with her elder sister’s classmate and her parents divorced. She initially remained with her mother but moved in with her father when her mother remarried an abusive man. Living with her father, however, was also unbearable and she ran away from home, living with friends until she returned to her mother, after she divorced her abusive husband, when Lena was 12. She left school when she was 15 and worked to help support her family but got pregnant when she was 18. After a turbulent relationship with the father of her children, Lena stabbed and killed the woman with whom he was having an affair. She regrets her absence from her children’s lives and asserts her desire to do better upon her release:

117 In some of these cases, the mother was the primary caregiver for some but not all of her children. Also, in some cases the mother was the primary caregiver during certain periods but it is difficult to determine when and how extensive these periods were. The information provided in the pre-interview intake survey, when women were asked if they lived with their children prior to their incarceration is not always reliable in determining the extent to which women consistently acted as their children’s primary caregiver.

118 This practice is particularly important because of its implications for the child which were highly evident in this study. Although this provides children with love and support from family members, it may not provide long-term stability. Because of a grandmother’s age, she is more likely to die while the child in her care is still relatively young. This has severe implications for the child’s welfare and wellbeing.

Um the time they were growing up, tell you the truth, I was never a mother for them. Because my mother spoiled me a lot, she will keep the children and then I can go. So I wasn't like a full-time mom. I will go to work and come back, go to club and come back, they will see me, I, I am there, but not actually there, ja. Ja ... My mother raised them. That's why I said when I go out I wanna be a full-time mom to them. Feel, I want to feel how it is to raise your, my own children.

Women who were physically present at certain times in their children's lives spoke of how they had neglected their parental responsibilities, often because of substance abuse or other forms of addiction. Annie described the physical abuse she perpetrated against her son, as well as the medical problems he has as a result of her drug use during pregnancy. Asked how she feels about the impact her drug use has had on her children, she talks about feeling "heart-sore" at having caused her children such pain but, at the same time, asserts the strength of her relationship with her son – thus reinforcing her own maternal identity - and expresses the determination never to hurt her children again:

It's my fault. I don't feel good about it. I was never a mother to them, and when my children come visit, and it's so heart sore to think my children could hate me because I was so, but they don't. My son, I was home on a weekend pass. I was there the last time and he was only by me the whole time. He wanted to be near me the whole time and I couldn't imagine that myself. Why was I like that. Why he, I will never again hurt my children, ever again, I will never be away from them again. Really it was for me...

Nola also related how she had regularly neglected her son while she was involved in crime. She stole money from the company she worked for to support her gambling addiction, which provided an escape from the trauma of childhood sexual abuse and from parental responsibilities, which she deeply resented. Speaking about the day her fraud was discovered, she recalled how her addiction caused her to neglect her son:

And I just started crying and I said to her but I need to leave now I need to go fetch my son. For the first time in almost two years I realised I must go fetch my son. Other times I be gambling till half past three and my son's been standing outside of school already an hour. Wondering where I am.

At another point in the interview, however, she also asserted the strong bond she had with her son and spoke about the daily tasks that she fulfilled as a mother that her husband has had to take over:

So um it was very difficult for my son because I was everything. There was not really a bond between my son and my husband, at all. And now all of a sudden if he got hurt or, he was ten years old, um he had to do this or that, he had to go to his father... So um he's had to also play the role of a father now. He is a single parent, he has to all of a sudden know what it's like to write a sick letter for Tristan. He has to know what it's like to pay the bills, to ensure that the doctor is paid, to ensure that there's food on the table, take Tristan to school, fetch him, is his homework done, does he have school clothes, pay for camp.

For these women, motherhood remained an important part of their identity in spite of their failures to care for their children. Although they expressed guilt over these failures, they also asserted the strength of their bond with their children, which was an important source of resilience.

Motherhood and the experience of incarceration

Contrary to the finding reported by the Judicial Inspectorate of Prisons in its 2004 report and by Luyt (2008), at least 75% of the mothers in our study maintained close contact with their children during their incarceration, although in one case the older child refuses to visit, while another mother had one son who is incarcerated.¹¹⁹ In some cases, visits were infrequent due to distances and transport issues or

¹¹⁹ According to JIP (2004), 55% of women incarcerated in South African prisons reported having no interaction with their children and having all but lost contact with them. Luyt (2008) similarly found that nearly two thirds of his sample had lost contact with at least some of their children.

because foster parents thought that a correctional facility was no place for a child, and mothers had to make do with phone calls. In one case, where the mother did not have contact, this was because the mother did not want the child to know where she is; it is not clear whether she maintains contact on the phone, though she is in contact with her mother, who is caring for her child.¹²⁰ Contrary to Luyt's (2008) unusual findings, in only six cases (out of 35 cases in which there were minor children), were any of the woman's children living with their fathers while she was serving her sentence. In at least three of these cases, only one of the children was living with his/her father and in one of these cases, the child had been left with the child's paternal grandmother after his birth. In 25 out of 35 cases in which there were minor children, some or all of the children were staying with their grandmother or other close relatives (including female relatives from the father's side ¹²¹). In only five cases were any of the woman's children in foster care (some of whom had been friends of the mother) or staying with friends.

Like incarcerated women elsewhere, many women pointed to separation from their children as a very difficult aspect of incarceration. They frequently described how they were managing their relationships with their children from the inside, through visits, letters and phone calls and expressed concerns about maintaining their maternal relationships, particularly with young children. Bilqees had two children, the youngest of whom was only a year and eight months old. Bilqees was serving a four year sentence for fraud after stealing R185,000 from her employer in order to send her husband to rehab. At the time of the interview, she had been incarcerated for six months. Through her tears, she describes her efforts to maintain her relationship with her children, reflecting her underlying fear that they will forget her:

At first it was very hard for her because we used to be very close. But she's seeing a psychologist outside and she comes visit, she comes every weekend, the children come every

120 In one case, the interview was terminated early (for reasons having to do with correctional facility schedules) and could not be completed because of the participant's release. Contact with children while she was in prison was, therefore not discussed explicitly. Her children were living in Johannesburg with her mother-in-law and it seems likely that she maintained contact with them at least by phone.

121 In one case, the relatives were those of the mother's platonic partner, though the child recognised him as her father.

weekend to visit me. And um I just, I write to her every week just to ... um just to make her understand that I am coming home and I love her and I'm thinking about her. She don't forget me [crying all throughout while talking].

Tokkie, who was charged with the murder of her abusive husband, also talked about how hard it was to be without her children. She felt she had freed her children when her husband died and had enjoyed a special closeness with them in the period prior to her incarceration:

They were like, we were the three of us were like birds that you could actually open out of a cage ... So my kids never had a problem. If I put on a old fashion pants and we went out the three of us because we were so close before I was incarcerated, we were so, we do, we did everything together. If I were in the bath they would get into the bath with me, that is how close we were. If I sit on the toilet they would come into the toilet with me because it's almost as if we could never have that special moments together.

Ironically, however, she also became addicted to drugs during this period, which took her away from her children. Now that she's incarcerated, she notes how difficult the separation is for both her and her children, stressing the special role she occupies in their lives. She also suggests how dealing with separation from children impacts on life in a correctional facility:

So they happy there. I won't say they're unhappy but I mean it's not their mommy ... It's not their mommy. I can see it when they come and visit me. Because they all over me. I mean Tracy [name changed] is 20 this year. The 14th of March is her birthday. She's 20 but she can't play enough with my hair. It's things that I, that I check in the visit. She checks my nails. She wants to, what's happening here mommy and my boy, their legs and stuff is all over me. So I can see my kids miss that. You know, they miss that quality times. The letters that they, that they write to me, if I read it I get very emotionally in the room. I start crying, I just wanna be alone. I close my head, you know. I don't feel like talking in the room. I get ugly outburst

sometimes with people I do care about a lot. And for me it's just, it's, it's hard being without my kids. It's hard, that's why I would like to appeal even if it's only on my sentence for a less sentence.

Some women also referred to their children as something that enabled them to cope with the difficulties of incarceration. Queen explained how her son sustains her while incarcerated: "I think if it wasn't for my son I could've killed myself here in prison." Similarly, Bilqees suggests that it is looking forward to her weekend visits that helps her get through each week:

It's been hard but um everyday it becomes a little easier. It's been hard being away from my family and my children but everyday it becomes a little bit easier. And I look forward to the weekends to get to my visits.

Children as a Buffer Against Criminal Behaviour and Substance Abuse

Although some women cited the need to care for their children as motivation for their crimes, concern for their children was also mentioned by some as the reason they hesitated to offend. Both Lusandre and Tokkie reported that they initially rejected the idea of committing a crime because of concern for their children's welfare. In the case of Lusandre, this concern was trumped by financial concerns and pressure from an accomplice, who was also Lusandre's only friend. Her husband, furthermore, though initially hesitant, did not object to his wife becoming involved in crime. As time went on without her being caught, her concern receded.

Looking to the future, however, children play a crucial role in the determination of many women to resist future offending as well as substance abuse. Women spoke of their children as providing motivation for stabilising their lives, "holding their heads high" and looking for legitimate work. Speaking about why she will not return to prison and the things she has lost by being incarcerated, Loli states: "What is important are my kids. Because I don't want to see my kids growing up without me. Each step that they take I have to be there as a mother and watch them." Similarly, thinking about the future and her ability to stay clean following her release, Cynthia refers to the promise she made to her children:

Um but you also know that if I ever, ever want to do drugs again that I will have no problem because I could do it without him even knowing and he would support it without even knowing that he's supporting my habit. You know. Um but then I've gotta think of my children and I've made them a promise and I've gotta do this for them. You know I just gotta stay drug free. If I can just stay drug free then I should be okay.

These narratives demonstrate how incarcerated mothers struggle with the experience of separation from their children and the difficulties and fears they have in terms of maintaining their relationships with their children. They also show how women draw strength and self esteem from their roles as mothers, which helps them cope with incarcerated life and provides a reason for them to resist criminogenic behaviour in the future.

CARING FOR OTHERS

In addition to the burden of care that women assumed as mothers, a number of women cited the need to support or care for other members of their extended families as the primary factor in their decision to offend.

Caring for partners

The story of Bilqees exemplifies this pathway. Bilqees stole a sum of R 185,000 from the car-transport company for whom she worked as a fleet controller in order to admit her drug-addicted husband to rehab. Although her theft persisted for only one week, and was not repeated in spite of being caught only three years later, she received a four year sentence. Although she had a good relationship with her parents and suspects they would have helped, she felt compelled to shoulder this responsibility on her own. Although she spoke about the increased household burden she bore during her husband's drug relapses, and noted her fear of divorce, she insisted that her desire to help him was distinct from these concerns. She simply felt responsible for him: "I somehow from the beginning I somehow felt the responsible thing for what he did and for his life to save him doing whatever he did." Strikingly, Bilqees did not reveal the reason for her crime to her attorney and it was not considered by the court in sentencing.

The fraud committed by Diane was also associated with the urge to care and provide for her husband. She began to steal from the company she worked for after her husband stopped working and her salary stagnated. She identified herself as someone who has the need to take care of others, and her husband as someone who wanted to be taken care of. She believes her need to serve others is modelled on her mother's relationship with her father. She also described her husband, however, as materialistic, abusive and controlling, and herself as a woman who had to marry the first man who showed interest.

Each of the women in these stories conceptualised her crime as a means of fulfilling a particular need of her partner. In Bilqees' case, the need was a very specific one with a clear price tag attached to it, and one can identify a direct relationship between this need and the crime that was committed. These cases (as well as those in the next paragraphs in which women committed crimes to help their parents, grandparents and others), suggest that it is not only women with children who conceptualise non-violent financial crimes in terms of caretaking responsibilities.

In a third case, Elize was caught selling goods stolen by her boyfriend. At his request, while under the influence of drugs, she pleaded guilty to the break-in and theft as well. She, too, described herself as being desperate for love. This case is somewhat different than those of Bilqees and Diane, in that it was not the crime she committed that was related to her boyfriend's need, but the assumption of guilt. It is rather more similar to other cases in which the woman's crime was committed under the influence of her male partner. Such was the case, for example, for Daleen, who stole goods from her employer (for whom she worked as a domestic worker) at the request of her abusive boyfriend; for Sandra, who was coerced by her abusive husband to commit armed robbery; for Melly, whose boyfriend murdered her sex-worker client while they were robbing him; and even for Shereen, who helped her husband in his fraudulent car repair business.

As suggested above, these two groups of narratives - Bilqees and Diane, on the one hand, in which women committed financial crimes for the benefit of their partners, and the cases in which the crime itself was committed under a partner's influence, on the other - are different. The

former group is perhaps closer in the way crime is conceptualised to the crimes committed by mothers in order to support their children, while the latter group is conceptualised in a way that is similar to the experience of domestic violence. In both cases, however, the crimes are tied to the women's unhealthy relationships with their partners. Modie-Moroka (2003) found similar patterns, where women sacrificed and compromised their values in order to retain certain relationships. Based on the "self in relation theory," she argues that "women organise themselves around relationships and the ethic of responsibility, care and nurturing others," (p.173) and that experiences, such as those associated with poverty, substance abuse, violence and abuse by trusted caregivers, disrupt this relational development in ways that lead to this type of "over-functioning" and "de-selfing" (pp.173-4). Not all of the women whose narratives are mentioned above articulated the kind of "disconnecting" factors noted by Modie-Moroka (2003, p.174), though some clearly did experience extreme poverty, loss and/or some form of abuse early on in life. This theory thus provides an interesting framework for understanding these stories, as well as the other care-giving narratives that follow.

Caring for a Parent

Two of the women convicted of drug trafficking explained their crimes in terms of the need to care for a parent. One, a first-time offender from Latin America, was sentenced to ten years for a single instance of drug trafficking, from South America to South Africa. She came from a poor family and needed the money for her father's urgent medical care. Her father got sick when she was 12, which caused a lot of disruption in her life, including separation from her parents, increased responsibility for her younger sister, and poor treatment by the relatives she was forced to live with. When she began to work, she was treated badly by the family who employed her as a nanny, but felt that she had to put on a happy face for her family. This self-silencing took a heavy toll. It was her inability to keep everything inside that led to risky behaviours:

When I feel sad, I go and see my friends, go to the pub they gonna drink. I gonna cry, I gonna say things that I couldn't say to my family because I was like always I was showing a beautiful face, a smile, you okay? Yes I'm okay, all of it with a smile on my face. They gonna see me no Jennifer's not happy, Jennifer's this type of person. But when I'm drink I gonna, I gonna talk. I gonna cry, I gonna show that person the one who's suffering inside of me.

Her friends thus provided emotional support but also led to alcohol use and her introduction to drug trafficking. In addition to the specific need to support her sick father, she conceptualised her crime as a means of getting her family back:

It was so really difficult. Always I was thinking I want my family back, I want my family back, always. Even when I did the crime. When I got to get money I gonna take my family back, we're gonna be together like before many years ago. It couldn't happen.

The other case also involved a woman who carried drugs from South America. Her aim was to earn money to buy her mother, who had been raped in their home in Cape Town, a safe house in the Eastern Cape. Unlike the previous case, however, she and her husband had both been involved in local drug-dealing previously, which supplemented their income from legitimate work.

Caring for Others

For some women, the ethic of care that led them to crime extended to other family members. Such was the case, for example, for Jo, who stole money from the company she worked for to care for her grandmother, who had moved in with her and her fiancé. As was the case with mothers who engaged in crime as a means of financial support, weak family and social ties also featured in this story.

As noted above, these findings suggest that the ethic of care that motivates some women to commit crimes encompasses a wider circle of relationships and is not unique to mothers. Caring for children, however, is both natural and necessary, as it is a mother's (and a father's) exclusive obligation to care for their minor children, who are unable to care for and support themselves. The ethic of care that manifests itself in these broader relationships, however, may reflect a problematic element of 'over-functioning' and 'de-selfing' that reflects a disruption in the relational development of these women. Nonetheless, like the mothers' relationships with their children, these broader family relationships may also act as a source of strength for incarcerated women and provide a reason for resisting crime in the future. For some women, incarceration also provided a healthy distance from these relationships, which has allowed these women to re-evaluate them. The story of Jennifer, mentioned above, illustrates these points well. Asked about important people in her life during her incarceration, she speaks about her relationship with her parents:

My daddy [laughter]. My daddy and my mommy because they are still saying to me, I spoke with him on Saturday. He said to me you know what I see a beautiful life for you and I know you're my child and I know the way you are and I know you never was involved with drugs and all this stuff ... And you gonna learn many things and you gonna find a new life, you gonna start again, we gonna start as a family so don't worry what the people say about you, don't worry about anything, God's gonna make a way for you ... He was always for me, my mommy and my daddy. I have a lot of friends outside but they don't ever write to me, they don't even ask for me. Uncles, Aunties also they don't, maybe they love me, but they don't really care 'oh she's there and she's fine.' But my mommy and daddy they are always there for me [...] **Do you think it would've been better for you to be in prison in Argentina [place name changed]? No. Why not?** Because I think if I'm in Argentina my parents they're gonna go and visit me, I gonna get everything maybe ... I not gonna learn the thing that I learn here. To be far away from my family for me it's a big lesson. I

got more love for them, more love for my life, for my freedom. I don't have anyone here to come and visit me but for me that's a blessing also. And I learn to have a little bit, I deal with even a little money if I don't have a stuff I not desperate for having stuff, I say no. God gonna make a way for [me]. If I need something he's gonna provide for me. If not I'm not desperate for that. If I'm there in Argentina I gonna get it, I never gonna learn what it's like to ... what it is to be so far away from your country, far away from your family. You will never learn that.

These narratives show how important relationships in women's lives impact on the choices women make. By providing for a person's needs – whether drug rehabilitation or medical care – these women were trying to “fix” or help the important people in their lives so that they could maintain their relationships. The choices women could envision, however, to obtain the financial resources necessary to “fix” things, were constrained by a number of factors. A constraint that Bilqees and Jennifer both expressed was the feeling that they had to handle things on their own and must remain silent about their own suffering. Unable to ask for help, Bilqees turned to the only financial resource she could access without having to explain, and stole the money she needed from the funds she managed for her employer. Jennifer, who grew up in a context of poverty which limited her education and job opportunities, did not have access to the sums of money that Bilqees did. She turned to alcohol and friends in order to cope with her self-silencing and seized the drug-trafficking opportunity that presented itself as a way to “get her family back” and therefore alleviate her suffering.

CHILDREN AS CAREGIVERS

Ten¹²² women spoke about the numerous household responsibilities they were given as children and about how they felt about these responsibilities. These responsibilities were generally “gendered” and differed from those responsibilities that male siblings were expected to assume. As young girls, women were expected to take primary responsibility for household chores,

122 One of these cases refers to a woman who was married at age 14 and, though she did not go to live with her husband until she was older, she felt the responsibility from that point to be there for her husband and felt that she lost her autonomy and ability to enjoy life for herself from that point.

such as cooking, cleaning and laundry, while their male siblings had to find outside work to help support the family financially. Several women spoke about having to take care of younger siblings, either because their parents had separated or because both parents were busy working. One woman who lived with only her father had to take care of him too.

The obligation to care for younger siblings impacted on women's lives in different ways. In some cases, this obligation led to a concrete and adverse change in circumstances. Sandra, for example, had to leave school before she completed high school in order to care for her younger siblings. Dropping out of school has a profound impact on the possibility of employment and on one's future opportunities for life. In Sandra's case, neither she nor her husband worked and she was forced, through her husband's violent abuse, to join him in committing crimes in order to support her family. For Cynthia, it was her parents' divorce that led to increased responsibility to care for her brother. Seeking to lessen this burden, she moved to live with her dad, but her responsibilities only increased. At age 16, she got involved with her husband, whom she married when she was 19 in order to escape her dad's house. She married a controlling and abusive man, 17 years her senior, who later stabbed her 11 times.

Equally profound, however, are the emotional and psychological impacts that such care-giving responsibilities have on a young child. When she was 8 years old, Jennifer had to take care of her little sister while her parents were working. Her father became seriously ill, and her responsibilities increased. She described how the burdens she carried made her feel tired of life when she was only 12 years old:

So I, when my father get sick it was um 1999 when I was 12 years old. So the responsibility was more. They used to go to school, I was in the high school I remember that time and I have to cook in the morning, I have to do everything for my sister to take to the school. I have to run all those things. Twelve o'clock I have to go to school. If the only time for me that there was enjoying to stay with my friends and talk and sing and do something. When that finished then um the class would finish was six o'clock for me it was like the dawn has

come over my back, I have to go and see my father lay in the best. I got to hear my mommy say we not have money for tomorrow. Uh I don't have money to buy for the medicines and all the stuff for me was too much. If like I, I remember think 12 years I was just starting to get um tired of life. I was 12 years old. I wanted to be like another teenager to do the stuff they're doing.

Jennifer conceptualised her crime – drug trafficking – as a way to provide urgent medical care for her father and to “get her family back.” This might suggest a correlation between the assumption of responsibility at a young age and the assumption of caretaking responsibility later in life. Reflecting on these responsibilities, however, Jennifer suggests a different causal relationship between her childhood experiences and the crimes that led to her incarceration, implying that it was the overwhelming burden she carried at such a young age, as well as her need for love, that made her unable to cope and drew her to a circle of friends who had a negative influence. She says: “but um sometimes I think if they think more about us I am not gonna suffer, I'm not gonna be here in prison.” As noted above, she also stressed the strain she experienced by her own self-silencing.

Sandra also spoke about feeling silenced in relation to the burden she carried when she left school to care for her siblings: “But I must do it. I must do it. I can't complain, my mother's working for us. She's the only one who's working for us.” For Queen, the gendered caretaking responsibilities that she had were a manifestation of the extreme poverty that she associated with feelings of shame and social exclusion:

And the guys they used to look at me but I know they will pick you rather than me because you've got, you were having a special [inaudible word] and you look nice and stuff and me I was always at home cooking and cleaning. Ja I think that's when I started to notice, in high school ... I didn't have friends because I wasn't, I wasn't in that level.

Diane also suggested that her need to please and care for others was modelled on her mother's behaviour. Diane started stealing money from the company she worked for after her husband stopped working so that she

and her husband could maintain their lifestyle. Thus, it is perhaps not only the actual responsibilities that women are forced to assume in childhood that may impact upon their future inclinations but also the female role models from whom they learn.

While it is impossible, therefore, to prove any correlation between childhood caretaking responsibilities and the adult assumption of responsibility, the findings suggest that, whether by observing the female role-models in their lives or because of the practical demands placed on girl-children, women may internalise the idea, early in childhood, that it is their responsibility to take care of other members of their family. Further, the women sensed that their parents had failed or neglected them by imposing such heavy burdens on them when they were still so young. This caused some women to run away from home, making them vulnerable to abuse. For others, it created conflict between a girl's love for her parents and anger and disappointment at the fact that they have failed her. For one woman, the attempt to silence this internal conflict became too much to bear and drove her to alcohol and other risky behaviours as a means of coping, while for another woman, silence became a way of being – limiting her ability to resist her husband's abuse. For yet another woman, these responsibilities were intricately tied to the feelings of shame and exclusion she associated with poverty, over which it became so important for her to triumph.

CONCLUSION

The findings reviewed in this section demonstrate the centrality of relationships to female criminality. Motherhood, in particular, plays an important role in women's pathways to crime and in the way in which they experience incarceration. Experiences of childhood victimisation increase the vulnerability of young girls to early pregnancies, which impact heavily on relationships and support systems. Concern for the welfare of children acts as a constraint on women's choices and, within circumstances of structural poverty and poor support systems, provides a rationale for both non-violent and, when combined with other factors, violent crime. For some, motherhood featured as an important part of their narratives because of their failures to care for their children. Though some expressed

guilt over these failures, they also asserted the strength of their bond with their children, which was an important source of self-esteem and resilience. Most incarcerated mothers struggle with the experience of separation from their children and the difficulties and fears they have in terms of maintaining their maternal ties. The strength and self-worth that they draw from their roles as mothers also helps them to cope with incarcerated life and provides a reason for them to resist criminogenic behaviour in the future.

Besides children, the needs of others with whom women had important relationships, particularly partners and parents, provided a rationale for crime. In most of these cases, women were motivated by the need to “fix” or protect a partner or a parent, or to otherwise satisfy their desires, in order to maintain the relationship. In some cases, these relationships also provided support for the women while incarcerated.

Lastly, this study highlights the heavy burden of responsibility that circumstances of structural poverty, parental neglect and substance abuse place on children, as well as the gendered nature of the responsibilities placed on girls. The findings suggest that the difficulty children have in coping with adult responsibilities, and their inability to express this difficulty, may silence them and/or drive them to risky behaviours that seem to offer a means of escape as well as physical and psychological support. They further suggest that circumstances of poverty interact with the gendered messages inherent in the responsibilities assigned to young girls, as well as those that girls internalise from their surroundings, to reinforce a sense of social exclusion and shame that may create the need to acquire wealth at any cost.

ADDICTION

Substance abuse is a major problem faced by South African society. The Western Cape in particular has a high rate of serious substance use and abuse, with the highest prevalence of risky drinking in the country (Harker et al., 2008), and the use of crystal methamphetamine, especially on the Cape Flats, having reached epidemic proportions (Plüddemann, Myers and Parry, 2007). It is thus not surprising that various forms of addiction – to alcohol, drugs and gambling – came up repeatedly in this research.

Internationally, substance abuse is a recurring feature of women's criminality. Substance abuse problems have been consistently found to be over-represented in female prison populations, compared to the general population (Moloney et al., 2009): 80% of women in Canadian federal prisons have substance abuse problems (Buchanan et al., 2011) and in England and Wales, 90% of women prisoners have a diagnosable mental disorder, substance addiction (either pre-existing, or developed while incarcerated), or both (World Health Organisation, 2007). Women offenders are also likely to report having been *dependent* on drugs, as opposed to having used drugs recreationally (Carlen & Worrall, 2004), and having used drugs prior to committing a crime (Cann, 2006). Studies have found that women prisoners' substance abuse is frequently predated by several types of trauma, including problematic family dynamics, childhood victimisation, loss of family members, children or friends, and dysfunctional relationships with significant men (fathers, boyfriends, husbands) (Buchanan et al., 2011). Amongst incarcerated women, there is a propensity to use substances as a form of self-medication, as a coping strategy or as a means of escape from unresolved traumas. This can often lead to addiction (Moloney et al., 2009). Buchanan et al. (2001) also found that a common reason for drug taking was simply curiosity. These findings resonate strongly in our sample.

Almost half of the women had histories of substance abuse or gambling addiction.¹²³ Alcohol and drugs played a central role in 23.6% of the women's

¹²³ Our sampling technique may have had an effect on reducing the number of substance abusers in the sample. Firstly, in order to ensure that all participant consent was valid, one of our criteria for inclusion in the project was that no offender who was undergoing drug detoxification or who was still severely addicted to drugs at the time of the research could participate. Secondly, all participants volunteered to be part of the project, and it is likely that some women who were still using drugs at the time of the research chose not to participate, so as not to implicate themselves in ongoing illegal drug use.

offending behaviour, and three women's gambling addictions were the cause of their offending. Although we didn't specifically ask about substance abuse or addiction in the interviews, a number of women themselves brought up the topic. In fact, this was frequently one of the first things mentioned by women who were addicted to substances or gambling, often as a way of explaining the series of events and choices that resulted in their incarceration. While the women's addictions were often deeply embedded in their life stories and pathways to criminality. Their addictions exposed the women to risky people, behaviours and situations that they otherwise might have been protected from, and combined with other factors and experiences (including abuse, poverty, disempowerment and isolation from support networks) to bring them to where they are today. Addiction was thus an important, if not central feature of many of these women's lives (although not always of the crime itself for which they were incarcerated).

Compared to the interview data, the statistics collected in the surveys slightly under represent the actual number of women addicted to substances. For example, while nine women mentioned using alcohol "often" on their surveys, 11 reported this behaviour in their interview. Similarly, six women reported using drugs "often" on the survey, while more than twice as many mentioned drug use in their interviews (n=15). Public health literature shows that underreporting of alcohol and drug use is fairly common (Stockwell et al., 2004; Mensch & Kandel, 1988), and the discrepancies in our data are thus to be expected. This under-reporting may also be because some women did not initially feel comfortable disclosing how frequently they had used substances, but during the course of the interviews disclosed that their substance use had in fact been more prolific than originally reported. It may also be that women who came from communities with high rates of substance use and abuse did not think that their use was excessive or problematic; rather, it was only when they were explaining in a narrative form how their substance use had impacted negatively on their lives that they acknowledged how harmful it had been. Few of the women who described heavy drug and alcohol consumption and dependency over extended periods of time referred to themselves as 'addicts' or 'alcoholics'. Women reported using methaqualone ('Mandrax' or 'buttons'), crystal methamphetamine ('tik'), cocaine, heroin, MDMA ('ecstasy'), lysergic acid

diethylamide ('LSD' or 'acid'), marijuana ('dagga'), and prescription sleeping pills/sedatives.

Three women in our sample were gamblers.¹²⁴ The three gambling addicts in our sample did describe themselves as being addicted, perhaps because gambling is a more socially acceptable addiction than substance abuse.

DRUGS AND CRIME: DIRECT CAUSES AND BACKGROUND CONTEXT

Substance abuse affected the criminal behaviour of the women in two ways: directly, in that their behaviour was 'fuelled' by alcohol or drugs, or in that they committed crimes in order to finance their addictions; and indirectly, in that their substance abuse constrained their choices and limited their opportunities. Substances were in some cases not a causal factor, so much as one of many factors that conflated to result in criminal behaviour. As described elsewhere in this report, addiction cannot be looked at in isolation, but is part of the 'context' that gave rise to the women's choice to commit crime. Addictions do not exist in a vacuum and they link closely to several other features of women's lives, especially family and peer relationships, childhood abuse, domestic abuse, financial need, and criminal activity. Substance-related behaviour and addictions are often just one step on women's pathways to criminality and incarceration.

Early Influences of Alcohol and Drugs

Just over a third of the women who had a substance abuse problem (8 out of 23) grew up surrounded by substance use and abuse in their families and communities. Rose, who grew up in a farming community where alcoholism was the norm, illustrates both the ubiquity and availability of alcohol when she says, "On the farm, *everyone* drinks, even children drink, little, big, everyone drinks ... because it is there, you have it in your house, there's wine, you go to a friend's house, there's wine, everywhere, there's wine." Such familiarity with substance abuse developed among other women who

¹²⁴ While this study does not attempt to be representative of South African women offenders, or of women criminals, it should be noted that in a sample of 55 women, three is not an insignificant amount and it is likely that there are several more gambling addicts in South African correctional facilities.

were constantly exposed to drugs and alcohol as children, and substance use was normalised for them. Elize's parents used Mandrax daily during her childhood, and while she was initially opposed to drug-taking, she came to use tik a party drug, to fit in because "everyone's using tik," and eventually became reliant on it to help her "forget all troubles I had just now and I felt high and, but I felt peaceful as well." The combination of her familiarity with drug use established by the example set by her parents, peer pressure, and the soothing effect tik had for her culminated in her addiction. Fancy Face similarly describes how drugs were readily available and substance use was normalised where she grew up: her father was a sort of 'drug lord' and her brother was a prominent dealer. Somewhat ironically, her father refused to let her and her siblings have a relationship with their mother because she was an alcoholic. In the absence of positive parental influences, she began using and dealing drugs, because she had no other employment prospects and it helped pass the time. Describing the sense of inevitability of involvement in drugs for young people in her community she said, "... many people sell drugs in Steenberg [place name changed] because there is no work in that place. And there are many young people that get into drugs because there is no work, and there are no opportunities that they can be busy with during the day." The combination of dysfunctional family dynamics and structural impediments within her community put her on a path to drug use and crime.

In some cases, the women who grew up in such circumstances were given their first drink or drug by a family member. Cynthia grew up surrounded by drugs and drug taking - she smoked marijuana recreationally as a teenager, and her drug-dealer father introduced her to hard drugs as an adult, when she was looking for a way to deal with the multiple crises she was having: her ex-husband, who was incarcerated, started threatening her and her employers, resulting in her becoming unemployed, and then evicted from her flat, and her son was molested. She said: "I suppose all the issues that I hadn't dealt with all just, you know ... everything just got too much for me. And so my father introduced me. My father gave me my first pipe." Cynthia later married a drug dealer, and described (somewhat fondly) how he supported her drug abuse: "... life was good, he was a good provider. ... [H]e fed my own habit [...] and, um, yeah life was good."

Peers were another important influence on women's substance use, and some women started drinking and taking drugs out of curiosity, boredom or to fit in with their friends. Kerri-Anne came from a good, financially stable family and had a happy childhood, but she started taking drugs – as many children do – simply to be 'cool'. Unlike her, Barbie did not have an easy childhood – her father was incarcerated for almost all of her life, and her mother struggled to raise her and her seven siblings alone – and her friends' influence over her outweighed her family's. She started drinking and taking drugs when she was 12 years old because her friends – one of whom was a drug dealer – were doing it, and it was common practice in her community, and she wanted to try it. For these women, weakened parental bonds allowed the space for their peers to become a powerful negative influence.

Dealing with Trauma, Creating Escape and Release

For the majority (82.6%) of the women with substance abuse problems, substances enabled emotional release or allowed them to escape mentally from difficult situations, including childhood abuse and neglect, domestic abuse (physical, sexual, psychological, and economic), divorce, and the death of family members and children. These contexts of abuse and trauma diminished the women's options for coping, and substances became a viable alternative. These women also often felt that they had little support family and friends, who might otherwise have helped them cope with or escape their difficult situations. In the absence of this support they turned to substances.

Several women described single incidents or long and complex histories of trauma and the cumulative unhappiness that led directly to their substance use and subsequent addiction. Rose started drinking after having been raped as a teenager, as a way to quell her fear of the perpetrator: "I was very young and I was scared that he would hurt me or kill me ... From 16 I started to drink and come home late and not worry. That's when I began to drink." Ruby started taking prescription sedatives to deal with her husband's physical, sexual and psychological abuse and his threats to do the same to her daughter. She said, "It was it was very difficult but with the drugs I, I could stay strong." Cheryl started using tik after she discovered that her husband was having an affair with her sister, which she describes as her

“downfall.” Catnip identifies the cause of her sleeping pill addiction as her 1-year old son’s death, and her husband subsequently leaving her. However, she describes long-term childhood sexual abuse at the hands of her father and grandfather, neglect and abandonment by her mother, who had known about the abuse and done nothing, living on the street for a while, and an abusive marriage to a man who openly cheated on her. She finally resorted to taking sleeping pills to numb the pain: “After his death I went into a depression. ... [A]nd I used a lot of tablets, especially sleeping tablets. I was drinking eight tablets in the morning and eight in the evening. Because the sleep, the two sleeping tablets didn’t want to, to do anything anymore”

Unfortunately for these women, what began as a means of escape soon became part of their problems. For example, Annie told how her drug addiction began in response to the emotional pain of having been sexually abused as a child. She began using, and found that being high helped her escape mentally from the trauma of abuse: “I think my way to deal with it was to use drugs. It was certainly my way to get away from it all.” As an adult, she became involved with a man who was an alcoholic, and who beat her, so she started drinking heavily to cope with the abuse. She was later in a debilitating motorcycle accident that left her on crutches for two years, and her boyfriend left her, at which point she turned to heavy drugs: “He left me for another girl. It was too much for me, I couldn’t accept it ... I couldn’t handle it.” Annie’s story illustrates how women use substances to numb the pain of the collective impact of multiple traumas, especially in the absence of alternative coping strategies and under the influence of drug-using peers. It also illustrates how addiction brought her in contact with people who would ultimately lead to her criminality – in Annie’s case, her drug dependency alienated her from her children and her parents, and got her involved with a Nigerian drug dealer who strong-armed her into trafficking drugs into South Africa.

Given the social and economic marginalisation that many of these women faced and the lack of positive support structures (especially parents) in many of their lives, it is not surprising that they turned to alcohol and drugs as a means of escape and release in the absence of other healthier alternatives. Unfortunately, given their already challenging circumstances, substance abuse further restricted their life choices, and became the aggravating

factor that led to their downwards spirals into crime. As Sybil said: “[Life] was not tough [before]. It became tough when I started going on drugs!”

Substance Abuse as Isolating

Substance abuse damaged women’s support systems and isolated them from family and friends who might have diverted them away from criminal activities. Further, drug use excluded women from legal employment and provided them with an entrée into criminal social circles that encouraged their criminal behaviour. For many women, the same factors that led to their substance use – experiences of trauma, lack of support, blocked access to legal employment – caused them to feel that they had no options other than crime. A cycle developed whereby women became addicted to a substance, which lead to criminal behaviour, which lead to regret and fear, which in turn led back to increased indulgence in the addictive behaviour to suppress those feelings. As they became more isolated, women’s capacities for exiting the cycle became extremely limited

Several women described how their substance abuse had damaged relationships with parents, siblings and children and disrupted family bonds. Substances became the overriding priority in their lives, displacing allegiance to family, partners, and children. Women reported betraying their family’s trust, verbally and physically abusing family members, and stealing from family members to fund their addictions. Women had neglected their children because they lost all interest in anything not related to getting high, because they did not want their children to see them under the influence of substances, and because their substance use clouded their judgement and made them incapable of distinguishing between healthy and harmful behaviour. They physically and emotionally abused their children, left them with their mothers while they went out with friends, and drank or used drugs while pregnant. Kerri-Anne, who was addicted to crack cocaine and tik, explains the powerful effect of drugs as follows: “I had no compassion for other people at all. I would do anything for drugs, steal from [family] and sell it for drugs.” Annie similarly describes how she had little regard for her family and friends. Annie was addicted to crack and alcohol and she stole from her family in order to pay for substances. Further, she neglected and abused her children – including drinking heavily while pregnant. She spent

the inheritance her son's father left him on drugs – and in her absence her mother had to look after them. She fought constantly – and often violently – with her parents and consequently stayed away from home and spent more time with her friends, who encouraged her to continue taking drugs. She explained: “[drugs] made me terribly aggressive and I wasn't worried who I hurt in the process.” Annie's story illustrates how harmful substance abuse can be for addicts' families and children, and the way in which it drives people away, isolating addicts from support networks that might otherwise have mitigated their involvement in criminal activities.

Substance-Driven Crime

Women in our study who were addicted to or frequently used alcohol were likely to have committed violent crimes. This comports with findings reported in the international literature that amongst women offenders, alcohol intoxication is frequently associated with arrest for a violent crime (Grella et al., 2005). The literature on alcohol and aggression shows that for both women and men, alcohol can have an aggravating effect on social interactions that otherwise might not have escalated beyond a simple disagreement (Parry & Dewing, 2006; Anderson, Chisholm & Fuhr, 2009). This was certainly true for the women in our sample – of the 11 women who heavily used or abused alcohol, seven (63%; 12.7% of our total sample) fatally stabbed people in the course of drunken arguments. Zizipho got in a fight with her brother-in-law after they had both been drinking heavily, resulting in her stabbing him to death. Leonie, who attributes her violence to her being drunk, accidentally stabbed and killed her aunt during a bar fight with another woman. Marlene, who was badly addicted to alcohol and heavily intoxicated at the time, fatally stabbed a friend (who was also drunk) in the course of an argument. Rose, who fatally stabbed the father of her child in the course of an alcohol-fuelled argument over the child's paternity, and over his drug use, explains how alcohol aggravated her behaviour: “Aggression is when something builds up here, inside, usually for a long period of time and then you drink alcohol on top of that, then your mind become large, you will then explode and you can't think positively at that time.”

Of the women who abused drugs, one third (9% of our total sample) had committed financially-motivated crimes (drug trafficking, robbery, and fraud) as a means of financing their addictions (or in one case, in an attempt to raise enough money to send herself to rehabilitation). These findings are supported by international research, which has found that illegal drug use is most often associated with arrest for property offences (Grella et al., 2005) and that substance-dependant women's criminal activity is often closely linked to financing their addictions (Buchanan et al., 2011). For example, Kerri-Anne, who was badly addicted to drugs needed money to fund her addiction and to support herself, so she started trafficking drugs, which she found very lucrative. Similarly, Cheryl had been financially stable – she managed an upmarket hair salon, and she owned her own house and car – but once she started using tik she quit her job, and quickly ran out of money. She began committing credit card fraud and theft in order to support her habit. She says that she “lost everything” to her addiction. For other women, the link was perhaps less direct: their substance use brought them into contact with other drug users, who encouraged them to commit crime. For example, when Jana started taking drugs, she also began socialising with a gang, and fell into their lifestyle. Her job did not provide her with enough money to pay for her drug habit, and so she started committing robberies with the gang. She admits: “... while I was drugging, my whole life spun out of control.” This highlights the way in which substance abuse exposes women to criminogenic people and opportunities from which they might otherwise have been protected.

In four cases, it was not the women's own substance abuse that led to their criminal behaviour, but their partners'. Their stories illustrate how substance abuse combines with family responsibility, abuse and limited options to produce pathways to crime. Nazley's mother-in-law had facilitated her violent son's drug habit for years by giving him money “so that he doesn't strip [get angry]and perform in the house.” Eventually, Nazley started supporting his habit to stave off attacks because, as she described, “he's not violent. ... when he doesn't have the drug, when he's very violent.” At least part of her motivation for committing her crimes (robbery and murder in the course of robbery) was to gain financial independence from him so that she could divorce him. Bilqees's husband was badly addicted to drugs for

many years, and she committed fraud in order to obtain money to send him to rehabilitation. Describing how helpless and desperate she felt, she said,

It was hectic. He used to just stay away from home for three, four days and come back. And I couldn't handle it. And the day that he told me he's ready to go to rehab I had to make a plan. ... I've always been successful. I've always worked for what I had. And when I got married it's like my whole life came down. [crying] And now I'm in prison and for what? ... But I so much wanted to help him get clean. ... but it didn't work. Even he was clean for three years now, now he's back on drugs again, what was the use?

Their partners' substance abuse, along with the women's own isolation from support networks, constrained their choices in much the same way that other women's substance abuse limited their options.

Gambling

As with the majority of women who abused substances, the roots of two women's gambling addictions were emotional trauma and loss (the third woman could not explain why she began gambling). Nola was raped and sexually abused by her uncle as a child, and suffered physical and psychological abuse from her father, who was an alcoholic. Unable to deal with this trauma, and abandoned those she perceived as her support, she turned to gambling – as she says: “choosing to escape and not even thinking about my husband or my son.” Similarly, Laurene's gambling began socially, as a form of entertainment after she got divorced, and for five years it was under control, but when her son committed suicide, she started playing riskier games, with greater amounts of money. She said, “All I could think about eventually was my next ... evening at the casino. ... there was this need to get to the machine where I was anaesthetised. I felt nothing. No pain, no anger at anybody.” These findings are consistent with the international literature, which shows that women's gambling addictions often develop in response to personal problems, psychological distress or loneliness as an escape mechanism (Abbott & McKenna, 2005).

These women were all relatively well-off and employed in 'white collar' jobs in positions of responsibility for their company's finances. They received decent salaries, at least enough to cover their personal expenses and needs outside of gambling. However, their uncontrollable gambling was so expensive (ranging from hundreds of thousands to millions of Rands) that they were unable to finance it legally. Their crimes were thus a direct result of their gambling addictions: all three committed fraud against the companies for which they worked. In all three cases, the women's fraud snowballed rapidly. They started stealing small amounts, which got progressively larger, as the amounts they were gambling with got larger. Describing how her gambling addiction and associated fraud took on a life of its own, Claire said:

How is it possible that an addiction can take you on so quickly?
Where was my logic? Where was my thinking? Where was my
morals? Where was my principles? Where was 'This is wrong.
Stop doing it!?' I told myself, 'This is wrong, stop doing it,' but
I kept on doing it. It's like I threw caution to the wind. It didn't
matter anymore.

These findings comport with the international literature, which has found that the majority of problem gamblers' crimes are committed for the purposes of getting money to gamble and to pay off gambling debts, and that as the severity of a gambling problem increases, participation in criminal activity also increases (Abbott & McKenna, 2005; Zorland, et al., 2008). The women's engagement in both gambling and crime also isolated them from family, support structures and pro-social influences in similar ways to the substance-abusing women in our study. Two women hid their gambling from their families, which perhaps allowed the problem to foment. Claire remarked during her interview that had her gambling problem been more obvious to her family they might have stopped her before she committed fraud. For Nola, gambling caused her relationship with her husband became strained, and made her neglect her young son while she was gambling. She said, "I used to sit in front of the computer. I didn't speak to my son, I didn't care if my son was standing outside of school for two hours or if he did his homework or not, I didn't care about anybody. Just as long as I could switch off and gamble". She also abused her family's trust by stealing from her sister in order to gamble and by using her family members' insurance

policies to commit the fraud, thus implicating them in the crime. The stress of her unhappy home life (which was in part unhappy because of her gambling) led to increased gambling as a way of escaping her problems, which led to greater debt and a need to further defraud her company, and a vicious cycle developed.

Two of the women sought help to stop their gambling, although neither was successful. Nola attended Gamblers Anonymous meetings after being arrested and before her incarceration. Years before being caught, Claire saw a psychiatrist to try and quit gambling and committing fraud. Laurene, who did not seek help in ending her addiction, drew attention to the fact that casinos encourage unhealthy gambling behaviour – despite their disclaimers that ‘responsible gamblers know when to stop’ – and that, unlike with drug abuse, gambling is almost a socially acceptable addiction. She thus felt that she had little incentive or support for seeking help for her addiction.

ADDICTIONS, ARREST AND INCARCERATION

For three women, the stressor that led to their drug use was having committed or having been arrested for the crime for which they are now incarcerated. It took nine months for Morag to be arrested for having hired someone to kill her husband, and during that time she felt both free of his abuse, but constantly nervous that her involvement in his death would be discovered. To quell her anxiety, she began drinking, and became addicted. Lena began using tik in a police station holding cell after having been arrested for killing the woman her husband had been having an affair with. She describes: “I was still in shock because they told me that I stabbed her 13 times and I just couldn’t imagine that it was me. ... [A]nd I didn’t have a cigarette ... And I took [tik] and it was *lekker* for me and I just went on with it.” Tokkie, who had never before used drugs, began smoking tik while she was out of prison on bail (for contracting to murder her husband, and fraud). She had no family, and in the absence of any support structure turned to her co-accused for support, who in turn encouraged her to try tik. Describing how quickly the addiction took hold, she says, “And I started and then my problems started. It’s a drug you get addicted to immediately. It’s a very strong drug.”

Correctional facilities are difficult environments in which to stop using substances and deal with addiction, as apart from Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous meetings, which are not always held regularly, there is little support for addicts going through withdrawal. Describing the experience of having felt alone in dealing with her addiction and withdrawal, Cynthia said: “you basically left to deal with your issues on your own. A lot of the members say yes they can help you and they here to help you and, but they can’t really.”

Despite this, incarceration, although in itself not an enjoyable experience, created positive change in several women’s lives, in that it has resulted in them stopping their substance abuse, gambling and related destructive behaviour. Fifteen women reported having participated in drug rehabilitation programmes while the correctional facility, and one reported participating in an alcohol rehabilitation programme.¹²⁵ There are no rehabilitation or support programmes for gambling addicts in Worcester,¹²⁶ and the women felt that this was a problem as they have not dealt with their gambling addictions.

However, the primary cause of women’s desistance from substance use – other than that their access to substances and gambling was greatly reduced (or absent, in the case of gambling) while incarcerated – was that the stressors that had driven them to substance abuse were now, if not gone, at a distance. For two women who had trafficked drugs, the experience of seeing other offenders badly addicted to drugs was sobering. The correctional facility environment provided a ‘reality check’ for them, and they felt remorse for having been part of the system that gets people hooked on drugs. The positive impact incarceration had is best described in the women’s own words. Jennifer feels that in a way it was good that she was caught and incarcerated, because that stopped the downwards spiral she was on, saying “I didn’t have that control over my life because I was just start to drink. ... So maybe God that stopped me to do that and bring me here to that place.” Rose, who had been drinking from a young age, and who at least partially blames alcohol for the role it played in her committing

¹²⁵ Not all of the women reported comprehensively on every programme they have done, so it is possible that this is an under-representation.

¹²⁶ Again, we are not aware of any gambling rehabilitation programmes in Pollsmoor, as no women from our Pollsmoor sample were gamblers, and none mentioned the need for rehabilitation.

murder, was only able to stop drinking when she was incarcerated. She said, "... now I have had a lot of time to think about what I did all that time ... I can turn things around." Elize felt that the correctional system had saved her from drugs: "If I didn't come here, I would have still been on drugs or I'd been dead."

Some women's relationships with family members – most especially their mothers – have improved since coming to prison and getting off drugs. Annie, who had used hard drugs, including Mandrax and heroin, for 15 years, decided to stop using drugs after only a few months in the correctional facility because she felt guilty for all she had already put her family through, and did not want to add to that by receiving a further charge for using drugs while incarcerated. As a result, her relationship with her mother and her children, which had been badly damaged by her drug use, is now greatly improved:

We have a relationship now that we never had before. Every time I say to my mother, I feel so bad about those things [I did], especially all the times I fought with her, and everything that I did to [my children]. She knows that it's the drugs that did that to me. She doesn't blame me ... it's things from the past. That's finished, it's a life that's over. My children also say it's the drugs that did it to me.

Lena, too, has found that her relationship with her mother and children has improved since she came to prison: "I have a lovely relationship with my mother and my children *now* ... and that was never there the time I were using drugs." Hopefully these renewed relationships will provide the pro-social bonds and support that the women were previously lacking, and will help them reintegrate into society and desist from reoffending once they are released.

This is of course not to say that incarceration has 'cured' any of these women of their addictions; the true test of whether they will be able to give up their substance abuse and gambling will be when they are released. A few women reported currently feeling the urge to use alcohol or drugs, and some believe that they may use again on release. Some women expressed being torn between knowing what's 'right' and the urge to continue using

substances, and worried that they will be unable to resist the temptations outside. For some, the reasons for abstaining were physiological – Marlene said, “I know now that I will surely die if I drink again. But the irony is that I probably would try it again if I could.” Similarly, Nola said that despite being aware of the fact that gambling is an addiction much like alcoholism and that she should never gamble again, she feels that she will be unable to give it up once she is released, admitting that “I know I’m going to gamble.”

For others, mending their family relationships was of primary importance – Cynthia said, “I’ve gotta think of my children and I’ve made them a promise and I’ve gotta do this for them. ... If I can just stay drug free then I should be okay.” However, the reality is that for many of these women, the problems that led them to addiction have not yet been resolved, and the relationships and support systems necessary to help them readjust to life outside the correctional facility are severely attenuated.

DISCUSSION

This project was designed to address two important gaps in criminological research. Firstly, in terms of South African scholarship, it is the first in-depth, qualitative study that examines the etiology of female crime and women's experiences of incarceration. Secondly, the project adds to the international literature by exploring the South African experience. While many of the key features that characterise the lives of incarcerated women in other countries, including poverty, multiple victimisations, loss and marginalisation, are shared by the women interviewed for this study, the findings demonstrate how these experiences are shaped by the historical and cultural context of South Africa and by the specifically gendered social position that women occupy within it. The study further elucidates how this context constrains the coping and survival strategies that women in South Africa are able to envision, thereby leading to the possibility of crime.

REVISITING THEORY: PATHWAYS AND CONTEXT

The project was conceived as a "pathways" study, following the tradition of "feminist pathways research," which we understood as:

[R]esearch that attempts to examine girls' and women's ... histories, allowing them, when possible, 'voice' in order to understand the link between childhood and adult events and traumas and the likelihood of subsequent offending (Belknap, 2001, p. 61).

The term 'pathway' is frequently used in sociological and epidemiological research to explain the linkages between a risk factor or exposure, and an outcome. Thus, the purpose of this study was to identify shared experiences and patterns in the lives of incarcerated women and to understand how these experiences interact and shape women's choices to engage in particular forms of criminal behaviour.

Throughout the research process, and particularly when the interpretation and analysis of the data began, the researchers questioned their ability

to identify a “pathway” amidst the myriad of important details that the women spoke about. Moreover, it was clear that each story was unique and that each woman’s pathway, should we be able to identify one, would be different, in potentially relevant ways, to all of the others.

Our uneasiness with identifying a singular pathway (or even several pathways) to women’s criminality mirrors feminist critiques of life course theory, which identifies turning points in an individual’s life trajectory that place them at risk of becoming delinquent or criminal (see for example, Sampson & Laub, 2005a, 2005b). Feminist criminologists have argued that to reduce women’s experiences to a series of risk factors that drive criminality is both essentialist and overly deterministic (for example, Richie, 1994; Belknap & Holsinger, 2006). Given the highly gendered nature of these factors – including social context, the disproportionate burden of poverty and care, and race – feminist theorists have argued that life events produce multiple, but more importantly *individual*, pathways to criminality.

Despite the emphasis on individual experience, feminist pathways theorists have identified commonalities across women’s lives that placed them at increased risk of criminality. These include: experiences of coerced or incestuous sex during and after childhood, intercourse at a young age, abandonment, substance abuse, a lack of parental guidance, inconsistent and physically injurious punishment by parents, a lack of positive (good) relationships with men, poverty and marginality (Daly, 1992; Chesney-Lind & Rodriguez, 1983; James & Meyerding, 1977; McClellan et al 1997; Belknap, 2001; Rivera & Widom, 1990). This commonality was also mirrored in our findings. It is clear from our analysis that there were many shared features in the narratives we collected. A history of child abuse, domestic violence, poverty, mothering and responsibility for others, and addiction were all issues that the women raised repeatedly.

These features were also inextricably inter-related. Thus, even where one of these factors stood out as a driving force in the particular woman’s “pathway” to crime, it was never the only important one; it had to be understood in relation to other particular aspects of the woman’s experience and to the way in which all of these converged to create circumstances which, for that individual woman, were criminogenic. The ‘messiness’ of the inter-

relationships between and among risk factors and life histories illustrates what Wesely (2006) describes as the importance of 'context' – the complex nexus of events and conditions that make up lived experience. It is this confluence of factors or combined context, that is experienced in a way that creates a constrained environment within which women may decide to commit crime. Certainly, the women in our sample experienced (and endured) a range of different events and institutional barriers: deaths, trauma, childhood abuse, domestic violence, poverty, dislocation and homelessness. They came from backgrounds of powerlessness, experienced gender-specific sexualisation and exploitation, fractured relationships, economic vulnerability, social alienation and exclusion. The combined reality of these experiences set the women up with social, behavioural and emotional deficits that shaped, constrained and catalysed their life decisions, behaviour, options of livelihood and coping strategies (including violence).

We are not arguing that a particular combination of risk factors is a 'recipe' for criminality. There is no fixed list of factors that can be said to causally create criminal behaviour. To suggest this would undermine the women's agency in their own lives and in the execution of their crimes. We are also not arguing that men and boys do not experience similar impediments and events. They do (albeit differently). We are arguing, however, that these experiences and the circumstances that they create are typical of the particular social position that women (especially in South Africa) occupy – marked by high levels of abuse, gendered socialisation and economic marginalisation. When women have these experiences, their options are shaped and compounded by the underlying inequality and oppression that brought them to that position in the first place, limiting their available support structures and coping strategies. The combined effect is to create a sense of isolation, and the lasting impression which women can count on no one but themselves. Thus, whatever the socio-economic, educational and other differences between and among the women, there are key features of their lived experience that work together to affect the choices that they make. These features combine to create a context in which women's and girls' resources for escaping and surviving their 'context' (often characterised by poverty and abuse) are so limited that they must depend on illegal activities to stay alive, and where violence has become so normalised that it may become a possible response.

The benefit of conceptualising women's criminality as a response to a constrained and problematic context, rather than a pathway, is in understanding that for these women choosing not to commit crime is perhaps not as simple as avoiding a particular experience or factor. Their lived experience is such that one cannot simply step off of the (negative) pathway, and onto one which detours away from crime. For almost every woman in our sample, their lived reality was characterised by layer upon layer of abuse, loss, financial and emotional isolation, and weakened social bonds. The cumulative effect of this context created an intractability that limited women's perceptions of legitimate problem-solving opportunities, and steered them toward the people and circumstances that would eventually lead to their incarceration.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN EXPERIENCE

Any comparison between the findings from this study and research data on women from other jurisdictions must proceed with some caution. Different sampling procedures and data collection methods¹²⁷ impact on the data in ways that make comparison with other studies difficult. The differences in legal and policy frameworks make these comparisons all the more complex¹²⁸. Perhaps more important, though, is that statistics do not present the texture and complexity of the women's lives. The purpose of a qualitative study of this nature, therefore, is to go beyond statistics.¹²⁹ The loosely guided interview method, which encouraged women to focus on what they felt were the salient features of their lives produced richly detailed and nuanced narratives which were deeply rooted in South African lived experiences.

127 Our study used a variety of data collection techniques with a relatively small, purposive sample of incarcerated women. Other studies have used a variety of sampling methods and populations, which makes direct comparison difficult. For example studies have been done with delinquent girls in an institutional setting (Belknap & Holsinger, 2006), large- (Carlson & Shafer, 2010), medium- (Simpson et al, 2008) and smaller-scale (DeHart, 2008; Pollack, 2007) studies with incarcerated women in North America. The range of data collection techniques further complicates direct comparison: some studies use in-depth interviews, others use life-history techniques, some use survey methodologies.

128 For example, stringent drug laws and three-strikes sentencing frameworks in parts of the United States have been widely accepted to have had a disproportionate effect on women's incarceration.

129 Given the overtly qualitative nature of the study, we made the methodological choice to sacrifice sample size in pursuit of the depth of information. As a result, we were not able to undertake statistical analyses as to the differences between and among race groups that may have been interesting (and indeed, important).

Experiences of Race

Given the age of our sample (64% of the women were between 18 and 39 years old), most women grew up in the shadow of apartheid. The apartheid legacy was evident in the circumstances of extreme structural poverty that many women described, including the low levels of educational achievement and high levels of unemployment. The researchers initially asked participants about racial discrimination and participation in the struggle against apartheid. The quizzical expressions with which these questions were generally met suggested to the researchers that the women in the study were unsure how to understand or respond to them. Strikingly, only one woman described a particular experience of discrimination or marginalisation based on race.¹³⁰ Certainly, the circumstances of extreme poverty, poor education and limited employment opportunities that many women grew up in were fundamentally shaped by the laws and the legacy of apartheid. It is possible, however, that the participants failed to make the connection between these circumstances which were, for them, a normal and pervasive part of everyday life, and the more individual experiences that they associated with their pathways to crime. It may also have been difficult for the women to articulate this connection in a way that enabled them to respond in any detail to these questions. We stopped asking these questions as the interviews progressed, expecting that experiences of race would emerge naturally – as did experiences of substance abuse, for example – where the women themselves perceived them to be a salient part of their narrative. We further decided not to probe this issue, because we didn't want to lead participants.

During the interview process, we repeatedly asked ourselves why we were not hearing more about race. It simply didn't make sense to us, as researchers, that Black and Coloured women who grew up during and immediately after apartheid did not see issues of race as a central feature of their lived experiences. The women's silence about race, however,

¹³⁰ The incident occurred in 1992 in Queen's workplace, where she was made to feel "small and stupid." Specifically, she described how her co-workers refrained from using the toilet she had used, preferring to wait for another to become vacant.

is an important finding in and of itself.¹³¹ In part, the answer may be methodological. We propose that the relative absence of reflections on race in our data may (at least in part) be an artefact of interviewing the women *in* correctional settings. While our interviews and supporting data collection methods encouraged women to reflect in totality on their life histories and experiences that had eventually led to their incarceration, the reality of life in the correctional facilities is so far removed from those circumstances as to blur those connections. A number of women described how prison is a disconnected place where women live without most of the relationships, routines and realities that make up daily life on the outside. We hypothesise that while this separation may have provided some of the women the ‘space’ to reflect back on their lives in a way that they may not have been able to do while outside the correctional system, it simultaneously (paradoxically) sublimated direct references to race as a context-relevant factor given that the women’s lives in the system – regardless of race – are similarly structured.

The answer may equally lie in the nature of society and lived reality in South Africa. Race, and more specifically the structural landscape that apartheid created, is so deeply entrenched in South African society that it may be hardly visible to the women at all. Likewise, the struggle to survive from one day to the next may not afford these women the luxury of pondering the inequalities of race. Thus, in his deeply qualitative exploration of the social histories of five Black women in post-apartheid South Africa, Motsemme (2002) highlights how one woman “consumed by survival, motherhood and wifeness” maintained that she had “little time and contact with formalised political structures and events around her” (p.664). Noting how her narrative focused on daily household routines and responsibilities, Motsemme argues that this “forces us to rethink how women construct time, events and modes of selfhood during critical historical moments” (p.665). Citing studies that point to the fact that women’s recollections tend to be intertwined with the daily chores of family and work, she asserts that women’s experiences and self-perceptions are shaped by their envelopment in domestic and family life.

131 The extent of this silence may be partially explained by the under-representation of Black women, and over-representation of White women, in the sample. Almost half of the sample identified as Coloured women, however, who were also subject to severe discrimination and segregation during apartheid. The silence may also have something to do with the researchers’ identities. Although a Black, Xhosa speaking researcher conducted most of the interviews of Black women, the rest of the interviews were conducted by White women, three of whom were not native South Africans. These differences may have introduced race- and culture-based dynamics.

The structural conditions imposed by apartheid as well as the struggle against them nevertheless had important consequences for women both in terms of their lived experiences and for their identities as women. An important factor that came up in the interviews was family separation and dislocation. For many Black women in South Africa, the experience of family dislocation became the norm during the apartheid years. The so-called “pass laws” that restricted the movement and residential rights of those defined as Black, Coloured or Indian (in terms of the racial classifications of the apartheid regime),¹³² and the absence of employment opportunities in the areas in which they lived, meant that breadwinners frequently lived separately from their families, often many hours away. This was the case for a number of the women in our sample, who spoke about living with or being raised by a relative because a parent was living elsewhere for work purposes. It was particularly common for women to report having been raised, under these circumstances, by their grandmothers. These women generally described their grandmothers’ homes as places of happiness and safety. Grandmothers, however, were older and often passed away when their grandchildren were still young, causing these women to experience a significant loss at an early stage of their lives. Indeed, the loss of a grandmother was frequently mentioned as an important turning point, which was followed by a return to a situation of abuse, increased poverty, dislocation and/or leaving school.

The struggle against apartheid and the negotiation of a post-apartheid identity have also had a notable impact on female roles and identities. In her discussion of gendered experiences of blackness in post-apartheid South Africa, Motsemme (2002) points out how challenges to the structures and assumptions of patriarchy were perceived as threatening to an “imagined black solidarity” (p.649) and how the “discursive space of black female-male relationships thus remains vividly coloured with silences and myths” that support and reinforce those structures and assumptions. In particular, these myths (e.g., that “racism is harder on males than females” and of “man as supporter, protector, provider and decision-maker” [citing Ramphele, 2000, p.115]) excuse aggressive male behaviour, including anger, irritability and

¹³² The rights of people belonging to other ethnic groups, such as the Chinese, were also restricted. (Group Areas Act, Act No 41 of 1950; Natives [Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents] Act, Act No 67 of 1952).

violence (citing hooks, 1990, p.72) and reinforce strict gender roles. These myths thus cultivate a culture of silence and tolerance which may have further constrained the choices women were able to envision when faced with physical and sexual abuse or a lack of support. Although none of the women in our study made specific reference to these myths, the underlying values resonate with certain experiences that women in our sample mentioned – for example, widows being kicked out of their homes with their children by male relatives – which demonstrate the vulnerability and dependence of women within this patriarchal culture. These patriarchal values also marginalise the needs of women and children and isolate them from important sources of familial love and support. At the same time, inasmuch as these myths, and the patriarchal status-quo that they support, purported to serve the goal of ‘Black solidarity,’ the cost of challenging them would be great. Thus, while most women did not identify race as an important factor in their narratives, it has undoubtedly been a critical underlying factor that has shaped the context of their lives. Further, in-depth interrogation of the ways in which racial constructs have impacted on women’s pathways to crime is certainly warranted.

Racial identities were more salient in terms of the experience of incarceration. Women reported little inter-racial socialising in the correctional facilities. Race appeared to be a source of some tension and suspicion, provoked primarily by perceived favouritism and special relationships between DCS Members and offenders that occurred along racial lines. Language – which overlaps, to some extent, with particular racial groups¹³³ - was sometimes the basis for this perception. While this is not surprising given the racial history of this country, and may not reflect any actual favouritism being shown by DCS Members, it suggests that the prison economy, prison rules and the stressful conditions of incarceration may strengthen racial prejudices.

133 Most Black women in the sample were Xhosa-speakers, as were most of the Black members (to the best of our knowledge). Afrikaans was spoken by the Coloured participants and by some of the White participants.

Experiences of Violence

Another important factor that shapes the context of life in South Africa is the high rate of violence, and sexual violence in particular, and the fear of such violence, that women experience as a constant feature.¹³⁴ The findings of this study show that more than half of the women in the sample had experienced domestic violence or rape at some time during their life, which is more than double the already high rate of these offences among the general population in South Africa. As we discuss in greater detail below, the consequences for women of these forms of abuse are severe and shape their life trajectories, choices and coping strategies in important ways that place them at risk of criminality.

TOWARD A GENDERED UNDERSTANDING OF WOMEN'S CRIME AND INCARCERATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

The findings from this study demonstrate how the criminal choices that women make are shaped by their particular social position as women. This position, which is one of structural inequality and oppression, impacts on women's experiences of poverty, family life, marriage and motherhood in ways that, when combined with other factors, result in social exclusion, economic marginalisation and violence. The roles they occupy are ones into which women have been socialised, such that they have also internalised the messages of patriarchy, which are further reinforced by their experiences of sexualisation and abuse. This process affects the way women perceive themselves as well as the coping and survival strategies they see as options.

134 Statistics on rape provided by the South African Police Service indicate that were 66 196 reports of sexual offences to the police in 2011 (SAPS, 2011). In their 2006/7 Annual Report the SAPS reported that 'a number of the contact crimes are social or domestic in nature and occur in social environments (e.g. the privacy of residences) which are usually outside the reach of conventional policing. These crimes usually occur between people who know each other (e.g. friends, acquaintances and relatives). Docket analysis indicates that 89% of both assault GBH and common assault cases, 82% of murders and 76% of rapes covered by the sample studied, involved people known to one another. In addition, 59% of the attempted murders occurred under similar circumstances (SAPS, 2008).

Gender and Poverty

While our study did not attempt to measure poverty levels as such,¹³⁵ the findings indicate that the majority of incarcerated women in our study struggled to access basic needs for themselves and their families, were not well educated and suffered high levels of unemployment. Many of these women also described childhoods marked by extreme poverty, in which their parents – and particularly single mothers – struggled to simultaneously provide child-care and financial support. This struggle affected women's self-perceptions and opportunities in a number of important ways. As noted above, for many in South Africa, economic survival during apartheid meant family separation and loss. As young girls, some of the women in our study were expected to help care for their families and assumed heavy burdens of responsibility. Within this environment, responsibilities were assigned along gendered lines. Several women in the study thus described the household responsibilities and chores they were required to take on as young girls, which included typically 'female' roles, such as taking care of younger siblings, cooking, cleaning and doing the laundry. At least one woman had to leave school in order to fulfil these responsibilities. Where male siblings were also required to help support their families, their job was to earn money.

In this way, women internalised the idea that women's priority was to care and provide for others, while education or employment was secondary or for men. These gendered responsibilities and roles provided the backdrop against which women understood their own (limited) agency and which defined their consequently limited choices, particularly later in life. These experiences, and the gendered messages they sent, are not different from those experienced and internalised by non-incarcerated women, in South Africa or elsewhere. Indeed, for many women the world over these messages form part of their experience of 'context': they represent just one of several key factors that impacted on her life. These gendered messages

¹³⁵ We did attempt to gauge our participants' *perceptions* of poverty using questions that asked them, for example, to describe whether they felt that they were more or less well-off than other people around them. We also used specific indicators of actual need such as whether people in their households went hungry. These are measures of relative poverty – women who fell into the middle-class socio-economic group could have answered 'yes' to these questions, just as the poorest women in our sample may have (or not). More traditional measures of poverty may have included household income, for example, but these were less relevant to our theoretical and methodological framework, which privileges individual experience and perceptions.

and expectations underpin the specific combination of life events, culture, and other elements that intersect and interact in complex ways to shape how a particular woman makes choices about her life. What makes the difference, perhaps, for the incarcerated women in our study is that these messages shaped their self-perception, constraints, and options in such a way that it enabled crime to emerge as a viable option.

The way women spoke about their *adult* responsibilities and options reflected how deeply they had internalised these roles and how this socialisation process trapped them in a cycle of poverty. This was perhaps most evident in the way they spoke about their roles as mothers, the expectations they had of their children's fathers and the survival strategies they adopted when these expectations were unfulfilled. Motherhood was central to the identities of most of the mothers who participated in the study, even if they had been absent for much of their children's lives or were neglectful mothers. As women, they saw themselves as uniquely capable of providing their children with the love and care that they required. This caused a fair amount of concern when, due to their incarceration, their children had been left in their fathers' care, and led women to assert that incarceration was particularly unsuited to women, and especially women with children.

The primary expectation that women had of their children's fathers was financial support. In many cases, however, the fathers of their children had abandoned them when they became pregnant or gave birth, or maintained a relationship with the mother but did not provide maintenance for their children. The heavy burden this created was a key factor in the narratives told by many women – creating highly constrained environments within which women had to survive. Remarkably, however, although many women resented the failure of their children's fathers to provide financial support they did not seem to care about their more general failure to establish a loving and caring relationship with their children. The role of father was rather perceived as a narrow one, while mothers maintained exclusive responsibility for nurturing and raising their children. Inasmuch as child-rearing was not viewed as a shared responsibility, women did not see themselves as contributing to the household in the same way as men who worked outside of the home. Consequently, they did not feel as entitled to make demands of their partners. Just as women understood their own

role as that of caregiver, they conceptualised men as the providers. Many women described their relationships with men in terms of the support they could provide. Thus, the decision to enter into a relationship or the necessity of remaining in a relationship, even if it was violently abusive, was frequently attributed to the need for financial support.¹³⁶ When fathers failed to provide, or mothers finally left their abusive partners, legitimate employment was rarely perceived as a real option for the long term, perhaps because these women could not see themselves in the role of breadwinner. The impact of socialisation processes on perceived options was exacerbated by circumstances of structural inequality, such as limited education and high unemployment, as well as other structural obstacles that women in South Africa face, including the absence of affordable and safe child-care facilities and institutional failures. These obstacles reinforce structural inequalities and gendered roles.

The combination of these factors – structural inequality, internalised gender roles and responsibilities of care – deprived many incarcerated women of the critical resources they needed in order to provide basic needs for themselves, their children and other members of their extended families. While this reality is probably not uncommon for many women in South Africa, for the incarcerated women there were additional factors that further constrained the options for survival that they were able to envision and acted as catalysts in the decision to choose criminal activity as a survival strategy. The lack of social and institutional support these women had was a central feature of their narratives. As described in our findings, many of the women came from severely dysfunctional families, leaving no one to whom they could turn for help. State agencies not only failed to provide a safety net for these women but presented them with further obstacles. In the absence of strong family ties or government welfare services that could provide financial and psychological support, many of these women found comfort and friendship among other similarly situated women (and men) who introduced them to crime. For some women, criminal opportunities did not need to be introduced by others as these were familiar and easily accessible within the neighbourhoods in which they lived.

¹³⁶ This does not mean to say that support was the only reason why women entered into or stayed in violent relationships. As argued above, the absence of positive role-models; the internalised perception of violence and abuse as normal; and the disruption of parental bonds all contribute to leaving women poorly equipped (both cognitively and emotionally) to seek out positive relationships.

Gender and “Providing” for Others

Thus far, we have discussed the relationship between the underlying inequality and oppression of women in South Africa; their experiences of poverty, family life, marriage and motherhood; and their struggle for economic survival. A number of incarcerated women in this study, however, committed economic crimes that were not linked to financial survival. In some of these cases, women committed financial crimes in order to provide for the needs of partners, parents, grandparents and others. Modie-Moroka (2003) found similar patterns, where women sacrificed and compromised their values in order to retain certain relationships. Based on the “self in relation theory,” she argues that “women organise themselves around relationships and the ethic of responsibility, care and nurturing others,” and that experiences, such as those associated with poverty, substance abuse, violence and abuse by trusted caregivers, disrupt this relational development in ways that lead to this type of “over-functioning” and “de-selfing”. Consistent with this theory, the prior experiences of a number of the women in our study who committed these crimes which were motivated by the need to “fix” provide for or protect a partner or a parent (e.g., from substance abuse, illness or incarceration) were marked by a variety of “disconnecting” factors, including extreme poverty and abuse, while women clearly articulated their crimes in terms of these relationships and their need for connection.

Clearly, the gendered messages our society sends about women’s roles – which are primarily constructed within the home and in care of others – reinforce a sense of responsibility for others and affect their perceptions of the range of options available to them. Combined with the dislocation that many women feel from sources of support (both personal and public), their inability to uncouple from these roles and responsibilities, and the impetus that this provides to weigh up illegal strategies for survival should not be surprising.

Gender, Abuse, Relationships and (Self)Worth

As has been discussed above, our findings show how intensely gendered messages about women's identities and worth impact their self-image and coping strategies. Our findings also underline how these gendered messages and eroded self-worth can combine with other marginalising problems (such as family responsibility, poverty, lack of employment, opportunity and education) to place women at risk of criminality. The women learned from a young age (and indeed, from the experience of parents, role models and caretakers) that women in this position have little agency and suffer severe social exclusion. Against this 'context' the women described how sex, relationships and abuse played out to create additional layers of complexity, and to push them toward the events that eventually led to their incarceration.

Wesely (2006) describes how women experience a constant sexualisation by being exposed to a continuum of behaviours that run from derogatory and sexist behaviour on one hand to sexual abuse on the other. She argues that through exposure to this behaviour, women internalise the message that a woman's worth is measured by her appearance and sexuality. This not only limits their perceptions of self-worth (particularly where they don't feel that they conform to the ideal image), but defines their value in terms of their sexual attractiveness and availability to men. It also combines with and underscores gendered cultural messages that teach women that their sphere of legitimate opportunity is – and should be – confined to the family and home.

The deleterious effects of constant sexualisation and gendered messages on women's self-worth was borne out in our study. For women who grew up in circumstances of extreme poverty, and could not live up to idealised notions of beauty and womanhood, these internalised messages about appearance, attractiveness and sexuality made them feel ashamed and excluded. Combined with the lack of other social support, and against a backdrop of learning that women's 'self' is subordinate to the needs of others, these experiences impacted the women's understanding of the world, their choices, their partners and relationships.

Other women had more direct and harmful experiences of objectification and sexualisation. Consistent with existing literature, the women in our study experienced extremely high levels of childhood sexual abuse and rape. The experience of childhood sexual abuse has profound effects on the choices made by young women, as it teaches them that their primary characteristic or asset is their sexuality, but paradoxically shows them that they are also responsible for their own victimisation. The findings suggest that women who have internalised this message see themselves as unworthy and, therefore, as deserving of further abuse. At the same time, they may believe that abuse is a manifestation of love, making them increasingly susceptible to violence. These women described how their distorted views of love, sex and relationships made them 'look for love in all the wrong places' – often exposing them to further abuse at the hands of lovers and husbands. Some of these relationships – which may or may not have been physically abusive – also led to early pregnancies, which placed enormous responsibility on young women who had limited resources for survival.

The trauma of childhood abuse also produces an enduring sense of fear and vulnerability. For many women, this sense of vulnerability was exacerbated by their mothers' disbelief, which isolated them and made them feel unloved and unprotected (which, indeed, they were). This vulnerability also extended into the community where women said they felt similarly unsafe. As a result, they internalised the message that victimisation by men was not only to be expected, but often went unpunished. In some cases, this vulnerability was exacerbated by the failure of other state agents – for example, the foster care system, the police and courts – to either protect them from further violence, or to provide an essential safety net to prevent them from having to make choices that placed them on a path to criminality.

The staggering proportion of women (67%) in the sample who reported experiences of adult domestic and sexual abuse suggests that this factor, too, is a central one in the lives of incarcerated women. This finding is consistent with previous South African research (and higher than international statistics, though these are, again, difficult to compare). A common feature of domestic violence is the control of women's social relationships and the resulting isolation of women from critical support structures. These coercive and controlling behaviours spanned the range

from physical to psychological isolation. Women described how they were not allowed to have friends, how their movements and phone calls were monitored, and how, in one case, an abusive partner physically locked his wife up. This isolation marginalises women and creates a sense of despair which constrains the options that women are able to visualise or access. Abusive partners also used the women's children as leverage to ensure their silence, both entrapping them further and making them feel responsible for their own (and in some cases, their children's) abuse. The women described how they stayed in abusive relationships because of cultural beliefs, because they were financially dependent on their partners, and didn't feel like they had 'anywhere to go'.

The fact that, in some of these cases, women had protection orders against their husbands which were ineffective in protecting them against abuse compounded this sense of despair. Others were failed by family and friends to whom they turned to for advice, and who either actively or tacitly encouraged the women to stay. These women described how this left them with the sense that they could rely on no-one but themselves for survival, and that in some cases, their only option was to fight violence with violence.

Infidelity was also a common contributing factor to the women's entrapment and isolation. In these cases, their partners' affairs significantly undermined the security of their relationships and increased the women's vulnerability – both emotional and financial. The women pointed to the fact that their partners' infidelity combined with other factors (for example, long histories of physical abuse, financial control over joint resources and belittling) to create an environment where they had few resources for coping, which in turn made them susceptible to committing crime.

Some of these women sought refuge in substances and gambling to deal with the trauma of childhood and adult abuse. The availability of casinos, drugs and alcohol, the latter of which are heavily used in the Western Cape, made these obvious choices for women seeking to escape the trauma they felt. Once addicted, women's choices become severely constrained. The findings demonstrate how gambling and substance abuse damages women's support systems and isolates them from family and friends. Drug use also precludes legal employment and provides an entrée into

criminal social circles that encourage criminal behaviour. At the same time, continued drug use requires substantial financial resources, which provides motivation for property-related crimes. This link – between drug abuse and financially motivated crimes, including drug-trafficking, robbery and fraud – was evident in our research and is consistent with international literature.

Although millions of women are victims of domestic violence and *don't* engage in criminal activity, the women in our sample described how their experiences of violence and abuse – sometimes at the hand of more than one partner – eroded their self-worth and limited their perceived options for survival. When taken against the layers of isolation and marginalisation (financial, social and otherwise), the combined effect was to create an environment of entrapment, where the women believed that they were incapable – indeed, undeserving – of living a 'normal' life. For some women, the connection between this profoundly marginalised position and their eventual criminality was indirect: their victimisation affected their life circumstances in ways that effectively separated them from mainstream avenues of support and livelihood, and influenced their psychosocial functioning, pushing them out of the mainstream toward criminal behaviour in order to cope. For others, their experiences of abuse led them to substance abuse and/or gambling, which in turn created the financial need that compelled them to (primarily financial) crime. For the remaining group, the connection was more direct. They described how the abuse became too much to bear, until they perceived that there was no other option but to kill their abusive partner.

For women who experienced violence and degradation at the hands of their abusive partner(s), incarceration is a respite from the abuse. Some described the experience as life changing, as they learned skills and coping strategies in the correctional facility that have shown them that violence is neither to be expected nor accepted. Of course, as the women themselves acknowledge, the true test of their ability to leave their abusive relationships and partners will only come when they leave the correctional system.

The Experience of Incarceration

The findings suggest that gender also impacts in critical ways on the women's experiences of incarceration. Consistent with international literature, motherhood was a central factor in the way women with children experienced incarceration. Correctional facility rules, which limit contact visits and phone calls, made it difficult for women to maintain (or to renew) their relationships with their children (as well as other important family members). The sadness, anxiety and guilt that separation from children evoked also impacted on behaviour while incarcerated and relationships among offenders, in both positive and negative ways, at times causing women to lash out against cell-mates, for example, but also motivating them to stop abusing substances. Motherhood was also an important source of strength in terms of women's future prospects and in their determination to desist from crime.

Unfortunately, female offenders are still subject to sexist and patriarchal regimes when it comes to opportunities for work in correctional facilities. Most of the work opportunities in Pollsmoor and Worcester were stereotypically "women's work," including needlework and textiles, food preparation, cleaning, library work, office work, laundry, crèche care and hairdressing. This is similar to the situation in the UK, where fewer educational and training opportunities exist for women than for men, and women are more likely to have to perform domestic tasks (Wahidin, 2004:153). Bosworth (1996) makes a similar point regarding the UK, noting that, in an attempt to promote 'feminine' behaviour, 'educational' programmes still focus on activities traditionally thought to be 'women's work' (p.10).

Domestic activities such as cleaning and salon work reinforce sexist notions that women are incapable of competing with men in the workplace (Wahidin, 2004). Although domestic skills may be useful on release for some women - as many available employment opportunities will probably involve domestic work - work programmes are rarely presented this way. Wahidin (2004) makes the valid point that while the skills taught to men are generally framed in terms of preparation for employment on release – training as a mechanic, gardener, or carpenter – those taught to women rarely are. The

lack of appropriate work opportunities is especially undermining for women who *do* have the capacity to achieve success in the workplace, or who were professionally successful before their incarceration, as they feel that time spent in prison is wasted time, intensifying “the loss of self, individuality, [and] affirmation by others” that some women offenders already experience (Wahidin, 2004, p.155). Further, the lack of work and skills-development opportunities in women’s correctional facilities reinforces women’s dependency on men and makes it likely that, once released, the women will be unable to find gainful employment, and in many cases will have to resort (again) to depending on a man to provide for them. This is unacceptable in its own right, but especially so when women’s histories of abuse, often by men, are taken into account.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Although the focus of this study was to understand why women come into conflict with the law and end up in correctional facilities rather than on their experiences of incarceration, we realised early on that women's pre-incarceration experiences, such as experiences of violence and substance abuse, have implications for the conditions under which they are incarcerated. There are a number of policy recommendations that stem from the findings, and these relate broadly to two aspects of incarceration: access to health and mental-health care; and work, education and vocational training programmes.

For purposes of these recommendations, national and international mandates governing conditions of incarceration for women were used as a baseline to assess the relevant research findings and to provide guidance as to best practice. These national and international mandates include: the South African Constitution; the Correctional Services Act (1998); the White Paper on Corrections in South Africa (2005); the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (supplemented by the Tokyo Rules for non-custodial measures); and the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-Custodial Means for Women Offenders (the "Bangkok Rules"). The rules contained in these documents are collectively referred to herein as the "applicable rules".

ACCESS TO HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Overcrowding

Overcrowding in correctional facilities and cells is a national problem facing the majority of South Africa's correctional facilities. Due to the fact that cell overcrowding contributes to the transfer of communicable diseases and exacerbates illnesses to which the prison population is particularly prone, a greater effort should be made to improve offenders' living spaces. Efforts to reduce overcrowding are therefore recommended.

Health Screening & Assessment

The applicable rules mandate a comprehensive health-care screening for all female offenders in order to determine primary health-care needs, including the presence of STDs or blood-borne diseases, mental health needs, reproductive health history and substance abuse, as well as experiences of sexual abuse and other forms of violence. In South Africa, following the admission of a new inmate, two screening processes are completed: an admission risk and needs assessment is completed within 6 hours of admission; and a comprehensive risk and needs assessment and offender profile are completed within 21 days of admission. The latter screening process is used to develop a sentence plan. The women in our study reported that when, in the context of this screening process, they were asked to record their life histories, they tended to write more about recent events or issues immediately related to their incarceration. Past experiences with violence or trauma, for instance, were not often documented at this stage. Although offenders may later request an appointment with a psychologist, some participants indicated the difficulty in actually scheduling these appointments. Participants further revealed that most women are not asked about their reproductive or mental health histories upon arrival at the correctional facility and that while a perfunctory physical health screening took place, this consisted largely of screening questions about the offender's physical health and medications, rather than an actual physical examination. These findings suggest that neither the assessment conducted upon admission, nor the comprehensive risk and needs assessment provides enough information to guide the offender's rehabilitation process or to fully address their possible health and mental-health care needs. We therefore recommend that:

- Health screenings should include a physical examination and should be comprehensive enough to determine primary health-care needs, including the specific issues covered by the applicable rules.
- Increased attention should be paid to the reproductive health histories of incarcerated women. This means that women should be screened on "current or recent pregnancies, childbirth and any related reproductive health issues upon entry" (Bangkok Rules 6(c)).

- Independent Prison Visitors and the Judicial Inspectorate of Prisons should develop clear guidelines for the monitoring of health and mental health care services in correctional facilities, paying specific attention to the needs of women.
- Due to the fact that we know that there are high-levels of past experiences of violence and abuse in the lives of incarcerated women, entry assessments should screen for child and adult sexual and/or physical abuse.
- Additional, periodic mental health assessments would encourage offenders to disclose important mental-health information when they are ready to do so, without having to ask and wait for an appointment with a psychologist.
- Keeping in mind that international literature has found that substance abuse is one of the main issues in prison health care (Watson, Stimpson & Hostick, 2004), a detailed assessment of drug and alcohol abuse should be conducted upon entrance. This will allow DCS to determine what level of rehabilitation and precaution is necessary for female offenders with addictions.
- Research from the United States has recognised the difficulty in treating and addressing chronic illness, especially amongst a population that may have short sentences and move among institutions regularly (Thorburn, 1995). These problems are exacerbated in the South African context with the incidence of HIV, TB and the like. Despite these complexities, however, screening for chronic illness must occur more regularly and then a treatment plan must be determined for each offender, depending on their needs. Upon release, chronic illness patients should be monitored in coordination with a community health care facility.

Routine Health Care

The women in the project reported not receiving annual general medical check-ups, routine pap-smears or mammograms. Health care was also reported to be periodic and usually provided on the basis of a request by the offender. This is not surprising given the reportedly infrequent visits of medical personnel. Women also said that the poor attitudes of health-care providers created a barrier for women who needed to access some medical services (such as a prescription glasses or dental treatment) and noted that nurses in correctional facilities did not exhibit the kind of compassion and sensitivity expected of health care workers. While most women said that major illness was addressed appropriately, women were expected to endure less serious pains and discomforts, including depression, while waiting to be seen. We therefore recommend that:

- The frequency of doctor, dentist, psychiatrist and psychologist visits should be increased to better meet the needs of incarcerated women.
- In order to avoid exacerbating previously undetected health issues, and as a matter of providing a health-care environment that upholds a preventative health-care standard, health services must be made available more regularly to female offenders.
- Medical illnesses that are not considered emergencies should be treated with an increased level of urgency and care.
- International research has found health education to be a positive health care prevention method. Health education should be regularly offered to offenders, covering a range of topics including the transmission, treatment, prevention, symptoms, risk factors and outcomes of diseases and illness (Niveau, 2006).
- Health care professionals working with offenders should be trained and encouraged to act with more compassion and sensitivity than was reported by the women in our study.

Gender-Specific Health Care

Two women in the study revealed being handcuffed throughout the entire process of giving birth, despite giving birth in a state hospital. Given that other, less invasive security measures can be put into place during the delivery of a child, there is little need for this form of security measure.

- The Bangkok Rules, which promote the discontinuance of the use of all instruments of restraint for incarcerated women giving birth, should be strongly considered.
- Gender specific health care screenings, in particular pap-smears, mammograms and gynaecological check-ups, should be offered annually, in line with the recommended minimum standard.

Mental Health Services

International research has found that ‘mental health problems are more prevalent among the prison population than the general population’ (Watson et al., 2004). Rule 12 of the Bangkok Rules provides that ‘individualised, gender-sensitive, trauma-informed and comprehensive mental health care and rehabilitation programmes shall be made available for women prisoners with mental health care needs in prison or in non-custodial settings’. These programmes are available to some extent in the correctional facilities where our research was conducted, although not to the extent the Bangkok Rules envision. Most mental health programmes are offered by external professionals, volunteers or agencies and are dependent on external funding and support. Women at both facilities where the research was conducted felt that the counselling and psychological services were severely lacking. Because so few mental health professionals are available to provide the necessary services, referral systems are in place that requires women to wait days or even weeks even when reporting mental health emergencies, such as severe depression or suicidal feelings. We therefore recommend that:

- Increased accessibility to on-site mental health professionals, on a more frequent and regular basis should be a priority, given that female offenders – both in this study and internationally – have faced high

levels of violence in their lives and are likely to be mothers. To this end, a brief 'mental health needs' survey should be conducted to establish the needs of women with (a) ongoing mental health problems; and (b) a periodic need for mental health support services to inform the extent to which mental health services should be available.

- Given the reality that DCS Members and staff are currently providing emotional support for offenders in the absence of enough mental health professionals, more training should be made available to equip DCS members and staff to fulfil this role.
- More consistent and successful rehabilitation programmes addressing mental health care needs of women are recommended. International literature has found that programmes adapted specifically for women – while additionally taking language and life experiences into account – are most successful (Carlen & Worrall, 2004).
- International research addressing mental health in incarcerated men and women has recommended the implementation of mental health screening and assessment, as well as monitoring and rehabilitation programming in prisons (Trestman, Ford, Zhang & Wiesbrock, 2007). This recommendation should be applied by DCS so that mental health conditions of offenders do not go unrecognised and/or unaddressed.
- The system of referrals for these particularly critical mental health emergencies should be streamlined in order to deal with emergencies in a more timely and responsive manner.

Hygiene

Our study has found that women are limited to two sanitary pads for each day of menstruation. Research in the UK has found that female prisoners in some English prisons face similar issues (Corston, 2007a, 2007b). This is an untenable situation, since the number of sanitary pads used by women during their menstrual periods varies. We therefore recommend that:

- In order to provide proper hygiene, female offenders should not be limited to the number of sanitary pads they are administered during menstruation periods.

Nutrition and Exercise

International literature has found that incarceration exacerbates a number of medical illnesses, including contributing to weight gain (Kane & DiBartalo, 2002). This problem occurs because of the lack of nutritious food options, as well as limited exercise for incarcerated women. We therefore recommend that:

- Female offenders should be allowed access to more open spaces than the small courtyards that are presently available (or allowed the same access to exercise facilities, field sports and other sporting activities available to incarcerated men).
- The availability and frequency of organised sporting activities should be increased. Based on the expressed interest of these women, these activities should be scheduled regularly and frequently, instead of occurring on an ad-hoc basis, when supervision is available.
- DCS should set a long-term goal of installing kitchens in all women's correctional facilities. Receiving prepared food from the men's sections has proven highly problematic as women offenders' access to similar grade, fresh food is impacted by this current arrangement. Installing kitchens would improve the quality of food and provide opportunities for skills development and employment.

- Fresh fruit should be available daily, if not at every meal. Fresh food can help alleviate depression, and would make women feel more physically comfortable (Carlen & Worrall, 2004).
- Although current DCS policy includes a varied meal plan for offenders, implementation of this meal plan should be closely monitored to ensure that meal options do indeed vary daily to improve nutrition.
- DCS should continue to resolve supply-chain issues that impact women offenders' access to a variety of healthy foods.

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND VOCATIONAL WORK

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has noted that prison authorities can contribute significantly to the social integration of women prisoners by providing and facilitating adequate and equal opportunities for vocational training in prisons that are aimed at finding gainful employment upon release (UNODC, 2008). Education, vocational training and work in correctional facilities are critical for female offenders, especially in South Africa, where women are likely to have suffered gender-based discrimination and violence prior to incarceration. Our findings suggest that many women become involved in criminal activity due to economic pressure (55% of the women were motivated *primarily* by economic reasons). Turning to crime because of the need to provide for their children, or even extended families, was a common feature of female offending. So too were efforts to emancipate themselves from abusive partners, spouses or parents.

Our experience of working within the correctional system illustrated that the failure to provide vocational and educational training opportunities for offenders is not due to a general lack of will on the part of DCS Management or Members, but instead to severely constrained institutional resources, both in terms of sufficient staff to oversee these activities as well as the skills and materials that are required for certain classes and activities. While resource constraints affect all South African offenders, women seem to be even further disadvantaged as they are afforded even fewer educational and training opportunities than their male counterparts. We therefore recommend that:

- Education, work and vocational training should be encouraged for every sentenced offender, so long as she is able, such that offenders can see incarceration as a learning experience and not 'lost' time.
- The achievement of 69.8% enrolment for basic literacy training (ABET) for eligible offenders is commendable. In light of the Correctional Services Act (s. 41(1)), however, which provides that such education is compulsory for illiterate adults, efforts should be made to extend such education to all eligible offenders. Existing barriers and deterrents to offender participation should be investigated and addressed. DCS should ensure that ABET is available for all offenders, regardless of when they are incarcerated, and proper support should be available to ensure that offenders are able to successfully complete this programme. Teachers for this programme should be provided by DCS and should not rely upon the availability of qualified offenders as instructors.
- More significantly, DCS should ensure that further education and training (FET) is available for those women who wish to participate and that adequate resources and support are available for this purpose. This is particularly critical for young offenders and those with medium and long sentences.
- A range of work and skills training activities should be made available to women offenders. Work and skills, however, should not be as 'gendered' as they currently are. While some offenders enjoy vocational pursuits such as sewing and hairdressing, others have emphasised the need to develop skills in less gendered areas, such as financial and business management and DIY.
- Sentencing plans should balance work, education and rehabilitation. To this end, 'work' should not be considered the same as 'rehabilitation' particularly given that many female offenders have deeply traumatic histories and report benefit from rehabilitation and social support programmes such as *Inner Healing*. Rehabilitation should therefore seek to do more than discourage further criminal behaviour but should also address some of the root causes of such behaviour, including poverty and abuse. In taking women's needs seriously, programmes must be specifically designed *for* women and not adopted or adapted from men's programmes.

- Work routines should foster a strong commitment to and pride in productive work as part of a broader scheme of rehabilitation and foster feelings of investment in, and contribution to, wider society among offenders.
- Correctional facility activities should seek to create egalitarian and appropriate skills that will develop and empower women, without fostering stereotypical gendered notions of 'women's work' that may in fact compound existing histories of dependency and abuse.
- In order to optimise the use of existing facilities, where women are housed in annexes to, or correctional facilities neighbouring men's facilities, a rotation system for women to share in the facilities available at men's correctional facilities should be established. Such a system needs to provide for sufficient separation from male offenders, for security, as well as sufficient supervision when offenders are in transit and at the men's correctional facility.
- Peer education and vocational training by selected groups of offenders with the requisite skills should be encouraged. This will have the additional benefit of increasing peer-educators confidence and work experience. However, peer education should only comprise a portion of activities available to offenders and should be well planned and structured so as to avoid the sudden or frequent absence of voluntary peer-educators disrupting other offenders' learning. Peer-education should also not be viewed as a substitute for targeted, specialised educational and vocational instruction.
- Partnerships should be fostered between DCS and civil society organisations to offer training and skills as well as to provide offenders with links to the outside that may provide useful information and support upon release. These programmes, however, must be offered on a regular and structured basis, as opposed to on an *ad hoc* basis.
- The current daily wage for 'work' is a disincentive for engaging in productive work and does little towards promoting a broader rehabilitative model that encourages self-respect and personal development. It is also so meagre that saving wages for release or using

wages to support children on the outside is simply impossible. Pay-for-work models should therefore consider the extent to which offenders can earn sufficient funds to (a) support children and families on the outside; (b) support further education and training not covered by DCS; and (c) create enough funds to support the offender on release until she secures work on the outside.

- A more comprehensive pre-release programme should be implemented that addresses basic life skills and provides offenders with technical knowledge needed to operate in society, including information about the banking system, job applications, and how to access support services. Such a programme should provide sufficient time for weekend and day visits, where offenders can practice these skills where possible.

REFERENCES

- Abbott, M.W. and McKenna, B.G., 2005. Gambling and Problem Gambling Among Recently Sentenced Women in New Zealand Prisons. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 21(4), pp.559-581.
- Anderson, P., Chisholm, D. and Fuhr, D.C., 2009. Alcohol and Global Health 2: Effectiveness and Cost-Effectiveness of Policies and Programmes to Reduce the Harm Caused by Alcohol. *Lancet*, 373, pp.2234-2246.
- Artz, L., 2011. Why Women Reoffend: The Women's Pathways to Incarceration Project." Paper presented at the Open Society Foundation for South Africa (OSF-SA) conference on recidivism and reoffending in South Africa, 29 and 30 November 2010, Johannesburg.
- Becker, S., and McCorkel, J.A., 2011. The Gender of Criminal Opportunity: The Impact of Male Co-offenders on Women's Crime. *Feminist Criminology*, 6(2), pp. 79-110.
- Belknap, J., 2001. *The Invisible Woman: Gender, Crime and Justice*. 2nd ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Belknap, J., and Holsinger, K., 2006. The Gendered Nature of Risk Factors for Delinquency. *Feminist Criminology*, 1 (1), pp.48-71.
- Belknap, J., Holsinger, K., and Dunn, M., 1997. Understanding Incarcerated Girls: The Results of a Focus Group Study. *Prison Journal*, 77, pp.381-404.
- Block, C.R., Blokland, A.A.J., van der Werff, C., van Os, R., and Nieuwbeerta, P., 2010. Long Term Patterns of Offending in Women. *Feminist Criminology*, 5(1), pp.73-107.
- Bloom, B., Owen, B., and Covington, S., 2002. A Theoretical Basis for Gender-Responsive Strategies in Criminal Justice. American Society of Criminology Annual Meeting: Chicago: 2002.
- Bloom, B., Owen, B., Covington, S., & Raeder, M., 2003. *Gender-Responsive Strategies: Research, Practice, and Guiding Principles for Women Offenders*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Corrections.
- Briggs, J.R., Goodin, B.J., and Nelson, T., 1996. Pathological gamblers and alcoholics: Do they share the same addictions? *Addictive Behaviors*, 21(4), pp.515-519.
- Britton, D.M., (2000). Feminism in Criminology: Engendering the Outlaw. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 571(1), pp. 57-76.
- Brown, K., 2001. The Determinants of Crime in South Africa. *The South African Journal of Economics*. 69(2), pp.269-299.
- Browne, A., Miller, B., and Maguin, E., 1999. Prevalence and Severity of Life Time Physical and Sexual Victimization among Incarcerated Women. *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, 22(3-4), pp. 310-322.
- Bosworth, M. and Carrabine, E. 2001. Reassessing Resistance: Race, Gender and Sexuality in Prison. *Punishment & Society*. 3(4): 501-515.
- Buchanan, M., Murphy, K., Martin, M.S, Korchinski, M., Buxton, J., Granger- Brown, A., Hanson, D., Hislop, G., Macaulay, A. C & Martin, R. E et al., 2011. Understanding Incarcerated Women's Perspectives on Substance Use: Catalysts, Reasons for Use, Consequences, and Desire for Change. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, 50(2), pp.81-100.
- Burman, S., 1991. Illegitimacy and the African Family in a Changing South Africa, *Acta Juridica*, pp. 36-51.
- Cann, J., 2006. Cognitive skills programmes: impact on reducing reconviction among a sample of female prisoners. (Home Office Research Findings 276). Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate. [Online]. Available at: <<http://library.npia.police.uk/docs/hofindings/r276.pdf>> [Accessed 22 July 2011].

- Carlen, P. and Worrall, A. 2004. *Analysing Women's Imprisonment*. Devon: Willan Publishing.
- Carlson, B.E. and Shafer, M.S., 2010. Traumatic Histories and Stressful Life Events of Incarcerated Parents: Childhood and Adult Trauma Histories. *The Prison Journal*, 90(4), pp. 475-493.
- Chesney-Lind, M., 1987. Female Offenders: Paternalism Re-Examined. In: L.L. Crites and W. Hepperle, eds. (1987) *Women, the Courts and Equality*. Newbury Park: Sage.
- Chesney-Lind, M., & Pasko, L., 2004. *The Female Offender: Girls, Women and Crime*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Chesney-Lind, M., and Rodriguez, N., 1983. Women under Lock and Key. *Prison Journal*, 63, pp.47-65.
- Chesney-Lind, M., & Shelden, R.G., 1992. *Girls, Delinquency and Juvenile Justice*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Chipkin, I., & Ngqulunga, B., 2008. Friends and Family: Social Cohesion in South Africa. *Journal of South African Studies* 34(1), pp. 61-76.
- Comack, E., 2005. Coping, Resisting, and Surviving: Connecting Women's Law Violations to their Stories of Abuse. In: L. Alaraid and P. Cromwell, eds., *In Her Own Words: Women Offenders' Views on Crime and Victimization*. Los Angeles: Roxbury Publications.
- Corston, J., 2007. *The Corston Report: Executive Summary*. London: Home Office. [Online]. Available at: <<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/corston-report/>> [Accessed 3 December, 2009].
- Corston, J., 2007. *The Corston Report: The Need for a Distinct, Radically Different, Visibly-Led, Strategic, Proportionate, Holistic, Woman-Centred, Integrated Approach*. London, UK: British Home Office.
- Covington, S., 2007. The Relational Theory of Women's Psychological Development: Implications for the Criminal Justice System. In: S. Zaplin, ed. (2007) *Female Offenders: Critical Perspectives and Effective Interventions*. 2nd Edition. Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett Publishers.
- Daly, K., 1992. Women's Pathways to Felony Court: Feminist Theories of Lawbreaking and Problems of Representation. *Southern California Review of Law and Women's Studies*, 2, pp.11-52.
- DeHart, D., 2008. Pathways to Prison: Impact of Victimization in the Lives of Incarcerated Women. *Violence Against Women*, 14(12), pp.1362-1381.
- DeVault, M.L., 1996. Talking back to sociology: distinctive contributions of feminist methodology. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 22, pp.29-50.
- Du Toit, A., 2005. Chronic and Structural Poverty in South Africa: Challenges for Action and Research. PLAAS Chronic Poverty and Development Policy Series No. 6, [online]. Available at <http://www.chronicpoverty.org/uploads/publication_files/WP56_duToit.pdf> [Accessed 30 June 2011].
- Ellis, C. and Adams, W. 2009. *Towards a 10-Year Review of the Population Policy Implementation in South Africa (1998-2008): Families, households and children*. Pretoria: South African Department of Social Development.
- Eloff J., and Moen, M., 2003. An Analysis of Mother-Child Interaction Patterns in Prison. *Early Child Development and Care*, 173 (6) , pp. 711-720.
- Farrington, D., 2003. Developmental and Life-Course Criminology: Key Theoretical and Empirical Issues - The 2002 Sutherland Award Address. *Criminology*, 41 (2), pp.221-255.
- Ferraro, K.J. and Moe, A.M., 2003. Mothering, Crime, and Incarceration. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 32(1), pp.9-40.
- Ferraro, K., 2001. Woman Battering: More than a Family Problem. In: C. Renzetti and L. Goodstein, (2001) eds., *Women Crime And Criminal Justice*. Los Angeles: Roxbury.

- Flavin, J., 2001. Feminism for the Mainstream Criminologist: An Invitation. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 29(4), pp. 271-285.
- Folsom, J., & Atkinson, J.L., 2007. 'The Generalizability of the LSI-R and the Cat to the Prediction of Recidivism in Female Offenders'. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 34, pp. 1044-1056.
- Frye, I. 2006. The "Second Economy": Short hand, underhand or sleight of hand? Southern African Regional Poverty Network (SARPN). Available at: <<http://www.sarpn.org.za/documents/d0001973/index.php>> [Accessed 30 June 2011]
- Genders, E. and Player, E., 1990. Women Lifers: Assessing the Experience. *The Prison Journal*. 70: 46-57.
- Gibbons, J.A., 1998. Women Prisoners and South Africa. *The Prison Journal*, 78(3), pp.330-343.
- Gilfus, M.E., 1992. From Victims to Survivors to Offenders: Women's Routes of Entry and Immersion into Street Crime. *Women and Criminal Justice*, 4 (1), pp.62-89.
- Gilfus, M.E. 2002. Women's Experiences of Abuse as a Risk Factor for Incarceration. Harrisburg, PA: VAWnet. Available at: <<http://www.vawnet.org>> [Accessed 3 June 2011].
- Girlhood, growing up in the inside, 2003. Moxie Firecracker Film, distributed by Genius Entertainment. California: United States.
- Godin, P., and Kendall, K., 2006. Incarceration of Women in Britain: A Matter of Madness. Citing The British Home Office (Female Prisoners 2006). [Online]. Available at: <www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk/adviceandsupport/prison_life/femaleprisoners> [Accessed November 2, 2008].
- Goodkind, S., Ng, I., and Sarri, R. C., 2006. The Impact of Sexual Abuse in the Lives of Young Women Involved or At Risk of Involvement with the Juvenile Justice System. *Violence Against Women*, 12(3), 456-477.
- Greene, S., Haney, C., and Hurtado, A., 2000. Cycles of Pain: Risk Factors in the Lives of Incarcerated Mothers and their Children. *The Prison Journal*, 80(1), pp. 3-23.
- Greenfield, L.A., and Snell, T.L., 1999. Women Offenders (NCJ 175688). Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice.
- Grella, C.E., Stein, J.A., and Greenwell, L., 2005. Associations Among Childhood Trauma, Adolescent Problem Behaviours, and Adverse Adult Outcomes in Substance-Abusing Women Offenders. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviours*, 19(1), pp.43-53.
- Gunnison, E., and McCartan, L. M., 2005. Female Persisters in Criminal Offending: A Theoretical Examination of Predictors. *Women & Criminal Justice*, 16(3), 43-65.
- Haffejee, S., Vetten, L., and Greyling, M., 2005. Exploring violence in the lives of women and girls incarcerated at three prisons in Gauteng Province, South Africa. *Agenda* 66, p. 40-47.
- Harker, N. et al., 2008. Substance Abuse Trends in the Western Cape: A review of studies conducted since 2000. Cape Town: Human Sciences Research Council. [Online] Available at: <http://www.hsrb.ac.za/Research_Publication-20460.phtml> [Accessed 22 July 2011].
- Harlow, C.W., 1999. Prior Abuse Reported by Inmates and Probationers. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice.
- Harper, G., Man, L., Taylor, S. and Niven, S. 2005. Factors Associated with Offending. In G. Harper and C. Chitty, eds. (2005) Home Office research Study 291. The impact of corrections on re-offending: a review of 'what works', 3rd ed. London: Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate.
- Heidensohn, F.M., 1985. Women and Crime: The Life of the Female Offender. New York: New York University Press.

- Hoffman-Wanderer, Y., 2007. *Women in Prison*. (Briefing Paper). Cape Town: Gender, Health and Justice Research Unit.
- Holtfreter, K., Reisig, M.D., & Morash, M., 2004. Poverty, State Capital, and Recidivism Among Women Offenders. *Recidivism & Women Offenders*, 3(2), pp. 185-208.
- Huebner, B.M., DeJong, C., Cobbina, J., 2010. Women Coming Home: Long-Term Patterns of Recidivism. *Justice Quarterly*, 27(2), pp. 225-254.
- James, D.J., 2004. *Profile of Jail Inmates* (NCJ No. 201932). Washington DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics.
- Judicial Inspectorate of Prisons (JIP), 2004. *Women in South African Prisons*. A publication prepared by the Judicial Inspectorate of Prisons in Support of the 16 Days of Activism Campaign Unite Against Women and Child Abuse. Cape Town: Judicial Inspectorate of Prisons.
- Kruttschnitt, C., 1996. Contributions of Quantitative Methods to the Study of Gender and Crime, or Bootstrapping our Way into the Theoretical Thicket. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 12(2), pp. 135-161.
- Kruttschnitt, C., and Gartner, R., 2005. *Marking Time in the Golden State: Women's Imprisonment in California*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Laub, J. H., and Sampson, R. J., 2003. *Shared Beginnings, Divergent Lives: Delinquent Boys to Age 70*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Lerman, L. G., 1981. *Prosecution for Spouse Abuse: Innovations in Criminal Justice Response*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Women Policy Studies.
- Luyt, W.F.M., 2008. Imprisoned Mothers in South African Prisons with Children Outside of the Institution. *European Journal of Crime, Criminal Law and Criminal Justice*, 16(3), pp. 299-324.
- McCartan, L.M., and Gunnison, E., 2010. Individual and Relationship Factors that Differentiate Female Offenders With and Without a Sexual Abuse History. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 25(8) , pp.1449-1469.
- McClellan, D. S., Farabee, D., and Crouch, B. M., 1997. Early Victimization, Drug Use and Criminality: A Comparison of Male and Female Prisoners. *Criminal Justice and Behaviour*, 24 (4), pp.455-476.
- Mensch, B.S. and Kandel, D.B., 1988. Underreporting of Substance Abuse in a National Longitudinal Youth Cohort: Individual and Interviewer Effects. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 52(1), pp.100-124.
- Modie-Moroka, T., 2003. Vulnerability across a life course: An empirical study: women and criminality in Botswana prisons. *Journal of Social Development in Africa*. 18(1). p. 145-179
- Moe, A.M. and Ferraro, K.J., 2006. Criminalized Mothers: The Value and Devaluation of Parenthood from Behind Bars. *Women and Therapy*, 29(3-4), pp.135-164.
- Moloney, K.P., van den Bergh, B.J., and Moller, L.F., 2009. Women in Prison: The Central Issues of Gender Characteristics and Trauma History. *Public Health*, 123(6), pp.426-430.
- National Commission on Correctional Health Care (2005). *Women's Health Care in Correctional Settings*. National Commission on Correctional Health Care Board of Directors Statement, 1994, Revised: October 9, 2005. Available at: <http://www.ncchc.org/resources/statements/womenshealth2005.html>
- New South Wales Aboriginal Justice Advisory Council, 2001. [Online]. Accessed at <<http://aic.gov.au/publications/current%20series/rpp/100-20/rpp107/11.aspx>>.
- Oppler, S., 1998. *Correcting Corrections: Prospects for South Africa's Prisons* (Monograph No. 29). Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies.
- O'Donovan, M., and Redpath, J., 2006. *The Impact of Minimum Sentencing in South Africa* (Report 2). South Africa: Open Society Foundation for South Africa.

- Owen, B., 1998. "In the Mix": Struggle and Survival in a Women's Prison. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Parry, C.D.H. and Dewing, S., 2006. A Public Health Approach to Addressing Alcohol-Related Crime in South Africa. *African Journal of Drug & Alcohol Studies*, 5(1), pp.41-56.
- Pettifor, A.E., Rees, H.V., Steffenson, A., Hlongwa-Madikizela, L., MacPhail, C., Vermaak, K., and Kleinschmidt, I., 2003. HIV and Sexual Behaviour among Young South Africans: A National Survey of 15-24 Year Olds. Johannesburg: Reproductive Health Research Unit. [Online] Available at: <http://www.healthlink.org.za/indicators/HIV_AIDS/HIV_YouthSurvey_2003.pdf> [Accessed July 2011].
- Pollack, S., 2007. "I'm Just Not Good in Relationships": Victimisation Discourses and the Gendered Regulation of Criminalised Women. *Feminist Criminology*, 2 (2), pp. 158-174.
- Pollack, S., and Kendall, K., 2005. Taming the Shrew: Regulating Prisoners through Women-Centered Mental Health Programming. *Critical Criminology*, 13(1), pp. 71-87.
- Plüddemann, A., Myers, B. and Parry, C., 2007. Fact Sheet – Methamphetamine. South African Medical Research Council. [Online]. Available at: <<http://www.mrc.ac.za/public/methamphetamine.pdf>> [Accessed 22 July 2011].
- Prison Reform Trust, 2009. Bromley Briefings Prison Factfile. [Online]. Available at: <<http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/subsection.asp?id=1781>> [Accessed 27 November 2009].
- Prison Reform Trust, 2010. Women in Prison, August 2010. [Online]. Available at: <<http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/uploads/documents/Women%20in%20Prison%20August%202010.pdf>> [Accessed 30 September 2011].
- Reichert, J., and Bostwick, L., 2010. Post-traumatic stress disorder and victimization among female prisoners in Illinois. Chicago, IL: Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority. [Online]. Available at: <http://www.icjia.state.il.us/public/pdf/ResearchReports/PTSD_Female_Prisoners_Report_1110.pdf> [Accessed: 30 September 2011].
- Reisig, M. D., Holtfreter, K., and Morash, M., 2006. Assessing Recidivism Risk across Female Pathways to Crime. *Justice Quarterly*, 23 (3), pp.384-405.
- Richie, B.E., 1994. Gender Entrapment: An Exploratory Study. In A. Dan, ed., (1994) *Reframing Women's Health: Multi-disciplinary Research and Practice*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.
- Rivera, B., & Widom, C., 1990. Childhood Victimization and Violent Offending. *Violence and Victims*, 5 (1), pp.19-35.
- Salisbury, E.J., and Van Voorhis, P., 2009. Gendered Pathways: A Quantitative Investigation of Women Probationers' Paths to Incarceration. *Criminal Justice and Behaviour*, 36(6), pp.541-566.
- Sampson, R. J., and Laub, J. H., 1993. *Crime in the Making: Pathways and Turning Points Through Life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Sampson, R. J., and Laub, J. H., 2005a. A General Age-Graded Theory of Crime: Lessons Learned and the Future of Life-Course Criminology. In: D. P. Farrington, ed. (2005), *Integrated Developmental and Life Course Theories of Offending*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- Sampson, R. J., and Laub, J. H. eds., 2005b. A Life-Course View of the Development of Crime. The *ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*: November 2005, Vol. 602(1), pp. 12-45.
- Seidman, G., 1999. Is South Africa different? Sociological comparisons and theoretical contributions from the land of Apartheid. *Annual Review of Sociology* 25, pp. 419-440.
- Shaw, M. and Hannah-Moffat, K., 2004. How Cognitive Skills Forgot about Gender and Diversity. In G. Mair, ed. (2004) *What Matters in Probation*. Cullompton: Willan.

- Sheridan, M.J., 1996. Families in Society: Comparison of the Life Experiences and Personal Functioning of Men and Women in Prison. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services*, pp. 423-434.
- Siegel, J.A., and Williams, L.M., 2003. The Relationship Between Child Sexual Abuse and Female Delinquency and Crime: A Prospective Study'. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 40(1), p. 71-94.
- Simpson, S.S., and Hertz, D., 1999. Gender, Crime and Criminal Justice. In J.S. Chafetz, ed., (1999) *Handbook of the Sociology of Gender*. New York: Kluwer Academic.
- Simpson, S.S., Yahner, J.L., and Dugan, L., 2008. Understanding Women's Pathways to Jail: Analysing the Lives of Incarcerated Women. *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, 41(1), pp.84-108.
- Sloth-Nielsen, J., 2005. Women and Prisons in South Africa. *Civil Society Prison Reform Initiative Newsletter*, 9, pp. 1-5.
- Snell, T.L., and Morton, D.C., 1994. *Women in Prison: Survey of State Prison Inmates, 1991*. Washington DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice.
- South African Department of Correctional Services (DCS), 2011. Statistical Information. [Online]. Available at: <<http://www.dcs.gov.za/AboutUs/StatisticalInformation.aspx>> [Accessed: 2011].
- South African Department of Correctional Services (DCS), 2008a. Presentation to the Portfolio Committee: The Awarding of Inmate Privileges According to Inmate Classification in DCS. [Online]. Available at: <<http://www.pmg.org.za/files/docs/080618dcs.ppt#324,4,BACKGROUND AND STATUS>> [Accessed 4 July 2011].
- South African Department of Correctional Services (DCS), 2008b. Strategic Plan 2008/09 – 2012/13 [Online]. Available at: <<http://www.dcs.gov.za/Publications/Strategic%20Plans/Strategic%20Plan%202008-09%20to%202012-13.pdf>> [Accessed 4 July 2011].
- South African Department of Correctional Services (DCS), 2008c. National Offender Population Profile in the Department of Correctional Services: Using statistical data up to 30 June 2008. [Online] Available at: <<http://www.info.gov.za/view/DownloadFileAction?id=99964>> [Accessed June 28, 2011].
- South African Department of Correctional Services (DCS), 2007. Web Statistics. [Online]. Available at: <<http://www.dcs.gov.za/Webstatistics.aspx>> [Accessed: 2011].
- South African Judicial Inspectorate of Prisons (JIP), 2006. Annual Report for 2005/6. Cape Town: Judicial Inspectorate of Prisons.
- South African Police Service, 2008. Annual Report 2006/2007. [Online]. Available at: <<http://www.saps.gov.za/statistics/reports/crimestats/2006.pdf>> [Accessed 2007].
- South African Police Service, 2011. Crime Statistics 2010: Sexual Offences. [Online]. Available at: <http://www.saps.gov.za/statistics/reports/crimestats/2011/categories/total_sexual_offences.pdf> [Accessed June 2011].
- South African Police Service (Criminal Records Department), 2010. Presentation to the Open Society Foundation for South Africa (OSF-SA) conference on Recidivism and Reoffending in South Africa, 29 and 30 November 2010, Johannesburg.
- Steffensmeier, D., Allan, E., 1996. Gender and Crime: Toward a Gendered Theory of Female Offending. *Annual Review of Sociology* 22(1), pp. 459-487.
- Stockwell, T.R., Donath, S., Cooper-Stanbury, M., Chikritzh, T.N., Catalano, P. and Mateo, C., 2004. Under-reporting of Alcohol Consumption in Household Surveys: A Comparison of Quantity-Frequency, Graduated-Frequency and Recent Recall. *Addiction*, 99(8), pp.1024-1033.

- Statistics South Africa (Stats SA), 2010. Social Profile of South Africa, 2002 – 2009. Statistics South Africa: Pretoria, 2010.
- Statistics South Africa (Stats SA), 2011. Quarterly Labour Force Survey: Quarter 4 (October to December 2010). Statistics South Africa: Pretoria, 2011.
- The Jali Commission (2005). Final Report. Pretoria: Department of Correctional Services.
- Tibatemwa-Ekirikubinza, L., 1999. Women's Violent Crime in Uganda: More Sinned Against than Sinning. Kampala, Uganda: Fountain Publishers.
- United Nations, 2010. United Nations Resolution 2010/16, Annex: United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules), Preliminary Observations.
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2002. South Africa: Country Profile on Drugs and Crime. Pretoria: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.
- Van Zyl, D., 2010. Annual Report for the period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010 (Judicial Inspectorate for Correctional Services). [Online] Available at: <<http://judicialinsp.pwv.gov.za/Annualreports/Annual%20Report%202009%20-2010.pdf>> [Accessed June 28, 2011].
- Van Zyl Smit, D., & Dunkel, F., 2001. Imprisonment Today and Tomorrow: International Perspectives on Prisoners Rights and Prison Conditions, 2nd ed. Deventer, NL: Kluwer Law International.
- Vetten, L., 2008. The imprisonment of women in Africa. In: J Sarkin, ed. (2008) Human Rights in African Prisons. Cape Town: HSRC Press.
- Walmsley, R., 2006. World Female Imprisonment List. [Online]. Available at: http://www.unodc.org/pdf/india/womens_corner/women_prison_list_2006.pdf [Accessed September 2011].
- Wesley, J.K., 2006. Considering the Context of Women's Violence. *Feminist Criminology*, 1 (1), pp.303-328.
- Widom, C.S., 2006. Child Abuse, Neglect and Violent Criminal Behaviour. *Criminology*, 27(2), pp. 251-271.
- Correctional Association of New York (Women in Prison Project), 2009a. Women in Prison Fact Sheet. New York: Correctional Association of New York. [Online]. Available: <<http://www.correctionalassociation.org/publications/factsheets.htm>> [Accessed 5 September 2011].
- Correctional Association of New York, (Women in Prison Project), 2009b. Survivors of Abuse in Prison Fact Sheet. New York: Correctional Association of New York. [Online]. Available at: http://www.correctionalassociation.org/policy_agenda/securing_justice_for_survivors.htm [Accessed July 2011].
- Wahidin, A. (2004) Older Women and the Criminal Justice System: Running out of Time. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Women in Prison Trust, n.d. Women in Prison: Statistics [online]. Available at <<http://www.womeninprison.org.uk/statistics.php>> [Accessed 5 September 2011].
- Woolard, I., 2002. An Overview of Poverty and Inequality in South Africa. Working Paper prepared for DFID(SA).
- World Health Organization, 2007. Health in prisons. A WHO guide to the essentials in prison health. Copenhagen: World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe. [Online]. Available at: <http://www.who.int/hiv/pub/idu/euro_health_prison/en/index.html> [Accessed 22 July 2011].

- Zlotnick, C., 1999. Antisocial Personality Disorder, Affect Dysregulation and Childhood Abuse among Incarcerated Women. *Journal of Personality Disorders*, 13(1), p. 90-95.
- Zorland, J., Mooss, A., Perkins, A., 2008. Gambling and Offending: An Examination of the Literature. (Review Paper). Atlanta: Georgia State University. [Online] Available at: <<http://www2.gsu.edu/~psyjge/Rsvc/RG%20and%20crime%20Lit20Review.pdf>> [Accessed 25 June 2011].