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People, Places, and Things: The Social Process of Reentry for Female Ex-Offenders
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Summary

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The primary goal of this study is to learn about the complex social lives of female ex-offenders and how their release from prison impacts and is impacted by their relationships. The main area of interest is how various groups impacted – offenders, their employers or potential employers, landlords, friends and family, acquaintances -- manage the process of inmate reentry. Little is known about the actual daily lives and experiences of ex-offenders or how, when, and with whom their ex-offender status is salient. Even less is known about the experience and networks of female offenders. I argue that the reintegration experience is an interactive one, between offenders and their private, parochial, and public social networks (Hunter 1985). These various relationships play varying roles in the reintegration process of ex-offenders, influencing their ability to successfully rejoin society. Many of issues related to offending and reentry, such as gender, drug use and abuse, structural disadvantages, and parenthood, appear throughout the chapters. In addition, chapters focus on methodology, origins of drug use and offending, reentry experiences with intimates (e.g., family, friends), educational and employment experiences, and housing and neighborhood context. I conclude by briefly summarizing the lives of these women, and introduce ways in which their experiences are relevant beyond the fields of criminology and criminal justice.

Despite their increasing involvement in the criminal justice system, female offenders remain relatively under-studied and under-theorized within criminology

(Chesney-Lind 1989; Simpson 1989; Simpson and Elis 1995; Chesney-Lind 2006). This

has been changing in recent years, with numerous studies focusing on women and girls'

offending and the role of gender for both male and female offenders, with greater nuance

and complexity in their theorizing and analysis (e.g., Messerschmidt 1993; Maher and

Daly 1996; Richie 1996; Steffensmeier and Allan 1996; Chesney-Lind 1997; Owen 1998;

Miller 2000; Miller 2001). Current studies focus on the "doing" of gender, and how this

is shaped by individuals' positions in the social structure (West and Zimmerman 1987;

Simpson and Elis 1995; West and Fenstermaker 1995; Miller 2000). Now with the

emergence of a strong literature on reentry and the collateral consequences of

imprisonment, the experiences of women are again marginal to the field (but see O'Brien

2001; Richie 2001; Giordano, Cernkovich and Rudolph 2002; Covington 2003).

Methodology

This research is based on a series of qualitative interviews with female ex-

offenders and their social networks. This approach is particularly suited to studying

female ex-offenders. Using an inductive and qualitative methodology allows the capture

of experiences substantially different than those theorized and tested among male ex-

offenders (Daly and Chesney-Lind 1988; Chesney-Lind 1989; Simpson 1989). In

looking at their experiences before and after their incarcerations, I use the life course

perspective (Elder 1998; Laub and Sampson 2003). Specifically, I recognize that their

lives are embedded in and shaped by the historical and physical context, that the timing

of life events matters, that lives are interdependent, and human agency plays a key role in

constructing one's life (Elder 1998; Laub and Sampson 2003). In addition, I draw

heavily on symbolic interactionism. Specifically, I use the four premises of symbolic

interactionism, as laid out by Herbert Blumer: a) people act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them, b) the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction one has with others, c) these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters, and d) the complex interlinkages of acts are dynamic, not static (1969, p. 50). Thus, my primary focus is how the women construct and understand their lives, life experiences and relationships (Goffman 1963; Berger and Luckman 1966; McAdams 2006). While the focus is on the women's definitions and understandings of their lives, I also highlight some of the structural constraints they face in attempting to organize their lives.

Participants were recruited through their participation in a Chicago halfway house serving women coming out of prison. The halfway house is a voluntary residential program. Women typically stay for between six months to a year, and unless they violate the rules, they are allowed to stay until they have a job (or stable income) and a suitable place to live. The halfway house has sixteen beds. While the women are there, they participate in group therapy meetings and outpatient drug counseling, and receive help finding work and transitional housing. While most come straight from prison, occasionally women are referred from an inpatient drug treatment program. Almost all halfway house residents, then, are involved with the criminal justice system, either on mandatory supervised release (parole) or probation, while they are residents.

The participants were recruited in two ways. I twice (in September 2003 and January 2004) went to the halfway house to invite participation of current residents (N=24). In addition, in December 2003, I mailed an introductory letter and an informed

consent form to all former residents for whom the halfway house staff has current addresses. I prepared the mailing inviting them to participate, and dropped them off at the halfway house, where staff added address labels. Out of approximately the 300 former residents since the time halfway house opened in 1995, they had what they believed to be current addresses for 85. Of these, I interviewed 25 women, for a total of 49 ex-offender respondents. All respondents were given $20 in cash for each interview, as compensation for their time. At the time I began interviewing them, then, the women had been out of prison for between a few weeks to nine years and were both current and former halfway house residents. Including former residents meant that I met women in vastly different parts of their reentry process. The research design called for each woman to be interviewed four times over the course of a year. The purpose of this was threefold: tracking changes in the women's lives, establishing greater rapport, and inductively identifying topics of interest and relevance to the women. In addition, I asked the women to identify people in their lives who they were willing to let me interview. This led to two interviews each with 26 "network members," including parents, siblings, adult children, romantic partners, friends, and co-workers.

Primary Findings

The women in this study all had similarities in terms of demographics (e.g., largely African American, with children) and offending (primarily drug related) backgrounds. Yet in talking to them about their childhoods and the origins of their offending, much more diversity was revealed. Some women began using drugs casually, often for years, before it became a problem. Sometimes they can pinpoint an event that served as a turning point for them, often a traumatic event, and other times, they slipped

into addiction without realizing when. Other women experienced abuse and victimization as a child or adolescent, and leading to drug use as a coping mechanism (Agnew 1992; Baskin and Sommers 1998). Nearly all of them were raised and were living in an environment in which drug use was commonplace (Sutherland 1947; Reiss 1986; Boardman, Finch, Ellison, Williams and Jackson 2001). Often family members also used drugs and/or drank heavily. Their first exposure to drugs was typically through their family members or friends. While less common in terms of initiation into drug use, relationships with romantic partners were heavily influenced by drug use of both partners, and often included violence. The women most often became involved in other offending after their drug use was well underway, and they became further and further removed from conventional society.

The women typically cited a desire to change their lives as the reason they chose to go to the halfway house. In my conversations with them, almost all of them seemed quite sincere in their desire to desist. This clearly is a necessary first step in successful desistance (Sommers, Baskin and Fagan 1994; Baskin and Sommers 1998; Maruna 2001; Giordano et al. 2002). Yet this desire just as clearly is not enough. Their structural positions and social relationships also shape their experiences with reentry and desistance.

Intimate Relationships

Relationships with families of origin remain important sources of both support and strain. These relationships are complicated and changeable as each person's beliefs and behavior influence the nature of the relationship. Family members often have endured years of neglect and pain through the women's addictions and periods of

offending. Many of them are or have been involved with drug use and offending themselves. Depending on each individual's current offending and drug use, the relationships change. Rarely are they terminated completely. These relationships can be both positive and negative forces in the women's lives, and sometimes simultaneously. At a minimum, they are relationships that are not as easily terminated as peer relationships.

Few women in this sample established romantic relationships with people who have no history of drug use or offending. While this is not surprising, it may seem to bode poorly for their prospects of developing a pro-social relationship that may contribute to their own desistance. However, many of the women did establish pro-social relationships with men or women who have similar histories as themselves. These relationships were not problem-free, but as with more traditional pro-social relationships (e.g., Laub and Sampson 2003), they can evolve into supportive and mutually reinforcing bonds. Thus "pro-social" need not be limited to those with no history of anti-social behavior, but also can include those who are desisting themselves. Also important for many desisting women, however, is an absence of romantic relationships. These women feel a need to establish their own independence and successes before (if ever) they form attachments to romantic partners. This is an outgrowth of their histories of abuse, the role men played in their own offending, and the messages they receive in recovery communities.

In many ways, the relationships with women had with friends followed similar patterns to those with family members and romantic partners. These relationships were potentially a social bond to conventional society and a strain, depending on the behaviors

of both parties. And while these relationships were quite significant and supportive for the women, they were not as intimate as those with family, and thus more easily disintegrated in the case of relapse or reoffending. As long as both partners in the friendship had similar behaviors and similar attitudes, they had a bond. However when one's behavior changed, so did the relationship, often resulting in nothing left in common.

There are several things we can learn from these women's intimate relationships. First, many of these women did form supportive, mutually beneficial relationships (romantic, friend, and family) with men and women with a history of offending and/or drug use who in many studies would be described as "anti-social" partners or friends. This suggests the need to more carefully define "pro-social" and "anti-social" partners and bonds. We may be well advised to expand our notions of "marriageable men" (or women) beyond those who have no history of involvement with drug use or the criminal justice system (Wilson 1987). As long as both partners are in recovery, relationships with others with a history of drug use or offending can provide a strong basis of shared experience and understanding. The same dynamic occurred in family relationships, romantic partnerships, and friendships.

Second, the rate of marriage among these women (and contemporary offenders more broadly) is low (Giordano et al. 2002). More research needs to be done on the effect of different types of relationships, especially in the area of cohabitation and same-sex relationships. In this study, roughly 20 percent of the women lived with a romantic partner at some point during the year. There is no clear difference in the effect of marriage, cohabitation, and non-cohabitation, as has been described among male

offenders (Horney, Osgood and Marshall 1995; Warr 1998). However, the sample here is small and the length of follow up was fairly limited; this issue warrants more attention. Similarly, the idea of romantic social bonds should also be expanded to include non-marriage relationships and homosexual relationships, both of which may serve similar roles among female offenders. Another important difference for female ex-offenders is that a conscious avoidance of romantic relationships may be necessary or beneficial for them to successfully desist from crime and redefine their lives as law abiding people. This is an important twist on social bond theories (Hirschi 1969; Sampson and Laub 1993), and reminds us of the importance of gender dynamics in offending and in romantic relationships.

Third, we need to look at social bonds as a dynamic characteristic. A single relationship may prove to both encourage desistance and lead to reoffending, depending on when it is looked at. All relationships develop over time, and are better understood as a process than a static entity. For social bonds to be a deterrent to offending, they must be strong – a characteristic that emerges in time (Laub and Sampson 2003). At the same time, some relationship characteristics can be a sign of instability, both for the woman and the relationship. Only by looking at the entire history (or at least a longer term history) of the relationship can an assessment be made. Also, more investigation into what leads to longer term relationships is warranted. Clearly, there is strong evidence of a "blood is thicker than water" dynamic in which families weather many difficult times amongst each other while still maintaining some type of bond. With friendships and romantic relationships this is less clear. Relationships that are faced with strong challenges (e.g., drug relapse) seem less likely to survive, and sometimes this was born

out with these women. Yet some relationships continued and evolved through drug use, recovery, relapse, and so on.

Education and Employment

The post-incarceration employment pathways of the women in this study were shaped both by their pasts and their ability to mobilize tangible and intangible resources in the present. All of the women faced barriers and restrictions due to felony convictions, and all experienced a fairly high level of access to services and support through the halfway house. Yet, three distinct pathways – stasis, upward mobility, and downward mobility -- emerged in their post incarceration experiences. While a base level of human capital was necessary for all women's success, their successes were more strongly shaped by their use of social and cultural capitals. Pursuing education benefited them primarily through their access to new social networks, cultural competence, and self confidence.

A small number of women faced significant hurdles, based largely on severe mental health issues which restricted their human and cultural capital and their ability to mobilize social capital. The majority of women were fairly evenly divided between upwardly and downwardly mobile pathways. The upwardly mobile women tended to start out at a low level of education and employment histories. For them, gaining access to high school and college educations gave them a number of benefits: tangible skills and knowledge, self-esteem, credentialing to demonstrate their "rehabilitation," communication competence to assimilate with mainstream employers, and access to pro-social networks. While many of these women believed in the mainstream ideology of education as a direct source of social mobility, the benefits they experienced through education were largely through education's influence on their social and cultural capital.

The downwardly mobile women typically had further to fall in terms of their prior education level and employment histories. Because they already had higher levels of education and experience, they also stood to benefit less from what the halfway house offered and also had limited opportunities to benefit from their former capitals. Thus these trajectories can best be described as a regression to the mean – ex-offenders as a group have the greatest chance to work in a fairly small number of fields and of limited stability or social status. Depending on their prior statuses, this narrow range of options may represent either an improvement or a decline.

We can thus conceptualize the importance of education in a number of ways. The least important aspect of education was that which is most frequently touted – skills and knowledge. The dominant social ideology of the human capital of education as a source of social mobility was limited for these women. However, education can be conceptualized more broadly, as an individual accomplishment and a social good. In addition, it led to greater communication competencies and beneficial social relationships.

For this group of ex-offenders, the most important aspect of education was first and foremost as a source of networks, something which many also developed outside of the school setting. The second most important value in education was as a source of cultural capital, both in terms of credentialing and communication competencies. Those that could foster and mobilize social relationships to their advantage were able to gain the most prestigious and meaningful employment, largely independent of their educational levels. For those who pursued education after incarceration, it served as a sign of rehabilitation. There were limits to the extent to which any form of capital can benefit

the women, however. Those who made the greatest progress started with minimal

professional accomplishments. Education as credentialing was less beneficial for those

women with higher levels to start. The social networks they may have developed through

their education were outdated. In addition, education merely as a form of human capital

was not enough to supersede a felony conviction. The stigma of a felony conviction for

these women functioned as a glass ceiling, limiting their employment, in spite of their

education and employment credentials and experience.

Certainly the connection between education and employment is a problem that is

broader than just ex-offenders. Here, the women's experience parallels findings from

welfare-to-work and other job training programs (Blank 1997). Those who are neither

the best nor the worst off are those who benefit the most from the programs. Women

who are the most disadvantaged do not receive enough help and support to enter

mainstream life unassisted. Those who are the best off, with the greatest experience and

education, will likewise have a harder time regaining their former positions. The services

provided ex-offenders assumed a low level of education and skills and so the social

connections were not in place to help higher level offenders. In addition, broader

economic changes mean that nonstandard work arrangements have increased, and this

often means work with low wages, no health insurance, and no pension. Low skill, but

stable and well paid, jobs that were once available for ex-offenders (e.g., in

manufacturing) are much less available. The effects of these broader economic changes

are experienced by all workers, not just those with felony convictions.

Quality jobs, with a modicum of stability, wages, prestige, can reduce recidivism

among male offenders (Sampson and Laub 1993; Laub and Sampson 2003), and this

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study suggests the same is true for at least a subset of female offenders. While fairly typical in terms of their backgrounds, the women in this study had a fairly high access to services and support, which is likely tied to a decreased likelihood of recidivism (Reisig, Holtfreter and Morash 2002; Holtfreter, Reisig and Morash 2004). The women in this study demonstrated a willingness and desire to work; this was central to their self-conceptions. Few of the women expressed a desire for a "gendered respectability package"; nearly all of them expected to support themselves and few expressed a desire to rely on anyone else to do this. While this may be, in part, a reflection of the racial composition of the sample (Giordano et al. 2002), it does suggest that employment can serve a similar function among female ex-offenders as it does for men, if the jobs are available.

Housing and Neighborhood

The women in this study had common aspirations as to where they wanted to live. They desired safety, quiet, and heterogeneity. While they were unlikely to be able to move into middle class neighborhoods which they typically cited as examples of their ideal neighborhood, many of them did turn their neighborhood context into a neutral or positive factor in their lives. The women clearly could articulate the reasons why they should not live in their old neighborhoods, and yet many managed to do so successfully. This is not to say, however, that neighborhood context is irrelevant, or that the arguments against the concentration of ex-offenders are invalid. Coercive mobility is clearly a factor in these women's lives and in their neighborhoods (Clear 2002). Yet several examples illustrate that the last step in the mobility can be a positive one. Being an ex-offender allows the women to bridge the law abiding residents and those who are

engaging in criminal activity in the neighborhood. From a community perspective, these women can then serve to strengthen the informal social control and collective efficacy in the neighborhood. The women themselves feel a sense of purpose and satisfaction in their ability to help others. While some of these women are also working as "professional ex-es," as drug counselors or at the halfway house, others do so only informally (Brown 1991; Maruna 2001). While achieving this level of comfort in the neighborhood may take time, and not all women were interested in serving as profession ex-es, formally or informally, these examples do demonstrate that ex-offenders returning to their old or similar neighborhoods also can be beneficial, for them and the community.

Neighborhood is a relatively unimportant factor for these women in terms of their peer groups. The women most often worked outside their neighborhood, and had friendship networks that transcended neighborhood boundaries. Many of their friendships were based in recovery communities, and many kept in touch with former halfway house residents. While they knew people in the neighborhood and often had family nearby, their social worlds were not limited to the neighborhood. So while peer groups were central both to their offending and desistance, these groups were not neighborhood-based.

While the women managed to successfully negotiate lives in disadvantaged, troubled neighborhoods, there were several macro-level problems. One, the women often spent large amounts of time on public transportation to get to often low paying jobs. Two, the women frequently transition from the halfway house to a subsidized housing program to their own apartment. These programs were often an invaluable stepping stone for the women. However, the extremely limited number of multiple-bedroom units and

rental restrictions often force the women to choose between living with their children and taking advantage of these services. Women who would like to reunite with their children are likely to need additional support services, from childcare to family counseling, and yet they are even less likely to live in a supportive housing program. The women also often stayed in these programs for years, at times in part because it was easier for them, but also because they tended to work in unstable and low paid jobs that made finding market rate apartments a challenge.

In short, while the neighborhoods in which these women lived clearly lack resources and have many social problems, the women themselves can still live successfully in these neighborhoods. Their peer networks are rarely solely geographically based and the women sometimes chose to contribute informally to social control and collective efficacy in the neighborhood by becoming "part of the solution" and working with offenders in the neighborhood.

This project is an attempt to describe the social process of reentry for women leaving the criminal justice system. These women were identified and interviewed because of their involvement (most often incarceration) with the criminal justice system. As with others taking a narrative, life history approach, I also sought to show the human side of these women, to reduce the perceived social distance between offenders and nonoffenders or deviants and nondeviants (see, for example, Liebow 1995; Duneier 1999; Maruna 2001; Laub and Sampson 2003). And, in each section, I referred to some of the ways in which their experiences parallel those of residents of urban neighborhoods (Taub, Taylor and Dunham 1984; Anderson 1999; Pattillo-Mc Coy 1999; Emerson, Chai and Yancey 2001), African Americans and women (Kirschenmann and Neckerman 1991;

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Browne 2000; Lin 2000), drug users and alcoholics (Cain 1991), and male offenders (Sutherland 1947; Hirschi 1969; Sampson and Laub 1993; Laub and Sampson 2003). These references serve not only to put the experiences of these women into some broader social context, but also point to the very real complexity of their lives and the complexity of the role of the criminal justice system in their lives. These women are not merely ex-offenders or recovering drug addicts. I have attempted to demonstrate how these roles and relationships shape and are shaped by their experiences as ex-offenders. In many ways, this label infuses every aspect of their lives, and yet it is also limiting. While in many ways this is a central facet of their lives, their lives also have meaning as mothers, sisters, daughters, neighbors, co-workers, and friends. These other roles that they play or have played also are significant, and their experiences in these regards contribute to our knowledge and understanding of these social roles.

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ABSTRACT

The dissertation focuses on the reentry process of women who have been involved

with the criminal justice system. It is a qualitative study of female ex-offenders, other

people in their lives, and how they affect and are affected by the reentry process. The

women were embedded in social relationships that included large numbers of (current

and former) drug users and offenders. While they tended to avoid contact with former

"associates," they struggled to balance relationships with family members and romantic

partners. This meant isolating themselves, negotiating relationships with a balance of

distance and respect, and forming supportive bonds with other ex-offenders or recovering

addicts. They frequently then relied both on social service program or governmental

support and employment. In addition to financial benefits (often minimal), employment

is closely tied to a sense of self-efficacy and self esteem. The women's housing choices

were constrained by income, family needs, housing restrictions, and desires. However,

they were able to negotiate living in disadvantaged neighborhoods by redefining their

role in the neighborhood as "part of the solution, not the problem." This is one way in

which they reframed their experiences to give meaning and import to their "ex-offender"

status, and worked not only for individual, but also community, change.

This study advances our understandings of desistance and reentry in several ways.

First, we can better understand how gender (and race) impacts reentry and desistance. In

addition, we can see how reentry and desistance is being shaped in the contemporary

incarceration environment. Here, there is evidence of social bonds, differential association, strain theories, and cognitive transformations. In many ways, these women's experiences are similar to those of contemporary male offenders. Yet, they are also often informally sanctioned for being "bad" mothers and struggle themselves with taking care of their children. In addition, their experiences with social bonds are different from those of men. While social relationships may establish ties to conventional society, these relationships are often with former offenders and many women consciously isolate themselves from some or all bonds to avoid strain and negative influences.

CHAPTER ONE

ISSUES IN FEMALE OFFENDING AND REENTRY

"*We must see deviance, and the outsiders who personify the abstract conception, as a consequence of interaction between people, some of whom in the service of their own interests make and enforce rules which catch others who, in the service of their own interests, have committed acts which are labeled as deviant.*" (Becker 1963, p. 163)

The primary goal of this study is to learn about the complex social lives of female ex-offenders and how their release from prison impacts and is impacted by their relationships. I take a multi-faceted look at offender reintegration. The main area of interest is how various groups impacted – offenders, their employers or potential employers, landlords, friends and family, acquaintances -- manage the process of inmate reentry. Little is known about the actual daily lives and experiences of ex-offenders or how, when, and with whom their ex-offender status is salient. Even less is known about the experience and networks of female offenders. I explore the issue of reintegration from all of these perspectives qualitatively, with a focus on female offenders. I argue that the reintegration experience is an interactive one, between offenders and their private, parochial, and public social networks (Hunter 1985). These various relationships play varying roles in the reintegration process of ex-offenders, influencing their ability to successfully rejoin society.

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The vast majority of incarcerated people will be released from prison. In Illinois only 3 % of inmates are serving a sentence of death or life imprisonment; the average sentence of an Illinois inmate is 4.2 years. Unfortunately, for those released in 1999, 48.3 % returned to prison within three years[1]. Policy makers and researchers have increasingly focused on reducing this high recidivism rate and helping inmates reenter society. Researchers are focusing on causes of desistance from offending (e.g., Sampson and Laub 1993; Shover 1996; Maruna 2001; e.g., Giordano, Cernkovich and Rudolph 2002; Laub and Sampson 2003) and the collateral consequences of inmate reentry, including voter disenfranchisement (Mauer 2002; Uggen and Manza 2002), community and family impacts (Braman 2002; Clear 2002; Western, Pettit and Guetzkow 2002; Travis and Waul 2003; Braman 2004), welfare (Rubinstein and Mukamal 2002), and employment (Lott 1992; Nagin and Waldfogel 1998; Uggen 1999; Uggen 2000; Pager 2003).

Much of the emphasis in research on offending and desistance has focused on male offenders. While the number of studies including or focusing on women has been increasing (e.g., Sommers, Baskin and Fagan 1994; Baskin and Sommers 1998; Miller 2000; O'Brien 2001; Chesney-Lind 2002; Giordano et al. 2002; Reisig, Holtfreter and Morash 2002; Richie 2002; Holtfreter, Reisig and Morash 2004), female offenders remain understudied and undertheorized. Male and female offenders tend to be of similar race and ethnicity, age, and educational levels as male offenders (O'Brien 2001). In the Illinois Department of Corrections, male and female offenders are, on average, the same

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[1] Illinois Department of Corrections, www.idoc.state.il.us. 2004.

age – 34.4 years – when released. The racial composition of inmates is also fairly similar among men and women. Sixty-six percent of men and 68.8 % of women are African American, 25.5 % of men and 25.9 % of women are white. The proportion of female Latino offenders (4.5 %) is much smaller than the men (8.6 %)

While they are demographically similar, however, there are some important differences between male and female prison inmates. Women comprise a relatively small percentage of total inmates in prison facilities, and by most estimates, they are underrepresented in offending populations (e.g., Greenfield and Snell 1999). Statewide in Illinois, approximately 6 % of inmates are women. In fiscal year 2002, 10 % of inmates released from IDOC facilities were female. While the rates of female imprisonment are still much lower than those for men, they are increasing at approximately twice the rate of male incarceration (Greenfield and Snell 1999; O'Brien 2001; Richie 2001). Chesney-Lind (1991) attributes the rise in female imprisonment to three policy shifts: the war on drugs, mandatory minimum sentences, and the "get tough on crime" attitude that has widened the net for less serious forms of law breaking. In addition to drug convictions *per se*, women are also more likely to commit an offense to get money to buy drugs or to commit an offense while under the influence of a drug (O'Brien 2001). Women often have more severe substance abuse problems, report more psychiatric disorders, repot lower self-esteem, and have more extensive histories of physical and sexual abuse than male inmates (Covington 2003, Richie 2001).

Women are more likely to have a high school diploma or equivalent (43 % of women in Illinois, compared with 27 % of men). Women are also much more likely to

be parents. Eighty-five percent of female inmates have at least one child, with an average

of 2.5 children. In contrast, 60 % of male inmates have no children, and an average of

1.4. Even among parents, women are more likely to be custodial parents and thus their

incarceration has greater impact on the children's lives (Hagan and Coleman 2001).

Female inmates are more likely to be convicted of drug related crimes (O'Brien 2001).

Between 1990 and 1997, the number of female inmates who were sentenced for drug

offenses increased by 99 %, while the rate for men increased by 48 %.

Women, on average, receive shorter sentences and have fewer prior incarcerations

than men. In Illinois, the average sentence is 3 years for women and 4.9 years for men;

most women serve less than a year (.79 years), compared to nearly a year and a half for

men. These sentencing disparities between men and women can be accounted for (at

least in part) by looking at the nature of their holding offenses. In Illinois, 45 % of

women and nearly 40 % of men are in prison for drug offenses. Because of the

prevalence of low level drug charges and property charges among female offenders, they

also then tend to receive shorter sentences. Women also have a smaller average number

of prior incarcerations (1.8 compared to 2.7 for men), and are less likely to be identified

as gang members (8 % of women, 32 % of men).[2] Women are also more likely to be

identified by prison officials as having drug problems. While men are more likely to be

flagged by IDOC staff for alcohol problems (34 %, versus 11 % of women) and

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[2] All information on Illinois prisoner inmates was provided by the Illinois Department of
Corrections Research and Analysis Unit. The Illinois Department of Corrections staff members identify
new inmates as gang members or not based on offender self-identification, tattoos, and other signifiers.
IDOC estimates that roughly 1/3 of its inmates are gang members, but many researchers believe this
number is a substantial underestimation and approximates gang membership at closer to 2/3 of prison
inmates.

marijuana use (31 % versus 16 % of women), women are twice as likely (44 % of women and 22 % of men) to be flagged for cocaine and more than twice as likely to be flagged for heroin (35 % of women, 14 % of men).

Female offenders and feminist theories

Despite their increasing involvement in the criminal justice system, female offenders remain relatively under-studied and under-theorized within criminology (Chesney-Lind 1989; Simpson 1989; Simpson and Elis 1995; Chesney-Lind 2006). This has been changing in recent years, with numerous studies focusing on women and girls' offending and the role of gender for both male and female offenders, with greater nuance and complexity in their theorizing and analysis (e.g., Messerschmidt 1993; Maher and Daly 1996; Richie 1996; Steffensmeier and Allan 1996; Chesney-Lind 1997; Owen 1998; Miller 2000; Miller 2001). Current studies focus on the "doing" of gender, and how this is shaped by individuals' positions in the social structure (West and Zimmerman 1987; Simpson and Elis 1995; West and Fenstermaker 1995; Miller 2000). Now with the emergence of a strong literature on reentry and the collateral consequences of imprisonment, the experiences of women are again marginal to the field (but see O'Brien 2001; Richie 2001; Giordano et al. 2002; Covington 2003).

Female offenders have been called "double deviants" because they both violate the law and gender norms (Owen 1998). Theories and empirical studies of both criminality and punishment tend to focus on men only, or have a very small sample of women. Those who do study female offenders typically argue that the leading theories of criminality do not apply to women. For example, Leonard (1982) concludes that the

theories of differential association, labeling, and anomie are insufficient in explaining female criminality because women tend to be sheltered from criminal learning experiences, are more likely to learn law abiding behavior, and have different role socialization. Daly and Chesney-Lind (1988) identify two problems in building theories of gender and crime: the generalizability problem (do theories developed with male offenders in mind apply equally to female offenders?) and the gender ratio problem (why are women less likely than men to be involved in crime?). They argue for the need to explore issues of gender and crime through a qualitative and gendered perspective to understand the social context shaping the lives of female offenders and against the "add women and stir" approach to understanding female criminality and gender differences in criminal behavior and criminal justice system involvement (Daly and Chesney-Lind 1988; Chesney-Lind 1989).

While some early feminist theories argued that female rates of offending would equal to male rates following the women's movement (Adler 1975), this has not occurred. Female offenders can be seen as liberated, as their behavior suggests a willingness to compete in traditionally all-male criminal behavior and therefore suggests a rejection of traditional gender norms (Adler 1975; Covington 1985). However, the nature of female offending is not consistent with Adler's (1975) liberation hypothesis. It is typically women who are the most disadvantaged, and who have benefited the least from the women's movement, that are more involved with criminal activity (Steffensmeier 1978; Chilton and Datesman 1987; Steffensmeier and Allan 1996). In addition, female offenders often believe in traditional gender norms and criminal

networks are typically male dominated and characterized by gender inequality (Steffensmeier 1983; Miller 2000). Women with more extensive offending histories are often initiated into that behavior by men and their offending is often with or for men (Covington 1985). A majority of female offenders report previous physical and sexual abuse, and rates of spousal abuse for women in prison are much higher than for women in general or for men in prison (O'Brien 2001; Chesney-Lind 2002). These findings are consistent with social control and social bond theories – those without interdependent ties to others (both economically and socially) are more likely to offend and to be involved more extensively in offending (Hirschi 1969; Sampson and Laub 1993). Thus, the worsening economic situation of marginalized women is more tied to female offending than is the idea of "liberated" women (Steffensmeier 1978; Chilton and Datesman 1987).

Many female offenders have experienced a history of abuse and violence. Yet (or perhaps leading to this), Stephanie Covington, citing relational theorists, argues that typically women's primary motivation is to build a connection to others (2003). Covington argues then that "to create change in their lives, incarcerated women need to experience relationships that do not repeat their histories of loss, neglect, and abuse" (2003, p. 74). In terms of desistance, Giordano et al. (2002) suggest that romantic and family bonds may be more important for women than for men. Because women in general tend to have closer relationships to family and the domestic sphere, a greater tendency to derive status from marriage partners, and less success and status in occupational arenas, their marriage and parenting roles may be more important, and employment roles less important. For at least some women this will mean fostering new

ties to family and loved ones. Given the substantial role that wives have played in male desistance (Sampson and Laub 1993; Horney, Osgood and Marshall 1995; Shover 1996; Warr 1998; Laub and Sampson 2003), this might suggest an even more significant role for romantic partners, family members, and children for female offenders' desistance. Yet, Giordano et al. (2002) concluded that marriage had a substantial role in narratives of desistance for roughly a quarter of both men and women.

The role of race, when combined with gender, adds an additional layer of complexity to our understanding of offending and reentry. African Americans and men are the most likely groups to be incarcerated, with nearly sixty percent of black male high school dropouts spending time in prison by their early 30s (Pettit and Western 2004). Likewise, African American women are one of the fastest growing groups in prison populations (Richie 1996). Thus, it is important to take into account this intersectionality, and how race, gender, and class interact and shape individual's experiences (Hill and Crawford 1990; Simpson 1991; Simpson and Elis 1995; Richie 1996; Collins 2000).

African American women who believe in traditional gender roles have a higher prevalence of drug use and minor property offenses. White women with traditional gender role attitudes are more likely to be involved in all types of crime (Hill and Crawford 1990). In general, social psychological factors (e.g., bonding, attitudes) have greater influence for white female offending, and structural factors (e.g., educational achievement, proximity to central city SMSA) have greater impact for Black female offenders (Hill and Crawford 1990). Hill and Crawford (1990) and Katz (2000), among

others, concluded that traditional theories of criminality, while inadequate for women in
general, are especially deficient in explaining African American women offenders.

Drug use and addiction

Much as gender is often dealt with in criminology as "add women and stir," drug
use and addiction also are often treated as "just" another variable. Drug use is typically
included in analyses as a dichotomous variable or series of variables to indicate the
presence or absence of addiction. Yet this treatment does little to further our
understanding of the role of drug addiction in the reentry process, and thus how drug
addiction has changed the landscape of reentry in recent years. Maruna correctly points
out that "the division between the study of crime and the study of addiction has always
been an arbitrary split dictated by bureaucratic and disciplinary boundaries, rather than
substantive concerns" (Maruna 2001, p. 64). In many ways, the two are
indistinguishable. This may be even truer for female offenders. Rates of drug use among
incarcerated women is higher than that of incarcerated men (Greenfield and Snell 1999)
and drug use often precedes other criminal involvement, in contrast to male offenders
who often begin offending before drug use (Steffensmeier and Allan 1996; Maruna
2001). In the present study, there are a few women who did not use drugs or who used
drugs occasionally and unrelated to their holding offenses. Yet these experiences are
rare, among this particular sample and among contemporary prison populations as a
whole.

Reintegration and desistance

Most research on offender reintegration has been from the perspective of the prisoner, and his or her post-prison behavior, issues, and barriers. This field of research includes both studies that focus on incarceration and the experience of the prison as a total institution (e.g., Clemmer 1958; Sykes 1958; Goffman 1961; Irwin 1970) and studies of the experiences, usually related to recidivism and reincarceration, of released offenders (Uggen and Kruttschnitt 1998; Uggen 1999; Travis 2000; Uggen 2000; Maruna 2001; Travis, Solomon and Waul 2001; Giordano et al. 2002; Uggen, Manza and Behrens 2004). These studies include both quantitative and qualitative, and together offer a detailed account of offenders' experiences, and often the offenders' impressions of those with whom they come into contact (e.g., corrections officers). Most often, however, they present offenders as individual actors, without putting them into a broader social context. Even in the work of Sampson and Laub (1993; Laub and Sampson 2003), firmly within the social control/social bond framework, rarely do we hear from anyone other than the offender himself. This study attempts to address this limitation by including interviews with social network members of the ex-offenders.

While there is no consistent or simple definition of "successful reintegration," it is likely to be defined as one or more of the following: desistance from offending (including behaviors which are parole violations), not getting arrested or charged with a new offense (but not necessarily desisting from offending), finding legal employment and housing, and/or establishing or reestablishing law abiding relationships and family bonds. In a review of studies of reintegration, O'Brien defines reintegration as "the former

inmate's acceptance of adult role responsibilities according to her capabilities (i.e., economic sufficiency, parenting), the individual's perceptions of acceptance by the community despite what is often a stigmatizing status, and the woman's sense of self-esteem or self-efficacy" (2001, p. 23). Desistance itself, while often conceptualized as an event or turning point, is better understood as a process (Maruna 2001). Maruna defines desistance as

> the long term abstinence from crime among individuals who had previously engaged in persistent patterns of criminal offending. The focus here is not on the transition or change, but rather on the maintenance of crime-free behavior in the face of life's obstacles and frustrations – that is, when "everything builds up" or one receives "some slap in the face." (2001, p. 26)

Successful inmate reintegration may include layers of behaviors and beliefs. Behaviors include getting a job, not engaging in illegal activity, and creating substantial social bonds. These behaviors are closely tied to classical criminological theories such as strain (Merton 1938; Agnew 1992) and social bond theories (Hirschi 1969; Sampson and Laub 1993; Uggen 1999). According to strain theories, quality employment reduces the strain felt by those who engage in crime, and so reduces their desire to reoffend. According to social bond theories, employment, marriage, and parenthood are important bonds to conventional society that will increase the cost of engaging in crime. Using either explanation, good (i.e., stable, reasonably paid, rewarding) employment is often considered crucial to reducing offending. Thus, employment is consistently included in definitions of "successful reintegration" and linked to reduced reoffending (Sampson and Laub 1993; Horney et al. 1995; Shover 1996; Laub, Nagin and Sampson 1998; Maruna 2001; Laub and Sampson 2003).

"Rebiographing" is a belief that may reduce offending. Maruna (2001) discusses offenders' desistance from crime, which he argues arises when individual offenders rebiograph, or rewrite their offending history to give their future, law-abiding lives meaning. Offenders create redemptive scripts, wherein "the desisting person's self-story not only has to allow for desistance but also has to make desistance a logical necessity" (Maruna 2001, p. 86). In order to refrain from offending for a sustained period, ex-offenders must be able to give their past and present lives meaning, often by redefining their offending history as a necessary experience that they can now use to help others (Ebaugh 1988; Brown 1991; Maruna 2001). A common way that ex-offenders accomplish this is through employment in fields such as drug counseling or in programs to help ex-offenders or troubled youth. The key, according to Maruna, is that "defiant rebels are able to find social roles or occupations that can provide them with the same sense of empowerment and potency they were seeking (unsuccessfully) through criminal behavior" (Maruna 2001, p. 121). Likewise, Shover discusses "subjective contingencies" that weaken the attractions of crime for male offenders. He concluded that "(1) a new perspective on the self; (2) a growing awareness of time; and (3) changes in aspirations and goals" that accompany aging decrease the appeal of crime among male offenders (1996, p. 130-131). In all of these examples, changes in circumstances interact with changing self-conceptions to produce greater conforming behavior.

Giordano, Cernkovitch and Rudolph (2002) develop a cognitive change model that includes a) an openness to change, b) exposure to a set of hooks for change (e.g., marriage, employment), c) the ability to focus reflexively on the self and envision an

appealing conventional "self," and d) a change in the way the actor views deviant behavior or lifestyle. While many of these cognitive changes occur together with exposure to conventional controls such as employment or marriage, "a solid replacement self may prove the stronger ally of sustained behavior change" (Giordano et al. 2002, p. 1002). In their sample, rewarding employment is unlikely to be a hook for change, given the widespread unemployment and unsteady employment. However, relationships with intimates (spouses, significant others, and children) and experiences with formal organizational settings, such as prison and drug treatment, were important. This is not to say that employment is not, or cannot be, important, but that not enough ex-offenders find jobs that may provide that "hook for change." Were these circumstances changed, employment may prove a more successful impetus for change. Giordano et al. (2002) also suggest that perhaps the "total package" of respectability – marriage and a stable job -- leads to desistence, a hypothesis for which they found some support. These approaches are similar to the model developed by Baskin and Sommers, specifically focusing on female offenders, in which offenders first must find the motivation to stop offending (often a result of negative experiences related to offending), publicly declare the decision to stop, maintain new behaviors, and integrate into new social networks (Sommers et al. 1994; Baskin and Sommers 1998).

Interaction and networks

Imprisonment policies have both individual and social outcomes (Wright 1994). Individual outcomes, the most common focus of studies of prisoner reentry, are consequences that primarily affect the offender, and only secondarily impact anyone else.

Social outcomes impact the offender, but also crime victims, families of victims and offenders, the state, and the broader society (Wright 1993). To study prisoner reentry, then, we should also look at both social and individual experiences. Just as crime must be prevented and controlled at private, parochial, and public levels (Hunter 1985; Bursik and Grasmick 1993), so offenders are affected. The present study then looks at family, acquaintances, and neighborhood simultaneously, and explores how they all relate to the offender's experiences and how these levels impact each other.

There are two common perspectives -- the public's and the offender's -- as to how released offenders should be received by the public. First, the public wants safety from violent offenders, offender accountability, offender treatment, and a public role in decision-making (Travis et al. 2001). Travis (2000) argues that the goal of reentry:

> is to have returned to our midst an individual who has discharged his legal obligation to society by serving his sentence *and* has demonstrated an ability to live by society's rules. Accepting released offenders into the community without a period of supervised released is morally unsatisfying: they have not yet earned their place at our table. By contrast, accepting an offender who has demonstrated, during a period of transition, that he can abide by the rules can be highly satisfying to the offender, his family, and the broader community. (p. 2)

Despite the current popularity among politicians and social service providers of balanced and restorative justice, or reintegrative shaming, there remains no "transition ceremony" for inmate release that parallels that of their transition to inmate status (trial and sentencing). In that sense, one an offender is apprehended and sentenced, he or she remains an offender for life (Braithwaite 1989). At best, we have a period of supervised release or parole, when the offender is subject to more stringent rules of behavior, and yet this too ends without ceremony or recognition.

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In contrast, many inmates feel they have done their time, and have "earned their place" by their time in prison; nothing more should be required. And despite their histories, they usually want the same things – e.g., money, family, success – as anyone else, though they may be less able or less likely to get them (Petersilia 1999). In a study of the role of street gangs in ex-offender reintegration (Scott 2004), one gang member, who had spent 6 years in prison, said:

> [The people who run the prison system] figure we're illiterate, we don't know no better. All we want is to get high, to get involved with other people's women and stuff, fornication and stuff. You know, when a man go home after a hard day's work, all he want to do is eat, be with his family, and be at peace. (p. 13)

When inmates are released, they often exhibit resistance and resentment of the many restrictions by which they still must abide. The majority of releasees will have some type of post-incarceration supervision (parole, supervised release). They often are forbidden, as conditions of their parole, from doing things that are not illegal for most adults (e.g., curfew restrictions, alcohol consumption). A failure to abide by this can lead to reincarceration. In addition, they will be faced with adjusting to values, norms, and relationships outside prison, will have to reestablish or create new relationships, and will deal with possible discrimination in employment and housing. Child custody is an additional burden faced by many women. When fathers are incarcerated, ninety percent of their children remain with their mothers. In contrast, less than a third of children remain with their fathers when their mothers are incarcerated (Hagan and Coleman 2001). Thus, many women have the added burden of working to regain custody of their children, who may have been living with family members or in DCFS custody.

Hunter (1985; Bursik and Grasmick 1993) identified three levels of networks, all of which impact social control and the ability of a neighborhood to control crime. These three levels -- private, parochial, and public -- characterize social life. These same three levels of relationships are important in understanding the experiences of ex-offenders when they are released from prison and must (re)enter "civilian" life. An offender's post-prison experience will be shaped by his experiences with private (intimate), parochial, and public relationships and forms of social control. Each level of relationship becomes less intimate, but not necessarily less important to reintegration. This dissertation, then, is organized along these lines. Each chapter addresses a different level of organization, and discusses how each affects the women's post-incarceration lives. In this next section, I briefly describe the focus of each chapter.

Private

Ties with intimates are central to our understandings of offending and desistance. Control and social bond theorists argue that individuals commit crimes when they do not have adequate reason not to (e.g., Hirschi 1969; Sampson and Laub 1993). Prisoners have greatly diminished contact with friends and family members while in prison. Often, prisons are located far away from an inmate's home; regardless, visitation procedures can be difficult and daunting. Upon release, then, the inmate must reestablish or replace these ties. Oftentimes, offenders purposefully avoid contact with old associates if they want to "go straight." Relationships with family may be more difficult to negotiate, as some family members may also be engaged in illegal activity.

Social bonds may foster desistance in several ways. They may provide a direct social control function, monitoring the behavior of the offender. An example of this is a "zero tolerance" attitude towards certain behaviors (Laub and Sampson 2003). Marriage, for example, may also lead to a change in routine activities, with more time spent at home and less time spent with delinquent peers (Warr 1998; Laub and Sampson 2003). Thus, in addition to raising the cost of offending, these ties also lead to more conventional activities. These activities in turn have conventional rewards and contribute to a corresponding non-criminal identity (Sommers et al. 1994; Shover 1996; Giordano et al. 2002; Laub and Sampson 2003).   In addition, "marrying up" may provide tangible material rewards, like housing or employment (Laub and Sampson 2003). Again, more important than the existence of social bonds is the strength of those bonds.

Some studies suggest that family networks are especially important for female offenders. Families of origin and romantic partners are frequently implicated in female offending, with strong evidence for differential association playing a role in female offending (Sutherland 1947; Giordano and Rockwell 2000). Sutherland's initial concept of differential association argued that "a person becomes delinquent because of an excess of definitions favorable to violation of the law over definitions unfavorable to violation of the law," including learning both techniques and motives, rationalizations, and attitudes (1947, p. 6). The rate of spousal abuse is higher among female offenders than the general female population, female offenders have more extensive than average histories of physical and sexual abuse, and women often commit crimes with or because of a male intimate partner (O'Brien 2001; Richie 2001; Covington 2003).   Giordano and Rockwell

(2000) found substantial support of differential association among their sample of serious female delinquents, who were exposed to both direct and indirect learning of criminal behavior.

In addition, intimate social networks are central to women's reentry and desistance process. O'Brien (2001) found in her study that all the women cited the importance of the support of family and friends in making the transition from prison to the free world. A majority of women in prison are mothers, with approximately two-third of them parents of minor children (Richie 2002). Often these children temporarily live with family members or foster families while the women are incarcerated (Hagan and Coleman 2001). Women with children then may have more at stake in creating (and proving the existence of) a stable home to regain custody and provide for their children.

Chapters 3 and 4 address the intimate ties that the women have with family, romantic partners, and friends. In chapter 3, I briefly discuss the various pathways into addiction and offending that the women experience. In chapter 4, I focus on those relationships as the women negotiate reentry and desistance.

Parochial

Parochial networks include those individuals with whom the offender has less intimate but more instrumental relationships, such as those with employers or potential employers. A common argument among researchers, inmates, and prisoners' rights advocates is that barriers to employment and housing are two of the most crucial problems facing ex-convicts. By extension, one could argue that it is this level of relationship will provide the biggest stumbling block to successful reentry (Irwin 1970;

Sampson and Laub 1993; Uggen 1999; Uggen 2000; Maruna 2001; Travis et al. 2001;

Western, Kling and Weinman 2001; Laub and Sampson 2003).   When ex-offenders see

how difficult their lives are, they may return to what is familiar – offending. Offending

with an economic angle, such as drug dealing or property crimes, may provide a quick

way to earn money upon release from prison. This is particularly true for those with

established offending networks, such as gang members (Fleisher and Decker 2001; Scott

2004). The frustration that comes from blocked goals also may lead those with substance

abuse problems to return to drug use (Agnew 1992). Because women often offend with

or for men, this may also be true for many female offenders, with or without gang ties

(O'Brien 2001). In addition, economic marginalization is central to female offender's

offending and desistance (Holtfreter et al. 2004). Irwin (1970) describes employment as

the most difficult obstacle to inmates reentering society. Even once the reentry stage is

past, barriers to success continue:

> Just meeting the exigencies of life overwhelms them. Perhaps their age and lack
> of experience brings them continuing employment difficulties. Often they have
> accepted some steady employment which pays a very low salary, such as busing
> or washing dishes. These jobs prove to be dead-ends. They offer no chance for
> advancement and take up all the ex-convicts; time, energy, and spirit, preventing
> them from exploring other job opportunities. Often minor health problems and
> drinking habits prevent them from maintaining steady employment and force
> them to seek only menial jobs which one may change regularly. (Irwin 1970, pp.
> 142-143)

Offenders, even those with good intentions, may be stymied when they cannot

find suitable (i.e., challenging, financially adequate) employment. Those with felony

convictions or drug convictions are often barred from certain professions, or they must go

through additional steps to get permission to enter the field. In addition, employers may

discriminate against those with felonies or those who they think are likely to have a felony conviction (Pager 2003). Modern technology increases the ease and lowers the expense for employers doing background checks. There may also be a cumulative effect of incarceration on lifetime earnings (Lott 1992; Sampson and Laub 1993). Other factors, such as offending history (Lott 1992; Western et al. 2001), age (Sampson and Laub 1993; Nagin and Waldfogel 1998; Uggen 2000), race (Uggen 1999; Pager 2003), work history and educational credentials (Lott 1992; Uggen 2000) also influence the likelihood of an ex-offender securing employment and the effect on his or her earnings.

One strategy that offenders may use to compensate for a lack of job skills and experience is the pursuit of additional education and training. Yet there is limited evidence that additional training helps any workers, much less those with a felony conviction (Tyler, Murname and Willett 2000; Lafer 2002). Chapter five addresses the issues of education and employment, placing both in a framework of human, social, and cultural capital.

Public

Often, an ex-offender returns to a family home or neighborhood or a comparable neighborhood (La Vigne, Visher and Castro 2004). The majority of inmates nationwide are released to core urban areas (Lynch and Sabol 2001). In Illinois, roughly twenty percent of all of inmates released from Illinois prison facilities return to just six Chicago neighborhoods (La Vigne et al. 2004). This often means returning to an area with old friends and family members, and living in an area that also is characterized by high rates of poverty, social disadvantage and racial segregation. Their low wages, on top of a

dearth of employment and housing references and bad financial histories, make it difficult to participate in the private housing market (Travis et al. 2001). Convictions make it difficult (or impossible) to participate in public housing programs. Many ex-offenders will live with relatives upon release, at least temporarily. Some may participate in transitional housing and permanent programs geared towards ending homelessness or aiding those returning from prison. These programs often require participants to pay one third of their income on rent, and to participate in programming. However, often they are single room occupancy buildings, with limited or no facilities for women (or men) with children. Again, the high rate of parenthood among female offenders creates an additional obstacle, where they must choose between affordable and stable housing, and perhaps beneficial programming, and living with their children. For those parents who do succeed at regaining custody, they must also locate and pay for appropriate day care.

Research on communities and incarceration has focused on the destabilizing impact of high rates of incarceration on neighborhoods (Clear 2002; Rose and Clear 2003). Neighborhoods with high concentrations of former inmates may also experience the results of the "coercive mobility" involved in incarceration and reentry (Clear 2002). In addition, at least one study has found that neighborhood has an independent effect on recidivism (Baumer, Olson and Dooley 2003). Residents in neighborhoods with high levels of population density and income inequality experience greater rates of rearrest. Offenders returning to an old neighborhood also are likely returning to old social networks, including offending networks, and thereby increasing the likelihood of recidivism (Gendreau, Little and Goggin 1996; Warr 1998). While these studies focus on

outcomes of the concentration of ex-offenders and prison releasees, they tend not to focus on the meaning of neighborhood and neighborhood choice for the ex-offenders themselves. In chapter 6 I address this issue, focusing on the women's experiences in their neighborhoods and how they frame these experiences. While the women were aware of the dangers of living in "bad" neighborhoods, they reframed their experiences so that neighborhood context was not a negative factor and could be beneficial for them and the communities.

Overview of remaining chapters

This dissertation is a study of the social process of reentry among a group of female ex-offenders in Chicago. Many of the issues described in this introduction, such as gender, drug use and abuse, structural disadvantages, and parenthood, appear throughout the remaining chapters. In the next chapter, I describe the research methodology of the current study, and briefly summarize the respondents' demographic and offending characteristics. In addition in this chapter, I reflect on how and why the study design evolved and on my role as a researcher. While the bulk of the dissertation focuses on the women's experiences post-incarceration, in Chapter 3, I first briefly describe the origins of their drug use and offending. Beginning in Chapter 4, I discuss the women's' reentry experiences with different levels of social networks. Chapter 4 focuses on their relationships with intimates – family, romantic partners, and friends. Chapter 5 focuses on their experiences with education and employment. In Chapter 6, I discuss their experiences with housing and their neighborhood context. Finally, in Chapter 7, I briefly summarize the lives of these women, and introduce ways in which

their experiences are relevant beyond the fields of criminology and criminal justice.

Specifically, I describe self help groups as a social movement and then conclude by

briefly mentioning the ways in which these women are much like many others, even

those without a criminal background.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

"Narrative identities are stories we live by. We make them and remake them, we tell them and revise them not so much to arrive at an accurate record of the past as to create a coherent self that moves us forward in life with energy and purpose. Our stories are partly determined by the real circumstances of our lives – by family, class, gender, culture, and the historical moment into which we're thrown. But we also make choices, narrative choices." (McAdams 2006, p. 98-99)

This research is based on a series of qualitative interviews with female ex-offenders and their social networks. This approach is particularly suited to studying female ex-offenders. This group remains understudied, and using an inductive and qualitative methodology allows the capture of experiences substantially different than those theorized and tested among male ex-offenders (Daly and Chesney-Lind 1988; Chesney-Lind 1989; Simpson 1989). In looking at their experiences before and after their incarcerations, I use the life course perspective (Elder 1998; Laub and Sampson 2003). Specifically, I recognize that their lives are embedded in and shaped by the historical and physical context, that the timing of life events matters, that lives are interdependent, and human agency plays a key role in constructing one's life (Elder 1998; Laub and Sampson 2003). In addition, I draw heavily on symbolic interactionism. Specifically, I use the four premises of symbolic interactionism, as laid out by Herbert Blumer: a) people act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them, b) the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social

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interaction one has with others, c) these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters, and d) the complex interlinkages of acts are dynamic, not static (1969, p. 50). Thus, my primary focus is how the women construct and understand their lives, life experiences and relationships (Goffman 1963; Berger and Luckman 1966; McAdams 2006). While the focus is on the women's definitions and understandings of their lives, I also highlight some of the structural constraints they face in attempting to organize their lives.

Participants were recruited through their participation in a Chicago halfway house serving women coming out of prison. The halfway house is a voluntary residential program. Women typically stay for between six months to a year, and unless they violate the rules, they are allowed to stay until they have a job (or stable income) and a suitable place to live. The halfway house has sixteen beds. While the women are there, they participate in group therapy meetings and outpatient drug counseling, and receive help finding work and transitional housing. While most come straight from prison, occasionally women are referred from an inpatient drug treatment program. Almost all halfway house residents, then, are involved with the criminal justice system, either on mandatory supervised release (parole) or probation, while they are residents.

The participants were recruited in two ways. I twice (in September 2003 and January 2004) went to the halfway house to invite participation of current residents (N=24). In addition, in December 2003, I mailed an introductory letter and an informed consent form to all former residents for whom the halfway house staff has current addresses. I prepared the mailing, and dropped them off at the halfway house, where

staff added address labels[1] inviting them to participate.[2] Out of approximately the 300 former residents since the time halfway house opened in 1995, they had what they believed to be current addresses for 85. Of these, I interviewed 25 women. All respondents were given $20 in cash for each interview, as compensation for their time. At the time I began interviewing them, then, the women had been out of prison for between a few weeks to nine years and were both current and former halfway house residents (see appendix A for tables summarizing respondent characteristics). Including former residents meant that I met women in vastly different parts of their reentry process.

The research design called for each woman to be interviewed four times over the course of a year. The purpose of this was threefold: tracking changes in the women's lives, establishing greater rapport, and inductively identifying topics of interest and relevance to the women. First, while limited in length, the longitudinal design allowed me to follow the women over the course of a year, and a year that is especially significant for individuals just released from prison. La Vigne et al. (2004) found that 31 % of their male inmates released to Chicago were reincarcerated within 13 months of release, with an average of eight months between release and reincarceration. This is consistent with

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[1] In order to protect the privacy of their clients and former clients, the halfway house would not disclose the women's addresses to me. I provided the mailings, and staff added the address labels for me. Because of this, I had no way of knowing the names of the former clients or their contact information unless they contacted me and provided that information. This made it impossible to do follow up mailings to encourage additional respondents. It also restricted follow up with women who I lost contact with over the course of the interviews.

[2] Ten letters in the initial mailing were returned "undeliverable;" I assume the remaining seventy-five reached the correct person. An additional nine women (3 current residents and 6 former residents) indicated an interest in participating, but either left the halfway house before I had a chance to interview them or I did not successfully contact them once I received their informed consent form. A lack of contact was because a phone number was not provided or was disconnected, they did not provide a mailing address, or they did not respond to follow up mailings.

Bureau of Justice Statistics research that has found, for example, that over half of state and federal prisoners who were released in 1994 were rearrested for a new crime or returned to prison within three years (Langan and Levin 2002). In addition to high likelihoods of recidivism, new releasees also must reestablish (or choose not to reestablish) relationships with family and friends, find employment and housing, and otherwise reestablish themselves in the community. The changes in the women's lives were, not surprisingly, more drastic for the current residents, but significant occurrences also happened in the lives of the former residents. I could witness and hear about important changes in the women's lives over the course of the year. For example, one woman was reincarcerated, one was arrested several times, several women relapsed and went back into recovery, jobs were lost and found, and relationships started, ended, and evolved. While limited in that it is only a year, there is substantial benefit over a purely cross-sectional design.

Second, multiple interviews allowed me an opportunity to establish greater rapport with the respondents. While for the most part the women were open and willing to talk from the start (obviously partly due to a self-selection effect in responding to my invitation to participate), additional familiarity and trust developed over the course of the interviews. I became more comfortable asking them about painful and sensitive topics and they became more comfortable discussing them. Interviews with current residents all took place in a private room at the halfway house. Interviews with former residents (and current residents who subsequently had moved out) usually took place at the respondent's home. This tended to make the interviews more comfortable, with a less institutional or

clinical feel, and gave me a glimpse into their lives. A few former residents chose to be interviewed at the halfway house (again in a private room), in a common area or meeting room of their residence, or a restaurant or coffee shop. Lastly, each interview included a combination of repeated and new questions. This allows me to use a methodologically inductive approach, learning from the respondents issues that are important in their lives and including these questions in subsequent interview guides.

During the course of the first interview, I asked respondents to identify people who they would feel comfortable with my interviewing. The goal of this part of the study is to look at the inmate reentry as a social process. Network interviews included questions about the respondent's background (employment, education, neighborhood, offending, and drug use), his or her relationship with the woman that referred him or her, and his or her perceptions of the woman's offending and likelihood of desistance. The women were free to refer anyone with whom they were close and comfortable with my talking; referrals included friends, siblings, parents, adult children, romantic partners, and co-workers. The only people excluded were those living a prohibitive distance from Chicago and those who were current or former residents or staff of the halfway house (since they had already been invited to participate).

I interviewed 26 network members "belonging" to 15 women (in one case, the three network members were the mother, daughter, and cousin of one woman, and the aunt, niece, and cousin of a second woman, who was also a cousin of the first woman. In the network interviews, I asked about both women). In one case, I was referred to a former resident by another former resident. When I learned that she was also a former

resident, I invited her to participate as a resident rather than a network member (meaning a more extensive interview, and twice as many interviews). Nineteen of these people I interviewed twice (see Appendix A, Table 4 for a summary of network member attrition). In addition to the "network" members, two pairs of women in the original sample became romantically involved with each other, and several others were close friends or relatives of other women in the sample. In these cases, the original "ex-offender" interviews also served as quasi-network interviews. Most of the interviews, not surprisingly, were friends and family of the women (though I also interviewed several co-workers).

An expected concern of a longitudinal design is attrition. While I began the study with 49 women, I completed four interviews with 33, or 67 % of the total sample (see Appendix A, Tables 4 and 5 for a summary of attrition). Moving was a primary cause of attrition. Over the course of the year, twenty-seven women moved. Most of these (24) were residents of the halfway house moving into their own housing. When they did this, I left messages for them at the halfway house (as many stayed in especially close contact right after they moved), and had halfway house staff mail letters to those with forwarding addresses. I gave all respondents my name and phone number, and encouraged them to let me know when they moved, but this rarely happened. Nine women in the first group of current residents (those initially interviewed in the fall of 2003) moved to the same single room occupancy building, which greatly facilitated my following them. In these cases, I knew where they were going before they left the halfway house, and was able to keep track of all of them. This was more difficult for those who moved to scattered site locations or private housing. In all, I lost contact with a third of the women after they

moved (illustrated by the broad line between interview rounds in Table 4), which is over half of the women who did not complete all four interviews. Some of these (as far as I know) did receive follow up letters from me, and others were returned undeliverable. In addition, two women moved out of town. I temporarily lost track of them, but eventually they did contact me and I made one trip to interview them. While I interviewed them two and three times, respectively, I covered all of the interview questions.

The majority of interviews were tape recorded. Two respondents did not want to be tape recorded, and a third chose not to be recorded the first time, but agreed for subsequent interviews. One network member did not want to be recorded. Additionally, I accidentally deleted one interview recording. For those interviews that were not recorded (a total of nine interviews), the interviews were transcribed based on handwritten notes only. For all other interviews, the recordings were transcribed verbatim. In addition, I wrote summary field notes for each interview. These interviews and field notes were then coded and analyzed using QSR NVivo.

Respondent characteristics

The group of women that I interviewed are more likely than women in Illinois prison facilities to be African American (87.5 % compared to 69 % in IDOC) and less likely to be white (6 %, compared to 26 % of IDOC) (see appendix A). The women in the sample are, on average, nearly a decade older than the average IDOC inmate.[3] A vast majority (87.5%) have at least one child, with an average of 2.2 children, evenly split

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[3] The average age of current residents of the halfway house is 39.8. Former residents averaged 38.4 years when they were residents. Part of the age difference between IDOC inmates and the sample women is because of the length of time that they have been out of prison.

between minor and adult children, though only a small number presently are living with their children. In some cases, they have given their children up for adoption or have permanently lost custody. More often, however, the children are living with family or friends; the mothers have not lost custody and hope to live with their children again once they are more established and financially stable. Once they leave the halfway house, many of the women move to single room occupancy (SRO) buildings, or into other subsidized housing, which most often prohibits children. Those who want to reunite with their children have more limited housing options. One SRO has a few town homes for women with children, but most of the women who want to (and are able to) live with their children must find market rate housing.

About half of the women in this study live in some type of subsidized housing. Only two of these live with their children. Nearly 40 percent of those with children under the age of 18 are living in housing that prohibits children. Current residents are twice as likely to move into an apartment that does not allow children. Former residents -- many of whom have been out of prison for a number of years -- are more likely to have a living situation that allows children. Ten former residents with young children (83 % of those with minor children) live in apartments that allow children; only two do not.   Former residents also are much more likely to live in private housing. Fifty eight percent of former residents with minor children live in private housing, compared to twenty two percent of current residents with minor children.

There is not a direct correspondence between housing that allows children and actually living with their children. Few of the women have permanently lost custody of

their children, but not all of them are actively seeking it. Linette[4], for example, is living with her fiancé's family. They decided to wait until she was off of parole and she and her fiancé found their own apartment, before they got their child back from her relatives. They intend to do so, but were not then pursuing it. Dee Dee's younger children have been raised from a young age by her father and her step mother. They do not know that she is their mother and she had no plans to regain custody of them, because she felt they were better off remaining with her father, rather than going through the disruption that moving in with her would entail (she was also living in a studio apartment, and so also had tangible constraints to living with them). She maintained contact with them and was developing a relationship with them, but she did not anticipate that it would result in eventual custody. Sugar and Sasha were living together in a market rent apartment in western Illinois. They lived with Sugar's new baby and the baby's father; Sugar's older son was living with an adoptive mother out of state. Similarly, Marie lived with one of her older daughters, but her younger children were adopted, after being taken away from her during her addiction, and her son lived with her mother.

The women in the sample have a greater than average offending history relative to the overall female IDOC population (see Appendix A, Table 2). Their times served range from 2 months to 14 years, with an average of 40.5 months (total) served in prison facilities. Three of the women have never been incarcerated in a state prison, and nearly

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[4] A note on names: During the last interview, I asked the women if they wanted to choose a pseudonym. Several women did, choosing a nickname they already had, a daughter or mother's name, or a favorite name. Others requested that I use their names, which I did. When they did not have a preference (and in those situations where I did not interview the woman the fourth time, and so did not ask), I chose a pseudonym for them.

two thirds (60 %) report going to a city or county jail five or more times. Most current half way house residents are all out of prison for less than a year (with a few exceptions that came straight from residential drug treatment), and former residents include women who left the halfway house a few weeks before the interview to nine years before. A few former residents have been reincarcerated after their halfway house stay. The women were incarcerated for a wide range of offenses, ranging from low level drug possession to homicide and their last sentences served range from 61 days to 14 years.

The most common charges were drug-related (including possession, possession with intent to deliver, trafficking; 36 % of all convictions), theft or larceny (32 % of all convictions), and forgery (10 %). When women were asked to self-report offenses they have ever participated in (whether or not arrested or convicted), the most common offenses reported are drug-related (possession, dealing; 76 %), driving without a license (45.8 %), assault or battery (47.7 %), theft or larceny (45.7 %), and prostitution (45.5 %). Many of those involved with theft and forgery also report engaging in these activities in order to support themselves and a drug habit. Only three of the 49 women report no drug use, with 77.6 % reporting the use of two or more substances. Seventy-nine percent of the women report using cocaine (powder and crack), 66.7 % report using heroin, and 58.7% report alcohol use. In many ways, then, the women are similar to the overall female offending population. Current residents, not surprisingly, are more like the general incarcerated population, while former residents are older, with longer criminal histories, and are also likely at or near the end of their offending careers.

One important factor that makes these women exceptional is their access to a high level of services in prison (many were involved in drug treatment programming in the penitentiary) and through the halfway house. The half way house provides them with resources and structure that the vast majority of releasees do not have. It also gives them the luxury of slowly reentering society without needing to worry about providing for their basic needs. The halfway house provides free housing and food and prohibits them from working until completing an outpatient drug treatment program. Then, the staff helps them find employment and housing (often in another transitional center or program). Many residents pursue additional education – a high school diploma (at an adult alternative school), GED, job training, or college degree – while at the halfway house, or after. Unless they violate the rules, they are not expected to leave until they have employment and a satisfactory place to live.

The women in this study have a range of education and employment experience. Many of the women in this study have had limited involvement with the labor force. They have spotty work histories, at best, and their last employment was often years ago, before addiction took over. Addiction, mental illness, and a lack of pro-social connections is prevalent among incarcerated populations, and more so for women (see, for example, Richie 2001). However, many also have at least some college and a more extensive work history. They have a higher than average (compared to the IDOC incarcerated population) educational levels, with nearly half with at least some college (often pursued after incarceration). About 20 percent are currently enrolled in college, and more have further education as a goal. This is likely in large part a direct result of

their half way house stay, as they are strongly encouraged by staff to pursue education and the staff helps connect them to an adult high school, colleges, and resources for college. In addition, the drug treatment they receive while at the halfway house can make them eligible for financial aid that would otherwise be prohibited to them.

Recidivism

Recidivism is a common focus of studies of reentry. Reincarceration rates were low among the women I interviewed. One respondent was reincarcerated for several months during the course of the interviews. I interviewed her once after her release. Another was jailed for short periods several times. As far as I know, no others were incarcerated over the course of the year (including those who dropped out or that I lost contact with). Two network members – a boyfriend and a brother – were also reincarcerated over the year. Much more common than rearrest or reincarceration, however, was drug use relapse or self-reported offending. Ten women told me of subsequent drug use or offending. Most commonly, this was drug use, and more likely among more newly released women (see Appendix A, Table 6). Of these, six women had recently moved from the halfway house and into the same single room occupancy (SRO) building. While they did not necessarily use drugs together, their relapses were common knowledge amongst the women there; I often heard about them from the women themselves and also other women I interviewed. This concentration of relapses among the newly released is surely a selection effect. The women that I interviewed often said they lost touch with the halfway house while they were using drugs, and were ashamed of their relapse and did not want the staff to know about their problems. Surely other

women had relapsed and subsequently lost touch with the halfway house (and so also would not have ended up in my group of respondents). Of the former residents reporting relapse and reoffending, in three of the four cases this was an ongoing or recent problem. In one case, the woman (Blanche) had been reincarcerated shortly after her stay at the halfway house, went to another program when she was released, and had maintained her desistance.

Interviewer effects

"Researching race usually entails researching class and it is often difficult for researchers to know if they are being treated differently from the people they write about due to skin, class, gender privileges, or by some interaction between them" (Duneier 2000, p. 217). I was separated by the women in this study and their social networks by a large social distance. I was a young, white, middle class, childless female with a high level of education. For the most part, these characteristics were known to them because they were clearly visible (race, age), they were the reason for my talking to them (my dissertation research), or because they asked (marital status and children). I shared one or two traits (e.g., race, age, class background, lack of children) with some of the women; the only thing I consistently shared with them was gender (and not even that with some of the network interviews). In addition, there was always the presence of the biggest difference of all between us: their criminal record. This was especially salient in these interviews because they were the reason I was there and the focus of many of the topics we discussed. Regardless then of demographic similarities, there was a clear and significant difference between us in all cases (with the exception of a few network

members). While impossible to know for sure, it is worth considering then how these differences may have impacted the data collection.

An initial factor that aided my research was my affiliation with the halfway house. Many women mentioned this as a main reason they agreed to participate (Network members all indicated that they agreed to participate because the person referring them had asked them to). They were willing to participate in anything that came to them from the halfway house, out of appreciation and gratitude for what the halfway house had done for them. Of course, there is a clear selection bias in that I was primarily talking to women who had a positive experience and memory of their time at the halfway house. This may explain some of the attrition among women who I lost touch with after they left the halfway house. Current residents often had less of a connection, or a less established connection, with the halfway house. They agreed to participate because they had little else to do, were perhaps interested in talking about themselves (as most people are), and wanted or needed the cash I was offering. The real test then came when they moved from the halfway house, when I lost a number of participants. While all but one of the women from the first group of current residents (those recruited in September 2003) completed all the interviews, only one woman from the second group of current residents (those recruited in January 2004) completed all four.

I believe that the halfway house affiliation also served another less direct effect. The women were used to spending their time talking about their pasts and their future goals. They spent their time in outpatient drug treatment, various self help groups, and individual counseling. For the most part, they were articulate, thoughtful, and reflective

about their experiences, which is likely in part an outgrowth of their experience and comfort with counseling settings. Indeed, many of the women said that their interviews with me were therapeutic. Part of this experience was being used to talking to counselors and case managers who had a different social standing than themselves. Our discussions gave them a chance to think about their lives, and reflect on where they had been and where they were going. In addition, our social distance sometimes led to greater explanations, as the women explained what "black families," "black women," prison, drug addiction, etc. were like, putting their own experiences in their broader community context that I would not otherwise understand (Miller 2001).

Despite the fact that the women often mentioned enjoying our discussions, that they seemed comfortable (for the most part) talking to me, and that the rate of attrition due to an apparent lack of interest was fairly low, there remained a significant social distance between us. As Kirsh (1999) writes "unlike friendships, which are built in reciprocal trust and sharing of personal information, interviews only simulate this context. . .In short, interviews represent an artificial, staged performance" (p. 30-31). I tried to keep this in mind as I interviewed the participants, and for the most part, I think they also remained aware of this distinction. Perhaps because of this difference between "friendship and friendliness," my attempts at relating to them by pointing out similarities between us often fell flat (Kirsch 1999). For example, I would agree with them on a certain point, and tell them that I had the same problem, and sometimes would get a look back that seemed to skeptically say "we are not alike," not with anger, but rather with irritation or dismissiveness. Even though the perception of commonality was genuine on

my part, it did not necessarily seem so to them. Another possible reason for this skepticism is that the women did see me as a therapist figure, something they often cited as a reason they agreed to participate or enjoyed talking to me. In this sense, any talk of me was time away from the topic at hand – themselves.

Where possible, I tried to minimize displays of hierarchy. For example, I tried to sit in an equivalent chair, rather than, for example, behind a desk (though they sometimes directed me to these chairs, in which case I usually complied). I also answered any questions they asked me, whether they were about my research or my life. I did, however, try to avoid giving them advice or offering my opinion, especially in terms of judging or validating their attitudes or behavior. In cases where I was directly asked my opinion, I would usually give it, though I tried to hedge and point out that I was unqualified to give advice (e.g., when I was asked about what I would do in a certain parenting context or with a romantic relationship). While some feminist researchers (Oakley 1981; Kirsch 1999; Miller 2001) may disagree with this somewhat more traditional interviewing approach, I did not think it was appropriate to either judge or validate respondent's experiences or opinions. While clearly it would be inappropriate – and bad for rapport – to judge the women for their actions, it also felt hypocritical and false to validate behavior with which I might not agree (though I may understand). I do not think this hindered rapport, as the women themselves never seemed to seek validation, and typically presented their lives matter-of-factly, and occasionally with some regret.

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There were some cases where the women themselves pointed out similarities – often in terms of education or class and sometimes as an apparent defensive measure, perhaps to point out (fairly) "I am just as good as you are." While I tried not to give the impression that I thought I was better (and did not think this was the case), but rather that I was there to learn from them, I appreciated their assertions of worth. I often wished that some of the others would do the same, rather than diminish and devalue themselves. Other women, less defensively, asked more questions about myself, and interacted more as a friend and social equal than as a "client." Occasionally they invited me to go to church with them, watch their choir performance, or socialize. When I was able to, I accepted these invitations, though I tried to maintain some boundaries to decrease the likelihood that I would fail as a "friend."

Interviews most often took place at the woman's home. This meant that many of the interviews took place at the halfway house, especially early on. This gave me the chance to see where the women did live (especially relevant in chapter 6), but also demonstrated that I was not afraid or unwilling to travel to their neighborhoods and that their time and convenience was important. I wanted to minimize the clinical and/or detached feel that an interview in an office or third-party place would elicit. Occasionally a woman expressed surprise that I was willing to go to her neighborhood without being afraid (in at least one case, the woman herself was new to the neighborhood) or that I was not afraid to leave my car parked outside. Occasionally also, someone expressed concern if I told him or her which neighborhood I was on my way to. Rarely did I feel uncomfortable in a neighborhood, and never did anything significant

happen.   Occasionally, we met in a common room in the woman's building (always the
case at the halfway house) and sometimes at the woman's place of work or a mutually
agreed upon restaurant or coffee shop. This was always at the request of the woman, and
the only reason explicitly given for this was convenience (and in one or two cases a
desire to show me where she worked). In several cases, I went both to the woman's
apartment and her place of work.

I was often viewed by those I came into contact with – the interviewees and staff
of organizations where they lived – in a case manager or therapist role. Often, staff
members assumed I was a case manager and expressed surprise and confusion when I
denied being a case manager and called myself a friend or personal visitor. This mistake
was never a problem, and most often worked to my advantage or convenience (if
annoyance) (Duneier 2000). For example, when I went to interview one woman at the
SRO building where she was living, she was not allowed any personal visitors in her
room because of a recent drug relapse. Though I introduced myself as a friend, she
explained over the phone to the front desk worker that I was not a "friend" and convinced
the front desk worker that I should be allowed up to her room. While she hesitated at
first, she was easily convinced by the woman that an exception should be made for me. I
made no attempt myself to convince her of this, and even after she said it was o.k., I
reiterated that I did not want to violate the rules or get the woman in trouble. I always
tried to remain aware of the rules -- and comply -- of the different organizations with
which I came in contact, both to maintain the cooperation of the staff and to avoid
causing trouble for the respondents. The staff of the halfway house and the SRO's I

frequented got to know me by sight, if not the reason for the visits, often guessing who I was there to see, and not always making me follow regular sign-in procedures. While I was a familiar and regular visitor at several buildings, their laxity was also likely largely because of my race, class, and gender position.

Participant benefit

As stated earlier, the women often expressed an appreciation and enjoyment of our interviews. They said it gave them a chance to reflect on their experiences, and remember where they had come from. They said they benefited personally from being able to talk about themselves, their struggles and problems in a nonjudgmental setting. Linette, for example, said she participated because "when I talked to you, you sounded nice. . .It gives you a chance to clear your thoughts, what's going on with you." Several women said they would tell me things they wouldn't talk about in group or with their friends (especially in the SRO environment) because they did not want their business spread around, and they trusted that I would not tell anyone. Millie said "I like to talk, to conversate with you. I tell you things I wouldn't tell others. . .I don't tell everybody about my life, my past. It's not appropriate, and they might bring it up and I don't want them to."

While many women stated that they enjoyed our interviews, and benefited from the conversation, they more often cited a desire to give something back as the reason they agreed to participate (consistent with desistance literature, e.g., Maruna (2001), Brown (1991). They hoped that their experiences, through their inclusion in this project, might help others in their situation or help change policy. Carolyn said she participated

"because no one tells the truth. Maybe somebody will be in charge and remember this." Some wanted to "get the word out" so that in general people had a better understanding of what they went through. For example, Caprice said that she agreed to participate "So you can know what we've gone through, how our lives have changed. Mostly where we're at and where we're going." Sharon said "It sounded like it could help somebody else. . .So people can really know." Others hoped that their stories might directly help others who were going through similar situations. Sheila said "Anything I can give or say to help someone. It might help, they may learn from my experience. Maybe if someone had sat me down to talk about this, maybe I wouldn't have been in hell as long as I was." Bennie said "Until we learn to channel this stuff, and know what's going on. . .We have to start somewhere. Someone may turn the page and see themselves. . . We learn we're only as sick as our secrets." They believed that they had something to contribute based on their past. Others specifically wanted to give something back to the halfway house, and agreed to participate at least in part because I was somehow affiliated with them. April said she agreed to participate because "You asked. When I heard it was affiliated with [the halfway house], I agreed. I wish I could spend more time there. . I need to give back what was freely given to me." Erica said that this is "my way of giving back, and helping someone else."

The network members that I interviewed typically saw their role in a more narrow way. They rarely articulated a desire to help women in general, or ex-offenders. They all said they agreed to participate because the woman who referred them had asked them to and that they would do what they could to support the woman in question. In those cases

where they did see a purpose beyond supporting the woman it was because they themselves were ex-offenders. Bennie's husband, Joe, for example, explained "Bennie told me about it. It's good for me. . .It helps bring back memories, to reflect on life. Hopefully it will help someone else. It's interesting, I can learn a lot from it. And the money helps, every little bit." Bennie had asked me if I was interested in talking to Joe before I brought up the network interviews; she had told him about it, and he expressed an interest in participating without being asked. He also expounded at length about his thoughts on crime, drug use, their impact on the African American community, and what he wished he had known when younger. Like the women, network members also often expressed appreciation and enjoyment of the interviews.

Though this may have been true more often than articulated, a few women also cited the $20 that I gave them for the interview as a primary reason they got involved, or at a minimum, an appreciated perk. This may have been somewhat related to those who dropped out of the study over the course of the year. For example, Heidi, whom I interviewed only twice, and lost contact with after she left the halfway house, said that she first got involved because of the $20, and liked the idea of being in a book. Similarly, Amanda, whom I also interviewed only twice, said she got involved "for something to do." These women were willing to talk when they were at the halfway house (sometimes hoping to get out of group therapy in the process) but did not continue when it surely would have been more inconvenient to them. This is merely conjecture on my part as to their reasons for discontinuing their involvement and surely does not apply to all the women who did not continue with all interviews. In addition, even those who

explicitly stated that they got involved for the money shared their experiences at length and I have no reason to think they were any less honest or forthcoming than anyone else.

Changes to original research design

There were several significant changes from the original research proposal. In this section, I describe these changes, and the effects they had on the overall project. In the original proposal, I planned to recruit participants through a Chicago-area non-profit agency serving women working in prostitution. The agency had two residential programs – one on the north side of Chicago and one on the south side. Part of the original design then would allow me to recruit participants through each of these locations, providing geographical variation (at least at the beginning) in their reentry. The executive director had agreed to support me in recruiting research participants. I did preliminary field work, primarily at the north side location (the south side was new, and was not yet in operation in the early stages of my research. I got to know several residents fairly well, and gained familiarity with staff members.

In the summer of 2003, the agency experienced significant organizational and budgetary problems and went through significant internal personnel change and reorganization. These changes made it difficult to move forward with my research plan. The executive director and several other key staff members were replaced and the north side location ceased its residential programming (the few remaining residents moved to the south side location). While I continued to do field work, now at the south side location, and make contacts with new staff members, it became increasingly clear that it

would be difficult to continue working with the organization, at least in the short term. At a minimum, it would delay my research substantially.

At the same time, I had made contact with a second agency, a transitional housing program for female ex-offenders. Originally, I heard about the agency from an employee of the first agency, who was also a former resident of the halfway house. I contacted them to learn more about facilities serving female ex-offenders, and to consider them as a second place of recruitment. They were very supportive and cooperative, and immediately offered to let me present my research to their residents and invite their participation. They gave me access, and the women the option of participating. As a result of the organizational difficulties at the first organization, I decided to focus exclusively on the halfway house as a recruitment location.

The halfway house has several advantages over the original site. One is that they focus on all female ex-offenders, rather than only those involved in prostitution. Most of the women have been incarcerated, and are released straight from prison to the halfway house. A few come to the facility from drug treatment, and/or are on probation. All women go there voluntarily. In contrast, the first organization focuses on prostitution, and their clients may walk in off the street or be court mandated as a condition of their probation. Some may have felony records, though not all. The halfway house then provides a much broader range of backgrounds, with offenses ranging from drug possession to first degree murder. While still not representative of the entire female incarcerated population, their residents come much closer than those of the first agency.

The halfway house is a residential facility. It houses up to 16 women at a time, usually for six to eight months. While it is under the auspices of the Episcopal Diocese, it is not an overtly religious organization. Women participate in groups relating to substance abuse (AA, NA), employment, anger management, etc. In addition, they receive help in locating a job and subsequent housing.

This change in plans resulted in data collection beginning later than originally planned. While I was prevented (IRB approval was contingent on this) from interviewing anyone until I had a privacy certificate, I was further delayed because of the changes at the original site and my subsequent decision to recruit through the halfway house instead. Data collection was originally scheduled to start in March 2003; I actually began interviews in September 2003 and completed them in December 2004 (with one additional interview completed in July 2005). I recruited participants in two ways. I first made contact with the halfway house in August. Both times I went to solicit participation, most women chose to participate (as far as I could tell, everyone present volunteered to participate). In addition, several residents who were not present for my introduction contacted me after hearing about the project through other residents. In addition, I interviewed one third of the former residents they had addresses for participated.

These multiple recruiting strategies have an additional benefit. The total sample now ranges from those being out of prison from a few days or weeks at initial contact to 10 years. While I was only able to follow the women for a year, they were at very different points in their reentry process, which gives me a much broader perspective on

the reentry process. The current residents were in a key time, when many releasees reoffend and/or violate their parole and are reincarcerated. The women who have been out longer are often more stable, but many had lived through tumultuous early years and could relate to me their experiences with relapse and recidivism (for those who experienced it). Because of this, the group of women provided a much wider ranging set of experiences than I would have learned about through only current residents.

The halfway house is located on the near west side of Chicago. They have only one location, which prevented me from comparing the experiences of women in high crime and low crime neighborhoods, which was one focus of the original research design. I do, however, have data on the women's experience in the neighborhood, both at the halfway house and their subsequent neighborhood. The women are widely dispersed across the city, residing in 16 of the approximately 60 zip codes in Chicago (based on my last known address for them; see Appendix A, Map 1 for a map of their locations). Six of the women live outside of Chicago. The greatest concentration of residents is in the same zip code as the halfway house, as there are also three SRO buildings to which a total of 14 women resided. The majority of the women live on the south and west sides. Again this is partly a reflection of the housing assistance that the half way house provides, but also reflects neighborhoods with affordable rent and the neighborhoods in which their families reside. Several women live on the north side.

As I became more familiar with the connection between the halfway house, the residents, and the surrounding area (of both agencies), I became more aware that the original plan of comparing facility-neighborhood contexts likely would not have yielded

substantial results. The halfway houses are unobtrusive and discrete. The women have little contact with the neighborhood, outside their immediate needs coming and going. For the most part the women did not have a strong opinion of the neighborhood in which the halfway house was located because they spent little time in it. These experiences in the halfway house neighborhood are themselves significant, and I discuss them at greater length in Chapter 6. However, the most important trait these neighborhoods seemed to have for the women was their centrality and accessibility of public transportation. While I do not have neighbors' perceptions of the halfway house, from the residents' perspectives and my own observations, it is an island in whatever neighborhood in which it is located. While no longer a comparative neighborhood design, the data still speak to the relationship between neighborhood and reentry.

An additional change is sample size. I originally planned to interview five women from each of the original organization's locations, for a total of 10. This original number was chosen in part because of the fairly small residential population at Agency A. I decided to increase this number, to get a wider range of experiences and to allow for attrition. Through my original recruiting trip to the halfway house, I interviewed 14 women. I interviewed an additional 10 current residents in my second recruiting trip four months later. In addition, I recruited 25 former residents through a mailed solicitation. In all, I interviewed 49 women at least once and 33 four times (see Appendix A, Tables 4 and 5) for a summary of the interviews, and reasons for attrition).

In addition, I planned to interview up to ten network members for each woman. Ten network members turned out to be highly unrealistic, given the social circles of the

women, and the difficulties in recruiting network participants. I asked the women to identify people they would be comfortable with me interviewing. Most identified between one and five individuals, though some could not think of anyone. Some of the women were not from Chicago, and so their families were too far away. For others, they did not have anyone that they thought would talk to me, or people who they were comfortable with me talking to about their pasts (or who knew about their pasts). Once they identified people for me to talk to, the women had to make initial contact, pass along information from me, and then have them contact me by phone or self-addressed stamped envelope if they were interested.

This approach was necessary in order to comply with Institutional Review Board restrictions, to protect the privacy of the network members. Unfortunately, it also prevented me from directly following up with the network members to encourage them to participate, or to verify that they had received the information and made an informed decision to decline to participate. I did interview 26 network members, "belonging" to 15 women. In addition, there was often overlap among the original group of women interviewed. Among these women were cousins, sisters, romantic partners, friends, and halfway house staff members (often cited as friends and important figures in the reentry of other women). While less ambitious than the original design, it does provide an introduction to reentry as a social process.

I originally planned to do volunteer work, as a way to also interact informally with respondents and establish greater rapport. While I did volunteer at the original location, I did not do so at the halfway house. To a certain extent, the goal of informal

contact and greater rapport was achieved with the current residents through my frequent trips there for interviews. I often saw and talked to other residents while I was there, and while the interviews were going on, I was a familiar face. The same was true of the several SRO buildings that many former residents lived in. In general, I felt I had greater rapport with these women than many of the former residents who I saw less frequently (though several former residents and respondents are current employees of the half way house, which provided additional interaction).

Being more of an outsider did provide some advantages. As I described in the methodology section, many of the women referred to our interviews as a "therapeutic" experience for them, and several said they told me things they would not say in group meetings, because they did not want other people "to know my business." Precisely because I was an outsider, with limited connection to their world (and because I pledged confidentiality), they were comfortable telling me things they did not want those in their circles to know. Had I been more of an insider, they may have been more reluctant (though clearly this is not something I can know for sure). Being a volunteer may have an added and negative effect of my being perceived as an official "staff" member of the house, which may well have impeded our conversations. My connection to the half way house, in terms of arranged meetings wherein I invited participation and letters associating myself with the halfway house (I wrote in the letter that I was contacting them as a former resident, and that the half way house had agreed to address and mail the letters for me) definitely increased the level of participation. Many women said they agreed to talk to me because I was "coming from" the halfway house and that they would

do anything that was asked of them from the half way house, in an attempt to "give back" what was given them. While this level of connection definitely helped me, a greater connection to staff also may have limited their willingness to talk to me (especially current residents) for fear that what they said would get back to staff.

A final change is that I also changed the research plan to allow for $20 cash compensation to all interview participants for each interview. As I discussed earlier, this provided an incentive for some of the women, who explicitly said this was a reason for participation. Women who are new to the halfway house are prohibited from working until they complete outpatient drug treatment. While their financial needs were minimal (i.e., no need to pay rent or for most of their food), the $20 contributed to their ability to buy cigarettes, toiletries, transportation and minor luxuries. In only one interview, however, did I feel that the woman was participating in a perfunctory manner in order to get the $20 (and the other three interviews with this woman did not feel like that at all). In every other case, the woman, even if she cited a financial motivation, went far beyond the minimum responses.

Summary of methodological strengths

One of the strengths of the original research design was its flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances and changing foci. I began with an interview guide that was consistent with my original research questions and previous research on offending, desistance, and reentry. As I continued through the study, I added questions to fill in gaps that became clear from talking to the women. In addition, I was able to ask about a much wider range of topics that could reasonably be covered in a single interview. For

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example, in each interview, I asked about their housing and employment situations, their relationships with family, friends, and romantic partners, any changes to their offending, drug use, and victimization histories. their future goals, and their worries and stressors. In subsequent interviews, I asked about their childhoods, their histories of abuse, and their histories of romantic and sexual relationships (with men and women). Some of these later questions emerged as women talked about things that were important to them, though not necessarily asked about directly. In addition, I asked them explicitly what questions and topics they thought were most important, and incorporated these into later interview guides.

This approach then had several significant strengths. First, the multiple-interview designed allowed me to establish more rapport and to follow the women over time, which served to allow me to observe and hear about changes in their lives over time, and also to verify information they gave me. In addition, the multiple-interview design allowed me to cover more information and to include questions and topics that emerged through the interviews. The network interviews allowed me to hear about the same people and events through multiple view points and to see the women more as part of a social context. From each of these respondents, in each of these interviews, I heard their "narrative identities" (McAdams 2006). In some cases, these narratives clearly changed over the year; in others they remained largely consistent. The relationships between respondents (and network members only referred to by the women) also changed over the year, clearly demonstrating the *process* of relationships (Sampson and Laub 1993; Maruna 2001). Without this longitudinal and qualitative design, these changes and consistencies

would be lost. Ultimately, I got to know these women substantially better than would be possible through an isolated interview or questionnaire. These relationships have continued in some cases; I occasionally receive a phone call from one of the women to let me know of a significant change in her life, to invite me to a church service, or to see how I am doing. In addition, I have attempted to keep the women updated as to my own progress and location (inspiring additional calls in return).

The main focus on this dissertation is the experience of women coming out of the criminal justice system, and how these experiences are shaped by and shape social relationships. Most of the interview data focus on just this – the women's then-present experiences and their future goals. However, the women did not come into being when they were released from prison. Their past experiences have strongly shaped who they are, and how they got to be where they were when we met. Thus, before turning to their reentry experiences, I first briefly discuss the women's pasts, especially as they relate to their offending careers. Chapter 3 focuses on these experiences, and how they women explain the initiation of their offending and drug use.

CHAPTER THREE

ORIGINS OF OFFENDING

*"They lifted their voices to tell me about the wisdom and follies, the courage and
fears, and hopes and dreams, and the tragedies and successes of their lives. I
heard how women construct identity even as they are trapped by the interlocking
strands of poverty, abuse, drug use, racism and sexism. Again and again they
spoke of their desire for others to hear them and to understand the lives they
face."* (Pettiway 1997, p. xiv)

One of the strongest predictors of delinquent behavior is association with
delinquent friends (Sutherland 1947; Reiss 1986; Matsueda and Heimer 1987; Warr and
Stafford 1991; Warr 1993; Warr 1998). The primary theoretical premise of this is that
offenders learn delinquent behavior, and definitions favorable to delinquent behavior,
through association with intimates. This is evident in the experiences of these women.
Much of their offending and drug use happens with others, and in a broader social context
(family and community) in which crime and drug use, along with poverty and other
social disadvantages, is widespread (Shover 1996; Baskin and Sommers 1998; Anderson
1999; Maruna 2001). In addition, their drug use and offending has significant impacts on
the lives of others in their social circles; in some cases, they also are the sources of
information and learning about drug use and offending.

Drug addiction factors strongly into the offending background of most of the
women in this study. Much of their offending is directly related to drug use, either in
terms of drug related offenses or in offenses committed to support a drug habit. In

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addition, their drug use plays heavily into their relationships with others. Many of the women had troubled family lives. Others grew up in stable homes, but were raped or assaulted as children or teens by strangers. In several cases, the women reported these stranger incidents as being "the beginning of the end" for them. In many cases, this trauma led to drug use and addiction. Shelly, for example, said that her family was not dysfunctional, but that she "created chaos" after being raped by a neighbor and then running away. In some instances, a happy home was disrupted by tragedy, such as the death or illness of a parent. For example, Starr grew up in a middle class family in the suburbs. While she did not directly make this link, her drug use and offending began at the same time her mother became debilitatingly ill. Often the women turned to drug use (either initially, or increasing their usage) as a form of escape. Some women escaped their childhood homes for the street, and others escaped romantic partners later in life. Some women also were responding to a particular trauma, such as the break up of a romantic relationship, or the death of a significant person, such as parent or romantic partner.

A second pathway to addiction for these women was experimentation. While many of the women experienced trauma in childhood or adulthood, this was not true for all of them. Some women began experimenting with drug use, often in adulthood, out of curiosity or for recreation, but it eventually became more serious and led to additional problems like job loss and criminal activity. For most of the women who reported drug abuse, their drug use often began casually, and continued for a significant period of time before it became disruptive in their lives. The women often could not pinpoint when

their drug use went from recreational use to an addiction. For many women, their use of "heavy" drugs (e.g., heroin, cocaine) did not start until well into adulthood.[1]

In most cases, regardless of the actual charge, drug use among these women was directly related to the offenses leading to incarceration. As stated in chapter 1, this is largely a result in changing drug policies that led to greater incarceration for less serious offenses (Chesney-Lind 1991). In addition to drug convictions *per se*, women are also more likely to commit an offense to get money to buy drugs or to commit an offense while under the influence of a drug. Thus for many women, their drug use also is associated with many other problems and lifestyle factors. Working steadily often becomes difficult, and they spend more time with other drug-using "associates" and romantic partners and less time with non-drug using friends or family. In this sense, their drug use is central to all aspects of their lives.

Family

These women were most likely to be first exposed to drugs through family or friends. The most common initiation into drugs was exposure through family members. Nearly half (N=22, 45 %) reported drug or excessive alcohol use among their family members. Often, this was their parents, and fairly equally likely to be either their mother or father who was drinking, using or selling. In one case, a woman (Sunshine; who did not use drugs) was introduced to drug trafficking through her parents. Both of her

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[1] It is important to note that while the majority of the women do report drug use and abuse, several (6%) never used drugs, and a few others do not think that their drug use led, directly or indirectly, to their incarceration. In at least one case, the offense leading to incarceration is not connected to drug use, or to a general pattern of behavior. While these isolated incidents are rare in this sample, they are significant and their incarcerations did significantly impact their relationships.

parents served time on drug trafficking charges, as did she eventually. More commonly, children witnessed drug or heavy alcohol use by their parents. In some cases, the women ended up using the same drugs as their parents, and other times, they purposely avoided those particular substances because of the problems their parents endured. For example, Heidi's mother was a cocaine addict. She grew up surrounded by relatives and friends using cocaine, and she witnessed the problems this caused them. She herself had never used cocaine, because of what she had experienced through them; instead, her "drug of choice" was alcohol.

Second to exposure through parents is exposure through their own generation, either siblings or cousins. This often goes hand in hand with parental (and/or other relatives in that generation) drug use and offending. For example, Tasha explained her exposure to shoplifting and drug use through a cousin. A younger cousin, Sarah (whom I also interviewed), likewise explained her exposure through Tasha. Sarah said "Coming from a poor family, her mom didn't have much. Tasha wanted nice clothes, and so began stealing. She turned me out. I didn't steal til we started hanging out. It was a rush for me, like getting high." While Tasha and her cousins frequently offended together, both she and Sarah also talked extensively about the problems in their families growing up. Tasha's father was incarcerated at the time of the interviews. Tasha also had a somewhat volatile relationship with her mother. While Tasha moved back to the northern suburbs where she grew up -- after several years living in Chicago SRO's -- to be nearer her mother, and lived with her temporarily, she later accused her mother of stealing her belongings when she moved out. For this, Tasha pressed charges. She also accused her

mother of emotional abuse. When I spoke to her mother later the same day that Tasha told me of the reported theft, her mother did not mention the incident. She said she had moved because she needed her own space. She considered herself a good influence, though Tasha's father, his family and Tasha's boyfriends were all bad influences. When I asked Ms. Lewis (her mother) about things she had done or could do to help Tasha, she said that she could "keep her from her father's family. There are some bad apples there."

Tasha described her relationship with her cousin Sarah, "We are real close. We have a lot of similarities. Her father and my father are brothers. Her father doesn't know how to be a father. Her mother used to be in and out of the penitentiary. We can relate on the parent perspective." All of Tasha's cousins have been to prison, though they are "not trying to go back." Sarah also said that many of her aunts, uncles (including Tasha's father), her own parents, and other relatives have been involved with illegal activity in the past and some in the present. Sarah explained Tasha's childhood as "her mother was in a lot of abusive relationships . . . Her father was in and out of jail. She's the type who wanted to be grown early, and if she wouldn't abide by her mother's rules, she'd leave." Similarly, Sarah experienced a lot of abuse as a child. Sarah's father molested her and her brother when they were children; both her parents were in and out of jail. Several of Sarah's siblings have drug problems, and several have no contact with either of their parents. Sarah also told me about numerous examples of incestuous relationships among her relatives, much of which she attributes to their drug use.

The experiences of Tasha and Sarah were extreme, both in terms of the seriousness of the abuse and the widespread drug use and offending among most

relatives. However, aspects of their stories were quite common. Sharon explained her introduction to drugs and offending, "everything was introduced to me by family members. I was in my 20s when I first started; everybody else around me was doing it." She first began using drugs and then started engaging in other illegal behavior (e.g., prostitution, drug selling) "as a ways and means to get money to use drugs." She said that her behavior was "acceptable because of the crowd I was with," and her family found her behavior "acceptable because they were all dysfunctional, doing the same thing." Sharon's mother is also struggling with drug use, though according to Sharon she is "trying to do better." Her father was incarcerated during her youth – a fact that Sharon did not learn until late in her teen years. Her step father was abusive to her mother, and so Sharon moved in with her grandmother. Despite her difficult childhood, her younger brother Samuel said he was surprised when he first learned that Sharon was involved with illegal activity. He said ". . .she was so smart, a straight A student. She stayed in school, and had a real ambitious attitude." When he found out she was involved with illegal activity, he "couldn't believe it. It wasn't her type of situation, her type of crowd.. .I was shocked. I didn't want to accept it, for her to go that route, to have an "X" on her back, and be marked." Samuel also has a history of drug use and illegal activity, and had been incarcerated four times (and was reincarcerated before we could do a second interview). Despite their similar backgrounds and behavior, Sharon and Samuel never used drugs or offended together.

In both Tasha and Sharon's cases, they were actively involved with offending which was with, or parallel to, members of their own generation. Yet also in both cases,

their parents were also troubled with abusive relationships, drug use, and incarceration.

These patterns of abuse were also common among these women. About 30 % of the

respondents reported physical and/ or sexual abuse by family members while they were

growing up. Most often, this was abuse by fathers or step fathers, though occasionally by

other relatives. Typically the abuse was at the hands of men. Sugar described her

childhood,

> Sugar: I don't have too many good experiences. I guess, I don't know. . .I would say my mom leaving when I was seven, I think that really, really set the stage for how the rest of everything went. . .
>
> AL: What do you remember most clearly from your childhood?
>
> Sugar: Him [her stepfather]. Him. That's what I remember most. He used to beat me all the time. He never sexually abused me, but it was emotional and physical. I was terrified. Through my whole childhood. Terrified and miserable.
>
> AL: After your mom left, did you see her at all?
>
> Sugar: Occasion --, no let me see. I saw her again when I was like 13, I think, and my babysitter helped me find her, and then when I found her, that lasted maybe two, three months, and she just was not -- I was always the one putting all the effort into it, like, meeting her and coming to her house and calling her and stuff like that and she would tell me, "oh, I'm going to go and get custody of you" and she never did any of that. And then after awhile, after always trying so hard, I was only thirteen, you know, I kind of got the hint she didn't want to see me, so I just stopped. Then I got hold of her again when I was, uh, maybe a year or two later, I called her. I had ran away, and, uh I was crying and I wanted to come and live with her, and she told me no. Then again, when I was nineteen, when my son was like eight months old, and I called her and she was going to tell me I have the wrong number. I don't have the wrong number, I know who this is. So, she. . And I told her, I said well, I just want to call you to tell you you have a grandson. And then she talked to me. So I seen her then for a little while, off and on. But, you know, I think that she just didn't want me in her life at all. There was no, she never put forth any effort, ever. It was always me, you know, so.
>
> AL: So how did you end up going to foster homes?

> Sugar: Um, my stepdad, like I said, beat me all the time, and one time when I was eleven years old, I finally got tired of it. And he had thrown me through the window in the door, and he left to go get new glass for the window and I ran next door to the neighbors and told 'em. And so they called whoever they called. . .

Likewise, Carolyn described abuse by her sister as the source of many of her problems. She said, "I don't know. It was explained to me that I have psychological problems with white women. My sister looks white, and she molested me. It's usually a power thing; I'm in control. . .They explained to me that someone molested her for her to do that to me." Edie described the changes to her family when her mother remarried, "I never knew my father; when my mom got married [to Edie's stepfather] it was a change for the worse for everyone but her. She's still with him. I let her be where she is. It don't even matter." Edie (and her siblings) was abused from the age of six or seven until she left home and began living on the streets, and began being incarcerated, around the age of twelve:

> AL: What do you remember most clearly from your upbringing?
>
> Edie: Very dysfunctional family, actually. That may be the reason why it's so hard for me to show love to other people. I really haven't learned how to do that, I don't think, and I remember that you had to be hard, that's the way I am now, actually, in most cases. That may be another thing that's holding me back from accepting other people in my life. The fact that you had to be hard, rough, and not show your feelings.
>
> AL: What made it difficult? What made your family dysfunctional?
>
> Edie: Oh, everything was. There was abuse, physical, mental, emotional abuse. And all of it was kept inside the house, it was hush hush.

Fifteen percent reported having little to no contact with their fathers throughout their

lives, either not knowing who they were or meeting them briefly later in life. Several of

their fathers were imprisoned for long periods.

An additional 15 % witnessed the abuse of their mother by their father or step

fathers, though they themselves were not abused. Both Tammy and her sister Samantha

believe their father abused their mother, and ultimately killed her (he was never charged

with this, and their missing mother was never found).   While they were not physically

abused, both reported that their father withdrew from them following their mother's

disappearance. Samantha became a "party girl. Everyone thought I was fast and wild."

She did not want to be at home following her mother's disappearance and so "smoked,

broke curfew, and drank . . .I used to shoplift from stores, back then it was fun." In

contrast, Tammy stayed home, and became a mother to her younger siblings.   Samantha

described her as "she was real smart, she got good grades – A's and B's. She played

basketball, volleyball. She was a tomboy." Tammy had no history of drug use or

offending. Despite these different responses, Samantha had never been convicted of a

crime. Tammy retaliated against their father and then was incarcerated. She was unusual

among the women I interviewed, both for her long sentence and for her complete lack of

other offending or drug use. In addition, she was one of the few women who had very

limited contact with her family. She was in contact with Samantha (though they also

occasionally had fallings out) and spoke to one brother. Her remaining siblings do not

want contact with her.

Experimentation with friends

While experiences of abuse and victimization were common, some women fell into addiction through experimentation, often with friends. Roughly a third of the respondents (30.6 %) reported being exposed to drugs through their friends. Often, the women reported common drug use among their peer groups, and a resulting curiosity. Sheila and her cousin Adena's experiences illustrate this. By all accounts, Sheila and Adena came from good and stable homes. Adena's parents owned several buildings in the Austin area, and she said she "had everything" growing up. She grew up in the ABLA homes, until the family moved to their current house in Austin when Adena was 14 years old. When asked what she remembered most about her childhood, she said

> Adena: Having to go to church. My parents didn't play; education was a priority. I had both my parents – a lot of my friends didn't. There was a lot they could get away with that I couldn't.

Similarly, Sheila said,

> Sheila: My upbringing was real good. My mom raised me right, with morals, standards, church. My upbringing didn't put me where I am. . .I am a high school graduate; I come from a large family and was the third to graduate. I went to summer camps, the boys and girls club. . .I did it to myself when grown.

Sheila grew up in the ABLA homes, "it was fine. We were in row houses. We respected our parents. There was grass. We slept outside in lawn chairs and left the doors open." While her parents divorced when she was a child, her grandmother lived next door, and her mother kept her involved in activities. Their cousin Joanne described their childhoods as "they have a good background. It shows it could happen to anyone." Sheila said she began using drugs in her late teens, because "I did it on my own, I wanted

to try it. No one pushed me to do it. I wanted to see what the high was like. My girlfriends tooted it, and liked it. I didn't like that, but I heard about freebasing. I liked it better." She earned an Associates degree and then married and had several children. Sheila graduated from high school and worked at Electric Motors until she lost the job as her addiction developed. She had two children, whom her aunts and mom tried to take several times (including calling DCFS) because of her addiction. Similarly, Caprice said she began using heroin because "my friends were doing it. It was something I wanted to try." She said "I got kind of wild. There were things I wanted to do. . .No one forced me to do them. . .There was no peer pressure."

Adena explained the development of her drug use. She said she first began using heroin:

> Adena: With some friends, some girlfriends of mine. Yeah, that was about 1980, '81, something like that. Yeah, I had a girlfriend that would snort heroin and I used to always go around her and her friends. She's dead now. . .I started using with them. . .
>
> AL: And so how old were you then?
>
> Adena: I'm 38 now, maybe like 28, 29, something like that. And it was just, like, occasional use then. I had, my babies were small, so I stopped because I did have. . .I stopped because of my children, you know. After they grew up, well, after my oldest one was 16, she was about 14, I was kind of going through changes with my marriage, that's when my disease progressed. That's when I got a habit, I gave up, I just stopped caring.
>
> AL: What was going on in your marriage at that time?
>
> Adena: Well, me and my husband just didn't see eye to eye on things. He was, you know, cheating on me, stuff like that. Yeah, wasn't spending no time with me and the kids. Because I always just wanted to get married and have children, you know, I was one of those types of girls.

AL: So you were with girlfriends?

Adena: Hmm mmm.

AL: And so he also used in the past?

Adena: Yeah, my husband, he started maybe like 3 years ago, he hadn't been getting high, well maybe about 5 years ago. Yeah.

AL: And do you know how he got involved?

Adena: I think from maybe messing around with me. I know it.

Adena's experience is common in many ways. First, her drug use started independently of her romantic relationship, and it began casually. Second, while her drug use started with friends, her relationship with her husband was central to her own understanding of the origins of her drugs use and its escalation. Third, It also was not unusual among these women for their drug use to begin relatively late in life, in their twenties or thirties (Laub and Sampson 2003). Fourth, Adena became involved with additional offending (primarily retail theft) later, after her drug use escalated. That Adena's drug use preceded other criminal involvement was also a common experience among these women (see also Steffensmeier and Allan 1996, but also Maruna 2001 for an opposite experience with male offenders).

> Adena: It started when I first started with my addiction, not when I first started, but the second time, when I really got heavy into my addiction. This girl I used to get high with, she used to steal and she showed me the tricks of the trade. You know the first time I ever went to the penitentiary I was 36 years old, in 1995.

AL: So how old were you when you feel that the addiction really –

Adena: Really progressed? Started getting bad? Like maybe 31, 32.

AL: O.k., so there were, like, several years—

> Adena: Yeah because I was just like a recreational. . .a recreational user. Yeah. Maybe like once a month or if I go out or something like that. Yeah. And I, because of therapy and stuff, I understand when I crossed that line, at what point I crossed that line, you know. You know, you just look up one day and you there, you know.

Shorty D similarly began using drugs casually. She describes her childhood as "not a bad childhood; I made bad decisions). She said she had dreams, a good job, an independent career, and did not know what drugs were. She first began using cocaine in her mid-twenties, followed by heroin a few years later. She said

> Shorty D: . . .First I had smoked cocaine. My first son's father's sister used to snort cocaine. . . Then my older brother he used to have cocaine, he had it cooked. . .And I asked him could I have a snort and he had a $100 of the stuff and he wouldn't give me a line to snort. I wanted to use it, I had to do it the way he did it, and I was smoking it, you know. So, that's how I got interested in smoking cocaine. O.k., now as far as the heroin, I knew people that used to do heroin. And the ones that used to do heroin it seemed like they was more manageable than the ones that did cocaine as far as they kept their appearance up, they kept money, you know. Uh, they kept themselves up, you know. And, uh, I started substituting when I had kind of got off in the races of cocaine and I seen that how it kept me running . . .to the point that I didn't change clothes for two days or something and you know, uh, I had substituted, for heroin. Not knowing that heroin was addictive. You know, cocaine is like mind over matter, know what I'm saying? You don't get no, you don't get a physical withdrawals as far as being painful, you know, you might sweat or something like that because it's coming out your pores or something. . .my sister was using heroin, so I asked her could I have some heroin.
> It was cool for a long time, I was getting it free, and it didn't take that much.
>
> Well, I got involved in prostitution and it was, you know, I had never went on the street corner, you know, and just made myself like I'd been a whore or something like that. But, uh, I would go to someone's house to get high. You know I come there with my money, I come there with my drugs, but I run out. So there might be somebody else come through the door, a man, and he have drugs so I start dating him, secretly. . .
>
> And as far as selling drugs. . .if I sold drugs, I had my own, and I didn't have to do nothing for it as far as sexually-wise, even though it was another risk I was

taking, at the time, I wasn't thinking about that. And being, they used to pay me up front, I didn't have to sell the drugs to get paid. . .I didn't stop dating, but I thought at the time selling was better. . .

AL: So everything you were involved with, it started after you were using drugs?

Shorty D: Yeah, right, right. I wouldn't, uh, I didn't never get high until somebody told me my sister was whoring. . . I couldn't do a thing, calling all kind of names that they was lying, you know, I broke down crying when I found out my sister was, you know, doing drugs, and whoring, and it hurted me so bad. I feel that pain like it happened yesterday. . .I would never have thought that I would ever get high, doing the same things, you know. Now, in my last imagination would I think I would be getting high. It hurted me so bad, cuz my sister was doing it. But today, my sister [Lauren, who also lived at the halfway house and whom I also interviewed] got 10 years clean and I'm real happy about that. And that's another reason that kind of gave me the strength to be at the [halfway house] and go through the process because of my sister."

Similar to Adena, Shorty D began using drugs casually, out of curiosity and because she was exposed to drugs through her friends and family. Once she became addicted to heroin and cocaine, she began engaging in other offenses (drug selling, prostitution) in order to maintain her drug habit.

Romantic partners

In contrast to much research (e.g., Covington 1985; O'Brien 2001) and popular conceptions, it was less common that the women were first exposed to drugs or offending through romantic partners. Sears (1989, cited in O'Brien 2001) found the main reason to which her respondents attributed their incarcerations was "being used and/or conned by a man." This was decidedly not the case among the majority of the women I interviewed. For example, Sugar explained that while her boyfriend at the time was with her when she stole cars, "I did it, he was just taking up space."

Twenty-two percent of the women did report initial drug exposure via romantic partners. For example, EJ attributed her initial drug use to her husband, who began using drugs before they met, and her criminal activity to "it was just the neighborhood I was in. I was using." Her mother and brother both said she had been a wild teenager; her brother said he did not know why she got involved with drugs and illegal activity, but that "she would do things you wouldn't think she would." Her mother attributed her problems to being involved with the "wrong crowd" and EJ's son's father – "then she got really strung out." EJ's brother Jonathan (whom I interviewed) did not use drugs, though their younger brother had. Jonathan said "I figured alcohol is bad enough. . .EJ knew I felt strongly about it; I see what it did. I lost too many friends, too much heartache." Albany also attributed her offending to a romantic partner. She explained her initiation into fraud, "I lived in New York with a guy. . .He showed me how to do it.. .I liked hanging out all night, working when I wanted. It was right up my alley – fast and quick." While Danielle was initially exposed to drugs through her mother, said she began offending as a teenager to "follow the crowd. . .through guys. . .I did it for fun, I didn't think of it as crime."

Bennie also attributed her initial drug use and offending to a combination of family "dysfunction" and "looking for love in all the wrong places." I quote our conversation at length, as she reveals her experience somewhat reluctantly, in layers.

AL: Can you tell me how you first got involved in illegal activity?

Bennie: Baby's daddy! Yeah, that's pretty much how I got involved with the dark side. [laughing] Other than that, I was pretty much on the straight and

narrow. Borderline dysfunctional family, you know. Nothing else. Good student
in school. Yeah. All that garbage, knew the dictionary. . .

AL: So, when you say you got involved through him, how so? Like, did you do
things with him, or did he ask you to do things?

Bennie: I left home. I ran away – how old -- about 16. About 16. Well, you
know, I came up in boarding school, foster homes, so. Uh, but you know, it was,
you know, you could, even though people have to go through that type of
upbringing there's still light in the tunnel and you can survive that. Many people
have. But, uh, when I got back with my family after a traumatic --, I got back
with my family, uh. Well, my sister, anyway. I was looking for love in all the
wrong places, so I got to put it like that. And, um, he was, he was what was
behind it door number one and that's what I got, so. What I interpreted to be love
was a cruel deception of it, so. With that came everything on the dark side. I got
familiar and acquainted with it.

AL: How did you feel about that, when you first started getting involved with
illegal activity?

Bennie: I thought it was the thing to do. You know, I was recruited, I was in it
for the long haul, I was in it for eleven years. It became a way of life, and, uh, I
didn't know anything different, I didn't desire anything different, you know. I was
true, loyal, dedicated to it. I learned it frontwards, backwards, up, down,
sideways, and around the corner. [laughing] So. And he was a darn good teacher.
May he rest in peace, wherever hell he at. [laughing].

AL: What sorts of things did he teach you?

Bennie: Everything. You name it, I knew about it.

AL: Can you give me some examples?

Bennie: Robbery, prostitution, drugs, taking, selling, uh, stealing, scamming,
conning. [sigh] what? What, what the – in every facet, in every dimension, I
mean. What, small crimes, big crimes, you know, just.

AL: So you said you were involved for eleven years?

Bennie: Yeah.

AL: Were you with him that whole time?

Bennie: Yup. Sure was.

AL: And then what happened at the end of eleven years?

Bennie: Oh, he go to jail, I go to jail. Oh. And one time he went away, and uh, for a long time, and I became, I was just an outlaw by myself. I discovered I didn't need nobody, that I was self-sufficient. I could do everything and anything alone. So, that's what I did, for some years. And I was quite successful at it [laughing]. I couldn't believe it! So, that's how it was.

AL: And so how long did that last?

Bennie: For some years. And then I met Joe. And, uh, I liked him! I didn't think, well, did I like him? I was curious. [laughing] I became curious, because I didn't have a companion. I just was doing my own thing, running and dealing and stuff like that.

AL: How did your family respond when they first found out?

Bennie: My family, I didn't involve myself with my family. When I was in crime, I was in crime, I wasn't in a family.   I wasn't involved with anything but crime.

AL: How old were you, or when did you first spend time in jail or prison?

Bennie: Oh, heck. As a child, in the Audi home. Abandoned, or whatever you call it. You know.

AL: How old were you?

Bennie: Oh, a little girl. Seven or something like that, waiting for something. You know how they take you, don't nobody want you, they take you and put you in the Audi home, until somebody say they want you. It's like a dog in a pet shop. How much is that doggy in the window [laughing], you know, so. It was very, uh, degrading and it was just uh, it was just, it was tragic. It was, you know, so you go here and you go there, and you get molested over here and then you go there. You know and it's sad, the system is what it is, but you know, some people make it through that, and some people don't. You know. A lot of young people to this day they perish in the, uh, system. Because they throw back or just abandoned or for whatever reason. It varies. It's sad, sad. It's a part of life, so.

AL: So who raised you?

Bennie: When? I had a lot of hands on. Who raised me to what? To be what? Well, my mother had a breakdown. My mother went insane when she gave birth to me, so, I was born and went to my aunt and my grandmother and, uh, I mean, and all my other brothers and sisters. They all, after she got ill, they, my aunt took and my grandma took all my mother's children. I was a baby of seven. So, I was there until I was about six or something like that. And then we had a fire and our home burnt down and so everybody got somewhere to go but me. The last one. So, I went, well my brother, he, no one took my brother after me, so we went to the Audi home. No one would assume responsibility for us. . .He went to a boarding school for boys, I forget the name of it, and I went to the Audi home, then I went to a foster home, then I went to another foster home, staying for about a year, if you're not beat up or battered or molested in it. Then I went to another one, then I went to another one, then I went to another one [laughing] you know. And then I went to a boarding school, Rockford Children's Home, then I got – I must have been about ten, or going on eleven, or something like that and I went there and got brutally raped, then I got on a bus. The man who raped me put me on a bus and I was, to Chicago, and I was in a bus, a Greyhound bus station, soaking blood and a policeman came and got me and then they try and find out who I was and where I came from and la la la. And, they managed to find my sister, who I went to live with, down there with her. And she further abused me [laughing], used me and abused me. And, uh, that's when I met the man, and you know. But in the process, I was educated, I went to school, I made good grades, I wasn't a bad person, I just had bad circumstances, and uh, I was a good, decent child, just had – was cursed [laughing]. Tragedy. You know, so, in the midst of that, you learn, you survive, and you look back and you try not to shut down and you just thank god for keeping you strong. So that's the tale of my two cities.

While Bennie initially attributed her offending to a romantic partner, as she continues the description of her childhood, it becomes clear that he was not the start of her problems. While Bennie told me about her childhood, she seemed reluctant to do so. She laughed periodically, but hesitated and spoke haltingly. By time she met her "baby's daddy" she had lost her mother, lost her home, lived in a series of foster and group homes and had been brutally raped. It was in the midst of this extreme instability and victimization that she "looked for love in all the wrong places." Again, Bennie's experience is extreme and she herself emphasizes that others experience the same victimization without getting

involved in criminal activity. Yet clearly, her victimization made her vulnerable to the influence of her "baby's daddy."

Relationships and Addiction

Romantic relationships

While romantic partners often were not the initial source of exposure to drug use, they did play an important role in the women's addictions. Fifty one percent of the women reported being in abusive relationships with romantic partners (5 women – 10 % - - were abused both by romantic partners and by parents/relatives). Often, the abuse was directly tied to drug use, and often was mutual. Several of the women describe these relationships as "kill or be killed." The father of one of Danielle's children abused Danielle, and later served a long term prison sentence for beating another woman. Sheila believed that if she had killed her husband of 26 years, there was no way she would have been sent to prison, because of the severity of the abuse she endured. Still, she said she never thought of leaving him. Erma said she was abused by her husband "whenever he felt like it," until she finally left him. Sugar's abusive relationship ended when both she and her boyfriend went to jail. Shorty D said that while she never endured abusive situations for long, they "come with getting high." Abra told me about several instances in which a girlfriend physically assaulted her, and vice versa. The abuse the women endured ranged from single incidents to long term physical and emotional abuse. Many of the women stayed in these relationships for long periods, and often the relationships were with the fathers of their children. In addition, the women were often violent in these relationships. Mary, for example, had several abusive relationships

during her addiction, but she also said "I did a whole lot of being abusive myself. I used to like to fight." For those women who continued relationships with partners they had during their addiction (a subject to which I will return in the next chapter), the abuse largely abates when both partners stop using drugs.

Children

Another common factor typically considered in the role of female offending and desistance is the role of children and childbearing. Some previous studies have found a connection between childbearing and desistance among young women {Mc Ivor, 2004 #43}. Katz (2000) wrote that this was more common among white women than women of color, because white women were more likely to define their worth in terms of relationships with romantic partners and children. While Giordano et al. (2002) found some support for the role of children in desistance and desistance stories, this effect was far from inevitable. They conclude "A focus on children as a hook for change is thus particularly useful as an illustration of our central argument – that when we focus on contemporary serious offenders, mere exposure to a given stimulus/catalyst is often not a sufficient bridge to conformity or sustained behavior change" (Giordano et al. 2002, p. 1038). Giordano et al.'s (2002) sample was incarcerated as adolescents, something many of the women in this study had not been.

For these women, their drug use and subsequent offending was as likely to begin *after* they became mothers as before. Of the women with children, they typically had their first child in their late teens. For about half of these women, their drug use began in their twenties, after at least their first child had been born. For the other half, their drug

use began in their late teens as well, usually within a few years of their first child's birth. Even among those who began drug use in their teens, it often escalated much later. For example, Winifred was first introduced to cocaine as a teen, shortly before the birth of her son, but she did not become addicted until she was in her 40's. For the most part, among all the women with children, their children were central to their identities. However, they did not seem to lead to (positive or negative) changes in behavior.

Perspective

In talking to network members, it became clear that they often had differing explanations for the women's behavior. For example, from a family member's perspective, romantic relationships play a more central role in offending than they do from the women's own perspectives. In one case, Tasha's mother blamed Tasha's incarcerations on a boyfriend. She said she did not know about her illegal activity until she was first arrested. In contrast, Tasha attributed her offending and drug use to curiosity, "I started hanging out with older cousins. One of them was a drug dealer; I was exposed to it and started using it. I was 15 or 16. I don't think I really wanted to start using it. It was curiosity. I was very curious about what was going on in that room." Similarly, Sheila attributes her own drug use to curiosity and exposure to drug using friends. In contrast, her aunt, Ms. Banks, attributed it to her "no good boyfriend. She got in trouble through him."

The perspective of family members typically varied depending on their relationship. Parents were often taken the most by surprise, while siblings and cousins (especially if the offending began as an adolescent) and children were much more aware

of the women's behavior. Parents commonly were unaware of their daughter's behavior until it resulted in incarceration. Ms. Banks, Adena's mother said, when she first found that Adena was involved with illegal activity:

> Ms. Banks: I went crazy, oh geez. I couldn't believe, you know how you in denial? I couldn't believe it. And then when I first heard it, well you know the parents be the last ones to hear it, and when I first heard kind of heard something, they told me it was the reefer. So that killed me, you know, cuz. Then I prayed, I said well, with reefer they say ain't so bad, you know, so I'm steady talking, steady on her, you know and this and that. When I found out about the other that really taked a toll on me, I just, oooh, I couldn't believe it! I really couldn't. How could you be that stupid? [whispering the last word]

> AL: How did you find out?

> Ms. Banks: How did I find out? One of the friends or something told me. Mmm hmm. Cuz I asked, you know, and they come "Ms. Banks don't say nothing." I said "Oh no, I won't say nothing." But I didn't know nothing, cuz a lot of that stuff was all new to me, you know.

> AL: How old was she when you found out?

> Ms. Banks: Let's see. She was married. I guess about 20. [Adena interjects "I was about 30"] In your thirties? Oh, I don't know.

In contrast, Adena's daughter Alicia described her childhood and when she learned her mother was involved in illegal activity.

> Alicia: It was o.k. Well, things didn't get, like, real shaken up and bad -- I was a teenager. So, it was o.k., when I became a teenager I moved here with my grandmother. I didn't like that, but I had to deal with it, and then it was kind of rough because I was just finding out my mother did drugs, you know, as a teenager. And, uh, and it, uh, it took a long time to accept it and to deal with it, because you know kids will tease you and, you know, torment you, and say things and, you know, they just try to hurt you.

> But other than that, I had a nice childhood with my grandparents, where they tried to give us the best of everything, did everything that, you know, families do and you know she made the way for when my mother stopped, you know. At a certain point we had our own house and everything, so, it was o.k., it wasn't bad.

I just wish they would have like instilled in us more, like, going to school, you know. That wasn't such a big, we didn't get scores for having our report cards and you know, they just didn't really make it seem like a big deal, which it is a big deal. Other than that, everything else was fine. . . My father, he did, but he was in the army, but he the only one to show he really cared, saying things as far as like homework, you know, extracurricular activities or anything like that. Everyone else was always too busy or do it yourself or you should know. . .There was no, you know, nothing to make you want to, you know, go to school, just to make you feel good about the school, make you, it made me not care. Because that's why I didn't go to college, I didn't think it was a big deal, which it is a big deal. Now that I have a child, you know, and I want her to go all the way to the top, and I am going to instill knowledge in her the way they didn't do it for me.

AL: How did you respond when you first found out that your mother was involved in illegal activity?

Alicia: Mmmm. I didn't kind of, well I believed it because I always knew she was doing something wrong, but I didn't know the consequences of it, so when I knew the consequences it was like, it was kind of hurting, because I'm like my mother gone, in jail. And then the way my grandmother done tell me, "she'll never come back." You know, they just scare you about everything. You know, "don't do this, you'll die. You do this, you'll get sick," and they just, oh God, they always get that.

Other than that, I thought it was bogus though. But I didn't feel bad about it cuz I'd rather her go to jail, you know, than to be out here doing other things to get high, like some of 'em do, so I guess if I had --, it was a give and take situation. I'd rather her, you know, feel than be out here belittling herself for men, doing lord knows what for drugs, so. It really didn't really bother me at first, like maybe after the third, fourth time. And then it seems like every time she go to jail, it'll be my birthday. It was always my birthday. I don't know. Even, yeah. But, it's just like I just got used to it. It was like it wasn't no new news.

AL: So you said you knew that she was doing something wrong, before she first went to prison. How did you figure that out, how did find out about that?

Alicia: Because I just knew. It was, I knew she wasn't buying it, you know, when we left the store, so, I just knew it was wrong. And then when, like when we was little, I remember a incident that we had stole something and she took us back in the store and made us give it back. And you know we got scared crying. We thought we was going to jail, but I'm like now, she did the same thing, why nobody told on her? And I'm like "I'm gonna tell," and she like "no, be quiet!"

Alicia went on to say "I don't know the person my grandmother knows," to explain their differing perspectives on her offending and her future chances. Because she was living with her mother during her drug use and offending, she was more aware of it than was Ms. Banks. This is not to say that parents were always unaware, however. Sheila, for example, told me that her mother and aunts several times tried to take away her children because of her drug use. When DCFS would come to the house, however, the house was clean and the children were cared for and healthy.

Conclusion

The women in this study all had similarities in terms of demographics and offending backgrounds. Yet in talking to them about their childhoods and the origins of their offending, much more diversity was revealed. Some women began using drugs casually, often for years, before it became a problem. Sometimes they can pinpoint an event that served as a turning point for them, often a traumatic event, and other times, they slipped into addiction without realizing it. Other women experienced abuse and victimization as a child or adolescent, and leading to drug use as a coping mechanism (Agnew 1992; Baskin and Sommers 1998). Nearly all of them were raised and were living in an environment in which drug use was commonplace (Sutherland 1947; Reiss 1986; Boardman, Finch, Ellison, Williams and Jackson 2001). Often family members also used drugs and/or drank heavily. Their first exposure to drugs was typically through their family members or friends. While less common in terms of initiation into drug use, relationships with romantic partners were heavily influenced by drug use of both

partners, and often included violence. The women most often became involved in other offending after their drug use was well underway, and they became further and further removed from conventional society.

Again, all of the women voluntarily chose to go to the halfway house. With few exceptions, the women I interviewed went there directly after release from prison. They typically cited a desire to change their lives as the reason they went there. In my conversations with them, almost all of them seemed quite sincere in their desire to desist. This is clearly a necessary first step in successful desistance (Sommers et al. 1994; Baskin and Sommers 1998; Maruna 2001; Giordano et al. 2002). Yet this desire is also clearly not enough. Their structural positions and social relationships also shape their experiences with reentry and desistance. In the next three chapters, I turn to some of these factors. First, in chapter 4, I address their relationships with loved ones, including family members, romantic partners, and friends.

CHAPTER FOUR

INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS AND DESISTANCE
FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND ROMANTIC PARTNERS

"While the decision to exit is a very personal one, it is inevitably made in a social context and is highly influenced by the reactions of other people." (Ebaugh 1988, p. 75).

This chapter discusses how the relationships the women had with friends and family evolved during their reentry and desistance processes. Significant others (romantic and otherwise) can play an important role in the desistance process, typically in a supportive, rather than instrumental, role. In other words, significant others support or discourage the decisions and changes that the offender makes. The women I interviewed were almost exclusively involved with others who have personal experience with drug use and/or offending, by them or by loved ones. This strongly influences their relationships with the women, leading to additional emotional support and encouragement in the case of others in recovery, a potential draw towards continued drug use or offending from those who are still offending or using drugs, and hurt, resentment, and mistrust by those who had experienced past relapses and missteps. The women must then learn to negotiate all of these relationships in order to further their desistance. In the first section, I address family relationships – parents, siblings, and children. Then, I turn to romantic partners. Lastly, I turn to the relationships the women had with friends. This

chapter is largely based on the interviews completed with women and their network members, though it is also supplemented by interviews done solely with women about their relationships.

Relationships play a different role among long term friends and family than with newer friends. Among the women in this group, new friends and romantic partners are almost all involved in recovery themselves. They are thus knowledgeable about drug addiction and recovery. The absence of a specific history with this woman, though, means the relationships are more fragile and less likely to survive relapse or reoffending. In these cases, the relationship has yet to evolve into a strong bond (Laub et al. 1998; Maruna 2001; Laub and Sampson 2003). Family members also often have a history of drug and alcohol use, offending, and incarceration, or experience with other loved ones. Yet they often experience this much differently, with a long history of hurt and difficulties resulting from the drug use and/or offending (Allen 2003; Braman 2004). In addition, family members often continue in their own addictions. While the women typically stop spending time with the "associates" they used drugs with, and rarely refer to these people as "friends" or important figures in their lives, their family members (and sometimes romantic partners) were more difficult to separate from. This was a significant challenge to the women, as they felt pressure to support and maintain (or recreate) relationships with their loved ones, while also wanting to avoid drug users. These continued relationships could, however, evolve into mutually supportive and understanding relationships once both parties had stopped offending and using drugs.

Thus, I emphasize the dynamic nature of social relationships, and the need to look at them in depth and over time.

Social bonds, desistance, and gender

This chapter explores how social bonds function for female offenders. Social bond theories (Hirschi 1969; Kornhauser 1978; Sampson and Laub 1993; Laub and Sampson 2003) argue that social ties to family and employment provide a disincentive to commit crime. These bonds raise the cost of engaging in illegal activity and thus it is those without these strong (quality) bonds that are most likely to continue to offend. Of course, these social bonds are dynamic and likely to grow or change over time (Maruna 2001; Laub and Sampson 2003). Shover describes the changes in relationships that male offenders have with women during their offending careers: "From adolescence onward, most have close involvements with girlfriends, lovers, or spouses. For young thieves, these are often exploitative relationships of convenience and not important influences on their behavior" (1996, p. 129). As these men age, their relationships change, along with their personal resolve to desist from offending. The nature and meaning of their relationships with women shift, and they become a pro-social force. This depends on the quality of the bond (Sampson and Laub 1993) and the pro-social orientation of the partner (Giordano et al. 2002). Laub and Sampson (2003) add that "because investment in social relationships is gradual and cumulative, resulting desistance will be gradual and cumulative" (Laub et al.).

For male offenders, these bonds are an important aspect of desistance. For example, in his study of persistent thieves, Shover writes "successful creation of bonds

with conventional others and lines of legitimate activity indisputably is the most important contingency that causes men to alter or terminate their criminal careers." (1996, p. 129). This can be summarized as the "love of a good woman" argument, though other bonds, such as those to employment or religious involvement, can serve the same function, and multiple quality bonds will be more effective than a single tie or type of tie. Social bonds may foster desistance in several ways. Social bonds may provide a direct social control function, monitoring the behavior of the offender. An example of this is a "zero tolerance" attitude towards certain behaviors (Laub and Sampson 2003). Bonds like employment, marriage, and parenthood, may also lead to a change in routine activities. For example, married men tend to spend more time spent at home and less time spent with delinquent peers (Warr 1998; Laub and Sampson 2003). Thus, in addition to raising the cost of offending, these ties also lead to more conventional activities. These activities in turn have conventional rewards and contribute to a corresponding non-criminal identity (Sommers et al. 1994; Shover 1996; Giordano et al. 2002; Laub and Sampson 2003). In addition, "marrying up" may provide tangible material rewards, like housing or employment (Laub and Sampson 2003).

A more psychological approach attributes desistance in offending to changes in self-concept, and stresses the need to include human agency in models of desistance (e.g., Shover 1996; Baskin and Sommers 1998; Maruna 2001; Giordano et al. 2002). The cognitive change model that Giordano et al. (2002) lay out includes exposure to tangible "hooks" for change, such as employment or marriage, but also focuses on individual thought processes, such as an openness to change, the ability to focus reflexively on the

self and envision an appealing conventional "self," and a change in the way the actor views deviant behavior or lifestyle. They conclude that these thought processes may be more important in long-term desistance, in part because traditional social bonds like marriage and employment are rare among contemporary ex-offenders.

In addition, from a strain perspective, these same relationships that may encourage desistance may also encourage reoffending (Agnew 1992).   Hirschi (1969), for example, argues that the existence of social bonds is crucial, but the normative orientation of those "others" is not. Others have argued that the normative orientation of the social networks is indeed crucial for it to serve as a controlling mechanism (Giordano, Cernkovich and Pugh 1986; Giordano, Cernkovich, Groat, Pugh and Swinford 1998; Giordano and Rockwell 2000; Giordano et al. 2002). Among these women, many of their social networks, be they family members, friends, or romantic partners, also have been involved with drug use and/or offending. While many are also trying to desist, they experience relapses. This is often a source of significant strain, as the women negotiate these relationships.

Gender and the meaning of "pro-social"

While much of the criminological and desistance literature focuses on male offenders, there is substantial reason to suspect that the types of social bonds and the role that they play may be different for women and men. Again, because of the distribution of offenders (i.e., most offenders are male) and the marginalization of female offenders, it is reasonable to assume that male and female offenders are drawing from very different relationship pools. Male offenders who form heterosexual relationships are much more

likely to be able to form a bond with non-offending females, than women offenders are to form relationships with non-offending men. Especially if pro-social is defined as having no criminal, drug, or incarceration history, women may have fewer opportunities to form relationships with pro-social partners. However, defining pro-social only in terms of *current* behavior expands the "good" relationship pool, and allows for a broader definition of pro-social relationships. Another possibility is that women need to, or choose to, break ties to non-pro-social partners –without necessarily replacing them with other romantic ties-- in order to foster their own desistance. For some offenders, bonds with children, other family members, or friends may be more important than those with romantic partners.

Romantic relationships are central to some studies of desistance, though again, discussions of female offenders are less common. When men are implicated in female criminality, it is typically in terms of the role that men play in female offending, not desistance.[1] However, women do play a significant role in our understanding of male desistance. Women (specifically wives) are a stabilizing force in male offenders' lives, and these relationships contribute to desistance from offending (Sampson and Laub 1993; Horney et al. 1995; Shover 1996; Warr 1998; Laub and Sampson 2003). The relationships that men develop are usually with pro-social women; in other words, men form relationships with women without a history of offending or incarceration. These women provide direct control and a stake in conformity, and these relationships lead to changes in men's routine activities. They spend less time with their peers, especially

those involved in delinquent activities, and more time at home (Warr 1998; Laub and Sampson 2003).

Despite the lack of attention, we have ample reason to suspect that men may play a significantly different role in female desistance than the role women play in male desistance. One reason for this difference is the rates of male and female offending. The vast majority of incarcerated populations are men, and, when released, they are heavily concentrated in a fairly small number of neighborhoods. Thus, the likelihood of a female offender – especially when she also is returning to a neighborhood with a high number of ex-felons -- becoming romantically involved with a man with no history of offending or incarceration is much lower than the likelihood of a male offender becoming involved with a woman without this history.

Given the differences in the offending patterns between men and women, Laub and Sampson question the applicability of their own argument that marriage contributes to desistance –marriage is "good for whom?" they rightfully ask (2003, p. 46). In their sample, the men marry "pro-social" women who have no involvement with illegal activity, and so serve as a bond to conventional life (when the marriage itself is a quality bond). For men, marriage creates an interdependent system of obligation and restraint that constrains involvement in criminal activity (Laub and Sampson 2003). For women, finding a pro-social spouse that may foster that interdependence is more difficult, especially when they are coming from, and returning to, high crime neighborhoods, with high proportions of male ex-felons. For example, in the United States, 22.3 % of black

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[1] An exception to this is Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph (2002), who focus on male and

men born between 1965 and 1969 had been incarcerated by 1999 (Western et al. 2002).

For those without a high school diploma, the percentage rises to 52.1 (Western et al.

2002). In Illinois, half of all prison inmates are released to Chicago, and a third go to just

six neighborhoods (Austin, Humboldt Park, North Lawndale, Englewood, West

Englewood, and East Garfield Park) (La Vigne et al. 2004). These neighborhoods are all

poor and heavily African American (and, in the case of Humboldt Park, Latino). This

concentration of releasees in poor, African American neighborhoods contributes to the

limited "marriage pool" for inner-city African American women, if a felony record is

seen as a strike against a potential partner (Wilson 1987). Again, if this is the case,

female ex-offenders would have even less likelihood than non-offenders of marrying or

having a relationship with a man without a criminal record himself.

This also raises the question of what constitutes a pro-social spouse. Researchers

typically define (either explicitly, but more often implicitly) a pro-social partner as

someone without any history of offending or incarceration and with a commitment to law

abiding norms and values and stakes in conformity. Typically, authors merely imply the

normative orientation and behavior of the spouse or partner. For example, Sampson and

Laub (1993; Laub and Sampson 2003) discuss the quality of the bond, not characteristics

or behaviors of the wife. However, they also point out

> Selection is surely operating at some level, but most marriages originate in
> fortuitous contacts rooted in everyday routine activities. Frank Cullen has also
> pointed out that such fortuitous contacts almost always result in deviant men
> ending up with less deviant women. . .We could perhaps put it more bluntly –
> given the crime differences between men and women, it is almost invariably the

female desistance, and include sections on romantic relationships, employment, and children.

case that men marry "up" and women "down" when it comes to exposure to violence and crime.   (Laub and Sampson 2003, p. 45-46)

Likewise, Shover writes "successful establishment of bonds with *conventional* others and participation in *conventional* activities are major contingencies on the path that leads to conformity" (1996, p. 126, emphasis mine). He goes on to say that a "mutually satisfying relationship with a woman is one of the most common and experientially important forms," and cites several examples (Shover 1996, p. 126). In none of these examples does he explicitly tell us anything about the criminal involvement (or lack thereof) or history of the woman in question; the reader is left to assume (from the previous statements about "conventional" relationships and activities) that she is not criminally involved. However, if one has a history of offending that has since ended, it is possible to be both a pro-social romantic partner and an ex-offender. This possibility increases the pool of potential pro-social spouses.

Now I turn to the women's relationships with close family, romantic partners, and friends, each of which plays an important role in the women's desistance and reentry process. First, I discuss the women's relationships with family members as they negotiate desistance and reentry.

Families of origin

While anger, shock, and hurt were all common responses of family members when they first learned of the women's offending and drug use, rarely did this result in an absence of contact or affection. Though Jeanette's mother, Ms. Smith, said she "almost died, I was so hurt" when she first found out Jeanette was going to prison, she always

wrote to her when she was incarcerated and visited when she could get a ride. She said that incarceration did not affect their relationship, "I still love her the same." Likewise, Ms. Smith remained optimistic that Jeanette would stay out of prison, and away from drugs, for good. At the time of our interview, the two of them were living together, along with Jeanette's fiancé. Jeanette's oldest sister was incarcerated at the time for six years for delivery of a controlled substance. Ms. Smith said "it hurts me very bad when my kids are locked up."

Simarily, EJ's brother Jonathan was hurt and disappointed when he found out about EJ's offending. He said he talked to her about it, and EJ promised she would change. Then "her whole attitude changed. I knew something was wrong." While Jonathan was hurt by EJ's incarceration, he said

> Jonathan: it brought us closer. We always look out for each other. Now she's focused on life; there ain't nothing in that. She's doing everything she should have done in the first place. Incarceration helped her learn responsibility; back then she didn't care.

Jonathan went to visit EJ in the penitentiary every chance he could. Sharon's brother Samuel also thought prison impacted Sharon in a positive way "she made a positive out of a negative. She changed her life around. . .She takes life more seriously." In some ways, Samuel also resented Sharon's new lifestyle. He was himself recently out of prison was looking for a job, and helping Sharon care for her four children. He said "she's self-centered with her recovery. She always makes statements about 'me and my recovery.' Without help it wouldn't be possible. She doesn't look at what I do for the kids." From

Samuel's perspective, Sharon was focusing on her own recovery to the detriment of her children.

Childcare was the most common tangible source of support that the women's family offered during their incarceration and reentry. The majority of children lived with the women's family siblings or parents during their incarceration and frequently beyond. In other cases, like Samuel, they offered child care while the women worked. Andrea and Erica's mothers frequently babysat their children. Erica had her daughter stay with her mother while she struggled with depression surrounding her job search. In a few cases, parents (or other relatives) had taken on a permanent parental role with the women's children. Linette's five children were staying with different relatives. The oldest three were living with their fathers' relatives, and the youngest two were living with her aunt. Linette was hoping to regain custody of the youngest child when she completed parole and her life stabilized. All of Dee Dee's five children live with her father and step-mother. While the oldest two know that she is their mother, the youngest three do not. She does not plan to tell them, though she maintains a relationship with them all, because she does not want to disrupt their lives. She said she had thought about regaining custody, but her six year old daughter has been with her father since she was a few days old. She said "as long as I know who I am" that is sufficient. She plans to let them stay with her father, unless they want to live with her. She said "my daughter intimidates me – it's like looking in a mirror."

While family members typically hoped for the best for their daughters, sisters, and mothers, they were rarely able to offer other tangible support (Reisig et al. 2002). The

most common way in which family members saw themselves helping the women was by talking to them. Mr. Nelson Matthews, a long time family friend, described Jeanette as "a black woman struggling. . .growing up depends on the community you come up in." He said "all you can do is talk, give advice."   Talking, giving advice, and offering encouragement were the most common ways in which family members could offer help. In few instances did I hear of any material support by family members. Starr's father, a doctor, paid the rent for the apartment she shared with her girlfriend and her girlfriend's son. He also paid for the attorney she hired to help regain custody of her daughter. Adena's parents owned several homes, and Adena lived in one. Sheila moved to live with one her aunt's after a year in a subsidized housing program. In addition, Sheila said her aunt was planning to help her buy a car if she continued to do well in her recovery. In a few other cases, the women moved back to family-owned houses, and Linette lived with her fiancé in his mother's house.

Relapse

During the course of the interviews, several women told me about drug relapses they had gone through. Typically, this happened among women in their first year or two out of prison and happened among a good number of women that had moved to the same SRO building. This is consistent with studies of recidvisim and reincarceration[2] (Irwin 1970; Maruna 2001; Langan and Levin 2002). For one of these women – EJ – I interviewed her, her mother, and her brother both before and after her relapse. EJ was in recovery for the first time after using heroin ("my drug") and cocaine for close to 30

years. Since she had been out of prison, she was dealing with fibroids and diabetes and

was trying to get permission to see her 25 year old son, who was incarcerated (she never

did get a visit arranged, though he was released over the year).   Both EJ and her mother

(independently) said that they had the relationship that they always should have had. EJ

said "we're bonding now, having the relationship we should have had."

After her incarceration, her mother said "I have the daughter I always prayed for.

Since she got out of the penitentiary, she came out a different person. The lord answered

my prayers. She made up her own mind." Both EJ's brother and mother believed that

she would not go back to prison or use drugs again. Her brother said "She's out for good

this time. She knows she hurted me. She gave me her word, I believe her this time.

Before she said she'd try. I believe her this time. Last time, it wasn't time; this time, she

kept her word. . .She put a lot of effort in to it. She stays away from that crowd; she

don't associate with them, she don't go around those people."

EJ attributed her relapse, a little more than a year after she was released from

prison, to "depression. I was tired. . . tired of getting turned down. My health is failing.

I was never this sick when I was getting high." When EJ got out of detox after relapsing,

she said that "the hurt I caused my mother" was one of her greatest worries (along with

her health." She said "I put her through a particular hell." Her mother was very upset at

the relapse. She said "She hurt me real bad. Two people told me, and I asked her. She

needs me more than ever. I had so much confidence. . .I'm trying to get over the hurt."

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[2]e.g. Among inmates in Illinois, close to 50 % return to prison within three years of their release.
Illinois Department of Corrections, www.idoc.state.il.us. 2004.

Her brother likewise did not know she had relapsed until EJ told them. He said "she disappointed me. But she's still my sister, I love her regardless."

Likewise, Adena's family had also experienced relapses and the resulting mistrust. When I first interviewed Adena's 27 year old daughter, her mother, and cousin, all were skeptical of Adena's ability to "go straight." Alicia, Adena's daughter said the thing she liked least about her mother was "she do drugs. She try to psych me into believing that she's tired – if she was, she'd stop. How she acts when she's high – she's overbearing. Drugs are her downfall." When I asked her the likelihood of Adena staying out of prison and drug free, she said

> She's been doing good. . .Less than 30 %. I don't see it happening. She say she wants to get it together, but it's on her to change. I hope she won't do anything to go back. . .She's not drug free now. There's a good chance. She's a good person, she knows God. She was doing good, she was clean. She went around people, places and things. She has to get tired. . . I hope she do.

While Alicia does smoke marijuana and drink alcohol, she does not use any other drugs "I will never do that, because I see what it do to my mother and father." As illustrated in Alicia's description of her mother's incarcerations (also in Chapter 3), she has clearly experienced strain related to both her mother's offending and drug use and incarceration, along with the stigmatization of having an incarcerated mother (Hagan and Dinovitzer 1999). Alicia said

> I didn't like that, but I had to deal with it, and then it was kind of rough because I was just finding out my mother did drugs, you know, as a teenager. And, uh, and it, uh, it took a long time to accept it and to deal with it, because you know kids will tease you and, you know, torment you, and say things and, you know, they just try to hurt you. . .

> But I didn't feel bad about it cuz I'd rather her go to jail, you know, than to be out here doing other things to get high, like some of 'em do, so I guess if I had --, it was a give and take situation. I'd rather her, you know, feel than be out here belittling herself for men, doing lord knows what for drugs, so. It really didn't really bother me at first, like maybe after the third, fourth time. And then it seems like every time she go to jail, it'll be my birthday. It was always my birthday. I don't know. Even, yeah. But, it's just like I just got used to it. It was like it wasn't no new news.

Here, Alicia frames her mother's incarceration in both good and bad terms. She was upset, called the incarcerations "bogus," and had to endure teasing and harassment from her peers. But while she did not like the consequences of the incarceration, she preferred to the alternative – of her mother on the street feeding her addiction. The same is true during Adena's attempts at desistance. Alicia does not trust her, but also worries about what might happen to her. Similarly, Ms. Banks, Adena's mother, characterized her relationship with Adena as "not too good. I don't believe her, because of the drugs. Overall, she talks, she say one thing, and do another. . .When she came home, she was doing beautiful. Then she hang out with the wrong crowd. She was good for about 3 months." When I asked her the likelihood of Adena staying out of prison, she said "Unless she leave that stuff alone, I wonder. She has to make up her mind, change peoples, look at life differently. She can't do wrong and get away with it. She talks good. She has a smart head, but she do the opposite." Adena's cousin gives her "a year, maybe not even" before she would go back to prison, because "she's got a lot of problems."

In contrast, Sheila, Adena's cousin, was perceived to be on the right track by her aunt, niece, and cousins. Sheila entered the halfway house after Adena, in part because

of the inspiration that Adena's experience gave her – "she gave me the strength to do the right thing." Now, 30 years later, Sheila was "a totally different person. She's doing really good, she's working," according to Mrs. Banks, Sheila's aunt. While Joanne, Adena and Sheila's cousin, said that Adena has not changed, Sheila "has ways opening up for her. She sees things differently, she's tired." Despite the fact that Sheila and Adena had equally long histories of drug use and criminal activity (and according to their own accounts, Sheila began using several years earlier), Sheila was seen by her family as rehabilitated, while Adena was seen as have more deeply rooted problems. Joanne described Sheila as "she had a drug problem, but without that, she's sweet." In contrast, Adena "she's lying. She's in denial. She's o.k. straight, but the next thing she's off again."

While there were certainly differences in their personalities (Adena was much more boisterous and outgoing; Sheila was quieter) and in their relationships to Mrs. Banks, Joanne, and Alicia, there was also universal agreement at this time that Sheila had more potential for change. In part this was because they had recently experienced problems with Adena. Alicia suspected she was using drugs (Adena said she had used heroin several times in early 2004), and the police had charged in to her parents house looking for her to serve an old warrant. During the interview period, Adena went back to prison for several months because of the old warrant. In contrast, Sheila was living at the halfway house and then a subsidized apartment on the south side. She was in no serious trouble during the year, and so had not "proven" herself untrustworthy. However, it is important to remember that Mrs. Banks, at least, was much more positive about Adena's

chances when she first got out of the halfway house, and her perspective had certainly changed after more time had passed. Jeanette, Adena's upstairs neighbor and another former halfway house resident, was the first person Adena told when she relapsed. Jeanette told her "We all had dreams when we were at the [halfway house]."

The women themselves were not the only ones in danger of experiencing relapses. These women clearly experience relationships with purely law abiding relatives (i.e., those who have never committed an offense or abused drugs or alcohol), desisting relatives, and currently offending relatives. As I described in Chapter 3, many of the women grew up with family members who used drugs and engaged in illegal activity. These same patterns often continued among the women's children and other family members, and the women must then negotiate these relationships. Sheila's older brother had been a drug addict for 15 years, and then a drug counselor for 5. He then started using again, to which she responded "I don't care for that. I really don't want to see him." Likewise her younger brother, who also had a history of drug use was "showing signs" of using again. While he denies it, she believes she can recognize the signs. Sharon's brother, who had been incarcerated five times when I met him, was reincarcerated before I could interview him a second time. Still, Sharon kept in touch with him, and said "I still love him." Erica's mother is, according to Erica, a functioning alcoholic, and Erica is "a mother to my mother." Yet she "still has the same resentments. I respect her for who she is, but nothing's changed. . .I've tried to convince her, but she declined. I don't see her much." Sometimes the women take the initiative to distance themselves from family members. Other times this is not necessary, as the family

members distance themselves while using drugs and offending. Like Bennie (quoted in Chapter 3) said "I didn't involve myself with my family. When I was in crime, I was in crime, I wasn't in a family. I wasn't involved with anything but crime."

Those with younger children worried about what would happen to them as they aged. Erica worried about this, "It's a cycle. My mom had me at thirteen, I had her at sixteen. I see many of my behaviors in her. I don't want for her what I had. Sometimes she just shuts down." In several cases, the women's adult children were or had been incarcerated. As with their own (and their siblings) differing responses to their parents drug use, violence, and offending, the women's children also had varying responses. Many were in college or were working and succeeding within conventional society, while others struggled with drug addiction, offending, and incarceration.

> Delilah: . . .The baby is 28. He's incarcerated. I have one in Milwaukee. And I've got one – he's the one that's never jay-walked, never smoked a cigarette. He's a maintenance man, a supervisor in one of those high rise buildings downtown. That's the eldest. My life is so messed up because I never raised any of my children. I was lucky enough to have the two oldest boys' grandmother -- she's eighty-eight next week – took them and my aunt took the two youngest boys. You know, because I was always on drugs, you know. And I couldn't have provided for them. They would have been up and down the street looking from pillar to post, probably be doing all kinds of stuff. But none of them are what you could call degenerate in society. The one that's incarcerated he sold a little drugs. He made a bad mistake, but he's not a bad kid.

Delilah had the same attitude towards her sons that many of the women's parents had about them – they may have done bad things, but they were still loved and good people. Sheila believed that her teenaged son would continue "doing the right things" because of his childhood experiences. She said he had never used drugs because of what they had done to her and his father. His girlfriend (and mother of his baby) is "smart, I hope she

goes to college. She's real nice, and her mother too." In contrast, her daughter is "hanging out all night" and not working. One of the fathers of her daughter's children is incarcerated, and the other is "on his way" to being incarcerated.

Regardless of the children's behavior, their relationships often were (or had been) strained. As clear from Alicia's quotes above, while she loved and maintained contact with her mother, she also suffered as a result of her mother's drug addiction. Lisa D. also said that her relationship with several of her six kids was not close because of "how much hurt they got out of what you were doing. Some don't let it go." She said "children love unconditionally; they think things are their fault, when they're not. . . [The youngest two] got it worst, that was the worst time in my life. I have apologized, but I realize I might not be forgiven." Several of her children had been incarcerated and have used and/or sold drugs. Several others are in college or working. Her youngest daughter, now in her twenties, "thinks she's my mother." The relationships also experience strain because of the behaviors of the children. EJ fought for several months to visit her son while he was incarcerated. After he was released, their relationship became "touch and go. I don't like what he's doing as far as his son's concerned . . .He knows he hurt me, and he don't know how to come to me. . ."

Despite these strains, most of the women spoke with pride and affection for their children, though they clearly also worried about their life chances and their relationships. Danielle said that, while she didn't like much about her life, she was proud of her kids "each have a little bit of me. I get to live through them. The things I've always wanted to do I can see through them. I always wanted to be a doctor, and my baby girl [who was

then in college] wants to go to medical school." Danielle especially identifies with her middle daughter, who "needs me more. She reminds me of me, I'm trying to protect her. . .she had a baby at 14. The others don't need me as much; they are more independent."

While family members are central to our understanding of social control and its role in offending (Hirschi 1969; Foshee and Bauman 1992; Giordano et al. 1998), the discussion typically leaves off with adolescence (with the exception of children of offenders). Here we can see the continuing importance of family members in the lives of female desisters. These relationships are complicated and changeable as each person's beliefs and behavior influence the nature of the relationship. These relationships can be both positive and negative forces in the women's lives, and sometimes simultaneously. At a minimum, they are relationships that are not as easily terminated as peer relationships.

Romantic relationships

Another collateral consequence of incarceration (albeit an informal one) is the impact on romantic relationships and, alternatively, the impact of romantic relationships on future offending. Only 8.1 % of the women interviewed in this study were married at the time of the interviews; and nearly two-thirds have never been married (see Table 1). This is consistent with the overall female IDOC population (11 % married; 67.7 % never married). To the extent possible, I will discuss possible differences in types of relationships (marriage, cohabitation, non-cohabitating boyfriend or girlfriend, no relationship) and the role they play in the women's desistance.

This distinction between all romantic relationships and marriage is significant. For example, among male offenders, marriage and cohabitation seem to have very different impacts on offending. Much of the previous literature on romantic relationships of male offenders has focused specifically on the benefits of quality bonds with wives (Sampson and Laub 1993; Horney et al. 1995; Laub et al. 1998; Warr 1998; Laub and Sampson 2003). These authors argue that the mere existence of a marital relationship is not enough to lead to desistance; rather the bond must be a strong one. As a marital relationship develops over time, it will have more of a conventionalizing effect.

In contrast, the role of non-spousal relationships for men has the opposite effect on offending. For example, Warr (1998) concludes that there is something about marriage itself that affects the routine activities of men, as unmarried men who live with parents, live alone, or cohabitate all spend more time with friends than do married men. This decrease in time spent with peers, then, contributes to lower rates of offending. Likewise, Horney, Osgood, and Marshall (1995) found that while living with a wife decreased the likelihood of offending among male offenders, living with a girlfriend *increased* the likelihood of offending. Rather than explaining this as a differential association effect (Sutherland 1947; Akers 1985; Wilson 1987; Warr and Stafford 1991; Warr 1998), they suggest that this might reflect a difference in the strength of the bond with a wife or girlfriend (consistent with the quality bond argument of Sampson and Laub). Thus, romantic relationships are implicated both in social control (Hirschi 1969; Sampson and Laub 1993; Horney et al. 1995; Laub et al. 1998; Laub and Sampson 2003) and social learning or differential association (Sutherland 1947; Akers 1985; Warr 1998)

approaches. Both factors contribute to differential effects of various types of romantic relationships.

All of the women in this sample voluntarily went to a recovery home upon their release from prison (and in a few cases, upon completion of an inpatient drug treatment program). They all expressed an interest in changing their lives and ceasing their offending and drug use. In doing so, they were all consistent with at least the first two components (openness to change and exposure to a set of hooks for change) of Giordano et al.'s cognitive change model and Sommers and Baskin's process of change (Sommers et al. 1994; Baskin and Sommers 1998; Giordano et al. 2002).

However, even when people make a decision to stop using drugs and offending, this is often a process that includes several attempts. While the halfway house strongly discouraged romantic relationships, and created an environment in which the women could create new friendships, some of the women were reluctant to give up their connections to old romantic partners or friends. Even when they exited prison with a desire to desist from drug use and offending, their relationships with abusive and/or addicted men (or women) often continued. As of the last interview, six women were involved with men who were then using drugs, involved with illegal activity, or incarcerated.

Ongoing relationships

There are three likely and common outcomes to these relationships at this point. Some women relapsed into addiction and/or street life themselves in part as a result of these relationships. Over a quarter (29 %) of the women directly attributed their (current

or former) drug use, relapse, or offending to relationships with romantic partners. Another possibility was that the women cut ties with these men in order to foster their own recovery. Often this happened while they were at the halfway house. Caprice, for example, said that she ended an eleven year relationship while at the halfway house because "it was time to move on." The women may have held on to relationships for a period, but realized that they could not move forward in their own lives while the men continued to use drugs and/or offend. In addition, they tended to grow apart, as drug use was their primary, or an important, bond. Once they lost this, they had little in common, or little reason to stay together.

While on the surface, this seems to be the best path for the women to take, staying together also can have a positive long term outcome. A third pattern is that both of the partners went into recovery, and their relationship continued. This is an important twist on the idea of social bonds and pro-social partners. While according to much conventional wisdom and the messages they heard in recovery settings the women should have ended these relationships, over time they can develop into strong, supportive, and pro-social ties. Here, the couple redefines themselves, both independently and together, as law abiding and in recovery. One example of this is Bennie and Joe. When they first met, both were using drugs. Bennie said she was originally introduced to crime and drugs from her oldest child's father. She was "looking for love in all the wrong places – or what I interpreted to be love." At the time, she said she "thought it was the thing to do. . .I didn't know any different, I didn't want any different." When her boyfriend was

incarcerated, she "was an outlaw by myself. I discovered I didn't need anybody, I could do it alone. I did for some years. Then I met Joe."

In the following passage, Joe describes how he met Bennie, and the inauspicious start to their relationship:

> Oh, well. I met her, I was having, I was in a situation with two other women. My wife, and another lady. . . So, I got five kids with my wife, and three kids by her. And I was living in two houses, a situation. And I didn't know Bennie. And, one of the girls called my father and told her that uh, she needed him to come get me one night. I was high, I was using, I was getting high, and the girl had stopped getting high. She was trying to straighten her life up, and so he came by, picked me up. . .
>
> I think I was 35 years old at the time. . .So, I went, so he took me over to my sister's house. So, when he left, I went on out. I went on 47th Street and went back, I was using at the time, right. So I went out, I had some money and whatever, and I went to this place to shoot some dope. And I had no place to get high, I bought some dope, now I got no place to get off. So, they was telling me where to go. So I went around this place on 47th and Michigan, and they told me to go in there, so I'm hearing on the third floor there's a shooting gallery. So, I went up there, and while I was there, there was a few guys in there that I knew. And, so they telling me about some of the girls that was around there, whatever, they was telling me about Bennie . . .
>
> So they said yeah, when she come back, she ain't got nobody, you should hit on her man, whatever. So when she came back, um, she liked me. She told the girl, I didn't know, but she told the girl, "who is that?" I'm not from, I'm not around there. I was like the new guy up there, and she was telling them, "oh, he's fine, he's real clean," you know. . . And then the next day, we was all still there, because it was right before the 4th of July, so everybody was getting high or whatever. And, uh, I talked to her. I called her over there and started talking with her and stuff like that. . . . And that's how we started going together. And it was hers, come to find out, the place was hers. And, so after that, we, I. . . So, I stayed. What happened is I sort of stayed right there. I didn't go back to where I lived. I had two places where I was living, but I was like, I had sort of messed that up, being in a situation with women, or whatever. . . A couple weeks went by, and she started telling me, "Look, we can't be together if you can't, you know, let me know if you're a man or a woman, or whatever." We had kissed a couple times, but we hadn't really done nothing, and so we had sex, and that's when we started being real close. We got real close. She liked it, and later on she got

pregnant by me. I think it was during that same summer. So, we had our first child about 9 months later, something. So, that was how we got together, and then we sort of stuck together pretty good.

They have been together ever since, married for 25 years, with 11 children between the two of them (two together), and living together again (post recovery) for 6 ½ years. They stayed together through two prison incarcerations each, and two attempts at recovery. Their latest attempt at recovery has lasted for close to 10 years, and both are confident it will continue. Bennie said "God and my husband, those are where my loyalties lie" and described Joe as "he wants to be the right side of my brain. He wants to finish my sentences and my thoughts. I need to put him in a box and sell him – he's a genius. . .We're closer than close." Bennie attributed her incarcerations (and subsequent sobriety) as "God doing for me what I couldn't do for myself." Their last relapse was a result, according to both of them, of the death of her mother.

Both Bennie and Joe spent time in halfway houses after their last incarcerations. Joe thought the time apart during their incarcerations and halfway houses may have helped their relationship. Bennie was the first to move out of the halfway house into her own apartment. Joe then joined her when he was ready to leave the halfway house and transitional housing. Joe described their relationship as a success because of "my maturity, basically being humble, allowing her ideas to come in without resentment." While Joe also attributed their success to God and the church, he considered himself an inspiration for Bennie. According to him, she "did a copy of what I did. What I do, I relate it to her, she do the same thing," and they have supported each other in transforming their lives. At the same time, he saw her as an independent, strong, and

intelligent woman who has her "own mind" and survival skills. Joe said that he has helped Bennie by "staying clean myself. I am not doing it for her, but it may help her. It's an individual situation. It's on you, not me."

While the origins of their relationship do not sound conducive to a desisting lifestyle together, they both became clean, law abiding and supportive of each others' recovery. While their lives and experiences paralleled each other, ultimately both made independent decisions and independent steps to stop using drugs and stop offending. In addition, since both had similar experiences, they were equals, and one could not hold his or her past over the other. Here, their shared background leads to additional understanding and empathy, and their relationship was on a more equal playing field. Thus, they each provided a hook for change (through their marriage) and reinforced the cognitive transformations in the other (Sommers et al. 1994; Giordano et al. 2002).

Obviously, this can be a difficult transition. It is also a process, which often does not succeed at the first attempt. Bennie and Joe went through one relapse together, and they and their relationship survived. Angela was struggling with her husband's relapse and reincarceration. She described herself and her husband as "partners in crime." They had known each other 20 years, entered into addiction together, and were twice incarcerated on the same cases. At the time of the interviews, they had been married for just under 2 years. Over the summer, he was jailed on driving without a license charges while visiting friends in their home town. In addition, he had used drugs. When she found this out, she would not let him come home. She was frustrated and angry, because she "thought we were working towards the same goals." She was doing very well on her

own, working in a non-profit agency and getting involved in her church and school. She did not know whether or not she should stick by him or leave him; she feared that his addiction could lead to her own relapse. In many ways, this parallels Bennie and Joe's experience, when she relapsed following the death of her mother. Ultimately, in both situations, both partners made individual decisions whether or not to use drugs, though drug use of a romantic partner can be too great a temptation.

In a similar example, Melvina struggled throughout the year with her on-again, off-again boyfriend of 17 years, who was also struggling with drug addiction. In the first interview, she said she was single, but she went on to talk about how she had changed since she had been at the halfway house:

> Melvina: I don't go to the old places, because I've been here for like ten months and for maybe like eight of those months I was still going around the same stuff and I haven't been there in about a month. I've met quite a few people that's sober.
>
> AL: What made you stop going over to the old places?
>
> Melvina: Because I kept feeling stuck; I wasn't moving nowhere. Now I go to school. I have a lot of homework so I don't want to stay focused on that no more.
>
> AL: And where are the old places?
>
> Melvina: I used to go up to my boyfriend's house. . .
>
> AL: And he's not still your boyfriend or he is?
>
> Melvina: Oh, he probably is but I'm not with him right now because he's still using.

The second time I interviewed Melvina, she was back together with her boyfriend (though not living with him). He had been clean for 6 months, after his mother moved

and could no longer take care of him. She said then "it's the first time I've been with him sober. I see the difference; he's nicer, gentler. I like it." The last time I met with her, the two of them had relapsed together. She said "we do good til we get high; then it always ends in an argument."

In addition to demonstrating the difficulty of being in a relationship with an addict or recovering addict, especially one with whom you have a shared history of addiction, these examples also show how these social bonds can change over the course of several months or years. If they were looked at purely cross-sectionally, they may look strongly pro-social or anti-social, depending on when they are considered. While clearly these are complicated relationships with many difficulties, examples like Bennie and Joe suggest that they can be successful in the long run, even if they go through difficult and destructive stages. While one conclusion is that these interviews reveal inherently unstable relationships, another interpretation is that these relationships reveal a recovery and desistance process that is just that – a process (Maruna 2001). Much as Shover (1996) discusses men who go from having exploitative relationships with women when they are offending to having relationships that serve as a source of social control later in their lives, these women have relationships that are tied to their offending at one point in their lives and to desistance at a later point, though in some circumstances they are relationships with the same men.

In this sense, the relationships reflect the inherent instability of the desistance process. Likewise, Sampson and Laub (1993; Laub et al. 1998; Laub and Sampson 2003) discuss the cumulative nature of the development and effect of quality social bonds. For

example, they write "This conceptualization [of relationships as an investment process] suggests that because investment in social relationships is gradual and cumulative, resulting desistance will be gradual and cumulative" (Laub et al. 1998, p. 225).   In terms of cognitive change, these relationships also support changing self-conceptions. In these relationships, the women made independent decisions to stop offending and, if their romantic partner did likewise, the relationship helped to maintain new behaviors and self-concepts (Sommers et al. 1994; Baskin and Sommers 1998; Giordano et al. 2002).

New relationships

In addition to ongoing long term relationships, many women established new relationships through the halfway house or other recovery settings. About a third of the women were romantically involved with people who at the time were not involved with drugs; however, almost all of them had a history of addiction. This is not surprising, given the social circles of which the women were a part. Many of the women were heavily involved in the recovery community, and met their partners in this way. Many others met in daily life, at work or in their neighborhood, but these were likely to be in populations with high rates of ex-offenders. These relationships often began with a common bond and experience, and they supported each other in their recovery.

One example of this scenario is that of Linette and Chad. Linette met her fiancée Chad when she was in a work release program. During the interviews, they were living together in his mother's house. She described him as "a big help. He's always trying to understand what's going on. He's a caretaker." Chad said "I've been into stuff myself. We both had done bad things. . .I'm getting too old; I woke up and realized it ain't a

place to be. Now, I go to work and I come home. If I go out, we both go." He described

Linette as "a beautiful person, she's kind and honest. She's never told me a lie, as far as I

know." In talking to each of them, and watching them interact with each other, they did

seem to have a strong and positive relationship. Linette may have served as a direct

source of social control for Chad – he did not go out, other than to go to work, without

her. Chad was a source of emotional and financial support for Linette. To a certain

extent he also may have served as a source of direct social control, but since she was

unemployed and therefore was home alone during the day, she had more opportunities to

go out without him (if she chose to do so). If pro-social is defined only in terms of

current behavior, rather than total behavior, then this relationship is a typical example of

a pro-social, bonding relationship. They each provided a stake in conformity, as they

struggled to get their lives in order, get their own apartment, and regain custody of the

child they share. Yet by the more narrow definitions of pro-social partners, Chad and

Linette may be seen as negative partners because of their history of offending.

        This is an interesting twist on the positive marriage effect that Sampson and Laub

(1993; Laub et al. 1998; Laub and Sampson 2003) and others (e.g., Shover 1996) have

written about in terms of male offenders. Again, it is also consistent with the

conceptualizations of both Sommers and Baskin (Sommers et al. 1994; Baskin and

Sommers 1998) and Giordano (2002).   In this case, the women clearly demonstrated a

publicly declared commitment to desistance and recovery through their participation in

the halfway house and the recovery community (e.g., Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics

Anonymous). In addition, they maintained these lifestyle changes by integrating

themselves into new social networks, again, often closely tied to recovery situations (Sommers et al. 1994).

As with long term relationships with offending partners, these new relationships can lead to both positive and negative results. While relationships with ex-offenders or former drug users can provide support, empathy, and equality, they can also be the source of strain and can lead to relapse or reoffending. Wanda also met her fiancé while they were both in recovery homes. They were living together, along with her mother. She said that "I still have dope tendencies; he doesn't understand." I later heard from her downstairs neighbor (another respondent) that her fiancé had asked her and her mother to leave the apartment they had all shared because she had relapsed back into drug use. While I never heard from Wanda again, I heard from her neighbors that her mother was in a nursing home and she was back on the streets and not doing well. Shorty D experienced both destructive and supportive relationships with (formerly) drug addicted men. Her first boyfriend, whom she met in recovery meetings, relapsed and began using again, including bringing the drugs around her. She also then relapsed. She said that while she may have relapsed otherwise, it would not have happened when it did without his influence. Her second relationship was with Greg, whom she met at a Laundromat. Greg also had a history of drug use. He said the day he realized he was an addict was "the day I wanted to quit. It was the worst thing I ever fought in my life." He thought that it was very likely that Shorty D stay off drugs in the future, because "she's got me. She's not satisfied with that type of lifestyle; she's been through it already." When asked

what he would do if she did relapse, he said "I'd snap. I wouldn't want it to be around. I am dead against it myself."

At least in the time that I knew the women, it looked as though these relationships were less likely than the long term relationships to continue once one partner relapses. This may merely be a reflection of the short amount of time I knew the women. On the other hand, both partners had invested less in the relationships, and so a drug relapse or new incarceration may be harder to overcome than in a longer term relationship. To a certain extent, it may also depend on the nature of the relationship. Shorty D, who lived alone in a single room occupancy (SRO) building, may have been less invested in her relationships (both of which were short term). On the other hand, Linette and Chad and Wanda and her fiancé lived together and both pairs planned to marry. Linette and Chad had been together for two years, and living together five months when we first met. They were doing well, despite some significant hardships (such as a miscarriage and subsequent depression). In contrast, the relationship between Wanda and her fiancé ended after close to two years together.

Same sex relationships

In addition to establishing relationships with outsiders, the halfway house itself has also fostered several romantic relationships. Romantic relationships are discouraged by the staff, and in at least one case, a couple was asked to leave (they believed) because they had entered into a relationship with each other. A total of 12 percent of the women told me about romantic relationships they had with other residents, though often they did not begin (or were kept sufficiently under wraps) until one or both of them have moved

out. While close to half (43 %) of the women identified themselves as purely heterosexual, the rest had some type of romantic or physical relationship with women. Ten percent of the women I interviewed identified themselves as lesbians; 27 % had relationships with both men and women (they identified themselves in terms of the sex of their current partner, as bisexual, or as "I don't put a label on it"); and 20 % said they had engaged in physical relationships with women, but in a utilitarian way, and often during their addiction. Dee Dee said "in my addiction I did [have physical relationships with women]; when I got straight, I left all that alone. These things go hand in hand. . .When I was using, I was drawn to women when it wasn't going good with men. . . They served a purpose, but were unnatural."

Same sex relationships function just as the heterosexual relationships do, both positively and negatively. When both partners succeed in staying clean and avoiding criminal activity, they provided support and empathy for one another. Sugar and Sasha, the couple who were asked to leave the halfway house, left and moved together to another city to live with the father of Sugar's baby. They both cited their relationship with each other as the most significant and meaningful of their lives. While Sasha always considered herself a lesbian, this was Sugar's first serious relationship with a woman. Much as these relationships function positively in the same way as heterosexual relationships, they likewise can be destructive when one or both partners relapse. Vivian was involved with Sunshine, who was also in her first romantic relationship with a woman. Vivian then relapsed after they broke up, and tried to persuade Sunshine to get

back together with her, to "save" Vivian. While Sunshine was concerned for Vivian, she did not believe she could save her; rather Vivian would have to recover herself.

Presumably women who are interested in relationships with other women have a greater chance of meeting a partner without a history of drug use, offending, or incarceration (again because of differences in rates of offending); however, this did not happen among this group. These women met their girlfriends in the same ways that women met boyfriends or husbands. Sugar and Sasha and Vivian and Sunshine met at the halfway house. While this is obviously an unlikely possibility for heterosexual couples (though they do attend drug treatment and educational programming with men), it is consistent with meeting in other recovery settings. Starr met her girlfriend at work. In addition, while a few women did cite long term relationships with women, in no case was the relationship always a romantic or physical one. For example, Dee Dee had a ten year an on-again, off-again relationship with another woman.   While she still loved her, she kept her distance because the woman was still using drugs. She also considered the physical aspect of their relationship "the devil's work," and considered her only a friend. Much more common were same sex relationships that started while the women were at the halfway house or after. Two same sex couples (Sugar and Sasha, and Starr and her girlfriend) lived together once they moved out of the halfway house.

Again, relationships with other former offenders or drug addicts (male or female) provide an interesting and important twist to the importance of strong social bonds. Recovering addicts are often very committed to the idea of reshaping their lives and staying away from drugs. They could provide a support network for each other.

However, there is also a strong likelihood that one or both will relapse. Given the social networks most of the women were in, they were much more likely to meet other people in recovery. Some women purposely stayed away from AA/NA meetings for this reason, as some of the meetings seemed to the women to be more about dating than recovery. Aside from meetings, the women were also often living in neighborhoods with extremely high rates of ex-offenders in the population, most of whom are men. Many of the potential romantic partners that they met, through recovery communities or through every day life, had a history of incarceration or addiction.   However, a history of drug use or criminal involvement is not necessarily bad, as it can provide a basis of understanding and mutual support. These examples also point to the dynamic nature of romantic relationships and the role they may serve in the women's desistance and recovery. For example, depending on when you talked to Bennie and Joe or Shorty D and her boyfriends, you might reasonably conclude that their relationships were a positive or a negative social bond. While in some cases, these relationship changes may reflect an inherent instability in the relationship, they also may reflect relationships that are "probably better understood as social constructions or processes than as stable conditions or events" (Maruna 2001, p 31). Of course, only by looking at these relationships in the long term can this distinction be made.

Relationship avoidance

A final, and significant, common response that the women took was to stay away from romantic relationships altogether. At the time of the interviews, 41 % of the women were not in a relationship, and another 10 % were "just friends" with someone and did

not want serious relationships. Some women saw this as a permanent state, and others saw it as temporary, until they were ready to move on and form solid relationships. Some realized that even when in new relationships, they were based in old behaviors, which they were trying to shed. In many ways, this seems like a clearly positive step. The women had histories of abusive relationships, and often offended directly or indirectly because of a relationship they had with a man. On the other hand, staying away from all romantic relationships seems counter to relational theorists' admonition that women need connection and relationships (Covington 2003). For some, this meant that they formed these connections with non-romantic friends, often through recovery communities or housing. Thus, they still clearly fit in the motivation-declaration-maintenance model of desistance (Sommers et al. 1994). They had both the cognitive changes necessary for desistance and the social network support of it (Sommers et al. 1994; Maruna 2001; Giordano et al. 2002).

While a few of these women wanted romantic relationships, others were consciously single. Sunshine, after having both a girlfriend and a boyfriend relapse (she never used drugs herself) and another man "smother" her, decided she would rather be by herself. She planned to move back to her home state when she completed parole, to be closer to her children. Sandra also had a relationship, but ended it because she decided she could not do it and "focus on the program" at the same time. Lisa D. said she was "in a romantic relationship with her books," referring to her need to focus on her schooling.

Because men were heavily implicated in their drug addictions and offending, the women felt the need to be by themselves, at least for a time, to establish a pro-social,

drug free, and independent life. Erica ended a relationship "because of my self esteem. It's not healthy right now; it doesn't make any sense to me." Likewise, Lisa S., who wanted to remarry eventually, says that "I would like to [have a relationship], but there's no room now. I have to prioritize [work, school, and her last child at home]." The women were also less tolerant than they had been in the past of men's behavior. For example, Dee Dee ended one relationship because the man was in a relationship with someone else at the same time. She said "I can't keep doing the same thing expecting a different result." She broke up with her next boyfriend because he was "jealous and insecure. . .If he's miserable, he wants everyone to be miserable. He wants submissive women; I'm not submissive."

Again, this is an important difference from the roles of romantic relationships in men's lives. For men, women are often tangential to the men's offending (though certainly not to their lives or their self-perceptions, often in an exploitative way), and then central to desistance process, serving then as a source of control (Sampson and Laub 1993; Shover 1996; Laub and Sampson 2003). While surely not all desisting men can attribute their change in behavior to a successful romantic relationship with a pro-social partner, researchers do not describe avoiding such relationships as a conscious and productive choice that men make. For these women, on the other hand, men are often central to their offending, and tangential to their desistance. Because men often play a central role in the history of a women's offending, some women purposely avoided relationships in order to successfully desist from offending. This is also surely an artifact of the women's experience with the halfway house and recovery communities, in which

they were repeatedly taught to avoid "people, places, and things" and to avoid romantic relationships, at least in the early stages of recovery.

In sum, few women in this sample established relationships with men who have no history of drug use or offending. While this is not surprising, it may seem to bode poorly for their prospects of developing a pro-social relationship that may contribute to their own desistance. However, many of the women did establish pro-social relationships with men who have similar histories as themselves. These relationships were not problem-free, but as with more traditional pro-social relationships (e.g., Laub and Sampson 2003), they can evolve into supportive and mutually reinforcing bonds. Thus "pro-social" need not be limited to those with no history of anti-social behavior, but also can include those who are desisting themselves. Also important for many desisting women, however, is an absence of romantic relationships. These women feel a need to establish their own independence and successes before (if ever) they form attachments to romantic partners. This is an outgrowth of their histories of abuse, the role men played in their own offending, and the messages they receive in recovery communities.

Friendship circles

Again, peer networks are central to our understanding of offending, especially among adolescents (Sutherland 1947; Giordano et al. 1986; Giordano et al. 1998; Warr 1998; Giordano and Rockwell 2000). And as described in Chapter 3, peer relationships were heavily implicated in the women's initiation into drug use and offending (Matsueda and Heimer 1987). The most common strategy for the women as they desist is to cut off ties to their old "associates." Andrea said "I don't fool with my old friends." In fact,

most of the women made a clear distinction between "friends" and "associates." Shorty D described her former relationships: "I was just close to whoever had what I wanted. . .I trusted no one, and suspected everyone. That's how I used to be." Lisa S. had a similar perspective on her old relationships "Because they use drugs and I don't, I feel like we have nothing in common. . .When you stop using drugs, users don't want to be friends. I love them from a distance."

Most often, the women formed new friendships, typically with others in recovery. Often these relationships began at the halfway house or in recovery meetings. This is consistent with the recovery movement of which they were a part. Ebaugh wrote "In the majority of cases, nondrinking alcoholics shifted friendship patterns to fellow members of self-help groups who understood their problem and also understood the necessity of supporting each other and not drinking" (1988, p. 168).   All of Lisa S.'s current friends are in recovery themselves. She described her closest friend "she'll call me on my stuff. That's what friends do; she don't worry about my feelings."   Similarly, Lisa D. described her current friends as "they're like sisters. We have had similar experiences and have overcome a lot. They understand what friends are. They don't make excuses, they don't sugar coat."   This combination of support and understanding with a willingness to provide "tough love" when necessary is a common description of their contemporary friends, and one of their most valued traits. Likewise, this was an oft-cited trait in the women by their friends. Laura, for example, described what she liked about April, "Her personality. She's a good person, very outspoken. She'll help you with a problem, she's a good listener and she'll give you suggestions on what you should and should not do.

She has a soft heart. She's the only one I would go to with my problems." While Tonya, April's co-worker, describes her as "sometimes a little emotional for me," she also describes her as "honest" and said "I know I can call her and say 'I need you' and she's there." It was relatively unusual for the women to maintain old friendships. Occasionally they do "from a distance," and those relationships that pre-date their desistance are typically with people who had never used drugs (and whom they most likely had limited contact with in the time they were using drugs) or who are now in recovery.

Not all of the women's friends and acquaintances have uniformly positive views of the women. Delilah did maintain a few long term relationships, and in them, her gender and her role as a "bad" mother shaded their view of her. In one case, her friend Denise described Delilah's past:

> Talk to the kids to get the true story of dope fiends. She was the best pickpocket on the South Side. She was with my son's father at the time; he was a hustler. They made money that paid the rent. What can I say. . .Delilah's doing good, but where are Delilah's kids? I don't like no woman who walks off and leaves her kids. . . I love her like a sister, but I don't like what she done with her kids.

Delilah described Denise as "nice in her own way. She lives in her own little world." In my conversations with Denise, she was clearly angry, both at Delilah and the world more generally. In the following excerpt from my field notes, she explains that prisons exist to lock up young black men:

> She said that on a farm, when they get too many cattle, they will lock the bull in the barn to slow the population growth down. When people are not needed, they have to figure out what to do with them. She covered her mouth and said she was saying a bad word –slave labor. So, once the slave labor is no longer needed, they lock the young black men up in prison to keep them from breeding.

Delilah also maintained contact with Jeremy, who she met about 20 years ago "partying." Jeremy was a heroin addict, who had been in treatment, and whom Delilah was trying to help get back in treatment. Jeremy said about Delilah "We're pretty good friends. She tell it like it is, she don't hold nothing back." Delilah wanted to help Jeremy, but also though of his mother (with whom he lived) as a good influence, "his mother has strong ties to the church. She's good to talk to." Ms. Jones, Jeremy's mother, also described Delilah as "a truthful person. She didn't try to be something different. . .Now she's a normal person. I wasn't used to seeing a woman in that type of stuff." She went on to say "When I first saw her, it was something different. She was running around with the guys. . .she was totally out there, she had lost her mind." For Ms. Jones, the fact that Delilah was a woman was what was notable about her behavior and made her stand out. Likewise, for Denise, the effect of Delilah's drug use on her children was the most important factor, though she also said "people think I can't stand men; I can't stand bitches either," and seemed to have more anger and resentment towards all drug addicts.

Another factor that colored relationships with friends was the history of drug use. While most of the women's friends shared this history, occasionally they did not, though they were often familiar with drug use by others.. In these cases, the friend's were suspicious of drug users and accompanying behavior. Denise, for example, said that while drug addicts may stop using drugs, the behaviors – "selfishness, lying, conniving" - - do not go away. Meghan had a similar attitude about Lisa D. Meghan met Lisa D. when she worked at the SRO building where Lisa lived. She mentioned as one of Lisa

D.'s strengths, "her honesty. She's very clear about who she is and where she came from. Most people don't want people to know, because they haven't got honest with themselves." The next time I met with her, she talked about the change at the SRO that would require some longer term residents (like Lisa D.) to move out.

> Meghan: . . .She could have been more on her business. She got good talk, she could talk the spit off your tongue and it's good! O.k., but are you using your own advice?
> . . .
> AL: What was your impression when you first met her?
>
> Meghan: I think she's a very intelligent individual. However, she has some slick and devious behaviors. And I know for a fact me being starting off in the substance abuse [field], that they gonna run the game. They know the game, they know every nook and cranny of how long you gonna be in jail, how long you can get recovery, they know the game. They're very very smart people. However, it comes a time that you must make that inside change, to me, you know. Because you done did that, and look at the price you had to pay. That's a big price, that's an awfully big price. So, I just look at the fact that at this point you have to stand on what you say, what comes out your mouth. You gotta really stand on it.
>
> AL: So what are some of her slick and devious behaviors?
>
> Meghan: She'll tell you some of the truth, but it's not all, o.k. This is an example. When they finally broke the news in the mandatory meeting that everybody's been there over five years is gonna start looking for an apartment, and then they throw in, well, we're gonna try to get you all hooked up with an SRO program, or we're gonna try to get you all some subsidized apartment, or we're gonna get you all some . .program to at least help you pay the deposit or something and then you say, "well, we'll wait and see what they gonna do. They can't put me out in the dead of winter." And my whole thing is why shold they even have to come to you in the first place, when you know what you have on your table, when you know what you need to do? That's just my thing. If I had been in a program five years, going on six years, and they had helped me tremendously, I'm gonna move out the way so somebody else can get that part of the program.
>
> AL: Do you think that she's changed in the past six months?

Meghan: Um, kinda sorta. Kinda sorta. She's trying to uphold an image. It was so funny. One of her children, she had four cell phones – why? I don't know. Her image, o.k. So, she gave one to the girl across the hall, let her use that, she has one for herself, she has one son, I think he's about 18 or 19, he was away at school, so she gave him one, and then she had another phone. So the son that was away at school ended up text messaging and emailing and all that, o.k., the phone get turned off. So, whoever she's got her service through turned all the phones off. And you call in and say I want this particular phone off and they said o.k., However you gotta pay this bill, and if you don't pay this bill, then you're gonna turn off all four phones. It was, it was, it was one of those mystical moments, when I'm like now what is she gonna do now? She took her whole check and paid the telephone bill, and borrowed money from four or five other different people, so she can, you know, still function. She ain't paid back one of the people she borrowed the money from! I said Lisa, don't do that. And that's been two months ago this occurred and the people call her, and you know, won't return the phone calls now. Now, that's a slick and devious behavior. You know, they were there to help you and you wasn't considerate enough to pay the people back.

Lisa D. had begun talking to me about moving out the SRO building at our second interview, because she had "outgrown" the place (about a month before the conversation above). She did finally move about nine months later. She was not alone in staying for years in the SRO programs. There often was not a formal time limit, and the women had difficulty achieving financial stability to afford market rent. In some cases, even when they could afford market rent, they were used to paying less and appreciated the safety of the program. Delilah described her feelings about moving:

Delilah: It's not a time limit but I'm making - I don't want to say substantial - enough money to pay my rent here. So next month they're going to want me to pay five hundred and one dollars to live here. Okay, if I move out and get an apartment by myself that means I'm going to have to pay light and gas, telephone and rent. You know, I have no problem in continuing to stay here until I'm sound enough to move out and I have no problem paying five hundred and one dollars but I don't want people to think that I'm just taking advantage of a good situation. My situation is totally different from other people; I don't have a family that I can cohabitate with or anyone I can live with and share bills with, stuff like that. I don't have that, so I'm alone. And everything that comes in here is because I bring it in. I generate the things that are happening with me.

By our next interview, she had been laid off from her job and was temporarily unemployed (by the third interview she was working again). So the subsidized rent did indeed help her (I discuss this more in Chapter 6). It is hard to tell, based on these interviews, if Lisa D. and Delilah really were using "slick and devious" behaviors, or if they were responding in a reasonable way to their constrained circumstances. However, at least some of their friends and acquaintances were suspicious. In both cases here, Meghan and Denise had professional and personal experiences with other drug addicts, though they themselves did not use drugs.

Relapses into drug use were a source of tension and strain among friends, regardless of their own drug history. Nine women moved in to the same SRO building when they left the halfway house and maintained relationships with one another. Five of them relapsed and used drugs again while they were there. This drug use did not happen with one another, though there did seem to be a contagion effect among them, and the relapses were well known among the residents (and the halfway house staff). I heard about the relapses most often from the women themselves, but also from other women at the SRO and the halfway house gossiping about our mutual acquaintances. Tammy looked at Danielle as a close friend and mother figure until Danielle relapsed. Even when she returned from detox, Tammy said they were less close, and Danielle was "more distracted" than before. After Danielle's relapse, she said that Tammy was "so naïve," though she still socialized with others in the SRO. She said that the staff of the SRO treated her differently, "like it's a disgrace." Sally, a friend of Shorty D's and another SRO resident summarized many of their attitudes. The first time I met Sally, she felt

closer to Shorty D because of their shared drug history. She was in treatment for the first time, and when she learned that Shorty D. and others had relapsed, she said

> A lot relapse. It doesn't bother me what the next person does. I know what I want and I don't want temptation to come up on me. When I see them, I speak, then I move on. It hurts. . . It's my first time in recovery. I stay my distance. There are two women on my floor that I talk to on a regular basis.

From a social perspective, living at the SRO was both a benefit and a threat to the women. They benefited from being around other women who understood their histories and been through similar things, and yet there was a real threat of relapse among them. This made all of their relationships tenuous, and they often disintegrated after a relapse.

In most cases, the friends and co-workers I interviewed also had a history of drug use and/or offending. Thus it was relatively easy for them to accept the women, because of this common history. Even in those without this similarity accept the women (though clearly this is a selection effect). Nina, one of April's co-workers, described herself as "I have never been a street person. My mom kept us close together. I have one brother and six sisters, and none of them use drugs either." Yet, April grew up in Englewood and was surrounded by drug use in her neighborhood. In addition, she is one of few people at her job who is not a recovering addict. These factors likely helped her accept April's background. In contrast, Angela's co-worker, Cathy, came from a very middle class background, and had when she first found out about Angela's background she said,

> Cathy: I guess I was surprised because I had never really been involved with the system, and nobody that I know, really closely has been involved in the system, so I had my own preconceived notions of what people who had been through the system would be like, or how they would react to things. And, um, intellectually I know that they are not, people are not all the same, they're not different than you or I, but I guess I just expected her to be a little bit more, a little different in some

ways. A little less open to it perhaps, I guess that's what I am trying to say. She's very open about it, and she's not ashamed of it, she takes it as a learning experience. . . I expect more secrecy."

Yet, as she got to know her, Cathy developed respect for Angela,

> Cathy: She's a survivor, she's definitely a survivor and she's got the biggest heart. She volunteers her time, I've been telling her a lot lately that she needs – this is the wrong calling for her. She doesn't need to be a receptionist; she's wasting her skills here. She should be in counseling. I think that she could really help other people, she has a huge heart for other people, and that's not something that's necessarily a skill, that's a little deeper than a skill, that's a talent. . . .A lot of people in the office like and respect her.

Cathy did not understand the struggles that Angela went through when her husband was

incarcerated. While she originally referred to him as a "phenomenal" person, by out

second interview, after he had been reincarcerated, she said "I think she should leave

him. She has so much opportunity, he's holding her back. His issues are becoming her

issues."   While clearly Cathy wanted the best for Angela, and Angela struggled with her

own doubts about the viability of her marriage, Cathy did not seem to appreciate the

complexity of their relationship or of the desistance process. Cathy concluded by saying

"if I was in her position, I'd have a better life." Cathy did claim to have learned about

incarceration through knowing Angela and attributed other people's resistance to her to

their ignorance. She also talked about changes she thought should occur.

> Cathy: For people like Angela, who have been through so much, I think it is so important for their to be changes in the system because she is such, she would be such an encouragement to other people. And another thing that I think, well, just in general, about incarceration in general, I think the system is terrible. I've learned a lot of this from Angela's experience and my experience working with issues dealing with incarceration, but the system is not set up so that people actually serve their debt to society and move on. It's a lifetime debt that they pay, and they're continuing to pay, and it cripples them and I know that she and her husband will probably have a very hard time finding jobs, which is unfortunate,

because they're phenomenal people. And I don't really know her husband that well, but I know Angela is a phenomenal person. If I had a business I would hire her in a minute.

In many ways, the relationships with women had with friends followed similar patterns to those with family members and romantic partners. These relationships were potentially a social bond to conventional society and a strain, depending on the behaviors of both parties. And while these relationships were quite significant and supportive for the women, they were not as intimate as those with family, and thus more easily disintegrated in the case of relapse or reoffending. Lisa S. summarized most friendship relationships when she said "I feel like we have nothing in common. . .When you stop using drugs, users don't want to be friends." As long as both partners in the friendship had similar behaviors and similar attitudes, they had a bond. However when one's behavior changed, so did the relationship, often resulting in nothing left in common.

Conclusions

This chapter addressed the role of intimate social relationships in the reentry process of these women. There are several things we can learn from these relationships. First, many of these women did form supportive, mutually beneficial relationships with men and women with a history of offending and/or drug use who in many studies would be described as "anti-social" partners or friends. This suggests the need to more carefully define "pro-social" and "anti-social" partners and bonds. We may be well advised to expand our notions of "marriageable men" (or women) beyond those who have no history of involvement with drug use or the criminal justice system (Wilson 1987). As long as both partners are in recovery, relationships with others with a history of drug use or

offending can provide a strong basis of shared experience and understanding. The same dynamic occurred in family relationships, romantic partnerships, and friendships.

Second, the rate of marriage among these women (and contemporary offenders more broadly) is low (Giordano et al. 2002). More research needs to be done on the effect of different types of relationships, especially in the area of cohabitation and same-sex relationships. In this study, roughly 20 percent of the women lived with a romantic partner at some point during the year. There is no clear difference in the effect of marriage, cohabitation, and non-cohabitation, as has been described among male offenders (Horney et al. 1995; Warr 1998). However, the sample here is small and the length of follow up was fairly limited; clearly this issue warrants more attention. Similarly, the idea of romantic social bonds should also be expanded to include non-marriage relationships and homosexual relationships, both of which may serve similar roles among female offenders. Another important difference for female ex-offenders is that a conscious avoidance of romantic relationships may be necessary or beneficial for them to successfully desist from crime and redefine their lives as law abiding people. This is an important twist on social bond theories, and reminds us of the importance of gender dynamics in offending and in romantic relationships.

Third, this research points to the need to look at social bonds as a dynamic characteristic. A single relationship may prove to both encourage desistance and lead to reoffending, depending on the when it is looked at. All relationships develop over time, and are better understood as a process than a static entity. For social bonds to be a deterrent to offending, they must be strong – a characteristic that emerges in time. At the

same time, some relationship characteristics can be a sign of instability, both for the woman and the relationship. Only by looking at the entire history (or at least a longer term history) of the relationship can an assessment be made. Also, more investigation into what leads to longer term relationships is warranted. Clearly, there is strong evidence of a "blood is thicker than water" dynamic in which families weather many difficult times amongst each other while still maintaining some type of bond. With friendships and romantic relationships this is less clear. Relationships that are faced with strong challenges (e.g., drug relapse) seem less likely to survive, and yet others, like that of Bennie and Joe, continued and evolved through drug use, recovery, relapse, and so on.

Relationships are important to the women in their reentry and desistance processes. Yet the women are also embedded in difficult structural circumstances. They must struggle to meet material needs, most often without being able to rely on these relationships to provide support. The next two chapters address these issues, by looking at their education and employment experiences (Chapter 5) and their housing and neighborhood context (Chapter 6).

CHAPTER FIVE

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

"The segmentation of labor markets is evident in our data. The labor market advantages of the Hamilton Park youths over their peers in the two minority neighborhoods derive not from their greater investment in human capital but rather from their personal networks. These networks afford them entry into more desirable sectors of the labor market which recruit not on the basis of education but on the basis of personal connections." (Sullivan 1989, p. 226)

An omnipresent belief in our society is that education provides low skilled workers the tangible skills they need to enter the workforce; education is thus set up as a panacea for many social problems. The idea that higher levels of formal training will result in higher paid, more stable or more prestigious employment, however, does not necessarily hold for everyone – for example, women with a criminal record. Yet because these women, like most other people, believe in this ideology, they often mistake the reality of their social and economic possibilities (e.g., employment opportunities, social status, mainstream acceptance). Consequently, they may pursue education or job training, only to find out later that they do not achieve the "promised" financial or employment benefits.

Nonetheless, education does serve as a means for social mobility when we think more broadly about it. Education is not only a source of skills and knowledge; it is also a source of relationships that can lead to resources (i.e., social capital) as well as a source of more intangible skills of how to behave in socially desirable ways (i.e., cultural

capital). In other words, the typical normative conflation of education and *human* capital alone masks the reality that social and cultural capital serve as the dominant vehicles by which education integrates ex-offenders into mainstream society. Therefore, rather than rely solely on the narrow conceptualization of education as a source of human capital, I envision education in the broad sense of the acquisition of multiple capitals (human, social, and cultural) that are both formally and informally acquired. The acquisition and use of these capitals is crucial to the women's reentry success. This reconceptualization allows us to better understand the underlying dynamics that lead to "successful" reentry of ex-offenders, how education benefits ex-offenders, and when these benefits are likely to be realized.

This chapter adds to our understanding of reentry by focusing on how this particular group of ex-offenders experience education and employment. Gender and race are two defining sources of difference in the lived experiences of offenders and ex-offenders. Likewise, race and gender shape one's experience in terms of the acquisition and use of capital. Even so, the vast majority of research on criminality and desistance does not make these categories central to the explanations or findings. Much of the desistance research relies on large scale quantitative studies. While valuable in illuminating general trends, this type of approach is especially likely to mask the differences among subgroups of offenders. Race and gender are implicit; typically, the focus is on men, and, with longitudinal studies, often white men, yet race and gender are not a substantial part of the analysis (Sampson and Laub 1993; Laub and Sampson 2003). The experience, then, of white men is taken as the defining experience of all offenders,

and sources of difference resulting from race and gender are ignored. An exception to this is a number of studies that emphasize African American men, as the largest group impacted by incarceration (e.g., Western et al. 2001; Pager 2003).

In this chapter, I provide new analysis that will shed light on the specificities of the contemporary African American female context in relation to these forms of capital and their educational and employment experiences. In particular, I look at female ex-offenders' employment prospects and how these are shaped by their education levels, through their acquisition and mobilization of human, social, and cultural capital. In this chapter, I argue that the volume and combinations of these different capitals determine employment successes or failures at various points in the lives of ex-offenders. Of the three forms of capital focused on here – human, social, and cultural – social capital turns out to be the most important key to their success. Their development, use, and benefits of human and cultural capital are largely mediated through their ability to mobilize social capital. This is in distinct contrast to the dominant ideology of the primacy of human capital, or skills and knowledge. I will explain the interactions and intersections of these capitals by looking at three pathways the women experience, from before their incarcerations to after their reentry: static, upwardly mobile, and downwardly mobile. Through these pathways, and the capitals that characterize them, I will explain the similarity in outcome, despite their diversity of backgrounds, of this group of ex-offenders.

This chapter comprises three sections. In the first section I discuss the relevant literature of female ex-offenders in relation to multiple capitals in order to illuminate the

discrepancies between the dominant mythologies and the underlying realities of their social experience. Next, I describe the three trajectories of economic and status mobility. I conclude with a discussion of the broader relevance in looking at female reentry in this way and the significance of these patterns among broader populations.

Women offenders and reintegration

The experiences of female ex-offenders are becoming even more relevant given the rapidly increasing rates of female incarceration (Chesney-Lind 1991; Greenfield and Snell 1999). However, much of the research continues to focus on men only, or fails to problematize differences between subgroups of offenders. As a result of the emphasis on general or male experiences, much of the literature on crime and desistance is relevant to only pieces (e.g., female offending, employment and desistance, or capital) of the present argument, without directly relating to the overall argument. In this section, then, I briefly address some of these various literatures on offending and desistance. First, I describe the connection between female offending and poverty. Then, I turn more specifically to employment, and its hypothesized role in recidivism and desistance, in general, and for women and African American women, in particular. I next turn to a brief discussion of how theories of employment and desistance are impacted by our contemporary post-industrial economy, and end the section with a discussion of the role of education and job training in our ideology of employment.

Gender, race, employment, and desistance

Rates of female offending are related to the increased financial instability of women, which in turn is influenced by changes in welfare policies and economic

marginality of women, especially single mothers in poor urban areas (Holtfreter et al. 2004). African American women are disproportionately affected by this hyper-ghettoization of urban neighborhoods, contributing to an increase in their offending (Wilson 1987; Hill and Crawford 1990; Blank 1997; Holtfreter et al. 2004). As a result of their increased incarceration rates, women offenders also are now more likely than in the past to experience greater long term and collateral consequences of imprisonment, such as disrupted employment and lost or limited federal aid, such as food stamps, housing assistance, and educational financial aid (Hagan and Coleman 2001; O'Brien 2001; Richie 2001; Mauer and Chesney-Lind 2002; Reisig et al. 2002; Richie 2002; Rubinstein and Mukamal 2002; Uggen and Manza 2002; Travis and Waul 2003; Holtfreter et al. 2004; Uggen et al. 2004). In addition, increasingly, drug use itself is becoming more difficult to separate from repeat offending for men and women, which is largely a result of new sentencing guidelines and drug laws (Chesney-Lind 1991; Maruna 2001). Thus the female prison population is disproportionately poor, African American, and drug addicted.

An important component of the "successful" community reentry of former inmates is employment (Sampson and Laub 1993; Shover 1996; Uggen 1999; Maruna 2001; O'Brien 2001; Western et al. 2001; Laub and Sampson 2003; Holtfreter et al. 2004). In addition, researchers have looked at various other personal characteristics and their impact on employment and reoffending. For example, traits such as race, age, length of criminal record and nature of conviction, influence both the likelihood of

finding a job and the effect of employment on recidivism (Lott 1992; Sampson and Laub 1993; Nagin and Waldfogel 1998; Uggen 1999; Uggen 2000; Pager 2003).

Researchers have conceptualized three primary ways by which employment opportunity contributes to desistance. First, it provides important social bonds, which increase ties to conventional society and thereby also increase the costs of (re)offending (Sampson and Laub 1993; Laub and Sampson 2003). Second, employment provides for material needs, which may make offending a less appealing or necessary option (Agnew 1992; Holtfreter et al. 2004). Finally, meaningful employment can contribute to a redefinition of an offender's self conception, leading to cognitive changes and a sense of a law abiding, conventional self (Maruna 2001; Giordano et al. 2002). Regardless as to how quality employment is conceptualized, it is central to our understanding of desistance, especially for male offenders. A limitation of many studies on employment and desistance is that they are based on historical data. For example, Uggen's (1999) study is based on data collected in the late 1970s and Sampson and Laub's (1993; Laub and Sampson 2003) work is based on the life course of delinquents coming of age post-World War II. While these studies certainly add to our understanding of the theoretical importance of employment for criminal desistance, our contemporary economy is substantially different and so the empirical reality of employment for ex-offenders also has changed (Wilson 1987; Wilson 1997; Hagan and Coleman 2001).

Even though employment is central to theories of criminality and desistance, the connection between employment and desistance is less well understood for female ex-offenders. Economic marginalization is central to female offending and persistence in

offending. Holtfreter et al. (2004), for example, found that poverty status accounted for over half of the explained variance in rearrest among a group of female ex-offenders. In spite of this, many studies on female incarceration focus on the impact of incarceration on motherhood and other relationships in the women's lives, and ignore or downplay the role of employment for women (Richie 2002; Covington 2003). These differences in the emphasis on employment in male and female desistance come, in part, from gendered experiences of the meaning of employment. Women may not consider employment central to their own self-conceptions, and therefore employment will have less of a social control effect. Giordano et al. (2002) included a measure for female ex-offenders of the "traditional gendered respectability package," defined as a woman married to a man who works full-time, in addition to measures for female ex-offender's own employment status (Giordano et al. 2002). If women's sense of themselves as workers is not central to their self esteem and self-worth, then employment may be less important in their desistance from crime, at least in terms of employment's role in social control and cognitive transformations. Likewise, in terms of economic well being, if women can find an alternate source of income (e.g., an employed spouse, state support), employment may be less important than other factors.

Race also factors in to gendered perceptions of employment among female ex-offenders (Katz 2000; Giordano et al. 2002; McIvor, Murray and Jamieson 2004). Katz (2000) suggested that white women may define themselves more in terms of motherhood, while non-white women may define themselves in terms of kinship, neighborhood, and work. If this is the case, research suggesting that employment is less important for

desistance among female ex-offenders may be more appropriately limited to white female ex-offenders. African American women offenders were the most likely race/gender subgroup to have no elements of what Giordano et al. (2002) called the "complete package of respectability," including being married and employed full time. In addition, African American women were less likely than white women to have a gendered respectability package of being married to an employed spouse (Giordano et al. 2002). So, while African American women (offenders, and also non-offenders) may personally value employment more in terms of their self conceptions than white women, they may also be less likely to achieve this respectability package.

The economic structure and the ideology of education as human capital

Offenders' (and anyone else's) experiences with employment will be strongly shaped by the nature of the economy, as well as the dominant ideology of success and social mobility. The United States has long propagated education and job training programming as a primary strategy to address unemployment (Blank 1997; Lafer 2002). This section addresses how the nature of the economy influences our interpretations of existing studies on employment and offending and the limitations of this dominant ideology of education and job training.

The existence of a job is not enough for it to serve as a force in desistance, however it is conceptualized. First, in order for jobs to serve a controlling function, they must be of a sufficient quality and stability that the employee would not choose to risk his or her employment by offending. Second, to reduce strain, the job would have to provide a high enough income to meet the employee's material needs. Third, to serve as a "hook

for change" in terms of self conception or cognitive transformation, the job would need to provide a sense of meaning and worth to the employee. A majority of jobs available to ex-offenders today serve none of these roles. Those jobs that are still more readily available for ex-offenders are likely to be low paid and low quality, and may therefore be less beneficial to ex-offenders from a social control, strain, or cognitive transformation perspective (Hagan and Coleman 2001). This is in contrast to earlier, when there were more low skill but well paid (e.g., manufacturing) jobs that parolees historically could get (Hagan and Coleman 2001). Therefore, it is not surprising that Giordano et al. (2002) found no effect of job stability on desistance for either male or female offenders, a finding they attribute to the dearth of jobs that may serve a social control function. This does not mean that employment cannot serve the roles hypothesized, but that in the current context, many ex-offenders cannot find jobs that provide a sense of self worth, financial stability, or meaningful and long-term ties to conventional society.

Despite this evidence of limits in the benefits of employment for ex-offenders in our current context, education and job training programs are frequently touted as the solution to economic disparities and unemployment. Lafer writes "No economist predicts that the total demand for college-educated workers will exceed 25 % to 30 % of the labor force at any point in the foreseeable future" and for those who are not in jobs requiring a college degree, the link between education and wages is weak (Lafer 2002). Thus, there is substantial reason to doubt the usefulness of education and job training to address underemployment in general, and even more so for the most disadvantaged and stigmatized (Blank 1997; Lafer 2002). Young white high school drop outs increase their

earnings by between 10 and 19 % once they receive the General Education Development (GED) equivalency degree, though the same is not true for non-whites (Tyler et al. 2000). One possible explanation is that many nonwhite males in their study received their GED while incarcerated, and incarceration, in effect, "trumps" the educational gains in employers' eyes. In addition, race alone, at least for men, may signal to a potential employer a criminal (or possible future) record or propensity (Pager 2003).

The dominant ideology suggests that all low skill or unemployed workers will improve their situation through the acquisition of more skills and higher levels of education; thus, the dominant ideology creates a false hope and false promise in terms of the value of education and of securing employment. Education as a cure-all for un- and underemployment is misleading, especially for workers already stigmatized by real or perceived criminal records or propensity.

While the previous section described some of the primary factors influencing an ex-offender's experience with employment, the next section lays out a new way of looking at pathways through employment for female ex-offenders. The mechanism through which all of the barriers in the previous section (race, gender, economy, education) function is the ability to acquire and mobilize human, social, and cultural capital. In the next section, I address these three types of capital and how they relate to the employment experiences of female ex-offenders.

Capital

An alternative way to explore desistance is by looking at differential levels of capital among ex-offenders. With this framework, capital is the mechanism through

which offenders desist and "successfully" reenter society. Offending and desistance are tied to an offender's access to and ability to mobilize human, social, and cultural capital. Those with higher levels of capital will be more likely to desist, because they will have greater ties to mainstream society and more opportunities to succeed in traditional ways. Both the levels and combinations of capital the women have prior to their incarceration and the levels and combinations they are able to cultivate after their incarceration will impact their post-incarceration employment pathways. Looking then, at how ex-offenders gain (or lose) capital, how they use it, and how they think about it, provides an important avenue in understanding desistance and the reentry process and the mechanisms by which education and employment function as forces of desistance. This section describes each type of capital, and how it impacts the reentry experience.

Human capital

Human capital, or the individual possession of skills, education, and experience, is often low among offenders and ex-offenders (Richie 2001; Giordano et al. 2002; Kaufman 2002; Holtfreter et al. 2004). According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) statistics, just over half of the women in state prisons have at least a high school diploma or GED, and seventeen percent have at least some college (1999). While women state prison inmates had, on average, achieved higher levels of education than male offenders, women offenders' rates of employment are much lower (BJS 1999; 2003). About 40 % of female inmates were working full time prior to their arrest, compared to 60 % of male state prison inmates who were working (BJS 1999). In contrast, women

were six times more likely than male inmates to be receiving welfare payments prior to their arrest (BJS 1999).

Despite fairly low levels of human capital among offenders, it is this form of capital that most closely corresponds to society's ideals and expectations for individual social mobility. The development of human capital, through education and job training, is also often a focus of policies and programs to help ex-offenders, though findings on the effects of human capital on recidivism have been mixed. For example, while human capital can help offenders secure a job, it has less of an impact on recidivism (Uggen 1999). Human capital may be counterbalanced by a felony conviction, at least for some subgroups of ex-offenders, so that ex-offenders cannot capitalize on skills or experiences that benefit non-offenders (Tyler et al. 2000; Pager 2003). While the primary message given to both ex-offenders and the general public is that education, because of its contribution to human capital, is the way to overcome the stigma of a felony conviction and the disadvantages that may have led to it, in reality, human capital has limited influence on ex-offenders' employment success.

Social capital

While human capital is an individual resource, social capital is based in networks. Portes (1998, p. 6) synthesizes existing literature and concludes that "the consensus is growing in the literature that social capital stands for the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures" (see also Bourdieu 1985; see also Coleman 1988). Social capital thus functions as a source of social control, as a source of family support, and as a source of benefits through extra

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familial networks (Portes 1998). Social capital depends in part on one's relative position in the social structure (Lin 2000). For example, women tend to have smaller and less diverse ties and more kin ties than men, which gives them less access to networks that may provide employment information (Lin 2000). Likewise, offenders and ex-offenders are often lacking in social capital (Sullivan 1989). This variability in social capital is, in turn, tied to likelihood of reoffending (Hagan and Coleman 2001; Reisig et al. 2002; Holtfreter et al. 2004). For example, Morash and colleagues (Reisig et al. 2002; Holtfreter et al. 2004) find that social capital does impact recidivism, largely through its effect on economic marginality. Poorly educated female ex-offenders of all racial groups with small incomes have limited social capital, which is also tied to greater likelihood of recidivism (Reisig et al. 2002). In contrast, those who are better tied in to community-based programming have higher levels of social capital, and through it receive more emotional, social, and overall support (Reisig et al. 2002). Thus, ex-offenders with greater social capital are less likely to recidivate, and also are more likely to be employed and linked to services.

Cultural capital

Cultural capital includes symbolic abilities, tastes, and goods which serve as a marker and source of social status, and which may be used for social exclusion (Lamont and Lareau 1988; Gartman 1991). The primary type of cultural capital that is relevant to this article is that of "'communicative competence' – essentially a style of discourse (including non-verbal cues, accent, and pacing of speech)" (DiMaggio and Mohr 1985). In this latter sense, cultural capital is similar to the idea of "soft skills," such as

politeness, customer interaction, appearance, and the ability to work with the public and a team of co-workers (Kirschenmann and Neckerman 1991; Blank 1997; Browne 2000). Broader changes in the economy leading to more service-based work and less manufacturing and factory work have made this type of cultural capital more important to low skilled workers (Blank 1997). These changes affect certain groups more than others. For example, black women are more likely than white women to work in manufacturing and other industries that are losing prominence in today's economy, and which are less likely to contribute to the development of soft skills (Browne 2000).

These traits and presentation styles are combinations of race, class, and gender socialization, and are typically based on white cultural conceptions of communication styles and dispositions (DiMaggio and Mohr 1985; Kirschenmann and Neckerman 1991; Blank 1997; Wilson 1997; Browne 2000). Those without exposure to or knowledge of these presentation styles may be disadvantaged and disvalued in the workplace. Those with more education gain exposure to these mainstream expectations through their educational experience, and they also possess the credentials that signal this familiarity to a potential employer. Again, because people in prison are likely to come from structurally disadvantaged positions, and are disproportionately African American and poor, they are also then likely to possess limited levels of cultural capital (Hagan and Coleman 2001; Holtfreter et al. 2004). Typically, the dominant ideology touts human capital as the primary method of success, yet social and cultural capital are also primary mechanisms by which individuals may experience social mobility.

Pathways of mobility

All of the women in this study share an experience with the halfway house. While they have a variety of personal and offending backgrounds, all experience a similar level or availability of services while staying at the halfway house. Despite their common "start" at reentry, however, the women experience a variety of pathways in their employment and life experiences after incarceration. These pathways are determined both by their pre-incarceration histories and their ability to acquire and mobilize additional capital once they leave prison. In many ways, they "regress to the mean." Those women who began at higher levels of education and employment typically could not return to them. Those women with very limited education and employment were able to mobilize the resources of the halfway house to improve their pre-incarceration status. A smaller group faced greater-than-average hurdles due to their low levels of functioning due to severe mental illness or developmental disabilities. To begin then, I discuss the services and the messages they receive while at the halfway house. Then, I detail the three pathways – stasis, upward mobility, and downward mobility. As a result, I will describe how the use of these capitals serves as the mechanism through which these women reentry society.

Halfway house resources

The halfway house was the one experience that all the women in this study had in common. Each spent several months living there as they adjusted to life outside of prison. As such, it served as a prism, through which all of their previous capitals were filtered. The halfway house provided several layers of resources to all its residents.

Immediately, it provided free housing and food. Unless they violated the rules, residents were not expected to leave until they had employment and a satisfactory place to live. While the tangible resources make the transition from prison easier, the halfway house staff members were also trying to impart human, social, and cultural capital to its residents that would contribute to their long term success.

Residents were prohibited from working until completing an outpatient drug treatment program. The goal of this was to push residents to focus on the issues that led to them offending (often related heavily to drug use, and earlier to abuse and significant losses in their lives). Many residents pursued additional education – a high school diploma (at an adult alternative school), GED, job training, or college degree – while at the halfway house, or after. In this sense, the halfway house was striving to strengthen the human capital of the women, consistent with broader societal messages of the importance of education to employment. The women were learning tangible skills (including how to use a computer, hospitality skills) and gaining credentials that they hoped would translate into conventional employment.

The importance and value of education was heavily stressed to women, and many embraced it as a goal. Nearly two-thirds of the women interviewed gave furthering their education as a future goal, and one-fifth were pursuing that goal during the study period. They set that goal in part because they saw education as a social good, and getting a high school diploma or college degree was something they wanted to accomplish for their own self worth. There is little doubt that education serves this purpose. The women were proud of their accomplishments, and often expressed enjoyment and pleasure in their

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classes. However, they also saw education as a means of social mobility. Lisa D., who

was a former resident and current employee of the halfway house and a college student,

described her educational goals, and the ones she espoused to the halfway house

residents:

> Lisa D: One of the things that I push a lot at [the halfway house] is education. I had to find out how important it was. You know, I always knew, because I pushed it on my children. But when I came through [the halfway house], I was probably one of the oldest women [there] at the time, still didn't have a high school diploma, you know? And, I had to take a look at everything around me. What kind of job am I going to have? It's the difference between a job and a career. I had set up to be a cashier for the next 25 years. And there's nothing wrong with that, if that's what you want, that's all you want. Education will allow you to do a little bit more than that.

Lisa D.'s perspective was common among these women. Most women directly related

their pursuit of education to a desire for more stable, secure, and meaningful

employment. The pursuit of education and job training was a way to gain credentials that

demonstrate to potential employers that they are skilled and prepared for the workplace.

This included high school diplomas, GEDs, and college degrees, as well as job training

certifications such as sanitation licenses. They cited these credentials as tools to better

themselves and their employment prospects. One woman, for example, was one of

several to participate in a hospitality course, which included training for a sanitation

license. She explained the benefits of having the license, as it would qualify her to

manage a restaurant, rather than being restricted to counter service or wait staff. Again,

she was focused on improving her short- and long-term job prospects. Those pursuing

college educations typically framed it the same way – as an accomplishment, but also

explicitly as a tool for social mobility.

More indirectly, the halfway house provided the "communicative competence" aspect of cultural capital. Women were expected to behave appropriately while in the halfway house and were admonished, scolded, and punished if they did not behave according to house rules. This included overt misbehavior (missing curfew, drug use, and sexual activity) and interaction with others. In my times at the halfway house, I regularly saw women admonished for running down the hall, talking too loudly, or otherwise behaving inappropriately. While often these misbehaviors are minor and seemingly innocuous, the staff – many of whom are former residents themselves – saw them as a matter of respect for the halfway house and its staff (especially administrators) and so took them seriously. In the following exchange between me and Dee Dee, she explained a conflict she had with a resident, and thereby described both what she learned since she first lived here as a resident the year before, and what she expected from current residents (in her role as part time house manager).

> Dee Dee: . . .You know, some people come here and they don't always comply with the program. They half-step and they do what they need to do just to get by. And I think a lot of them take for granted, because I am an ex-resident, that they can do things in my face and think I'm not supposed to do my job. So when I reprimand them in any kind of way, they take that personal and twist it around to say that I am picking on 'em, or that I don't like 'em or, you know, things like that, which I am not gonna even let them twist it up like that. You know, you doing something you had no business doing, and I'm just making you aware of it, 'cause you say you didn't know. Now you know, you know. And then they'll tell you a further step, "well you don't have to say it like that." You know, how am I supposed to say it? I mean, I wasn't, I don't think I degraded anyone, you know. I try to talk to people the way I would want them to talk to me. That's something different for me, you know. I know in the past, my presentation of myself is intimidating and I work daily on it. I am well aware of what is going on with Dee Dee. Because I used to be prone to negativity and stuff like that. A lot of times things happen here, and my first reaction is sometimes to be, to do what I probably would have done a couple of years ago. But, I've also learned to think.

And that's what the blessing is, because now I am able to think on my feet. Before I would kind of react, you know. Because I almost called the police on that young lady. That's how over she was. But I didn't because I'm really not trying to make anyone's stay here worse than it has to be, or however they want to look at it, you know.

AL: So what exactly did she do?

Dee Dee: She used the staff bathroom. And my thing is, is that a lot of people still doing little slick and devious stuff, you know, and I have to be alert and watchful, and at some point, she got into that bathroom without me knowing, you know. So, if she did that, she done it sneaky, 'cause she had to get past me. So, now I'm like, I've gotta watch this lady. . . I just think that when you come in here, you supposed to come in here because you ready to change who you are. If other people can comply, what makes you any different that you don't have to?

While for the most part, there was a positive relationship between staff and residents, there was a constant tension in the house between line staff members (who are often former residents) who think that residents are scheming and hustling, and residents who think that the line staff members have "forgotten where they came from." The staff members often reflected on their own role, how they've changed since they first lived there as residents, and how their own perspective and professionalism had changed. They tried, with varying levels of success with different women, to teach the residents the importance of this. Their expectations ultimately were those of the administrative staff, who were representative of the dominant culture. Often then, what they were trying to impart was not a tangible skill or knowledge base, but rather more abstract, proper and respectful behavior. While the above example sounds innocuous and somewhat trivial, it is something that Dee Dee took very seriously, and was likewise something that is a learning experience for the residents of expected behavior in professional situations.

Self confidence is another important aspect to cultural capital, and is often one of the most visible reminders that capitals are variable traits. In addition to admonishing the women for inappropriate behavior, the halfway house staff members also encouraged and supported positive behavior and changes, and contributed to increased self assurance in many of the women. This self confidence also came from the very real successes they were experiencing in mainstream life, and often led to visible and dramatic changes in self assurance and self presentation. For example, Dee Dee reflected in the excerpt above about her own self-reflection and changes in demeanor. In the time I knew her, her self presentation changed noticeably for the better. The first time I interviewed her, in January, she was not working. My field notes from the second interview described the changes I perceived in her: "She sounded confident and sure of herself, both in what she said and how she said it. Last time, I had gotten the sense that she was waiting for things to happen to her and that didn't seem to be the case now, maybe because at least some things have been going her way." She was then working part time, and going to school part time, and was enthusiastic about her experiences in both areas. In subsequent interviews, she was even more self-possessed, and reflected on some of the things she had learned about herself and her job, such as setting boundaries and maintaining professionalism.

In contrast, Erica's self confidence fluctuated throughout the year, responding to changing employment circumstances. I was very impressed when I first met her; she was dynamic and involved, and she had excellent communication skills and self presentation. Though she had recently been laid off, she was enjoying her college experience and sat

on the boards of several agencies (including the halfway house). She said then "I have an X on my back [referring to her felony drug conviction]. I am minimized by what I can do. I am real humble; I will work at McDonalds, that's not a problem. . . I think my niche is in HIV testing and education." She spent close to a year looking for new employment. She was frustrated, worried, and struggling to make ends meet, despite being a part of a subsidized housing program that allowed her to live rent free as long as she was not working (and was enrolled in school). The stress of being unemployed caused her to shut herself off from friends and family, and her lack of income necessitated that her teenage daughter stay with her mother because she could not afford to take care of her. She had lost much of her confidence, missed final exams, and was disengaging herself from her volunteer work. When she finally did get a new job as an outreach worker at another social service agency, she was again optimistic and enthusiastic about her life. Thus her self confidence and resulting self-presentation was a direct reflection of her employment successes and failures.

Women's self confidence, and resulting changed self presentation, changed both for the better and the worse over the year I knew them, based on changing circumstances. The women who exhibited confidence felt that they were working towards something, and were proud of their accomplishments. When they hit stumbling blocks, though, they often lost much of their self confidence. Their level of confidence, in turn, impacted their ability to mobilize other forms of capital. This is a recurrent theme in their stories, and one that it is necessary to keep at the forefront.

While on the surface, the most important type of capital that the halfway house espoused was human capital, in reality, the most important type of capital they provided was social. Once the residents completed their drug treatment, the staff helped them find employment and then housing (often in another transitional center or program). The jobs they got were often entry level, in businesses with which the halfway house has a standing relationship. Typical jobs included telemarketing, resale, and social services. In addition to providing job connections, the administrative staff also helped navigate the at times very confusing regulations implicating felons, including employment[1] and student loan restrictions and record expungement, and the more mundane tasks they must accomplish, like getting a state ID. In addition, all halfway house residents on parole had the same parole officer, who also then had a relationship with the halfway house administration.

While none of these things *required* halfway house residence to accomplish, the connections they gained greatly facilitated the process of reentry for many women. Given that all women in this study lived at the halfway house, we might expect their post-prison experiences to be fairly similar. Yet there is substantial variation depending on their levels of capital when they came to the halfway house and their ability to mobilize it during and after their halfway house stay. In the next section, I describe the three trajectories the women experienced: stasis, upward mobility, and downward mobility.

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[1] In Illinois there are over 50 professions regulated by the Department of Professional Regulation. See http: www.ildpr.com for information on the regulations. (Accessed June 21, 2004). While many fields do have restrictions barring the employment of those with felony (or drug) convictions, these restrictions are sometimes time bound and can be contested. This can take years, and necessitates wading through a maze of legislation, guidelines, and procedures.

These pathways are dependent both on where the women started (i.e., their levels of capital pre-incarceration), their experiences with the halfway house, and their experiences after their halfway house stay. In other words, their "mobility" is determined both by their social position prior to their incarceration and their ability to mobilize capitals after their release. The halfway house functions in this analysis as a central prism through which all women pass, though it is not their only source of mobility. Additionally, these characterizations are dynamic; over time, the women's positions change for the better or worse depending on circumstances, like a new or lost job. Typically, however, they can be seen as moving up or down a pathway, rather than changing pathways altogether.

Women who experienced stasis were typically the most disadvantaged, and had numerous barriers to their acquisition and mobilization of capital. They were unlikely to be able to adjust to mainstream society without considerable support. Because of their lack of movement, the unlikelihood of it happening, and their relative rarity (about 10 %) in the sample, this group is the least helpful to explicate the importance of capital. However, this group illustrates some of the formidable challenges that some incarcerated populations (and therefore also those responsible for them) face. Women who were upwardly mobile began in disadvantaged circumstances, and were able to improve their situations by gaining capital. Women who were downwardly mobile began at a relatively higher position, and so had more to lose through their incarcerations. They were typically unable to regain their previous positions. In some cases, the upwardly mobile and downwardly mobile groups ended up in similar positions post-incarceration, but got there from very different places and in different ways.

Stasis

About 10 % of the women faced greater than average obstacles in finding and maintaining employment. Typically this was because of considerable mental health issues. For example, Corinna was diagnosed as bipolar. She said her counselors don't believe she was ready to work, as she had a hard time following instructions. She was affectionate and likeable, but also depressed, and unsure of herself. She was struggling with her mental health and drug addiction, and was recently both jailed and hospitalized. She had a job when she lived at the halfway house, but "the job I had, anyone can get hired. There was a lot of drinking on the job, there were gangs. I didn't have a sponsor and I relapsed. It went from drinking to using." She continued to struggle throughout the time I knew her, and occasionally engaged in illegal activity, such as prostitution and "copping" drugs for other tenants, in an attempt to make money. It seemed unlikely that she would be able to work in anything other than a highly supportive and sympathetic environment.

Possibly less severe, but also debilitating, was a severe lack of self confidence and self efficacy. Melvina seemed paralyzed by fear and self doubt. She was 47 years old and had never worked. She had limited human capital, and was well aware of that. She had not graduated from high school, and had never been incarcerated (but has been in jail and on probation). For much of her life, she cared for her two disabled sons and a disabled nephew, all of whom were living in a nursing home. While at the halfway house, she had a job for one day at a home health care agency. She said "I couldn't handle the lady they gave me by myself. I would like health care, if it's not hard. I can't

lift. I am trying to think – they're the only skills I have is taking care of the three boys."

When asked what her goals were, Melvina said "to work on my self esteem. It's keeping

me stuck. My confidence, so I'm not scared to look for a job." Winifred also struggled

with low self esteem and a sense of failure. Explaining why she didn't like her current

SRO apartment, she said

> Melvina: I wanted to pay market rent. I want to be a normal person. I am tired
> of people taking care of me. It takes something from me, I feel like I'm not doing
> enough. I feel like I am part of the problem. The first time, when I lived at
> [another SRO building] it didn't sit so well. It was a stepping stone, but I took it
> for an insult. I took it the wrong way, like an insult.

This was a common feeling that many of the women struggle with. They had a strong

desire to take care of themselves and their families, yet many were not able to, for

financial or emotional reasons, or both.

In some cases, this may also be a dynamic state of being. Much like Dee Dee was

transformed when given a chance to work at the halfway house, Melvina and Corrina

could possibly thrive in the right environment. Both lived in subsidized housing

buildings that also provided them with case managers and other support. These services

kept them off the street, but the problems they faced, as they influenced their human,

social, and cultural capital, limited their progress. The connections to capital were

inadequate for these women to live unassisted in mainstream society.

Upwardly mobile

Roughly half of the women in this sample could be characterized as upwardly

mobile. This group is characterized both by low levels of pre-incarceration education and

employment experience, and a pattern of successfully building and mobilizing additional

capital during and after their halfway house stay. While most of the women develop human, social, and cultural capitals, their social capital is most central to their mobility. All halfway house residents were encouraged to seek employment once they completed an outpatient drug treatment program. Most of the working women were hired by employers that have an ongoing relationship with the halfway house. Many of those working also pursued additional education -- eleven completed their high school diplomas while living at the halfway house and ten were enrolled in college classes during the time of the study. Another had recently graduated from college.

Of those that were working, Sharon was fairly typical. She worked at a service organization that provided day programming for those living in a nursing home. She led groups, and worked directly with the clients. The job began as an Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) Earnfare[2] job. The limited hours, absence of medical and other benefits, and low wages of the Earnfare jobs virtually ensured that participants could not afford private housing and limited their ability to care for minor children. However, many women I interviewed cited jobs like this as an important stepping stone. They gained valuable work experience, which often was lacking from their pasts. When Sharon's Earnfare benefits ended after 6 months, she was hired full time, making less than $6 an hour. Five of the women I interviewed work at the same organization, and

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[2] IDHS contracts with employers to hire individuals receiving food stamps for the Earnfare program, which is conceived as a welfare-to-work program for low-skill workers. The workers can then work off the value of their food stamps, at minimum wage, and earn up to an additional $294 a month (paid by the government) by working a maximum of 80 hours a month. Participation is limited to 6 out of 12 consecutive months, and is designed to provide those receiving assistance with some work experience. Some participants then may be hired on permanently by the individual companies. http://www.dhs.state.il.us; accessed August 31, 2004.

one reported that "90 percent [of the people working at the organization] have a criminal justice background. One hundred percent are recovering addicts." The environment was often described as disorganized, but the client interaction made it enjoyable for many of the women. While these jobs were "bad" jobs, in terms of their low pay and lack of benefits, the nature of the work did provide a sense of meaning. The jobs also provided structure and experience that many of the women lacked previously.

Many women used their stay at the halfway house to begin to pursue further education. Those who did not have a high school diploma enrolled in an alternative high school, and those with a GED or high school degree enrolled in college. The women often cited a desire for upward mobility as a reason to pursue education. A typical example of this was Delilah. Delilah reported going to jail at least twenty times and served five prison terms for robbery and theft charges. Following her last incarceration and her stay at the half way house, she enrolled in a local college and earned a bachelors degree. At her first job, as an outreach worker at another social service agency, she was frustrated by administrative disorganization and what she perceived to be a jealousy of her education among her co-workers. She said "They are jealous of my education . . . I am the lowest paid person with a degree. I didn't go to school to walk routes [do street outreach]." She had several conflicts with her co-workers and supervisor before being laid off (one of many at that agency to be laid off due to funding problems). A few months later, she received another job at another social service agency. She competed with several other former half way house residents for the job, and believed that her college degree gave her advantage over the other candidates.

In addition to education itself, there seems to be a difference in the benefits of education based on whether or not it occurred before or after incarceration. Most of those who have pursued college after their incarcerations were employed, and were more likely to be working in a field that gives meaning to their lives. However, of those who had at least some college before their stay at the halfway house, they were evenly split between those who were employed and those who were unemployed (see table 1). Several of those with degrees from prior to their last prison sentence were working in part time or seasonal positions. This suggests that their employment was not merely a result of the human capital that their degrees afforded them. If this were the case, we would expect those with completed degrees to have the same or greater success in the job market than those currently pursuing education, given their accumulated educational achievements.

While both Delilah and Erica believed that Delilah's completed bachelor's degree helped make the difference for her being hired for the position they were both interviewed for, this gave her an edge within a pool of ex-offenders. At least three women (Delilah, Erica, and Angela) were considered for this job in part because of their connection to the halfway house. This connection benefited many of the women, both directly and indirectly. For example, almost all halfway house residents were employed at the time they left the halfway house, most often through employer connections the halfway house has established. Eighteen women heard about their current jobs directly through their connection to the halfway house. In a typical example, Lisa D. received her current job when the program director made her a job offer. "I came in one day, and the receptionist said the program director wanted to see me. . . You never know who's

watching. I didn't know she knew [what I had been doing]. She offered me the position; it was one of the biggest honors."   Lisa S. had the same experience, when she was offered a job at a drug treatment facility after her neighbor, a supervisor at the agency, saw her interacting with neighborhood children and thought she would be a good fit for the position. She too was pursuing a college degree and had been working in the drug treatment field, but again her personal connections were central to her employment. She said:

> Lisa S: My supervisor lives across the street from me, coincidentally, you know. And, I was, every now and then just, you know, wave at him and sometimes when I park, you know, hold a conversation with him. And he knows the field that I am in, because actually I know some people – some other people that work at [her current employer] that knows him and da-da-da. And one day he stopped and he was like "You know I would really like to have you on my team." He said "I sit on the porch and I watch how you interact with the kids in the neighborhood," right. Because all the kids in the neighborhood call me Auntie Lisa. Don't ask where I got that name from, it just, I don't know, it just seemed like one day the whole neighborhood called Ti Ti Lisa. . .And all the time, I know my supervisor [at my former job] used to always tell me "you never know who's watching you," you know. So all the time, he was watching me, and I mean, I never, I do my thing, I do what I do, you know. And he stopped me and told me he want me on the team because he know I'd be good for the kids. And he asked me could I come in for an interview, and basically that's how I got the job.

Their education was also often less tied either to their ability to get the job or their responsibilities. Andrea, who worked at an SRO building and was enrolled in college, complained about her (then current) job, "We all have the same position. A lot of the women have degrees, but we all have the same job." When she lost that job due to budget cuts, she was considered for a position at a drug treatment center -- a job she thought she had a good chance of getting, in large part because her sister in law is a well-liked long term employee there.

In addition to the utilization of social capital, the upwardly mobile were also able to use their cultural capital. Education functioned as cultural capital in two senses. First, it provided credentialing for the women, so that they could send a message to potential employers that they were a part of mainstream society. Erica, who was then pursuing her college degree, expressed frustration over the necessity of having a degree. She believed this is the reason she was not hired for the job that Delilah ultimately got. In addition, she felt that she was given less credit by some of the other staff at her new place of employment (a service agency where she worked with drug addicted women) because she did not have a degree, despite her relevant life experiences. Again, those women who earned a degree or other credential after their incarcerations seemed to benefit from it more than those who entered prison with a degree. The degree (or being able to say they were working on it) served as a signal that they were "earning" their reentry and their status as a *former* offender. For those women who had earned a degree before their incarceration (or during a series of incarcerations), it could not serve as a symbol of change.

Secondly, women gain cultural capital through education by increasing their "communication competence." They learned how to behave appropriately, as expected by employers. For some, this means adjusting to a fixed schedule, and not causing or participating in conflict with co-workers or superiors. Some of the women learn these things explicitly, by participating in job training or job readiness programs. The ostensible purpose of these programs is to prepare the women (ex-offenders, welfare recipients, and other low skilled workers) for the job market. They practice how to

complete a resume, interviewing skills, other communication skills, and other general "job readiness" competences. Those who are in high school or college classes learn these same skills indirectly, through their interactions with teachers and fellow students.

Upward mobility was a common pathway for women in this study. Through the halfway house, they learned the cultural expectations and developed the personal relationships that helped them develop connections with mainstream society. Many continued their education, earning high school diplomas and working on college degrees. These tangible accomplishments, however, were less beneficial than their correspondingly increased social and cultural capital. The jobs they found were found through personal connections, and often were still "bad" jobs, in terms of pay and stability, though the women enjoyed them and took meaning from them. As the examples above demonstrate, the women were aware of the importance of social relationships and benefits of their halfway house connection. Yet they saw these as secondary to education as human capital (and as credentialing) as the steps necessary to their continued success and future mobility.

Downwardly mobile

Downward mobility was also a common pathway among these women, representing nearly half of the sample. The women who were most likely to be downwardly mobile after their incarcerations had a higher level of accomplishment in terms of education and employment before they were incarcerated. Sixteen women had attended at least some college before their incarcerations. Some of them became involved in offending at a relatively late age, and others struggled to attend school during

a drug addiction. The typical program or service geared towards ex-offenders had little to offer them from an educational or employment perspective, as they had already crossed the milestones that the programs offer. In this sense, the social capital they gained through the halfway house was inadequate, and their preexisting professional social networks were likely attenuated as a result of their incarcerations and addictions. They were left largely on their own to try to regain employment that was comparable to what they were once able to do.

Carolyn is a prototypical example of downward mobility. She had earned a masters degree and worked for many years as a high school teacher before committing several armed robberies leading to a 4.5 year incarceration. Despite her education and years of experience, she struggled to find work, which she thought was due both to her felony record and her high level of education. She could not get a job in her field because of her conviction,[3] and had a hard time getting a low level job because she was too highly educated. She said

> Carolyn: They have all these different programs – Safer Foundation, and Blue this and Blue that. And, you know, and I go to that, and I could run the program. I got a job at Wrigley Field as a cashier. I lied and said – well, I didn't lie – I just put high school diploma. And I got the job! But, I was trying to think of Erica's plight. She's going to school, she's got a job. I don't have the same goals or desires, you know.

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[3] According to the Illinois School Code (www.isbe.net/schoolcode/articles 21-28.pdf), conviction of a sex or drug offense, first degree murder, attempted first degree murder or a class X felony are grounds for revocation of the teaching certificate. For all others who were convicted and receive a sentence of at least a year, the school code lays out that the school board must notify in writing the State Board of Education the name of the certificate holder, the fact of the conviction, the name and location of the court in which the conviction occurred. The State Board of Education, in turn, must notify the board of trustees of the Teacher's Retirement System of the State of Illinois and the Public School Teachers' Pension and Retirement Fund of the City of Chicago. What happens once these groups are notified is unclear.

Carolyn long ago accomplished the goals that are the mainstay for many of the women she has met through the halfway house and her current SRO building. She had a high school diploma, college degree, master's degree, and years of work experience. She was frustrated that the only programs and services specializing in helping ex-offenders target those seeking educational opportunities and job experience that she long ago accomplished. She gave up trying to utilize these programs, because she had been turned away for being too skilled and they had not helped her.

Carolyn also complained that the halfway house administrators did not like her, and so did less to help her. Partly as a result of this perception, she did not try to use these resources, though it was doubtful that they had connections that could help her retain her previous, or a comparable, position. Carolyn then lacked both social and cultural capital, though she had high levels of human capital. The human capital she had did nothing to help her, and in some situations may have hurt her. She was highly skilled, yet her degrees and credentials did not demonstrate atonement for her crimes, as they did for women who pursued education post-incarceration. Her education also made her a suspicious candidate for low skill, low wage jobs that are typically more open to ex-offenders. Her lack of closeness with halfway house staff limited her ability, and her willingness, to use these resources to her advantage, though again, the connections they had may not have helped her, given her already developed human capital.

While Carolyn's experience was extreme, it was consistent with the experience of the other women who had a more established work history or more extensive education. The frustration that she felt was also consistent with the assessment of one of the

administrative staff members of the halfway house, who believed that those who start out with more often have a harder time reentering society. These women lost a lot through their criminal involvement, and so know first hand what they are missing. Many other women experienced losses comparable to Carolyn's, with established careers interrupted by drug use and/or incarceration. For example, Libra worked in the stock market for several years, before losing her job as a result of a heroin and cocaine addiction that began in her late 20s. She was trying to get back into a "professional atmosphere" at age 46. For those who began the reentry process never having experienced "straight" or mainstream life, a menial or low wage job can feel like a significant accomplishment and can contribute to a sense of self-worth. For a woman with a master's degree and an established career history, like Carolyn, it felt like a failure.

Another component of downward mobility for a few women was physical health. Many of the women were middle-aged, and often had spent years without any medical care and living dangerous and damaging lifestyles, including severe drug addiction and homelessness. Once incarcerated and afterwards, they began experiencing new health problems or ones of which they were previously unaware. In addition to her inability to fully utilize social and cultural capital, Carolyn also struggled with lung disease which makes it difficult for her to work. Likewise, EJ suffered from fibroids and diabetes, and regularly had doctor's appointments. She also had been denied Medicaid, and so had to rely on free clinics for her medical care. EJ worked at a telemarketing firm in the suburbs and quit because of the lengthy commute and the low pay. She said "It wasn't worth it. I had to leave here at 6 to get there at 9. . . I don't want to work for $6 an hour. I don't see

myself going anywhere [with that job]. It cost more to go there than I brought in, with lunch." Low wages and lengthy commutes were common for all the women who were working. However, when combined with debilitating health problems and restricted medical care, they became more restricting.

The women experienced downward mobility for two primary reasons then: a relatively high starting position (high level of education, established career) or newly developed barriers to employment, such as health problems. Both of these are likely problems, especially for women ex-offenders. Their offending was often tied to drug use, and this drug use in some cases did not become an issue until their late 20's or 30's. This also means that the women have had more time to establish themselves professionally prior to their incarcerations. Several of the women did have established careers or long term and stable employment histories in their young adulthood. In these cases, they were not necessarily worse off than the upwardly mobile women (though sometimes they were), but they were worse off then they had been earlier in their lives. Relative to their own experience, they were downwardly mobile, and unlikely to regain their former positions. The social capital available to them through the halfway house was less beneficial to them, at least in terms of reestablishing their prior careers. Again, while those who pursued education while at (or after) the halfway house were almost all employed, those who had previously pursued education (at least some college) were no more likely to be employed than unemployed. Secondly, given their age and their limited medical care, many of the women started to experience debilitating health

problems that restrict their employment options, both because of physical and time limitations.

Despite the high levels of human and cultural capital that these women had, they lacked relevant social capital to maximize it. In addition, their credentials, as cultural capital, were less beneficial to them than they were to women who could use them to demonstrate rehabilitation and positive change.

Conclusions

The post-incarceration employment pathways of the women in this study were shaped both by their pasts and their ability to mobilize tangible and intangible resources in the present. All of the women faced barriers and restrictions due to felony convictions, and all experienced a fairly high level of access to services and support through the halfway house. Yet, three distinct pathways – stasis, upward mobility, and downward mobility -- emerged in their post incarceration experiences. While a base level of human capital was necessary for all women's success, their successes were more strongly shaped by their use of social and cultural capitals. Pursuing education benefited them primarily through their access to new social networks, cultural competence, and self confidence.

A small number of women faced significant hurdles, based largely on severe mental health issues which restricted their human and cultural capital and their ability to mobilize social capital, resulting in stasis. The majority of women were fairly evenly divided between upwardly and downwardly mobile pathways. The upwardly mobile women tended to start out at a low level of education and employment histories. For them, gaining access to high school and college educations gave them a number of

benefits: tangible skills and knowledge, self-esteem, credentialing to demonstrate their "rehabilitation," communication competence to assimilate with mainstream employers, and access to pro-social networks. While many of these women believed in the mainstream ideology of education as a direct source of social mobility, the benefits they experienced through education were largely through education's influence on their social and cultural capital. The downwardly mobile women typically had further to fall in terms of their prior education level and employment histories. Because they already had higher levels of education and experience, they also stood to benefit less from what the halfway house offered and also had limited opportunities to benefit from their former capitals. Thus these trajectories can best be described as a regression to the mean – ex-offenders as a group have the greatest chance to work in a fairly small number of fields and of limited stability or social status. Depending on their prior statuses, this narrow range of options may represent either an improvement or a decline.

We can thus conceptualize the importance of education in a number of ways. The least important aspect of education was that which is most frequently touted – skills and knowledge. The dominant social ideology of the human capital of education as a source of social mobility was limited for these women. However, education can be conceptualized more broadly, as an individual accomplishment and a social good. In addition, it led to greater communication competencies and beneficial social relationships.

For this group of ex-offenders, the most important aspect of education was first and foremost as a source of networks, something which many also developed outside of

the school setting. The second most important value in education was as a source of cultural capital, both in terms of credentialing and communication competencies. Those that could foster and mobilize social relationships to their advantage were able to gain the most prestigious and meaningful employment, largely independent of their educational levels. For those who pursued education after incarceration, it served as a sign of rehabilitation. There were limits to the extent to which any form of capital can benefit the women, however. Those who made the greatest progress started with minimal professional accomplishments. Education as credentialing was less beneficial for those women with higher levels to start. The social networks they may have developed through their education were outdated. In addition, education merely as a form of human capital was not enough to supersede a felony conviction. The stigma of a felony conviction for these women functioned as a glass ceiling, limiting their employment, in spite of their education and employment credentials and experience.

Certainly the connection between education and employment is a problem that is broader than just ex-offenders. Here, the women's experience parallels findings from welfare-to-work and other job training programs (Blank 1997). Those who are neither the best nor the worst off are those who benefit the most from the programs. Women who are the most disadvantaged do not receive enough help and support to enter mainstream life unassisted. Those who are the best off, with the greatest experience and education, will likewise have a harder time regaining their former positions. The services provided ex-offenders assumed a low level of education and skills and so the social connections were not in place to help higher level offenders. In addition, broader

economic changes mean that nonstandard work arrangements have increased, and this often means work with low wages, no health insurance, and no pension. Low skill, but stable and well paid, jobs that were once available for ex-offenders (e.g., in manufacturing) are much less available. The effects of these broader economic changes are experienced by all workers, not just those with felony convictions.

Quality jobs, with a modicum of stability, wages, prestige, can reduce recidivism among male offenders, and this study suggests the same is true for at least a subset of female offenders (Sampson and Laub 1993; Laub and Sampson 2003). While fairly typical in terms of their backgrounds, the women in this study had a fairly high access to services and support, which is likely tied to a decreased likelihood of recidivism (Reisig et al. 2002; Holtfreter et al. 2004). The women in this study demonstrated a willingness and desire to work; this was central to their self-conceptions. Few of the women expressed a desire for a gendered respectability package; nearly all of them expected to support themselves and few expressed a desire to rely on anyone else to do this. While this may be, in part, a reflection of the racial composition of the sample (Giordano et al. 2002), it does suggest that employment can serve a similar function among female ex-offenders as it does for men, if the jobs are available.

CHAPTER SIX

HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD

"Almost everyone residing in poor inner-city neighborhoods is struggling financially and therefore feels a certain distance from the rest of America, but there are degrees of alienation, captured by the terms 'decent' and 'street' or 'ghetto,' suggesting social types. The decent family and the street family in a real sense represent two poles of value orientation, two contrasting conceptual categories. The labels 'decent' and 'street,' which residents themselves use, amount to evaluative judgments that confer status on local residents." (Anderson 1999, p. 35)

In continuing to explore the reentry of these women into Chicago, it is necessary to look at their experiences where they live, both in terms of housing and neighborhood. Neighborhoods are a defining feature of self conception and every day life. For example, researchers have demonstrated an independent effect of neighborhood on depression, drug use, perceptions of self-efficacy, legal cynicism, and ex-offender recidivism. (See, for example, Ross (2000) on depression, Boardman, Finch, Ellison, Williams, and Jackson (2001) on drug use, Boardman and Robert (2000),on perceptions of self-efficacy, Sampson and Bartusch (1998) on legal cynicism, and Baumer et al. (2003) on ex-offender recidivism.) For inmate reentry, neighborhoods matter in terms of where ex-offenders live, how they respond to their neighborhoods, and how they are responded to by others in the neighborhood.

Prison inmates are not evenly drawn from, nor released to, neighborhoods; rather they are concentrated in a relatively small number of neighborhoods (see, for example,

Lynch and Sabol 2001). The volume and concentration of offenders in core urban

counties (i.e, those that contain the central city of a metropolitan area) have increased in

the past two decades. In 1996, over two-thirds of offenders nationwide were released to

core counties; often they are then further concentrated in a small number of

neighborhoods (Lynch and Sabol 2001).   The vast majority of offenders, then, are

released to a small number of neighborhoods within inner city areas. For example, in

Illinois, over half of all inmates are returned to the Chicago area, and over a third of these

are released to a mere six (of 77) neighborhoods (La Vigne et al. 2004). This is

consistent with research on inmate concentration in Tallahassee, Florida, Cuyahoga

County (Cleveland), Ohio, and Brooklyn, New York (Lynch and Sabol 2001; Cadora,

Schwartz and Gordon 2003).

This concentration of offenders in a small number of central city neighborhoods is

of interest for a number of reasons. First, high rates of incarceration leads to "coercive

mobility," wherein offenders are forcibly taken out of the neighborhood, sent to prison,

and then returned to the neighborhood months or years later (Clear 2002).   While these

individuals are committing crimes, they also serve other more conventional roles, such as

parent, sibling, or employee, in the neighborhood and in their families. Their removal

may be seen as beneficial if we only focus on their criminal activity; however, they also

leave a void in terms of these conventional activities and roles.   Incarceration also can

lead to the relocation of a child or other family member, further destabilizing the

neighborhood. In addition to the effects on individual offenders, in neighborhoods with

high rates of incarceration and return this coercive mobility also has a neighborhood

effect, destabilizing the community and undermining informal social control. Thus, both the presence and removal of offenders can be problematic for other residents (Lynch and Sabol 2001; Clear 2002; Rose and Clear 2003).

Mobility tied to incarceration is likely to reduce neighborhood trust. High rates of residential mobility impede the formation of relationships, and so collective efficacy, or the willingness of neighbors to work together to solve neighborhood problems, is reduced (Sampson, Raudenbush and Earls 1997). This in turn reduces a community's ability to control crime and limits the formation of social capital (Clear 2002). As defined by Rose and Clear, social capital is "a byproduct of social relationships that provides the capacity for collective understanding and action" (2003, p. 320). Together, this means that the neighborhood's sense of social solidarity and its willingness to work together for the common good is impeded as a result of mass incarceration.

Second, returning ex-offenders provide (real and perceived) public safety and resource acquisition concerns for residents of these neighborhoods (Lynch and Sabol 2001). Residents fear being victimized by released offenders, especially when they are seen as an especially heinous group, such as sex offenders (see, for example, the news coverage and resulting outrage over the location of sex-offender half way houses in Chicago, e.g., Sadovi 2005). The neighborhoods in Chicago and elsewhere with the highest rates of inmate return are also characterized by high rates of crime, poverty, and unemployment (La Vigne et al. 2004). This makes the issue of safety of central concern to residents. In addition, released offenders may need services, such as drug treatment

and housing and employment assistance, that these communities are not equipped to provide, especially at the level they are needed.

Third, and tied to the previous point, the neighborhood in which an offender resides has an independent effect on recidivism, above any individual-level predictors (Baumer et al. 2003; Kubrin and Stewart 2006). Inmates who return to disadvantaged neighborhoods are less likely to find employment and are more likely to reoffend (La Vigne et al. 2004). Even when controlling for offender and offense characteristics, such as age, sex, prior arrest and incarceration history, and property versus personal offenses, Baumer et al. (2003) found that the likelihood of rearrest is greater among inmates released to areas that are more densely populated and that have higher income inequality. Similarly, Kubrin and Stewart conclude that ex-offenders living in areas with high levels of disadvantage and inequality will be more likely to recidivate, independent of individual level factors (2006). Thus the neighborhood effect is not merely a reflection of a certain type of person being more likely to live in a certain neighborhood; rather certain neighborhood characteristics contribute to a higher recidivism rate. Both individual and neighborhood characteristics contribute to the cyclical nature of recidivism and incarceration.

Neighborhoods, offending, and incarceration

There are two primary arguments about the disadvantages of offenders returning to the same neighborhood upon release from prison that they lived in prior to their incarceration. One is related to the social context of offending and the relationships offenders have with others in their neighborhoods. The second is related to the

concentrated disadvantage and lack of resources in many neighborhoods with high numbers of ex-offenders. The next section explicates these arguments.

Social context, relationships, and crime

The first argument against offenders returning to their pre-incarceration neighborhoods is that removing offenders from their previous environment will reduce recidivism, primarily through altered relationships. Neighborhood change is one of four self-described turning points (the others are marriage, the military, and reform school[1]) Laub and Sampson (2003) identified among desisting offenders. The benefit of these turning points is that they "knife off" offenders from their immediate environment and offer them a new script for the future (Caspi and Moffitt 1995, in Laub and Sampson 2003). The change in context provides an opportunity to redefine one's role, lifestyle, and sense of self. Residential changes allowed the men to break away from unsatisfactory peer or family relationships (Laub and Sampson 2003). These relationships, in turn, are tied to recidivism. Most offending occurs in groups, and so if offenders distance themselves from these offending peers, their own recidivism is likely to decrease (Shaw and Mc Kay 1942; Erickson 1971; Reiss 1986; Reiss and Farrington 1991; Warr 1993; Warr 1998). Many offenders believe this to be true and so desire to live in new neighborhoods upon their release. In a study of Chicago inmates, La Vigne, Visher, and Castro (2004) found that 45 % of released inmates lived in different

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[1] Laub and Sampson devote considerably more time to these other turning points than to neighborhood change, but these are tangential to the arguments in this chapter. These other turning points also provide supervision and social support, change and structure in routine activities, and an opportunity for identity transformation (in addition to a "knifing off" from the past).

neighborhoods than prior to their incarceration, primarily because either they wanted to avoid trouble or because their family had moved.

Relationships, especially peer relationships, are central to our understandings of offending and desistance (Farrington 1987; Reiss and Farrington 1991; Farrington 1998; Warr 1998). In a meta-analysis of 131 studies, "companions" was the strongest individual predictor for recidivism (Gendreau et al. 1996). Dynamic factors more broadly (many of which can at least theoretically be influenced by neighborhood change) were at least as useful predictors as were static factors such as race, age, or gender (Gendreau et al. 1996). Warr (1998) concluded that changing peer networks over the life course are essential to understanding trajectories of offending. Again, to the extent that neighborhood change also leads to peer network and other relationship changes (or vice versa. Among Laub and Sampson's (2003) men, neighborhood change was often a result of marriage) we would expect it to influence recidivism. These moves (and relationship changes) also led to changes in routine activities and a chance for identity transformation, both of which can be helpful structural changes tied to desistance.

Changing neighborhoods as a way to change relationships also is, in part, contingent on neighborhood-based social networks. Vaillant (1988) offered a slightly different interpretation of the role of neighborhood change in desistance (in this case, desistance from drug use). He found that external interventions that restructure an addict's life in the community were often associated with sustained abstinence. The main factors were: a) compulsory supervision; b) finding a substitute dependence; c) obtaining new social supports; and d) membership in an inspirational group and discovery of new

source of hope. None of these changes requires an actual change in residence, but rather a reframing of one's life within a community. In other words, the community does not need to change, merely the offender's experience within it. This approach allows for relationships to be defined independent of geography (see also Chapter 4).

The first reason for neighborhood effects, then, is related to a neighborhood's impact on social networks. To the extent that neighborhoods shape social relationships and networks, offenders are better off in new neighborhoods so that they can, in turn, establish new relationships. If their offending social networks are geographically based, they are less likely to recidivate if they relocate. If, however, they can reframe their relationships within their neighborhood, establish new pro-social and supportive relationships, or if their offending relationships are disconnected from their neighborhood, then neighborhood itself will be less important. This argument relates to the idea of contemporary consequences – as long as offenders remain in the same environment they are likely to continue with the same behavior (Moffitt 1993).

Resource acquisition

The second argument relating neighborhood change and desistance is that neighborhoods are important sources of resource acquisition and social support. When offenders return to highly disadvantaged communities, they continue to lack these resources that may support desistance. For example, recently released inmates need to locate housing and employment, and often need medical and psychiatric care and drug treatment. Neighborhoods in which many offenders end up do not have the facilities to provide these services at all, or in response to the demand (La Vigne et al. 2004). These

factors, in turn, contribute to the high rates of recidivism. Close to one-third of all inmates released to Chicago were reincarcerated within 13 months of their release, many of whom were returned to prison because of parole violations (La Vigne et al. 2004).

Even when inmates want to move to avoid trouble, they still have limited options and often live in similarly disadvantaged communities. In the Urban Institute study cited above, while nearly half of the inmates lived in new neighborhoods after their release, they were still largely concentrated in highly disadvantaged communities (La Vigne et al. 2004). The six community areas (Austin, Humboldt Park, North Lawndale, Englewood, West Englewood, and East Garfield Park) in Chicago that receive the largest numbers of releasees are all characterized by high poverty, high crime, and limited services (La Vigne et al. 2004).

Housing options are also limited for ex-offenders, both because of a lack of funds and the stigma of a felony conviction. First, ex-offenders are likely to have limited funds to pay for housing, especially immediately after their release. Second, formal restrictions limit their ability to stay with family. For example, typically no more than one person on parole can reside in an individual household. In addition, public housing agencies restrict housing for those convicted of sex or drug offenses, and the waiting list for subsidized housing is often several years (Petersilia 2003). Many ex-offenders have attenuated relationships with family, after years of offending and drug use, and so are not welcomed back. Third, programs geared towards helping people out of homelessness or helping ex-offenders or drug addicts can provide some help, though it can be inadequate. These programs are often time-limited and are often single room occupancy buildings. Thus,

those with minor children may have additional hurdles to find suitable housing. The waiting lists for these can also be extensive, with admission requirements. Lastly, ex-offenders may experience discrimination in private housing markets. These problems are more pronounced in major urban areas, where a majority of inmate releasees will end up (Petersilia 2003). Many inmates experience homelessness, both before and after their incarcerations (Petersilia 2003).

This second argument about the importance of neighborhoods is related to cumulative consequences, both for the neighborhood and for the individual offenders within it (Moffitt 1993). Disadvantaged neighborhoods contribute to the likelihood of offending of their residents. High rates of offending and resulting high rates of incarceration and return further strain the resources of the neighborhood, which, in turn, further increase the chances of offending. Both individual and neighborhood resources are attenuated by the cyclical process of incarceration and return to the community, further increasing the likelihood of recidivism. This lack of resources leads to the cyclical nature of offending and incarceration.

Neighborhood identity

Despite these compelling arguments in favor of offenders relocating upon their release from prison, the choices of where to live and one's experiences there are not always limited to pragmatic decision making. While the women in this study certainly have limited options and limited incomes on which to live, they also have a variety of experiences with their living arrangements and a variety of relationships with their

neighborhoods. For many, there is an affective component to their neighborhood identity.

The first section addresses their desires, their options and how they make decisions of where to live based on these options. These women have very conventional desires in neighborhood. They aspire to live in neighborhoods that are low crime, stable, and hetereogenous. However, while they have very mainstream aspirations in terms of where they would like to live, their choices are significantly restricted. Their perspective is shaped largely by the rhetoric of self-help groups that advise them to stay away from "people, places, and things" related to their addiction. I turn to this rhetoric and the effects of it on their choices and experiences in the second section. Many of the women believe strongly in this message and wish to avoid areas with which they are familiar. Yet other women subvert this message, either rejecting it outright or reframing it so that they can successfully live in "bad" neighborhoods while seeing themselves as "good" and positive members of the community. I conclude, in the third section, with a discussion of the meaning of neighborhood and community identity for these women. While many of their choices are pragmatic, many do have a strong sense of place, often based in identification with their childhood neighborhood.

Choosing where to live

The neighborhoods, or neighborhood characteristics, in which the women aspire to live are often in stark contrast to the neighborhoods in which they are able to live. The "dream" neighborhoods are often middle class neighborhoods, with commonly valued characteristics. In reality, however, the women make decisions within substantial

financial and social constraints. The neighborhoods in which they end up are often

plagued with social problems such as high crime rates, high poverty, and segregation.

This section describes both where they would like to live, and where they do live.

Neighborhood aspirations

When asked where they would like to live, the women typically name

characteristics that are common and socially desirable. They value the same traits in

neighborhoods that most people value, striving to find peaceful neighborhoods with

minimal crime, drug use, and street activity. When asked to describe their ideal

neighborhoods, where they would like to live, the women typically mention peacefulness,

convenience, diversity, and low crime – in short, they strive to live in the same

neighborhoods, for the same reasons, most others do (Taub, Taylor and Dunham 1984;

Harris 1999; Charles 2000).

> Sweetness: After Sanctuary Place, after I move again, North, I wanna move North. . . Just the atmosphere, you don't really hear about nothin'. I think the North side is a much better neighborhood than the other neighborhoods, but the clientele, the atmosphere of the shopping area and everything. I think the north side is a better side of town.
> **
> Heidi: The North Side. . . It's clean. It ain't as much hanging out on corners. It's like, I think it's a good environment. Plus, it's like a majority of economic, you know, people from different races. You know, it's a mixture of people. It ain't all Black or brown. On the West Side you see mostly Black. You know, up North you'll see white people. You'll see African people. You'll see Chinese people. All types of people up there. My cousin lives there.
> **
> Shelly: You know I haven't really given that [where to move] any thought. But since you asked me that question I would like to look for a neighborhood where people are working, going to schools, striving to do better. I wouldn't want to see a drug dealer on the corner, or gangbangers. I wouldn't want to see people hanging out on the corners.
> **

Amanda: I would look for how the people are in the neighborhood, you know, if they hanging out. I don't want move there because I know there's going to be some trouble. That's what I look for.
**

Libra: Well this neighborhood's [halfway house area] fine. Because, I mean, I don't want to live in the suburbs. . . .Quiet and, you know, friendly. I don't want any drug dealing going on around me.
**

Winifred: Where would I like to live? What neighborhood? . . .Well, if I ever get myself together and be able to buy some property I always liked Evanston. . . .I like their little community houses. I like their homes, its something about the homes. It's in the city too and then it's the suburb effect, but city that's what I like about it.
**

Millie: I don't know. I know everywhere you go there's going to be peace and quiet but I'd like some place nice for me and my son to stay.
. . .
AL: Is there anything else that you're looking for in a neighborhood?

Millie: No. Because basically you can't go anywhere without that being negative.
**

Abra: North Side or Southeast Side. . . Because the diversity. You know, the people up on the North Side are very engaged. So that's definitely the place for me. And also on the Southeast Side, and I'm talking right around the Hyde Park area, it's diverse. I like different cultures. I don't like being in just one setting. You know what I mean? I like different people from all different ethnic backgrounds. Diversity is like a very important issue to me.
**

Erica: I like the diversity [in her Rogers Park neighborhood].

AL: What do you like least about this neighborhood?

Erica: The drug house on the corner.

AL: What made you choose this neighborhood?

Erica: Roger's Park. I heard a lot of good things about Roger's Park as far as there being a lot of programs after school for children.

The women often stress both diversity and safety (or an absence of street activity)

as a primary goal. While heterogeneity and neighborhood change are often seen as

undermining neighborhood stability and collective efficacy and so contributing to crime (Shaw and Mc Kay 1942; Taub et al. 1984; Sampson et al. 1997), most of these women have lived in very homogenous, segregated and disadvantaged environments. Thus, they aspire to more stable, and less segregated, neighborhoods. Diversity for them means a higher proportion of White and middle class residents, relative to the neighborhoods in which they have lived. This goal of diversity also is consistent with studies that have demonstrated that residents of all races tend to prefer to live in neighborhoods that are not a majority African American (Harris 1999; Charles 2000). Thus, these women value the same neighborhood characteristics as the general population.

In addition to moving to more stable and socially desirable neighborhoods, several of the women also would like to move out of Illinois altogether. This desire is distinct from the goal of the type of neighborhood in which they aspire to live. While their descriptions of the latter goals is more directly tied to their concerns to avoid re-offending or relapsing into drug use, the desire to move out of state more often is presented as an adventure. Thus, these desires seem more connected to a desire to expand their experiences or because of the desirability of the location than to avoiding their pasts. Many of the women have spent their entire lives in Chicago or Illinois, and want to try living in a different part of the country. The reasons they give for wanting to move involve weather, aesthetics, the location of friends and family, anticipated employment prospects, or local culture. In other words, they want to move for reasons that most non-felons also choose to move to a new part of the country. Sugar talked

about wanting to move to Atlanta – an area that was at least tangentially connected to her

offending (as she described below).

> Sugar: Because when I've been here. I mean even though it's been different areas but it's Illinois. I've been traveling to other places and there's places that I think would have more to offer.
>
> AL: So, what sorts of places are those?
>
> Sugar: I think I'm pretty set on moving to Atlanta. Maybe Florida but I kind of like Atlanta.
>
> AL: That's some place that I've considered moving too. What makes you like Atlanta?
>
> Sugar: I really can't give you definites. I've been down there twice. I was stealing cars out of car lots and driving around the country and I stayed there for like four of five days. I just liked how, you know, just how it was down there: just how it looked, the country down there. Not the middle of Atlanta, maybe a suburb of Atlanta. The fact that there's just more opportunity as far as recreation and jobs and where you can live. It's just more to offer for someone from Rockford.

Danielle, after returning to visit family in Colorado, talked about her strong desire to

move there, because she could "just see myself there." Angela wants to move to North

Carolina because she thinks she will like the lifestyle. Similarly, Melvina talks about

moving to Philadelphia after hearing about it from a friend.

> AL: Is there a part of town, a place that you would like to live if you left there?
>
> Melvina: I would really like to move out of town. I got a girlfriend. She called me the other day and it was really amazing. You know, we had lost contact with each other but I had been writing her since I've been --, she lives in Philadelphia. You know, we went to grammar school together. You know, we kind of growed up together. So I'm going to try to say something to her when I go get a job. I might try to take a look around up there. Try something new.
>
> AL: So why do you want to leave town? Is it just to try something new?
>
> Melvina: I guess just to try something new.

Again, these desires are a reflection of a common desire to try new things, gain opportunities, and live in a preferable climate or culture; they are largely distinct from any explicit attempt to avoid the stigma of their felony conviction. Often however, their convictions (especially if they are still on parole) provide an additional hurdle to overcome if they do want to move out of the city.

Thus the women have aspirations of where they would like to live that are common among city residents. They strive to live in a stable, middle class context with the amenities that come along with that, such as an absence of street activity, quality housing stock, diversity, and programs for their children. Several display a sense of adventure, wanting to move to a new part of the country. While to a certain extent this may reflect a broader desire to start over after a time in prison, more often they mention these dreams as broader than this. They want to do move, not as an attempt to get away from their past, but merely as a chance to experience new and better things.

Halfway house context

Oftentimes, their stay at the halfway house provides some experience in the quality of life they would like to enjoy in a new neighborhood. It is located on the Near West Side of Chicago, close to Malcolm X College and the United Center. While it is also near the Henry Horner public housing development, the area has undergone substantial gentrification and redevelopment in recent years. A major benefit the women cite in living at the halfway house is that it is in a "quiet" neighborhood free from open drug dealing.

Shorty D: There's not so many drug activities around here. It's just peaceful.
**

Sheila: Well, it's clean. It's clean around here. I believe it's mostly drug free because we're right over here by. . the United Center. You know what I'm saying? It's more police patrols around here. So it's a nice neighborhood.
**

EJ: It's quiet. You don't have to worry about shootings. You can walk out the door and not worry about getting shot.

Several of the women also appreciate the familiarity of the neighborhood, even though

the familiarity is to negative things.

Winifred: Familiar with it. Ya know I'm familiar with it. I know it and it was a childhood neighborhood for me. A lot of things changed. And maybe I needed this, where all the nonsense began.
**

Millie: I used to stay in this neighborhood when I was a little girl. The Henry Horner Homes, that's where I grew up. Really, I grew up in this area so I know it like the back of my hand. But it's gotten nice since I moved up and grown up. There used to be gangbangers and stuff like that.

The women typically mention the "quietness" of the neighborhood and their

lifestyles in it as a benefit of living at the halfway house. Even when mentioning

neighborhood familiarity, they also usually mention how much the neighborhood has

changed since they lived there in the past. These changes may be both absolute changes

as a result of gentrification and perceptual changes as a result of their changed

circumstances in the neighborhood. Their lifestyles while living at the halfway house

consist of fairly controlled activities, including numerous "groups" and outpatient drug

treatment, which is located a few blocks away. Many of the women do leave to work,

and are free to leave on the weekends, but when not working, their weeks are fairly full

of structured activities. Thus regardless of what is happening outside, they experience

and see little of it. This is a primary experience in redefining their role in a

neighborhood. Whether or not the women are familiar with this particular neighborhood, they change their behavior from a largely street-oriented lifestyle (for most of them) to a home-oriented lifestyle. This is a first step in changing their relationship with their future neighborhood as well.

Neighborhood reality

While the women aspire to live in middle class, low crime neighborhoods, this often is not possible. All of the women in this study struggle to make ends meet, and often rely on subsidized housing (most often another connection they make through the halfway house). The majority of women in this study received referrals to housing programs that provided them more independence, while remaining in a recovery community and while receiving at least temporary financial assistance. Typically, they move into the first unit or program into which they are accepted, and have limited options in choosing where they will be located. Roughly a third (38 %) of the women lived in single room occupancy buildings and an additional 10 % live in scattered-site studio apartments. Another 10 % live in either town homes or scattered site multiple-bedroom apartments. The remaining women (38 %) live either in their own apartment or house or in a family home.[2]

The majority of the women end up in single room occupancy buildings or other subsidized housing programs geared towards the drug addicted or homeless in the city. These provide a helpful stepping stone for the women. They provide more privacy and

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[2] These percentages exclude seven women with whom I lost touch before or when they moved from the halfway house. I do not know where they moved.

independence than the halfway house, but still provide some programming and case management (and require rule following). They also provide a financial "cushion" – their rent is typically calculated at one-third of their income, and accommodations can be made if the women are out of work. The terms of these programs vary by site; some are considered permanent housing while others have stricter time limits. There are several SRO buildings in which halfway house residents frequently live (Lakefront SRO, Sanctuary Place, Cressey House) and voucher programs (Chicago Connections) which provide rent assistance for a year, after which the resident can choose to take over the lease, paying market rate rent.

These programs are typically located on the south and west sides of Chicago, in predominantly African American neighborhoods. The Chicago Connections program places women in studio and one-bedroom apartments across the south side. The main SRO buildings in which the women are placed are in the South Loop and the West Side. Exceptions to these placements are two women who live in Rogers Park as participants in an education-based program (i.e., they receive rent assistance while they are enrolled in (school) and one woman who lived in an Uptown nursing home. The particular program in which the women are placed depends on the availability in each at the time the woman is ready to move. In addition, there is at least some consideration for the race and ethnicity of the woman. The women are predominantly African American and most of the neighborhoods in which they are placed are also predominantly African American. However, when a woman is not African American, this may be taken into account. For

example, Sunshine, a Hispanic woman, expressed a preference for living in a

neighborhood with at least a sizable Hispanic population.

> AL: Where is it [your apartment] gonna be?
>
> Sunshine: The South side.
>
> AL: That's where you wanted to go, right?
>
> Sunshine: Not really, but it's an apartment, and I'll take it. So, it won't be that bad. I haven't found the address, they haven't found me one. They asked me if I wanted one, if I would feel comfortable living in a Hispanic neighborhood, and I said yeah, I would, like I would feel a lot more comfortable. So they're trying to find one for me. It could be mixed, you know, half and half, because that's how I, in my neighborhood where I grew up at [in New York], it was always like that, it wasn't one more than the other, it was always mixed, it was always half.

Sunshine ended up moving to Hyde Park, which she described as "a beautiful area. . .a

mix of everybody." She stayed there for several months, and then moved in with her

friend Starr, who lived on the north side. She did this to save money in anticipation of

returning to New York to be closer to her family.

The women who live in SRO's often mention having a place of their own as a

determining factor in their desire to live there. For nine of the women, they were also the

first residents in a new SRO building that was built not far from the halfway house on the

West side. In addition to having her own apartment, Shorty D, like many of the others,

said that she wanted to live there "because it is going to be something that I can call my

own. And plus it's being built from the ground. I'll be the first one there to live in it." A

few of the women, however, were concerned about the neighborhood in which the SRO

was located, because it was seen as drug-infested. Danielle said, for example, "I'm

scared. I'm scared to move to Sanctuary House because it's in a drug infested area. You know, because it's safer over here [at the halfway house]."

In all, sixteen of the women in this sample lived in their own apartment or in a family home. This was much more common among the former residents (13) than among those were still living in the halfway house when I met them (3). Some of the former residents moved straight into market-rate units, while others transitioned from the half-way house to an SRO or other subsidized unit, and then to their own apartment. Many of the women who move in to their own apartment do so because they want to (immediately or in the near future) live with their children, romantic partner, or other family members. Most of the women who found their own housing live with either a romantic partner or children, or both. For example, Blanche now lives in a Lawndale two-flat that she bought in 2003 with her husband. Lisa S. lives in her family home with her teenaged daughter; her brother lives downstairs. Lauren lives with her daughter and her daughter's baby.

In addition, several of the women chose to find their own apartments because of conflict with the halfway house staff. Sugar and Sasha, for example, moved into an apartment together after they were asked to leave the halfway house after becoming romantically involved. Bennie, who moved into an Englewood apartment where she now lives with her husband, Joe, found housing on her own because of conflict with staff:

> Bennie: . . .So I just got what I could, you know? Now, at the [halfway house] they have an aftercare where they help you relocate. Well, I didn't get that. I didn't get that part of the [halfway house].
>
> AL: Why not?

Bennie: The director there, we didn't see eye to eye. She's no longer there but at the time, I thought it was best for me to move on, you know. They give you a length of time to be there or whatever but that's for some and not for others.

AL: So did they think you were ready to move on and you didn't want to or you didn't want to stay any longer?

Bennie: I think I was asked to move on or I thought it was best to move on.

The majority of the women living in market-rate apartments or houses also live on the South or West sides. Often, they move to neighborhoods with which they are familiar or where their family owns property. Typically, these neighborhoods are predominantly African American and low income. The greatest concentration of women is in Austin, Lawndale, and Garfield Park – neighborhoods that have the highest concentrations of ex-offenders in the state. In addition, these neighborhoods tend to be more affordable. Of those not living on the South or West sides, three are in suburbs, again returning to near where they lived prior to their incarcerations. Sugar and Sasha moved downstate, to Sugar's hometown. Only Starr lives in a market rate apartment on the North side of the city, in West Ridge.

Housing options and children

A substantial drawback is that most of these programs do not allow children (or allow them in a very small subset of the total units they have available), forcing the women to choose to leave their children with the person (often a family member) who has been caring for them until they are released or to secure market rate housing or otherwise find their own housing. For those with minor children – about half of this sample -- choosing between a subsidized program and living with their children was

often a significant source of stress. While a few women permanently had lost or given up custody of their children, more commonly, their children were living with family members or friends temporarily. Regaining custody of their children was often a priority for the women, though one that was difficult to accomplish.

A minority of women were placed in subsidized housing programs that would allow them to live with their children. Two women, Sharon and Iris, were placed in larger apartments so that they could live with their children. Sharon lived with her four children in one of six town homes attached to the 63-unit SRO building in which many of the other halfway house residents lived; Iris moved into a 3 bedroom apartment with one of her three children (with plans for a second to join her once she became financially stabilized) in a new complex with 2, 3, and 4 bedroom units. Andrea and Erica also lived in apartments big enough for their children; these units were subsidized through a program providing rent assistance for women enrolled in school for up to three years. Gertrude moved in a Section 8 apartment with her four children after spending some time in an SRO building.

More commonly, the women have to choose between housing programs or living with their children. Sweetness, Marie, and Starr all had typical experiences in making compromises between housing and living with children. Sweetness chose to move into an SRO apartment when her request for a townhouse (in the same complex where Sharon lived) did not come through

> Sweetness: I had originally put in for the town home, because I had wanted my baby daughter, 15, and my son, 19, to come stay with me, but they consider him as grown, because he was 19, and I don't really consider him grown til he is 21.

So anyway that was put on the backburner so they offered me the SRO instead of a town home, you know, so that's how it end up that I'm living in here, so I was like I'd stay here for awhile, but I'd still want my daughter to come stay with me and my son. If I'm gonna end up getting an apartment just to get the space, you know, he can stay with me til he's 21, . . .and then but I didn't want to turn it down or nothing because you know there's other people that need to get in the program [halfway house] you know. . .so I make room for someone else, you know. . .

AL: So how long do you think you'll stay here?

Sweetness: Well, until I find something bigger. . .

Sweetness's struggle to find an apartment for her two younger children (who were then staying with her oldest daughter) continued throughout the interview period. She was denied housing through another program because she was not considered homeless (because of her SRO unit, which was considered permanent housing). She was still hoping to get into a town home associated with her SRO building, and thought she might have a chance once another resident was evicted. Similarly, in 1997, Marie moved from the halfway house to a rent-subsidized studio apartment in the Kenwood-Bronzeville area. Once the temporary housing assistance ended a year later, she stayed in the apartment, assuming the entire cost of rent, and her 15 year old daughter began living with her while her 17 year old son remained with her mother. She was looking into the possibility of moving into a one- or two-bedroom apartment, but was not sure she would be able to afford to stay in the neighborhood as it underwent gentrification.

Starr said that finding housing was the hardest thing she was dealing with as she prepared to leave the halfway house. She was involved in a bitter fight with her husband to get a divorce and gain custody of their daughter. Her daughter was living with her

husband and his family in another state and she was trying to position herself to get custody of her. Her aim was to find an apartment on the north side, closer to her job and school. She was prepared to pay $450 a month. She ended up moving to a basement apartment with her girlfriend and her girlfriend's teenage son, for $750 a month, which was paid by her father. Starr was in an unusual and fortunate position of getting financial support from her father, something most of the women did not have access to (though many did receive child care help from family).

While most women work during part of their stay at the halfway house, they are unlikely to have enough money saved or the income to move to where they aspire to live. While they would like to live in middle class, heterogenous neighborhoods with low crime and little street life, most often they move into high crime, high poverty, and segregated neighborhoods. Often, they move into a single-room occupancy unit or a scattered site program for drug addicted or homeless individuals. Those that choose instead to find market rate housing often move back to neighborhoods with which they were familiar, and which likewise are often in disadvantaged neighborhoods. While the housing programs provide a valuable and appreciated service to the women, they also have significant drawbacks. An important disadvantage is that the women often must choose between participating in these programs and living with their children; this choice is a significant and stressful decision the women must deal with.

This section detailed both the dreams and realities of the women's housing options. In the next section, I turn to what the neighborhoods mean to the women living in them.

People, places, and things

A constant mantra of self-help alcohol and drug counseling is to "stay away from people, places, and things." The women are taught to avoid people and locations which were connected to their drug use which may serve as "triggers" for drug use that might undermine their self control. In addition, they are encouraged to avoid relationships with others who were still using – to leave these people "where they were" because they could not control others' behavior and make them stop using.

All of the women were inundated with this common drug treatment philosophy of avoiding people, places, and things. They had both required and voluntary participation in self-help and drug treatment groups. While at the halfway house, the women are required to participate in outpatient drug treatment. In addition, they participate in self-help groups (i.e., Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, and Prostitutes Anonymous) at the halfway house. Many had also participated in drug treatment prior to their stay at the halfway house, in prison and/or earlier and many continued to attend self-help groups after they left the halfway house. The women that moved into supportive housing after they left the halfway house (SRO's and scattered site programs) were required to attend a minimum number of meetings a month. In addition, many of the women became employed in the drug treatment field and several took leadership roles in their self-help groups, working as meeting facilitators and leaders.

While there was certainly variation in the level of their involvement, commitment, and interest in these structured programs, all of the women could, and did, articulate the program philosophies. They frequently invoked common catch phrases of Alcoholics

Anonymous and other self-help groups, such as "people, places, and things," "do for me what I could not do for myself," "there but for the grace of God." While they could all recite these messages, they were translated into several very different interpretations. Avoiding "people, places, and things" was a significant theme in how they chose and viewed their neighborhoods and apartments. In addition, some women appropriated the phrase "people, places, and things" but rejected the typical message. Rather than rejecting their old, familiar neighborhoods as a frequent trigger, they embraced them as a reminder of where they are coming from and as an opportunity to be a positive influence in the neighborhood. This section explores these competing interpretations and multiple uses of this self-help message.

Avoiding people, places, and things

Making a move to get away from "people, places, and things" does not necessitate moving to a crime or drug free neighborhood, rather just avoiding *known* areas and people. Most often, the women equate avoiding triggers with avoiding neighborhoods where they had used drugs or offended in the past. For some, this included the entire city, or large portions or it, and for others, it was merely staying away from their former block, immediate neighborhood or people with whom they used drugs. Commonly, they used this phrase to describe the desirability of their current and preferred neighborhoods.

> AL: And what makes, what do you like about that [the idea of living on the north side}?
>
> Vivian: It's nice, quiet. You live by the lake and it's just a nice quiet place. Different environment.

AL: Is this where you were living when you first left Grace House last time you said you were living on the North Side? You kind of want to go back to the same area or different?

Vivian: Yeah, different area, people, places, and things.
**
AL: And you said that when you leave here [halfway house] you'd like to go back to Elk Grove Village?

Patricia: After I leave here I'd like to find a low income home out in the suburbs. I don't want to stay in the city because the city is what gets me to people, places, and things. So there's too much of that around and I was easily influenced by the wrong people. When you're abused and had a lack of love you look for others that's been abused and had a lack of love. Maybe it'll be different when I get recuperated but right now I'd like to stay away from that because that's what got me into trouble.
**
AL: What do you like about living in this neighborhood? [Austin]

Jeanette: I don't know nobody. The only one I know is my landlord. Everybody minds their business. They stick together. It's a community, there's no violence.

AL: What do you like least about living here?

Jeanette: The drugs, you see all the traffic.

AL: What made you choose this as a place to live?

Jeanette: I wanted a new start, away from people, places, and things.
**
AL: What made you chose to live in this neighborhood? [Waukegan/North Chicago]

Tasha: I had chose to live in this neighborhood because it was a lot different than what I was, a lot different than what I was used to living in. It was more peaceful and quiet a little bit more low key than Waukegan, and not too many people would suspect me to be living on this street.

AL: Why?

Tasha: Cause they consider this side more uppity than on the other side of town.

Many of the women clearly appropriate the "people, places, and things" message in describing the value of their current neighborhood and their preferred characteristics of future neighborhoods. Some of them use this to explain the value in a certain neighborhood, or in leaving the city altogether. This is not simply used as a proxy for a crime- or drug-free neighborhood, however. For example, Jeanette (201, above) lived in Austin, one of the neighborhoods with the highest concentrations of ex-inmates in the state of Illinois. While the neighborhood is experiencing some redevelopment, it is largely characterized by extreme segregation, unemployment, poverty, and crime. Yet because Jeanette was from "K-town" (an area with many of the same social problems as Austin) she felt she was in a better area for her.

Avoiding known places was especially common among women who were new to the halfway house or in recovery for the first time. Those who were more experienced with drug treatment or who had been out of prison for longer often learned the limitations of the admonition. While they continued to use the language "people, places, and things" they rejected its intended message, for several reasons. The first argument against the message is the prevalence and ease of finding drugs, thus making impossible the avoidance of them. The flip side to this is that the women have personal agency and can choose whether or not to use drugs, even if they are surrounded by them. Second, some women take comfort in being in familiar surroundings and around familiar people. Again, they emphasize their personal agency, and ability to choose to not to use drugs. Third, some women turn the message around, so that being surrounded by known people, places, and things or being in high crime, high drug use neighborhood is a good thing,

both for them and the community. They are reminded of what they do not want for their lives, and the community sees positive role models of women who have changed their lives for the better.

Drugs are everywhere

Staying away from "people, places, and things" was not always easy or possible; the women had limited opportunities when they moved and many returned to neighborhoods (either in SRO buildings or private apartments or houses) with which they were familiar. As discussed earlier, many of the women aspired to live in drug-free neighborhoods, but did not have the financial resources to do so. Typically, the supportive subsidized housing programs were located in disadvantaged neighborhoods.[3] In addition to these structural constraints, many learned from first hand experience (now and in past attempts at recovery) that there is often not a straightforward relationship between places and drug use. On one side, if they want to use drugs, they will be able to find them even if they are in an unfamiliar neighborhood or city. Being in a new area may slow them down a bit or add an additional step to the procurement of drugs, but would not prevent them from finding them. These women still used the rhetoric of "people, places, and things" but rejected its message. Instead, they interpreted it as irrelevant or misguided. Abra, below, describes the events leading up to her arrival at the half way house:

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[3] Several of the SRO buildings were located in gentrifying neighborhoods in the South Loop and Near West Sides. For the most part, these are established supportive housing facilities. It will be interesting to see what happens to them, however, as the neighborhoods continue to change.

AL: What made you decide to come here?

Abra: I got expedited to Rock Island County to Cook County. So I was in Cook County Jail and there was a former resident who was in county jail that spoke so highly of Grace House. And, you know, when I first, when I left jail on November 3, because everything got thrown out. So, on November 3, I left Cook County Jail and I went out to my mom's and you know, I love my mom and my family and everything but it's like a place where I used at, you know, so before I knew it I started using again. And I had been clean for awhile. You know, I guess my family and stuff like that is a trigger for me. So, I got high for about 13 or 14 days, a bag here, a couple of bags there.

Anyway, this particular, the day before Thanksgiving, I just decided, you know. I mean I just decided really to leave. . .God telling me, because I know better, you know. And I ended up at Haymarket. I mean I had, I don't think many people go into detox with money in their pocket, but I had like 70 bucks in my pocket, you know. Um, I bought a fifth of Absolut and a couple of bags of dope, you know. I still had, you know, a half a bag left when I got in front of Haymarket. So it wasn't like I had reached bottom. I had nice clothes on, and everything. But, um, so when I detoxed off of the heroin, all I could think about was Grace House. Grace House, you know, because each day I was thinking about what, all the things she had told me about Grace House in Cook County and I had the supervisor there, Ms. Cooper to call here. And, like I said, I believe it was an act of God. Because that's the only reason, I believe, that I am really here, because he knew, you know, the opportunities that could be offered to me here at Grace House, and the support team that I really needed in my life.

Being in Chicago where I knew, this is the place where I knew where drugs is at everywhere. Every side of town, even in the suburbs. I have been over there. I have tried to do a geographical change, that's why I ended up in Rock Island, over in the Quad Cities. You know, to stay away from the blows. O.k., well I stayed away from the blows because they didn't have none, but they had rocks. You know, so, that's like they say that in the book, that shit doesn't work. Excuse my expression, but it don't work that geographical thing. If you want to find it you're going to get it. I needed a support team in my life. Like a family, and that's what I get from Grace House, so.

Abra was very familiar with Chicago and where and how to locate drugs in the city. In an earlier attempt at recovery, she had attempted to abide by the message of avoiding "people, places, and things." This time, however, she decided that "people" was the

significant component. Not only did she want to stay away from the "trigger" of her

family, she wanted to find positive social supports. In essence, the absence of negative

social relationships – and the presence of positive relationships – was more crucial to her

than physical location, in part because drugs are omnipresent.

The flip side of this is that drugs in an area do not necessarily lead one to use

drugs. Several women mentioned the presence of drugs in the neighborhoods they lived

in prior to their incarcerations. While they acknowledged the drug use around them, they

did not use it as a negative trait, but rather a mundane and omnipresent characteristic that

was separate from their experience there.

> Sasha: It was a decent neighborhood. Yeah, it was decent. . .Well I lived in that neighborhood before I went to New Jersey. I don't care what anyone says: any neighborhood, there's drugs around. You know, you have to deal with that. But it was clean. You know what I'm saying? It wasn't loud. So it was a decent neighborhood.
> **
> Carrie: Drug dealers everywhere you go. It's the same old thing over there: people walking the streets selling drugs, selling clothes or whatever. Some people out there selling their bodies out on the street trying to get that drug. It's the same thing but I chose not to go that way.
>
> If I do I just have to chose to be strong. If somebody wants to talk to me I got to say, "I can't talk to you. I got somewhere to go" and just leave them where they at. Just tell them I don't have time. Some people'll say, "You think you all that 'cause you clean now." Then you like, "I don't think I'm all that." You know, it's just that I don't want to be bothered with it. That's not my lifestyle no more; that's what I choose not to do. I don't want to do that, drugs. I want to go shopping, go places, do things, stuff like that. I want to enjoy life.
>
> AL: What do you like about living in this neighborhood here?
>
> Carrie: It's nice. It's what you make of it. It don't matter because everywhere you go there going to sell drugs. . .

Carrie clearly uses the rhetoric of the self-help community to explain why the presence of

drugs and prostitution does not affect her. She must "leave them where they at," but she

can do that while surrounded by drug users and sellers, because they are "everywhere you

go." Even when surrounded by drugs – and here she agrees with Abra that they are

everywhere – she can choose not to use them.

What these two perspectives – "if you want it, you'll find it" and "just because it's

there, doesn't mean you will use it" – have in common is the idea that the presence of

drugs and the use of drugs are two independent phenomena. From this perspective, the

women believe that neighborhoods do not matter as much as individual agency and how

one defines one's experience in a neighborhood. In addition, Abra especially, brings in

the importance of the presence of *positive* social supports. Rather than only focusing on

possible negative aspects of a neighborhood, she argues that positive supports are more

significant and can counteract whatever negative behaviors may be around (Vaillant

1988). Whether the women are in the same neighborhoods in which they used drugs and

offended, or in equally disadvantaged and drug-infested neighborhoods, their own drug

use will be based on factors such as positive social supports more so than negative

reminders or triggers.

Knowing people in the area

While the women are taught that avoiding "people, places, and things" is

necessary and good, it is also unsettling to a lot of them. They see moving to a new

neighborhood as a mixed blessing. The women can stay away from old friends and old

locations, but they also sometimes feel anxious and uncomfortable because the area and

the people are unfamiliar. Often this is a feeling that begins while the women are living at the halfway house. Caprice, for example, expressed some nervousness about moving to a new apartment. Before she moved, she said that she wanted to stay on the west side, because she was unfamiliar with the south side (these are the only two options she mentioned as possibilities, and they were the more likely two, given the typical housing options and programs available to the women). While at the halfway house, she mentioned unfamiliarity as both a good and bad thing:

> AL: What do you like about living in this neighborhood?

> Caprice: Because I don't know anybody. It's away from everything; it's away from a lot of things, my old places. I don't want to go to any of the other places. But it's a good thing and it's a bad thing.

> AL: It's good and bad that it's away from everybody?

> Caprice: Right.

> AL: It sounds like you want to stay away from people that you knew before?

> Caprice: Yes.

> AL: O.k., so what's the bad thing about being away from people you used to know?

> Caprice: It's not bad. It's just that I have to learn my way around over again, or go to different places.

She did end up moving to an SRO building on the West side, a few blocks from the halfway house. She was happy with this location because it was close to the el, and she was at least somewhat familiar with the area.

Again, some of the women do take a very pragmatic approach to their decision-making regarding where to live, which is often consistent, or as consistent as their

financial resources allow them to be, with the arguments laid out above about avoiding people, places, and things related to their offending and drug use. Others, however, purposely choose to move back to their old neighborhood, most often where they grew up (typically neighborhoods with a high crime rate and frequent drug use), because they wanted to be in an area that was familiar to them. This is often a primarily affective decision; that is, they want to go back to a neighborhood that has meaning, history, and familiarity in their lives. By the last interview, close to 20 percent (N=9) of the women were living in the same neighborhood in which they grew up. In contrast, only one woman identified her new, current neighborhood as "home."

Moving to a childhood neighborhood was much more common among those who had been out of prison and the halfway house for longer periods of time; half of these women lived in the halfway house roughly a decade ago, and only one woman who was a current halfway house resident lived in her old neighborhood. Often, these moves are preceded by stays at SRO buildings. At times, there is practical exigency in the decision, as, for example, when the women move into a family-owned home or move to help a sick parent. However, the women have strong affective ties to these neighborhoods as well, as links to family or to "happier times." Other women, even when they are unable to live in the neighborhoods (because of pragmatic decisions or financial resources and opportunity), they maintain strong ties to the neighborhood, considering these neighborhoods "home." The vast majority (88 %) of the women thought of the area in which they were raised as "home."

For example, Mary moved back to Englewood after leaving the halfway house. She was comfortable in the neighborhood, because of its familiarity. Mary describes her neighborhood in Englewood in what sounds like undesirable terms: crime is rampant; the kids are "bad," yet she likes living there.

AL: How would you describe this neighborhood?

Mary: This neighborhood, to me, is quiet. I guess since I live at home. It's alright. I've been around here so many years I guess I just adjusted.

AL: What do you like best about living here?

Mary: Mostly because I know people in the area. Because you know crime is real bad in Englewood. So when I leave home I don't have to worry about it being broken into because I know people all around the neighborhood. Somebody's going to see something.

AL: What do you like least about living here?

Mary: Least about it? Let me see. The kids is real bad around here.

AL: How so?

Mary: They're just bad. They like to tear up and destroy things.

While Mary's description begins as though she is talking about the negative aspects of the neighborhood, for her, these are minimized by the neighborhood's familiarity. Even though she grew up in the neighborhood, and used drugs with many others in the neighborhood, she feels comfortable there. This sentiment was echoed by Nina, a co-worker of April (and who had no offending or incarceration history herself). She said that she "don't know no different" when asked both what she likes and does not like about living in Englewood. She went on to say "It's just like any other place. I know everybody; it's not a threat to me. I wouldn't move nowhere else." In spite of the

problems in the neighborhood, which both Mary and Nina were well aware of, they liked living in the neighborhood and had every intention of staying there, even given a (hypothetical) alternative.

While many of the people that Mary knows in the neighborhood do use drugs, and many of them she used to use with, she still maintains a friendly, but distant, relationship with them. This parallels Carrie's (124) response above about "leaving people where they at."

> Mary: . . .I would say, most people in the neighborhood I know around here I used to get high with them, you know, but I tend to shy away. Well, you know, I can speak to them or something, because you just don't do people like that. You know because they got a problem, you know, because I don't want nobody to do me like that if they was clean and I was still getting high. . .

Likewise, Bennie said:

> Bennie: Prostitution, drug trafficking, everybody got a part to play. . .they don't bother me, I don't bother them. There but for the grace of God. Whatever. I just thank God. Where I came from to where I am at.

This attitude is consistent with the messages they receive in self help and group drug treatment programs. They are taught that they cannot control others' behavior, cannot force anyone to get help, and must avoid people who contribute to their own relapse. Thus, they may avoid close contact with others who are using, but attempt to avoid judgment (though they are sometimes accused of being judgmental).

Other women, such as Danielle, believed she needed to avoid people, places, and things, and yet also attributed negative experiences to being in an unfamiliar area.

> AL: Has your experience here [at the halfway house] been different from what you were expecting?

> Danielle: I didn't expect, I don't know I think that for some reason I didn't think that I would accept the program the way I did, but I did, you know. It wasn't as hard as I thought it was going to be. Well I've lived in that environment before but I was out in the suburbs and I was lonely out there. And I was also afraid to come here because it was in Chicago. And I know Chicago like the back of my hand, you know, at least all the bad areas. And I was scared to come here. And I conquered one of my fears. It wasn't like I thought it was going to be. You know, I think that if I would have went back out to the suburbs I would have messed up again. You know, because I would be out there and be lonely and it's like, okay, I keep running from it. You know, so I dealt with it, you know.

While initially wary to be in the city because of possible temptations, Danielle decided instead that it was good for her to be in the city, which allowed her both to face her problems and avoid the loneliness of being in an entirely new place.

Occasionally, they do not see their neighborhood or the people around them as part of their problem. For example, Sunshine blamed her own stubbornness (and the influence of her parents), not the influence of her friends, for her offending. In addition, she was anxious to return to her hometown (she was from New York) to be nearer her three children.

> AL: Okay, and you want to go back to the same neighborhood?

> Sunshine: Yeah. My friends were the ones I was fighting with were telling me to quit my shit and stop it. They were the ones that kept telling me, "No, no, no." I mean they were a good influence on me but I was hardheaded. I wouldn't listen. But, yeah, I'd go back over there. Over in my part there's no gangs and nobody selling drugs so it's not a problem.

> AL: Okay, so you want to be there because your friends are there and your family's there?

> Sunshine: My children. Mainly because of the children.

Sunshine was also fairly unique among these women in that she was far away from home. More typically, their families and children were in Chicago or downstate Illinois. Given

the restrictions on her parole, Sunshine had no direct (physical) contact with her children or family while in Chicago. But again, she did not see a neighborhood influence as an important one in her own offending, so there was no need to avoid any places. The same is true for women, such as Tammy and Sunshine, who do not have a history of drug use. While they may face some stigma in their childhood neighborhood, they are unlikely to face the same temptations the "people, places, and things" admonition is trying to prevent.

Several of the women do not see a problem in returning to their previous neighborhoods. For a few, they do not see their neighborhood or the people in it, as connected to their offending. This perspective is rare, however. More commonly, they find comfort in familiar surroundings and people. Some of the women go a step further, and argue that being in an old neighborhood, or an equally troubled one, is a positive thing for them and the community.

Part of the solution, not the problem

Some women take this a step further – not only do they not need to avoid "people, places, and things" but being around them is a good thing, for them and the community. Most of the women (like ex-offenders more broadly) live in areas rife with drug use and criminal activity, whether these are familiar or new areas. Both affordable market rate rent and subsidized buildings and housing programs tend to be located in these neighborhoods; about half oft hew omen in this sample live in neighborhoods with the greatest concentration of ex-offenders in Illinois (see Appendix A, Map 1). Some women

believed that neighborhood did matter, but they reframed their location as a beneficial one.

From a personal perspective, they could constantly be reminded of where they did not want to return. Angela described her neighborhood (Gresham) as "not a destination, but a place on the way." Angela is not originally from Chicago, and while she would move to Hyde Park (or North Carolina) if she could afford it, she also said that a benefit of her neighborhood is that "it keeps the addiction up front. I look out the window and see where I don't want to be." Angela talked about the undesirability of her neighborhood, and disliking her view of drug dealers out her windows. However, at a minimum, she constantly was reminded by the effects of her own long term drug use. Her own experience in the neighborhood is substantially different from her experiences when she was using drugs; now she works, goes to church, and spends little time on the street. This similar also to Danielle's experience of facing her fears:

> Danielle: . . .And I was also afraid to come here because it was in Chicago. And I know Chicago like the back of my hand, you know, at least all the bad areas. And I was scared to come here. And I conquered one of my fears. . . .

In many respects, the women are taught in drug treatment to fear Chicago (or their neighborhoods). Yet, being in a high drug use neighborhood "keeps the addiction up front" and demonstrates Carrie's point above – that just because the drugs are there, does not mean they will use them. Learning this lesson can be valuable, strengthening the women's sense of self-efficacy.

In addition, the women saw themselves as positive role models for others in the neighborhood. While this contrasts with the common messages of ex-offenders being a

scourge on communities, many of these women see themselves as living in a realm apart from the drug addicts and prostitutes and other "rabble" in their neighborhood (Irwin 1985). As Bennie said "I used to be part of the problem, now I am part of the solution." They see themselves as living in parallel worlds as the criminal or deviant element in their neighborhood. They have, in a sense, elevated themselves to a pro-social status. This parallels how many other non-deviant individuals see themselves, such as the "decent" families of Anderson (1999) or the middle class residents of Groveland (Pattillo-Mc Coy 1999), and their neighbors in troubled neighborhoods. Their position is different from the purely "decent" individuals in that they also have the experience of being the "rabble," and so can serve as a role model and inspiration for other drug users, dealers, and other offenders in the community (Irwin 1985; Anderson 1999). Bennie describes below her experiences in both her current and former neighborhoods, both of which have high rates of drug use, crime, poverty, and other disadvantages.

AL: Where were you living before?

Bennie: 51st and I think I was on Michigan or Indiana.

AL: What was that neighborhood like?

Bennie: Hell. This neighborhood is like hell too, but I'm not a part of the environment, you know, negative wise. <<.. . >> It's that I just wasn't into the nice part of it. This is a dope-stroll, a ho-stroll, everything else but I'm not a part of it so it doesn't affect me, you know, unless I be a neighborhood watch and you know and put a, too noisy, disturbing the peace or something and put a cease and desist on it or something like that. But other than that

I was part of the problem. So it was different because at this point in my life I'm not a part of the problem; you know, I'm part of the solution. So it's different. . . .

AL: What do you like about living in this neighborhood?

Bennie: No one bothers you. The neighbors are friendly. It's accessible. You're by the bus line. There's a college down the street, no abandoned buildings.

AL: Which college is that?

Bennie: Kennedy-King College. So this neighborhood is coming up. I know my alderman, my precinct captains, my committeemen, my state representatives and things like that so. I volunteer in parks. So it's okay.

AL: What do you like least about living in this neighborhood?

Bennie: It needs to come up. There's some nice neighborhoods back east. They got block clubs and everything. It all depends on where you're at in this neighborhood, you know, if you're a home owner or renting. The least thing about it is the prostitutes, the drug trafficking, stuff like that. But, you know, everybody got a part to play in society. You know, they got a place in life. That's their place in life at this time in their lives. So I don't bother them either. I don't knock them. You know, they don't bother me and I don't bother them. You know, because only by the grace of God there go I. You know, so I just thank God. Then the pastor, he owned this building. Even though he passed on they got the church downstairs so I feel this is holy ground for me too. From where I was at, from where I came from to where I'm at.

AL: What made you choose this neighborhood?

Bennie: The rent I could afford. You know, the blessing of giving me. So I just got what I could when I could, you know. . .

While Bennie's two neighborhoods are comparable in many ways, her experience in them is vastly different. She recognizes these similarities, and yet sees the two neighborhoods in very different ways because of her own role. She emphasizes her own efficacy and her ability to shape the neighborhood, either through a neighborhood watch, or merely by not participating in the "dope stroll, ho stroll" and other street activities in the neighborhood. She goes on to talk about conversations she has with others in her

building and neighborhood about her own experiences. She sees these stories as inspirational for others who are in similar positions as to her own, years before.

Lisa S. said she went to the halfway house because "I wanted more stability first before I went back to the neighborhood." After the halfway house, she moved into a single room occupancy building, until she "outgrew it" and moved back into her mother's building "on the west side – the only side I've ever lived on." A decade after her stay at the halfway house, she was still in this building, with her teenaged daughter. Her neighborhood had a lot of drug activity, including "disrespectful guys. They stand around on the corner and sell drugs; they do it right in your face." However, Lisa S.

> "talked to them. We're not used to this. Almost everyone has been here for 25 or 30 years. They don't live here; this block is our business. I went to them like they were somebody. We've always been able to maintain the neighborhood. Kids here respected their neighborhoods; we raised each other's kids. I asked them "Is that fair to us?" They said "no." They probably see how people treat me. It's been much better. Where they went, I don't know."

Lisa S.'s connections in the neighborhood, and her relationships with neighborhood children, also contributed to her getting a job at a drug treatment facility (see also chapter 4). Her supervisor lived across the street and saw her interacting with the children, and invited her to apply for a position. Despite Lisa S.'s own half a dozen stays in jail and nine month prison stay, she identified herself as someone who is a positive force in the neighborhood, helping raise neighborhood children. In addition, however, she could relate to the local drug dealers by treating them with respect. Lisa S. now has a "passion to get everyone to feel what I felt. I never want to go back," and this is apparent in her interactions and attitudes towards her neighborhood.

These women are unique in that they identify themselves primarily with the

"righteous" or "decent" in the neighborhood, while maintaining some connection and

identification with the "rabble" (Irwin 1985; Anderson 1999). In other words, they retain

a "hangover identity" of their offending and/or drug using past (Ebaugh 1988). As

Ebaugh (1988) writes "to be an ex is different from never having been a member of a

particular group or role-set" (p. 149). In this case, the women see this position as

uniquely advantageous, because they can relate to the drug dealers and users, prostitutes,

and offenders in the neighborhood while contributing to the positive aspects of

neighborhood life. In this sense, they take on the role of an informal "professional

ex-" in their daily lives – they redefine their past experiences as necessary for a

meaningful future in helping others with similar problems to their own (Brown 1991;

Maruna 2001). For these women, the neighborhood context is just one area in which they

demonstrate the desire to give meaning to their offending lives and use them to positive

benefit in the future (for example, this also contributed to why they said they chose to

participate in this research and for many, their career choices led them also to

professional ex- careers in drug treatment and other social service positions). Yet our

discussions of professional ex-es tends to focus on employment sector; these women's

experiences suggest it can be much more broad than that. For at least some of the women

(i.e., those moving to new neighborhoods) they can choose to maintain discreditable

status with regard to their offending history (Goffman 1963). They choose when and to

whom to reveal their ex-offender status. Even without revealing their past, however, they

may feel they can help people in the present, based on their first hand knowledge of the

struggles. Yet many in the neighborhood may define them as "offenders," if they know their background, and not allow them into an "ex" category.

Conclusion

The women in this study had common aspirations as to where they wanted to live. They desired safety, quiet, and heterogeneity. While they were unlikely to move into middle class neighborhoods which they typically cited as examples of their ideal neighborhood, many of them did turn their neighborhood context into a neutral or positive factor in their lives. The women clearly fit into, and could articulate, the reasons why they should not live in their old neighborhoods, and yet many managed to do so successfully. This is not to say, however, that neighborhood context is irrelevant, or that the arguments against the concentration of ex-offenders are invalid.

Coercive mobility is clearly a factor in these women's lives and in their neighborhoods (Clear 2002). Yet examples like Lisa S. and Bennie illustrate that the last step in the mobility can be a positive one. Being an ex-offender allows the women to bridge the law abiding residents and those who are engaging in criminal activity in the neighborhood. From a community perspective, these women can then serve to strengthen the informal social control and collective efficacy in the neighborhood. The women themselves feel a sense of purpose and satisfaction in their ability to help others. While some of these women are also working as "professional ex-es," as drug counselors or at the halfway house, others do so only informally (Brown 1991; Maruna 2001). While achieving this level of comfort in the neighborhood may take time, and not all women were interested in serving as profession ex-'s, formally or informally, these examples do

demonstrate that ex-offenders returning to their old or similar neighborhoods also can be beneficial, for them and the community.

Neighborhood is a relatively unimportant factor for these women in terms of their peer groups. The women most often worked outside their neighborhood, and had friendship networks that transcended neighborhood boundaries. Many of their friendships were based in recovery communities, and many kept in touch with former halfway house residents (see chapter 4). While they knew people in the neighborhood and often had family nearby, their social worlds were not limited to the neighborhood. So while peer groups were central both to their offending and desistance, these groups were not neighborhood-based.

While the women managed to successfully negotiate lives in disadvantaged, troubled neighborhoods, there were several macro-level problems. One, the women often spent large amounts of time on public transportation to get to often low paying jobs (see chapter 5). Two, the women frequently transition from the halfway house to a subsidized housing program to their own apartment. These programs were often an invaluable stepping stone for the women. However, the extremely limited number of multiple-bedroom units and rental restrictions often force the women to choose between living with their children and taking advantage of these services. Women who would like to reunite with their children are likely to need additional support services, from childcare to family counseling, and yet they are even less likely to live in a supportive housing program. The women also often stayed in these programs for years, at times in part

because it was easier for them, but also because they tended to work in unstable and low paid jobs that made finding market rate apartments a challenge.

In short, while the neighborhoods in which these women lived clearly lack resources and have many social problems, the women themselves can still live successfully in these neighborhoods. Their peer networks are rarely solely geographically based and the women sometimes chose to contribute informally to social control and collective efficacy in the neighborhood by becoming "part of the solution" and working with offenders in the neighborhood.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF REENTRY

"There is a popular notion that although impersonal contacts between strangers are particularly subject to stereotypical responses, as persons come to be on closer terms with each other this categoric approach recedes and gradually sympathy, understanding, and a realistic assessment of personal qualities takes its place. . . The idea of such a continuum no doubt has some validity. . .In spite of this evidence for everyday beliefs about stigma and familiarity, one must go on to see that familiarity need not reduce contempt." (Goffman 1963, p. 51, 52-53)

As should be evident from the previous chapters, the complexity of these women's lives is not done justice by focusing on any individual aspect of them. The women have individual problems, now and in their past. Many experienced abuse and violence as children or adolescents, and many experienced (and participated in) abuse and violence as adults. Nearly all the women were addicted to drugs, commonly heroin and cocaine, and continue to struggle with the effects of this. Each of these women is negotiating complex sets of relationships, both pro-social, anti-social, and – more commonly and more importantly – somewhere in between. They negotiate relationships with parents, siblings, cousins, and children; these relationships are heavily shaped by the drug use and offending of many family members. Likewise, relationships with romantic partners and friends are heavily shaped and influenced by the drug and offending histories of both parties.

In addition, they are struggling with their position within the social structure. Most of the women come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Most are African American. Nearly all live in neighborhoods characterized by high rates of poverty, high rates of crime, and high concentrations of ex-offenders. The women are likely to experience difficulty gaining steady and well-paid employment. They likely

experience discrimination because of their race, gender, and class background and also because of their often limited educational and employment experiences and their felony convictions.

In many ways, these women are characteristic of women (and men) who are incarcerated in the contemporary United States. They are socially and economically marginalized, often with limited education and employment experiences and prospects, and they experience high rates of drug and alcohol abuse. Yet many of these women also manage to redefine their lives in ways that include the "ex-offender" or "ex-drug addict" labels, but also transcend them. This is not to say that they no longer experience discrimination and stigma, which remains real and meaningful. Rather they construct new meaning in their lives in spite of these stigmatizations (Sommers et al. 1994; Maruna 2001; Giordano et al. 2002). Despite the fact that many of the women were living in high crime, high drug use contexts, they were able to reframe their experience as beneficial to them and the communities. In most cases, they remained in the same social context after their release as before. They maintained or developed relationships with the same or similar people and lived in the same or the same type of neighborhood as when they were offending, yet their relationships and their experiences in their neighborhood changed. In addition to a narrative change, some of the women were able to mobilize cultural and social capital to actively change their lives and work towards neighborhood change.

For these women, reentry cuts across all aspects of their lives and they adapt the messages they get in the halfway house and the self help groups to fit their own social context (see Appendix A, Diagram 1 for an illustration). Their neighborhood is salient in

terms of their self conception and their experiences. Their relationships cut across neighborhood lines, and are often tied – and always influenced – by their experience at the halfway house and in reentry and recovery. They do have meaningful ties within their neighborhoods. For example, it is not uncommon that they live near family members. In addition, they have significant quasi-professional ex relationships with currently offending or drug using "associates." They also have significant relationships with others in recovery that transcend geographic neighborhood. They frequently have to travel great distances to reach jobs and educational opportunities. One thing, then, that the halfway house does for many of them is to strengthen their extra-neighborhood ties.

In some ways; this is very much the story of the halfway house. The halfway house provided them both tangible resources and connections and a way of constructing and understanding their experiences. It gave them a language and a framework. The narrowest interpretation is that this is nothing more than a story of a particular group of residents at this particular halfway house at this particular time. Yet, the experiences of these women are in line with others who experience drug addiction and incarceration. In addition, their experiences have relevance to our understandings of social life much more broadly. While in many ways, their interactions are centered on others with histories of addiction and offending, these women do not exist apart from "normal" society. In this rest of this chapter, I will address two ways in which this study has broader relevance to our understandings of social life. In the first section, I argue that their halfway house/self-help experience can be viewed as a social movement. In the second section, I briefly talk about how their experiences parallel the experiences of other urban residents.

Culture and identity politics

We often take behavior and labels to be static. There is an implication, implicit or explicit, in much literature on offending, social bonds, and differential association, that those with an offending background are a negative influence on others[1] (Sutherland 1947; Hirschi 1969; Matsueda and Heimer 1987; Sampson and Laub 1993; Shover 1996; Warr 1998). We often describe ex-offenders as negative influences on friends, family, romantic partners, and communities, even while a related body of literature discusses the structural barriers they face when exiting the penitentiary (e.g., Western et al. 2001; Western et al. 2002; Pager 2003; Uggen et al. 2004). Yet with these women, we can see the possibility that they redefine themselves as positive forces in the neighborhood and in the lives of their loved ones (Sommers et al. 1994; Maruna 2001; Giordano et al. 2002).

One way to frame this experience is by looking the women's social identity and resistance to the dominant society as an example of identity politics and civic involvement.[2] In this case, the self-help groups are a social movement, specifically in the context of predominantly low-income, African American ex-offenders. While today, self help groups are among the most racially (and otherwise) diverse small groups (Wuthnow 1994), this was not the case from the start. Cain describes members of Alcoholics Anonymous in the framework of drinking "in the culture of middle class Americans," and

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[1] Initial social bond theories, such as Hirschi (1969; see also Sampson and Laub 1993) argued that the normative orientation of the person(s) with whom the offender or potential offender has the bond does not matter. What is relevant is merely the existence of strong social bonds, which will serve as conventionalizing forces, regardless of the behavioral orientation. This aspect of bond theories has been criticized as both logically and empirically flawed (see, for example, Giordano et al. 1986 and Giordano et al. 2002) In addition, in many applications of this theory, the authors assume a pro-social orientation of those individuals (e.g., Matsueda and Heimer 1987).

goes onto to make a distinction: "There is a significant difference between members of Alcoholics Anonymous and the urban nomads described by Spradley in *You Owe Yourself a Drunk* (1970), yet the people in both groups are labeled 'alcoholics'" (1991, p. 211, 212). Roman makes an even stronger point when he writes "the 1935 beginnings of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) involved an unexpected meeting and bonding between two upper-middle-class male WASP's in Akron, Ohio, a prototypical heartland American city" (1997, p. 1762). Not surprisingly, the urban predominantly African American women in this study – who probably share more with Spradley's urban nomads that the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous -- shift the messages somewhat to fit their own experiences. In the process, they make statements about their social identities and their communities.

Some argue that self-help groups are not examples of civic involvement or social movements. For example, Sampson and colleagues exclude self-help groups from their analysis of civil society because "They may be announced like civic events, but self-help gatherings, unlike a community festival or church pancake breakfast, focus on the individual and are typically not open for public display and consumption" (Sampson, McAdam, MacIndoe and Weffer-Elizondo 2005, p. 683, fn 11). In this respect, self help groups are certainly not equivalent to a protest event. Yet, the twelfth step states "having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to *carry this message to alcoholics* and to practice these principles in all our affairs." (emphasis mine, 2006). Here, these groups are not merely religious or spiritual, but also evangelical (Cain 1991).

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[2] Thanks to Andrew Abbott for first suggesting this connection.

Despite the language of individualism and the *self*-improvement focus, wherein people are taught to focus on their own needs, "leave other people where they are at," and avoid "people, places, and things" related to their addictions and offending, these women also focus on storytelling and "carrying the message to others." This storytelling serves both individual identity-building and community ends (Cain 1991; Irvine 1999; Broad 2002; McAdams 2006).

The language of individualism within self help groups masks their social nature. Irvine (1999) describes Codependents Anonymous (CoDA) as a social institution

> But CoDA also qualifies as an Institution, and it is this aspect that I emphasize here. If one thinks of Institutions as relatively permanent, organized patterns of activities and relationships that meet basic needs of a society, then CoDA also fulfills these requirements. CoDA participates in and maintains a set of ideas about selfhood. It diffuses and legitimates ideas about the self in the same sense that the economy legitimates ideas about bureaucratic capitalism (p. 68).

She goes on to say that remaining connected is also crucial for the existence of CoDA, "It contains enough Institutional elements to keep the group running, but conceals and minimizes these intrinsically social obligations with the language of inner 'needs'" (Irvine 1999, p. 70). While Irvine describes CoDA as a departure from Alcoholics Anonymous, in the sense of its role as an institution it is very much consistent with AA and other self-help groups to which these women belong.

In the context of these women, self help groups often do lead to a wider understanding not only of a personal problem, but also of a community problem. There are similarities with community policing meetings, which bring people together to discuss (and ideally try to address) community problems (e.g., Skogan and Hartnett

1997). Many residents attend the meetings when they have an individual problem. Yet by addressing their own issues, they also are ostensibly working towards neighborhood change. While the focus of self help groups is on individual problems, and the focus of community policing is community problem solving, in practice, both often start with an individual concern that has community relevance.

The self help groups that these women in particular participate in are heavily shaped by context. While the professed focus of self-help groups is individual-level substance abuse, drugs, drug users, and drug dealers are seen as scourges on many urban communities – not only by outsiders or politicians, but by the people who are living in these neighborhoods. Thus, while these women are dealing with individual drug addictions, they also are very cognizant of drugs as an issue salient to their entire community. This also means that women see and experience the limitations in the avoidance messages they receive. Avoiding people, places, and things is very difficult when drugs are prevalent and visible, especially when you lack the resources to be able to freely choose a neighborhood and access to private transportation to get to work and visit family and friends (many of whom also are people you should be avoiding). Thus, they learn to redeploy these messages to work for both self- and community-improvement, in their context.

Not only, then, do these meetings provide an opportunity for individual level change, they also provide an opportunity for community-wide change. Many respondents gave impassioned speeches about the problems of drugs in their communities. For them, the problem is not merely an individual one, it is a community

problem. In this passage, Joe describes his own upbringing, his life now, and his

relationship to the broader community:

> My mother and father. I told you I was from something like a broken home, my mother and father was going through, my father was addicted, my mother was addicted to alcohol. But she was like low profile or whatever, so. There was two girls and two boys. I found out through having other sessions like this that I was from a dysfunctional family and a abuse situation that I didn't know, because I hadn't been exposed to any type of psychiatric treatment, or therapist, so of course I wouldn't know, right? But in the process of being in jail and talking to therapists, I find that a lot of my behaviors and a lot of my dysfunctions stemmed from not having a proper bringing up. Which I thought my bringing up was just as good as anybody else's. Because I didn't know no different, no better. You know, so, hey. That helped change my life. To sit down and talk to someone to describe healthy and unhealthy. If you don't know what's healthy and there's no one to tell you what's healthy, you gonna screw for eight years as a grammar school child out of a abusive or broken home and you ain't never have a class in the eight years to explain and show you what is good, what is the way it should be, what will support you and what won't support you, how are you to know, if you're not getting it at home?

> And the state and the – that's why I was telling you about the community. And the people with the money let you live like this, and then talk about you on the 5 o'clock news. About how disabled, dysfunctional you and your community are. And you gonna tell the principal that this is the program for these teachers and this community and this is the way we want it ran. And if you ran it any other kind of way, you not going to be dysfunctional So, you know, that's, you know, it's real, real, real – I was watching a program the other day about the young kids that come from juvenile. They said they got juvenile programs. Why would send a child to boot camp after he get in some trouble when you could take out of a semester of one semester, ah, two weeks out of, three weeks out of a semester and take a classroom to a bootcamp and let – you know what I'm saying? You could do that before they get out of grammar school. You got the money to do that, in a community like this. You got the money to do that now, so why wait til they go, you know what I'm saying? If you got two boot camps in grammar school, you will be a better structured person by high school. It ain't no big deal, but ain't nobody gonna put in for it, so you ain't gonna get it. You know what I'm saying.

> You got half the people in the penitentiary because of their own choices, selling dope, they say. Then you got the mothers they out here struggling trying to get the kids, they said, take care of 'em, and she by herself, you know what I'm saying? And the grandmother gotta keep paying her mortgage, so it's, it's, it's

something that people like myself and yourself will take time out to educate yourself about these situations that can bring a better day for somebody that needs to know. Because when I look at my life and I look back, talking to a therapist and stuff like that, I can see what I didn't know. And what was intended for me to know. But I get it when my life is almost over, you know what I'm saying. So you know, that's, that's, that's hard on a brother [laughs]. That's hard, you know, but they don't, they won't, you see, well the people like Oprah and other guys on TV and they'll knock the brother, you know what I'm saying. "Well, he said he can do this."

But when you really go through this, what it takes in the mind for a person that be functionable in a proper manner, it takes more than that. You know because people need affection, they need love, they need, you know, they need encouragement and stuff, you know, so. There's a few of us that get like living on a [. . .] in a grave, man, I got, look, when I got a dream, I got a dream, most everyone I know is dead. So, you know, I'm 57, so look at all the guys that died that didn't get to 57 that I know in the street that committed suicide or haray caray or the really genocide, they kill themselves from the drugs and the dysfunction and the things that they do, selfish stuff, like breaking out of a window in […] but I could have gotten shot or killed, you know what I'm saying, different stuff that go on and then you say, well that's because he did that, he did it on his own, he put hisself in that position, in that particular manner. But when you really take a good look at it, I don't think so. I don't, you know what I'm saying, as an older person who's more clear, I don't think so. It's a little more stuff go with that. . . .But there's a lot of good minds that are being wasted, that could be of some help to us to get better. We're sick, this is a sick nation, we need work.

Joe goes back and forth between individual choices, family "dysfunction," neighborhood disadvantages, and broader structural factors, all of which influenced his experiences. While few of the people that I interviewed did not take responsibility for their own actions, they also recognize the widespread prevalence of drug use, and the problems it (and they) caused. For example, Sunshine never used drugs herself, though she was involved in drug trafficking. Because of her drug charges, she was required to participate in drug treatment programming. She said through this she learned about the consequences of her actions, "I see what people are going through. I was a part of it. I

helped. It's sad. It hurts. They tell some stories of what they've been through, and what they've done."

An important aspect in this case is how the women's role as ex-offenders and drug addicts in poor, disadvantaged neighborhoods impacts their social identity. The women clearly do not forget their former identity. They rarely publicly transcend the label of drug addict or offender, and never do they forget their own experiences and their own history (see also Ebaugh 1988). Thus, both personally and publicly, these women cannot transform themselves into purely law abiding residents; they are always ex-offenders. Yet they are also often in high crime, high drug use contexts, and so they become a middle-layer in a social hierarchy, between the purely law abiding and currently offending groups. Their position allows them to negotiate between these two groups.

This ties in with idea of professional ex-es, who use their previous experience and redefine their past as necessary for a meaningful future (Brown 1991). Typically, professional ex-es are just that – professionals. For example, drug addicts work as drug counselors, thereby adding meaning and significance to their pasts. Here, however, the possibility is more widespread. In this case, the women see their position as uniquely advantageous, because they can relate to the drug dealers and users, prostitutes, and offenders in the neighborhood while contributing to the positive aspects of neighborhood life. Here, the possibilities and benefits of their quasi-professional ex- status are broader in that it benefits both the individual and community and is not necessarily tied to their professional life. It is fairly common for these women to work as professional ex-es, as

drug counselors or in the drug treatment and reentry field. For example, Lisa S. works for a drug treatment program, and was hired after her neighbor, now her supervisor, saw her interacting with neighborhood youth and offered her a job (see also Chapter 5). Others, like Bennie, work in completely unrelated fields, yet still see themselves as ex-offenders, with a chance to positively impact their community. For Bennie, this involves both informal activities, like telling her story to others in her neighborhood that may be experiencing some of the same things she did, and formal activities, like registering people to vote.

This may be a uniquely gendered process, in that women may still be excluded from existing power structures in their communities, leaving them few options other than self-help grassroots organizations (Steffensmeier 1983; Taylor 1999; Miller 2000). In addition, the women may take on a somewhat maternal role with others in the community. In general, women may be less feared by other residents, even those who knew them as drug users and offenders, because of their gender – again uniquely situating them to work for community change. Age also may play an important role. For example, in the passage above, Joe talks about the importance of his age in shaping his view of his experiences. He also goes into jails to tell detainees about his experiences. In addition, his commitment to changing neighborhood life is as strong as his wife, Bennie's. While Joe identifies himself as a former "thug," his age makes him less threatening and others in the neighborhood may perceive him as more worldly.

Self help groups are limited in that they cannot eliminate crime, create jobs, and so on (Wuthnow 1994). However, here we can see how an individual-centered group

also can have community benefits (Lichterman 1995). Thus self-fulfillment and the public good need not be contradictory. Lichterman describes this balance in his study of the U.S. Green movement, "Whereas communitarians worried that a focus on private life would detract from public responsibility, Green activists focused on choices in their everyday private lives – choices of occupation, for instance – as aspects of public responsibility" (1995, p. 287). The choices these women make, whether they are occupational, residential, or interactional, impact their community and can affect community change and the women often frame their choices in this way. When they saw themselves as an asset to their communities, precisely because they were an ex-offender or ex-drug addict, they were taking public responsibility through their private lives.

In addition, their "personalized solidarity" with others from their self help groups was a significant part of their lives as ex-offenders and ex-addicts (Lichterman 1999; Broad 2002). In addition to the self-help messages to "leave people where they're at," among their friends, they valued traits like "calling me on my shit," and "telling me like it is." Many of them also made central to their identities the need to tell others about their experiences in order to help others who were going through much the same thing. This took the form of leading AA or NA meetings, telling individual acquaintances or friends, and talking to me. They wanted to reach other addicts and other offenders, but also those who had no experience or "real" knowledge of addiction, offending, and incarceration, including those in a position of power. As Carolyn said, explaining why she got involved in this project, "because nobody tells the truth. Maybe somebody will be in charge and

remember this. Who's running it and do you have their ear?" Again, their experiences were not only about them as individuals, but also about broader community impact.

In this sense, the experience of these women can be described as both an expressive and instrumental social movement (Bernstein 1997). Their involvement with self help groups helps them frame and articulate their experiences (Cain 1991; Irvine 1999) and it helps them articulate and work against community problems. For these women, the self help community (the halfway house), rather than a geographically defined community, becomes central to their lives, but also with the possibility of geographically-centered community change. Almost all of these women remain involved with the ideology of self help groups, formally or by maintaining informal networks – which are not geographically based. Yet they are still involved with neighborhood life, and their neighborhood is often important to their life and sense of self. Wilson (1987, p. 112) wrote "the character of civic involvement must be understood in terms of the social ecology of entire neighborhoods, rather than as an attribute of individuals or families alone." This example illustrates the importance of both geographically defined neighborhoods and non-geographically based social networks, and how these two factors interact and intersect.

This also demonstrates the importance for these women to have positive social supports. This social context, however, need not be geographically based for the women to successfully desist from offending. Many of these women's needs are met outside the neighborhood – for example, rarely do they work in their neighborhood, and often their friends and family live in different neighborhoods. With these non-geographically based

supports, they can successfully negotiate life in what are typically seen as detrimental neighborhoods, and by doing so, they can work to improve these neighborhoods. Thus the women are neither resisting nor complying with elites and elite messages (here represented by the halfway house and more broadly the self help movement), but rather articulating whole new meanings of recovering from addiction and offending (Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003).

Beyond reentry

This project is an attempt to describe the social process of reentry for women leaving the criminal justice system. These women were identified and interviewed because of their involvement (most often incarceration) with the criminal justice system. As with others taking a narrative, life history approach, I also sought to show the human side of these women, to reduce the perceived social distance between offenders and nonoffenders or deviants and nondeviants (see, for example, Liebow 1995; Duneier 1999; Maruna 2001; Laub and Sampson 2003). And, in each section, I referred to some of the ways in which their experiences parallel those of residents of urban neighborhoods (Taub et al. 1984; Anderson 1999; Pattillo-Mc Coy 1999; Emerson, Chai and Yancey 2001), African Americans and women (Kirschenmann and Neckerman 1991; Browne 2000; Lin 2000), drug users and alcoholics (Cain 1991), and male offenders (Sutherland 1947; Hirschi 1969; Sampson and Laub 1993; Laub and Sampson 2003). These references serve not only to put the experiences of these women into some broader social context, but also point to the very real complexity of their lives and the complexity of the role of the criminal justice system in their lives. These women are not merely ex-offenders or

recovering drug addicts. I have attempted to demonstrate how these roles and

relationships shape and are shaped by their experiences as ex-offenders. In many ways,

this label infuses every aspect of their lives, and yet it is also limiting. While in many

ways this is a central facet of their lives, but their lives also have meaning as mothers,

sisters, daughters, neighbors, co-workers, and friends. These other roles that they play or

have played also are significant, and their experiences in these regards contribute to our

knowledge and understanding of these social roles.

APPENDIX A

SUMMARY OF RESPONDENTS

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Table One: Demographic Characteristics

	Current residents	Former residents	Total	IDOC (women only)[a]
Number of respondents	24	25	49	3543
Age	39.8 years	42.8 years	41.3 years	33 years
Race				
African American	79.2 %	96 %	87.5 %	69 %
White	8.3 %	4 %	6 %	26 %
Latina	12.5 %	0 %	6 %	5 %
Marital status				
Single	62.5 %	64 %	63.3 %	67.7 %
Married	0 %	16 %	8.1 %	11.7 %
Separated/divorced/widowed	37.5 %	20 %	28.5 %	20.2 %
Education				
Less than HS	54.2%	4 %	28.6 %	56.5 %
HS diploma/GED	16.7 %	28 %	22.5 %	30 %
Some college	29.2 %	68 %	48.9 %	13.5 %
# with minor children	58.3 % (average 1.08)	48 % (average 1.08)	53.1 % (average 1.08)	85 %[b]
Network members*: **Family:**				
Parent	1	3	4	
Child	0	1	1	
Sibling	3	1	4	
Romantic partner	0	3	3	
Cousin	0	1	1	
Friends	1	10	11	
Co-workers	0	1	1	

[a] Fiscal Year 2002 releasees (as of May, 2002). Information provided by the Illinois Department of Corrections Research and Analysis Unit.

[b] All children.

Table Two: Offending Histories

	Current residents	Former residents	Total	IDOC
# incarcerations	1.79	2.84	2.54	1.8
Total months in prison	37.7	43.3	40.5	--
Average age at first incarceration (range)	32.3 (19-51)	31.1 (20-47)	31.7 (19-51)	--
Incarcerations	Drug related (possession, delivery)			36 %
	Theft or larceny			32 %
	Forgery			10 %
Self report offenses	Drug related			76 %
	Assault or battery			48 %
	Theft or larceny			46 %
	Prostitution			46 %
	Driving without a license			46 %

Table Three: Respondent Characteristics

	Age at interview	Race	# kids	Age at 1st incarc.	# prison Sent.	Total mos. Incarc.
Caprice	47	African American	1	34	2	132
Shorty D	38	African American	2	36	1	16
Albany	45	African American	2	27	4	52
Sharon	34	African American	4	30	1	7
Tammy	33	African American	0	19	1	168
Danielle	47	African American	3	n/a	0	n/a
Sheila	48	African American	2	44	3	28
EJ	45	African American	1	44	1	9
Winifred	54	African American	1	51	2	20
Vivian	37	African American	0	19	3	60
Sweetness	43	African American	4	39	3	39
Melvina	47	African American	3	n/a	0	n/a
Sunshine	35	Latina	3	30	1	66
Sugar	31	Caucasian	1	21	2	46
Heidi	28	African American	4	25	1	33
Shelly	38	African American	4	32	3	36
Patricia	42	Latina	3	41	1	4
Sasha	36	African American	0	31	2	37
Amanda	38	African American	1	31	3	36
Libra	45	African American	2	45	1	2
Millie	38	African American	1	24	3	18
Abra	42	African American	1	n/a	0	n/a
Starr	30	Caucasian	1	28	2	18
Carrie	34	African American	7	27	3	78
Jeanette	34	African American	5	25	3	54
Tasha	32	African American	0	21	3	27
Andrea	35	African American	1	26	3	57
April	48	African American	1	38	1	12
Allison	42	African American	3	23	10	93
Mary	41	African American	1	33	2	19
Linette	34	African American	5	27	3	42
Marie	38	African American	2	29	1	10.5
Delilah	54	African American	4	25	5	156
Jane	55	African American	0	37	3	89
Victoria	37	African American	3	26	4	68
Bennie	48	African American	3	28	3	54
Dee Dee	39	African American	5	24	5	58
Edie	39	African American	1	33	2	48
Lisa D.	46	African American	6	38	2	7.5
Carolyn	57	African American	2	47	1	54
Blanche	47	African American	1	36	2	28
Corinna	48	African American	2	36	4	8.75
Angela	42	African American	0	35	2	24
Erica	33	African American	2	20	2	60
Lisa S.	47	African American	3	37	1	9
Lauren	41	African American	1	27	3	51
Junelle	50	African American	1	46	1	4
Gertrude	38	African American	4	30	1	5
Adena	47	African American	3	39	4	23

Table Four: Respondent Attrition Summary[a]

Women (N= 49)

number of interviews completed	Current			Former			Totals
	1	**2**	**3**	**1**	**2**	**3**	
No call back	1	0	1	1	1	2	6
No forwarding information	2	2	1	0	2	0	6
Reincarceration	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Moved out of town	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
Total Attrition	**3**	**3**	**3**	**1**	**4**	**2**	**16**

Network Members (N= 26)

	Current	Former	Total
Reasons for attrition No call back	0	1	**1**
(Re)incarcerated	1	1	**2**
Drug treatment	0	1	**1**
No forwarding info.	0	2	**2**
Total attrition	**1**	**6**	**6**
Only one attempt made	1	0	1

[a] This chart summarizes the number of interviews I completed with each respondent. In several cases, I covered multiple interview guides in one interview, either because I reestablished contact, or knew the woman wouldn't be available again. In one case, I interviewed the woman twice, but the second interview incorporated both Time 2 and Time 3 interview guides. In one case, I interviewed a woman three times, but covered all four interview guides; and in one case, I interviewed a woman twice, but covered all four interview guides.

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Table Five: Timing of Respondent Attrition

	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 4
Caprice				
Shorty D				
Albany				
Sharon				
Tammy				
Danielle				
Sheila				
EJ				
Winifred				
Vivian				
Sweetness				
Melvina				
Sunshine				
Sugar			a	
Heidi			b	
Shelly				
Patricia		c		
Sasha		a		
Amanda			d	
Libra				d
Millie				e
Abra		e		
Starr				
Carrie		c		
Jeanette			b	
Tasha				
Andrea				
April				
Allison			e	
Mary				
Linette				
Marie				
Delilah				
Jane			b	
Victoria		e		
Bennie				
Dee Dee				
Edie				e
Lisa D.				

---

[a] Moved to Rockford. (2)

[b] Moved; no forwarding information. (3)

[c] Left halfway house under bad circumstances; no forwarding information. (2)

[d] Letter returned "addressee unknown." (2)

[e] No response to messages. (7)

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	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 4
Carolyn				
Blanche				
Corinna				
Angela				
Erica				
Lisa S.				
Laren				
Junelle				
Gertrude				e
Adena		f		e

---

[f] incarcerated (1)

Table Six: Patterns of Employment and Recidivism

1995-1997 (former)	1998-2000 (former)	2001-2003 (former)	2003 (current)	2004 (current)
Blanche [a][b]	**Lisa D.**	**Victoria**	**Sharon**	**Caprice**
Marie	**Delilah**	**Edie**	**Vivian**[b][c]	**Sheila**
April	**Angela**	**Junelle**	**Sweetness**	**Sunshine**
Lisa S.	**Erica**	**Mary**	Danielle[b]	**Heidi**
Bennie	Corinna[b]	**Allison**	EJ[b]	**Sasha**
Lauren	Gertrude[b]	**Dee Dee**	Winifred[b]	**Amanda**
Tasha	Carolyn	Linette	Melvina[b]	**Starr**
		Adena[b]	Shorty D[b]	**Shelly**
		Jane	Tammy	**Libra**
		Jeanette[b]		**Millie**
		Andrea		Sugar
				Albany
				Abra
				Patricia[d]
				Carrie[d]

[a] Bold indicates employed at time of last interview

[b] reported to me drug use, offending, and/or incarceration subsequent to halfway house stay

[c] stayed at halfway house twice

[d] left halfway house after first interview; no contact since then

Map One: Participant's Residences, Post-Halfway House[a]

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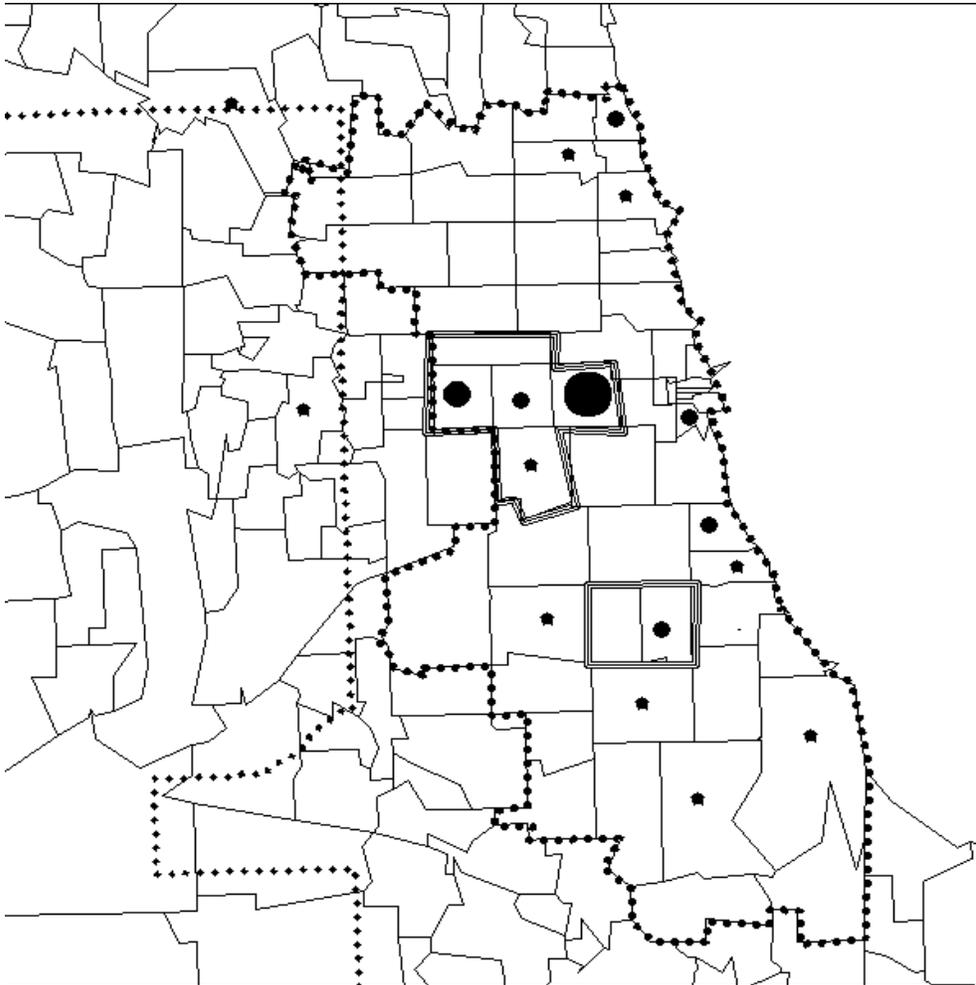
[a] This map is based on the last known address of the 42 women whose addresses I knew. Three of
those 42 are not on this map – one was living in the northern suburbs and two were living in Western
Illinois. The triple-line outline represents those neighborhoods with the greatest concentrations of prisoner
releasees in Illinois (La Vigne et al. 2004).

Diagram One: The Social Context of Reentry

Self Help Movement

**Education
Employment**

Neighborhood

**Family
Friend
Romantic**

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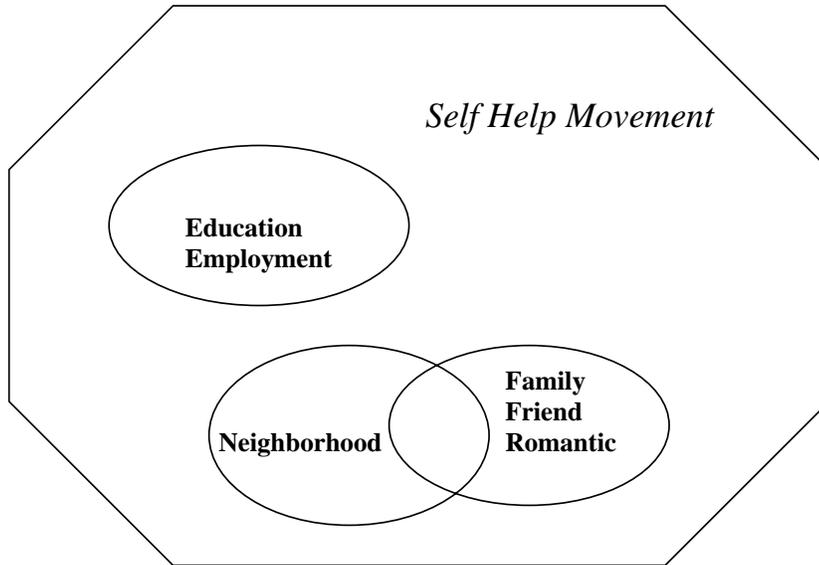
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDES

INTERVIEW GUIDES: EX-OFFENDERS

TIME 1

General Background (Current Residents)

1. How long have you been at GH?

2. How did you end up at GH? (court ordered, voluntary participation, how heard about it) Why did you choose to come here?

3. What do you like best about your experience here?

4. What do you like least?

General Background (Former Residents)

1. How long ago did you live at GH?

     1a. How long did you stay there?

     1b. How did you end up at GH? (court ordered, voluntary participation, how heard about it) Why did you choose to go there?

     1c. What do you like best about your experience there?

     1d. What do you like least?

2. Do you keep in contact with Grace House staff? In what ways? How often do you talk to them/visit GH?

3. How long have you lived at your present address?

     3a. What made you choose this as a place to stay?

     3b. Who do you live with (document relationships)?

(Current and Former)

5. What is your birthdate? _____/_____/_____

6. Where were you born?

7. What neighborhood do you consider "home"?

> 7a.. Why do you consider that neighborhood home? (grew up there, was living there prior to incarceration, lived there longest)

8. How far did you go in your schooling? [Check one.]

___ Some elementary (primary) school	___ Associates' Degree (2 yr. degree)
___ Graduated elementary school	___ Bachelor's Degree (4 yr. degree)
___ Some high school	___ Some graduate studies
___ Graduated high school	___ Obtained graduate degree
___ GED	(Master's, Ph.D., J.D. M.D.)
___ Some college	

9. What is your current marital status?
    ___ Single, not married by state law
    ___ Not married by state law, but live with someone as married
         How long have you lived with this person? ___ years ___ months
    ___ Married, by state law
         How long have you been married to this person? ___ years ___ months
         How many times have you been married? ___
    ___ Widowed
         How long ago did your husband pass? ___ years ___ months ago
    ___ Separated
         How long have you been separated? ___ years ___ months
    ___ Other (Specify:)_____

10. Are you currently involved in a (another) romantic relationship?
     10a. If YES, for how long? _____

     10b. How did you meet? How did you become involved?

11. Do you have any children?
     If YES: Name, Age, Sex, Where Living? Who has custody?

     11a. Do you have contact with them? What type of contact (in person visits, letters, phone calls)? How often?

Incarceration History

12. Are you currently involved with the criminal justice system?
_____ parole
_____probation
_____not involved

     12a.. If parole: do you have any special conditions in your parole agreement?

     12b. When does your parole end?

13. Have you spent time in a city or county jail? How many times have you spent time in a city or county jail?
     If YES,   13a. How many times? _____
                    13b. Awaiting trial? _____
                    13c. Sentence? _____

14. Have you ever spent time in a state prison?
     If YES,   14a. How many times? _____
                    14a1. How many for parole violations? _____
                    14a2. How many for new offenses? _____

15. Can you walk me through each of your prison incarcerations? Can you tell me the year you caught the case, what you were convicted of, the length of your sentence, the time you served, and the penitentiaries you served time in for that offense.

     15a. Did you ever spend time in segregation? (Either administrative or disciplinary)?
          15a1. How many months? _____

16. Did you have any money when you released this past time?

     16a. How much?

     16b. Where did you get it? (check all that apply, and give approx amt)
          _____family   _____from IDOC
          _____friends   _____saved from prior to
          _____prison job   incarceration

17. Did you have any photo id ?

18. Did the facility you were in give you or offer to give you any clothing when you were released?

19. Did the facility you were in give you or offer to give you a bus or train ticket when you were released?

20. Did they give you or offer to give you anything else?

21. Did you go through any pre-release programs prior to your release?
      If YES: 21a. Which one? What was the name of it?

                    21b. What was the official purpose?

                    21c. What did you actually do?

                    21d. How helpful was it in terms of helping you get back into the community?

22. What person or persons most helped you get ready for release (probe for unofficial/informal support and type of support they received)? What makes you choose that person?

23. Did you change at all during your most recent time in prison?   How?

 (If currently on parole):

24. How many parole officers have you had since you were released?

25. Overall, how helpful has your parole/probation officer been in helping you get back into the community?

26. How many times have you seen your parole officer in the past month?
                    _____ in person visits, announced
                    _____ in person visit, unannounced
                    _____ phone (P.O., not check in)

      26a. How often do you have to check in with the parole office?

      26b. How much time, on average, would you say you've spent talking to your parole officer? _____ hrs _____ min

Release reality versus expectations

27. Have you changed at all since you've been at GH?

      27a. If YES, how have you changed?

28. What are some of your personal goals now?

28a. What do you think it will take for you to reach your goals?

29. What worries you the most?

30. Has your experience since joining GH been different from what you were expecting?
      30a. If YES, how so?

31. I'm going to ask you about some things that might be goals of yours since coming to GH. For each of these, please tell me if this has been something you've tried to do, and if so, how difficult it has been to accomplish it.

	Goal?	Very difficult	Somewhat	Not at all
a. restore relationships with family?				
b. restore relationships with children?				
c. regain custody of children?				
d. reestablish contact with old friends?				
e. be accepted socially?				
f. stay alcohol free				
g. stay drug free				
h. provide yourself with food				
i. stay away from criminal activity				
j. avoid a parole violation				
k. stay in good health				
l. make enough money to support yourself				
m. further your education				
n. provide yourself with adequate housing				
o. find a job				
p. find a job you enjoy				
q. keep a job				
r. other				

32. What would you say is the hardest thing you're dealing with now?

Employment

33. Are you currently working? Where?

      33a. How did you find this job?

      33b. How long have you been there?

      33c. Is it full or part time?
         _____Full time
         _____Part time: 36c1. How many hours a week?

      33d. How do you get along with your supervisor? Your co-workers?

      33e. How long do you plan to stay at this job?

      33f. What do you like most about your job?

      33g. What do you like least?

34. Are you currently looking for a job, or a new job?
      If YES: 34a. How are you going about your search? (newspaper, word of mouth)

                   34b. How much time do you spend each week looking?

                   34c. Have you had any interviews? If YES, how many?

      If NO: 34d. Why aren't you looking for a job?

Neighborhood

35. Are you living in the same neighborhood as you were before your incarceration/ before coming to GH?

36. If no, where were you living before?

      36a. What is that neighborhood like?

37. What do you like about living in THIS neighborhood?

38. Where do you hope/plan to live after you leave GH?

39. What makes you want to live there? (probe for familiarity vs. newness)

Substance use (past and present) (remind about confidentiality)

40. I'm going to ask you some questions about possible substance use. I'm going to read a list of substances, both legal and illegal. I'd like you to first tell me if you've used these substances in the past six months. For each that you have used, I'll ask you how often, and how much. If you haven't used them in the past six months, I'll ask if you've ever used these substances, and again how often and how much for those you have. I'll also ask how long you've used each of them that you have used at some point.

	Daily, or almost daily	At least once a week	At least once a month	Less than once a month	None	How much in a typical day?	For how long?
Alcohol (beer, wine, liquor): 6 MOS						____ ounces	
EVER							
Cigarettes/ tobacco: 6 MOS						____ packs	
EVER							
Marijuana/cannabis: 6 MOS						$	
EVER							
Heroin: 6 MONTHS						$	
EVER						$	
Methadone: 6 MONTHS							
EVER							
Pain killers: 6 MONTHS							
EVER							
Sedatives/tranquilizers: 6 MOS							
EVER							
Cocaine (powder, crack): 6 MOS						$	
EVER							

	Daily, or almost daily	At least once a week	At least once a month	Less than once a month	None	How much in a typical day?	For how long?
PCP: 6 MOS							
EVER							
LSD/hallucinogens: 6 MOS							
EVER							
Crystal Meth: 6 MOS							
EVER							
Other amphetamines: 6 MOS							
EVER							
Inhalants: 6 MOS							
EVER							
Other							

41. Has drinking or using drugs been the cause of any problem in the past six months? (losing a job, getting arrested, getting divorced, arguments, accidents)

42. Has it ever been the cause of any problem? How so?

43. Have you ever received substance abuse treatment (AA, NA, outpatient, inpatient, detox, methadone).

43a. When?

43b. What made you decide to get treatment? (probe for whether it was their idea, or a requirement of a shelter, program, probation, parole, etc.)

43 c. Are you still getting treatment?

43d. Was/is it helpful? How so?

Illegal Activity

44. I'm going to list off various ways you may have broken the law. This would include anything that could have gotten you arrested, if you'd been caught. Reminder: everything you tell me is confidential, both from the police and from GH staff (check all that apply; probe for circumstances for each offense). First, if you can tell me if you've

EVER engaged in these things (whether or not you've been caught) and second, if you'd participated in any of them since coming to GH:

	Yes	No
Burglary—residence		
Burglary—business		
Theft from a vehicle		
Theft of a motor vehicle		
Robbery—business		
Robbery—person		
Assault		
Battery		
Theft/larceny		
Forgery		
Fraud		
Drug dealing		
Drug possession		
Vandalism		
Criminal sexual assault		
Homicide		
Arson		
Prostitution		
Mob action		
Drinking in public		
Gang loitering		
Disorderly conduct		
Contempt of court		
Throwing gang signs		
Using profanity at cops		
Gambling / shooting dice		
Driving without a license		
Other (Specify:) _____		

For any checked, probe for circumstances around offense: who did you do this with? When was this (number of months/years ago)? How often (regular, rarely, once)? Did you/others get caught?

45. Are you currently involved in a street gang?

    45a. If NO: Have you ever been involved in a street gang?

    If ever involved:

45b. Which gang:

45c. When did you first become involved (age or year)?

45d. How long were you involved??

45e. Could you describe the nature of your involvement? What did you do with the gang? Would you say you were more or less involved than other members, or about the same level of involvement? How much time did you spend with fellow gang members?

Victimization

46. Have you ever been the victim of a crime?
   If YES: 46a. About how many times would you say you've been victimized?

   46 b. Can you walk me through the times you've been victimized? Tell me what happened, when, who did it to you, and what happened afterwards?

Police contacts

47. Have you been stopped by the police since you came to GH?

   47a. How many times?

   47b. What happened? What were you doing when you were stopped, what was the outcome?

48. Have you been arrested since you came to GH?

   48a. How many times?

   48b. What were the charges?

   48c. What's happening with the case?

Networks
Now, in this last section I am going to ask you questions about other people in your life, friends, family, and acquaintances that you consider to be important to you in some way:

49. First I'd like you to think about your close family members and friends. By close I am talking about people who look out for you, who would do you a favor even when you don't ask them to. The kind of people who've got your back, and you've got theirs. (ask for family and friends).

      49a. What is his/her name?

      49b. Sex?

      49c. How has this person helped you in your reintegration? What makes you close?

      49d. Has he/she ever been in a gang?

      49e. Has he/she ever been in prison?

50. What about prior to your incarceration/ prior to coming to GH. Are there people you were close to then, that you don't consider close friends or family now?
      If YES   50a. What happened? Why have you lost touch with these people? When?

51. Who on your list tends to help you the most in terms of staying out of trouble?

52. Does anyone on your list tend to get you into trouble, or close to trouble?

53. Has anyone else helped you since you've been at GH? (probe for GH staff, residents, employers) How so?

54. Lastly, I'd like to try to talk to as many people in your life as possible, to get their take on your experiences with them. Again, their participation is entirely voluntary, and everything they tell me is confidential. I won't talk to anyone that you don't want me to talk to or who doesn't want to talk to me. Do you have any questions about what I'd like to do?

The first step is to get a list of people and their relationships to you. For now, I'd like you to fill out this sheet of people you're willing to let me talk to. Next, I need you to ask them if it is o.k. for me to contact them. I will give you information about the project that you can give them, and they can contact me if they are interested in participating. I will only talk to adults – that is, people who are 18 years or older.   I added column headings on this sheet, to encourage you to think about these kinds of people, but you can include anyone you want. (Collect first names and relationships)

TIME 2 — `Formatted: Font: Bold`

General Background

1. Are you still living at Grace House?

       If NO: 1a. When did you move out?

                  1b. Where are you living now?

                  1c. What made you choose to live here/there?

                  1d. Who do you live with?

                  1e. What do you like about living in this neighborhood?

                  1f. What do you like least about living in this neighborhood?

2. Do you keep in contact with Grace House staff? In what ways? How often do you talk to them/visit GH?

3. Are you currently enrolled in school?
        If YES: GED   _____
                         High school   _____
                         College   _____
                         Post BA   _____

4. Are you currently working?
        _____Full time
        _____Part time
        _____Not working

        4a. How long have you worked there? _____

        4b. What is your position? _____

        4c. How did you find out about this job?

        4d. What do you like best about it?

        4e. What do you like least?

4f. How long do you plan to stay there?

4g. Are you currently looking for a (new) job?

5. Are you currently involved in a romantic relationship?
    If YES   5a. For how long? _____
                   5b. How did you meet? How did you become involved?

6. Are you currently involved with the criminal justice system?
    _____ parole   When does it end?
    _____probation   When does it end?
    _____not involved

        6a. Do you have the same parole officer?

        6b. How helpful has he/she been?

Release reality versus expectations

7. Looking back, do you think you changed at all while you were at GH? If YES, how did you change?

8. What are some of your personal goals now?

9. What do you think it will take for you to reach your goals?

10. Right now, what worries you the most in your life?

    10a. Last time you said _____ worries you. How is that going?
    Has anything changed about that in the past four months?

11. I'm going to ask you about some things that might be goals of yours in the time since you first came to GH. For each of these, please tell me if this has been something you've tried to do, and if so, how difficult it has been to accomplish it.

	Goal?	Very difficult	Somewhat	Not at all
a. restore relationships with children?				
b. regain custody of children?				
c. restore relationships with other family?				
d. reestablish contact with old friends?				

	Goal?	Very difficult	Somewhat	Not at all
e. be accepted socially?				
f. stay alcohol free				
g. stay drug free				
h. provide yourself with food				
i. stay away from criminal activity				
j. avoid a parole violation				
k. stay in good health				
l. make enough money to support yourself				
m. further your education				
n. provide yourself with adequate housing				
o. find a job				
p. find a job you enjoy				
q. keep a job				
r. other				

12. What would you say is the hardest thing you're dealing with now?

Substance use (past and present) (remind about confidentiality)

13. Last time, you said that you had used _____ in the past. Can you tell me about how you first got involved with X? When did you start? How did you first get exposed to it?

14. I'm going to ask you some questions about possible substance use. I'd like you to first tell me if you've used these substances in the past four months. For each that you have used, I'll ask you how often, and how much.

	Daily	once a week	once a month	< once a month	None	How much in a typical day?
Alcohol (beer, wine, liquor)						
Cigarettes/ tobacco:						_____
Marijuana/cannabis:						$
Heroin:						$
Methadone:						
Pain killers:						
Sedatives/tranquilizers:						
Cocaine (powder, crack):						$
PCP:						

	Daily	once a week	once a month	< once a month	None	How much in a typical day?
LSD/hallucinogens						
Crystal Meth:						
Other amphetamines:						
Inhalants:						
Other						

15. If any: has drinking or using drugs been the cause of any problem in the past six months? (losing a job, getting arrested, getting divorced, arguments, accidents)

16. Are you currently receiving any substance abuse treatment? (including NA/AA meetings)

            If YES   16a. How often?
                          16b. Is this helpful? How so or how not?

Illegal Activity

17. I'm going to list off various ways you may have broken the law. This would include anything that could have gotten you arrested, if you'd been caught. Reminder:

everything you tell me is confidential, both from the police and from GH staff (check all that apply; probe for circumstances for each offense). If you've participated in any of these in the past four months, let me know, and I will ask you more about it.

	Yes	No
Burglary—business or residence		
Theft from a vehicle		
Theft of a motor vehicle		
Robbery—business or person		
Assault/ battery		
Theft/larceny		
Forgery or fraud		
Drug dealing		
Drug possession		
Vandalism		
Homicide		
Arson		
Prostitution		
Mob action		
Drinking in public		
Gang loitering		
Disorderly conduct		
Contempt of court		
Throwing gang signs		

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Using profanity at cops		
Gambling / shooting dice		
Driving without a license		
Other (Specify:) _____		

For any checked, probe for circumstances
- With whom?
- When was this?
- How often?
- Did you/others get caught?
- If you got caught, what happened to the case?

18. Last time you talked a little about the specific offenses that you have done over your life. Can you tell me about how you first got involved with crime?

    18a. Why did you decide to do what you did?

    18b. Who did you do it with?

    18c. How did you feel about it?

    18d. How did your family respond?

19. When did you first spend time in jail or prison? Can you tell me what that was like for you?

20. Are you currently involved in a street gang? If yes: Could you describe the nature of your involvement? What did you do with the gang? Would you say you were more or less involved than other members, or about the same level of involvement? How much time did you spend with fellow gang members?

Victimization

21.. Have you been the victim of a crime in the past four months?
    If YES   19a. About how many times?

    21 b. Can you walk me through the times you've been victimized? Tell me what happened, when, who did it to you, and what happened afterwards?

Police contacts

22. Have you been stopped by the police in the past 4 months?

22a. What happened? What were you doing when you were stopped, what was the outcome?

23. Have you been arrested in the past four months?

23a. What were the charges?

23b. What happened/ is happening with the case?

Life History

24. Looking back on your whole life, what would you say were the most important things you experienced, the most important things that happened to you, the most important turning points? [Probe for detailed descriptions of each event, experience, turning point and how each affected him.]

25.   Where did you grow up?
             City: _____
             Neighborhood: _____

25a.   What was it like there when you were coming up?

26. What kinds of things do you remember most clearly from your upbringing?

27.   Who raised you?

28.   Who were you closest to as a child?
         28a.   What made you feel close to this person/these people?

29. What would you say were the biggest changes to your family as you were growing up?

30. What's been the best way that you've made money over your life (legal or not)? What makes you choose that?

31. What's been the worst way you've made money? What makes you choose that?

32. The last time you went to the penitentiary, were you working in a legitimate (legal) job? Where? Doing what?

33. What do you like most about your life until this point? Why?

34. What do you like least about your life until this point? Why?

35. Who do you feel closest to right now? (Friends or family)? What makes you feel close to these people?

36. What do you think is the most important thing I should be asking women in this study?

37. Is there anything else you think I should be asking that I haven't?

38. Why did you decide to get involved with this project?

Follow up with network people.

TIME 3

1. What's been going on?

Housing

2. Where are you living now?

> 2a. Is this the same place as you were living at our last interview?

> 2b. If yes, has anything changed about the neighborhood, or about your living situation?

> 2c. If no, what made you decide to move?

> 2d. If a new neighborhood, what do you like most about your neighborhood?

> 2e. If new, what do you like least about your neighborhood?

3. Have you been in touch with Grace House staff in the past 4 months?   (if yes, prompt for frequency, nature of contact).

Employment

4. Are you currently enrolled in school?
> If YES, Where are you enrolled? Working towards what degree?

5. Are you currently working?
   _____Full time
   _____Part time
   _____Not working

   5a. How long have you worked there? _____

   5b. What is your position? _____

   5c. What is your salary?

   5d. How did you find out about this job?

   5e. What do you like best about it?

   5f. What do you like least?

   5g. How long do you plan to stay there?

   5h. Are you currently looking for a (new) job?

Involvement/ Goals

6. Are you currently involved in a romantic relationship?

   If YES, for how long? _____
      ____Married?

   6a. If new relationship: How did you meet? How did you become involved?

7. Are you currently involved with the criminal justice system?
   _____ parole   When does it end?
   _____probation   When does it end?
   _____not involved

       7a. Do you have the same parole officer?

       7b. How helpful has he/she been?

8. What are some of your personal goals now?

9. What do you think it will take for you to reach your goals?

10. Right now, what worries you the most in your life?

Substance Use

11. Have you used any substances in the past three months? (Probe for cigarettes, alcohol, any illegal substances)

12. Are you currently receiving substance abuse treatment? Are you still going to meetings?

      12.1. how often?

      12.2. Do you usually go to the same meetings each week or different meetings?

            12.2a. Why? How do you choose which meetings you go to?

      12.3 Is it helpful? How so/ how not?

13. Are you taking any prescription medications? If so, what are they/ what are they for?

Police/ Courts

14. Have you been arrested at all in the past three months?

15. Have you been stopped by the police at all in the past three months? (Probe for circumstances)

16. Have you had any court dates in the past three months? (probe for circumstances)

17. Have you done anything that could have gotten you arrested in the past three months? (probe for details, circumstances)

18. Have you been the victim of a crime in the past three months? (probe for circumstances)

Relationships

19. Who do you feel closest to right now? What makes you feel close to these people?

20. How would you characterize your relationship with your:

      20a. Mother:

20b. Father

20c. Grandparents, stepparents, other people who raised you

20d. Siblings (probe for differences among siblings)

20e. Children (probe for differences among)

20f. Boyfriend/ girlfriend/ spouse/ significant other

21. Right now, what portion of the people that you know are *currently* involved with illegal activity? Would you say that none, a few, some, or most of the people that you know are currently involved with illegal activity? (probe)
_____ none
_____ a few
_____ some
_____ most

22. Right now, as far as you know, what portion of the people that you know have been involved with illegal activity *in the past*? Would you say that none, a few, some, or most of the people you know have been involved with illegal activity? (probe)
_____ none
_____ a few
_____ some
_____ most

Prior Victimization

23. Now I am going to ask about things that may have happened to you in the past. Please let me know if any of the following has ever happened to you. PROBE for frequency, timing, relationship, outcome.

23a1. Has a romantic partner ever physically hurt you?

23a2. Did you ever need medical attention as a result?

23b1. Has a family member ever physically hurt you?

23b2. Did you ever need medical attention as a result?

23c. Have you ever felt threatened by a romantic partner?

23d. Have you ever felt threatened by a family member?

23e. Have you ever been forced to engage in sexual activity with a romantic partner?

23f. Have you ever been forced to engage in sexual activity with a family member?

23g. Have the police ever been called because of a fight between you and a romantic partner?

23h. Have the police ever been called because of a fight between you and a family member?

24a1. Have you ever physically hurt a romantic partner?

   24a2. Did they ever need medical attention as a result?

24b1. Have you ever physically hurt a family member?

   24b2. Did they ever need medical attention as a result?

25. Since you left Grace House, have you asked them for any help (e.g., finding an apartment, a job, counseling)?

   25a. If yes, what for? When? How satisfied were you?

   25b. If no, why not? (e.g., haven't felt need, didn't want to feel like failure, don't like them)

26. Have you used any other programs or services since you left Grace House (e.g., finding a job, housing, counseling)?

   26a. If yes, how did you find out about that program/service?

   26b. What sort of help? When? How satisfied were you with their help?

Follow up with remaining network people:

27. How would you characterize your relationship with _____ now.

28. Is there anything else you wanted to talk about that we haven't covered?

TIME 4

1. What's been going on?

Housing

2. Where are you living now?

    2a. Is this the same place as you were living at our last interview?

    2b. If yes, has anything changed about the neighborhood, or about your living situation?

    2c. If no, what made you decide to move?

        2c1. If a new neighborhood, what do you like most about your neighborhood?

        2c2. If new, what do you like least about your neighborhood?

    2d. Do you receive any assistance with your rent (rent subsidy)?

3. Have you been in touch with Grace House staff in the past 4 months? (if yes, prompt for frequency, nature of contact).

Employment

4. Are you currently enrolled in school?

    4a. If YES, Where? What degree are you working towards?

    4b. When was the last time you were in school? What degree did you earn/work on at that time?

5. Are you currently working?
    _____Full time
    _____Part time
    _____Not working

    5a. How long have you worked there? _____

    5b. What is your position? _____

    5c. What is your salary?

5d. How did you find out about this job?

5e. What do you like best about it?

5f. What do you like least?

5g. How long do you plan to stay there?

5h. Are you currently looking for a (new) job?

6. Do you have any other sources of income? (e.g., informal work, food stamps, medicare/Medicaid)

Involvement/ Goals

7. Are you currently involved with the criminal justice system?
    _____ parole   When does it end?
    _____probation   When does it end?
    _____not involved

        6a. Any new cases?

        6b. Do you have the same parole officer?

        6c. How helpful has he/she been?

8. Are you currently involved in a romantic relationship?

        If YES, for how long? _____
            ____Married?

        8a. If new relationship: How did you meet? How did you become involved?

9. Have you ever had a romantic relationship with a man (someone you might call a "boyfriend")? How many?

10. Have you ever had a physically intimate relationship with a man? How many?

11. Have you ever had a romantic relationship with a woman (someone you might call a "girlfriend")? How many?

12. Have you ever had a physically intimate relationship with a woman? How many?

13. Do you consider yourself to be homosexual, heterosexual, bisexual, or something else?

____ homosexual   ____ bisexual
____ Heterosexual   _____ other

Future Goals

14. What are some of your personal goals now?

15. Why did you choose this as a goal? What makes it important to you?

16. What do you think it will take for you to reach your goals?

17. Where do you see yourself in a year? In 5 years?

18. Right now, what worries you the most in your life?

Substance Use

19. Have you used any substances in the past three months? (Probe for cigarettes, alcohol, any illegal substances)

20. Are you currently receiving substance abuse treatment? Are you still going to meetings?

        20.1. how often?

        20.2. Do you usually go to the same meetings each week or different meetings?

             20.2a. Why? How do you choose which meetings you go to?

        20.3 Is it helpful? How so/ how not?

21. Do you do anything (else) to maintain your sobriety? What?

22. Have you ever gone into treatment, and then used again later? What do you think has led to you relapsing in the past?

23. Do you think there is anything that might lead you to go back out and use again in the future?

24. Are you taking any prescription medications? If so, what are they/ what are they for?

Police/ Courts

25. Have you been arrested at all in the past three months?

26. Have you been stopped by the police at all in the past three months? (Probe for circumstances)

27. Have you had any court dates in the past three months? (probe for circumstances)

28. Have you done anything that could have gotten you arrested in the past three months? (probe for details, circumstances)

29. Have you been the victim of a crime in the past three months? (probe for circumstances)

Relationships

30. Who do you feel closest to right now? What makes you feel close to these people?

31. How would you characterize your relationship with your:

> 31a. Mother:
>
> 31b. Father
>
> 31c. Grandparents, stepparents, other people who raised you
>
> 31d. Siblings (probe for differences among siblings)
>
> 31e. Children (probe for differences among)
>
> 31f. Boyfriend/ girlfriend/ spouse/ significant other

32. Since you left Grace House, have you asked them for any help (e.g., finding an apartment, a job, counseling)?

> 32a. If yes, what for? When? How satisfied were you?
>
> 32b. If no, why not? (e.g., haven't felt need, didn't want to feel like failure, don't like them)

33. Have you used any other programs or services since you left Grace House (e.g., finding a job, housing, counseling)?

       33a. If yes, how did you find out about that program/service?

       33b. What sort of help? When? How satisfied were you with their help?

34. Any follow up or missed questions:

35. Is there anything else you wanted to talk about that we haven't covered?

36. When I write about this, I will make up names for everyone, to protect their anonymity. Do you want to choose your own name, or would you like me to make up a name for you?

37. Some women have expressed an interest in knowing when the project is finished. Would you like me to notify you when I have something completed?
       If yes, address where I'll be able to reach you.

THANK YOU!!

INTERVIEW GUIDES: NETWORK MEMBERS
TIME 1

Relationship with _____

First I am going to ask you a little about your relationship with _____.

1. What is the nature of your relationship to _____?

  _____friend   _____parent
  _____boyfriend/ husband   _____co-worker
  _____sibling   _____neighbor/ landlord

[If NOT family]:
  1a: How long have you known R?

  1b. How did you meet?

2. How would you describe the nature of your relationship with R?   For example, do you consider yourselves close? If so, what makes you close?

3.   What do you most like about _____? What is your favorite thing about her?

4.   What do you like least about her?

[If Family]:
5. What was is like when she was growing up? What was she like as a child? What was the family like? What are your clearest memories of her childhood?

[If R knew _____ when she was incarcerated]:

6. How did you respond when you first found out that _____ was involved with criminal activity?

7. How did you react when you found out that _____ was going to jail/prison?

8. Do you think that _____'s incarceration affected your relationship with her? How so?

9. Did you keep in touch with _____ while she was incarcerated? How?

10. Do you think that her involvement with the criminal justice system (incarceration, probation, parole) has changed R? If so, how?

11. If _____ HAS BEEN INCARCERATED: Do you think she has changed at all since getting out of prison? How so?

[If respondent met _____ after her last incarceration]:

12. How did you find out that _____ had been involved with the criminal justice system?

13. How did you react when you first found out that _____ had been involved with the criminal justice system?

[Everyone]:

14. How likely do you think it is that R will be able to stay out of prison in the future? Why makes you think that?

15. IF _____ HAD A DRUG/ALCOHOL PROBLEM: How likely do you think it is that R will be able to stay drug free in the future? Why?

Respondent's Background

16. What is your birthdate? _____/_____/_____

17. Where were you born?

18.   How far did you go in your schooling? [Check one.]
    ___ Some elementary (primary) school   ___ Some college
    ___ Graduated elementary school   ___ Associates' Degree (2 yr. degree)
    ___ Some high school   ___ Bachelor's Degree (4 yr. degree)
    ___ Graduated high school   ___ Some graduate studies
    ___ GED   ___ Obtained graduate degree (Master's,
                                           Ph.D., J.D. M.D.)

19.   What is your current marital status?

___ Single, not married by state law
___ Not married by state law, but live with someone as married
           How long have you lived with this person?
___ Married, by state law
           How long have you been married to this person?
                   How many times have you been married? ___
___ Widowed
           How long ago did your husband pass?
___ Separated
           How long have you been separated?
___ Divorced
           How long since you've been divorced?
___ Other (Specify:)_____

20. Are you currently involved in a (another) romantic relationship?

       20a.   If YES, for how long? _____

       20b. How did you meet? How did you become involved?

21 Do you have any children?

       If YES, how many? What are their ages? Sexes?

Respondent's Employment

22. Are you currently working? Where?

       22a. What is your position?

       22b. How did you find this job?

       22c. How long have you been there?

       22d. How long do you plan to stay at this job?

       22e. Is it full or part time?
               _____Full time
               _____Part time: How many hours a week?

23. Are you currently looking for a job, or a new job?

Neighborhood

24. What neighborhood do you live in now?

25. How long have you lived there?

26. What do you like most about that neighborhood?

27. What do you like least about the neighborhood?

28. What neighborhood do you consider "home"? Why?

Substance Use

29. I'm going to ask you some questions about possible substance use. I'd like you to first tell me if you've ever used these substances. For each that you have used, I'll ask you how often, and how much. Also, for those that you have, let me know if you've ever used them with _____.

	Daily	once a week	once a month	< once month	None	How much in a typical day?	With W?
Alcohol (beer, wine, liquor)							
Cigarettes/ tobacco						____	
Marijuana/cannabis						$	
Heroin						$	
Methadone							
Cocaine (powder, crack)							
Sedatives/tranquilizers							
Pain killers						$	
PCP							
LSD/hallucinogens							
Crystal Meth							
Other amphetamines							
Inhalants							
Other							

30. If any: has drinking or using drugs been the cause of any problems for you? (losing a job, getting arrested, getting divorced, arguments, accidents)

31. Have you ever received substance abuse treatment?

    31a. If yes, what type? When?

31b. If yes, how helpful was it?

Illegal Activity

32. I'm going to list off various ways you may have broken the law. This would include anything that could have gotten you arrested, if you'd been caught. Reminder: everything you tell me is confidential. Please let me know if you've ever done these things, and then if you've ever done any of these things with _____.

	Yes	No	With W?
Burglary—business or residence			
Theft from a vehicle			
Theft of a motor vehicle			
Robbery—business or person			
Assault/ battery			
Theft/larceny			
Forgery or fraud			
Drug dealing			
Drug possession			
Vandalism			
Homicide			
Arson			
Prostitution			
Mob action			
Drinking in public			
Gang loitering			
Disorderly conduct			
Contempt of court			
Throwing gang signs			
Using profanity at cops			
Gambling / shooting dice			
Driving without a license			
Other (Specify:) _____			

Probe for circumstances – when, how often, with whom.

Incarceration History

33. Are you currently involved with the criminal justice system?
_____ parole
_____probation
_____not involved

33a.. If parole: do you have any special conditions in your parole agreement?

33b. When does your parole end?

34. Have you spent time in a city or county jail? How many times have you spent time in a city or county jail?

       34a. If YES, how many times? _____

35. Have you ever spent time in a state prison?

       35a. If YES, how many times? _____

36. Can you walk me through each of your prison incarcerations? Can you tell me the year you caught the case, what you were convicted of, the length of your sentence, the time you served, and the penitentiaries you served time in for that offense.

37. Have you ever been the victim of a crime?   If YES, probe for circumstances.

Respondent Support

38. Is there anything that you have done anything to help _____ stay crime and drug free?

39. Have you ever helped R get an apartment, or given her a place to live?

40. Have you ever helped R get a job? (probe for circumstances)

41. Has your relationship with R gotten closer or less close in the past 6 months? Why do you think that is?

Wrap Up

42. Is there anything else that you wanted to talk about, or that you think I should be asking?

43. What do you think is the most important thing that I should know about _____?

44. What made you decide to get involved with this project (talking to me)?

TIME 2

Respondent

1. How have things been going with you in the past six months?

2. Are you currently working? Where?

> 2a. What is your position?
>
> 2b. How did you find this job?
>
> 2c. How long have you been there?
>
> 2d. How long do you plan to stay at this job?
>
> 2e. Is it full or part time?
> _____Full time
> _____Part time: How many hours a week?

3. Are you currently looking for a job, or a new job?

4. Are you currently in school?

> 4a. If Yes, what for?

5. What neighborhood do you live in now?

> 5a. What do you like it?
>
> 5b. What don't you like about it?
>
> 5c. How long do you plan to stay in the neighborhood?

6. Right now, what portion of the people that you know are *currently* involved with illegal activity? Would you say that none, a few, some, or most of the people that you know are currently involved with illegal activity? (probe)
_____ none
_____ a few
_____ some
_____ most

7. Right now, as far as you know, what portion of the people that you know have been
involved with illegal activity *in the past*? Would you say that none, a few, some, or most
of the people you know have been involved with illegal activity? (probe)

_____ none

_____ a few

_____ some

_____ most

8. Have you yourself done anything in the past six months that could have gotten you
arrested?

9. Have you been arrested in the past six months? (probe)

10. Have you been stopped by the police in the past six months? (probe)

11. Are you currently involved with the criminal justice system?

_____ parole

_____probation

_____not involved

12. Have you been the victim of a crime in the past six months? If yes, probe for
circumstances.

13. Have you used any substances? (probe for cigarettes and alcohol). If yes, have you
ever used them with _____ or in her presence?

Relationship with _____

14. Has anything changed about your relationship with _____ in the past six
months?   What led to the changes?

15. How would you describe the nature of your relationship with R now?   For example,
do you consider yourselves close? If so, what makes you close?

16.   What do you most like about _____? What is your favorite thing about her?

17.   What do you like least about her?

18. [IF NOT FAMILY] What was your impression of _____ when you first met her?

19. Do you think she's changed at all in the past six months? How so?

20. As far as you know, has _____ done anything that could have gotten her arrested in the past six months?

     20a. If yes, how did you find out about it?

21. How likely do you think it is that R will be able to stay out of prison in the future? Why makes you think that?

22. Do you think she's more or less likely to be arrested again (or the same) than you thought she was the last time we talked? Why?

23. IF _____ HAD A DRUG/ALCOHOL PROBLEM: How likely do you think it is that R will be able to stay drug free in the future? Why?

24. Do you think she's more or less likely to be arrested again (or the same) than you thought she was the last time we talked? Why?

Respondent Support

25. Is there anything that you have done in the past six months to help _____ stay crime and drug free?

26. Have you helped R get an apartment, or given her a place to live?

27. Have you helped R get a job? (probe for circumstances)

28. If NO, why haven't you done any of these things (e.g., she didn't ask, doesn't need help)

29. Is there anything (else) you think you COULD do for her? How would this help her?

Targeted Questions

Employer/co-worker

30. Do you know how _____ came to work here? Are there any other individuals working here with a background with the CJ system (that you know of)?

31. Is her background ever an issue (good or bad) as far as working here is concerned?

Family

32. What is _____ relationship like with other family members?

33. Are other family members involved with the CJ system or illegal activity? Have they been in the past?   If yes, do you think that impacted _____'s activity?

34. What do you think led to her engaging in illegal activity?

Friends

35. Does her background (and/or your own) have anything to do with your friendship? E.g., did you meet through housing/meeting/etc.

36. Do you think that _____'s background impacts your relationship in any way? How so?   If not, why not?

Wrap Up

37. Is there anything else that you wanted to talk about that we haven't talked about yet?

38. What do you think is the most important thing that I should know about _____?

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