STRUGGLING FOR SUCCESS:
THE ROLE OF SOCIAL SUPPORT IN FEMALE REENTRY PATHWAYS

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by

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the gendered reentry experience of females on parole in Massachusetts in order to understand the role that social support and parole services play in the negotiation of the process of desistance and reentry. Using a mixed-methodological approach including field observations of Regional Parole Offices and community-contracted Transitional Housing Programs (n= 300 hours), narrative interviews and social support surveys conducted with high-risk female parolees living in transitional housing (n=22; 38 interviews), and a time-to-recidivism survival analysis of all active female parolees under supervision in Massachusetts from 2006-2009 (N= 2405) this research asked: (1) how do women conceptualize successful pathways to reentry? (2) What role does social support plays in the negotiation of these successful reentry pathways? And (3) what role do MA Parole supportive services play in the construction and maintenance of successful reentry pathways?

Women take three gendered pathways to successful reentry: reunification with children, recovery from substance abuse, and economic demarginalization. Success was experienced within these gendered pathways through adoption of transformational identity narratives based on personal empowerment, independence and overcoming adversity that the women had to adopt due to significant deficits in social support networks. This necessary self-reliance is distinct from other (Maruna, 2001) notions of agency and scripts for change in desistance literature for these narratives represented campaigns for reclaiming traditional femininity. Significant instability and upheaval in release plans for high-risk female parolees (20% of the population) accounted for most instances of failures; most occurring in the first ten weeks post-release. Findings suggest (1) broad practical and theoretical implications for the concept of gendered reentry, (2) that social support mechanisms are gendered in the reentry context, (3) MA Parole service delivery model can be updated to better address the reentry needs of women, and (4) that more feminist research into the female experience of reentry is necessary to replicate these findings.
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for Dad: because I promised I would finish.

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INTRODUCTION

Recent decades have witnessed a dramatic increase in the number of women under criminal justice supervision. Between 1980 and 1999 growth in the rate at which females were incarcerated was double that for males (BJS, 1999). In other words, although incarceration rates for men still exceed those for women, the gender gap in incarceration has been decreasing over time because growth in women’s incarceration rates has outpaced growth in men’s incarceration rates. As a result, by midyear 2008 the Bureau of Justice Statistics reported that approximately 106,000 women, or 69 per 100,000 of the United States population, were incarcerated in a state or federal facility (Sabol & West, 2009). If estimates for the number of women incarcerated in jails were added to these figures, the number of incarcerated women increased by a count of approximately 50,000 (2009: 17). The vast majority of females serve at least part of their sentence under community supervision. In 2006, females represented 12% of the overall parole population in the United States, or 1 out of every 8 adults under parole supervision that year (Glaze & Broczar, 2007), an increase from 8% in 1990 (BJS, 2000).

These statistics are striking for two distinct reasons: first, they demonstrate that females are being incarcerated at climbing rates, but second, and perhaps more importantly, they underscore the fact that reentry into the community post-incarceration is an increasingly female endeavor. While females remain a smaller proportion of the reentry population, the reality is we know very little about the female experience of reentry.

Reentry literature is replete with publications coming to the conclusion that the process of reentry is difficult for everyone. There are structural impediments to re-entering society such as civil death, lack of employment, lack of housing, court fees/restitution, poverty, lack of
education, stigma of prisoner status, and many more (Visher & Travis, 2003, Travis, 2005, Maruna & Immarigeon, 2004). Collateral consequences literature describes the roadblocks to community reentry and reintegration a felony conviction and/or jail or prison time creates (Clear, 1994; 2007). Although research in this area is needed to gain insight into the overall experience of prisoner reentry, it suffers from a universalism fallacy (Bender, 1990). That is to say that reentry literature can be criticized for understanding the reentry experience from a male gendered perspective and assuming the experience from that perspective represents the totality of possible experiences. The reentry literature to date has demonstrated that the experience of reentry is difficult for everyone, but how is the experience of reentry difficult specifically for females?

Despite lack of research into the female reentry experience historically, there are some researchers who have begun to examine the ways in which gendered pathways to crime, as well as addiction, abuse, relationships, homelessness, and joblessness are integrally related to the process of reentry for female former prisoners in ways that are distinct from the same processes for males (Brown & Bloom, 2009; Covington, 2003). Burnett & Maruna (2004) stated it well when they described reentry and the process of desistance from crime as “the interplay of subjective factors such as identity, as well as with objective factors, such as jobs and housing” (391). Females reentering society are faced with the objective human needs of housing, employment, food, and transportation that every former prisoner is faced with; however the subjective factors relating to identity, reconstruction of relationships, and negotiating the process of desistance from crime and analogous behaviors is an entirely gendered process.

This research has two purposes. First, this research seeks to explore the experience of reentry for females from a gendered perspective. In order to examine the experience of reentry using gender as lens, this research made women’s experience central to the analysis. Prior
research examining women’s reentry experience suggests that three concepts and their relationship to each other need to be examined in order to gain an understanding of the gender-specific components to reentry into a community: struggle, support, and success. For formerly incarcerated females whose experiences are often characterized by the interlocking inequalities of gender, race, socio-economic status, and sexuality (Hill Collins, 1994), the process of negotiating reentry successfully and desisting from crime is one of constant struggle. Struggle to comply with the conditions of release, struggle to obtain objective necessities, struggle to reconnect with family, and struggle to accomplish all of that while negotiating a gender identity. This process of accomplishing gender in a manner that is normatively acceptable within the male and hetero-dominant social structure in which society currently operates while simultaneously struggling with reentry from incarceration is what could make the female experience of reentry different from that of males.

Relational theory (Miller, 1976) as well as research on social support (Chan et al., 2005, Farrell, 2000, Staggs et al., 2007) suggest that women develop a sense of self and of self-worth when their actions arise out of, and lead back into, connections with others (Covington, 2003). This understanding of the fundamental nature of social support networks to the identity of women and the exercise of personal agency have a potentially critical role in the negotiation of a successful reentry process. To assess the role that struggle, support, and success have, this research uses quantitative and qualitative methodologies in order to gain a rich understanding of the female reentry experience from many directions.

Second, this research employs a feminist agenda of change. Primarily, this research seeks to advance the knowledge of the gendered reentry experiences in the field of reentry research. Additionally, through partnership with the Massachusetts Parole Board, important
suggestions for the improvement of existing reentry programs and strategies for the female parole population of Massachusetts can be made as well as recommendations for new informed policies and practices.
CHAPTER ONE

THEORETICAL RELEVANCE:
PATHWAYS TO CRIME & RELATIONAL THEORY

A diverse set of literature is needed to construct a theoretical basis for understanding female reentry. Feminist criminology as well as feminist psychological understandings of developmental processes contribute to a gendered conceptualization of the experience, while social support and desistance literatures provide insight into the social structures and human agency processes involved in desistance from crime. The former are covered in this chapter and the latter in chapters that follow. By including theories that span the entire process of criminal involvement, from introduction to crime to eventual desistance, an understanding of the ways in which the reentry process is gendered should emerge. Figure 2.1 illustrates the relationships among these theories that are further elaborated upon in the following chapters.

This chapter has four main sections. A review of the literature on pathways to crime is presented first and discusses foundational texts to the development of a gendered perspective on entrance to crime. Though the pioneering texts on pathways to crime focus on entrance into criminal activities, the argument is made that similar gendered patterns in experience also shape reentry and desistance from crime. Following the scholarly progression of the pathways to crime perspective is a section highlighting five categories of life experiences (victimization, economic marginalization, trauma, addiction and mental health problems) that shape pathways to crime specifically for females. Finally, this chapter turns to feminist relational theory to show how it too can shed light on the ways in which female reentry is gendered.
LITERATURE ON PATHWAYS TO CRIME

Although this study is interested in exploring and understanding the factors that predict success and failure in the reentry experience for females on parole, research suggests that in order to fully understand the ways in which female reentry may be different from male reentry, the pathways that females take to enter into crime must be examined. Pathways-to-crime literature and relational theory both describe the gendered nature of entrance into crime for females and form an important basis for understanding how reentry pathways are subsequently gendered in similar ways.

With the exception of some recent publications (Brown & Bloom, 2009, Rumgay, 2004, Covington, 2003, O’Brien & Young, 2006, Richie, 2001), much of the literature that explicitly addresses the reentry process has focused on male offenders. Similarly, there is a body of literature hailing from a life course perspective that, although focused specifically on the process of desistance from crime and not the entirety of the reentry process, highlights mixed results.
concerning gender differences in desisting from crime. Some research from this perspective suggests that the desistance experience is very similar across genders, while competing research suggests that gender matters to the ways in which desistance is fostered and that females and males arrive at different pathways out of crime (Broidy & Cauffman, 2006, Uggen & Kruttschnitt, 1998). This desistance-focused literature is important to mention briefly here as a contrast to the pathways literature. Desistance from crime is certainly an aspect of the reentry experience; however, the research devoted to understanding what facilitates desistance has mostly focused on the male experience. There are some studies that have specifically examined the female process of desistance (Alarid, Burton & Cullen, 2000; Li & MacKenzie, 2003; Simons et al., 2002; Uggen & Kruttschnitt, 1998; Broidy & Cauffman, 2006, Friestad & Hansen, 2010). This research goes beyond this body of inquiry, as these studies did not link together the entire gendered process of how and why women enter into crime in the first place and the ways in which society is constructed around gender to determine available reentry pathways for females. The pathways to crime and relational theory bodies of literature begin with a shared understanding of how gender shapes social interactions and behavior, and then explain female crime from that standpoint. By focusing on gender as a way to understand entrance into crime, we can examine how subsequent desistance from crime and the reentry process are also gendered.

Many of the first pathways-to-crime studies using feminist, gender-central foci studied prostitutes or “street women” using qualitative methodologies. Authors of these studies were interested in exploring the major life sequences linking the experiences of women who worked and/or committed crimes on the street. James & Meyerding (1977) were among the first researchers to examine a distinctive pathway to crime for females using a feminist gender-central
lens. These authors studied early childhood sexual experiences of adolescent prostitutes and compared them to those of the general population in order to draw conclusions about the predictive relationship between negative childhood sexual experiences and prostitution later in life (also see Belknap, 2007). The authors cited a lack of parental guidance and monitoring leading to early and casual intercourse, the double-edged sword of a sexually promiscuous status (meaning one that both increases power with males but denigrates normative social status), and emotionally destructive rape and incest experiences as the three most common pathways to prostitution for the women studied (James & Meyerding, 1977: 1384). Although the authors’ conclusions omit much of what is understood now about the agency involved in prostitution and other street crimes women engage in (Maher, 1997), theirs was one of the first studies that examined commonalities in gendered pathways to crime and served as a springboard for future research in this area.

Silbert & Pines (1981) continued research on the pathways to prostitution with their San Francisco Bay Area study. Using information from interviews conducted with 200 former and current prostitutes ranging in age from 10 to 46 years and racially diverse (including Whites, African-Americans, Asians, Hispanics, and one Native American) the authors found striking similarities in the cumulative life experiences of the prostitutes. They found that childhood sexual abuse (most commonly perpetrated by a father, step-father or other male relative) often led to running away from home and living on the street for approximately two-thirds of their population (Silbert & Pines, 1981: 408). Additionally, nine-tenths of the sample reported that entrance into prostitution was due to being hungry, needing money, and having no other viable options for survival (1981:410).
Research on pathways to prostitution exemplified gender-specific pathways-to-crime research during this time period. Mainstream criminological theories had only recently been accused by Heidensohn (1968), Klein (1973), and Smart (1976) of assuming generalizability of “gender-neutral” theories of crime based on male subjects to women and for ignoring the social and economic realities of the female experience unique from that of males. These early pathways-to-prostitution studies sought to demonstrate, with evidence that came directly from the mouths of the women living on the streets, that there are unique female pathways to crime that distinct from those of males and that there were important commonalities within the experiences of prostitution for all females.

Kathleen Daly’s work in the area of female pathways to crime has become synonymous with feminist criminological scholarship on the subject. Her research regarding female pathways to felony court attempted to “map out” (Daly, 1992) the life events of women and girls in order to understand what individual and structural level experiences, i.e. life experiences, offending context, and social location can lead to criminal offending (also see Holtfreter et al., 2004, Reisig et al., 2006). In her seminal work, Daly explored many routes to distinct types of delinquent behavior but focused on the reoccurring theme of economic marginalization. Daly’s approach discussed economic marginalization in terms of patriarchy, and also the consequences that marginalization has for female criminality (Chesney Lind, 1989). Between 1981 and 1986, Daly examined the extent to which her first female pathway to crime, the street woman, accurately depicted a sample of women (n =40) whose criminal cases ended in a conviction in a New Haven, Connecticut felony court. While ten of the women fit into Daly’s street woman category, the majority did not (Daly, 1992; Miller, 1986). The street woman describes women who are either pushed or run away from abusive homes, end up living on the street and addicted to drugs
and/or alcohol, and generally end up in felony court due to crimes committed to support a drug habit, namely prostitution, drug sales, and/or stealing (Daly 1992: 13-14). Street women are constantly caught in the revolving door of the justice system and are in and out of court and jail frequently.

Based on her qualitative study of the remaining women’s biographies, Daly identified four additional ‘pathways’ to felony court (Daly, 1994:46-58; Bloom & Covington, 1998; Simpson, Yahner & Dugan, 2008):

- **“Harmed and Harming Women** (n = 15): women who had suffered abuse and neglect as children and responded with anger and/or “acting out” resulting in a label of “troublesome youth” that in turn was a self-fulfilling prophecy to secondary deviance. These women had chaotic home lives both in child- and adulthood, began abusing drugs and alcohol early in their teen years, and may have become violent in response to psychological and emotional trauma mixed with addiction to drugs and/or alcohol.

- **The Battered Woman** (n=5): Women in violent relationships with a partner that landed them in felony court. The criminal activity of battered women was a direct result of associations with violent intimate partners, most often men, and was unlikely to have a prior criminal record.

- **The Drug-Connected Woman** (n=5): categorizes women who sell drugs as a result of their familial and intimate relationships. Like the battered women, drug connected women are unlikely to have extensive criminal records, however are distinct from street women in that they are not addicted to drugs but are either experimental or recent users.

- **Other Women** (n=4): no addiction or trauma histories linked these women, nor were they from noxious home environments. Criminality was economically motivated (either by greed or conversely, poverty) with the end goal of a comfortable, secure, and conventional lifestyle.”

Not always discussed in reports of Daly’s research are her conclusions about the degree of overlap between her pathways to felony court for the females and males she studied. Although Daly did find some overlap in categories of male experience, especially in the “street,” “harmed and harming,” and “drug-connected” pathways, Daly found that for the males, she had to add a pathway called the *costs and excesses of masculinity* for explosively violent, wrong place at the wrong time, and gaming/gambling men. Additionally, she found that even though there was overlap in some of the pathways, males were over-represented in the *street* pathway and under-represented in both *harmed and harming* and *drug connected* when compared to their female
peers (Daly, 1994). These findings indicated that although the process of arriving at felony court may have some similarities across gender, there are female- and male-specific effects of previous and current life experiences that help to determine the pathway certain people take to arrive at felony court.

Daly’s work was unique for its focus on the female experience and its use of males as a comparison group; however it is not the only study of its kind to examine the pathways of females into contact with the criminal justice system. Ritchie (1994, 1996) used the biographical information of White and African-American women sentenced to terms at Riker’s Island in New York to discuss the effect that the intersecting inequalities of gender and race have on the construction of identity and interpretation of structural and institutional life events like education and employment (1994:4). The concept of intersecting inequalities has been utilized by Ritchie and others to describe the additive effect that maintaining multiple marginalized statuses has on one’s position in society. For females, the status of being female within a patriarchal society is one source of status marginalization, but adding other sources of marginalization such as race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, etc., creates a cumulative marginalized status that serves to limit the social-structural opportunities available in life.

Ritchie’s work was foundational to exploring how intersecting inequalities serve to shape the lives of incarcerated females. In order to describe the women she worked with, Ritchie stated that:

Their everyday existence has been shaped by very threatening circumstances, many deferred dreams, tremendous unmet needs, and exceptionally hard choices. And yet, their stories represent only the most extreme version of that which a very common experience for women: being controlled and feeling constrained by tense intimate relationships within a hostile social world. The extent to which some women experience this predicament is directly related to the degree of stigma, isolation, and marginalization imposed by their social position (1996:1-2).
Ritchie saw the consequences of the systematic marginalization experienced by her incarcerated population culminating in a compulsion to crime through the process of gender entrapment (Girschick, 1999). She stated that women’s position in society is socially constructed and women who experience marginalization in society due to their race or other social-structural realities (i.e., socio-economic status, education, vocational skills) are met with rejection and isolation when they cannot conform to the normative construction of gender. These marginalized women try to conform, yet due to their intersecting inequalities, are only met with entrapment into crime, as a way to achieve the norms for success society requires of them.

Ritchie’s construction of pathways to incarceration was predicated on the differences in the abuse histories of the women studied. She observed three distinct pathways to incarceration: (1) battered African-American women, (2) African-American women with no abuse histories, and (3) battered White women. Battered African-American women overwhelmingly came from sheltered and privileged families of origin where they developed strong senses of self and self-confidence. Conversely, their adult lives were characterized by overt racism in the public sphere and violence in the private sphere that shook their optimism about the world and their lives. These women were compelled into crime as a by “any means necessary” desperation to maintain status in their lives and relationships (Ritchie, 1994:226).

Ritchie’s second pathway to incarceration characterized the experiences of African-American women who had not been battered in their relationships. In their families of origin and throughout childhood, these women experienced low socio-economic status and structural disadvantage in terms of limited access to multiple resources in their communities. These women were compelled to commit drug crimes, both illicit use and sales, in order to support themselves, and were typically incarcerated for these types of crimes (DeHart, 2008). For these women, the
intersecting inequalities of gender, race, and although Ritchie did not use this term, concentrated disadvantage, served to marginalize them economically and socially in society to a high degree, compelling them to commit crime.

Ritchie’s final category described the pathway battered White women were compelled to follow to incarceration. In this pathway, distinctly different from her first two, Ritchie described women who were confronted with traditional patriarchal values and hegemonic norms for femininity in both their families of origin and their families of procreation. Ritchie stated that because the White women were more likely to have been raised in traditional patriarchal families, they were more accepting of abuse and battery in their intimate relationships. White battered women were more willing to admit to a victim identity than the battered African-American women were, making them more likely to seek help (1994: 298). Ritchie’s work was critical to the development of female pathways literature in that it looked at the differential experiences of women by race and other social structural impediments that had not been addressed prior to her work.

Barbara Owen’s (1998) compelling research from the Central California Women’s Facility offers a final example of the importance of examining the entire life histories of incarcerated women in order to understand their pathways to crime. Through face-to-face interviews with approximately 300 incarcerated women throughout the 1990s, Owen was able to observe five important experiences that she saw as salient to pathways to imprisonment: (1) multiplicity of abuse, (2) early family life, (3) children, (4) street life, and (5) spiraling marginality, described by Owen as the “intersection of substance abuse and street life” (1998:61). Owen emphasized understanding the additive effects of intersecting marginalities on
the life circumstances of women in her comprehensive pathways model while still highlighting many of the categories of life experiences that emerge from the pioneering pathways literature.

**LIFE EXPERIENCES THAT SHAPE PATHWAYS TO CRIME**

Subsequent research on pathways to crime has tended to focus on one or more of the five life experiences that were most influential in leading to crime for women as indicated in these early studies: victimization, economic marginality, trauma, addiction, and mental health. In order to further explicate the intricacies of how these life experiences might serve as a pathway to crime specifically for women, scholars have developed a broad literature for each of them.

*Victimization:*

Research indicates that victimization is a central factor in the development of a pathway to crime (Belknap, 2007; Owen & Bloom, 2000; Bloom & Covington, 1998; DeHart, 2008; Chesney-Lind, 1988; 1989; 2006; Brown & Bloom, 2009; Holtfreter, Reisig & Morash, 2004; Morash, 2010). Nearly all of the more comprehensive life-history approaches to female pathways to crime described previously in this chapter include victimization, whether physical, sexual, or hegemonically patriarchal. This focus on victimization is firmly grounded within feminist criminology in general. Seminal works by Brownmiller (1975) and Martin (1976) “awakened feminist and public consciousness to the dimensions of rape and intimate violence” (Daly & Chesney-Lind, 1988:513). Additionally, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, men’s violence against women was new theoretical terrain for criminologists, and one that feminist criminologists frequently addressed at the time (1988:513). Within the theme of victimization, feminist criminologists have theorized about distinct aspects of the victimization to crime pathway including (1) the gender differential in the likelihood of being abused, (2) blurred boundaries between victim and offender, and (3) status offenses and paternalistic justice.
Research has consistently demonstrated that there are significant gender differences in the likelihood of experiencing physical and sexual abuse. Overwhelmingly, being female dramatically increases the likelihood of experiencing abuse. Qualitative interviews conducted by Chesney-Lind & Rodriguez (1983) with young females in community alternative-to-detention facilities in Hawaii elicited accounts of young girls or women who had experienced either physical or sexual abuse or both as children or adolescents, as did Rosenbaum’s (1989) study of more than 200 girls held by the California Youth Authority in the 1960s, the American Correctional Association’s (1990) study of adult female prison populations, and Gilfus’ (1992) study with twenty incarcerated women from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. These qualitative studies represent a sample of the existing research linking victimization with future criminal offending as well as criminal justice involvement, but do not begin to cover the extent of this line of research both within criminology and across other disciplines. The link these researchers and others (Belknap, 2007; Bloom & Covington, 1998; Owen, 1998) have made between victimization and criminal offending demonstrates that for females, a gender-specific pathway between victimization early in life and subsequent status offenses and more serious criminal offending is one that many females take and that is unique to females.

Understanding this female pathway to offending includes investigating the criminalization of survival techniques girls and young women employ in order to escape abuse that most typically occurs in the home (Chesney-Lind, 2006, Chesney-Lind & Rodriguez, 1983). Young girls experiencing abuse, domestic violence, or other negative living conditions in the home may have no choice but to engage in behaviors that are considered “status offenses” within the juvenile system, such as truancy, running away, or attempting to survive on the street through panhandling or prostitution (2006: 8). Unfortunately, committing such status offenses often
results in remand to the custody of family, very often source of the abuse to begin with. This experience of the patriarchal control of both the family unit and the criminal justice system (in terms of deferring to the power of the family unit) creates fewer options for many girls experiencing abuse who may turn to being more skilled at running away, or resorting to prostitution or drugs for survival. Chesney-Lind & Irwin (2008) criticize the juvenile justice system as “still being the best place to conquer girls” (2008: 160). They state that despite decades of legislative and research efforts to improve the situation of girls in the juvenile justice system, changes in the ways in which girls are policed in schools, families, and peer groups have resulted in increased as opposed to decreased referrals to juvenile courts (2008:163). Since 1983, the percentage increase of arrests of juvenile females has increased 42.5%, mostly due to arrest for increasingly violent offenses and the status offense of runaway that females have dominated since the 1980s (FBI, 2005, as cited in Chesney-Lind & Irwin, 2008).

Additionally, the paternalistic nature of the juvenile justice system still disproportionately punishes girls more severely than their male counterparts. Chesney-Lind has documented in numerous studies (1988, 1989, 2006) that not only do girls receive harsher and longer sentences for similar crimes committed by males, they also tend to stay in the system longer through technical violations, and are more likely to be sentenced to detention in a juvenile facility. According to Chesney-Lind, the overt formal social control of girls demonstrates that girls are being “conquered” not only for their behavior, but also because of their violation of normative gender constructs for how young girls should act. A modern-day example of punishment for double deviance.

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1 Hagan et al (1987) offer a contradictory position regarding patriarchy and the criminality of girls. Hagan and colleagues view is that crime and delinquency rates are a function of two factors: (1) class position (power) and (2)
Recent research about the victimization to crime pathway to crime has started to examine the effects of intersecting victimization. Polyvictimization (DeHart, 2008) describes the cumulative impact of multiple forms of victimization over the life course, such as routinely witnessing or being the victim of physical, emotional, or psychological violence, being forced to engage in sexual acts, or even being economically controlled by a significant other (2008:1374). Polyvictimization affects life circumstances in ways that contribute to the marginalization of women from mainstream or legitimate avenues of gaining status through its effect on mental health, physical health (including sexually transmitted diseases), suicidal ideations, addiction, psychosocial effects of depression, and acting out in aggression (2008:1365-1370). The consequences that marginalization based on polyvictimization have are significant in that they significantly diminish the ability of a female to participate in legitimate employment, education, and even family institutions. Therefore, crime or illicit activities become predictable responses to the cumulative effects of victimization.

*Economic Marginalization:*

Economic marginality has been demonstrated to be a strong indicator of a pathway to female criminality. This economic marginality is part of the greater trend of the feminization of poverty in the United States (Chesney-Lind, 2006). The overwhelming majority of women incarcerated in the United States are sentenced for nonviolent crimes such as prostitution, shoplifting, fraud, or drug offenses (Girschick, 1999) that tend to be committed in response to crisis or enduring disadvantage in their lives. The feminization of poverty is a phenomenon that was first introduced in 1970 by Diana Pearce in order to describe not just the material reality of higher rates of females living in poverty than men, but the denial of opportunity, inability to achieve life goals, and systematic inaccessibility of resources from both the communities where
women live, and the federal government that culminate to produce a life fraught with adversity and marginality. The feminization of poverty has been exacerbated over the past few decades as governmental policy changes in the administration of social welfare have increased the concentration of female-headed households in areas characterized by high levels of structural disadvantage (Miller, 2009). Women bear the burden of supporting families more often than their male counterparts, yet due to systematic inaccessibility of legitimate means to gain status and income (i.e., quality education, gainful employment), they are forced to do so by any means necessary. Often, by any means necessary translates into criminal or illicit activity.

Prior to the 1980s and the early 1990s, the pathway between economic marginalization and criminal activity for females was discussed in the above manner; crime was something women were forced into due to a dearth of other legitimate sources of income or status. The work of Pat Carlen (1988) and Lisa Maher (1997) suggests that although a lack of legitimate opportunities plays a large role in the construction of this pathway to crime, there are other social structures working to construct the ways in which women negotiate criminal environments in order to make money.

Carlen (1988) situated her analysis of the feminization of poverty and the economic marginalization of women within the political structure. She studied the criminal careers of 39 women in the 1980s in Great Britain, and concluded that policies instituted by the Thatcher government regarding employment, taxes, and social security benefits had the effect of criminalizing women who could not meet the standards of these policies (1988:167). A similar political and symbolic statement was made in the United States under the Reagan administration with the creation of the “welfare queen;” a symbol of female marginalization who was a “drain”
on the system; albeit a system that was constructed to keep this “welfare queen” in a diminished social position (Hill-Collins, 2000).

Research to this point on the pathway to crime through economic marginalization removed all agency from the lives of female offenders. Women were either forced into crime to the structural realities of poverty or through changes in the political welfare system. Lisa Maher (1997) changed this with her ethnography of female street workers in Brooklyn, New York. Maher examined gender, race, and class roles within the context of the economy of a crack market in order to construct an argument about the role that agentic criminal decision making played in the lives of the women surviving in that community with minimal resources or opportunities for legitimate, formal economy participation. Maher situates her research within what she termed the “dichotomy of agency” (1997:2) she claims female criminals have classically been forced into. She criticizes this dualism of agency that places submissive, passive victims at one end with little or no agency of their own to commit crime, and the volitional, emancipated, evil woman at the other end. Like Kathleen Daly, she is critical of the “blurred boundaries” between victimization and offending that leave no room for the personal agency of women. She reacts similarly to the “crack pipe as pimp” or “drug dealer as pimp” thesis (Anderson, 1990) offered by others, and states that these depictions overlook the volitional hustles women engage in within the street culture to survive.

Maher’s research added important nuances to the economic marginalization pathway to crime. Conceptualizing women purely as victims of the post-industrial, shrinking welfare state did not acknowledge the agentic life choices women make in criminal contexts. Maher was careful to point out that those choices are constrained by the gendered social reality of the
women’s lives as well as the operation of the crack market, but that they are volitional and agentic nonetheless.

Trauma:

Trauma theory has emerged a critical area necessary for understanding female offending as so many criminally involved women are survivors of or are currently surviving trauma in their lives. Trauma is a response to violence that is both an event and a particular response to an overwhelming event (Covington & Bloom, 1998) and affects every aspect of human functioning, from biological to social (Herman, 1992). Trauma theory focuses on understanding how trauma is a response to many of the pathways to crime that already link female offenders; most notably childhood maltreatment, childhood physical and sexual abuse, and continued sexual and physical abuse in adulthood (Covington, 2003). Ineffective coping strategies for dealing with trauma serve as a link between traumatic experiences and criminal offending for females. Without access to resources for healthy coping, whether professionally administered or based in social support networks, women use the means that are available to them (running away, living on the streets, prostitution) in order to neutralize the emotional response to trauma. These coping mechanisms effectively place women in the trauma to crime nexus, but do not address the effects of the trauma.

Trauma theory is derived from psychiatric and psychological literatures discussing the appropriate treatment modalities for dealing with individuals coping with extreme trauma in their lives (Harris & Fallot, 2001). In addition, trauma theory has been integrated into gender-responsive service models for female offenders. Trauma-informed services within a gender-responsive service model incorporate knowledge of victimization and abuse histories of female offenders (Covington, 2003), avoid triggering trauma reactions and/or re-traumatizing the
individual, adjust behavior of service providers to support the coping capacity of the traumatized individual, and allow survivors to manage their symptoms successfully so that they may access, retain, and benefit from trauma services (Harris & Fallot, 2001). Trauma-informed services are based on theoretical constructions from feminist pathways-to-crime research and seek to address the intersecting sources of trauma in the lives of women in order to institute recovery processes that address the source of the trauma, and therefore address the symptom of that trauma (which is the criminal offending).

Trauma results from exposure to many types of events, and although experiencing or witnessing violence firsthand is the most cited event leading to trauma, any event that results in the emotions of intense fear, helplessness, or horror can be construed as traumatic (Covington, 1998). Additionally, not everyone experiences trauma in the same way. For many women, trauma has profound effects on relational networks as well as on the progress of psychological development (1998:158). But not all women experience trauma in the same way either. Similar in concept to intersecting inequalities or polyvictimization, the cumulative effect of witnessing or experiencing multiple traumatic events throughout the life-course is differentially experienced by women whose lives are characterized by multiple sources of structural inequality.

Addiction:

The drug to crime nexus is a powerful one when directed toward female offenders. Although the majority of criminological research concerned with drugs focuses on the effect of drug distribution, sales and use as well as the “war on drugs” on male populations, as Chesney-Lind (1997) so eloquently put, at the same time:

“without any fanfare, the ‘war on drugs’ [became] a war on women and contributed to the explosion in women’s prison populations including the implementation of urinalysis and other technologies that are used on paroled women to send them back to prison at unprecedented rates for drug use” (1997:147).
This “war on women” that Chesney-Lind references combats female drug involvement on two fronts: through normative/cultural controls and through formal sanctions. Women who engage in drug use or are involved in the drug trade in anyway represent a population of “double-deviants” (Chesney-Lind, 1986); women who simultaneously do not conform to dominant cultural standards for femininity as well as commit acts that are against the formal laws of society. As such, women who are involved with drugs either through addiction or for profit or both are treated harshly by the criminal justice system.

Research on the etiology of substance abuse for women indicates that women are most often introduced into drug use via relationships; however, those relationships are not always with men but with peers or even parents (Evans, Forsyth, & Gaulthier, 2002; Maher, 1995; Surrat, Inciardi, Kurtz, & Kiley, 2004). Surrat et al. (2002) suggest that for the majority of female heroin users, drug use was a result of a cycle of violence experienced in their lives as well as integrally linked to the sex work they accomplished on the streets of Miami. Similarly, Inciardi et al. (1993) reported that a significant gender difference in drug usage patterns is the role of a sexual exchange for drugs. They found that females are far more likely to be in a position where they must trade sexual services for drugs, a phenomenon Maher (1997) sees as being inextricable from the establishment of the crack trade. With the introduction of crack into street drug markets, Maher stated that many females hustling to survive on the streets became addicted to the drug due to its increased availability and decreased cost in comparison to other available drugs. As a result, prostitution changed for many women from being a sex for money industry to one that traded sex for drugs, and more specifically, crack (1997:125).

Perhaps the most marked gender difference in drug use is the tendency of women and girls to use drugs to “self-medicate” to “treat” themselves for various emotional, psychological,
or physical symptoms (Belknap, 2007). Self-treatment among women and girls is often considered a coping mechanism to deal with co-existing pathways to crime such as victimization or trauma, exemplifying the interrelated nature of pathways to crime.

The second body of research that exists in relation to drugs and a female pathway to crime examines drug sales. Fewer studies have examined women’s roles in the drug for illicit street economies are overwhelming male-dominated. Diaz-Cotto (1996) and again, the work of Lisa Maher (1997) best characterize the ways in which women enter into the drug market via agentic, volitional choice. Those choices are made in the context of structural constraints that have limited women to only having certain illicit options available for maintaining economic stability. Diaz-Cotto (1996) goes so far as to state that increased female activity in the drug market in sales or distribution over the years leading up to her research is more of an indication of female economic marginalization than of increased drug use.

Cumulatively, the magnitude of the effects of the “war on drugs,” female addiction to drugs, and female involvement in the drug trade on forging a pathway to crime is high. As the above research suggests, it is nearly impossible to fully conceptualize this pathway without considering how it interacts with victimization, trauma, economic marginalization, and as highlighted below, mental illness.

Mental Health Problems:

Studies have provided evidence of two phenomena unique to the mental health of female offenders: (1) a higher percentage of female offenders suffer from mental illness than their male counterparts, and (2) female offenders suffer from different and unique types of mental illness when compared to their male counterparts (Bloom et al., 2003; Belknap & Holsinger, 2006). Research conducted by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (James & Glaze, 2006) found that in the
overall state prison and jail populations in the United States, female inmates had higher rates of mental health problems than male inmates in both types of institutions (73% of females to 55% of males in state prisons, and 75% of females and 63% of males in jails, respectively (2006:1)). Additionally, at the time of intake, 23% of females in state prisons as well as in local jails stated that they have been diagnosed with a mental disorder by a mental health professional in the last twelve months, while only 8% of male inmates reported the same (2006:5). However, the most telling results from this report come in the commonalities observed between women who had a mental health problem:

Female State prisoners who had a mental health problem were more likely than those without to:

- meet criteria for substance dependence or abuse (74% compared to 54%),
- have a current or past violent offense (40% compared to 32%),
- have used cocaine or crack in the month before arrest (34% compared to 24%),
- have been homeless in the year before arrest (17% compared to 9%).

They were also more likely to report:

- 3 or more prior sentences to probation or incarceration (36% compared to 29%),
- past physical or sexual abuse (68% compared to 44%),
- parental abuse of alcohol or drugs (47% compared to 29%),
- a physical or verbal assault charge since admission (17% compared to 6%) (James & Glaze, 2006:7).

The frequency of these co-occurring experiences provides evidence that victimization, addiction, marginalization, and trauma are all interconnected with mental health problems for female inmates in the United States. Although it could be argued that male inmates share some of these backgrounds and experiences, they do not co-occur among male prison populations to the degree that they do for females. Overwhelmingly, mental health problems exacerbate existing pathways to crime for females in a uniquely more powerful way than they do for males.

Secondly, female responses to mental health problems are different than those of males. The most frequently diagnosed psychiatric disorder in females is drug dependency (Belknap & Holsinger, 2006). As discussed previously, female drug use is often described as a type of self-medication or as a way to cope with trauma. Female responses to mental health problems tend to
be similar to self-medication, in that females more frequently experience depression, self-loathing, and self-injurious behavior than males do (Bloom et al., 2003). Additionally, more frequently than males, females are diagnosed with co-existing mental health problems, most typically drug dependency and depression (2003:145; Owen & Bloom, 1995).

Any gender-responsive programming for women must take into consideration the central role mental health problems play in the lives of female offenders. And although victimization, economic marginalization, trauma, drug addiction, and mental health have been discussed here in separate sections in order to fully explicate how each individual pathway leads to criminal offending uniquely for females, it is next to impossible to understand female pathways to crime without looking at their interrelationship and the cumulative effect over the life course that multiple co-occurring pathways can have on female offending.

The intersections of multiple pathways to crime has been explored through the feminist paradigm of intersecting inequalities, which examines how multiple sources of marginality result in crime for females. Intersectionalist perspectives examine female life experiences and pathways to crime in terms of the multiple inequalities that intersect and interlock in the lives of women. Patricia Hill Collins has described this approach as “showing how social relations operate within a matrix of domination at three levels: personal, group, and systemic” (1994: 26-27). Collins’s approach conceptualizes social structure and power as fluid concepts, meaning that they are complex and ever-changing as marginalized populations in society vie for power, both as individual and group agents. For example, such an approach looks at the ways in which the experience of being female, black, from a community characterized by concentrated disadvantage and a high rate of incarceration per capita would create gendered mechanisms of subordination potentially causing criminal behavior (Daly, 1997, Chesney-Lind, 2006).
Intersectionalist theory developed in large part due to a backlash against feminism in general for being ethnocentric (Hill Collins, 2000) and implicitly enforcing the norm of “compulsory heterosexuality” (Rich, 1980) to the point of excluding the life experiences of any woman who was not white, hailing from the middle- or upper-class, and heterosexual. Closely related to the concept of identity politics, intersectionalist theory attempts to analyze the life stories of a diversity of women and men in order to understand the complex structural and institutional forces that intersect with gender in order to produce crime. It is difficult to construct pathways to crime without looking at the differential effects of race, gender, class, socioeconomic status, and other social structural variables and how these structural realities produce additive effects upon the already powerfully criminogenic pathways to crime described above. Bloom (1996) and Owen (1998) have constructed concepts of intersectionality in regards to female offending that they have termed “triple jeopardy” and “multiple marginalities” respectively, to discuss this additive process that occurs when race, class, and gender come together to produce this multiplicity of decreased opportunities for success within legitimate structures.

The pathways-to-crime literature suggests that there are significant commonalities in the experiences of a group of people that put them at greater risk for entering into crime. Steffensmeier & Allan (1998) note that gender matters in research due to the “profound differences” between the lives of women and men shape their patterns of criminal offending. Though the pathways-to-crime literature is most often characterized as hailing from a feminist perspective, Farrington (1986) offered a “stepping stones” approach to understanding entrance into crime that is “gender neutral.” His stepping stones approach, as described by Sampson and Laub (1993), is a model consisting of risk factors for crime and delinquency that are time ordered by age and assessed as a developmental network of causal factors (1993:303). It
suggests both a chronological order and increasing severity ladder among risk factors. Each risk factor builds upon the previous “stepping stone” in the direction of more serious delinquency or crime at each level. Although Farrington’s research provides a pathways-to-crime model for understanding the cumulative effect life experiences can have on predicting entrance into and persistence within criminality, it does not take into effect the pathways to crime that are unique to females.

Howell (2003) attempted to reconcile the “gender neutrality” of Farrington’s (1986) stepping stones model by examining five risk factors he assessed as combining to explain female-specific pathways to serious, violent, and chronic delinquency. He identified victimization or child abuse, mental health problems, running away or being thrown away, gang involvement, and juvenile justice involvement as risk factors in his stepping-stones approach. Howell has been criticized for not including more information about whether his stepping stones are age-graded risk factors influencing initiation and continuation of serious, violent, and chronic delinquency and whether he conceptualizes the stepping stones as a causal chain (Johanssen & Kempf-Leonard, 2009). In their test of the independent effects of Howell’s five risk factors contributing to a female pathway to serious, violent, and chronic delinquency, Johanssen & Kempf-Leonard (2009) found that when comparing girl’s and boy’s involvement in serious, violent, and chronic offending in metropolitan Texas, mental health problems, running away, gang involvement, and secure detention in juvenile facilities predicted both male and female serious, violent, and chronic offending (2009:231). The authors were careful to point out that although their test did not find significant evidence of a unique female pathway to serious, violent, and chronic delinquency, that it does not mean a unique female pathway does not exist for less serious, violent, and chronic delinquency.
Similarities in female pathways to incarceration demonstrate that the process of entrance into crime and the continuance of criminal activity are gendered. The pathways literature adequately addresses the similarities in female experience into crime; however this area of literature cannot fully explain why some women go on to have more successful negotiations of reentry pathways than others. Why do some women struggle more than others and have more instances of recidivism? Is there some link between the successful pathways?

LITERATURE ON RELATIONAL THEORY

Relational theory adds some insight into these inquiries. First proposed by Miller (1976), relational theory challenges traditional psychological theories of development that suggest human development in achieved through the process of moving from child-like dependence to a state of adult-like autonomy and independence (Covington, 2003). Conversely, relational theory takes a gendered approach to development, stating that traditional theories may accurately describe male development, but for females, the path to maturity is forged through meaningful connections with others (2003: 4). According to Miller, for women, connection through meaningful, empathic, and empowering relationships produces five psychological outcomes: (1) increased zest and vitality, (2) empowerment to act, (3) knowledge of self and others, (4) self-worth, and (5) a desire for more connection (Miller 1986). Conversely, disconnections, meaning abusive or controlling relationships produce a “depressive spiral” characterized by (1) diminished zest or vitality, (2) disempowerment, (3) unclarity or confusion, (4) diminished self-worth, and (5) a turning away from relationships (Miller, 1986).

Gilligan’s (1982) influential psychological theory of women’s development contributes to an understanding of how reentry might be a gendered accomplishment. Her research about women’s responses to the abortion dilemma suggests “a sequence of development of an ethic of
care where changes in the conception of responsibility reflect changes in the experience and understanding of relationships” (1982: 126). Although Gilligan’s related argument that crisis and vulnerability are harbingers of change could be construed as contradictory to Miller’s work, the above quote suggests that even in the face of a personal crisis (words women in her sample used to describe their choices about abortion), new understandings about an ethic of care, responsibility, and relationships were forged. Gilligan’s concept of the ethic of care is similar to Miller’s mutuality of relationships—both construct an understanding of female development through the creation and maintenance of relationships not autonomy.

Relational theory has been widely criticized by feminist scholars on the basis that the argument that there is some fundamental difference between the ways in which females and males develop morality is essentialist (Bender, 1990, Karlan & Ortiz, 1993). Miller, and perhaps to a greater degree Gilligan, have been criticized for reducing women to a single essential difference that purports to describe all women generally, or in other words, assuming that because all women are female, the female experience is always the same (Karlan & Ortiz, 1993: 858). This criticism has been leveled at the relational theory perspective, because if feminist theory reduces the female experience, then patriarchal notions that all women can be generalized to be the same on all aspects of experience are more easily proposed and defended. According to this perspective, by reducing women to an essential version of morality, feminist theory upholds culturally imposed subordination that forces women to act as such.

Bender’s (1990) analysis is even more poignant, as she dichotomizes this essentialism assertion into two perhaps more stinging criticisms: that relational theory (or difference theory in her words) is essentialist in that it assumes there to be “an essence of being a woman…that has two interrelated components: a universalism critique and a sameness critique” (1990:21). She
charges feminist difference theorists with committing the universalism fallacy—“that is speaking in one voice for the many and understanding one’s own experience as representing the totality of the experience” (1990:21) as well as the sameness fallacy, whereby the assumption is made that there are a “set of attributes that define the category ‘woman’ when in fact those attributes are not true of all women” (1990:29).

Though Bender is critical of this perspective, likening it to 19th Century separate spheres ideology, she also sees redeeming qualities in relational/difference theory for feminist inquiry. She defends the use of “women” as a unit of analysis in the context of female experience as different as a whole from that of men, based on the social constructions of gender. She states that:

Differences among women based on particularized cultural, historical, and political factors ought not be ignored, but they also ought not serve to break down the category of women into infinitely smaller groups, until we end up with an analysis that can only effectively cover individuals. Women, with all of our differences accounted for, can achieve a feminist solidarity for social and legal transformation. Gender difference theories, which investigate and work from acknowledged commonalities among women, provide a rich vein for us to tap in our reconstructive and transformative efforts (1990:7-8).

Bender’s critique/support of relational/difference theories supports utilizing relational theory as part of the foundation for this research. In an effort to explore the experience of reentry for females, this research does not seek to essentialize the experiences of all women by assuming a given structure of developmental morality or construction of relational networks. The work of Miller and Gilligan serves to support the hypothesis that an ethic of care and emphasis on relational connections may be salient to the experience of women in ways in which it may not be for males. But, this research takes the accusation of essentialism seriously in using relational/difference theories in construction of a theoretical understanding of the experience of female reentry.

CONCLUSION
Decades of research into the unique pathways women take into crime and the ways in which that experience is shared among these women, yet distinct to each woman’s subjective reality, suggest that gender matters to entrance into crime. Questions that remain as to how are these pathways to crime shaped or changed through social support networks women construct and maintain, and as to what effect these pathways into crime have on the experience of reentry and the process of desistance from crime?
CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL RELEVANCE: SOCIAL SUPPORT

As the previous chapter demonstrated, successful reentry into the community following incarceration and desistance from crime is widely acknowledged as being facilitated by both individual and community-level factors. Embedded within notions of success and the types of community-level factors that encourage desistance and successful community reentry is the construct of social support. Scholarship investigating the role of social support in influencing various outcomes spans a wide spectrum of academic disciplines and has produced a plethora of theories, conceptualizations, and operationalizations of the construct. Starting in the 1970s, scholars in the psychology, public health, medicine, and social science disciplines have since investigated and discussed the protective role social support plays in terms of recuperation from illness, coping with mental health/physical health conditions, ensuring healthy exercise and diet, connection to pro-social others as protective against delinquency, and many other outcomes. The interdisciplinary recognition of the potential social support has to affect outcomes has resulted in significant diversity in the conceptualization and operationalization of the components of social support. Although the literature on social support is vast, over the past forty years, some consensus has emerged regarding the essential components that make up the construct of social support, and they are: social support networks/social embeddedness, social support behaviors (actual), and social support appraisals (perceived) (Vaux, 1988). The language used to convey embeddedness, behaviors, and appraisals can vary in the literature, but for some time these three concepts and the methods used to measure them have become more or less standard, with some variation in the manner in which they are operationalized. More or less, as the variables and scales with which they are operationalized still vary.
In addition to utilizing a three-pronged conceptualization of social support, the present research is distinguished from other studies of social support for it applies a gendered lens to the concept. Using insights gained from Relational Theory and Pathways to Crime scholarship from feminist criminology, this research employs methodological tools to examine how social support specifically effects female populations negotiating reentry. Inherently, social support research examines the relationships that individuals have with significant others; therefore relationships must be examined for their salience according to gender.

Many studies examining social support networks and the effect of social support on some outcome do not include a measure of how negative social support and even criminal social support may actually have a negative effect on that outcome. For the purposes of this research, and to better examine the population under study, omission of a measure of negative or even criminal social support would be negligent. Both Relational Theory as well as Pathways to Crime scholarship indicate that female criminality is correlated with the criminality of significant others within the social network of a female offender. Understanding social support for females as solely a positive concept in the reentry campaigns of women would not fully encompass the range of effects social support and social support networks might have on this population.

This research differs from prior studies for not only does it examine negative social support (i.e. harmful, criminal, or even dangerous social support behaviors), but also whether or not a person holds negative perceptions about her social support network (i.e. whether or not it is safe to rely upon/receive the support of significant others) and the effect both have on recidivism. Women’s perceptions about the utility and even safety of relying upon the resources contained in their social support networks are presumably related to their histories of trauma, addiction, victimization, mental health, past relationship dynamics, mental health status, and their prior
experiences in reentry/recovery/sobriety and are integral to understanding the role social support plays in fostering successful reentry.

This chapter provides a brief overview of social support research in general, and then discusses the ways in which social support has been utilized theoretically in criminology generally and in the reentry and feminist literature more specifically, in order to outline the theoretical bases upon which social support is conceptualized for the purposes of this research.

FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIAL SUPPORT RESEARCH

Pioneering research regarding the role of social support consisted of epidemiological inquiries into the protective nature of social support against various diseases or conditions. Most notably Cassel (1974a, 1974b, and 1974c), Caplan (1974), and Cobb (1976) pioneered examinations of how social support (understood as a psychological process) was related to disease etiology. Cassel examined social support specifically in terms of stress-related disorders, researching how noxious urban conditions (poor housing, crowding, disruptions of neighborhoods) were linked to increases in rates of physical and psychological disorders. His argument was one not unlike the Chicago School’s understandings of social disorganization (Shaw & McKay, 1942), in that he found that the disruption of significant social ties produced by stressful environmental conditions that heightened disequilibrium heightened susceptibility to disease (Cassel, 1974b). According to Cassel social support is provided by primary socializing groups and serves as a buffer from the psychological consequences of stressful situations. His conceptualization of social support was one that was health-protective as well as ecological in nature as it discussed community and place-based social support networks.
Caplan’s (1974) research focused primarily on community-based mental health. He was interested in the role that support systems play in influencing the developmental transitions of individuals as well as how those systems could engage in preventative psychiatry through crisis management and intervention. In addition to examining the overall role that social support plays in this community context, Caplan also elaborated on the types of assistance an individual could receive from a support system. He suggested three main sets of supportive activities: the mobilization of psychological resources to manage emotional problems, the sharing of demanding tasks, and the provision of material, financial, and emotional support (159). Caplan’s understanding of social support systems also encompassed formal support systems (i.e. government agencies, schools, churches, etc.), and he saw them as playing an important mobilizing and enhancing role when combined with informal systems.

Cobb (1976) took a similar stance to Cassel and Caplan, focusing on the importance of social support to well-being; however his conceptualization was much more specific and assessed social support as information. Cobb’s conceptualization was comprised of notions of social integration that were Durkheimian in nature (though perhaps unintentionally), as he understood “information” to lead individuals to believe that they are cared for and loved, valued and esteemed, and belonging to a network of communication and mutual obligation. Although Cobb stressed that social support fulfills two important functions: fulfillment of social needs and protection from stressors, his research primarily focused on the latter. Cobb elaborated on the coping and adaptation skills/abilities an individual gains from a social support system in order to achieve goals and to buffer against stress.

Cassel, Caplan, and Cobb sparked decades of research on the notion of the protective qualities of social relationships over a variety of outcome measures. They outlined the scope,
dimensions, and concepts inherent in the construct of social support. Missing from their analyses
is a formal *theory* of social support from which the concept is derived. No doubt there are
sociological, psychological, and even anthropological bases in the fundamental assumption of
the concept of social support, that humans are social beings that derive some positive socializing
effect from their interactions with others. The problem that derived from not couching social
support within a properly constructed theory is that following the work of Cassel, Caplan, and
Cobb, social support was operationalized with such frenzy and so widely that the task for
researchers in the decades to follow would be to attempt to come to a consensus as to what
concepts are actually subsumed under the construct of “social support” and how they should be
measured. Measures proliferated without adequate attention to reliability or validity (Vaux,
1988), social support was inappropriately differentiated from other constructs (Barrera, 1986),
and this lack of focus and uniformity made it extremely difficult to compare findings and/or
measurement models across studies.

It was not until approximately a decade after the pioneering work of Cassel, Caplan, and
Cobb that a consensus emerged regarding what social support consisted of and how it was going
to be measured. That consensus was not easily achieved. Through the findings of two separate
reviews of typologies for measuring social support (Mitchell & Trinkett, 1980; Barrera &
Ainlay, 1983) a foundation for the “meta-construct” (Vaux, 1988) of social support was created.
The term “meta-construct” when referring to social support was coined by Vaux (1988), and it
splits social support into three subsidiary constructs: support network resources, supportive
behaviors, and subjective appraisals of support (Vaux, Riedel, and Stewart, 1987). Without the
reviews by Barrera and Ainlay (1983) and Mitchell and Trickett (1980) this conceptualization
could not have become as parsimonious.
One of the main issues that plagued social support research prior to the typology reviews was the fact that researchers had identified many “modes” of help or assistance upon which “social support” is predicated. Operationalizing social support into modes of assistance in and of itself was not problematic—the problem lay in the varied terminology used to describe these modes: instrumental and affective support (Pattinson, 1977), tangible, intangible, advice, and feedback (Tolsdorf, 1976), instrumental and expressive (Dean, Lin & Ensel, 1981), and problem solving and emotional sustenance (Gottlieb, 1978) just to name a few.

Mitchell and Trinkett (1980) reviewed the classifications schemes for modes of social support in five prior studies and suggested a four-mode typology, stating that social networks and social support serve four major functions: (1) emotional support; (2) task-oriented assistance; (3) communication of expectations, evaluations and a shared world view; and (4) access to diverse information and social contacts. Although a step in the right direction, this typology was not perceived in the research community to be nuanced enough to encompass the implicit functions that social support serves (Vaux, 1988: 21).

A few years later researchers Barrera and Ainlay (1983) reviewed various social support typologies, and their construction of an overall social support typology was better received. The authors’ purpose was to address concerns in academia that “social support” was becoming too inclusive as a term. Barrera and Ainlay therefore wanted to come to an elegant and parsimonious conceptualization—one that included all that was necessary but nothing superfluous. From their research, six categories of social support emerged as essential to both the understanding of social support as a “buffer” against stressors but also as related to affective or cognitive responses to social integration: (1) material aid (providing materials and money), (2) behavioral assistance (sharing tasks), (3) intimate interaction (traditional nondirective counseling services), (4)
guidance (offering advice, information, or instruction), (5) feedback (providing feedback on behavior), and (6) positive social interaction (social interactions for fun or relaxation) (1983:39). This typology of social support provided the social support literature with one of the first typologies of support that included a research-based understanding of both activities that encompass modes of social support and also the socially integrative results of those activities. Indeed, this typology assisted Barrera and colleagues in the created of the ISSB (Inventory of Socially Supportive Behaviors) (1981), a validated scale for assessing the types and amount of support an individual receives from his/her social support network.

Although an improvement, Barrera and Ainlay’s typology still left two major types of social support research out. Their typology assesses the actual supportive behaviors available and received by individuals, but it does not assess qualities of the social network itself or the individual’s perceptions about the availability of supportive behaviors. Derived from research into the concepts of protective nature of social integration and intimate relationships, social network analysis examines a focal individual’s system of relationships with other individuals. Examinations of the dimensions of social networks can explore their structure, composition, component relationships, size, and density (interconnectedness of individuals within the network) (Tolsdorf, 1976). According to Lin (1986), connectedness to the social environment is better understood as connections at the community level, the social network, and in intimate relationships, and to date researchers still incorporate this three-level approach.

Additionally, an individual’s perceptions about the availability of support and supportive behaviors from his or her network are integral to social support research. Social support scholars have demonstrated that an individual’s perceptions of the availability of support from his/her support system are responsible for creating the psychological buffering benefits against stress
and the affective benefits of feeling supported, loved, and a sense of belonging (Barrera et al., 1981; Sarason et al, 1983). Analyses of the dimensions of social support networks and actual supportive behaviors enacted by an individual’s network do not address this psychological and affective aspect of social support that, in its essence, is at the heart of the “social” aspect of the concept. Without adequate socialization into a social network and a sense of belonging and integration into that network, an individual would not perceive support to be available, and yet these constructs were not explicitly included in Barrera and Ainlay’s review. Social support appraisals comprise what psychologists understand as the element in social support central to mental well-being (Barerra, 1981), what criminologists have linked to the importance of attachment to significant others in explaining why individuals do not commit crime (Hirschi, 1969), and what epidemiologists connect to the protective element social interaction provides individuals against negative environmental factors (Cobb, 1976; Kaplan, Cassel & Gore, 1977). In short, examining the effect of social support on some outcome measure without including measures of an individual’s subjective appraisals of the supportiveness of his or her social network does not capture the affective connection between individuals that is typically necessary to subjectively feeling supported. Below in Figure 3.1, the four main elements of social support described in this chapter are depicted graphically.

SOCIAL SUPPORT AS A META-CONSTRUCT

By conceptualizing social support as a meta-construct that is comprised of three subsidiary constructs (social support network resources, supportive behavior, and subjective support appraisals) Vaux (1988)\(^2\) created a “higher-order theoretical construct comprised of several legitimate and distinguishable theoretical constructs” (1988: 28). Vaux’s meta-construct and the

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\(^2\) This citation references Vaux’s book (1988) that most succinctly describes how social support came to be conceptualized in this way over the course of research published throughout the 1980s. For a complete list of citations please view the references.
resulting scales he designed to measure it address both the richness of the construct of social support overall, and also makes important distinctions between the components that work in concert with each other to manufacture that overall effect. By examining the dimensions of social networks, the actual/enacted modes of supportive behaviors enacted by that network, and the focal individual’s subjective appraisals of the supportiveness of his/her network, Vaux’s treatment of the meta-construct advanced the study of social support on varied outcome measures in two important ways: 1) his meta-construct is a research and theory-based conceptualization of social support, and 2) upon completing the conceptualization of the meta-construct, Vaux and colleagues constructed scales with which to measure social support based on these parameters that they validated statistically and using varied samples.

Figure 3.1: Conceptualization of Social Support

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3 This research utilizes Vaux’s social support scales to examine the effect of social support on reentry outcomes for female parolees. Please refer to the methodology section for a full description of the scales as well as their demonstrated validity and reliability.
Following publication of Vaux’s conceptualization of the meta-construct of social support, many of his contemporaries who had also been working toward formalizing and validating a conceptualization of social support also published conceptualizations and scales confirming that social support and its subsidiary three concepts should be treated as such, albeit still utilizing different language to describe them (Barerra, 1981; MacFarlane et al, 1983; Sarason et al, 1983). Each of the conceptualizations share the important framework that Vaux and colleagues were the first to offer in publication, and it is for that reason that this research will utilize his meta-construct as the organizing structure for examining how social support affects reentry outcomes for female parolees.

Although conceptualizing and measuring social support as a meta-construct with three subsidiary components was critical in the development in research utilizing social support in and of itself, it also allowed scholarship in the field to refine measurement of each concept. Once there existed validated, replicated scales that could effectively determine the effect of social support of various outcomes, nuances in those components could be teased out. One of those nuances expands upon the concept of subjective appraisals of the supportiveness of an individual’s social network, and more closely examines that individual’s attitudes and expectations regarding the usefulness of social support networks in coping with stress and meeting goals (Clapp & Beck, 2009). This branch of social support literature suggests that perceptions of social support networks play a crucial role in determining the degree to which individuals are willing to seek out or utilize social resources (237).

When Tolsdorf (1976) originally introduced the concept of the negative or detrimental aspects of social support, he specifically focused on what he termed “negative network orientation,” a concept he referred to as “a set of expectations or beliefs that it is inadvisable,
impossible, useless or potentially dangerous to draw upon network resources” (413). The degree to which an individual maintains a negative network orientation is hypothesized to determine, regardless of social network dimensions and actual/enacted supportive behaviors of that network, the degree to which an individual actually feels that it is safe or a good idea to rely on the support that network offers. Viable social resources may be rendered functionally useless if an individual is unwilling or reluctant to engage with his/her social network (Vaux, Burda & Stewart, 1986). This reluctance or unwillingness to engage with a social network is partially explained by the observations that a high degree of negative network orientation is highly correlated with negative interactions with members of an individual’s primary social support network (Tolsdorf, 1976). Trauma, abuse, neglect, and/or social isolation at the hands of a primary socializing other or central figure of a primary social network like a spouse or significant other increases the likelihood that an individual will have a high degree of negative network orientation, and it is for this reason that the bulk of network orientation research compares the network orientations of research subjects that have experienced these types of treatment against those who may not have experienced them (i.e. abuse survivors compared to college undergraduates).

As this research seeks to make conclusions about the effect of social support on the reentry success of female parolees, an examination of network orientation as it speaks to appraisals of the supportiveness of social networks is crucial. Both pathways to crime perspectives and relational theory contribute reasons why reentering women in particular might have a high degree of negative network orientation. As discussed in the previous chapter, the pathways to crime perspective has demonstrated that females are introduced into committing crime via the pathways of trauma, addiction, mental health conditions, past relationship dynamics (i.e. abuse,
criminally involved significant others), and economic marginalization; all of which could have potentially altered their appraisals of not only whether they can rely on social support networks, but whether it is safe to do so. Additionally, the importance that females place on the maintenance of primary relationships in their lives in order to feel successful (according to Relational Theory (Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1983) may complicate the orientation female parolees have toward their social support networks. Although it may be unsafe, unhealthy, inadvisable to rely upon the support of social networks for female parolees, the desire to maintain and/or repair relationships, and reunify with children may override that negative appraisal. The mixed-methods approach of this research allows for a full examination of how negative network orientation and relational theory may interact within this particular population.

Social support research and scholarship continues to evolve as new populations are examined and new nuances within the constructs of the meta-construct of social support are identified and examined. Though the literature is large and spans many fields, this research focuses that wide research by utilizing Vaux’s clear conceptualization of social support as a meta-construct and then further focuses its examination by employing a feminist criminological lens to both the theoretical conceptualization of the measures employed. Pathways to Crime, Relational Theory, and other criminological adaptations of social support research inform the specific focus of this research and both theoretically and methodologically support examining social support from a gendered perspective.

SOCIAL SUPPORT IN CRIMINOLOGICAL RESEARCH

In his presidential address to the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences in 1994, Francis Cullen described social support as an important organizing concept for criminology, and one that may serve as an overall protector against crime across many risk factors (1994:535). Through a
series of propositions, Cullen’s analysis of social support in criminology concludes that at the community and family levels, the more social support that exists, the less crime will occur. Additionally, Cullen discussed a connection between social control and social support; namely that high levels of social support in a community encourage processes of informal social control to flourish (546). His overall message in this address emphasized that social support operates to enhance crime protective factors conceptualized across many different criminological theoretical perspectives, and though perhaps difficult to model, its effect is important to consider when attempting to foster non-criminogenic outcomes.

Criminological inquiries into social support have expanded some of the pioneering conceptualizations of the meta-construct to include formal sources of social support as well as informal (Jiang & Winfree, 2006). Formal support refers to the support provided by criminal justice systems, other governmental agencies, even schools or formal community organizations like the Boys & Girls Club for example (2009:38). However, as Cullen (1994) concluded, even though social support as a concept is implicitly examined in many of our most revered criminological theories it is better understood as an organizing concept for criminology. According to Cullen, social support concepts play central roles in the following foundational criminological theories/perspectives:

- Durkheim’s (1897) concept of social integration
- Hirschi’s (1969) attachment element of the social bond that focuses on the affective ties we have with others,
- Braithwaite’s (1989) reintegrative shaming requires a social network responsible for positive types of shaming and a web of social resources,
- Feminist inquiries into kinship networks and relational theory (Giallombardo, 1966),
- Social Learning theory concepts of significant socializing others (Sutherland, Agnew)
- Desistance theory (Maruna, 2001; Sampson & Laub, 2003) discussions of connections to significant positive socializing others and achievement of turning points that aid in desistance from crime (1994: 540).

Our field does not have a “social support theory” of crime, but as demonstrated by the list above, the concepts of social networks, the behaviors that social networks engage in to provide
support, and individual’s internal appraisals of the supportiveness of those networks can all be found within criminological literature. Fortunately for the purposes of this research, feminist criminological inquiries into social networks and social support are arguably the most direct examinations of the phenomena within criminology and provide important theoretical bases for examining how social support, negative network orientation, and even negative social support can be conceptualized in order to study how social support effects the reentry process of females on parole.

**FEMINIST CRIMINOLOGICAL EXPLORATIONS OF SOCIAL SUPPORT:**

Social support networks have been discussed by several feminist criminologists as having protective features for women in the form of coping mechanisms. In the specific context of women who have been or are criminally involved, it is important to conceptualize support networks as also having negative or even dangerous implications.

Many investigations into the dynamics of female-centric social support networks of criminally involved females have focused on within-facility (i.e. inside jail and/or prison) networks. Integral to the construction and maintenance of these networks is the concept of kinship. Hill Collins (1994) introduced the role of kinship networks and “other mothers” (100) as critical to the functioning of Black female relationships with each other, their families, and communities. These kinship networks serve as a type of community orientation to survival; women support and help each other with the responsibilities of motherhood and community. “Other mothers” are women in the community who can enforce systems of informal social control on the children of other women in the community with as much authority as the biological mother can. These types of relationships have historically developed in social settings
where resources are scarce and access to more formal systems of support are limited (Hill Collins, 1994).

Hill-Collins’ concept of kinship networks has been observed in the female prison setting, another social reality where access to any formal system of social support is noticeably absent. Researchers (Giallombardo, 1966, Owen, 1998, Ward & Kassebaum, 1965, Watterson, 1998) have documented the emergence of social support networks in the form of fictive kinships in female prisons. These fictive kinships create “family” systems that fulfill needs for protection and a sense of supportive community that allow women to cope with the feelings of separation and isolation from their outside lives. These kinship networks afford incarcerated women strength through relationships and not autonomy. Although these findings indicate interesting and dynamic differences regarding the prison experiences of men and women, in some ways they are not surprising. No person arrives at incarceration tabula rasa in terms of socialization and social interactions with significant others in his/her social network. These prior experiences of the dynamics and importance of relationships dictate, especially along the lines of gender, how the prison experience will be for individuals and also how the prison society will be fostered and maintained (Owen, 1998). Incarcerated women tend to uphold traditional values regarding gender roles (Jiang & Winfree, 2006). They frequently subscribe to traditional conceptualizations of relationships, child rearing, and care giving responsibilities. They see themselves first and foremost as wives and mothers and those relationships are important for them to maintain, as their maintenance is critical for accomplishing social status (Ward & Kassebaum, 1965; Owen, 1998). While males tend to “do their own time” (Sykes, 1958) and attempt to rely on inner strength and personal autonomy to accomplish sentences in prison, females tend to both remain interwoven with extra-institutional relationships, especially those
involving care of children, they also create systems of interconnectedness within the jail/prison that provide emotional support and relationships (Jiang & Winfree, 2006).

Analyzing the ways in which female inmates rely on relationship structures like fictive kinship networks within institutions is critical to understanding the central role that social support and supportive relationships may play in negotiating successful reentry pathways post-incarceration for females. Unfortunately, upon release from incarceration via parole or a completed sentence, women are forced into a criminal justice system or into a community that values autonomy, values accomplishing conditions of release (i.e. housing, employment, desistance from drug/alcohol use) through ostensibly autonomous processes (Farrell, 2000), and that does not always emphasize community-based recovery. Therapeutic communities, typically instituted at transitional housing programs (i.e. halfway houses), are recovery/reentry-based and often gender-responsive programs designed to harness the recuperative power of the community. Evidence suggests therapeutic communities can help women to have more successful post-incarceration careers (Messina et al., 2000). Due to the high frequency of dual diagnoses (substance abuse and mental health) within the population of females within the correctional system, the substance abuse recovery element of therapeutic communities combined with a focus on accomplishing reentry goals allows women rely on a feeling of shared goals and strengths within their communities (2000: 197).

Although therapeutic communities demonstrate promise through capitalization on the supportive functions of fictive kinship networks, unfortunately all females negotiating reentry post-incarceration do not find themselves enrolled in transitional housing programs. For women who are released to parole-approved housing or who serve their entire sentences within the facility, the support systems they had prior to incarceration are what they must rely on in order to
accomplish their reentry. As discussed regarding female pathways to crime, female criminality is often a result of relationships with criminally involved significant others, be they family members or romantic partners. Therefore an analysis of the role that social support plays in the negotiation of a successful reentry career for females must include an examination of the degree to which support networks can actually be detrimental to that process. Some research shows that not all connections to social networks are positive—some can be severely damaging to pro-social processes. Rook (1984) was one of the first social support scholars to discuss how immediate and extended family networks can be detrimental due to the pressures put on individuals to provide either materially or emotionally for family members. These demands can often be overwhelming, and especially for females who may be thrust into a primary caregiver role immediately following incarceration, those demands may lead to any number of negative outcomes from relapse on drugs or alcohol, to re-arrest, or even re-incarceration. The same patterns of life experiences that led females to commit crime in the first place (poverty-stricken backgrounds, trauma and abuse, mental illness, substance abuse and dependency, dysfunctional intimate relationships) are the same social structures they will return to in their communities, only now with the added collateral consequences of a record of incarceration and perhaps even a felony conviction (Mauer & Chesney-Lind, 2002).

Additionally, criminological and sociological research into the human and social capital of communities and the individuals that comprise them suggests that the social networks offenders return to contain limited social capital. According to Bordieu’s (1985) classic definition, social capital has two distinct components: a) the social relationship that enables individuals to achieve access to desired resources, and b) the quantity and quality of those resources. While social capital, or a lack thereof, is developed early in life in the family of origin
and follows an individual throughout life, most notably affecting educational and employment outcomes, human capital refers to individual capacity to acquire new knowledge, skills and abilities that enable individuals to act and think in new ways (Coleman, 1988). Akin to self-efficacy, or the confidence to act in self-interest in pursuing personal goals (Salisbury & Van Voorhis, 2009), human capital is augmented by environments or communities that are rich in social capital. Clear (2007) as well as Owen & Bloom (1995) discuss the ways in which the communities and social networks to which returning prisoners are released tend to be characterized by individuals low in both human and social capital, but that are also rich in criminal capital, or connected to a breadth and depth of criminal connections. This type of criminal capital is highly detrimental to negotiating a life free of crime and criminal contacts for an individual reentering society post-incarceration.

Increasing the social and human capital of formerly incarcerated women by administering state support decreases the chances of recidivism post-incarceration (Bloom et al, 2003; Rumgay, 2004; Salisbury & Van Voorhis, 2009). Additionally, studies conducted by Reisig et al (2002) and Giordano et al. (2002) concluded separately that among felony convicted females higher education, higher income, and high quality employment and marriage were indicators of larger social networks and a more positive perception regarding the positive aspects of social networks. Giordano and her colleagues went on to conclude that these indicators of social networks also served as insulators from continued criminal activity. Expanding on this literature, Holtfreter et al. (2004) argued that in order to reduce recidivism among females we need to increase their human and economic capital by providing them with housing and employment assistance. The authors’ argument did not stop there, but instead couched this notion of augmenting social capital within the important supportive network of the family. Using “The Bodega Model” of La
Bodega de la Familia, a family justice center in New York City’s Lower East Side that focuses on promoting desistance from crime by strengthening families and their social capital (Flavin, 2004) as an example, Holtfreter and her colleagues argue that by teaching families how to activate resources and networks while also providing them with some governmental assistance, a real impact can be made on recidivism. If the role of the family and/or kinship is downplayed in reintegration programming, then a major source of support for females is depleted. Therefore focusing on the family or extended family for reentry programming may yield more successful outcomes for women in particular.

Conversely, focusing on the family as the primary unit for reentry programming for women may also serve as yet another source of governmental oversight into the lives of poverty-stricken women. Although reintegration programming should assume a strengths-based approach for females, there is real danger that even state services that are designed with the best of intentions will actually function as additional sources of formal surveillance for this population. Loic Wacquant describes this process in what he terms the “erosion of state capital” (1998), and although his argument was in made in regard to the creation of the black ghetto in America, his analysis can be extrapolated to females with criminal justice system involvement (23). The status and position women in this population hold in society tends to be characterized by the intersecting inequalities of gender, class, and race, practically ensuring economic marginalization and therefore reliance upon state services for assistance. When these intersecting inequalities are understood within the context of the trend in western democracies toward the feminization of the experience of poverty (Brady & Kall, 2007), reentry programming could be construed as a burdensome source of surveillance and control over women as opposed to a source of support. Interviewing women experiencing reentry programming while on active
parole supervision allows for the exploration of this process. Overall, reentry literature is replete with references regarding the reentry needs of women encompassing child care and parenting services (Arditti & Few, 2006; Glaze & Maruschak, 2008), health care and counseling services (O’Brien & Young, 2006), housing and transportation services (Scroggins & Malley, 2010), and education, job training, and employment services (Arditti & Few, 2006)—in other words, the same or very similar reentry needs as the entire reentering community. However, there is little attention paid to whether or not addressing these barriers to reentry success may be tantamount to more types of formal surveillance in the lives of reentering women.

CONCLUSION:

This research bridges an important gap between feminist explorations of the reentry process and the wide body of literature conceptualizing and operationalization social support. Placing the theoretical emphasis on the role of social support in reentry pathways and examining it from a gendered perspective allows this research to fill this gap in the literature. What is less clear from the research, and subsequently what this research explores, is the role that social support (perceived, actual, negative/criminal) plays in mitigating or aggravating reentry needs in terms of recidivism outcomes for females. Using gender as a lens to examine reentry demands a nuanced conceptualization of social support in order for its role in predicting success to be understood.
CHAPTER THREE
THEORETICAL RELEVANCE: DESISTANCE AND REENTRY

The process of negotiating successful community reentry post-incarceration is just that: a process consisting of both objective and subjective factors that contribute to as well as detract from that potential success. No one person will experience the process of reentry in the same way, just as no one person enters into criminal offending in the same way. Criminological theory has a storied history of examining the process of entering into crime and the mechanisms that facilitate criminal offending, but only in the past two decades has more attention been paid to the processes of desistance from crime, and further how desistance plays a role in community reentry. Two major perspectives have emerged that examine the process of desistance from crime and the role it plays in reentry success. The first perspective finds its theoretical origins within social control literature, and examines how important shifts in informal social controls over the life-course can be transformative for criminal offending. Although this perspective is rooted in the work of Sampson & Laub (1993), important research examining the relative transformative power of turning points in the life course adds important insights into the ways in which even turning points like employment, marriage, and military service might be gendered. The second perspective examines the process of desistance as a more subjective, cognitive process of self-transformation. Maruna (2001) and his colleagues propose that although objective turning points are undoubtedly essential to the desistance process, they are rendered meaningless if they are not accompanied by agentic, self-initiated desire to change.

Taken together these perspectives provide a solid theoretical foundation for desistance theory, as they encompass both social and psychological factors relating to this process. While there is agreement amongst desistance and reentry scholars that there are overwhelming
similarities in those processes for all persons, regardless of race, gender, class, etc., research increasingly indicates that especially in terms of gender and race, the differences in the desistance and reentry experiences are too crucial to overlook theoretically (Brown & Bloom, 2009; Leverentz, 2006). After providing an overview of the social control (i.e. Sampson & Laub, 1993) and re-storying (i.e. Maruna, 2001) desistance theoretical perspectives mentioned above, this chapter will discuss current inquiry into their foundational concepts indicating the ways in which desistance and reentry are gendered processes. Arguably, there are important differences in the desistance and reentry experience that females in particularly tend to experience.

**THE SOCIAL CONTROL & THE IDENTITY TRANSFORMATION PERSPECTIVES**

Sampson & Laub’s (1993; 2003) reconstruction of data collected in the 1940s from the lives of 500 male delinquents living in Boston (Glueck & Glueck, 1950) provided them with the raw material with which to propose their age-graded life course theory of crime. Drawing heavily from social control/social bonding literature and concepts (Hirschi, 1969) Sampson & Laub emphasized the ways in which informal social controls shift in possibly transformative ways throughout the life course of an individual through turning points (1993:35), helping to explain the processes of onset, acceleration, deceleration, and desistance from crime. In *Crime in the Making* (1993) Sampson & Laub advanced Travis Hirschi’s seminal proposition that crime is most likely to occur when an individual’s bond to society is attenuated, and stated that although individual traits and childhood experiences are important for understanding behavioral stability, experiences in adolescence and adulthood can redirect criminal trajectories in either positive or negative directions (1993:78). These experiences can serve as turning points: alterations of deflections in long-term pathways or trajectories that were initiated at a previous point in time. According to the authors turning points were most often associated with marriage,
employment and military service. The authors attributed the salience of these life experiences in altering criminal trajectories to the social ties embedded within adult transitions. In *Shared Beginnings, Divergent Lives* (2003) Sampson & Laub extended their examination of the reconstructed Glueck data and elaborated on the mechanisms through which the turning points of marriage, employment, and the military operate to alter criminal trajectories. Turning points allow individuals to a) “knife off” from past behaviors, associations, and places, b) engage in new social situations that provide supervision, monitoring, and new opportunities for social support and growth, c) engage in new or different routine activities, and d) start to undergo an identity transformation (2003:100). These mechanisms along with involvement in institutions such as marriage, work, and the military reorders short-term inducements to crime and over time, redirects long-term commitments to conformity.

Although in these two primary publications hailing from their reconstruction of the Glueck data focused on a more objective understanding of turning points—meaning that the presence or self-selection into a certain social institution or bond fosters desistance, Sampson & Laub have more recently (2005) aligned some of their concepts with the perspective of Shadd Maruna (2001). Maruna’s perspective suggests that human agency is crucial to understanding the causation of persistence in, as well as desistance from, crime. Sampson & Laub (2005) state that:

“persistent criminal offending is more than the weakening of social bonds, and desistance from crime is more than the presence of a social bond. Structural-institutional turning points and opportunities are mediated by perceptions and human decision making…that are situated or relational according to social context and are not property of a person or environment, but are a product of both” (2005:30).

The addition of notions of situated decision-making not only in the lives of offenders but also in terms of the choices that are available to those offenders within their own socio-cultural realities is a concept that future research in the area of desistance continues to examine.
In his ethnographic research, Maruna focuses on human agency through his conceptualization of desistance from crime as a “restorying” of one’s life history. Through a series of ethnographic interviews with a group of male offenders in Liverpool, England who had been or were currently incarcerated, Maruna concluded that even for prisoners who had personal histories marked by high levels of criminal activity, persistent drug use, failed experiences with rehabilitation, and pervasive criminal identities or “selves,” desistance from crime was something that could be achieved, albeit through a long process of cognitive change or “re-storying” (2001: 25). Maruna found that most important to the process of desistance from crime is the agency to lead productive lives as “new people” that offenders develop through the process of being reformed (2001:206). Learning to use past behavior in order to construct a “new person” identity, offenders developed feelings of self-efficacy and personal agency leading to a more positive self-image and renewed confidence to act in a manner that would inspire personal fulfillment. Though identity transformation is achieved through interpersonal interaction, Maruna’s perspective on desistance focuses on the re-invention of self based on new definitions of one’s own life-story.

Important to the process of constructing a new personal identity is the concomitant creation of scripts for change (Maruna & Roy, 2007) to accompany new roles that foster the desistance process. Maruna & Roy state that although connection to structural/institutional turning points and subsequent knifing off from past associations and behaviors consistent with a “criminal” self are critical to desistance, without a new behavioral script to follow in a new life role any attempts at desistance will be short-lived and difficult to sustain in the long term (2007: 51). Examples of scripts for change are the adoption of new pro-social roles such as parent or employee that allow a potential desister to construct new patterns of acting and thinking that do
not involve those from his/her old “criminal” self. Additionally, these scripts must be salient to
the offender and his/her self-concept and implemented via agentic decision-making processes in
order for them to serve as the foundation for a new non-criminal self. In sum, Maruna and his
colleagues have furthered Sampson & Laub’s age-graded life course perspective by examining
the psycho-social processes potential desisters undergo when making an agentic choice to desist
and adopt new, non-criminal selves. In the context of reentry policy and programming this
dynamic of the mechanisms of desistance indicates that much like in the case of substance abuse
addiction processes, the choice to desist from crime and then the subsequent commitment to
maintain that desistance must be volitional and accompanied by new people, places, things, and
according to Maruna and his colleagues, roles and scripts that foster that desistance. Forcing
desistance from crime on offenders via programming or imprisonment may have less of an effect
than other social institutions or roles that the offender enters into willingly on fostering
desistance.

Two main criticisms have been waged against the social control and identity
transformation perspectives on desistance: 1) the generalization of findings to all offenders when
the subjects studied were solely male, and 2) the generalization of findings across diverse time
periods and socio-historical contexts. The first criticism is made against both the work of
Arguably, the reconstruction and enhancement of the Glueck data that was undertaken by
Sampson & Laub resulted in the largest, most comprehensive, and longest spanning longitudinal
data set ever compiled and analyzed in criminological history, but that notwithstanding some
researchers (Arditti & Few, 2006; Giordano et al., 2003; Leverentz, 2006) have argued that
although there are certainly shared similarities in the desistance process for males and females, if
these processes have not been systematically and specifically examined for females as they have been for males, then sweeping generalizations cannot and should not be made. There are structural differences in the way society is constructed that render the salient turning points of marriage, employment and military service much less accessible for females than males (Brown & Bloom, 2009; Lyons & Pettit, 2011; Nieuwbeerta, Nagin & Blokland, 2009; Porter & Purser, 2010). Fundamentally, structural impediments to inclusion in these critical social institutions and turning points in the same qualitative way that males are included calls into question the generalizability of these perspectives across genders. Although there are important studies examining the criminal offending patterns of females over time, the majority of them do not follow females past young adulthood; therefore they are unable to discuss offending over the life course. To date, due to the lack of inclusion of females in longitudinal research little is known about the applicability of developmental and life-course theories to females throughout the life-span. Marriage and employment in the context of gendered desistance have been investigated in the research extensively over the next decade, and those processes in addition to motherhood as turning point for females are discussed individually below.

A second major criticism of life-course perspectives on desistance pertains to the generalizations they make regarding socio-historical and cultural context. Due to their nature, longitudinal samples that examine behavioral processes over the life course must contend with changes and shifts in cultural norms embedded within social institutions. Unfortunately, conclusions drawn regarding the social institutions of marriage and employment in particular have not been made in ways that acknowledge the transitory nature of the accessibility and normative values inherent in the “respectability package” (Giordano, Cernkovich & Rudolf,

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2002), or the combined effect of gainful employment and a “good” or “fulfilling” marriage. An economic climate that limits employment opportunities (especially for populations with criminal records) (Pager, 2003; 2007; 2009), increasing credentialism in society (Weber, 1946), decreases in the availability of a suitable or attractive marriage partner due to both changes in the societal valuation of the institution of marriage (Bersani, Laub & Nieuwbeerta, 2008; Charles & Luoh, 2010) as well as the concomitant consequences of the new penology (Feeley & Simon, 1992), and mass incarceration and mass reentry in terms of the sheer number of marriage-aged males in marriage markets typically available to females who also have criminal offending histories (King & South, 2010) all seriously diminish the transformative power of marriage as a desistance fostering social institution. Moreover, there is mounting evidence that these processes may preclude females more so than males from yielding positive transformative qualities from marriage. The remainder of this chapter will explore this phenomenon as well as two other turning points in the desistance process from a gendered perspective: employment and motherhood.

*MARRIAGE: THE LOVE OF A GOOD MAN?*

Desistance research has demonstrated that marriage is an important event and institution that can reduce criminal behavior and even lead to desistance from crime (Sampson & Laub, 2003). The literature on the effect of marriage on crime has been robust in two ways: 1) when an individual is in a state of marriage he or she is involved in significantly less crime (Blokland & Nieuwbeerta, 2005; Horney et al., 1995; Sampson et al., 2006; Warr, 1998), and 2) marriage has a causal impact on desistance from crime over the life course (Sampson et al., 2006). Empirical literature finds that for most individuals, when in the state of marriage, they are less likely to commit crime (Bersani, Laub & Nieuwbeerta, 2009). Support for this effect has been found in
studies of: high-risk offenders (Farrington & West, 1995; Laub & Sampson, 2003), general population studies (Massoglia & Uggen, 2007; Warr, 1998), and minorities (Horney et al., 1995), as well as internationally in London (Farrington & West, 1995), Canada (Ouimet & Le Blanc, 1996), and the Netherlands (Blokkland & Nieuwbeerta, 2005). Some studies (Giordano et al, 2002; Baskin & Sommers, 1998; Leverentz, 2006; Uggen & Kruttschnitt, 2006) have specifically examined this relationship with female subjects and have concluded that females tend to derive as much benefit from marriage as males in the desistance process. This research challenges those results based on a more contextualized understanding of the modern context of marriage.

Sampson and his colleagues were able to demonstrate the relationship between marriage and crime is causal in nature, i.e. that being married leads to a 35% reduction in crime (Sampson et al 2006). According to Sampson & Laub’s interpretation, marriage works to change behavior in the long term, because entering into a marriage partnership with a significant other allows an offender to a) strengthen a social bond with a significant other; b) “knife off” from previous associations and behaviors in order to be a “good” spouse or simply to spend time with the chosen spouse; c) have their behavior monitored and supervised in a new and meaningful way; d) engage in new routine activity schedules, e) cultivate and manage a new script for identity transformation in the role of loving, reliable spouse. Although this “good marriage effect” has been reported in numerous studies, the universality and generalizeability of that effect varies in important ways according to gender and socio-historical context.

In order to fully grasp the ways in which the effect of marriage on crime and desistance in not equally distributed across genders, it is necessary to fully conceptualize marriage in the modern context. Over the past half-century the percentage of persons entering into the institution of marriage nationwide has fallen consistently and today is at an historic low (Charles
& Luoh, 2010). Changes in reproductive technology (most notably the availability and legality of the birth control pill) (Goldin & Katz, 2002), increased female labor market participation (Bloom et al., 2009), increased female educational attainment (in 2009 females obtained 58% of bachelor’s degrees overall, while within the African-American population, African-American females obtain 67% of bachelor’s degrees) (DiPrete et al., 2006), and the resulting economic independence that is often derived from higher educational attainment and labor market participation have all contributed to decreased entrance into marriage for females. However, discussing marriage in these large-scale, social trend terms universalizes the experience with marriage to the experience of females who have access to birth control, higher education, and employment. In other words, discussing marriage this way essentializes the female experience to that of privileged females.

If the effect of marriage on desistance from crime is examined from a gendered perspective, mass incarceration, reentry, and pathways to crime cannot be ignored in a discussion of the availability of marriage as a positive turning point in the life course. Taken together, the disproportionate racial and spatial distribution of incarceration and release in communities and the conditions of concentrated disadvantage that accompany those processes fundamentally limit female opportunities for marriage, qualitatively change procreation patterns, and increase economic marginalization for females.

Much of the desistance literature makes an important distinction about the institution of marriage: that being married is not enough, it is the quality of the emotional bond in the marriage that matters (Leverentz, 2006). The reality for many females living in communities that are disproportionately affected by concentrated disadvantage and incarceration is that the pool of eligible males to marry is dangerously shallow. For example, when age is considered along with
race, for black males under the age of 35 incarceration is a more likely life experience than both marriage and college (Pettit & Western, 2004). Additionally, of the 2 million people incarcerated nationwide on any given day, 90% of those adults are male, with half of those identifying as African American (Harrison & Beck, 2006). Taking these statistics one step further reveals that in some urban areas one in six black adult males is incarcerated (Sabol & Lynch, 2003). Considering that partners for marriage are typically chosen from within “marriage markets” that are defined by the interaction of race, age, and geographic region (Charles & Luoh, 2010), the opportunity for females of minority status, aged 18-24, and living in urban environments to enter into a quality marriage is slim. Available males within these communities are overwhelmingly likely to have criminal records and incarceration experience and therefore have decreased employment prospects (Pager, 2007; 2009), decreased wage increase potential throughout the life course (Western & Pettit, 2008), and a large population of eligible females from which to choose from in their communities. So although these males are not “attractive” marriage partners, females end up in competition for, for lack of a better descriptor, the best of the worst. The result is that for these women who are already at a disadvantaged position in society due to their lack of access to quality education and vocational training, they must now compete for males within their marriage market, which often translates into trying to “keep a man” (Anderson, 1999) through having children out of wedlock.

Becker discussed how this phenomenon shifts the benefits of the marriage game from women to men. Traditionally, males had to compete for female marriage partners, but systematic reduction in available males leads to females having three options: 1) remain single and suffer the economic consequences, 2) marry “down”, or 3) have children with males out of wedlock to secure financial assistance from both the male as well as the government (1972;
Criminologists have noted the “marrying down” phenomenon in their research, demonstrating that even females who have criminal records are likely to marry males that have more serious or lengthy records (Sampson et al., 2006). Overall, female opportunities for marriage in society are at all time lows, but the consequences for the female criminal offender population are much more pronounced, and indicate that marriage may not be an available turning point to aid in desistance from crime.

Preference to marry may mediate marriage opportunities in terms of its salience to the desistance process. The mechanisms that drive preference to marry have to do with the combination of socio-cultural opinions of the institution of marriage, prior examples of marriage (i.e. parental relationship) (Giordano et al., 2002), and even preference in homogamous mates, or mates that display behavior that is similar to one’s own (van Schellen et al., 2011). In the general population increased educational and labor market participation in females tends to either postpone or mitigate the preference to marry; however it has been documented that females of low SES in particular, and also incarcerated women, tend to subscribe to more traditional conceptualizations of gender roles. One of aspects of the traditional female gender role is to be the “good wife.” Therefore, even though more females within the offender and incarcerated population may have the preference to be married, the reality that they will most likely have to marry down still persists.

EMPLOYMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF ECONOMIC MARGINALIZATION

The “respectability package” (Giordano et al., 2002) discussed above is the culturally significant combination of marriage, employment, and community status that confers a status upon individuals that connotes adulthood, responsibility, and respectability—or at least it used to earlier in the 20th Century. The aforementioned change to the salience of marriage as a valuable
and respectability-conferring institution has changed significantly in recent years. This change alone shifts the dynamic within the respectability package’s components, and success in the labor market comes to hold more weight in terms of gaining respect and status. Unfortunately, there are major structural impediments within the current economic climate that preclude certain populations from securing gainful employment. These structural impediments have an effect on the employability of the entire offender population, but there are specific ways in which experience with economic marginalization over the life course in the female population specifically exacerbates the elusive nature of employment as a salient turning point in the desistance process.

In examining the social structures and processes that have lead to widespread urban poverty, Wilson’s (1987) work *The Truly Disadvantaged*, Anderson’s *Code of the Street* (1999), and more recently Venkatesh’s *Gang Leader For A Day* (2009) ethnographically examine how the trends in the United States over the past four decades of deindustrialization (especially in terms of urban factory systems), large scale unemployment in unskilled labor markets, social disorganization, and the drug trade have resulted in this phenomenon. Urban poverty is an overwhelmingly African American experience (Wilson, 1987), and is one that is perpetuated through the process of social isolation. Wilson states that in neighborhoods that are characterized by high levels of concentrated disadvantage the social systems tend to be redundant; meaning that if your community ties are all to other similarly situated individuals also living in urban poverty and concentrated disadvantage then those connections further alienate the community and its members from accessing outside resources. According to Wilson (1987), in areas of urban poverty there are few job holders and middle-class institutions are noticeably absent. Poor blacks tend to live among other poor people and residential segregation by race and
by economic circumstances effectively relegates this population to neighborhoods with crumbling social infrastructure (Massey and Denton 1993). Moreover, upper- and middle-class flight from these neighborhoods has removed all social buffers that would exist to ameliorate the effects of concentrated poverty, leaving behind an entire population with little to no prospects in terms of employability.

Additionally, these communities are populated by individuals who, due to lack of opportunity, possess little human capital (limited educational attainment, limited employability due to lack of vocational training, and little to no self-efficacy as a result) (Clear, 2007). The limited human capital of individuals plus the conditions of social disorganization that contribute to decreased social cohesion and an inability to regulate behavior on a parochial level results in decreased social capital in these communities as well. Consequently, networks of weak ties (Pager, 2009) that often yield employment or social services connections for individuals who do have higher levels of human and social capital are infrequent, and more typically social networks consist of strong ties that are redundant in the resources they can provide. For example, in areas of concentrated disadvantage, where lack of educational, vocational, and social opportunities combine with pervasively high levels of poverty, all of the inhabitants of that community find themselves similarly disadvantaged, so although an individual may have many strong ties to significant others, those connections do not yield any new opportunities.

Researchers have started to examine the economic and labor market consequences of mass incarceration. This research has wide-ranging foci from the factors influencing hiring decisions by employers (mainly the interaction between race and criminal record) (Pager 2003; 2007; 2009; Western, 2006; Western & Pettit, 2007) to large-scale examinations of how mass incarceration and release increase crime rates due to their effect on labor economics (scarcity of
jobs disproportionately harms the most disadvantaged job seekers, with ex-offenders representing the most disadvantaged (Holzer, Raphael & Stoll, 2007) and job scarcity (DeFina & Hannon, 2010b). This type of research examines the “flip side” of the mass incarceration phenomenon; mass release. Returning offenders represent the least employable population in the labor market (young, under educated, limited vocational skills and job readiness, stigma of criminal conviction/incarceration record, returning to areas of concentrated disadvantage) (Lyons & Pettit, 2011) and therefore when they are returned en masse to communities disproportionately affected by coercive mobility and prison cycling, the consequences of their near inevitable unemployment also presents a mechanism through which these processes serve to increase crime rates.

Dating back to the emancipation/liberation hypothesis for female criminality (Adler, 1975; Simon, 1975) and continuing through Daly (1992) and Ritchie’s (1994; 1996) female pathways to crime, systematic marginalization within a patriarchal society has been discussed. Adler and Simon, as well as host of researchers who sought to lend empirical support to their hypotheses, linked economic marginalization to female crime (Datesman & Scarpitti, 1980; Steffensmeier 1978; 1981; Steffensmeier & Cobb, 1981). The theme of exclusion from or entry into the labor market was central to these discussions—the notion that once liberated from the household females would both have the opportunity and the inclination to commit more economically motivated white-collar crimes, though debunked as myth for its theoretical conceptualization today, still holds some weight in terms of its discussion of the effects of marginalization.

As discussed in the pathways to crime chapter, female marginality in terms of access to education, opportunities for gainful employment, and the ways in which intersections of gender,
race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status all combine to foster systematic marginalization (Simpson, 1989) has consequences not only for entrance into crime, but arguably desistance from it. This cumulative marginalization has previously been understood in the context of female entrapment into crime via intersecting inequalities (Ritchie, 1994; 1996), spiraling marginality (Owen, 1998), the feminization of poverty (Chesney-Lind, 2006), and changes to welfare policy affecting governmental regulation of the economic lives of females (Carlen, 1988). Economic marginality was previously discussed in detail as one of the important pathways to crime (see the Pathways to Crime and Relational Theory chapter); however it has clear salience to the desistance process across gender.

Feminist criminologists have documented the ways in which, regardless of current economic climate, females as a group are marginalized economically within society. At the societal level, the labor of females it not equally valued monetarily to that of males. At year-end 2009 employed females in the United States as a group made 77 cents to every full dollar of their male counterparts, representing a 22.9% wage gap (Albelda, Drago & Shulman, 2010). Although this statistic alone is impressive, this economic disparity only covers those females that are gainfully employed. Were this statistic to be extrapolated to unemployed or underemployed population the gap would certainly widen. Not only does the economic disparity in earning power exist between males and females, but evidence increasingly demonstrates that poverty is an overwhelmingly female experience. Recent publications on the feminization of poverty (extending Pearce’s (1978) discussion) indicate that due to changes in the welfare state in the last half-century and the cumulative effect of intersecting inequalities of gender, race, and socio-economic status the experience of poverty has been transformed into one that women experience at a much higher rate than males (Brady, 2005; Brady & Kall, 2008). Three social phenomena
are hypothesized to drive the creation and maintenance of the feminization of poverty in the United States: single motherhood, sex ratios of the elderly and labor force participation (Brady & Kall, 2008).

When understood in the context of turning points in the life-course, the feminization of poverty has important consequences to the availability of employment as a salient to desistance process. Concentrations of poverty, incarceration, and lack of access to opportunities for education and gainful employment in many urban areas have resulted in a population of females who are more likely than not to be undereducated (Lyons & Pettit, 2011), to have limited employability (Holzer, Raphael & Stoll, 2007; Uggen, 1999), to rely on some type of welfare assistance (Heimer et al., 2012), to be primary caregivers to minor children (Brown & Bloom, 2009), and to be living at or under the poverty line (DeFina & Hannon, 2010). The gendered concentrated disadvantage that these statistics produce for females in the correctional system systematically precludes them from obtaining meaningful employment upon which to accomplish both the objective and subjective dimensions of desistance. Although employment in any sort of job, even entry-level does serve to re-order the routine activities of a female offender as well as a male offender, subjectively the transformative effect of that employment may be qualitatively different in the context of negotiating caregiving, mothering, and conditions of poverty.

**MOTHERHOOD: A MORE SALIENT FEMALE TURNING POINT?**

The majority of females involved in the criminal justice system are mothers (Mumola, 2004), and as such maternal concerns are paramount for this population post-incarceration (Brown & Bloom, 2009). The majority of female inmates have children; approximately 80% of female inmates have one child, close to 70% have children younger than 18 years of age, most
maintain primary custody of those children, and most plan to live with their children upon release regardless of custodial arrangement (Austin & Irwin, 2001). As a subjective component of the desistance and reentry process, motherhood can provide a new “script for change” with the power to serve as a transformative turning point for females. When marriage and employment are made structurally unavailable, it may seem as though reliance upon the power of the role of motherhood from a reentry or desistance program standpoint would increase the rate of success in reentry for females, but it is just not that simple.

The criminal justice system and society in general stigmatizes mothers who engage in criminal activity with a powerful “double deviant” label (Schur, 1983; Chesney-Lind, 2006). The shame that accompanies that label of being a “bad mother” in addition to a “criminal” can be nearly impossible to overcome in the reentry process making reliance upon motherhood as a salient turning point a) precarious and b) dependent upon the timing of entrance into motherhood (i.e. pre- or post-incarceration). Brown and Bloom (2009) specifically investigated the role of motherhood in the negotiation of reentry for females on parole and they concluded that “while the maternal role may constitute a conventional “identity script” for these ex-inmates and motivate their success on parole, the challenges they face that impact their childrearing before prison make reassuming their maternal roles a precarious enterprise” (313). The challenges the authors speak of are the same problems that drove the crime and incarceration of the women to begin with: poverty, lack of education, unstable housing, lack of access to social services, unemployment, and addiction (313). And although maternal concerns are of the utmost importance to the majority of reentering mothers, these challenges make reassuming the maternal role a “precarious enterprise” (313). In the context of these challenges and added complications in the child-parent relationship due to complicated custody arrangements and child-welfare
agency involvement, motherhood, although subjectively important to identity transformation, objectively is fraught with the potential for failure.

Incarceration also represents a significant erosion of maternal capital (Morash, 2009; Rumgay, 2004). As a result of incarceration, parental authority shifts from the incarcerated mother to whoever now has custody of any and all minor children. Coupled with the stigma, shame, and guilt of the “double deviant/bad mother” label, the lack of maternal efficacy in parenting actions may render even motherhood unavailable as a salient script for change in desistance and reentry. Conventional identities like motherhood tend to have conventional scripts that go along with accomplishing them (Rumgay, 2004). Incarcerated mothers are certainly maternally unorthodox (Covington, 2003) and cite struggles with family reunification as central to their own conceptualizations of success in reentry and desistance.

CONCLUSION:

Desistance theory provides subjective and objective conceptualizations for the mechanisms of the desistance and reentry process. Criminology has only begun to investigate the ways in which desistance mechanisms in the form of turning points are gendered. Intersecting inequalities built into the American social structure may make it impossible for females involved with the criminal justice system to have the same qualitative experience with marriage, employment, and economic independence that males have, indicating that more research into those turning points and sources of identity transformation they do have access to (i.e. marriage) may be critical to understanding the female desistance process. This research examines the gendered reentry and gendered desistance processes as just that; socially constructed processes that do not exist independently of one another and therefore cannot be examined as if they do.
CHAPTER FOUR

A GENDERED REENTRY FRAMEWORK

The previous three chapters provided detailed description of the three theoretical perspectives that combine to frame the process of what this research calls gendered reentry. This section first details the theoretical conceptualization of gendered reentry and then provides a description of the how this research was structured in order to examine this phenomenon using a mixed-methodological approach.

GENDERED REENTRY:

Desistance and reentry literature is replete with evidence that these processes are objectively difficult for every person that undergoes them. What this research does is examine the ways in which, in addition to the universal barriers that exist to successful desistance and reentry, what are the barriers to female desistance and reentry, and similarly what contributes to female success? This nuanced examination of the reentry process is supported theoretically by the three areas of criminological inquiry discuss in the previous three chapters and advances theoretical inquiry into the gendered nature of reentry processes in three ways: first, it constructs theoretical linkages between pathways to crime, relational/difference theory and desistance to the concept of social support, forging an important theoretical basis for understanding the ways in which reentry is a gendered experience. Second, this research prioritizes the modern experience of reentry from the perspective of females who have recently or are currently experiencing reentry. By placing the experience of females currently under supervision at the center of this analysis, this research improves upon previous retrospective research conducted with male subjects and improves on research that relies explicitly on quantitative assessments of recidivism as the only measure of reentry outcomes. Lastly, this research improves upon other reentry
literature in that it seeks to explore the ways in which social support predicts successful reentry according to a parole-based and female experience-defined concept of success.

The three previous chapters on pathways to crime/relational theory, social support, and desistance/reentry provide overviews to three significant perspectives in criminology that span the entirety of the process of crime: onset, acceleration, deceleration and eventual desistance. Until this point, these areas of inquiry have not been integrated to create a parsimonious theory of gendered reentry. In terms of theoretical logic, this study proposes that just as pathways to crime and relational theory of criminality state that females come to commit crime due to certain similar experiences (e.g. trauma, addiction, economic marginalization, mental health conditions, abuse) and because of differential primacy placed on the maintenance of relationships in the socialization of females, that similarly the process of desistance from crime is also a gendered one.

In order to understand the ways in which the process of desistance from crime is gendered, this study moves away from concepts from major desistance theories, specifically Sampson & Laub’s social-control based turning points and Maruna and colleagues psycho-social concepts of choosing to re-story one’s life, for they are 1) derived from all-male samples and 2) in the case of Sampson & Laub in particular based on culturally sensitive social institutions whose availability to certain populations has changed over time.
The process of reaching a turning point in life as critical to the desistance process is not being challenged here; instead this study makes the argument that the turning points that have been hailed as powerful pulls toward pro-social behavior—marriage, employment, and the military—are neither salient nor accessible to the female population negotiating desistance from crime post-incarceration. Instead, it is hypothesized that females will find turning points that are related to family reunification and the maintenance of other important relationships (kin, romantic), agentic moves toward independence, and overcoming addiction to be important to initiating and sustaining desistance from crime. Figure 5.1 (above) highlights the intersectional nature of reunification, recovery, and demarginalization central to this hypothesis. Also under studied is the role that social support plays in either encouraging or discouraging success in the negotiation of gendered reentry; is the social support experienced or
perceived by reentering females an important variable in determining success? Can negative social support or non-existent social support derail the desistance and reentry processes?

In order to explore whether or not this conceptualization of gendered reentry fits the female experience, this study prioritizes the perspective of females going through that exact process. By observing, interviewing, and surveying (via questionnaire) a female population of women going through processes and concepts that are important to success contemporarily for females were explored in detail. Although this investigation could be criticized for only being relevant to the current socio-cultural context, examining the female experience with desistance and reentry in such a dynamic way allows for rich description of the reentry process specifically for females.

The importance of a gendered conceptualization of social support to this research cannot be understated. As discussed in the social support theoretical relevance chapter, notions about the social connections an individual has have been at the foundation of many influential explanations for initiation into, maintenance of, and desistence from criminal activity throughout criminological inquiry. This study goes beyond other conceptualizations to suggest that there are specific mechanisms through which gender interacts with social support to affect the reentry and desistance processes. By utilizing Vaux’s mega-construct of social support that examines the dimensions of social support networks, actual enacted social support behaviors by those networks, and the perception of how supported an individual feels by her network, this research examines the whole range of concepts used to measure social support in the past. Moving forward in terms of gender research, this study integrates relational theory as well as pathways to crime concepts of the pervasiveness of negative social connections in the lives of criminally involved women by assessing the degree to which females on parole have negative network
orientations. Additionally, this research assesses the level to which females sacrifice their own selves and place primacy on the maintenance of relationships.

This theoretically-based conceptualization of gendered social support along with the conceptualization of gendered reentry discussed above both offer new theoretical understandings of desistance and reentry as well as provide theoretical support for why the experience of desistance and reentry may be different for females than it is for males.

**RESEARCH FOCUS**

This research specifically addresses three major gaps in the current scholarship on reentry. First, it constructs theoretical linkages to the perspectives of pathways literature, relational/difference theory and desistance to the concepts of social support and struggle forging an important theory basis for understanding the ways in which reentry is a gendered experience. Second, this research prioritizes the actual experience of reentry from the perspective of females who have recently or are currently experiencing reentry. Lastly, this research improves upon previous reentry literature in that it seeks examines the process of gendered reentry with specific focus on the role that a gendered conceptualization of social support has on the successful negotiation of that process. Each of these contributions advances the state of knowledge in criminology regarding the desistance and reentry processes through nuancing and specifying the mechanisms through which success and failure are predicted.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The overarching goal of this research was to explore the role that social support played in the negotiation of the processes of desistance and reentry for females. In order to accomplish this goal and use gender as a lens to understand these processes, it was imperative to observe them with a female population currently negotiating community reentry post-incarceration. This
research was accomplished in partnership with the Massachusetts Parole Board (MA Parole) who provided quantitative Parole-generated data (i.e. data entered into parolee case files by parole officers and staff) on all females who were released to active parole supervision from a Massachusetts incarcerative facility (either a state-level Correctional Institute or a county-level House of Correction) between 2006 and 2009. The last release date contained in the dataset was December 31st, 2009 to ensure that at the time of analysis (early 2011) every single female parolee in the dataset would have been released from incarceration for at least one calendar year. This dataset was analyzed according to recidivism outcomes to be detailed in the findings chapters, but it is mentioned here to indicate that the research partnership with MA Parole also allowed for institutional access into the Regional Parole Field Offices as well as Transitional Housing Facilities (formerly referred to as halfway houses) where qualitative field observations were accomplished, interviews conducted, and questionnaires administered. The official support of MA Parole provided important entrée into the system of Parole in Massachusetts, and was essential for lending credibility to the research from the perspective of potential and confirmed participants. Further detail regarding the population studied will be provided in the methodology chapter.

In order to fully explore the female reentry experience on parole, this research posed three research questions: First, how do females experience “successful” reentry pathways? Second, how is the concept of social support related to the negotiation of successful reentry pathways for females? Third and lastly, what role do Parole reentry services play in the experience of a successful reentry pathway?

Before elaborating on each of the aforementioned research questions, it is imperative to address the concept that is central to each of the research questions: success. Much of the reentry
literature conceptualizes reentry success as connected to desistance from crime through the mechanisms of turning points or the completion of a one to three year post-release period free of some measure of recidivism (typically a) re-arrest for either a new offense or parole/probation technical violation, b) re-conviction, or c) re-incarceration). This research went beyond these conceptualizations of reentry success and failure and sought to allow female parolees to help define success in the context of their own experiences. Although the quantitative analyses allowed for an examination of official recidivism outcome measures (but with a nuanced definition of “recidivism” using the MA Parole system of graduated sanctions), the components of success that emerged through interviews with female parolees and the social support questionnaire added qualitative depth to understanding why and in what context “failures” occur. By giving primacy to the experience of females reentering the community post-incarceration, important knowledge about the ways in which the reentry and desistance processes are gendered contextualized the official Parole statistics regarding recidivism in important and informative ways.

Each of the research questions discussed in more detail below guided and shaped this exploratory research. This research used inductive methodology that used information and theories that emerged from qualitative research to test those theories on MA Parole generated quantitative data. These questions are informed by the theories discussed in the previous three chapters; therefore there were patterns that were expected to emerge that helped to guide inquiry. The resulting patterns and theories can be tested hypo-deductively in future research.

*How do females experience “successful” reentry pathways?*

This research question exemplified the feminist agenda for this research. Women’s voices were prioritized and used to explore a conceptualization of the diverse ways in which
success is defined, negotiated, and achieved in reentry. First, it was important to explore the question, how do women define success in reentry? Relational theory and a modernization of social control and identity transformation desistance perspectives suggest that female successful reentry encompasses more than addressing the objective impediments to reentry (i.e. housing, employment, civic responsibilities, transportation, etc.). The second sub-question elaborated on this perspective further and asked if, and in what ways, success was a gendered concept? Gendered reentry suggests that the women experience successful reentry in terms of more subjective concepts like connections to social support networks, reunification with family, identity transformation, and accomplishment of desistance from criminal behavior, but that all of these are predicated on prior experiences. Lastly, do women take certain pathways to successful reentry? Pathways to crime, relational theory, desistance theories, and intersecting inequalities literature all combine to suggest that pathways success in reentry are gendered. This sub-question explored gendered reentry success existed in the experience of women on parole, and if so in what ways.

This overarching research question structured inquiry into how and through what mechanisms the women experienced success, and was sufficiently exploratory to allow the women’s narratives to construct the conceptualization of success.

How is the concept of social support related to the negotiation of successful reentry pathways for females?

As discussed in Chapter Three, diverse research suggests that social support is critical to success in reentry. This research explored how social support figured into the gendered conceptualization of success defined by the women, and therefore understanding the role of social support in success was contingent upon allowing the women to define what success in reentry actually is. Three sub-questions drove this line of inquiry: (1) how do women define social support? (2)
How do women access and mobilize social support? And (3) how important are perceptions of support in negotiating success in reentry?

Theoretically, gendered reentry suggests pathways to crime, extensive and/or repeated exposure to the criminal justice system, multiple intersecting sources of social and economic marginality, and previous failed attempts at substance abuse recovery all diminish the likelihood that women on parole will have extensive and reliable positive social networks. Subsequently, exploring the women’s perceptions of social support was key to understanding both how they define the concept, and how they define its importance to negotiating success. Literature on social support indicates that regardless of whether or not supportive behaviors are enacted, if an individual perceives that a social network supports her, then positive psychological benefits are derived from that perception alone.

Additionally, this question explored the ways in which evaluations of social support were gendered. Negative network orientation examines the degree to which an individual perceives that it is dangerous, ill advised, or useless to rely upon the supports in her social network. Taken in accordance with pathways to crime theory, it was expected that women would have a high degree of negative network orientation resulting in under-utilization of existing social supports.

Exploring the women’s conceptualization of social support was the first step to understanding the role that it plays in negotiations of success. Once “support” was conceptualized, then explorations about perceived utility, sources, and the importance of different types of support (i.e. tangible, emotional, guidance, instrumental) were undertaken.

What role do parole reentry services in Massachusetts play in the experience of reentry for female parolees?

Literature on the supportive nature of parole services (Petersilia, 2003) suggests that parole helps reentering offenders in some ways, but hinders them in others. The mixed-
methodological approach of this research was uniquely situated to explore the ways in which women in particular defined parole services in terms of the support they offer in the reentry process.

Questions that were explored in this area were: (1) Do women conceptualize parole services as supportive overall, or does the perception of parole’s support depend upon the female and her previous experiences? (2) Relatedly, do women with prior experience on parole and/or extensive experience with the criminal justice system perceive parole services as less supportive? (3) Do women with more negative network orientations perceive parole services as essential to reentry success? And (4) are parole services conceptualized as necessary for negotiating success in reentry?

Through these questions this research fills important gaps in the reentry literature. Reentry pathways have been demonstrated in the literature to be difficult for every prisoner leaving incarceration, but the development of the concepts of gendered desistance and reentry as well as social support in the context of parole supervision, uniquely situates this research to be able to describe the ways in which reentry pathways are gendered. By exploring the female experience of reentry important practical suggestions for improving the reentry success of female parolees will be made to the Massachusetts Parole Board in an attempt to ensure this research has practical as well as academic significance.

REPORTING THE FINDINGS: A MIXED-METHOD APPROACH

To explore the gendered processes of desistance and reentry and the role that social support plays in negotiating those processes, the following four methodologies were employed: (1) quantitative survival analyses examining official recidivism, (2) participant observations, (3) qualitative interviews, and (4) a social support survey. The use of a mixed-method approach
allowed for a global exploration of gendered reentry as experienced by females on parole, and moving forward in this report, each type of data will be used to address all three of the research questions enumerated in the above section. First, a more detailed description of Massachusetts Parole as well as its female population is provided for context, and then the specific methodologies used to recruit participants, accomplish data collection, and analyze data are reported. Following these two chapters, each of the three research questions will be addressed in order applying all four types of data collected to best demonstrate how the triangulation of multiple forms of data both validated findings and contributed to the development of a deeper understanding of the process of gendered reentry.
CHAPTER FIVE

MASSACHUSETTS PAROLE: GENERAL OVERVIEW & RESEARCH POPULATION DESCRIPTION

The population for this research was all females under active parole supervision from 2006-2009 (for the quantitative analyses), and females under active parole supervision and living in Transitional Housing Program housing in 2011. This section places the study population in context by providing (1) a general overview of the organization of the Massachusetts Parole Board (heretofore MA Parole), (2) a description of the overall composition of the Massachusetts Parole female population, (3) a summary of reentry services offered by Massachusetts Parole, and (4) a caution around the socio-historical context within which this research took place.

THE MASSACHUSETTS PAROLE BOARD: ORGANIZATION & DUTIES

Unlike the majority of jurisdictions nationwide, Massachusetts maintains a discretionary parole system (Petersilia, 2003). Officially, according to the Massachusetts General Laws chapter 127, section 128, the Massachusetts Parole Board “is the sole decisional authority in the Commonwealth for matters of parole granting and parole revocation.” Statutorily, this empowers MA Parole to accomplish all tasks related to the determination of whether and under what conditions an eligible individual, sentenced to a correctional institution, should be given a parole permit; to supervise all individuals released under parole conditions; to determine whether or not and under what conditions violations merit parole permit revocation; and decide when to terminate sentences for individuals under parole supervision (Massachusetts Parole Board, 2009). The parole board is a seven-member, gubernatorially appointed decision-making body on which each member serves a five-year term staggered amongst the other board members. One of the seven members is designated as the chairman of the board, and that chairman serves as the executive and administrative head of all functions accomplished by the parole agency. In
addition to their decisions regarding parole release, rescission, and revocation, the parole board also functions as the Advisory Board of Pardons and makes recommendations to the Governor on petitions for pardons and commutations to sentences.

The Massachusetts Parole Board has divisions within it that accomplish tasks related to transitional services (in-facility parole officers compiling data to be reviewed by the Board), field services (supervision of active parolees), warrant management and apprehension of parole violators or absconders, victim services, immigrant population management, placement services with educational, vocational, and volunteer organizations, legal support, research and program analysis and administrative support. All of these functions serve to sustain the Massachusetts Parole Board as an independent agency within the organizational structure of the Commonwealth. Within that structure, the Parole Board is an independent agency reporting to the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS). Due to EOPSS location within the executive branch of the Commonwealth, the Parole Board is directly accountable to the Governor’s office.

Prior to the 1970s the American model of indeterminate sentencing coupled with parole release for the purposes of rehabilitation (Petersilia, 2003:63) came under public attack. The now infamous “Martinson Report” (1974) published regarding the effectiveness of rehabilitative correctional interventions which found that (contrary to the “nothing works” for rehabilitation moniker it received) rehabilitative programs had few appreciable effects on recidivism, coupled with concerns regarding the severity of indeterminate sentencing and the discretion afforded to judges within that sentencing structure and growing fear of crime sentiment nationwide resulted in the shift away from discretionary parole as part of a more determinate sentencing structure. The shift toward a justice model for corrections brought with it calls for the complete abolition of
parole services or at the very least systems of mandatory as opposed to discretionary release (2003:65). As of 2006, 19 states still have some form of discretion built into the creation of conditions for parole, release to parole, and revocation (Bonczar, 2008), and 16 states had fully abolished discretionary parole release (Petersilila, 2003). Likewise, under the Comprehensive Crime Control Act of 1984 the U.S. Parole commission initiated the phasing out of parole at the federal level starting in 1997. Moreover, truth-in-sentencing laws which mandate that prisoners serve at least 85 percent of sentences within a facility in order to receive federal funding have served to curtail the powers of parole boards to set release dates nationwide.

Despite all of the nationwide trends toward limiting discretionary parole, Massachusetts still maintains an independent board with full releasing powers unless the death penalty was sought in the sentencing of an offender (Petersilila, 2003: 66). In defense of the discretionary system, research indicates that offenders released via discretionary release engage in fewer instances of recidivism than their counterparts who are released in a mandatory fashion. Two hypotheses (Hughes, Wilson & Beck, 2001) have been offered to interpret this result: a) those offenders who are released discretionarily posed lower risk to public safety due to less serious incarcerating offenses and other risk-assessment considerations, or 2) offenders released discretionarily had to somehow “earn” that release through demonstrating a commitment to rehabilitation while incarcerated. The second hypothesis is touted by parole boards employing discretionary release in defense of the continued practice, despite nearly constant pressure to abandon it in favor of mandatory parole or the discontinuation of parole altogether (Petersilila, 2003).

Supervision of active parolees by the Field Services Division is accomplished regionally in Massachusetts. Eight geographical regions each house a Regional Field Office where parole
services are centralized for that region. Figure 6.1 (below) presents a map of Massachusetts’ parole regions. Between the years of 2005 and 2009 the Field Services Division of the Massachusetts Parole Board supervised the release of an average of 4,889 prisoners. In 2009 Quincy (region 1, which includes all of greater metropolitan Boston excluding Mattapan, aka region 2), Springfield (region 5), and Lawrence (region 6) supervised the largest percentage of parolees with 13 percent, 17 percent, and 15 percent of the overall population supervised respectively. These statistics are consistent with the overall population densities in Massachusetts, with parolees being released to regions in a fashion commensurate with the distribution of the overall state population.

Similar to trends nationwide, the overwhelming majority of the Massachusetts parole population is male (88 percent in 2009). This gender breakdown of parolees has remained constant between 2000 and 2009 nationwide with females representing 12 percent of the overall parole population (n = 98,432 in 2009) (Glaze & Bonczar, 2010). This percentage of the overall parole population equates to females constituting 1 in every 8 offenders under parole supervision (Brown & Bloom, 2009).

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5 All of the statistics provided in this section are courtesy of the Massachusetts Parole Board 2009 Annual Statistical Report. This report can be accessed at the following web address: http://www.mass.gov/Eeops/docs/pb/2009ARweb.pdf
Figure 6.1: Massachusetts Parole Board Regional Field Office Locations

*note: Regional Parole Field Offices are located in towns highlighted yellow.
** image courtesy of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security

FEMALE PAROLEES IN MASSACHUSETTS

In the Commonwealth of Massachusetts the overwhelming majority of incarcerated females are released to parole and serve a portion of their sentences in the community. The majority of females are released to parole supervision from both state-level Department of Correction facilities and county-level Houses of Correction (a very small percentage of the overall female population are released from out-of-state or federal facilities). According to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts’ Executive Office on Public Safety and the Department of Correction, 31% of all offenders released from incarceration (via parole or a completed sentence) in 2004 were female (n = 749). The majority of these females (60%) were released to

Worcester, Middlesex, and Essex counties. Within these counties, the cities of Worcester and Boston were those to which females were released with the most frequency. Additionally, in their Annual Statistical Reports for 2006-2008, the Massachusetts Parole Board indicated that of the average number of total prisoners released to parole (5062) for those years, the female population accounted for 13%, or an average number of 650 female parolees. This statistic fell in 2009, as in that year females constituted 12% of the overall parole population in Massachusetts with 544 females under active supervision that year. These statistics indicate that the population of females being released from incarceration overall, and the population being released to parole supervision specifically in Massachusetts, is large enough to merit an analysis of female reentry separate from male reentry.

The Massachusetts female parolee population is ideal for this research due to the proportion of the overall Massachusetts parole population they represent (an average of 13% between 2006 and 2009), and the amount and depth of electronic data maintained by the Massachusetts Parole Board in the form of case files for all parolees. Moreover, the recent programmatic changes made to the way parole services are administered in Massachusetts in the RRC and THP services could represent increases in the social support network of women. Conversely, by focusing on the experience of females who are receiving support in the form of transitional housing through their parole supervision, the qualitative impact of that program is explored.

MASSACHUSETTS PAROLE REENTRY SERVICES:

Massachusetts Parole demonstrates its commitment to the provision of reentry services via its Regional Reentry Center initiative and utilization of Transitional Housing Programs made possible through community partnerships. The Regional Reentry Center concept was introduced
in 2004 by the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS) as a collaborative initiative between the Massachusetts Department of Correction (DOC) and the Massachusetts Parole Board. The RRC’s were created in response to recommendations made by the Governor’s Commission of Criminal Justice Innovation and the Governor’s Commission on Corrections Reform, which highlighted a need for innovative strategies directed at effectively transitioning offenders back into the community post-incarceration. The RRC’s are designed to serve as the nucleus of reentry services for all state offenders released from any correctional facility. The RRCs are located inside six existing community-based parole regional field offices throughout the state (Quincy, Mattapan, Worcester, Springfield, Lawrence, Brockton, New Bedford, and Framingham). Together, the RRC’s aspire to three main goals: (1) to reduce duplicative efforts of law enforcement, criminal justice, and social service agencies, (2) to maximize and leverage existing resources for former prisoners, and (3) to strengthen the reentry services provided to offenders who were released to the community with no conditions of supervision (i.e. completed their full sentence within a facility).

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Although the Massachusetts Parole Board does not record gender-specific data regarding parolees who utilize Regional Reentry Center services, they do report the overall number of parolees utilizing RRC services. Figure 6.2 (above) demonstrates the frequency of utilization of RRC services for 2006-2008, and reveals a large increase in service utilization from 2007 to 2008, a trend that MA Parole attributes to better advertisement of the services available at the centers both by parole officers as well as staff working inside correctional facilities on the incarceration to community transition with offenders. Despite this dramatic increase in utilization, 776 paroles utilizing services in 2008 only represent approximately 15% of the overall parole population.

In addition to the services provided at the RRC’s, Massachusetts Parole also operates its Transitional Housing Program (THP) designed to place parolees in residential treatment programs and sober houses for up to six months post-release.

Figure 6.3: Total Number of Parolees Utilizing Transitional Housing Program Services 2006-2008.


Support services parolees receive at the THP’s include job training, drug/alcohol abuse counseling, and mental health services. Originally funded in 2005 through the Violent Offender Initiative/Truth-In-Sentencing federal grant, the THP program has been funded through the Commonwealth’s budget since 2006. The Massachusetts Parole Board describes the goals of the THP as follows:

- Provide transitional housing opportunities in the community
- Ensure that education, vocational training and substance abuse/mental health counseling are an essential component of each housing vendor’s programming
- Reduce recidivism and increase public safety

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- Enhance self-sufficiency, including the ability to obtain sustainable housing and employment
- Improve access to health insurance, medical services and other public assistance programs

The THP allows clients to utilize up to six months of substance abuse treatment, job training, mental health counseling and other support services at the transitional housing facilities. This treatment is achieved through collaborations between Massachusetts Parole and various long-term residential programs as well as sober houses in all eight parole supervision regions.

Despite goals that align with those highlighted in current recidivism and reentry literature prioritizing safe and stable housing for success in the reentry process, the THP has two major shortcomings. First, the THP serves an even smaller population of parolees than the RRC’s (see Figure 6.3), and second, Massachusetts Parole reports that for the population of parolees who entered into THP services between 2005 and 2007 (n=919), 45% were re-arrested for a new offense by 2008 and this statistic only reflects those clients that were arrested for a new offense, it does not include those clients that had their parole status revoked due to a technical violation (n = 174). Although the Regional Reentry Centers and Transitional Housing Programs represent a theoretical move in the direction toward reentry and reintegration support in Massachusetts, in practice the implementation of these programs seems to be falling short of the theoretical goals.

SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONTEXT: MA PAROLE UNDER FIRE

Community-Based Corrections (i.e. probation and parole services), as a subset of the overall correctional system, does not exist in a socio-historical bubble. Current sentiment regarding punishment changes according to region of the country, political orientation of the general public, and can be dependent on specific events triggering public outcry regarding the supervision of offenders in the community. Public safety is “job number one” (Hanser, 2010) for community-based corrections and when the parole or probation population poses a specific threat

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9 Ibid.
to that safety calls to dramatically curtail community-based supervision are often demanded by the public and politicians alike.

Such was the case in Massachusetts starting on December 26th, 2010. It was on this date that parolee Dominic Cinelli, age 57, fatally shot Woburn, Massachusetts police officer John “Jack” Maguire during an armed robbery of a Kohl’s department store in Woburn, a city approximately twenty minutes north of Boston. During the exchange of gunfire with police, Cinelli was also fatally shot.¹⁰ Cinelli had been paroled in 2008 after having been denied conditional release in 2005. Cinelli’s criminal record was lengthy and included armed robbery, assaults on police officers, assaults on other persons, as well as attempts at escape from imprisonment. Prior to his release on parole he had been serving multiple concurrent life sentences levied against him in 1986. As previously discussed, except for first-degree murder convictions, all offenders who have served at least 15 years of a life sentence are technically eligible for parole in Massachusetts. Initially, the Transitional Services Division of the Parole Board determined that, given his criminal history, Cinelli would only become eligible for parole in 2008, however a 2005 appellate decision ordered a parole hearing for him in that year. Pursuant to relevant Massachusetts General Law (c.127, § 133A), for the 2005 hearing the Transitional Services Division made the appropriate notifications to the district attorney and police chief from jurisdictions where crimes related to the parole of Cinelli had occurred (Middlesex and Suffolk Counties as well as relevant municipalities). The Parole Board denied Cinelli’s bid for parole in 2005 on the basis of materials they were presented with as well as objections from Middlesex and Suffolk counties. The Parole Board heard Cinelli’s case again in 2008 and at that juncture, did indeed grant him parole. Upon investigation (post-shooting), the

Governor’s office found that for the 2008 hearing the Transitional Services Division did not accomplish the requisite notifications to the Middlesex County District Attorney’s office nor to the relevant municipalities and their police chiefs prior to the hearing, and as such representatives for those offices were not able to appear at the hearing to object. This failure to notify on the part of the Transitional Services Division was the result of a computer coding error (one of Cinelli’s crimes was not indicated) and therefore the automated notification was not sent.

Additionally, the Parole Board did not implement the use of an actuarial risk assessment tool until 2009; one year after the decision to parole Cinelli. Had the tool been used to evaluate Cinelli’s risk for recidivism, he would have been categorized as a high risk, scoring a 9 out of possible 10. With only the materials the Parole Board did have at the time of his hearing, they determined that his release would not be “incompatible with the welfare of society [and that there is] a reasonable probability that, if such prisoner is released, he will live and remain at liberty without violating the law.”

The investigative review made by the Governor’s office regarding Cinelli’s 2008 release and subsequent supervision on parole found that although Cinelli’s parole officer in charge of his supervision accomplished all of the requisite face-to-face contacts, drug screening tests, and program completion checks throughout his tenure on active parole supervision, the standards for “collateral contacts,” or contacts that allow the parole officer to assess the parolee’s status at home, in the community, at work, in programming, etc. without asking the parolee himself, were not accomplished for the majority of months in 2010. Additionally, the review found the parole supervisor in charge of overseeing Cinelli’s parole officer and the case never documented the lack of collateral contacts in the casefile, despite two performance reviews occurring in 2010.

(April and August respectively). When presented with this information regarding Cinelli’s supervision, the Chief of the Field Services Division stated that he felt as though this level of care was “adequate” for Cinelli.

In addition to the investigation made by the Governor’s office, there was intense pressure from the general public as well as powerful interest groups (namely the Fraternal Order of Police and the Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association) on the Governor to make broad and decisive changes to Parole in the Commonwealth. Demands were made ranging from the outright abolishment of Parole in Massachusetts to the termination of the entire Parole staff. In a press conference held approximately three weeks after the fatal shooting, Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick announced that five of the seven Parole Board members (currently serving in 2011, but had also been sitting on the Board at the time of Cinelli’s release) had resigned (most certainly not voluntarily), the Parole Board chairman had been terminated, as well as the Chief of Field Services, Cinelli’s parole officer and as her direct regional supervisor. In his public address Governor Patrick made a powerful statement regarding his faith in parole services:

“After this review, I cannot say that the Parole Board or parole office did all they could to ensure public safety...the public has lost confidence in Parole, and I have lost confidence in Parole.”

This powerful statement made by the Governor was not simply a sound bite. The large-scale termination of Parole employees involved in the Cinelli case represented the tip of the iceberg in terms of the changes to the day-to-day operation of parole services. Following the release of the Governor’s office investigation, a moratorium was put on releases to parole for all offenders pending a further review of the parole release process as well as the appointment of a new parole board. This moratorium lasted from January 1st, 2011 until mid-February 2011 at which time

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13 Ibid.
only offenders assessed to be minimal risk to public safety were released. It was not until April 2011 that the Parole Board started to consider the cases of higher risk individuals again; however the rate at which offenders were being released was nowhere near the frequency of year-end 2010.

This type of change in policy on the “back-end” of the correctional system has wide-ranging effects on the functioning of the entire justice process in Massachusetts. If offenders are not being regularly paroled after serving a certain proportion of their sentences, then defense attorneys and prosecution have to change their negotiations on sentence length (aka the “going rate” for certain offenses) (Nardulli, 1978), offenders may change their decisions regarding plea bargains as their time served incarcerated increases, and perhaps most importantly, jails and prisons start to accumulate a back-up of offenders who were sentenced under the understanding that they would be eligible for parole after a certain amount of time incarcerated but are no longer being considered for conditional release. This change in policy not only creates overcrowding in jails in prisons, but it also breeds distrust and contempt for the justice process and the correctional system’s investment in rehabilitation and reintegration within the offender population.

In addition to the broad effects the Cinelli event and subsequent fallout had on the justice system, there was an additional institutional effect within the Parole Board that directly affected this research. When the Cinelli event occurred, the data collection phase of this research had just gotten underway. The Parole Board had already given the electronic data pertaining to all females under active parole supervision from 2006-2009 to the researcher; however the plans to begin field observations at each of the Regional Field Offices as well as select Transitional Housing Programs were slated to begin in January of 2011 with the qualitative interviewing
slated to begin February 1st, 2011. Due to scrutiny of all Parole activities by the Governor’s office, the qualitative aspects of this research were put on hold until the first week of March, 2011. Although the actual time delay was not inordinately lengthy, the institutional climate at Parole changed dramatically during that time period. One member of the research office at the central offices of the Parole Board accurately described the atmosphere in the central offices as “survival mode.” The entire executive office (i.e. the Board as well as the Chief of Field Services) had completely turned over and all functions of the Parole Board were being reviewed and scrutinized by the Governor’s office. In no uncertain terms, this researcher was informed that if this research had not (fortunately) aligned with the values upheld by the Governor’s office of “evidence-based reentry research and inquiry” then the research partnership would have been terminated. The thought process behind that was that Parole simply could not afford to have any more “negative outcomes” associated with the services it provides.

Moreover, the institutional climate at the Parole Board central office was distinctly different from that expressed in the Regional Field Offices. While the central office was under extreme scrutiny by the Governor’s office, the parole officers and supervisors in the Regional Field Offices were a bit more removed from that scrutiny and were more open regarding their opinions and perceptions about the changes to Parole. The community sentiment among field services parole employees was that the parole officer and parole supervisor accomplished the supervision of Cinelli at if not above the level of standard supervision previously found acceptable. One parole officer stated:

“The whole thing is bull***t. The public expects us to work miracles and be psychics and know when someone is going to pull a gun a shoot a cop like a frickin’ idiot. All we can do is our best given the resources we have. And you know what, the majority of the time we do really frickin’ well. It takes one major incident with one guy out of the thousands we supervise on a yearly basis to do this."

A fellow parole officer, overhearing this conversation, added his perspective:
“The Governor had been looking for an excuse to come down on Parole for a long time. This was just his chance to put a whole new crop of idiots on the Parole Board who have no frickin’ idea was it is actually like to supervise anyone. Those lawyers have no clue what we do or what it takes. They just decide who to release and then we deal with the consequences.”

These strong statements from parole officers are representative of the disjuncture between field services and the decisions made by the Parole Board. The investigation made into the Cinelli case and the new appointments made to the Parole Board seemed to solidify the rift between the two divisions. Parole officers and supervisors wanted to get on with their day-to-day tasks of supervision and treatment, but with such uncertainly regarding whether or not their tasks would be under increased scrutiny, there was a large degree of fear and contempt circulating in the Regional Parole Offices.

Fundamentally, the moratorium on parole releases reduced the size of the potential sample for the qualitative aspects of this study. Fortunately, many female offenders tend to have committed less serious, or less severe incarcerating crimes than their males counterparts, so once parole releases resumed, many females were at the top of the list for release. Once released there was a general opinion among released females that “parole wasn’t messing around.” This statement was repeated over and over again by females in transitional housing faculties in particular. There was a shared opinion that even the slightest of violations against parole conditions would result in returns to jail. This sentiment was certainly derived from a renewed focus on stringent supervision within the Field Services Division. Violations of parole conditions like a positive drug test or violation of curfew, which might have been seen as more minor infractions as first-time violations, post-Cinelli were now grounds for return to incarceration. As a result, not only were fewer offenders being released to parole to begin with, but also once under parole supervision in the community there was an increased chance that any violation of parole conditions would return an offender to incarceration.
This socio-historical and institutional context of parole was the reality for the data collection phase of this research. On one hand, the timing of the qualitative field observations and interviews within this context provides a unique look at what managing reentry is like under strict surveillance; however it does suggest that the experience of negotiating reentry while under parole supervision examined may not be representative of the experience outside of this time period. This has consequences for the comparison of the qualitative data with the electronic data provided by parole regarding females under parole supervision from 2006-2009. Arguably, the type and quality of supervision was different between the two, and therefore caution was taken regarding the generalizability of the qualitative findings.

CONCLUSION:

The discretionary nature of Massachusetts Parole, its commitment to the priorities in reentry services, and its utilization of community partnerships to deliver reentry services allows for a unique view of the accomplishment of community reentry and desistance. Although historical events out of the control of the researcher had an effect on data collection and must be taken into consideration when comparing active female parolees in 2006-2009 and those accomplishing reentry in 2011, the access given to the researcher in terms of case file data, entrée into Regional Field Offices, and official affiliation in Transitional Housing Program facilities allowed for unprecedented access to the female parolee population in Massachusetts.
CHAPTER SIX
METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this research caters to its exploratory nature. Data gathered from (1) quantitative analyses of Parole-generated case file data, (2) participant observations of Regional Reenter Centers and Transitional Housing Program facilities, (3) qualitative life history interviews with active female parolees, and (4) a social support survey conducted with a sub-sample of the interviewees at Transitional Housing Facilities produced a rich and detailed understanding of what the experience of reentry is like on Parole in Massachusetts for female. This section will discuss the data collection and sampling strategies for quantitative and qualitative methods, and the operationalization of the quantitative variables.

DATA SOURCES:

The data for this research are derived from, (1) notes from participant field observations at Massachusetts Parole regional field offices, Regional Reentry Centers, and Transitional Housing Program sites; (2) two stages of qualitative interviews with female parolees; a preliminary stage and a life-history narrative stage consisting of multiple interviews with each female (n=22 females, 38 interviews); and (3) a Massachusetts Parole Board generated case-file dataset for all females released to Parole in Massachusetts between the years of 2006 and 2009 (N= 2407); and (4) qualitative results from a social support survey (n = 10). Multiple methods were needed to accomplish the goals of this research due to its fundamental feminist orientation. In order to focus on how women on parole constructed and maintained success in reentry, a global, contextualized, and nuanced picture of that experience needed to be explored. By prioritizing the women’s voices and experiences with the interviews, exploring the diversity of
the parole experience with the field observations, and explicitly focusing on the role of social support in reentry with the questionnaire, gendered reentry was explored from multiple angles. This triangulation approach reduced the likelihood of essentializing the experience of a diverse population of female parolees to the experiences of a few, and also provided thick description of those experiences that could not have been achieved had only one of the methodologies been selected. In the form of a diagram, Figure 7.1 (below) presents a flow-chart of how the mixed-method approach of this research is uniquely situated to address the three main research questions, and more specifically, aligns specific methods with the questions they are meant to address.

Figure 7.1: Mixed Method Approach Addresses Research Questions

**QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY**

The qualitative data were collected allowed for a case study of the experience on Parole for women living in Transitional Housing Programs. Field observations, both the preliminary and life-history interviews, as well as the social support questionnaire triangulated to provide a
detailed understanding of the factors relating to negotiating reentry while on Parole. The collection of the qualitative data consisted of four phases: first, participant observations conducted first-hand at the Regional Reentry Centers, Transitional Housing Program facilities, and regional Parole field offices, second, preliminary interviews regarding the experiences of the females in the first 72 hours post-release, third, life-history narratives with the same interview population, and lastly, the administration of a social support questionnaire to a subgroup of the interview sample. These two qualitative methods will be used in concert with each other in order to gain a rich understanding of the experiences of women on parole in Massachusetts as they experience it on a daily basis and in the context of their pathways to crime.

Field Observations:

The participant observations were conducted to gain insight into what the experience of negotiating a pathway to reentry is like on a daily basis for women on parole. The observations were conducted at three locations over the course of a six month period spanning from January 2011 to September 2011: Regional Reentry Centers (RRC’s), Transitional Housing Program (THP) facilities, and Parole field offices. Through the course of these observations, the researcher naturally observed both male and female parolees engaged in the process of reentry, but special attention was paid to the females in these environmental contexts. These observations allowed the researcher to gain contextual awareness of the reentry services Parole provides, the ways in which female parolees managed the conditions of their release, and what the physical realities of being on parole are like. They were critical to addressing all three of the research questions as they provided insight into how women accomplished negotiating success on a daily basis. Observations regarding the conditions of transitional housing, the physical realities of being under parole supervision, and how female parolees form relationships with
service providers described the framework within which the women negotiated success. Not only did data from the field observations add depth and context to this research, but it also provided the researcher with important rapport with both the population of female parolees and also Parole employees. By conducting field observations prior to and while collecting other data, important connections with potential participants were made that proved invaluable in recruitment process for the qualitative interviews.

*Qualitative Interviews: Preliminary and Life History*

In order to recruit participants at the THP facilities, potential respondents were informed about the purposes of this research and given the chance to give their informed consent to participate. Every female that was released to either the Recovery House or the Pre-Release House (facilities to be discussed in detail in Chapter Eleven) for Transitional Housing Program supervision between January 2011 and June 2011 was approached for participation in the interview sample. This population was targeted for recruitment due to the high-risk assessment of female parolees assigned to parole supervision at each of these locations, the comparatively high proportion of the overall Massachusetts female parole population who chose these facilities as their THP location over others in the state, and metropolitan Boston location of both houses. Given that the participants in this research are under criminal justice system supervision, and therefore need additional protection against coercive research practices, the researcher administered informed consent in two ways. First, an oral presentation fully describing the purpose of the research, what participation entails, and all potential risks to the participant was explained at a comprehension level consistent with six-grade reading and listening comprehension. Second, written materials also written in language for the appropriate comprehension level were provided to potential participants for their review and signature. One
major concern for participant risk is that this research is being conducted through a partnership with Massachusetts Parole. However, all precautions were taken through the Northeastern University IRB as well as the Massachusetts Parole Legal Department to ensure the ethical treatment of all participants.

Recruitment of participants at both the Recovery House and the Pre-Release House used a combination of targeted and convenience methods. As mentioned above, these two houses were targeted for recruitment, but the specific participants were recruited out of convenience, ultimately making the interview sample a purposive convenience sample of high-risk female parolees released to transitional housing. At the initiation of data collection, there were ten women available to be interviewed (one at the Pre-Release House, the other nine at the Recovery House). Each of these women had been released to parole ranging from seven to nine months earlier, and due to their near-completion of the Transitional Housing Program requirements as well as the fact that they had been released to parole prior to a major restructuring and reprioritizing of MA Parole procedures (as discussed in Chapter Six) they were excluded from participation. The remaining six women as well every other woman who was released to either THP location between January 2011 and September 2011 was approached for participation. Due to the Cinelli incident, MA Parole did not re-commence to releasing inmates until March 2011, at which point recruitment drastically improved as women were among the first to be released statewide due to their comparatively low risk for recidivism when compared to many of their male counterparts.

The Pre-Release House and the Recovery House are THPs located in metropolitan Boston. The choice to conduct the interviews and to administer the social support questionnaire at these locations could limit the generalizability of the results gained to the overall population of
female parolees in two ways: first, females assigned by parole to the THPs are assessed as high risk for recidivism, and second, the sub-population of all female parolees who are assigned to THPs limited the potential sample to about 20% of the overall female parolee population. This choice is defensible for it allowed for better triangulation of the evidence gained from the survival analysis regarding the profile of female parolees most likely to recidivate: high risk parolees with public order, property, or drug related crimes. The women in the interview sample exemplified this profile, and so although the location for recruitment in the large metropolitan center of the state may bias the results and describe the experience of a certain type of female parolee, that type of female parolee was also highlighted by the quantitative results.

A subgroup of the interview sample was recruited to participate in the completion of the social support questionnaire. Initially, the questionnaire was meant to be distributed population-wide to all women on parole supervision in 2011, but in accordance with a decision made by MA Parole, the questionnaire was disseminated to those women who participated in the interview phase who could be contacted and who were willing to participate. The resulting sub-sample was representative of the overall interview sample in terms of age, race, type of incarcerating offense, employment and education history, and substance use. Although the dissemination of the questionnaire was not as widespread as originally planned, the combination of the

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14 The methodology for the dissemination of the questionnaire had originally been approved by MA Parole as well as the Northeastern University Institutional Review Board as a mail survey to be sent to the approved home addresses of all females under active parole supervision between January and June of 2011. As previously mentioned, the events that transpired between Dominic Cinelli, the Woburn, Massachusetts Police Department and Massachusetts Parole warranted a full investigation of Parole processes. Once this research was re-evaluated by the new legal department at MA Parole, and their original approval of mail survey was revoked, stating that it would be “too invasive of the parolees” and that it would “subject them to what constitutes harassment.” Following this ruling, MA Parole indicated that they would approve a methodology where the questionnaires were disseminated to females who had already consented to be part of this research. As such, females who had participated in the interview portion of the research were re-contacted (four could not be reached as they had already completed their parole and Transitional Housing Program staff could not locate them, either due to the lack of contact information or being “back on the street”). Due to this change in approved methodologies the subgroup for the social support questionnaire is quite small and therefore ungeneralizeable even to the population of females serving their parole sentences living in Transitional Housing Program facilities. It is presented for context and to lend support to the information gained regarding the role of social support in negotiating reentry solicited in the interviews.
questionnaire and interview data was designed to add specificity and theoretical connection to discussions about the role of social support in the negotiating of successful reentry.

The second qualitative aspect was two-fold. Two rounds of interviews with distinct goals and subject areas were conducted with females living in one of two principal Parole contracted Transitional Housing Program facilities in Metropolitan Boston. Females were recruited during the field observation period of study, and potential respondents underwent both a verbal and a written informed consent process prior to the initiation of any formal interview. At this point the important disclosure that this research was being conducted in partnership with the Massachusetts Parole Board was made. It was emphasized to potential respondents that participation was by no means a conditional of their Parole supervision, and that although the interviews would be both confidential and anonymous that Massachusetts Parole did have knowledge the interviews were occurring and would eventually be appraised of the results. This mandatory risk disclosure to potential respondents resulted in the loss of thirteen potential respondents.

Those females who did choose to participate (n=22) provided their consent to participate first in the preliminary interview. This interview was conversational in style and occurred in the first three weeks following her release from incarceration. Females were asked to recount their experiences in the first 72 hours following their most recent release from incarceration and to the Transitional Housing Facility where they were currently residing. The interviews took place in case management offices of the THPs, and were recorded on a digital recording device with the respondents’ permission. The preliminary interviews tended to last for approximately thirty minutes each, and provided important information about the crucial immediate needs of the females in the minutes, hours, and days following release.
At the conclusion of each of the preliminary interviews the females were thanked for their participation and then recruited for continued participation in the second phase of qualitative interviews; the life-history narratives. This recruitment strategy allowed for 100 percent retention of the interview sample from the preliminary interviews to the more in-depth narrative phase. A similar verbal and written informed consent process to that of the preliminary phase was again undertaken, and respondents affirmed that they would continue in their participation (see Appendix A for informed consent documents).

Life history narratives are a research method typically utilized by feminist researchers, and are especially catered toward research interested in constructing pathways or trajectories to some end like this research is. In order to construct these narratives, several guided-conversation interviews designed to elicit chronological life-story were conducted with each female participant. Questions were designed to address three distinct periods in the lives of the respondents: pre-incarceration, incarceration (and any instances of prison cycling), and release/reentry. The interviews were designed to elicit information about the past experiences of the respondents in order to gain an understanding of how those experiences have affected the present and the experience of reentry. Of particular interest were the degree to which the pathways to crime literature and prior research was borne out in the lives of the women, and whether similar distinct pathways out of crime, or gendered reentry, were evident. (See Appendix B for interview schedules).

**MA Parole Research Partnership**

Had this research not been conducted in partnership with the Massachusetts Parole Board gaining access to the women living in the THPs would have been much more difficult. Due to the affiliation with and sponsorship from MA Parole this research was placed in a position of
authority in the houses that both served as an important source of entrée but also as a hindrance to gaining participation. The distinction of “being with Parole” had two consequences: first, access to sensitive information and interactions within the Regional Parole Offices, THPs, and RRCs was granted making the field observations much easier to accomplish, but second, this distinction served to cultivate an air of distrust of the researcher on the part of potential participants. This verbal distinction of being “with Parole” was damaging enough, but necessary admissions to a research partnership in both the verbal and written administration of informed consent resulted in a high rate of refusal to participate on behalf of potential research subjects. Once a few potential participants living in a THP refused to participate, word tended to get around that “Parole was watching.” Therefore it was twice as hard to reassure potential participants that although the research partner was MA Parole, that the researcher was not in fact a MA Parole employee: a tenuous distinction in their minds at best.

Fueling the distrust of the motivations of this research, especially at the recruitment and data collection phase was the effect that the socio-historical event that the Cinelli incident had on MA Parole functions. The women had been threatened upon eventual release to parole (once it was resumed following the inquiry made by the Governor’s office) that any small infraction would result in a return to incarceration. There was a general distrust of all things Parole in the houses, and this research was guilty by association. Not only was recruitment stymied by this perception of the omnipresence of Parole, but data collection strategies that had been approved by the MA Parole legal department pre-Cinelli were changed and/or rescinded post-Cinelli.

The implicit connection of this research to criminal justice supervision in general, and MA Parole specifically, was overcome using two strategies. First, every opportunity to emphasize that the research was designed to learn about the experience of the women was
capitalized upon. Every chance to say something to the effect of “understanding your experience is important for future women in your position” was taken. Making clear that this research was not a “witch hunt” was key to assuaging trepidation about participation. Once it was explained that “partnering” with MA Parole was about gaining permission to speak to the women about their lives, the women tended to agree to participate. Second, trust was earned. The researcher utilized observation hours as time not only to understand the day-to-day realities of life on parole, but also as a way to gain trust and entrée with the women. Refusals to participate were frequent at the outset of the research, but once the reputation of the researcher as “safe” was circulated by important gatekeepers to the parolee community, (i.e. staff and respected parolees), the refusal rate declined to near zero.

Grounded Theory

The information gained from interviews was inductively coded using Grounded Theory methods (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) in order to gain rich, detailed data on the pathways to crime for the female parolees. Grounded theory methods provide systematic procedures for shaping and handling rich qualitative materials and allow the researcher to have simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis (Charmaz, 2001). The exploratory nature of this research makes Grounded Theory uniquely situated as a data collection/analysis tool to assist the researcher in understanding and contextualizing what occurs both in the course of field observations as well as qualitative interviews. The continual process of data collection and analysis supported by Grounded Theory methods allowed the researcher to simultaneously evaluate theoretical expectations regarding female reentry experience while analyzing those that emerged through the course of data collection. The qualitative analysis software N6 by QSR was utilized to systematically code the qualitative data using a system of creating free nodes, or
thematic codes that emerge from the data, memos about the dynamics of those free nodes and how they are interrelated, and also tree codes, or hierarchical systems of themes that relate to one another in terms of roots, branches, and leaves. From this thematic coding system and process of continual analysis thematic network maps were constructed regarding the interrelationships between central concepts forming the analytic basis for the qualitative research. Specific information regarding the coding structure can be found in Appendix C.

There are many types of narrative research, as well as varied analytical strategies for interpreting the data gathered in such research. This study employs a life history approach, which tells the story of an individual’s experience, using gender as a lens to understand the cultural context of the experiences of the interviewees. Narrative research is an appropriate method for addressing this specific research agenda for two reasons: first, narrative research is best for examining the experiences of a small group of subjects in a rich and detailed manner. Second, feminist research has traditionally employed qualitative methodologies like narrative research that allow the voice and the agency of the participants to be showcased. Instead of employing positivistic hypo-deductive methodology, this narrative research allows for themes to emerge from the data that will add to knowledge about the phenomenon of pathways to crime and the effect they may have on successful reentry outcomes.

In order to assess the role of social support in the negotiation of reentry, females who were interviewed in either the preliminary interview phase or the life history phase were also asked to participate in a social support survey. Ten women consented to the completion of the Social Support survey designed to qualitatively delve deeper into the dynamics of social support
in their lives post-release. The questionnaire consisted of three contextual data sections: first, demographics (age, race, ethnicity, primary language, sexual orientation, current employment status, governmental assistance, prior incarceration experience, prior parole experience, prior probation experience, current probation experience), second, social network dimensions (marital status, committed relationship status, current housing status, current housing dynamics, number of children, age of children, custody status, frequency of child visits, number of close friends, number of people can share feelings with, number of people rely on for money, number of people rely on for transportation, number of people rely on for child care), and last, pathways to crime (substance abuse, frequency of substance use, prior number of detoxes, longest period of sobriety, witness to physical violence, target of physical violence, witness to sexual violence, target of sexual violence, intimate partner abuse experience, experience with homelessness, experience with survival tactics, mental health diagnosis).

These sections provided important contextualizing information for the analysis of the four remaining sections of the questionnaire: questions designed to measure dimensions of social support in the lives of the women. As discussed previously in the review of social support literature, there is much debate as to how social support should be measured. For the purposes of this questionnaire and case study, three of Vaux’s scales were used: one examining social support appraisals (Vaux, 1982), or a person’s subjective feelings regarding support resources and interactions, a second examining social support behaviors (Vaux, 1982) or the emotional, socializing, practical assistance, financial assistance and advice/guidance enacted behaviors of the social support network of an individual. The Social Support Behavior Scale examines each of these five dimensions of enacted support via validated sub-scales. The remaining two scales

15 Please refer to Appendix D for both the Social Support Questionnaire and a description of future plans for distribution to larger samples. This survey was originally to be distributed to a much larger sample. The small sample size is addressed in the appendix at length.
present in the questionnaire examine the ways in which social support networks may consist of negative supports for the females. Vaux’s Negative Network Orientation Scale (Vaux, Burda & Stewart, 1986) examines the degree to which it may be inadvisable, impossible, useless, or potentially dangerous to draw on supports from one’s network, and when examined in concert with Dill’s Silencing the Self Scale (1992), designed to demonstrate how depression in women can be connected to self-sacrificing relationship maintenance, a theoretical connection to pathways to crime as well as relational theory is made in the context of gendered reentry. Due to the small response rate of the social support survey (n =10), the results were not analyzed quantitatively, but instead were used to add qualitative and descriptive depth to social support narratives provided in interviews.

Assessed together the qualitative aspects of this research provide a detailed and contextualized case study of the negotiation of gendered reentry success on parole while living in a Transitional Housing facility.

**QUANTITATIVE METHODOLOGY:**

The quantitative data for this research were drawn from Parole-generated case files for females on active parole supervision between 2006 and 2009 (n=2407).

The analysis of these data focused on exploring what factors in the experience of reentry are related to official Parole conceptualizations of “success” or “failure” reentry outcomes for female parolees. The official criminal justice recidivism outcome measures used in this analysis are based on the system of parole hearings (i.e. disciplinary actions taken by Parole) active parolees may be subject to throughout the course of their supervision. Parole in Massachusetts has moved to a system of graduated sanctions representing a scale of disciplinary actions that is much more telling of a reentry pathway to success than a measure of re-arrest or re-incarceration.
Within the relevant reentry and recidivism literature there is considerable debate regarding what measure is most appropriate for measuring recidivism (Petersilia, 2003) as debate over whether recidivism is best measured through re-arrests, reconvictions, or reincarcerations (for new convictions or for parole violations) rages on. This research is unique in that it bypasses the typical arrest versus reincarceration debate and is instead inclusive of the processes of graduated disciplinary sanctions and final revocation of parole; comprised of both new offenses committed and parole technical violations that result in reincarceration.

**Sampling Strategy**

The quantitative data were derived from two populations. Recidivism outcome analysis utilized the universe of all female releasees from the Massachusetts Department of Correction (state level) or Massachusetts Houses of Correction (county level) between 2006 and 2009 (n=2407). This time span was selected for two reasons: first, Parole mandated utilization of their case file database, SPIRIT, in 2005, which captures comprehensive data regarding each active parolee. By using data from this system starting in 2006, the accuracy of entered data increases. Second, the end-date of 2009 was chosen so that women who had release dates to Parole in that year would have been either under Parole supervision or in the community for at least a year, helping to ensure that these females would have recidivism outcomes to evaluate.

**Operational Definitions:**

This section delineates the operationalizations of variables to be used in the recidivism outcome analysis of females under active Parole supervision from 2006-2009 (see Figure 7.2). Some attention has already been paid to the measures of official recidivism to be used as outcome measures in the analysis of Parole data, but a more detailed description is offered in this section.
Release hearings occur for all active parolees, and serve as the initial interaction between the offender and the Parole system. Rescission hearings occur when an active parolee has been granted release by the parole board but, in the interim between actual physical release from jail or prison, that parolee receives a disciplinary report (D-report) from the Department of Correction or House of Correction and is therefore detained for a period of time. The rescission hearing is then initiated by the disciplinary infraction and the parole board rules to determine whether the potential parolee is indeed a good candidate for release. Recidivism was operationalized using the system of graduated sanctions corresponding with parole hearings and disciplinary actions. Once released actions that can be undertaken in the case of an active parolee are: a rescission hearing, and a final revocation hearing, which can occur due to any new crime that has been committed by the active parolee, or due to a technical violation of the conditions of parole release.
On the continuum of the severity of disciplinary responses, Parole may undertake to address the behavior of an active parolee, rescission hearings are at the more lenient end, while final revocation of parole status is at the stricter end. A final revocation hearing is necessary when an active parolee has either committed a new crime while under parole supervision, or has committed a violation of the technical conditions of release. However, a system of graduated sanctions is in place that may mitigate the necessity of a final revocation hearing for an active parolee. These graduated sanctions (e.g. escalation of parole restrictions (curfew, drug testing, geographical restrictions), house arrest, electronic monitoring, increased in-person meetings with parole officer) represent a new system put in place by Massachusetts State Parole in 2006. Massachusetts State Parole developed this system of warnings due to concern that reincarceration due to final revocation was occurring with too great a frequency and in order to aid active parolees in negotiating a successful parole career. Graduated sanctions are applied to active parolees based upon their Parole-administered risk level, meaning that parolees who were initially assessed as low risk when released to parole and violate their conditions of release may be assigned to substance abuse treatment, have curfew restricted, have a mandatory meeting with a parole officer, or be issued a warning ticket. However, higher risk parolees who are found to be non-compliant have a higher likelihood of being returned to custody as opposed to receiving a graduated sanction.

In sum, the outcome measure of official recidivism will be comprised of instances of rescission hearings, documented warnings through the system of graduated sanctions, and final revocation of parole resulting in reincarceration due to the commission of a new offense or a violation of the technical conditions of parole. This graduated scale of disciplinary sanctions will provide unique insight into the struggle females face in the reentry process.
Although the argument could be made that using these explicitly post-incarceration outcome measures leaves out criminal justice involvement at the arrest level and conviction levels, or the levels of the criminal justice system where less discretionary bias has occurred, there are distinct advantages to using these parole-based measures. Taken together, these measures cover a substantial portion of the types of recidivism women are most likely to have as they attempt to navigate a successful reentry process. Women who are engaging in behaviors that are not necessarily criminal, but are in violation of their parole, such as drug use or contact with other convicted felons will most likely end up re-incarcerated for a parole technical violation. Conversely, women who are re-incarcerated for a new offense are those women who have engaged in criminal behavior that was deemed serious enough at the arrest level to make an arrest, and were also then convicted for that offense. Additionally, using the system of graduated sanctions as an outcome measure widens the net of behaviors that will be considered instances of “recidivism” in this research, to mean that any behavior that is not positively contributing to the construction of a successful reentry career.

Further, feminist criminology theories regarding the treatment of women by the criminal justice system state that the treatment is characterized by two gendered processes: gallantry/chivalry and double-deviant/evil woman (Schur, 1983, Heidensohn, 2006). According to the gallantry hypothesis, women are treated more gently by the criminal justice system than their male counterparts due to reasons such as an underlying societal desire to protect the family and strict adherence to antiquated notions of gender roles that conceptualize females as the “gentler” sex. The double-deviant hypothesis states the exact opposite, that women who commit crime have violated not only the social norms and laws for behavior of society but that have violated the norms of femininity by acting in such a stereotypically male fashion. The double-
deviant hypothesis states that women are treated much more harshly than their male counterparts in order to address their dual forms of norm violation. Although this research does not make male to female comparisons, by using all available disciplinary measures Massachusetts Parole has on female active parolees analyses of not only the types of infractions females are likely to have, but the intersections between those official instances of recidivism with other outcome measures of success and demographic variables explores the full spectrum of disciplinary action taken against females that could later be tested against their male counterparts.

ANALYTIC STRATEGIES

In order to explore the experience of reentry for females, this research uses a triangulated analytic strategy (see Figure 7.3) whereby information gained from the interviews were tested in the quantitative survival analyses to see if the experiences of the interviewed women existed in the recidivism experiences of the entire female parole population. The case study of the experience of females negotiating parole from within a Transitional Housing Program examined via field observations, both types of qualitative interviews, and the social support questionnaire provide rich, detailed, and contextualizing information to the Parole-generated recidivism data. Pathways to successful reentry that emerged from the qualitative data were tested against the parole-generated recidivism data to determine the ways in which official failures on parole coincided with negotiations of success. When assessed completely in this way, each of the sources of data provided a piece of the puzzle of success in reentry for females on parole.

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

Survival analysis was used to analyze the quantitative data, but prior to estimating the survival models, descriptive analyses were conducted on the 2006-2009 population of female
parolees. Please refer to Appendix E for a complete list of MA Parole generated variables that were utilized in the quantitative analyses.

Figure 7.3: Triangulation Analytic Strategy

The aim of survival analysis is to estimate causal or predictive models in which risk of an event (in this case the parole hearings and graduated sanctions outcome variables) depends on covariates (Allison, 1995). Generally, survival analysis uses longitudinal data to study the timing and occurrence of events. For this research, because more than one “end” event is being analyzed, a competing risk model, which allows for the estimation of multiple kinds of events will be used.

One major benefit of using a competing risks survival analysis model for this research is that it allows for the inclusion of time-varying explanatory covariates. Take employment status as an example of a covariate. Over the period under study, a person’s employment status could change multiple times, rendering it a time-varying, as opposed to static, explanatory covariate
(Allison, 1995: 4). Other statistical models that are also used to model recidivism outcomes like various logistic regression models can be incorporated, albeit through extensive computationally awkward processes (1995:5).

This research utilized the hazard function as a vehicle to allow the probabilistic estimation of the instantaneous risk that some event will occur at time $t$. More specifically, this study’s survival analysis of parolee data using the hazard function estimated the individual risk for each active female parolee between 2006 and 2009, conditional upon covariates, of experiencing recidivism outcomes. The hazard function is defined as follows:

$$h(t) = \lim_{\Delta \to 0} \frac{\Pr\{t \leq T < t + \Delta t \mid T \geq t\}}{\Delta t}$$

The aim of this definition is to quantify the instantaneous risk that an event will occur at time $t$ (Allison, 1995) and to discuss the probability that an event occurs in the small interval between $t$ and $t + \Delta t$. Additionally, the hazard function definition accounts for the fact that the probability of the event at time $t$ is conditional, as is indicated in the numerator of the equation, on the fact that individuals that have already experienced the event being measured (in this case, recidivism) then they are not considered in the rest of the estimation of the model. Lastly, by dividing by $\Delta t$ and by adding a limit to the equation, the interval between time $t$ and $t + \Delta t$ is shortened, addressing issues with the interval time. The longer the interval, the more likely an event will occur (1995:16).

As previously mentioned, the type of survival analysis best suited to model the probability of risk to multiple outcomes is a competing risks model. This study is not only concerned with the factors that contribute to the risk of rearrest or reincarceration for active female parolees, but also for graduated sanction recidivism outcomes. Although the hazard model defined above serves as an important starting point for these analyses, the competing risks
model allowed for the estimation of hazard risk models for the six major recidivism outcomes this research is interested in: graduated sanction, parole technical violation for conditions of parole, parole technical violation for a new offense, final revocation—re-release to parole, final revocation—reincarceration, final revocation—conditional release (Refer back to Figure 6 for a diagram of these outcomes).

In the competing risks model, a separate hazard rate function was defined for each type of recidivism outcomes that were called case-specific hazards. In the definition of a case-specific hazard below, \( T_i \) is a random variable that represents the time to event (i.e. recidivism) for parolee \( i \). \( J_i \) is a random variable that represents the type of recidivism event that happened to parolee \( i \). Therefore, the hazard rate function for event type \( j \) at time \( t \) for parolee \( i \) is as follows:

\[
h_{ij}(t) = \lim_{\Delta \to 0} \frac{\Pr\{t \leq T < t + \Delta t, J_i = j \mid T \geq t\}}{\Delta t}, \quad j = 1, \ldots, 6
\]

The only major difference in this definition of the hazard rate function and the basic version already defined, is that the conditional probability in the numerator now includes \( J_i = j \), changing the statement to the probability that an event occurs between \( t \) and \( t + \Delta t \) and that the event is of type \( j \), given that that person \( i \) did not already have another recidivism event by time \( t \). By utilizing this type of hazard rate function modeling this research expands upon prior recidivism research that relies solely on one measure of recidivism and is therefore more inclusive of potential struggles and barriers faced by active female parolees.

Survival analyses were used in the study of regression models where the dependent variable(s) measure the time to the occurrence of an event of interest (Hosmer, Lemeshow & May, 2008). The fact that time to an event is the outcome of interest requires careful consideration regarding what is actually being measured, and therefore requires unambiguous
definitions of a beginning point (when the clock starts) and an endpoint at which point the event of interest occurs (when the clock stops) (2008:3). For the purposes of this research, the beginning point for analysis ($t = 0$) was the first release date to Parole for each female that fell within the 2006-2009 time period. Reentry and recidivism research typically either uses a one-year post-release or a three years post-release follow-up time period, and there is a large body of research corroborating this study’s use of a one year time period (Meares et al., 2008).

Observation ended or had a “stop time” for each of the females when (and if) she experienced an event within that one-year post-release time frame. The survival time for each female is then the distance on the time scale between her release date to parole and the week during that year she experienced one of the seven recidivism outcome measures listed above. The time intervals measured in this study were consecutive weeks, making the potential survival time for each female between 1 and 52.

The dependent variables examined as the recidivism event were changes in housing plan, changes in employment plan, positive drug test, first instance of a graduated sanction hearing, first instance of a parole technical violation, and two final revocation hearing outcomes: re-release to parole or remain incarceration. Each of these dependent models was estimated separately in a time-to-event examination. Each model estimated the time lapsed between release onto parole supervision and the first instance of each outcome for the women. If a woman did not experience the event within the first year after being released to parole, then she “survived” the time period in question in accordance to that outcome.

Two mechanisms can lead to the incomplete observation of time in survival analysis: censoring and truncation. The most common type of censoring occurs when an observation begins at $t = 0$ (for this research, release date to Parole between 2006 and 2009) and terminates
prior to the outcome of interest being observed. This type of censoring is called right censoring, due to the right side of the time axis being censored by the end of the observation period. This study experienced right censoring due to the termination of the observation period being set at one year (fifty-two weeks), and therefore some of the effect observed of a small percentage of the population experiencing certain recidivism outcomes could be attributed to the effect of censoring. A truncated observation is incomplete due to some selection process inherent to the study design (Hosmer, Lemeshow & May, 2008:6), and since this research relies on data collected for the entire active female Parole population and not some sample thereof, truncation is not an issue.

In order to estimate the survival experience of the female parolee population for the seven outcome measures, first univariate descriptive statistics for the right-censored time-to-event data on the recidivism outcome measures are presented, and then the comparative survival experience of females based on Parole assessed risk level and current most serious incarcerating offense are compared using life tables to estimate the survival variable and the Cox Regression and Cox Hazard Rate to compare survival outcomes across categorical groups.

The goal of survival analysis is to estimate and compare the survival experiences of different groups, and the survival experience is described by the cumulative survival function: 

\[ S(t) = 1 - P(T \leq t) = 1 - F(t) \]

where \( F(t) \) is the cumulative distribution function of \( f(t) \) and \( T_i \) is the event time for an individual that is a random variable with a probability distribution. For example, if \( t = 100 \) years, then the \( S(t) \) is the probability of surviving beyond 100 years (Sainani, 2012). This type of analysis was particularly well-suited for this research for it allowed for conclusions to be drawn regarding the factors predicting instances of failure on parole, what demographic variables within the female population were more prone to instances of failure, and
the time to failure while on active parole supervision which can help MA Parole better deploy supervision resources with the greatest amount of return in terms of reducing recidivism in the female population.

**QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS**

As previously stated, the qualitative analyses in this research utilized a feminist research approach, focusing on the diverse situations and institutions that affect women with the goal of problematizing those situations and correcting the invisibility and distortion of the female experience, in this case of constructing a successful reentry career via parole (Creswell, 2007). Essential to a feminist approach are two concepts: the use of gender as a basic organizing principle and the role of the researcher. Using gender as a lens for inquiry into an issue means approaching an issue understanding the centrality of gender in shaping the conditions of the social reality in which that issue exists (2007:26). The role of the researcher in feminist research is twofold: first, the researcher has an obligation to the subjects to ensure that the study is transformative in nature; meaning that there is an impetus for change that runs as an undercurrent for the research. Second, the researcher must acknowledge his or her own agency and social position. The researcher needs to be aware that in every social interaction gender is accomplished (West and Zimmerman, 1987), and therefore the researcher must be aware of how she accomplishes her gender role in social interactions with the subjects of the research. Particularly pertinent to this research is the consideration of power dynamics between the researcher and the subject and also the temptation to search for one single unified voice from the subjects. In regard to the former, the researcher was (1) constantly working in the observation and interview phases to remain outside of both the MA Parole and case management supervision...
structures so as to not derive power or influence from that association, (2) careful to interact with women at the THPs in settings other than the interview room such as at meals, during free time, or in casual conversations during smoke breaks\(^{16}\) where common ground could be found on a variety of subjects. These two strategies both helped gain rapport with the women and also diminished the power differentials that existed due to differences in power and status between the researcher and the women. In regard to the latter, interview questions were designed to allow the women to discuss their experiences in their own words. For instance, to begin a discussion of experiences prior to incarceration women were asked, “What was your day-to-day life like at the time of your most recent arrest?” If a simple or vague answer was given, for instance, “Crazy,” then the researcher would ask the woman to elaborate, but in specific ways. A question like “Could you walk me through what a typical day was like?” would reveal many dimensions of the experiences of that particular woman that could then be expanded upon. From here, important similarities as well as differences from the experiences of other women could be examined.

Although this is only one example of a strategy used to avoid reducing the experiences of all of the women into the experiences of the few,

Within the feminist framework, this research employs a narrative approach to addressing the research questions, a method rooted in social and humanities disciplines that take discourse as the phenomenon under study. As Geertz (2001) describes in the context of anthropology,

> “the enlargement of the universe of human discourse…is an aim to which a semiotic concept of culture is particularly well adapted. As interworked systems of construable signs, culture is not power, something to which social events, behaviors, institutions, or processes can be causally attributed; it is context, something within which they can be intelligibly—that is, thickly—described” (2001:63).

To engage in the activity of thickly describing human discourse is to do exactly as Geertz states, to examine that what makes humans social beings (interactions, institutions, and processes)

\(^{16}\) Smoke breaks only occurred at the Recovery House, but were looked forward to by the entire client community as a chance to get outside, to smoke cigarettes, and to have casual conversations with other clients.
within a context. This research sought to thickly explore the discourse provided by women who have been released from prison about how they perceive the culture that they live in from their specific, gendered social positions and how that culture helps to define the choices they make in their lives.

Narrative research focuses on the life stories of individuals, gathering information (typically chronological) in the form of successive guided-conversation interviews, and then reporting on the meaning of the information derived from those interviews. There are many types of narrative research, as well as varied analytical strategies for interpreting the data gathered in such research. This study employs a life history approach, which tells the story of an individual’s experience, using the aforementioned lens of gender to understand the cultural context of the experiences of the interviewees.

Narrative research is an appropriate method for addressing this specific research agenda for two reasons: first, narrative research is best for examining in a thick and detailed manner, the experiences of a small group of women. Second, feminist research has traditionally employed qualitative methodologies like narrative research that allow the voice and the agency of the participants to be showcased, and third, it emphasizes the vital importance of the respondents own words in describing their experiences. Instead of employing positivistic hypo-deductive methodology, this narrative research allows for themes to emerge from the data that will add to knowledge about the phenomenon of pathways to crime and the effect they may have on successful reentry outcomes.

Although narrative research is an appropriate and desirable method to employ in addressing this research question, it also poses unique challenges to the researcher in the areas of information collection, context, and participant collaboration. In order to create a narrative that
is full of thick description of the life events of a participant, the researcher needs to collect an extensive amount of information (Creswell, 2007). In order to gain this information, there are two important issues to consider: gaining entrée and building rapport (Weiss, 1994). Through partnership with the Massachusetts Parole Board, entrée to the population sought for study has been accomplished, a feat that can be extremely difficult in the research context. Once entrée is granted and the researcher has access to a pool of participants, the second, and equally challenging issue of building rapport emerges. Through the data collection processes of the preliminary and life history interviews, a succession of an average of three interviews with each subject, the researcher will have to work diligently to gain the trust and respect of the participants while simultaneously working to understand the context of the information being gained. Without establishing a rapport, the researcher will not be able to uncover information that is any deeper than the surface.

The interview schedule for the life history interviews sought to produce a diachronic report of active female parolee’s lived experiences (Weiss, 1994). Diachronic reports tell stories in a chronological format; they may describe phases of development or change, or focus on end event, in this case successful reentry (1994: 43). The interview schedule developed for this research focuses on three stages of life for parolees: pre-incarceration, incarceration (and any instances of cycling), and release/reentry. Each of these three stages was conceptualized as a temporal framework that supported discussion of themes regarding female pathways to crime at each stage. The interviews were not conducted using a set of predetermined questions that must be answered, but instead the researcher sought to cover themes within these predetermined life stages using certain types of questions designed to elicit deep responses.
Data gathered from the qualitative interviews were analyzed using a grounded theory approach. Grounded theory research design, developed in the 1960s by sociologists Glaser and Strauss, moves beyond thick description to generate a theory about the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2007). Grounded theory contends that theories should be “grounded” in the actions, interactions, and social processes of people who have experienced the process under study and thereby inductively produce theory (2007:63). According to Glaser and Strauss, applying grounded theory practically requires that the resulting theory closely fit the substantive area in which it will be used, that it be readily understood by “laymen” (i.e. participants and/or practitioners) in the area under study, that it must be generalizable to diverse daily situations within the area of study, and that it must control for changes in the area of study over time (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The process of grounded theory research starts with identifying the research questions and then conducting interviews to gather data regarding the process. In this case, the preliminary and life history interviews served as the bank of data to be analyzed.

In order to analyze the data collected via the interviews, stages of coding were undertaken. In qualitative grounded theory research, analysis is an essential part of the data collection process. Immediately following each interview with a participant, the recording of that interview and/or written notes were transcribed and downloaded into the qualitative software program “N6” which is a qualitative data analysis software program that allows the researcher to manually code the text for emergent themes. Although the research questions specifically address themes that the extant literature has connected to the process of a successful reentry career, so those themes were coded when they emerged, any and all themes that emerged throughout the interviews were also coded as free codes. These free codes formed categories of information about pathways in and out of crime for active female parolees that were then turned
into thematic coding structures that will serve as a map for explicating the commonalities and differences within the experiences of reentry for females. Additionally, pseudonyms were assigned for each of the interview respondents as well as other female parolees encountered during field observations. All proper names used in the reporting of narratives are fictional to protect the identities of the women.

Part of the process of the grounded theory approach is reflexive data analysis, meaning that as new data are entered into the pool of data for research, all previously collected data are reanalyzed utilizing the themes that emerged from the new data. This reflexive process allows for analysis of the data and writing about the data to occur throughout the data collection process and was completed throughout the duration of the data collection/analysis research process.

CONCLUSION:

The sources of data and their attendant methods for analysis allowed for both a quantitative understanding of the factors that predict instances of recidivism for females on Parole in Massachusetts as well as a thick, detailed case study of the mechanisms, both social structural and psychologically agentic through which females engaged in the process of gendered reentry.
CHAPTER SEVEN

QUANTITATIVE & QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

The methodology described in the previous chapter demanded collection of descriptive statistics pertaining to three distinct data sources: the quantitative population (n=2405) of females under active parole supervision in Massachusetts between 2006 and 2009; the qualitative interview sample (n=22) of females living in transitional housing program facilities and negotiating early community reentry while under active parole supervision in 2011; and lastly the social support questionnaire subgroup (n=10). This descriptive statistics chapter provides demographic information on the active female parolees and demonstrates the ways in which these data can be triangulated to make broader conclusions about the experiences that females have in negotiating successful community reentry while under parole supervision in Massachusetts. 

QUANTITATIVE: FEMALES UNDER MASSACHUSETTS PAROLE SUPERVISION

Although the quantitative and qualitative data do not overlap in terms of time period, according to the descriptive analyses performed on both, the qualitative sample is representative of the overall female parolee population of 2006-2009, making comparisons relevant. Please refer to Table 8.2 for a side-by-side examination of the demographic profiles of the SPIRIT, interview, and social support survey samples. The similarities across the three samples are highlighted in this table. For a complete listing of the demographic characteristics of the samples overall, please refer to Appendix F.

Demographic Characteristics

Females under active Parole supervision in Massachusetts between 2006 and 2009 were similar in some respects to the overall female parole population nationwide. The females were
an average age of 32 years old, and were overwhelmingly single at the time of their release to Parole (70.2%). Although the majority of women were single and had never been married (53.6%), a significant portion were single at the time of their release to Parole, but had been married at one time. Women in the latter population were either divorced (10.1%), legally separated from their spouses (5.3%), or widowed (1.2%). Women who were married at the time of release were represented a small proportion of the overall population (8.2%), and when understood in the context of the overall experience with the social institution of marriage for all of the women (only 30.8%) there is strong evidence to suggest that marriage was an institution that female parolees had not participated in despite an average age within the socially normative age range for entering into marriage. Surprisingly, given the average age of the women and previous research suggesting that females with criminal justice system involvement (especially incarceration histories) tend to be mothers (Brown & Boom, 2009), only 6.7% reported having children.

Unlike nationwide racial demographic trends for females on parole, Massachusetts’ female parolees were overwhelmingly Caucasian (75.4%). Although this racial homogeneity does limit the generalizability of this population to previous studies of females on parole, fortunately the populations was not totally lacking in diversity as 14.1% of the sample was African-American, 8.6% were Hispanic/Latina, 0.4% identified as Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0.3% as American Indian/Alaskan Native. Nationwide, the racial/ethnic composition of the female parole population demonstrates more diversity as 55% of the population identifies as Caucasian, 30% as African-American, 13% as Hispanic/Latina, 1% as Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1% American Indian/Alaska Native (Glaze & Bonczar, 2011). Despite the difference in
magnitude of the percentages of the Massachusetts and nationwide demographics, the overall pattern of racial/ethnic distribution is similar.

Overall, the female parolees displayed a high level of civic marginality. Eighty-seven percent reported not holding a valid driver’s license either due to never acquiring one prior to incarceration or due to revocation at the time of sentencing. Less than half of the women reported being covered by some type of health insurance (44%), but of the insured population the majority were insured through MassHealth, Massachusetts’ low-income health care program. Over three-quarters of the women were both born in the United States and United States citizens, so immigrant status was not a likely culprit in driving down percentages of driver’s license or health insurance statuses.

Demographically, the picture that is painted of the “typical” female on parole in Massachusetts from 2006 to 2009 is one that is in her 30s, Caucasian, single with no children, and potentially low-income (using MassHealth participation as a proxy measure for income level). Unfortunately, Massachusetts Parole does not directly ask questions about income; however two other predictor variables for which they do collect data can help paint a more complete picture of the economic reality of the typical female parolee. These two variables are changes in approved home plan and changes in approved work plan.

Over half of the women had four different approved home plans within their first twelve months under active parole supervision, and on average each woman had experienced three changes in approved home plan during her supervision period on parole. Safe and stable housing is touted in recidivism and reentry literature as paramount to negotiating a successful reentry pathway post-incarceration. Cognizant of this fact, Massachusetts Parole not only tracks the number of times an active parolee changes his or her housing plan, but also records the date that
change occurred, and what type of housing the parolee is living in at all times (please see Table 8.1 below for a description of type of housing). Safe and stable housing is a standard condition of parole supervision nearly nationwide, and Massachusetts is no exception.

Table 8.1: Parole-Generated Housing Types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing Type:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Apartment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Holding Facility/Prison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Halfway House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hotel/Motel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Homeless Shelter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Medical Facility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mental Health Facility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Nursing Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Refused*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rooming House/Dormitory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Residential Treatment Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sober House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Trailer/Mobile Home</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Refused denotes that the parolee refused to live in a residential in-patient facility. This is only a viable option after a parolee’s first six months under parole supervision has been completed successfully.

For the women the most frequent housing options were an apartment, a sober house, or a residential treatment facility (i.e. Parole contracted Transitional Housing Program site). Changes in approved home plan tended to fall into one of two trajectories: in the first trajectory women transitioned from less independent living (sober house, residential treatment center, halfway house) to forms of more independent living (apartment, house, trailer/mobile home). The second trajectory followed the opposite track: women transitioned from more independent living to more restricted forms of housing. The first trajectory could be conceptualized as a progressive reentry pathway; the women were released from incarceration to a transitional housing program with rules and restrictions for their behavior, and therefore take a path that progresses toward more independent living. The second trajectory represents the path for a woman who is approved
upon release by parole to live independently directly following incarceration, but for what could be a whole host of reasons, she takes a step back toward more restrictive and less independent housing in order to address reentry or rehabilitation needs. At any given time during the year, approximately 20% of the female parole population is enrolled in the Transitional Housing Program.

Similarly, being cognizant of the correlates to the creation and maintenance of a successful reentry campaign, Parole collects data regarding shifts in the employment status of its active parolees. Strikingly, more than half (60%) of female parolees were not employed prior to their incarceration and subsequent parole to the community, signaling a high degree of economic marginalization in the overall population. While under active parole supervision the majority of these women (40%) experienced changes in approved work plans between two and four times within their first twelve months of active parole. Unfortunately, though Parole does collect data regarding the type of employment obtained by parolees (i.e. full time, part time, not in the workforce, school/training, and unemployed), this field within Parole’s electronic data system is not a mandatory field for parole officers to enumerate, resulting in too much missing data for it to be a reliable statistic for analysis. Further analyses of the female population would benefit from a full examination of the difference between “not in the workforce” and “unemployed” as the two are qualitatively different, implying non-involvement in legitimate employment, versus involved, perhaps seeking employment, but currently unemployed. Future investigations could find nuanced differences in terms of economic marginalization in these data alone.

When considered together the statistics regarding the dynamic nature of both housing and employment in the lives of females under active parole supervision suggest a high degree of instability and volatility in the structural elements of the reentry process. Cumulatively, these
women tended to be of lower socio-economic status (i.e. low-income health insurance, scarce and short-term employment, highly variable residences), and have extensive criminal histories that indicated a high degree of substance use and/or abuse. Unfortunately, Massachusetts Parole does not collect information on the education levels of their active parolees, as this information would add depth to this cumulative marginality profile, but even with the data that are supplied, the cumulative effect of these sources of marginalization places these females at an objective disadvantage in terms of what needs or deficits they must overcome to construct successful reentry pathways.

*Criminal Background*

The criminal history and criminal justice system experience of the women are extensive. Most frequently, they were arrested as adults for the first time between the ages of 16 and 22, with the most frequent age at first arrest being 18 (11.3%). From the time of this first arrest the majority of the women were subsequently arrested multiple times. Approximately 12% only had one or two arrests as an adult, while 13.4% were arrested three or four times as an adult. An additional 11.2% were arrested five or six times as an adult. Although the women had been arrested three times as adults most frequently, at least 1% of the sample (or at least 23 women for each consecutive number of arrests) had been arrested between seven and eighteen times as an adult. Both popular conceptions of female criminality as well as some prior research discussing the criminal tendencies of women would lead even the most discerning consumer of these statistics to assume that the majority of these arrests would most likely be for property crime like fraud or passing bad checks and for drug related offenses; however nearly half of the females had been arrested at some point in their criminal histories for an assaultive (i.e. violent) felony (24.5%) or an assaultive misdemeanor (20.9%).
When the criminal activity of the women is conceptualized more narrowly and examined in terms of the most serious current incarcerating offense only, the most frequent incarcerating offense was drug-related (30%), and following that majority, significant proportions of the remaining women were incarcerated for larceny/theft (16%) and aggravated assault (12%). These statistics are more in keeping with substantiated patterns and trends in female criminality observed since the 1980s, as they reflect policing initiatives pertaining to the War on Drugs as well as mandatory arrest policies for domestic/intimate partner violence incidents (Chesney-Lind, 2002; Sherman et al., 1992). Although drug-related crimes, larceny/thefts, and aggravated assaults constituted the majority of most serious current incarcerating offenses, fraud and embezzlement charges (8.9%), operating under the influence (6.3%), and sex for a fee (4.5%) were also well represented in terms of the frequency at which the women were arrested for these charges. Taken together, these top six categories of most serious incarcerating offenses reflect the complete typology of criminality exhibited by the female parolees under active supervision in Massachusetts as a whole.

The fact that the overwhelming majority of women have a drug related charge as their most serious incarcerating offense reflects an overall trend observed in the incarcerated population as a whole. Today, severe sentencing policies regarding drug possession and distribution have had two decades of influence over the criminal population, and the female criminal population in particular. Not only is the lure of making money via an illegal pharmaceutical enterprise alluring, but also self-medication to control post-traumatic stress disorder and a whole host of other mental diagnoses is a common trend with female populations (Inciardi, 2008). The proliferation of different types of drugs for sale (i.e. prescription medications like Oxycontin (Oxycodone), Percadan, Dilaudid, etc.) has led to both increased
dependence on these highly addictive drugs, but also an increase in the arrest rate for female drug crime perpetrators.

In addition to their arrest histories, the female parolees also had prior experiences with incarceration and parole. Although a relatively small proportion of the female parolees had been incarcerated prior to the most recent incarceration from which they had been paroled (8%), of that sub-population 20% had been incarcerated once before, 30% on two prior occasions, and 13.8% on three prior occasions. Given that the sub-population of the women that had been previously incarcerated is relatively small, it follows logically that the overwhelming majority did not have previous experience with the parole system prior to their current active parole releases. Of the proportion of the population that had been released to parole prior to their current release (28.4%), the majority had only been exposed to the system of parole on one prior occasion (18.8%), with the next most frequent experience being two previous parole releases (6.8%). When contrasted with the arrest data discussed above, a pattern regarding the typical sentencing for females in Massachusetts emerges. Although the Massachusetts Parole Board does not maintain data on the rate of involvement within their population with the Massachusetts probation department, the drug court system, or other community-based sanctions, and therefore this research cannot substantiate that a high degree of the females’ arrests resulted in one or more those sanctions, it stands to reason given the arrest to incarceration ratio of the population.

Parole Profiles:

The supervision of females on Parole was fairly evenly distributed across the eight regional Parole offices for the period under study; however the Quincy (19.7%), Springfield (16.7%), Lawrence (14.2%), and New Bedford (16.4%) offices taken together supervised the majority of the female parolees (67% of the total population). In order to supervise these
females in the community while effectively managing the risk they pose to public safety, Massachusetts Parole assesses the risk level of each of the females upon their release from incarceration. The LSI-R II is administered to each female during the intake process and once completed, that risk level helps to determine Parole conditions as well as placement into services like the Transitional Housing Program. Actuarial risk assessment tools like the LSI-R II rely heavily on criminal record and the severity of the current incarcerating offense when determining the risk a parolee will pose to public safety in the community (Andrews & Bonta, 1989). Not surprisingly, females tend to score lower on these risk scales than their male counterparts due to their propensity to commit non-violent, drug-related crimes.

Massachusetts’ female parolees corroborated this pattern in female offending, as more than half of the women were assessed as low-risk at the time of release to parole (58.8%). Significantly, slightly more than a third were assessed as medium risk, and finally 3.3% (n = 63) were assessed as high risk. Although MA Parole does not track the admittances to the Transitional Housing Program according to assessed risk level, the institutional culture regarding approval for application to the THPs is highly contingent upon the availability of safe and healthy housing combined with treatment for substance abuse, which represent risk factors that could augment a parolee’s risk assessment. Despite no direct data to rely upon to base this assertion, the inference can be made that the 17.9% (n = 432) of the overall sample who were recorded as having been enrolled in a Transitional Housing Program represent those females within the Massachusetts Parole population who are assessed to be at the highest risk for recidivism upon release.
Table 8.2: Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive Variable</th>
<th>SPIRIT (n=2405) %</th>
<th>Interview (n=22) %</th>
<th>Social Support (n=10) %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean Age</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Single</td>
<td>70.6</td>
<td>91.0</td>
<td>90.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Single Never Married</td>
<td>53.6</td>
<td>73.0</td>
<td>90.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Divorced</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Widowed</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Married</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Caucasian</td>
<td>75.4</td>
<td>86.4</td>
<td>70.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- African-American</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Hispanic/Latina</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- American Indian</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
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<td>Civic Marginality</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- No Driver's License</td>
<td>87.0</td>
<td>77.0</td>
<td>70.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Health Insurance</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Yes</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>64.0</td>
<td>75.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- MassHealth</td>
<td>82.9</td>
<td>64.0</td>
<td>75.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- No</td>
<td>56.0</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Welfare Assistance</td>
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<td>91.0</td>
<td>70.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Homelessness</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- THP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Yes</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- No</td>
<td>82.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed at time of arrest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Yes</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- No</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>73.0</td>
<td>70.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age at first arrest</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 17</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 18</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 19-22</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 23-30</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Adult Arrests</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 1-2</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 3-4</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 5-6</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>27.2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>- More than 6</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most Serious Inc. Offense</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Drug related</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Larceny/Theft</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Aggravated Assault</td>
<td>12.0</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Fraud/Embezzlement</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- OUI</td>
<td>6.3</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Sexual Crime</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Breaking &amp; Entering</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Prior Incarcerations</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 1</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 2</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>45.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 3</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior Releases to Parole</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Yes</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Number of Times:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* 1</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* 2</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parole Supervision Region</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Quincy</td>
<td>19.7</td>
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<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Springfield</td>
<td>16.7</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Lawrence</td>
<td>14.2</td>
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<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- New Bedford</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk Level</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Low</td>
<td>58.8</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Medium</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>72.7</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- High</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children (Y/N)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Yes</td>
<td>(6.7)</td>
<td>86.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- No</td>
<td>(93.3)</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Indicate s data not collected for comparison.
( ) Indicates data that is not mandatory to enumerate in SPIRIT.
**Conceptualization of Recidivism**

For reasons discussed in the methodology, disciplinary outcomes served as the measure of recidivism for this study. Of the seventeen possible disciplinary outcome measures for which Parole collects data, eight proved to have been experienced by a large enough sub-set of the women to maintain statistical power for examination via survival analysis (see Table 8.3 below). Any outcome measure that was experienced by fifteen percent or more of the women was included as an outcome measure for the survival analysis.

Table 8.3: Recidivism Outcome Measures for Survival Analyses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome Measure</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change in Housing Plan</td>
<td>n = 493</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in Employment Plan</td>
<td>n = 696</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Drug Test</td>
<td>n = 504</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduated Sanction</td>
<td>n = 445</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parole Technical Violation</td>
<td>n = 365</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provisional Revocation</td>
<td>n = 417</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Revocation: Reinstitution</td>
<td>n = 1003</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unfortunately, due to lack of experience with the following recidivism outcomes for females under active Parole supervision between 2006 and 2009, they could not be included in the recidivism study: parole violations for a new offense, final revocation hearings resulting in new conditional release conditions, rescission hearings, or final revocation hearings resulting in reincarceration. Nonetheless, the outcome measures that were included provide a dynamic conceptualization of the disciplinary process for females on parole and when during their first year under Parole supervision they experience instances of disciplinary action.
One of the three main research questions addressed by this research asks about the role that Massachusetts Parole services play in the experience of reentry for females. Utilizing a survival analysis methodology allows for a time-to-event examination of when, following release to Parole, the females experienced instances of changes to their approved home plans, changes to their approved employment plans, positive (dirty) urinalysis tests, graduated sanction applications, parole technical violations, and two types of final revocation hearing outcomes, provisional and restitutional. The survival analysis is the right choice methodologically for a few reasons. First, this study aims to understand how pathways to reentry are forged in the context of prior experiences with pathways to crime. Survival analysis uses the dynamic nature of time as a resource to demonstrate how females progressed through their first year of Parole supervision and when in that first year they experienced “barriers” to successful reentry in the form of Parole sanctions. Second, these outcome measures can be understood in the context of categorical variable data also collected by Massachusetts Parole regarding the criminal history and assessed risk levels of the female population to determine which populations Parole should focus its resources on, and at what point in their Parole careers to be able to prevent the greatest number of instances of recidivism.

**UNIVARIATE LIFE TABLE DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS**

One unique aspect of survival analysis is that it can be helpful to conceptualize the descriptive statistics in terms of time in addition to typical frequency distributions discussed above. The following sections highlight the univariate time-dependent descriptive statistics for the seven main outcome variables under study.
Approved Home and Work Plans

Although housing and employment plans are not technically outcome measures relating to recidivism for females on Parole, assurances that parolees have safe and health housing and are actively seeking gainful employment are standard release conditions for Parole departments nationwide (Petersilia, 2003). Changes in approved housing and employment plans within the first year post-release can therefore indicate volatility in the reentry process and even lack of reliable social support or support networks capable of serving as housing or employment references. The life table results pictured below in Figure 8.1 for the cumulative survival function for changes to approved home plans demonstrate monthly (four week) intervals estimating the conditional probability of confirmed survival at each observed survival time. In other words, the survival variable demonstrates the conditional probability that a female who “survived” the first interval observed without experiencing an “event” (in this case without experiencing a change to her approved home plan) will “survive” the following interval. The conditional probability is multiplicative and based on the proportion of the population surviving each consecutively observed interval. The hazard rate for a given time interval represents an instantaneous incidence rate whereby the probability that if a person survives to time $t$, then they will succumb to the event under study in the next instant or interval. Increases in the hazard rate per time interval observed indicate a “danger zone” of sorts; that the higher the hazard rate at that instant, the greater the probability of succumbing to that event in the next instant.
The cumulative proportion of the population surviving the year without a change to the approved home plan was .80, with a median survival time of 52 weeks, or the full year. This statistic taken in isolation would suggest that overall, the experience with changes to home plans was small, but when the timing of changes to home plans is considered, the hazard rates for the time period between the week of release to parole and the 24th week (or the first six months post-release) are not only uniform (.01) but are also represent the highest probability of experiencing a change for the population.

One marked limitation to the data that Parole collects regarding employment plans, is that the SPIRIT system overrides past employment plans with new data when it becomes available. The implication of this data collection strategy is that each of the incidences to a change in employment plan indicated in the intervals above in Figure 8.1 may be a negative chance (i.e. from employed to unemployed) or a positive change (i.e. from unemployed to employed). Notwithstanding this data collective artifact, it is nonetheless worthwhile to examine the overall time-based trends for the probability of experiencing a change in employment status while one year post-release from incarceration. Here again, as with housing plans, the initial period on
Parole poses the time of the greatest risk for experiencing a change in employment status. The hazard rate is the highest for employment in the first three months post-release, and it peaks in the first week post-release at .03. Cumulatively the population proportion surviving to one year post-release without a change in home plan (or being censored out) was .71, with the median survival time of the full 52 weeks.

When considered together, the housing and employment change survival functions indicate two separate trends to be explored further with the covariates: first that the initial two months post-release are particularly volatile in terms of changes to the tangible aspects of parole conditions, and second, the cumulative proportion of the population surviving to the full year post-release without an event hover around .80 of the population. By looking into covariates it will help to tease out the remaining .20 proportion of the population who are not surviving and what the characteristics of that population are.

*Parole Supervision Sanctions: Positive Drug Test, Graduated Sanction, and Parole Technical Violation*

A positive result on a urinalysis screening, an instance of a graduated sanction meeting/escalation of the terms of parole, and a parole technical violation (which may or may not result in a final revocation hearing, but will most certainly result in a graduated sanction) are all outcome measures pertaining Parole supervision and disciplinary measures. The women experienced these events in the proportions of the overall population of 21.0%, 18.5%, and 15.2% respectively. The latter statistic is the smallest proportion of the population deemed acceptable for modeling of a survival function, due to the fact that it represents the Parole Technical Violations, or the mode of return to incarceration or augmentation of parole conditions most frequently utilized by parole departments nationwide to combat poor accomplishment of the conditions of release. Additionally, the fact that there is a smaller proportion of the female
population that had experience with parole technical violations as well as with re-arrest for new crimes or reincarceration, suggests that perhaps the shift that the Massachusetts Parole Board engaged in to move toward greater utilization of graduated sanctions has been well implemented in the rank and file parole officer factions.

The connection between substance abuse and the recovery from substance abuse with the desistance/reentry process is well documented in the literature. Interviews with the female parolee population also confirm a high degree of substance abuse prior to incarceration. For these reasons examining the timing of any instances of relapse into substance abuse can shed light on the degree to which relapse and failed reentry coincide with one another for females on parole. Figure 8.2 below examines the time-event survival function for incidences of Parole supervision sanctions including positive drug tests, graduated sanctions, and parole technical violations. A similar pattern is observed regarding relapse onto substance use as was described with housing and employment plans: the first eight weeks (or two months) represent the time of greatest risk for females recently released from incarceration. The hazard rate indicates that the probability females in the first and second monthly time intervals will succumb to an incidence of substance use is .02 for both intervals. Again the cumulative proportion of the population surviving the full one-year observation period without an incident is .79, and the median survival time was the full 52 weeks, in continuation of the pattern observed above.
An incident of a positive drug test often results in a graduated sanction hearing for parolees in Massachusetts, and can also be conceptualized as a Parole technical violation that could be grounds for revocation. However, in Massachusetts the determination of how to dispense with a “dirty urine” is wholly made by the supervising Parole officer. The implication of this discretionary process for the purposes of this research is that the survival functions of positive drug test, graduated sanction, and parole technical violation may be interrelated.

Depicted above in Figure 8.3 is the survival function for observations of graduated sanctions one year post-release to Parole. Not surprisingly due to the similarity of this outcome measure with a positive drug test, the time of greatest risk as reported by the hazard rate are the second and third months post-release (hazard rate of .01), the cumulative proportion surviving
the observation period without incident was .81, and the median survival time was the full one-year observation period.

After such similar results for positive drug test and graduated sanction, the survival function for parole technical violations stands apart. As previously stated, the sub-population with experience with a Parole technical violation in the one-year observation period was 15.2%. Again on Figure 8.2 above, the ramifications of that limited experience are displayed graphically. Though again here the time of greatest risk for an event of a Parole technical violation was between the second and third interval or in the second month post-release, the scale of the cumulative proportion surviving the observation period does change the landscape of these results. The overwhelming majority of the population survived their first year post-release onto Parole without experiencing a technical violation that was recorded in their Parole case files (.99 of the population). It follows then that the median survival time for the population in terms of parole technical violations was the full 52-week observation period. Again, after another type of outcome measures, a pattern remains: the time of greatest risk as defined by the hazard rate is within the first three months post-release and approximately .80 of the population survives without experiencing the outcome measures in the one-year observation period.

*Final Revocation Hearing Outcome Experiences:*

Two types of outcomes from the final revocation hearing stage of Massachusetts Parole’s graduated sanctions system met the requirements for statistical power for the survival analysis: provisional revocation and reinstitution. Provisional parole revocations (depicted below in Figure 8.3) may only be mandated by the
Figure 8.3: Life Table Survival Function for Final Revocation Hearing Outcomes

Parole Board members, and is typically administered when the Parole Board has reservations regarding whether or not a parolee should be granted release. It stands to reason then that the time of greatest risk for an incident of provisional revocation would be in the first interval under examination, or the first four weeks of observation post-release (hazard rate of .04).

The last outcome measure to be examined via survival function for descriptive univariate analysis is the final revocation hearing outcome of reinstitution of conditional release (Figure 8.4 above). This outcome is arrived at by the Parole Board members who, following a revocation hearing, determine that a parolee who has been brought up on charges of violating her parole should be reinstituted on parole and re-released into the community. The experience females had with this particular dispensation was distinct from other parole outcomes. There was a marked hazard rate time of greatest risk for probability of succumbing to an incident of this type in the first four months post-release (hazard rate of .07), perhaps indicating that if a parolee was to violate the conditions of her parole in such a drastic manner as to deserve a final revocation hearing in the first four weeks of her parole, then she was given leniency or new more stringent parole conditions upon her reinstitution. Also distinctly different from other parole outcomes is
the fact that only a .58 proportion of the population survived the one-year follow-up period without experiencing a final revocation hearing outcome of reinstatement of parole status.

The univariate examination of the survival outcome measures provided important insight into the degree to which Parole-originated supervision and disciplinary procedures played a role in real time-to-event context in the negotiation of reentry for the females. The next step was to use covariates from the SPIRIT dataset in an attempt to understand the profile of the 20% of the female parolee population that was experiencing incidences of “failures” in the reentry process from the perspective of Parole. This analysis is examined in Chapter Eleven.

QUALITATIVE: TRANSITIONAL HOUSING PROGRAM INTERVIEW SUBJECTS

The following demographic information describes both the interview sample (n=22) as well as the social support questionnaire subgroup (n=10). The women interviewed reported social statuses in their lives prior to incarceration that were characterized by the cumulative impact of intersecting sources of marginality. Intersections of marginalization from (and limited access to) education, employment, housing, and marriage cumulatively disadvantaged the women, as they provided serious social-structural barriers to the attainment of conventional status, leaving the women to make life choices in the context of their marginalization.

Women who were interviewed were overwhelmingly Caucasian, mirroring the trend within the overall female population of 2006-2009. Only three of the women were minorities (with one woman identifying as African-American, one as Latina, and the last as American Indian). The majority of the women were living in some of the more economically disadvantaged suburbs of Boston at the time of arrest (with two-thirds of the women living in Chelsea, Lynn, or Revere). Although these communities are located within the City of Boston’s public transit system, and therefore offer an easy commute from one of the largest financial
centers on the east coast, these communities have annual median incomes at an average of $35,000, whereas Boston itself stands at almost $56,000.\textsuperscript{17} The remaining third was living in one of two cities south of Boston at the time of arrest: Brockton or New Bedford. These two cities are also well known for drug activity, crime, and lower than average socio-economic status when compared to the towns and cities that surround them. All of the women reported living conditions at the time of arrest that were replete with criminal associations, perhaps a pattern that is partially attributed to the communities in which the women were living.

With an average age of 31 (range = 22 to 56) the women had an average education level of some high school; only two of the women had graduated high school. Both of these women went on to complete some college-level credits, but neither graduated with any type of degree. In terms of employment, six of the women reported having a job at the time of incarceration that paid more than minimum wage, while the remainder had experience with employment in the service sector (i.e. wait/service, maid service, or fast food/convenience store chains) or had exclusively worked in illegitimate or illegal enterprises (i.e. drug sales, sex work, or other criminal activity as a means of economic support). Although these illegal or illicit sources of income provided important economic support in these women’s lives, ultimately they were not gainfully employed at the time of arrest. Additionally, the women had nearly ubiquitous experience with the welfare system either via food stamps or social security/disability wages. For many of the women the reality that they did not have a high degree of educational attainment combined with their limited or negligible employment experience resulted in reliance on official welfare support. Taken together these types of marginalization firmly placed the majority of the

\textsuperscript{17} Commonwealth of Massachusetts Annual Statistics, 2010.
women into a position of economic marginality, if not due to the monthly earnings they made legitimately but then certainly in terms of their future wage earning potential.

Concurrently, the women tended to rent as opposed to own housing, and had extensive experience with the federal and state Section 8 Housing Voucher Choice programs. Nonparticipation in home ownership limited access to the social status it confers for the women; social status that was already a limited commodity due their educational and vocational attainment. Furthermore, eight women reported that they had been homeless at the time of arrest. Of these eight women, five reported having experience with homelessness more than once over the past four years, a distinction made by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the federal government that indicates “chronic homelessness.” This distinction designates those individuals within the population who not only have experienced one instance of homelessness, but have also found themselves without housing multiple times in recent history. The women with experience with homelessness both in general and chronically reported utilizing various survival mechanisms while living in shelters or on the street. Most frequently the women reported engaging in criminal activities to survive, and most specifically reported selling drugs, providing sex for a monetary fee, and providing sex for drugs as the most frequent survival techniques.

When viewed as a system of marginalization, lack of educational attainment, lack of formal experience in gainful employment, lack of experience with home ownership but experience with renting, housing voucher programs, and homelessness combine to cumulatively disadvantage the female parolee population interviewed both economically and socially. Lack of ability to be economically solvent independently may force dependence on others, dependence on the government, or dependence on criminal activities for survival, and due to lack of
education or access to education there is little recourse for these women to increase their economic station. The result is a population characterized by low socio-economic status with high levels of experience with the blurred boundary between victim and criminal that the survival mechanisms used to combat that status invoke.

Two avenues through which traditional desistance and social bonding theories suggest that even disadvantaged women can gain social status is marriage. Though the women had extensive experience with motherhood (to be further explicated in the findings chapters), approximately one-fourth of the women (n=5) had ever been married, and of those women who had been married in the past, only one of them was currently married at the time of the interview, and she was not married to the fathers of any of her five children. Two of the women initially reported being married, but it was later determined that this was a within-relationship distinction each woman had entered with their partners, not a legally binding, official marriage in the traditional sense. Each of these women was in committed, long-term relationships that they conceptualized as “marriages,” but for various reasons were not legally married.

The “respectability” afforded to marriage in traditional conceptualizations of stake in conformity was not something the women had experienced throughout their lives, but this fact did not seem particularly troubling to the women themselves. Females who have criminal justice system involvement and who are characterized by low socio-economic status tend to maintain more traditional conceptualizations of gender roles and norms, in particular those relating to marriage and motherhood (Steffensmeier & Allan, 1990). In her research regarding the perception of the utility of marriage for low SES African-American women Edin (2000) found that due to work and eligibility requirements surrounding marriage for welfare benefits imposed by the Personal Responsibility and Work Reconciliation Act (1996), for females with children
(like the women interviewed) marriage actually decreases the benefits available to that woman in some states. Therefore marrying would have to represent a significant economic benefit to that woman first and foremost, and any social “respectability” benefits are secondary. These dynamics of the salience of marriage as a turning point for desistance simply did not apply to the women interviewed. The women overwhelmingly did not have experience with marriage, nor was it something they aspired to in the near future suggesting that it had not and would not play a salient role in the construction of desistance and reentry for this population. This overview of the sources and intersections of marginality in the lives of the women interviewed is provided as a baseline starting point for understanding the disadvantaged and marginalized position the women operated from. These marginalization sources taken on face value do not come close to explaining the intersectionality of disadvantage experienced by the women that served to constrain their choice in life pathway. In order to understand why the women adopted criminal behavior, and how those pathways shape experiences with incarceration and release, examining these sources of marginalization as they correlate to substance abuse and its intersectionality with abuse and trauma, the maintenance of relationships at significant personal cost, and motherhood.

Through questions asked in the interviews as well as the demographic section of the social support questionnaire, important information was gained regarding the ways in which the women have had life experiences depicted in pathways to crime research outside of those of economic marginalization discussed above: namely victimization, trauma, addiction, and mental health problems.

Victimization and trauma, though potentially related, were separated from one another both in close-ended questions in the social support questionnaire as well as in the way they were
discussed in interviews. When coding interviews any mention of being the target of physical or sexual violence was considered an instance of victimization. In addition, any reference to experience with controlling behavior either from a family member or a significant other. Three questions on the social support questionnaire asked respondents to report on their experience with these three types of victimization. Out of all twenty-two women interviewed, only three indicated that they had never experienced victimization in the form of physical or sexual violence, or controlling behavior. The remaining majority indicated that the most frequent source of physical violence was a romantic partner. Each woman also indicated that the physical victimizations they had experienced were not isolated incidents, but instead repeated violent victimizations, sometimes including fists or other hand-to-hand contact, while other times instruments used as weapons were included. Family members, on the other hand, most frequently perpetrated sexual violence against the women. Male family members perpetrated assaults with the most frequent perpetrator population being stepfathers; a result that was consistent with much of the research on sexual violence of children. Experiences with controlling behavior was conceptualized as a measure for psychological and emotional victimization, and all but five women interviewed (n=17) indicated or referenced experience with controlling behavior that encompassed (according the narratives of the women themselves) social isolation, economic control, controls on employment choices, forced criminal activity, restricted movement, and perhaps most powerfully, “just all aspects of life.” These types of victimization will be elaborated upon in the findings section, but it is important to mention there the pervasiveness of experiences of victimization among the women interviewed.

In conceptualizing trauma, in the social support questionnaire women were asked regarding their experiences witnessing physical and sexual violence, as well as their experiences
with the criminal justice system (previous probation, incarceration, and parole experience). Responses to these closed-ended questions revealed ubiquitous experiences with multiple instances of physical violence against others. Women indicated having witnessing anywhere from four to “over fifty” instances of physical violence. Sexual violence was not witnessed to anywhere near the frequency with which it was experienced by the women; in fact only one woman indicated having witnessed sexual violence being perpetrated upon another person, and it was in the context of her experience with prostitution. Not a single woman did not have previous experience with the criminal justice system at the probation, incarceration, or parole levels; indicating that a degree of trauma may have been incorporated into the lives of these women as a result of formal processing through the system. Discussion of these experiences in the words of the women and how they affect their reentry process will be elaborated upon in the findings sections.

There was significant evidence of a pervasive addiction-crime nexus in the interviews. Due to the focus of Transitional Housing Program facilities on recovery from substance abuse, it is no surprise that the women had extensive substance use histories. Every single woman indicated having a long-standing substance abuse problem with most frequent drugs of choice indicated as: methamphetamines, heroin, marijuana, alcohol, cocaine, crack, and illicit use of prescription drugs like oxycontin, oxycodone, and vicodin. In addition to significant histories of substance abuse, there was also evidence the struggle with addiction was a long standing. Women indicated histories with multiple visits to detox facilities, sober houses, Alcoholic Anonymous participation, and pervasive narratives regarding the desire to “get clean.”

Lastly, the pervasive nature of either self-diagnosed or formally diagnosed mental health conditions completed the induction of the women interviewed into the classic five-pronged
model of pathways to crime for females. When asked either in the interview format or in the questionnaire if “you think you have a mental health problem,” every single woman indicated in the positive. The follow-up question to this inquiry was “have you been formally diagnosed with this problem,” and the majority of the also indicated that this was the case (n=18). This may be an artifact related to their recent incarcerations where emotions or mental strain could have been heightened by the incarceration environment, but regardless the women indicated having experience with anxiety, depression, mood disorders, post-traumatic stress disorders, and even bi-polar disorder.

CONCLUSION

The demographic composition of the interview and subsequent questionnaire subgroup samples both mirrors that of the less encompassing MA Parole descriptive variables, and demonstrates that the participants typified what research has come to see as the pathways into crime for female offenders. This profile is an important place to start for the findings of this research, for it confirms that those experiences that the new theory of gendered reentry is based upon in terms of experiences that shape the negotiation of community reentry are in fact in place for this sample. Although the demographic data provided by MA Parole goes a long way toward confirming this status of the overall female parolee population in Massachusetts, the demographics of the interview sample confirm that not only were the females interviewed representative and comparable to the overall Parole population, their experiences are also representative of those reported in other feminist criminological inquiries into female experiences with crime.
CHAPTER EIGHT
THE GENDERED EXPERIENCE OF REENTRY PATHWAYS

The next three chapters discuss the findings of this research as they pertain to the three main research questions posed. This chapter examines findings from the qualitative sources of data (field observations, qualitative interviews, and social support questionnaire subgroup) pertaining to the first research question: how do females conceptualize successful reentry pathways? Three sub-questions, informed by theoretical expectations, helped to explore the dimensions of this line of research: (1) how do women define success in reentry? (2) Is success in reentry a gendered concept? If so, what are the ways in which success is specifically gendered? And (3) do women take certain shared, gendered pathways to successful reentry?

Qualitative data used to answer these questions offered substantive support to the theoretical propositions of gendered reentry; specifically that there are important gendered dynamics that female parolees negotiate in order to be successful in community that are unique to their gendered position in society. Female parolees, by no means a monolithic group with identical experiences with crime, incarceration, or parole, did provide evidence that success and failure in reentry are by no means dichotomous terms distinguishable based solely on official measures of reentry. For the women examined in this research, re-arrest and/or re-incarceration rarely entered into the calculus of achieving success. Instead, these women conceptualized success as being related to improving/repairing important relationships, becoming more economically and socially independent and responsible, and staying “clean;” or maintaining sobriety. Their narratives help us understand the concept of success as defined by women re-entering society.
Until now feminist criminological literature has focused on the concept of female pathways to crime; however there is evidence in the experience of negotiating community reentry by the women studied that there are specific pathways from crime for women as well. These pathways to reentry are threefold: economic demarginalization, reunification with significant others, and recovery from substance abuse. Just like their pathways to crime counterparts, these pathways to reentry are highly interdependent and influenced by experiences with victimization, trauma, and mental health diagnoses, logically connecting experiences with pathways to crime with reentry. It would be impossible to conceptualize reentry without examining previous experiences with entrée into crime, exposure to the criminal justice system (inclusive of incarceration experience), and previous attempts at reentry. Each of these experiences impacts the accessibility of success in reentry and will be examined for their impact on pathways to reentry. Using information gained from the preliminary interviews, life-history interviews, and the social support subgroup the first section of this chapter briefly presents the similarities in experiences with entrance into crime had by the interview sample, and then proceeds to discuss how these experiences determined the finite and gendered pathways to successful reentry available to the female parolees and how the women perceived success.

PATHWAYS TO CRIME: DETERMINANTS OF AVAILABLE PATHWAYS TO REENTRY

It would be impossible to grasp how female parolees conceptualize successful community reentry without first exploring the experiences that proceeded release from incarceration; namely entrance into criminal activity and incarceration. The qualitative interviews provided insights into the circumstances surrounding the women’s most recent instance of incarceration. This research makes an important theoretical link between pathways to
crime and pathways to reentry, and this section provides evidence gained from interviews with women in Transitional Housing Facilities that corroborates the experiences with those that have been observed in similar populations previously. The women experienced common pathways to crime that had direct effects on their experiences with negotiating incarceration and release and those pathways were specifically gendered. Every female who provided a life history interview could be categorized into at least one of the pathways to crime identified in the prevalent research on the topic: victimization, trauma, addiction, marginalization, and mental health issues. More frequently these pathways to crime intersected with one another to cumulatively and collectively limit legitimate opportunities for success and status for the women. Five major pathways to crime were identified by the women that contributed to these intersecting inequalities: marginalization, motherhood, abuse, trauma, and substance abuse.

**POLYVICTIMIZATION & SPIRALING MARGINALITY**

The concept of intersecting forms of victimization, or polyvictimization (DeHart, 2008), describes the cumulative impact of multiple forms of victimization over the life course that contributes significantly to the marginalization of women from mainstream or legitimate avenues of gaining status. Polyvictimization can result in consequences for mental health, physical health (including sexually transmitted diseases), suicidal ideations, addiction, psychosocial effects of depression, and behavior, especially in terms of acting out in aggression (2008:1365-1370). Experience with polyvictimization significantly diminishes women’s access to legitimate employment, education, and even some family institutions like marriage for such females, which can significantly increase the marginality of females who experience it. The interviewed women provided evidence to suggest that the pathways taken to crime were aptly characterized by
polyvictimization via the their experiences with multiple forms of social marginalization, 
substance abuse/addiction, early and/or frequent motherhood, abuse, and trauma.

*Spiraling Marginality: Life Pathways Constrained by the Limited Availability of Conventional Status*

The women interviewed reported social statuses in their lives prior to incarceration that were characterized by the cumulative impact of intersecting sources of marginality. Intersections of marginalization from (and limited access to) education, employment, housing, and marriage cumulatively disadvantaged the women, as they provided serious social-structural barriers to the attainment of conventional status, leaving the women to make life choices in the context of their marginalization. The women had an average education level of some high school (only two of the women had completed some college-level credits, but neither graduated). In terms of employment, six of the women reported having a job at the time of incarceration that paid more than minimum wage, while the remainder of the women had experience with employment in the service sector (i.e. waitservice, maid service, or fast food/convenience store chains) or had exclusively worked in illegitimate or illegal enterprises (i.e. drug sales, sex work, or other criminal activity as a means of economic support) they were not gainfully employed at the time of arrest. Additionally, the women had nearly ubiquitous experience with the welfare system either via food stamps or social security/disability wages. Catherine, a 24-year-old Hispanic woman living in transitional housing described her experience with the welfare system as follows:

“I used to work the system—of course I did! Everyone out there [the streets] knows how to work the system so that you can have money for drugs. I would get my check, make sure my kids had what they needed and then spend the rest on crack. And I am definitely not the only one out there working it that way. Its just the way it is. Your check is for drugs, not food.”
Her sentiment is one that was corroborated by her housemate Jane (27 years old, Caucasian) who discussed the shame she felt in having to rely on the welfare system for support:

“You know, I dropped out of school after a year of high school. I can’t get a great job, you know? Plus I had a rockin’ habit for so long…I just had to support myself somehow. I remember the first time I had to go on food stamps… I know it’s not like ‘okay’ to say this, but always thought that food stamps were for the Black kids or the Hispanic kids. But here I was, no job, no way to get a job and a huge crack habit. I was so embarrassed when I used them [food stamps] for the first time. But then I got used to it.”

For many of the women the reality that they did not have a high degree of educational attainment combined with their limited or negligible employment experience resulted in reliance on official welfare support. Taken together these types of marginalization firmly placed the majority of the women into a position of economic marginality, if not due to the monthly earnings they made legitimately but then certainly in terms of their future wage earning potential (Western & Pager, 2006).

Concurrently, the women tended to rent as opposed to own housing, and furthermore had extensive experience with the federal and state Section 8 Housing Voucher Choice program. Nonparticipation in home ownership and the social status it confers was a limited commodity for these women. Furthermore, at the time of release to parole eight of the ten women in the social support subgroup reported that they had been homeless at the time of their most recent arrest. Of these eight women, five reporting having experience with homelessness more than once over the past four years, a distinction made by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the federal government to indicate “chronic homelessness” and to designate those individuals within the population who not only have experienced one instance of homelessness, but find themselves without housing again and again. The women with experience with homelessness both in general and chronically reported utilizing various survival mechanisms while living in shelters or on the street. Most frequently the women reported engaging in criminal activities, and most specifically in selling drugs, providing sex for a monetary fee, and providing sex for drugs.
When viewed as a system of marginalization, lack of educational attainment, lack of formal experience in gainful employment, lack of experience with home ownership but experience with renting, housing voucher programs, and homelessness combine to cumulatively disadvantage the female parolee population economically as well as socially. Lack of ability to be economically solvent independently may force dependence on others, the government, or criminal activities for survival, and due to lack of education or access to education there is little recourse for these women to increase their economic station. The result is population characterized by low socio-economic status with high levels of experience with the blurred boundary between victim and criminal that the survival mechanisms used to combat that status invoke.

Two avenues through which traditional desistance and social bonding theories suggest that even disadvantaged women can gain social status is marriage. Though the women had extensive experience with motherhood (to be further explicated later in the chapter), only one-fourth of them (n=5) had ever been married, and of those women who had been married in the past, only one of them was currently married at the time of the interview and she was not married to the father of any of her five children. The “respectability” afforded to marriage in traditional conceptualizations of stake in conformity was not something the women had experienced throughout their lives, but this fact did not seem particularly troubling to the women themselves. Females who have criminal justice system involvement and who are characterized by low socio-economic status tend to maintain more traditional conceptualizations of gender roles and norms, in particular those relating to marriage and motherhood (Steffensmeier, 1990). In her research regarding the perception of the utility of marriage for low SES African-American women Edin (2000) found that due to work and eligibility requirements surrounding marriage for welfare benefits imposed by the Personal Responsibility and Work Reconciliation Act (1996), for
females with children marriage actually decreases the benefits available to that woman in some states. Therefore marrying would have to represent a significant *economic* benefit to that woman first and foremost, and any social “respectability” benefits are secondary. Throughout multiple interviews Paloma had frequently referred to her husband as an important source of love and support in her life. It was not until the third, one-hour interview that she revealed the following about their “marriage”:

Paloma: “Well, I call him my husband, but he’s not really.”
Researcher: “Wait, what do you mean, he’s not really your husband? Correct me if I am wrong, but you told me you’re married.”
Paloma [laughing]: Yeah, no, you’re not wrong. I tell people that we are married because to us we are, you know? I mean, we never went to city hall or anything. But we have the kids and we love each other. I guess we don’t see the point.”

Paloma went on to describe that she receives better welfare benefits as a result of not entering into marriage with her “husband,” and that she saw his value more in terms of his role as “daddy” to her children than as her legal husband. Like Paloma, Judy had been with her romantic partner off and on throughout the years. They also had multiple children together; however the similarities between their perspectives on marriage ended there. Judy saw her relationship as dangerous:

“Oh, he is always wanting to get married. Says that he loves me and that we are better together and all of that. But he does drugs, and I do drugs, and when we get together we are bad for each other. He is the father of my children so I will always love him, but what does marriage have to do with any of it. Oh, there I go sounding like Tina Turner again! [laughing…then singing “What’s Love Got To Do With It]. But seriously. I will never marry him. I just don’t see the point.”

Further, Elizabeth discussed marriage for its disutility in achieving her reentry goals:

“I can barely have a healthy relationship with myself right now. I can’t even begin to think about something like marriage. That just seems so far off. Like, I have a lot to do before I would even consider being with someone, nevermind marrying them.”

As demonstrated by these examples and many more, the salience of marriage as a turning point for desistance simply did not apply to the interview sample. The women overwhelmingly did not
have experience with marriage, nor was it something they aspired to in the near future suggesting that it had not and would not play a salient role in the construction of desistance and reentry for this population.

This overview of the sources and intersections of marginality in the lives of the women is provided as a baseline starting point for understanding the disadvantaged and marginalized position the women operated from. These marginalization sources taken on face value do not come close to explaining the intersectionality of disadvantage experienced by this sample that served to constrain their choice in life pathway. In order to understand why the women adopted criminal behavior, and how those pathways shape experiences with incarceration and release, examining these sources of marginalization as they correlate to substance abuse and its intersectionality with abuse and trauma, the maintenance of relationships at significant personal cost, and motherhood.

**SUBSTANCE ABUSE**

The interviews indicated that the circumstances leading up to the incarceration as well as the incarcerating offenses of the women therein were dominated by what has been termed the “addiction-crime nexus” (Chesney-Lind, 1997). Addiction to illicit substances as well as alcohol can yield criminal arrests or serve as the impetus for the commission of criminal behaviors to support said addiction. Perhaps then not surprisingly, when examining the pre-incarceration experiences of the women the intersectionality of substance use and abuse with social and economic marginalization served to explicate pathways to crime and criminality for many of the women. The relationship between substance abuse and crime was also strengthened by the drug-related dynamics of the women’s social networks. The social support networks of the women were predominantly enumerated by family members, close friends, or romantic partners who also
suffered from substance abuse addiction and/or were involved in the local drug culture via sales and distribution.

Substance abuse operated across three dynamics: entrée into substance use, substance abuse as a coping mechanism to neutralize co-existing abuse and trauma experiences, and reasons for continued substance abuse despite previous attempts at recovery/sobriety (refer to Figure 9.1 for a concept map of the intersectionality of these dynamics). These dynamics of substance abuse taken together created a cycle of marginality characterized by addiction that effectively placed the women at an extreme level of social, economic, and status disadvantage prior to incarceration.

Entrée into Substance Abuse

Three avenues for entrée into substance use and abuse were prevalent for the female parolees: introduction to drugs via the concurrent use of a romantic partner, use as an extension of the drug use/drug culture engaged in by families of origin, and/or substance use as a coping mechanism for addressing feelings derived from trauma and abuse. These modes of entrée into substance abuse were not mutually exclusive; many of the women began using and abusing substance due to some combination of these three modes. The intersectionality of even the mode of entrance into substance use belies the complex nature of the role it played in constructing the pathways to crime embarked upon by the women. Take for example the experience of Jane that epitomizes this intersectionality:

“He was older than me. Things were good—we were seeing each other for a while and then he broke it off with me and that was when I found out I was pregnant with my first daughter. And I wasn’t even going to tell him, you know? I was just going to have the baby and all of that. I had had two abortions before that, so you know. But I did tell him, I said, ‘I don’t want you back or anything because of the baby.’ But we ended up back together and things were pretty good. If I remember correctly that was when he introduced me to crack. I never knew he was into drugs like that, he was a big crack smoker. I remember one night I came home and I was like, ‘What’s that?’ because I had never saw [sic] it before. I had heard what it was because my cousin used to smoke it. He was like, ‘Here, try it!’ and I was like, ‘Okay!’ so then I really liked it and I got really hooked.
Jane was introduced to crack by the father of her first child; a man she would never subsequently marry. Prior to having his child she had not known that he was a frequent crack smoker, and after gaining such knowledge she was faced with the choice of joining in with the use of a man with whom she has a child and romantic relationship or making a statement against the actions of that person. Given the constraints within her decision had to be made, she chose to take up the drug habit.

Figure 9.1: The Intersectionality of Substance Abuse

She was not alone in terms of her entrée into substance abuse; many of the women reported that their first instances of trying drugs were with romantic partners. Furthermore, the substance abuse of romantic partners was often the impetus for the women to continue or even increase the frequency of their own use. Judy, a 35-year-old African-American woman’s entrée into drug use followed this pattern:
"I met a guy when I was like 17. He was my first love. He smoked pot and drank a lot. Being around that… it [the drug use] progressed for me and it just got worse and worse. [Did you join in because he was using?] Yeah, I mean I was just around it all the time. His friends were real big partiers. They were doing stuff all the time. Then I got into Oxy’s and Perc’s but I wasn’t into heroin yet then. I did start doing coke, but I wasn’t free-basing yet then.

Judy’s initial decision to start doing drugs came from the use of her romantic partner, and her continued use took off from there. Often the initial use of a substance was related to the drug sales activities of a romantic partner like in the case of Sarah, a 22-year-old Caucasian woman:

“I was like sixteen at the time and I met this kid at a pool hall. For real I did. I know that sounds so cheesy [laughing]. I thought he was really cute and sold weed. He had me try weed for the first time then and didn’t make me pay for it. We started dating and we ended up moving in together. I started coke at that time too. You know, we were living together and he sold weed…like a lot of weed…and the other drugs were just like around.”

Despite the prevalence of the mode of entrée into drug use via the concurrent use or distribution business of a significant other, many of the women also reported having been raised in family environments where drug use, distribution, and overt presence were the norm. Stacy (28-year-old Caucasian living in transitional housing) had an upbringing that was characterized by the overt drug use of her mother:

“She smoked coke and she did a lot of drugs. She was just kind of a mess, you know? Like she had some mental health issues but she was a coke head essentially. My dad was always trying to save her. She would eat a lot of pills and then she would use the coke you know, like before I was little, even before I was taught like what drugs was [sic], I knew what they were because I had seen my mother—like I had seen her with pipes and stuff my whole life.”

The proximity of drugs and the substance use of parents like in the above description was a theme that frequently emerged suggesting the presence of an intergenerational effect of drug use. Paloma’s experience epitomized this effect. She was a 35-year-old Hispanic woman whose whole family was engaged in drug use up and to the point of incarceration for nearly the whole family at once:
“I was never into pills or anything like that. I would smoke marijuana and crack. But my sisters—I have one sister who is a heroin addict and another that does cocaine. I’ve just never touched that stuff. It was a never-ending cycle with us until I was about sixteen. I was living with my mom and my sister lived above us and my aunt below us, you know like in a triple-decker. We lived the street life—the fast life. Hanging out, going to parties, fighting, carrying on with my family. Then we all went to jail from 1989-2003… [Your whole family was incarcerated at the same time?] Yeah, there was a drug raid. They said my mother was moving big heroin. She was.”

Although the example of Paloma’s life is extreme, there were a myriad of one-sentence indications throughout the interviews that the family upbringings of the females were characterized by early and frequent exposure to drugs and a drug culture:

“My dad drank a lot. He almost always had a beer in his hand if he was home.” - Stacy, age 28

“My parents were like your typical townies. I mean my step-dad too. He was Charlestown Townie, you know like robbing banks and everything. He was pretty heavy into cocaine.” – Alexis, age 40

“It was really normal for me to see my mother with a crack pipe and for there to be other people around in the house smoking too.” – Tracy, age 29

“I mean, I don’t remember there being drugs in my house but I definitely knew where to get some and where to get some quick.” Elizabeth, age 29

The omnipresence of a drug culture and the substance use of significant others initiated the substance use of a majority of the females; however often concurrent to these modes of entrée was the use of drugs and alcohol as a coping mechanism to process victimization, trauma, and/or stress.

*Substance Abuse as a Coping Mechanism*

The prevalence and ubiquity of drugs and a drug culture in the upbringing of the women had an impact in the decisions that some of the women made to use substance abuse as a coping mechanism for neutralizing the emotional impact of traumatic events and/or abuse in their early years. Women experienced death of family members, incarceration of family members, major personal accidents, sexual abuse, abandonment by parents and significant others, acts of physical violence perpetrated against others and themselves, reproductive trauma (i.e. abortions,
miscarriages), and many types of emotional abuse in their lives prior to incarceration. In many of their discourses regarding what life was like when they first began to commit crime the women pointed to an instance of abuse or trauma that was the impetus to their initial drug use, and even more likely, the acceleration of their drug use and related criminal behaviors. For Jackie, a 37-year-old Caucasian woman, drug use was the way she coped with both a serious personal injury sustained in a car accident and the self-esteem deficit she experienced due to injuries to her face:

“I was being bullied pretty badly. Girls were calling me ‘Scarface’ and like on top of having been in the hospital for six months and having twelve plastic surgeries, I mean it was just more than I could take. So I worked my way up the chain from fighting into running around with the wrong crowds and getting involved to drinking to smoking weed to smoking crack. My brother was out there running [on a drug binge] at the time too so like I knew I could go to him to get high. It was a cycle for me. I used drugs to not have to feel what I was feeling.”

Many of the women echoed her sentiment regarding using drugs as a way to dull the feelings associated with abuse or trauma. Paloma experienced a brutal stranger rape while working on the street as a prostitute and explained the role that drug use played in “allowing” her to continue working in sex for money transactions after that incident:

“You know I have had a rough life because of my drugging but at the same time I needed it in order to work in prostitution…it was real bad. I was raped at gunpoint by a guy who picked me up in his car. He brought me to Savin Hill Cemetery and raped me the whole time with his gun in my face. After that I needed the drugs more than because of my addiction, you know? I needed them to forget about that and I needed them so that still be a prostitute because I could only have those men touching me if I was high. But that was my choice then, you know?”

Paloma’s story exposes many of the dynamics of the intersectionality of substance abuse and how it relates to the marginalized economic and social position the women came from. She was undereducated, underemployed, had been raised in a situation where her mother was a heroin dealer, and she turned to prostitution as a means to support herself, her children, and her drug habit, yet her drug habit was the coping mechanism that allowed her to neutralize her sexual trauma that came as a result of her occupation. Tragically, she was not alone in having a life
story that read similarly. Fiona, a 45-year-old Caucasian housemate of Paloma, reported on a rape she experienced:

‘I got raped when I was 25 and they murdered the guy who raped me. Notice I said ‘they;’ I will never [emphasis in original] say who did that for me. Never. Um, it was very bad, it was a very abusive rape [long pause…crying]. I got raped in Somerville when I went to go sell some serious cocaine to some people. I was doing major major deals back then. But um, I got raped and they tortured me real bad, but um fortunately I saw his face, the guy who raped me. I think when he left me there he thought I was dead. Unfortunately, I survived it. But um, that was the second time I was raped in my life. After that I started really getting high big time. I just didn’t want to deal with reality. Reality was just too fucking [sic] scary to deal with.’

This particularly emotional interview demonstrated the stark reality that the lives of many women were replete with instances of trauma and abuse. The women attempted to escape or neutralize this reality by utilizing substance abuse as a mechanism. These two brutal examples of rape are not uncharacteristic of experiences that many of the women faced. When the women participating in the social support subgroup were asked if they had ever witnessed physical violence, every single one of the women answered in the affirmative, and additionally that they had witnessed instances of physical violence more than one time. Further, eight of the ten women had been the target of physical violence, with the aggressor being a family member, romantic partner, or stranger. Even more dramatically, of those ten women six had additionally been the target of sexual violence by a friend, family member, or a stranger. Not all of the women were willing to detail experiences with abuse in the narrative interviews, but powerfully, all but two (n=20) of the women reporting being the target of some form of physical or sexual abuse, and if abuse is conceptualized as including psychological and emotional control in relationships, then the entirety of sample had been the targets of abuse. Combined with other types of trauma (emotional, due to personal loss, or reproductive), the prevalence of a drug-culture upbringing, and early introduction into substance use by romantic partners, the coping mechanisms available and seemingly normative utilized by the female parolees involved serious and prolonged substance abuse.
The intersectionality of the mode of entrance into substance use belies the complex nature of the role it played in constructing the pathways to crime embarked upon by the women.

Take for example the experience of Elizabeth, a 29-year-old Caucasian woman:

“He was older than me. Things were good—we were seeing each other for a while and then he broke it off with me and that was when I found out I was pregnant with my first daughter. And I wasn’t even going to tell him, you know? I was just going to have the baby and all of that. I had had two abortions before that, so you know. But I did tell him, I said, ‘I don’t want you back or anything because of the baby.’ But we ended up back together and things were pretty good. If I remember correctly that was when he introduced me to crack. I never knew he was into drugs like that, he was a big crack smoker. I remember one night I came home and I was like, ‘What’s that?’ because I had never saw [sic] it before. I had heard what it was because my cousin used to smoke it. He was like, ‘Here, try it!’ and I was like, ‘Okay!’ so then I really liked it and I got really hooked.”

Elizabeth recognized the crack use was due to the use of her cousin, the experience of two abortions prior to the birth of her first child, and the introduction to regular use by her significant other. Elizabeth subsequently developed a crack cocaine habit that would lead to a series of drug arrests and finally incarceration due to breaking and entering and larceny over $250 she engaged in to support her drug habit. In the face of reported events like those in this section and this one in particular that the role of substance abuse into the construction of pathways to crime for women is significant and significantly gendered would be a dramatic understatement.

**Intersection of Substance Abuse, Economic Marginalization & Criminal Justice System Involvement**

There were two main consequences for the females of entrée into substance abuse and utilization of those substances as a coping mechanism to neutralize experience with trauma or abuse: further social and economic marginalization due to frequent and early motherhood and criminal justice system involvement (refer back to Figure 9.1 for a conceptual map). The ubiquity of substance use is closely related to the noted position of social and economic marginality the women hailed from. The interaction of those types of marginality plus significant substance use produced experiences with both the criminal justice system and early/frequent motherhood unaccompanied by early /frequent marriage. Responses from women
in the social support subgroup provide standing for this interaction. All ten of the women were mothers, yet as previously mentioned they did not and were not married to the fathers of their children. Many of the women prophetically asserted in the context of reporting the extent of their past substance abuse and criminal involvement that they were “good mothers” and they took that role very seriously. The collateral consequences of a criminal conviction are well documented in criminological literature, but in the context of the spiraling marginalization of females those consequences were devastating and led to further utilization of substance abuse to cope with the trauma experienced due to the losses accrued as a result of criminal justice system experience. Loss as mothers, loss as citizens, and loss to relationships that these women could not afford to lose.

**MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS AT SIGNIFICANT PERSONAL COST**

Relational theory (Gilligan, 1977; Miller, 1976) suggests that females are socialized to prioritize the maintenance of relationships in their lives constructing an ethic of care (Gilligan, 1977); a social dynamic regarding cultivating the welfare of others above one’s own welfare. The ethic of care permeates female conceptualizations of success, happiness, and emotional well-being to the point where females will engage in self-deprecating, self-denying, and self-injurious behavior in order to maintain “good” or “strong” relationships with others. The implication of the inverse of relational theory is then that females experience depression, self-doubt, guilt, shame, and feelings of failure when the relationships in their lives that they prioritize and assign value to are weak, failing or non-existent. The women demonstrated a high degree of fidelity to the ethic of care and its co-existing effects on self-depreciation in two very distinct ways: through their maintenance of romantic relationships with abusive partners and with their children. Both of these types of relationships had a detrimental effect on the mental and
emotional health of the women to point where the cost of maintaining these relationships resulted in an emotional marginalization that interacted with the more social-structural.

Findings from the life history interviews were integrated with results of the social support survey questions regarding Silencing the Self (Jack & Dill, 1992) to conceptualize the relational theory dynamics of female pathways to crime.

**Maintenance of Romantic Relationships with Abusive Partners**

The Silencing the Self Scale (Jack & Dill, 1992) and the four subscales therein are designed to examine the cognitive schemas about how “to create and maintain safe intimate relationships lead women to silence certain feelings thoughts and actions” and that the resulting “self-silencing causes a fall of self-esteem and a loss of self” (1992:98). Therefore the effort necessary to forge and maintain intimate relationships, can result in self-negation in order for the woman to “bring herself into line with schemas that direct” traditional feminine social behavior (1992:98). The four subscales within the overall scale reflect the following dynamics of self-silencing behavior, and were used as a structure to guide inquiry into the assessments of social support held by the women in a medium other than interview narrative.

- **Externalized Self-Perception**, or judging oneself by external standards (6 item scale)
  - Question 6: I tend to judge myself by how I think other people see me.

- **Care as Self-Sacrifice**, or securing attachments by putting the needs of others before the self (9 item scale)
  - Question 3: Caring means putting the other person’s needs in front of my own
  - Question 4: Considering my needs to be as important as those of the people I love is selfish

- **Silencing the Self**, or inhibiting one’s self-expression and action to avoid conflict and the possible loss of relationship (9 item scale)
  - Question 2: I don’t speak my feelings in an intimate relationship when I know they will cause a disagreement
  - Question 8: When my partner’s needs and feelings conflict with my own, I always state mine clearly (reverse coded)

- **The Divided Self**, or the experience of presenting an outer compliant self to love up to feminine role imperatives while the inner self grows angry and hostile (7 item scale)
  - Question 5: I find it is harder to be myself when I am in a relationship than when I am on my own.
  - Question 6: Often I look happy enough on the outside, but on the inside I feel angry and rebellious.
Externalized self-perception was discussed by the women in terms of the interaction between the actions of significant others who made them feel as if they were worthless and could not do anything on their own, and feelings of inadequacy in terms of not having accomplished traditional types status in their lives to date. This dual attack on the self-esteem of the women resulted in feelings of worthlessness and diminished self-efficacy. Diana, a 39-year-old Hispanic woman, discussed how the ways in which her boyfriend used to control her had a significant effect on her self-perception:

“I mean I used to have friends and a network and like a good job but he totally derailed all of that. He started to want to have control over my finances and my opinions no longer mattered and he would make decisions regarding himself and what he wanted. I didn’t matter at all and he was quick to tell me that. Our relationship was falling apart and he didn’t care, but he was in the driver’s seat, you know? Like he took control of everything because he thought I was bad at it…but he was bad at it…but I couldn’t tell him that. I actually started to believe him too. I didn’t want to lose him.”

The controlling behavior of her significant other forced her to begin to believe that she was not adept at handling their finances, and she was willing to go along with that assessment of her abilities to maintain the relationship and stay with her boyfriend.

For females who were in physically abusive relationships with significant others, they reported the abuse to have significant effect on their self-perception and self-concept. Fiona, who previously recounted her brutal rape, described years of abuse at the hands of the father of one of her sons wondered why she endured the abuse for so many years:

“Its like something in our brains scrambles or something. I tried to leave him a couple of times but I always ended up back with him. I would always go back. Honestly, I don’t know why. I don’t know if it was that I thought I couldn’t get anyone better or that he was my kid’s father or what. But I do know that he beat me everyday for years. I do know that. He beat me for sex, he beat me for talking, he beat me for not talking. I would run away and he would find me. He would always find me. I think I eventually just gave up and stayed with him. It was easier than running away.”

“…I thought I couldn’t get anyone better” aptly characterizes the externalized self-perception cultivated in the women through the abuse of romantic partners and its intersection with the marginalized social positions the women were in. The pattern of the women staying in
emotionally, physically, and sexually abusive relationships was highly correlated with the feeling that they were so “inadequate” that there was no way “someone else would want them.” So the women tended to stay with men with whom they had children despite unhealthy or dangerous relationship dynamics in order to hold onto the status of being in a relationship with the father of their children. Feelings of inadequacy and of not living up to the standards of status for traditional society was discussed in terms of physical appearance (not skinny enough; not pretty enough), lack of education, inability to “keep a job,” in ability to stay sober, inability to maintain relationships with family. Due to diminished accessibility and availability of traditional avenues to status and success the women were perhaps more willing to adapt external conceptualizations of self transposed upon them by significant others.

Care as Self-Sacrifice and Silencing the Self went hand in hand for the women. They were willing to maintain relationships with significant others at any cost—especially costs to self-perception and personal safety. Some of the women acknowledged this behavior as “enabling,” but others were simply in love with these men who took advantage of them emotionally and financially:

“I lost my kids and I lost my life all in one day over that fricking guy. I should have left. I should have left so many times. I fucking [sic] enabled him and I allowed him to walk all over me for years. You know I thought that I could help him—if I was clean then I would be clean enough for both of us, you know? I could save him if I just tried hard enough. But all he ever did was tear me down. He fricking tore me down faster than I could have ever helped him. He took me down so hard…the things he did to me will never go away. I will never be the same because of him.”

Jackie’s experience aptly demonstrates the extremes to which the women were willing to go to sacrifice their health, sobriety, status as mothers, and clean criminal record to try to care for or “save” men they were in intimate relationships with. Women expressed confusion as to why they stayed with these men, but in the context of spiraling and cumulative systems of marginality curtailing avenues for success and status in their lives one type of marginalization of the time,
relationships, even if they are destructive represent one aspect of life women could still work within to maintain status. Being a “good girlfriend” or having a “boyfriend” afforded them status and a feeling of wantedness that they did not have elsewhere, and they were willing to go to extremes to maintain that status.

The women displayed a multitude of behaviors in their interactions with significant others prior to incarceration that indicated a high level of self-sacrificing and self-deprecating mental and behavioral processes. The women were willing to espouse external views of their worth as human beings that were a concert of the abusive and controlling behaviors of significant others and the cumulative effect of a marginalized social position. Additionally, the women continually fought through self-sacrifice to maintain the status garnered through being a “good girlfriend” by going to any lengths necessary to “save” their significant others. These behaviors and cognitions indicated support for the hypothesis that relational theory played a significant role in understanding the social priorities of the women as opposed to those dedicated to more autonomous processes. This baseline understanding of the critical importance the women placed on the maintenance of relationships, even at extreme personal cost helps enormously to conceptualize the central concepts in gendered reentry.

Although the similarities inherent to pathways criminally involved females take into criminal activity have been well documented in the past, it was necessary to explore the dynamics of the experienced had by *this sample* in particular in order to ensure a degree of generalizability to the overall “female” experience. This researcher does not wish to fall into a trap of universalism, assuming that simply because the population under study is comprised of female criminals that their experiences were aptly described by pathways to crime and relational theory observations made in the past. A theoretical link between pathways to crime and the
ways in which they constrain or dictate the available pathways to reentry for females in particular could not have been made had an exploration not been conducted into the experiences of the interviewed women. The resulting conclusions that this sample has indeed experienced intersecting inequalities resulting from experiences with trauma, victimization, addiction, economic marginalization, and mental health problems indicated that a correlation could potentially be forged suggesting that pathways to successful reentry are in fact dependent upon pathways to crime. The remainder of this chapter explores the subjective interpretation of reentry success provided by the women, and the ways in which this conceptualization is fundamentally linked to experiences with pathways to crime, with incarceration, and with release.

GENDERED PATHWAYS TO REENTRY: CONCEPTUALIZING SUCCESS

This research was fundamentally interested in the question of how females on parole would conceptualize reentry success, and hypothesized that success would be based on subjective interpretations of reentry rather than objective success markers (i.e. employment, education, or housing), that success would consist of more than MA Parole definitions of success and failure measured by recidivism outcomes, and that relationship maintenance, recovery from substance abuse, and economic demarginalization would be critical to pathways to reentry success. Interviews with the women as well as the social support subgroups provided evidence to support all three of these hypotheses, but in nuanced ways that were not anticipated prior to data collection. The constraining dynamics of pathways to crime had more of an effect than anticipated on dictating in what aspects of reentry the women found success available to them. Overall, the women conceptualized success in reentry in regard to the aspects of their reentry pathways that they could personally control: reunification with family/children, becoming less economically marginalized, and recovery from substance abuse. After life experiences prior to
incarceration that were driven by forces that were largely out of their own control, the women were anxious to “do this for themselves” which betrayed a level of agentic development of new life narratives previously observed in the work of Maruna (2001). Conversely, only the pathway to reentry of economic demarginalization contained references to traditional turning points to desistance/reentry identified in the social control desistance literature (i.e. employment, education, and marriage), and even this success pathway was conceptualized in a gendered context of the availability of available avenues to demarginalization. Markedly absent from the women’s conceptualization of success was any reference to Parole understandings of success and failure (largely based on recidivism outcomes). This orientation toward Parole will be discussed in the next chapter in detail; however it is interesting to note here that success in reentry was rarely predicated on formal notions of recidivism. Women negotiating community reentry and parole while living in transitional housing program facilities conceptualized success in reentry as reliant on three processes or pathways: reunification, economic demarginalization, and recovery.

**PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS: REUNIFICATION, DEMARGINALIZATION & RECOVERY**

The pathways out of crime and criminal justice system involvement for female parolees are just as gendered as their pathways in. Synthesizing the goals that the women had for reentry into three overarching themes demonstrates the impact that experiences with marginalization, substance abuse, and search for social status via the “good mother” role in female pathways to crime shape and drive their gendered campaign for success in reentry. Overcoming only one of the barriers to reentry of cumulative marginalization, subjugated social status, or serious substance addiction would be a difficult task to ask of anyone, and so for the female parolees addressing all three meant struggling every single day to try to attain these reentry success goals simultaneously. Success in gendered reentry pathways was conceptualized and experienced
through the three avenues depicted in Figure 9.2 below. Although success could be experienced in each of these areas singularly, the females tended to conceptualize them as interrelated pathways; similarly to the ways in which pathways to crime have been characterized as intersectionalist. Each of these pathways to reentry are discussed separately in the following sections, and then the importance of their intersections will be discussed.

**Reunification with Children: The Double-Edged Sword of the Good Mother Role**

“Being a mother, you know they say don’t worry because it just comes natural. It all came easy for me…easy as pie. I didn’t even mind the crying, the bathing. None of that. I guess motherhood is one of those human nature things. If you’re a woman you just know how to do it.” – Elizabeth, age 29

Motherhood is one traditional form of social status that women cannot be marginalized out of, and perhaps for this reason teaching parenting skills both within prisons and in reentry has become a focus in the reentry literature.

Figure 9.2: Gendered Reentry Goals for Females on Parole
Desistance theory from a psychological agency perspective (i.e. the work of Shadd Maruna and colleagues) indicates that scripts for change, or the agentic decisions and steps necessary to adopt new social roles and statuses, must be individually salient to the reentering offender. The role of parent is one that Maruna (2001) explored in his Liverpool sample of male returning offenders and found to particularly powerful as an impetus to the adoption of a new role and script for change with which to accomplish this new role, leading to successful desistance from crime. Although the role of “mother” was highly intrinsically salient for the females in this study, meaning the women attached significant meaning to the accomplishment of motherhood, attempts at being a “good mother” and fulfilling this subjective definition of what “good mothers” are like was a tight-wire rope walk fraught with opportunities for failure. Because being a “good mother” was fundamentally important to success, if an event occurred to tarnish that status in any way the progress that the female had made toward other reentry goals like recovery from substance abuse or economic demarginalization were in serious jeopardy. The role of “good mother” was the cornerstone to the construction of successful reentry; if that cornerstone was removed or damaged, then the whole reentry house around it would subsequently fall. Ranging from negative outcomes in custody deliberations to missed or rescheduled visits, any challenge to the positive accomplishment to the role of mother waged an assault on this pathway to successful reentry. Chloe, a 22-year-old Caucasian woman, had her parental rights terminated for her son during the observation period. She was twenty-two years old and had just finished a one-year prison sentence when she was admitted into the transitional housing program facility. On her way back from Family Court on the day her rights were terminated (due to her conviction, subsequent incarceration, and history of heroin addiction) she acquired some heroin and relapsed. Upon her arrival to the house she was visibly under the
influence, and staff administered a urine test that subsequently came back positive. Her Parole officer was notified and she was returned to custody. This woman’s most salient reentry goal had been to obtain at the very least temporary custody of her son. When that right was taken from her by the state, effectively ruling that she was unfit to be a mother, all of the progress she had made toward her other reentry goals disappeared, and she relapsed on her drug of choice. Her story was heart wrenching, but demonstrated in dramatic fashion how renegotiating motherhood in reentry is a tenuous and fragile process that is intricately woven into other pathways to successful reentry for women. In this case an assault to the good mother role resulted in relapse with substance abuse, and mandated a full instance of official reentry failure.

Although high degrees of personal self-worth were attached to being a “good mother,” from a programmatic perspective, placing too much emphasis on this pathway as the key to reentry success would be risky. In order to examine how females utilized adoption of the “good mother” role as a script for change to desist from crime, as well as the salience of the goal of reunification, this section will explicate how the women conceptualized the role of “good mother” and then what constituted success and failure in the pursuit of that goal.

The “Good Mother” Role

Often throughout the course of interviews the women would testify to their mothering skills “on the street” prior to incarceration as a way to stake their claim in the good mother role. They were emphatic in their need to assert their belonging in this distinction and often provided lengthy narratives as proof of this belonging. The women were very careful to make assertions regarding the ways in which they were good mothers despite prior substance abuse and criminal involvement. It was noted numerous times that participation in either of these activities, that in a normative sense can be considered “bad” mothering, did not preclude the women from
effectively raising their children. As such, one dimension of the good mother variable emerged as being related to protection. If the women were able shield their children from the substance abuse and criminal activity that was occurring around them, then that represented good mothering. One type of testimony to the protective dimension of the good mother role was the assertion that the women never used drugs nor had drugs around their children:

“I never let them see it once they were old enough. The drug dealer never came to my house, people never smoked in my house. I was the only one that was allowed to smoke in the house and I did it only when my kids were asleep or not home. No. That never happened.”- Stacy, age 29

This claim to forming a protective shield despite drug activity was a critical claim made by many of the women. There was a very big difference between using drugs in front of your children and making sure that it was “hidden” in order to be able to still derive positive identity meaning from the role of mother. Judy, who discussed selling drugs on a large scale for much of her criminal career asserted similar claim to the good mother role prior to reentry:

“I never brought drugs around them. That is one thing—they have never seen me high, you know? I thank God for that. I never went home high or intoxicated to the point where they would know, you know? If I was in real bad shape after a run I would go home and go straight to bed. I would sleep for like three or four days and shut myself in a room and detox myself so my kids wouldn’t see me like that. Then I would take a shower and they would see me and be like, “Mummy is up! Mummy is okay!” So they never saw me real bad, you know?”

There were many more examples that reiterated this theme of hiding substance abuse from children being evidence of the “good mother” role on the street, but even more powerful than this claim to being a good mother was the theme that giving up custody of one’s children to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) was the ultimate example of being a “bad mother” on the street. The women would go to great lengths to emphatically describe the ways in which they relied upon complicated temporary guardianship arrangements with various family members in order to avoid “putting kids in the system.” Becky became particularly agitated when she discussed her desire to keep DCF out of her life:
“After my first arrest DCF tried to tell me that I couldn’t be alone with my daughter, that I couldn’t live with my daughter. I was like, ‘No one is going to raise my daughter but me. I don’t care what judge, what social worker, God himself is not going to tell me that I can’t raise my own daughter. And that was what I did, you know?’"

Ensuring that DCF did not have custody of one’s children was worn like a badge of motherhood honor by many of the women. DCF was conceptualized as a worst-case scenario for the social status of good mother. Catherine even went on to describe how despite having lost custody of her first-born, she was going to be a “good mother” for her two subsequent children to “make it up to” her daughter:

“I lost custody of her. I was in the hospital for three months and after that she was put into the system. She is in foster care now. I have a son too. He is with his grandmother—his father’s mother. She has temporary custody but she never lets me see him. I am not going to do that to my youngest. I am going to make sure that keep custody of him. He is with my mother right now. His first birthday is next week. I’ll make it up to my daughter by being a good mother to my boys. It kills me that I couldn’t get it right for her, but I wasn’t ready.”

Although she was discussing the complex battles with custody and balancing that involvement with being a good mother, the woman above touched on one of the major themes the women discussed that juxtaposed their assertions about being good mothers on the street: the guilt they felt around abandoning their children either through substance abuse, incarceration, or both. This guilt served as the bridge that connected experiences with the role of “good mother” prior to incarceration with the process of reunification with children in reentry.

As a result of incarceration, whether it was a six-month sentence or a nineteen-year sentence, each of the women had been removed from her role as daily mother and caregiver from her children for some period of time directly prior to being interviewed for this research. Subsequently, the most salient reentry goal the women had was reunification with their children. For those who had not kept DCF from becoming involved in their cases, some no longer held parental rights to their children, and others were negotiating complex court hearings and custody battles in the desperate attempt to retain parental rights and/or custody. For the majority of the
women, reunification meant negotiating with family members regarding visitation, and more importantly renegotiating the “good mother” role despite ample evidence that they had in fact been “bad mothers” to their children. Not one of the women described an easy, stress-free relationship with her children during the interview period. Part of this was a function of the residential housing facilities they were living in at the time, but the physical separation was not what made the role of mother difficult for the women. They described the difficulty surrounding being a mother in emotional terms, demonstrating that success in reentry via reunification with children required confronting prior acts that contradicted the “good mother” role they were so desperate to espouse.

Confronting guilt over past “abandonment” of their children was described as the most difficult dimension of reunification with children. The women desperately wanted to show their children through their actions, and not just through words, that they were going to “be there” for them like they had not been in the past. The guilt the women harbored over abandoning their children represented a significant barrier to accomplishing success in the pathway of reunification. As Jane stated:

“I haven’t been there for a big part of their lives when they needed me, you know? I want to be there for them now and I want them to know that I am there for them. I just wasn’t the mom that they needed me to be for a really long time.”

Even more strikingly one of her housemates, Kate, a 32-year-old African-American woman, added:

“I can’t change all of the years that haven’t been there. I mean, my youngest daughter suffered the worst of all because she always thought that I was going to come back. I never did. I never went back for her. She was always waiting and I never went back for her. I abandoned her with my mother for her father and for drugs. I have some good sober time now but every time I talk to her she doesn’t believe that I will stay sober. I can’t really blame her I guess.”

These statements demonstrate how the interaction between the emotional salience of the good mother role and guilt over prior instances of self-assessed failure in that role represent the double-edged nature of motherhood as a pathway for reentry success. While commitment to a
new script for change (Maruna & Roy, 2007) rooted in good motherhood was critical, the reality that experiences in the past with frequent and early motherhood, substance use, and criminal involvement all present evidence in contradiction to the accomplishment of this role. Add in the complicated relationships with family members who may have temporary custody of the children, or lengthy battles with the Department of Children and Families, and the hurdles that must be scaled to accomplish this role are great indeed. Despite the challenges to success in reunification with children, the women prioritized it above all else when conceptualizing success in their negotiations of community reentry.

Economic Demarginalization: Accomplishment of an Independent Identity

The second dynamic of pathways to successful reentry was economic demarginalization. The descriptive statistics alone derived from this research provide evidence demonstrating the depth and breadth of the economic marginalization experienced by the women interviewed, and by the female parole population of Massachusetts as a whole. The women were undereducated, had little to no employment history in legitimate employment, and any experience with work tended to be in the service or manufacturing sectors. Limited access to both education and legitimate employment led to economic dependency on significant others, illegitimate sources of income, and/or public assistance programs. The intersection of these forms of economic marginality were compounded by a lack of civic engagement, increased likelihood of renting rather than owning property, and a general lack of ownership of any forms of personal property (i.e. automobiles, land, etc.). After a lifetime of systematic marginalization the women conceptualized success in reentry as forging an independent identity that was related to dimensions of economic demarginalization. Specifically, the women saw a pathway to reentry success in overcoming sources of marginality that had constrained their choice in the past. They
discussed improving upon their levels of education in order to become gainfully employed, engaging civically, and more subjectively, to be economically independent, whereas previously they saw themselves as dependent. These elements of economic demarginalization seem as though they go hand-in-hand with previous investigations into the objective turning points in the desistance and reentry process; however the intersection of social, gender, and economic marginalization introduced new structural elements to these understandings of the reentry process. These women were speaking in a language of “overcoming” akin to that used in social movements or struggles for rights by minority citizens. Theirs was not only a narrative regarding individualistic, objective turning points in reentry; it was more than that. On the pathway to reentry success via economic demarginalization these women were attempting to break what were sometimes generations-long trends in the marginalization of women in their families from having any sort of socio-economic independence. Through this process these women were finding power, identity, and independence often for the first time.

“Overcoming:” A Personal Empowerment Narrative Linked to Education, Employment & Housing

The women interviewed do the best job at describing what their lives were like at the time of their most recent incarcerations. They describe lives that were characterized by multiple sources of marginalization economically, sources that they describe as deterministic of the choices they made. Alexis, a 40-year-old Caucasian woman, described her orientation toward money in the context of her drug habit:

“Money. For me it was all about getting money, and like that was how I took care of myself. I used to get money and then I would spend it right on the drugs. I would give my sister what she needed to take care of my kids and then I would go and buy drugs. It was like I was putting myself aside but I thought that was how I was taking care of myself—living high, living large.”
Her narrative is a powerful one in that embedded in her discussion of endlessly searching for money is a willingness to sacrifice oneself in service of something or someone else. Samantha was dependent on her substance abuse, and therefore was marginalized economically from ever getting ahead with savings. She was even willing to sacrifice some of her claim to the “good mother” role in order to continue to support her addiction. In the same interview she conceded that the ways in which she was supporting her addiction were rarely legal:

Alexis: “I didn’t finish high school, so you know I had to do what I had to do to get those drugs… I was selling a little bit at the time but I was also doing some B&Es [breaking and entering]. I would actually break into other people’s houses and steal the things that they had worked for. Looking back it was pretty pathetic.”

Since Alexis did not finish high school, she could not achieve the type of job she desired, or the type of job that would support the costly drug habit she was supporting at the time. In addition to trying to provide for the needs of her children, due to her marginalized position she turned to illegal means to support herself. A decision that she found to be “pathetic.”

Diane’s narrative fused together three needs she had prior to incarceration: housing, money, and the welfare of her children:

“I had my three boys at the time and I was living in this building where the couple upstairs had three kids too. I sold to him so he let me live there as long as I sold him coke. His wife was a streetwalker and she was always in and out of the house. But I was selling major, major drugs back then. I would say it was to ‘keep the roof over our heads’ but, you know, I was just ripping and running and selling, selling, selling.”

Diane also had an education that culminated in one year of high school, had been pregnant early and often in her life, and was in and out of an abusive relationship with the father of her first two sons. Her survival mechanisms in the context of her marginalized position in society were to make money the only way she ever had: selling and trafficking in cocaine. She made attempts at securing income and housing for her children, but they occurred in the context of what she could manage given her abusive relationship and serious drug addiction. These two vignettes of what
life was like in terms of economic marginality for the women demonstrate that the construct of economic marginality is a complicated one. At a structural level it is related to the overall position of females in society compared to similarly situated males; however at the day-to-day reality level for the women, their socio-economic status, gender status, racial status, limited availability of pro-social or even simply non-abusive partners, addiction, and mental health status all played a role in placing these women in an extremely marginalized position. Overcoming this marginality structurally required both action toward the completion of objective goals and development and maintenance of a personal empowerment narrative.

*Action Toward Accomplishing Objective Demarginalization Goals*

The women conceptualized objective demarginalization goals similarly to how reentry and desistance has been conceptualized by “turning points” theorists since the 1990s. This finding would seemingly contrast to the hypothesis that the women would conceptualize success more subjectively than simply in terms of housing, education, employment, and marriage; however the finding is more nuanced than to simply state that women saw a road to success paved by objective turning points. Evidence from the interviews supports the psychological agency perspective on desistance (Maruna, 2001) as critical to the conceptualization of demarginalization success. This research takes this perspective one step further to suggest that these agentic psychological processes are specifically gendered as they are intrinsically related to overcoming structural gender-based forms of marginalization.

The women identified education, employment, civic engagement, and “independence” as dimensions of the pathway to successful reentry through economic demarginalization. This notion of independence is a theme discussed by the women in several contexts, but overwhelmingly connected to a feeling best described as wanting to “stand on my own feet,” or
to be self-sufficient and not reliant on any other person for economic solubility. Contrary to many criminological studies of desistance and reentry, the “turning point” of marriage was not perceived as part of any pathway to success; in fact quite the opposite. Women had limited experience with the institution of marriage to begin with, having had more experience with adult cohabitation, and ultimately the women perceived marriage as flying in direct opposition to ideas of empowerment and independence. Notions of not being beholden to or controlled by any man were extremely salient for the women, and in fact an important dimension of economic demarginalization was the assertion that these women would never have to “depend” on any man ever again. Julie’s comments on the subject were particularly powerful:

“I want to be stable. I don’t want to be that person who messes up all the time. I don’t want to live off of my father’s money anymore. I don’t ever want to have to rely on a guy…ever! I don’t want to ever be like that ever again. I want to provide the roof over my head. I want to have stability. I want to have that emotionally, you know? I gotta be ready. I want things, I want stuff. I WANT them [emphasis in original]. I want them and I want to make them on my own. I’m tired of this nonsense.”

Other women discussed not being ready for relationships due to their desire to “just do me.”

Sarah stated the following:

“Look, there’s girls who want to come to this house just because of the guys. I’m not gonna say who, but like, yeah, it happens. And I’m like, first of all, how selfish are you? What you’re gonna get with this guy and then you’re gonna get both of you kicked out? Nah. I’m not into that. I’m here to do my own recovery and to do me. I have enough stuff to work through without adding some guy to the mix, and knowing me it would be some no good guy who would treat me like shit [sic] anyways. I’m sure someday I’ll want to be with someone, but like not anywheres in the near future. No way. I’m doing me.”

It was a rarity if women were to bring up the concept of relationships in any manner other than the one Sarah described above. Even the two women who were “married” at the time of the interviews, or as was later ascertained were not legally married but conceptually married, did not hail their marriages as a salient pathway toward successful reentry. Jasmine, one of these “married” women, discussed her relationship in the following terms:

“He is the father of my children and I love him. I have loved him for over ten years. But he and I both go back and forth with drug use. I will be clean, then he will be clean and sometimes we are clean together and other times we use together. I love him and he is everything to me, but I owe to myself to get this worked out this time. I need to be there for myself before I can be there for him.”
One dynamic of marriage that did not emerge from the interview data was Leverentz’s (2006) concept of the “love of a good man” as an impetus for desistance from crime. The women did not report on loving, healthy relationships assisting them in their pathways to reentry. Perhaps the timing of the interviews in the first weeks and months post-release to the community can account for the lack of positive relationships contributing to success, but the fact that the women did not discuss having past experience with positive relationships and their bearing on reentry or recovery was telling in its marked absence.

Education and employment were hard to extricate from one another as critical steps in the pathway to successful reentry via economic demarginalization. As mentioned, the women were chronically undereducated and had little if any experience in the legitimate job market. Abigail’s statement epitomized this connection:

“I don’t care if it is a get-well job, you know? I just want to be employed so I can save money and feel like I am accomplishing something. You know, maybe once I get some sober time I can go back to school and try to get a better job, but one step at a time, you know? I want things for myself now. I want things that I was content to let go of when I was out there rippin’ and runnin’ [on the street doing drugs].”

Her willingness to have a “get-well job” was a sentiment shared nearly uniformly. The women acknowledged their own lack of qualifications to get the types of jobs that they dreamed of, typically described as jobs that “meant something,” and so were willing to get service or manufacturing jobs in order to become more economically solvent. Education was seen as the key to that next step toward better employment, and the women understood it to have a transformative power. The personal empowerment narrative was seen at its strongest when the women were discussing education:

“I don’t want to be making Italian subs my whole life. I mean, seriously. I make money and I am earning respect from my boss, but like, I want to do something that means something to me. If I could start with my GED then maybe I could get something else. I think I could. I work hard and I am a good employee. I just never took school seriously until now.”

Jane’s commentary was reiterated by Fiona, who said:
“When I got locked up I was already a manager at my old job. I was really good at it, but then I fucked [sic] it up all for my ex. I really messed up something that I had going for me that could have been really good. And now I have a felony fraud record, and who is going to hire me now? I figure as long as I do the right thing and go back to school someone will give me a shot. I just have to show them who I am.”

Jane was one of the two women who had completed high school. She had even gone on to take some college-level accounting courses. Here she demonstrates faith in the transformative power of education to the point where she hopes that more education could even overcome the stigma of a felony conviction on her record. Margaret’s discussion of education and her goals for bettering her future demonstrate the ways in which education and employment goals were intertwined for the women:

“My next steps are to start applying to Mass Rehab so that I can go back to school. That is a long-term goal for sure, but one that I am focused on. I have enough of an education that I can go and do it, but right now I am okay with my get-well job and with maybe moving up in that job. Is it my career? Maybe. Maybe not. Right now I don’t have too many long-term goals other than that one. I don’t want things to deter me from the immediate—from the right now.”

Literature on collateral consequences of felony convictions would tell Jane and Margaret that the likelihood they will be hired with a felony conviction are low, especially in this economic climate (Pager, 2007; Western, 2010). Additionally, that same literature would tell them that even if they were to get hired, their wage earning potential would be much lower than her non-felon counterparts as the jobs they will get will be lower-paying and lower in prestige. Despite never having read the criminological studies referenced above, the women were not naive to their disadvantaged position in the socio-economic climate. In fact, they conceptualized this significant barrier to success in terms of economic demarginalization as sizeable, but surmountable. Jessica, a 27-year-old Caucasian woman, discussed her job prospects despite a felony drug possession charge:

“Look, someone is either going to hire me or they’re not. I just have to be as persistent as possible. I am out there every day looking for work and putting myself out there and I will take whatever comes. Whatever comes [emphasis in original]. I know I can’t be picky right now. I just need a job so that I can start on the right track.”
Jessica was emphatic that her persistence could overcome her lack of desirability as a new hire.

Becky took Jessica’s perspective a step further:

“Any boss who isn’t going to hire me because I have record isn’t somebody I wanna work for anyway! I think that there are people out there who think that people deserve a chance. I’m tryin’ to make somethin’ of myself, you know? And I only wanna be around people who get that. I’m going to get a job. I know I will.”

Becky’s persistence and perspective paid off. At the time of her subsequent interview (one week later) she had been hired as a waitress in a local restaurant serving breakfast and lunch. When asked how the interview process had gone, she replied:

“I was honest with him—my new boss—I was like I’ve been to prison, I have a streetwalkin’ charge and a possession charge but that don’t mean that I’m not a good worker and that I’m not a good person. He was like, ‘show me that I can trust you and we won’t have a problem’ and I was like, ‘okay!’. ‘I’m so psyched!’

Becky demonstrated multiple dynamics of the power of economic demarginalization in her discussion of her new position. She felt empowered to go and find a “get well” job to help her on her way toward economic independence, and she also relied on the new narrative and role of employee to start her on a path toward reentry success. Despite significant barriers to the likelihood of her employment she persevered, was honest about her situation, and overcame adversity in the hiring process, all allowing her to structurally achieve an objective reentry goal, but also giving her an important boost of self-sufficiency and empowerment.

Although employment and education were significant objective reentry turning points for the women in working toward economic demarginalization, the goal of independent housing was held up as the gold standard of “making it” on the outside. Elizabeth’s comments regarding the salience having her own place had in signaling her independence were instructive regarding the depth to which women had previously never experienced independent living:

“I think that the day that I have my own apartment I will feel the most successful. I have never had my own place. I lived at my aunt’s for while and after that I lived in hotel rooms or on somebody’s couch. Having my own apartment is a huge goal for me. It is going to be a struggle, but I mean as long as I stay sober and keep working at it I than I can do it. Success will definitely be my own place.”
One of Elizabeth’s housemates Alexis held similar opinions regarding independent housing, but she discussed having previously relied on the support of significant others:

“When I got locked up I had been living with my boyfriend for a while, but right before I was arrested we got evicted so we were living on the street. It wasn’t the first time that had happened either. When we was out there runnin’ we were on the street most of the time. I never want to do that ever again. That was real bottom for me; living on the street. So yeah, for me having my own place that I can afford and that I pay for will really mean something.”

Alexis had life experience with homelessness that she never wanted to repeat, and so for her, success would be ensuring for herself that she would never be in that position ever again. In terms of their objective goals, independent housing was upheld by the women as the indicator of having arrived at success in reentry.

Education, employment, and housing were all objective goals that signaled to the women that they were achieving independence by overcoming sources of economic marginalization they had experienced or been subjected to in the past. Contrary to the hypothesis that women would conceptualize success subjectively and according to the maintenance of relationships, in this pathway to successful reentry via economic demarginalization, the women indicated that the traditional markers of success still remained salient. These objective markers are only part of the conceptualization of success, indicating that the construction of success in reentry in a modern, female context is a dynamic process different in important ways from the male process.

*Recovery From Substance Abuse: Survival & Overcoming Dependency*

“It seemed like if I could stay sober I really could do it all.” ~Tracy, age 29

The third pathway to successful reentry as discussed by the women was recovery from substance abuse. On the surface, this pathway might seem like simply a logical continuation of the pathway to crime of addiction; however for the women it was so much more than that. The role of good mother was described as the cornerstone of success for the women, but in reality even that pathway could not be accomplished unless the women remained clean and sober. For
these women substance abuse was a symptom of other sources of victimization, trauma, and mental health issues, and not the cause. Therefore inextricable from their pathway to success of course was desistance from substance abuse; however the process of taking that pathway was one wrought with challenges in overcoming the reasons for why substance abuse had played such a prevalent role in their lives up to that point. Here again, as found in the women’s conceptualization of personal empowerment in working toward economic demarginalization, a rhetoric of overcoming adversity and of resiliency and strength resulting from having come through life this far as a survivor emerged as salient to the accomplishment of success via recovery from substance abuse. The actual desistance from substance abuse logically is imperative to the accomplishment of this pathway, but for the women addressing the reasons for the substance abuse and developing new health coping mechanisms was essential to working toward success.

Here again themes of overcoming, of empowerment, and of resiliency demonstrated that for the women, success entailed a sense of independence. Independence for these women was not predicated on autonomy; the women did not seek success through independence so that they could be islands unto themselves. Demonstrating independence meant being responsible to have healthy relationships with others. Only after desisting from substance abuse, addressing the motives for that abuse, and developing new coping mechanisms did the women perceive that they would be successful in negotiating their reentry.

Salience of Substance Abuse: Recovery in the Context of AA/NA

Prior to their most recent incarceration, the lives of the women were inextricably linked to the maintenance of their substance abuse, typically to the detriment of all other aspects of those lives. Alexis resorted to criminal behavior to support her heroin habit:
“We were broke. We both had jobs and pretty good jobs, but I was asking my father for money all of the time because we had spent all of ours on heroin. That was when I started doing the b and e’s.” – Alexis, age 40

Paloma went from working independently as an exotic dancer to working for a drug-dealing pimp as a prostitute:

“I used to dance; exotic dancing, strip dancing. Then I went from strip dancing to working the streets to escort services…it was quick money, fast money, and that was all I was thinking about. Being under the influence was a key part of my prostitution…you know I just wanted the drugs.” – Paloma, age 39

Margaret involved herself in the local drug culture to ensure that she could have access to drugs at a high enough volume to support her habit:

“I wasn’t some kind of crack ho. I sold drugs and I did drugs, but I never had sex for drugs. I would never do that. I would sell enough drugs and know all of drug dealers so at the end of the night I could do enough coke to give myself seizures. I would make sure that would do that every time. Flopping around with my heart ready to explode, like that is just how bad it was.” – Margaret, age 26

Lastly, Kate would use cocaine when her children were in the house:

“At the end of the night if there was a lot of coke left over I would do it all. Always after my boys went to sleep though. I never did drugs around my boys. My house wasn’t some sort of crack den.” – Kate, age 27

Each of the women above was willing to sacrifice aspects of her life in different ways to sustain her drug habit in the days leading up to her arrest: the property of others, her body, her health, and the safety of her children. Although these four examples do not represent the full range of the dynamics of the substance abuse of those interviewed, they depict the pervasively rampant ramifications of substance abuse in the lives of the women. Substance use played a role in every single one of the lives of these women, and it is this ubiquity that made the pathway to reentry through recovery from substance abuse so potent for the women.

The fact that recovery from substance abuse was so imminently salient to the women may be attributable to the environment from which they were recruited for this study. All of the women were living in transitional housing program facilities that had at least a nominal focus on substance abuse recovery, and in the context of the Recovery House, an overt focus. In addition,
MA Parole mandates full desistance from substance abuse as a condition of release. Although these plausible rival explanations to the centrality of substance abuse as a pathway to successful reentry could challenge the validity of this pathway, data supporting the addiction to crime nexus for criminally involved females mitigates their threat. Specifically for the women interviewed, the ubiquity of the salience of this pathway could be due to the orientation of the house and Parole conditions, but regardless of that the women themselves reported on the dynamics and importance of this pathway for their reentry negotiations. As such, its salience cannot be understated.

The lexicon used by the women to discuss recovery betrayed the prevalence of a specific style of recovery that was accomplished; specifically, recovery occurred Alcoholics Anonymous/Narcotic Anonymous (AA/NA) context. AA/NA provided a rhetoric and lexicon to the process of recovery from substance abuse that served to support the women address their sobriety so that they may address the reasons why it existed in the first place. Sarah described AA in the following terms:

“They focus on making you get a sponsor and go through the steps and all of that stuff…do commitment work, speak at meetings, tell your story, help the newcomer, and all of that stuff. It really is the inspiration for my reentry. It makes me live day to day. Right now I don’t want to use. I’m still here [at the House]. I’m not going anywhere right now but I can’t tell you about tomorrow. I can only tell you about today.”

For Sarah and many of the other women, their accommodations in transitional housing and the tenets of AA/NA gave them a structure to apply to recovery. AA rhetoric is replete with references to recovery as a day-by-day process. Every AA meeting ends with a recognition of “clean time” or how many days or months attendees at the meeting have in abstention from drugs and/or alcohol. The last time chip that is given is always recognized as “the most important chip of all: clean and sober for 24 hours.” This emphasis on one day at a time, and the structure and support with which to do so was extremely salient for the women. They were not in this alone,
and more than that they had a community of people who understood what they were going through and were willing to support them. Especially in the context of sponsors, or AA community members willing to guide and help newcomers through the process, the women felt as if they finally had positive support in their lives:

“I’m dealing with positive people in the community. My meetings [AA] and my caseworkers are so positive for me right now. I’m building a network of my sponsor, my home group, and people here at the house who are all here for me. I have people here in Boston who are here for me, you know?”

Hannah’s comments above demonstrated that it is not only the structure of going to meetings that makes AA important to her recovery. She felt as if that for the first time in a long time, she did not have to “go it alone.” She had a support system that she could rely on for help and understanding should she need it. AA provided this critical form of tangible support for the women that helped them to stay in recovery and on that pathway to success.

One aspect of AA that resonated with the creation of a successful reentry pathway through recovery was the concept of a higher power. One of the twelve steps to sobriety in AA asks the recovering person to put their faith into a higher power; that there is some entity out there that has a plan. Even if that plan is invisible, it is there and as a recovering addict, one just has to have faith that that plan is there. The higher power has not given up on the recovering addict, so they should not give up either. For recovering addicts with and without incarceration experience, this concept resonates with their life experience. Faith in a higher power was referenced in nearly every interview with the women. Having faith in the idea that despite horrific experiences prior to incarceration, in incarceration, and even in release there is still some redemptive quality to the lives of these women provided them with a spiritual link to their recovery. For the women, “getting straight” with their higher power meant that they were truly serious about their recovery; whereby those who were not “serious” did not espouse this spiritual component to their recovery. Allison’s thoughts on this subject demonstrate this distinction well:
“A lot of people pretend to be spiritual just to fit in, but that isn’t recovery. That isn’t what having faith in a higher power is all about. A lot of people are just too interested in the he said she said to actually be interested in their recovery. I have been there. I have gone to meetings just to meet guys. But this time I really sat with myself and my higher power and I had never done anything like that before. This is a brand new experience and I can feel a happiness inside of me.”

This distinction between what it is to be serious in one’s recovery and just going to through the motions as a spiritual distinction was an unanticipated element of the pathway to successful reentry through recovery from substance abuse. Even more surprising was the observation that faith in a higher power allowed these women find acceptance for their actions in the past and find a way to move forward. Paloma’s comments about acceptance and progress were particularly poignant:

“Now I’m not scared to sit with myself, and think to myself, and be with myself. If God [her higher power] accepts me for who I am, then who am I to reject myself? My higher power will help me bring acceptance for what I have done. If He chooses it, He chooses it. It is not totally up to me.”

Faith in a higher power played a significant role for the women in the construction of successful recovery. As discussed above, what caused these women to become involved in substance abuse to begin with was not a simple equation, so consequently the pathway to successful recovery from that state was similarly complicated. Giving some of that complicated work over to a higher power allowed the women to focus on themselves; to focus on addressing the causes for their substance abuse and via that process gain a sense of empowerment through overcoming that addiction and through a sense of independence.

Addressing the reasons why they began using in the first place forced the women to accept those actions in the past and find a path to forgiveness of those actions in order to move forward with their reentry process. Faith in a higher power played a critical role in this process, but two additional themes, empowerment and independence were conceptualized as inherent to long-term success in recovery from substance abuse.
Empowerment & Independence: Recovering from the Intersection of Substance Abuse and its Causes

“I would get so many years clean but then go right back to the pattern. I was because I was getting clean for everybody else. But today I have been clean for nine months. I’m clean today because I want to be clean. I want it and I am focusing on my sobriety and doing things more and more for myself. I am trying to move forward so that I can know who I am without the drugs.” – Becky, age 28

“Before in the past when I was in recovery, I did it for everybody else. I never did it for myself. I did it because I had to do it. This time I have the passion to do it from my heart, from my soul, and I’m doing the work because I am motivated to do it for myself.” – Judy, age 32

The two women above made these nearly identical speeches regarding the motivations for their recovery. Inherent to these speeches and others just like them were the recurring themes of personal empowerment and independence. The women had experienced victimization, trauma, and struggled with mental health diagnoses that were both stand-alone as well as direct results of their trauma and victimization. For so many of them, they have never felt empowered to succeed at anything. Undereducated, underemployed, subjugated by controlling relationships, economic marginalization, and intersecting inequalities of gender and race, these women have had little if any opportunity outside of early and frequent motherhood to feel successful. Therefore the process of empowering themselves to face all of that, all of what had come before, and feelings of shame, guilt, and worthlessness attached to it was a process that carried the weight of all success goals put together. Seemingly, as the quote at the beginning of this section indicated, if the women could stay clean and sober then they truly could do it all.

Overcoming the sources of trauma and marginalization listed above entailed the creation and maintenance of new coping mechanisms outside of substance abuse. AA/NA structure and rhetoric went a long way in providing the women with the actions necessary to achieve success in recovery, but the mental and emotional orientations of self-empowerment and independence dominated the conceptualizations provided by the women for how they perceived success in recovery.
For many of the women, key to feelings of success was the accomplishment recovery “for themselves” as opposed to for any other person or reason. This was not a feeling connected to notions of autonomy in recovery, but instead it was connected to feelings of self-worth. The women were not attempting to achieve recovery independently, but instead for the first time saw themselves as worthy of a better life. For many of the women, including Tracy, who is quoted below, this attempt at recovery was not the first, but for some it was the first that had this new empowered orientation:

“I’ve tried to get clean for my kids, for my parents, for boyfriends, but I think until this time I never thought that I was worth getting clean for. I thought I was a piece of shit [sic]. I really did. I’m still working on that I guess. But I deserve better than what I was doin’.”

For some of the other women, recovery meant never having to be dependent upon another person for any reason. It meant empowering themselves through staying away from drugs and alcohol, like in Margaret’s situation reported below:

“I refuse to live like that anymore. I refuse to allow the heroin to force me to make bad decisions. I refuse to live on the street again. I refuse to give my body for heroin. I was out there rippin’ and runnin’ and I didn’t care what I did because alls [sic] I cared about was where I was gonna get my next fix. I put myself in some really effed up situations. Some really effed up situations. Sometimes I can’t believe that I am alive. But I am. I’m here. For some reason I am still here, so I probably should make the most of it. No more lying, no stealing, no more cheating. Its time to let that go. I want to be clean because if I’m clean, like emotionally clean, you know? Then I don’t have to ever do that stuff again.”

Overcoming the pull of addiction and becoming independently solvent was empowering in and of itself, as demonstrated by Margaret above. But for many of the women overcoming substance abuse meant confronting instances of trauma, of victimization, and of mental health problems for which they had been using substance abuse as a form of self-medication. The type of strength necessary to address the emotions those experiences produced for which the drugs were used as a numbing agent was impressive. The women recounted instances of trauma and victimization that resulted in stress, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder. When taken together as a
whole, the amount of loss, tragedy, abuse, and trauma experienced by the women interviewed was staggering. Just some of the examples were the following:

“I can’t really talk about it completely—I’m working on it in therapy—but my father sexually abused me every night starting when I was two years old until I was thirteen. I guess he wasn’t into people who can fight back. At least I got to confront him after I got out of federal prison and before he died.” – Chloe, age 22

“I got into a bad car accident when I was fourteen… I went through the windshield and got over 500 stitches on my face. They basically had to sew my face back on. I just went downhill after than… I was getting bullied… they called me Scarface… and so I started carrying weapons to protect myself and running with a bad crowd. That was when I started using.” – Paloma, age 38

“My mother was unstable. She had epilepsy and also some other mental things going on, so she was highly medicated plus she smoked coke. She was also really violent with me and my sister. She died when I was 13 right in front me. She had a fit on the beach and died. That was when I started drinking, having sex, and doing drugs. I just didn’t care.” – Stacy, age 28

“Right after I had my second child there was a raid on my family’s house and my whole family was incarcerated from 1989-2003. I was in DYS placement at the time because I wasn’t 18 yet.”

“The father of my kids is a boxer… so yeah I got beat up a lot. There was one time when he put me and the guy who tried to help me in the hospital. He had tracked me down at the women’s shelter and waited for me to come out so he could jump me on the sidewalk.” – Jane, age 27

“I was raped when I went to go sell drugs to some people. It was very violent… a really bad rape. I got tortured and raped really bad, and um, fortunately I saw the face of the guy who raped me. I think when he left he thought I was dead. He left of me for dead. Unfortunately I survived it [crying]… he didn’t though. Some boys went and murdered him for what he did to me. So I’m still processing that.” Fiona, age 40

These examples are only a few of the life events that served as the impetus or continued use of substances as coping mechanisms. Imagine the strength necessary to confront such events with a clear, substance free mind, and one can begin to grasp the sense of empowerment that would be derived from facing them head-on while also attempting to negotiate reunification with children/family and economic marginalization. The women conceptualized success on the pathway to reentry via recovery from substance abuse not only in the objective maintenance of sobriety, but through this critical dynamic of overcoming the sources of their initial and sustained use through personal empowerment and assertions of independence over the coping mechanism of substance abuse.
CONCLUSION:

The conceptualization of success in reentry provided by the women demonstrated support for the theoretical link between pathways to crime and pathways to successful reentry. Like women in other studies, the women interviewed had lives characterized by experiences with intersecting inequalities, trauma, victimization, substance abuse, mental health problems, and economic marginalization. It was important to explore whether or not the women shared these experiences to be able to explore the role they played in conceptualizing success in reentry from a gendered perspective. For these women, success in negotiating community reentry meant approaching that process along three pathways: reunification with children and attempting to fulfill the good mother role, working toward economic demarginalization, and accomplishing recovery from substance abuse. Important dynamics linking each of these pathways of narratives regarding overcoming adversity and personal empowerment are concepts similar to those contributed by the psychological agency perspective from desistance literature (Maruna, 2001) and from the resiliency literature from victimology and examinations of disadvantaged populations (Rumgay 2004). Important to note about this conceptualization provided by the women is that although each of the three pathways can provide a script for change with which to negotiate reentry, all three are highly interrelated. One instance of failure or perceived failure in any one of these co-occurring pathways can ultimately derail the entire process. As such, pathways to reentry are dependent not only upon the pathways the women took into crime, but also on their concurrent accomplishment if reentry success is to be a reality.
CHAPTER NINE
THE ROLE OF SOCIAL SUPPORT IN SUCCESSFUL PATHWAYS TO REENTRY

The previous chapter detailed how the women conceptualized success in terms of pathways to reentry. Although the themes and pathways enumerated accurately portray how the women individually perceived success subjectively, in reality each of the women was either helped or hindered by the relationships she maintained and the support services she received from the transitional housing system. This chapter addresses the question of what role social support plays in the negotiation of the reentry pathways as conceptualized by the women? Three sub-questions drove this line of inquiry: (1) how do women define social support in reentry? (2) How do women access and mobilize support in reentry? And (3) how important are perceptions of support to negotiating success in reentry? Exploring the women’s conceptualization of social support was the first step to understanding the role that it plays in negotiations of success. Once support was conceptualized, then explorations about perceived utility, sources, and the importance of different types of support (i.e. tangible, emotional, guidance, instrumental) were undertaken.

Findings suggest that women who perceived that they had large and accessible social networks had a more positive orientation toward their ability to be successful in accomplishing successful reentry. Unfortunately, large and accessible social networks were not the norm. Overwhelmingly, the social networks that the women had to rely upon were shallow and narrow, meaning they consisted of few people who would actually enact social support behaviors, and that those shallow networks did not contain a wealth of resources upon which to rely. Compounding this lack of resources was the high degree to which the people who comprised
these social networks tended to be negative assets, or people who in the past had encouraged or enabled past criminal or substance abuse behavior. Negative network resources also tended to be past romantic partners or former customers, most often Johns, who had vested interests in maintaining the women in subjugated, dependent positions. Transitional services from incarceration to the Transitional Housing Facility, both from official sources and from housemates in the housing program facilities themselves provided essential tangible and emotional social support that facilitated reentry success in the critical first 72 hours post-release.

Overall, the role of social support in the negotiation of success in reentry pathways cannot be understated. Despite powerful rhetoric surrounding empowerment, overcoming adversity, independence from substance abuse and/or negative influences in the conceptualization of success, this extremely marginalized population found themselves desperately in need of support in order to be successful. As indicated in the literature, perceptions about how much support was potentially available to the women was critical to their feelings of being supported in reentry; however the choices the women made regarding upon whom they should rely often had a great deal to do with their perceptions of whether or not they were achieving success as they conceptualized it.

This chapter proceeds through findings first from field observations, narrative interviews, and social support survey regarding the supports enacted for the women in their transitional process from incarceration to the housing facilities in the first 72 hours. Parole and the Housing Programs will be discussed in their more general roles in the next chapter; here their key supportive services roles are discussed.
Social support was defined as having immediate tangible needs fulfilled and connecting with family for both those tangible needs and emotional support in the reentry process. Clothing, money, toiletries, and cigarettes uniformly topped tangible needs list. Beyond these tangible needs, the most common desire females expressed was to connect with family as soon as possible. For many of the females this desire was an all-encompassing one; they wanted to call family, see family, and think about when they would get to see family. Perhaps understandably, the women wanted to reach out to their social networks to try to acquire these types of support: tangible and emotional. Due to prior attempts at recovery and/or reentry, as well as the overall diminished social capital inherent to the social networks women described, both tangible and emotional support could not always be relied upon from outside social networks. In fact, the observation made in previous investigations into the role of social support that perceptions of support were more important to feeling supported than actual enacted supportive behaviors was evident in the narratives of the women. Taking this observation one step further was the critical role the women saw the community of clients at the THP playing in perceptions of support. The camaraderie and sense of shared experience provided support where outside social networks failed. Overall, the women were devoted to maintaining narratives of empowerment, independence, and overcoming adversity, but in the same breath would admit that they “never could have made it without the House.” Here “the House” meant both the community of female clients as well as the tangible supports provided by the THP staff.

Transportation was a form of tangible support offered by the THP facilities that was viewed as invaluably supportive. Females entering into Transitional Housing Programs contracted by Parole are guaranteed transportation from the incarcerating facility to the THP site.
Not only does this service greatly reduce the anxiety levels of the returning females, but it also allows the THP staff to account for the safety, sobriety, and behavioral compliance of the females to Parole. For the women, knowing that THP staff was coming to the jail or prison to facilitate their release and transportation mitigated any efforts to mobilize transportation support in their social networks. Elizabeth stated:

“It was comforting knowing that the program was coming to pick me up and that I didn’t have to find my own transportation because, like for me, I am not from Boston and I don’t know my way around the city. It was a really big relief knowing that they were coming to get me because if they didn’t what was I going to do, walk the 45 minute drive down the Pike [the highway]?”

Though she joked about walking down one of Massachusetts’ major highways, Elizabeth’s comment is a poignant one. For many of the females, had THP staff not served as transportation then they would have had few resources to rely upon for safe transport. Fiona recalled feeling a similar sense of relief regarding transportation:

“I knew that I was going to be released that day, and knowing that they were going to meet me at the door was great. These two women from the house picked me up—and they were just hilarious goof balls so that put me at ease right away, you know, these two crack pots! But like they were there when they said they would be and they answered the four million questions I had about the house. They even stopped so I could get coffee and cigarettes. Yeah, that was pretty great.”

Fiona’s feeling of relief regarding guaranteed transportation was shared by many of the females, and it belied a larger theme regarding the tangible needs the females had upon release, and how those needs were met. Like all returning offenders, the chief tangible concerns of the women upon release were money, clothing, toiletry items, and although not a tangible need, making a connection with family members was also discussed as a top priority in the first few hours post-release. Discussing these tangible needs allowed for the researcher to gain an understanding of the enacted social support received during this critical time. Tangible needs were met by three distinct populations: close relations (family/friends/significant others), the client community and staff at the THP, or former clients/criminal connections. Overwhelmingly, immediate needs upon release were cigarettes, money, and clothing; always stated in that order. The ways in
which the females were supplied with these immediate needs correlated to the degree to which they had social support networks willing to deliver these tangible services. For many of the women, a family member, friend, or significant other would bring these critical items to the THP soon following her arrival. Grace, a 31-year old Caucasian woman, elaborated on why clothing can be a major concern for returning females in particular:

“The day that my husband showed up with my clothes and stuff it was nice. I just really needed my own clothes from home, you know? When I left jail I had the clothes I had from the canteen—you know my prison sweats—but those were the same clothes I had worn everyday for nine months. When I did finally get my clothes they were all too big! I lost a lot of weight in jail because I was actually like exercising. Most women gain a lot of weight in jail, but not me. Didn’t matter, my clothes still didn’t fit!”

The majority of the women did have necessities dropped off for them within the first few days of their arrival at the THP. In the intervening time, the female client community and the case management eased the transition greatly.

The focus on establishing one’s feminine sense of self or identity immediately post-incarceration was demonstrated in this focus on clothing (most notably undergarments) and toiletries. Leaving behind the prison-issued sweats and sneakers, putting on make-up, and wearing a bra that was even remotely close to the correct size gave the women their first feelings of self on the outside. This gift of self that was extended by other women living in the client communities represented a true understanding of shared experience; the women already living in the house knew what had made the difference for them in those first few hours, and they made sure that newly released women received the same treatment. Not only did the females in the THPs serve as critical sources of tangible support in terms of clothing and toiletries, but they served as important sources of emotional support in a shared experience/camaraderie way that tended to assuage some of the anxiety females experienced in their first 72 hours post-release.
Unfortunately, not all of the females had positive support networks they could rely on to supply them with the crucial tangible items they needed in their transition. For these women the client community and the donated items at the THP only go so far; they provide clothing, toiletries, housing, and transportation, but for some of the women these services still did not go far enough and they were forced to rely upon negative social support. Lindsay, a 28-year-old Caucasian woman, described her reality of not having anyone she could rely upon for support and what that forced her to have to do:

“I needed everything. I had no idea who I could even call to like come drop me off stuff. Seriously, I was like what dirty old man do I need to call to bring me some clothes or some money to buy clothes. That is most of our stories. I mean most people don’t want to say it, but like who was supporting your habit in the end? Some loser you didn’t want to be around; some scumbag. So yeah, I had some dirty old guy bringing me coffee and cigarettes all the time in those first few days. I needed clothes really badly. My family wasn’t going to send me money or things—they have done that so many times in the past—they just won’t anymore. Pretty much if I didn’t have some loser dude bring me stuff then who knows if I would have stayed here.”

Case management staff were very aware that the reliance on what they called “old behaviors” (above referenced as “some dirty old guy”) was a coping mechanism that many of the women fell back on to survive the transition from incarceration to release. The THPs attempted to provide as much tangible and emotional support as possible to eliminate the need for reliance on negative social support such as the above example, and additionally there were consequences for women who chose to rely on former johns for support (for example, revocation of passes in the community), but if women were determined to receive this type of support then they would.

One example of this dynamic of negative social support was observed at the Recovery House. A male “contact” of Lindsay was observed by the researcher and a case manager approaching one her on the sidewalk outside of the THP with a paper grocery bag and a large coffee. The case manager did not interrupt the interaction, but she did indicate to the researcher that the male was not “approved for visitation” for Lindsay; therefore when Lindsay attempted to bring the bag into the house the case manager intercepted it. The following conversation ensued:
CM: “What is in the bag?”
Lindsay: “Oh, you know, just some stuff that John dropped off for me.
CM: Who is John? Is he approved in your case file? Regardless of that, you know that visitation is Saturday and Sunday.”
Lindsay: “Please let me keep this stuff! I won’t call him ever again I promise! I just really needed some things.”

The case manager proceeded to check the contents of the bag and found: four packages of cigarettes, two brand-new pairs of jeans, three t-shirts, one hooded sweatshirt, a package of underwear, and three hundred dollars in cash. She did allow the client to keep the contents of the bag, but she proceeded to have a lengthy conversation with that client regarding why she was going against house rules and relying upon old negative contacts for support. Lindsay’s response was “I just don’t know why I do that. I just don’t have anyone else to turn to.” Despite the best efforts of the THPs to have as many transitional services in place as possible for the females, the pre-incarceration realities of their sources of tangible support had important consequences on the availability of support post-incarceration.

Disappointing for many of the women was the reality was that they would not get to see family as soon as they would have liked following release. THP rules allowed family to briefly drop off necessities during the week, but full two-hour visits were sanctioned for weekends only. If a female arrived at the THP on a Monday she could call family as many times as she pleased, but to see family could take longer. Coupled with the two-week orientation restriction to house confinement, the result was a long period of time before the women could see their families post-release. Additionally, it was not always possible or convenient for family members to visit the females at the THP. Margaret’s family consisted of her grandmother, and although she desperately wanted to reconnect with her, her grandmother’s health precluded them from a visit.

“I really want to see my grandmother but I just can’t get to her. She lives in East Boston and I want to see her so badly. I’m considering just up and leaving this place. The fact that she is so close but I just can’t get to her is terrible. I want her to be able to see me sober, you know? Who knows if she will ever get to see me clean.”
Blanket statements were often made about wanting to “see family above all else.” But within the context of family the females’ most salient reunification desire was to reconnect with children. All but two of the females interviewed were mothers, and therefore child reunification resounded as chief immediate desire for the females. Despite often complicated custody arrangements (children in the temporary guardianship of family members, significant others, or the state), when asked if there was anything beyond immediate tangible needs the women wanted or needed the women with children always listed reunification as their primary desire. Nancy, a 37-year-old woman who identified as Native American (but confessed that this was only in her orientation toward life) described the urgency she felt upon release to address getting her son back in her primary custody:

“I was an emotional wreck and all I could think about what that I had this court date coming up to try to get my son back, and like I didn’t know how I was going to get there or if anyone would go with me. All I wanted was my son back and I still don’t have him.”

Similarly, Phoebe, age 25 and Caucasian, discussed what it was like for her to want to see your children above all else but have to try to negotiate a complicated custody arrangement:

“All I wanted was to get out so that I could see my son for his first birthday. I have been locked up for most of his first year of life and like he is with his father’s mother and she is trying to plan his birthday and stuff. The father doesn’t think I should have the baby, but like he’s not even the one taking care of him, his mother is, you know? So now he wants to take me to court for a 51A and I’m like, what you wait for me to get out to try to take custody? Just like why now? All I want is to be a good mother to that kid.”

Phoebe’s dual concerns regarding wanting to see her infant son and the continual battle over custody placed reunification into the forefront of her transition concerns. Above all she wanted to have contact with him, and emotionally could not see past that issue of reunification to focus on other concepts central to her reentry transition. For the women whose custody situations were less contentious than the above two examples, arrangements for child visitation could still be complicated. Paloma expressed significant reluctance to bring her children to the THP for a visit:
“Why would I have them brought here? There are homeless dudes getting dinner who are high on who knows what and sometimes look pretty rough, there are bed bugs all over this place, and I just really don’t want them to see mommy like this, you know? I didn’t have them come visit me in jail and I sure as hell won’t have them come here. I will see them in a few weeks when I am off restriction and I can get a pass to go meet them somewhere. It has already been six months. I can wait another two weeks so that they can see me clean and in the fresh air somewhere safe. I haven’t been the best mother but I am better than that.”

Notwithstanding her deep-seeded desire to see her children after a six-month jail sentence, this mother was unwilling to expose them to the atmosphere of the Recovery House and therefore felt as if she was espousing a “good mother” role.

Reconnection with children was chief among immediate needs for the mothers in the house, and trumped visitation by any other person; even visits from significant others. The two women who were not mothers were more concerned with informing family members that they were safe and sound at the Transitional Housing Program facility. They shared the desire to connect with family with the women who were mothers; however without the added concern of reunification with children connection with family via phone was given primacy.

The impact of tangible needs and desires of the females in the first 72 hours post-release were mitigated by the support enacted on behalf of the females by the THP staff, family/friends/significant others, and the client communities in the THPs. Even in the context of this critical stage in the reentry process, the effect of negative social support on this process is evident in the transition process for some of the females. The processes of recovery and reentry that followed this crucial point demonstrate further the ways in which dynamics of the social lives of the women prior to incarceration play a crucial role in the capacity of the women to successfully negotiate parole, substance abuse recovery, and reintegration into the community.

Additionally, definitions of social support constructed within the critical first 72 hours post-release remained relatively constant throughout the reentry process. Support in reentry was defined as enacted tangible support in the form of everyday needs, and perceived emotional
support from existing shallow, but meaningful social networks comprised mostly of family but also some close friends.

**ACCESSING & MOBILIZING SUPPORT: LIMITED & NEGATIVE SOURCES**

Despite having many of their tangible and emotional needs met by the Transitional Housing Programs and initial connections with family and friends during the period immediately post-release, in the following six months spent living in the transitional housing programs negotiating reentry, recovery, and Parole the women had varying degrees and sources of outside social support. The sources and networks for support that they women had to rely upon were limited in terms of the amount of social capital they contained, and further these limited social networks were comprised of negative social supports that detracted from successful reentry progress as opposed to encouraging it. The initial period post-release was characterized by an overall sense of feeling supported tangibly and emotionally whereas when the reality of the difficulties inherent to the reentry process began to emerge, reliance on prior “bad behaviors” and more negative sources of support emerged as avenues through which perceptions of support could be increased. Relying on negative sources of support gave women feelings of support in reentry that they desperately sought, but this reliance also counteracted progress made toward personal empowerment and independence. Depletion of resources within positive social networks due to prior criminal, substance abuse, and incarceration experiences left the women three options: be self-supportive, rely on THP community and staff support, or turn to negative sources of social support. Self-support and self-reliance were inherent to success in reentry as defined by the women, and often overcoming the temptation to rely on easily accessible, yet negative sources of support signaled true progress toward independence and empowerment.
These two themes of depletion of positive resources and reliance on negative sources of support characterized the ways in which women felt supported in reentry.

Overall the social networks of the women lacked breadth and depth. Social networks were described as shallow; meaning that there were few people the women considered close friends who they could share worries or feelings with, rely on for transportation, rely on for money, or rely on for childcare. The largest number of people each woman felt she could rely on for these measures of emotional and tangible social support were few indeed, with the majority of women relying upon only one to three people for these types of support. Although the women felt as though their family and friends would probably enact supportive behavior on their behalf, the reality remained that the number of family and friends the women felt as though they can rely on was very small, forcing them to constantly approach the same family members or friends over and over for any type of support. Within the first hour of arriving in the house post-transport from the incarcerative facility the majority of women wanted to place a phone call to advise family that they were released and doing well. Tracy and Stacy did not wish to alert family that they had been released, and for both of them it was for the same reason: “I don’t want to call them until I know that I am going to be able to do this.” Both of these women had significant experience with detox facilities, recovery programs, and the criminal justice system. Stacy stated, “I have just put them through the ‘I’m out and I’m clean and doing well’ rig-a-ma-role too many times. If I can manage to stay clean and out of trouble then I will call them.” Although each of these women had parents who had supported them in the past, the tangible supports available from them had been depleted due to past over-reliance. The women accepted responsibility for depleting these resources, but this did not mitigate the fact that this depletion drastically reduced the amount of support available from outside networks. Becky, a 30 year-old
Caucasian woman, reflected on a similar theme of depleted familial support due to her past behaviors with heroin addiction:

“Before I went in this last time I was rippin’ and runnin’ for a long time. I had friends that I did drugs with, and drug dealers that I knew, but its not like any of them have anything they can give me. My parents have been through this a lot of times with me now, and like, they brought me some stuff when I first got here, but they are past the point of being willing to drop everything and help me out. I think they just don’t want to get their hopes up again.

Judy described having a similar depleted relationship with her support network:

“You know it wasn’t like when I was younger and I would get out and they [grandparents] would come and drop me off like a whole bureau’s worth of clothes, and money, and cigarettes. I mean after a while with them dropping that kind of cash on stuff and then I would just go use again and get locked up again, like they stopped putting up with it. So what do you do? You do what you gotta do. I don’t have a husband, boyfriend, significant other that is going to come bring me stuff, and like I have friends but I don’t want to ask them. They have their own lives and don’t want to run downtown to a friggin’ homeless shelter to bring me shit [sic]. No. I do what I have to do.”

Judy chose to be self-reliant in the face of depleted social support resources, but this drastically reduced her feeling of being supported. Her empowerment narrative emerged out of necessity, not choice. She did not have support to rely upon and therefore had to be self-reliance and self-supportive in reentry.

Social support literature suggests that regardless of the frequency or likelihood of actual enacted supportive behaviors, if an individual perceives that her social network would mobilize resources if she needed them, then that appraisal of her available sources of support if more important than actual enacted support. Feelings of belonging, respect, closeness, and the mutuality of these feelings are essential to perceptions of support, and overall the women did not report feeling supported in these ways by their shallow support networks. From their narratives, a few explanations for limited perceptions of support emerged and they were connected to two themes: depletion of social support resources due to prior attempts at recovery and/or reentry, and an overall sentiment of negative network orientation. Negative Network Orientation (Tosdorf, 1976) assesses the set of expectations that it is inadvisable, impossible, useless, or
potentially dangerous to draw on social network resources (1976: 413). Through the course of the life history interviews, the women indicated two main sources of negative or criminal social support left over from their lives pre-incarceration they relied upon in the negotiation of reentry: former criminal associates/customers and former romantic partners.

One goal of case management in the THPs was to encourage the women to stop “holding on to old bad behaviors with men.” What the case managers wanted to discourage was contact with former Johns met in the course of sex work or sex for favors transactions prior to incarceration. These Johns were meeting up with the women outside of the house while the women were out on their passes for the day and supplying them with money, clothing, cigarettes and other tangible necessities in exchange for sex acts. On one occasion during the observation period, case management at the Recovery House called a special meeting with the female community (that the researcher was able to observe) to address this behavior. At this meeting one of the women, Becky, spoke up in her own defense:

“What, that is the only person who came to see me in jail; the only person who brings me money and I am supposed to send him away? [Begins crying] What am I supposed to do after that, huh?! I have NO ONE [yelled].”

The case manager responded by holding this woman’s hand and telling her, “You have me. And I am going to make sure that you never have to rely on that man or any other to get what you need.” This event was both an extremely poignant and emotional demonstration of the desperation some of the women felt in their early reentry: they had limited sources of legitimate support, and were therefore forced to rely upon even former customers for basic necessities. This reliance on negative sources of support was an absolute last resort that devastated the campaigns for reentry success via empowerment identity narratives. Reliance on these “old behaviors” made the women feel like they were living right back on the street, where they were desperate and willing to do anything to survive. Although the negative support in the form of
prior Johns supplied much needed tangible support, it was a destructive form of emotional support capable of derailing progress made toward reentry success.

The other negative source of support the women relied upon when other sources of social support were either exhausted or non-existent was former romantic partners. Extensive attention has already been paid to the ways in which romantic partners served to foster pathways into crime for the women, and unfortunately they had an extensive effect on the pathways out as well. Reliance on former partners who were typically co-users of illicit substances, contributed to sources of trauma due to abuse and marginalization, and at the center of complicated custody arrangements for minor children for social support was a dangerous proposition for the women. Slipping into old patterns of behavior and old coping mechanisms was all-too-easy when these men were relied upon, and case management was constantly vigilant to try to ensure that the women were staying away from these negative sources of support. This vigilance stemmed from the knowledge that any connections to people or patterns of behavior that existed prior to incarceration could quickly translate into relapse into substance use or other forms of criminal behavior.

Feeling supported was a complicated process for women. Prior behaviors, depletion of positive supports, and the relative ease of relying on negative supports all limited the ways in which women perceived support in their networks. Further, mobilizing support from negative sources served to derail identity transformation processes critical to success in reentry, while self-reliance and self-support made important strides toward feelings of progress toward success.
PERCEIVED SUPPORT & NEGOTIATING SUCCESS:

Despite powerful rhetoric surrounding empowerment, overcoming adversity, independence from substance abuse and/or negative influences in the women’s conceptualization of success in reentry, this extremely marginalized population found themselves desperately in need of social support in order to be successful in the pathways of reunification with children, recovery from substance abuse, and economic demarginalization. Women were quick to discuss the ways in which they were “doing their own time” and “focusing on their reentry goals” as the basis for an empowered and independent lexicon of success in reentry, but their behaviors betrayed a desperate need to feel supported. This desperation was evident in their reliance on case management for emotional support, and the creation of community of support among female THP residents, A distinct lack of social support in personal networks, and transformative identity narratives only in the infancy stages left the women with a deficit in perceived social support that they purported not to need, but sought out at every turn. Reliance on case management for emotional support is explored next chapter in the context of the supportive role that parole services played in negotiating success, but examples of the support the women constructed for each other (discussed below) in their THP communities underscored the both the extreme deficits inherent to their outside networks, as well as the importance of feeling as though the other women shared and understood what they were going through. This reciprocal relationship of support between the women supported each individual tangibly and emotionally, but more than that it built systems of responsibility between them as well. The women were each other’s supports in negotiating success, and so the failure or relapse of one individual woman had consequences for the networks of all of the other women.
The ways in which the women met each other’s tangible needs in the first 72 hours post-release discussed above served as each woman’s introduction into the social support network of the housing community. There was a distinct “pay it forward” culture that maintained this mode of entrée. As Hannah, a 30-year-old Caucasian woman stated, she had nothing when she arrived in the house, but got by due to the support she received from the THP community:

“Gosh, yeah I needed clothes mostly. Bit I mean they also have a lot of stuff here for you that has either been donated or the other girls really help each other out. Its like a community wardrobe to a certain extent. Its like “who has some sneakers; I have some jeans!” You know, because we all come out of jail with like nothing, and most of the time we either have gained or lost weight in prison too so none of our own clothes would fit anyway. Nobody lets you go without here. I came here with two sweat outfits from jail and got what I needed—like one of the ladies even gave me a bra and underwear. There is a whole closet of donated toiletries, so things were okay.”

The sentiment above conveys the general sense of “we are in this together” that existed in the client communities at the THPs. Tangibly, the women shared both personal and donated clothing items with each other to create the communal closet referenced above, but more than that, they served as important emotional support systems for each other as well. The women were similarly situated, in that they had all been through the incarceration to THP transition process, and there was a sense of duty to ease that transition for new female community members. Tracy recalled feeling welcomed to the house by the other females in a positive way:

“I was so unbelievably nervous when I got here…I was like isolating myself and I must have looked like a scared bird or something because the girls here were like really welcoming and not letting me stay alone, you know? The girl I was bunking with was very welcoming and nice and everything and tried to like make me feel at home. You know, she helped me get my bed area all set and showed me where everything was on the floor and in the house and stuff.”

She went on to describe how she “paid it forward” to new women coming into the house:

“We all come in here with absolutely nothing. We are lucky that stores and people around the city donate things for us—there is that whole closet filled with hotel shampoos! I know what it meant to me to get out of jail scared shitless [sic] and come here and have this whole care package sitting on my bed waiting for me with shampoo and deodorant and razors, and clean sheets on the bed, and a whole bunch of girls who were like, we have been there too. Now I’ve been here for a little bit, and I don’t have much, but what I have I share with any new girl that comes in. Its just what we do.”
This notion of “its just what we do” was the cornerstone of the support system created by the women. None of them “had much” but they pooled together their limited tangible resources (and mobilized outside support like donated items) to meaningfully support one another in the transition to reentry. Being “in this together” meant that the women shared a lot of the support they received from the outside as well. If a woman received some tangible items from her network, she would almost always voluntarily share those resources. In one instance, Jessica, a 27 year-old Caucasian woman, received a package from her father right at lunchtime. She looked inside and then exclaimed to the table filled with women: “Oh my God you guys! Coffee is on me!” She then pulled the wad of cash that existed in the package among some clean underwear, books, cigarettes, a bus ticket home. All of the women exclaimed and shared in her excitement, for having a nice cup of coffee from the Dunkin’ Donuts down the street was a really big deal for a lot of the women who literally did not have the two dollars to spare. Although seemingly innocuous interaction was one of many like it that demonstrate this shared system of support, it was what Jessica did next that further explicated it. She leaned in to the woman next to her (who happened to be sitting in between Jessica and the researcher) and whispered, “Remind me when we get to the store and I can pay for your prescription.” The woman nodded and gave Jessica a hug. Clearly, the two of them had a previous conversation regarding the fact that the other woman, Janet, could not afford to pay for her prescription. Once Jessica had access to the money her father sent, she immediately disseminated it to the entire female community. This is just one example of how limited outside resources were used to elevate the level of support in the whole transitional housing community. Emotionally, the women engaged in a system of reciprocal support that was critical to negotiations of success.
At the Recovery House, where the focus was on encouraging recovery from substance abuse and developing healthy coping mechanisms, often case management conducted homogendered group therapy sessions. It was in these sessions that the women displayed the most reliance on one another for emotional social support. These findings connect this type of emotional social support to the ways in which women have been previously observed in therapeutic communities (Farrell, 2000) to need and support one another. This research takes those findings and places them in the context of negotiating success in gendered reentry.

Women supported each other to achieve success (often as defined along the gendered pathways of reunification with children, recovery from substance abuse, and economic demarginalization), but instances of “failure” or “relapse” experienced by one woman could have detrimental effects on the entire female community. The reciprocal nature of their system of support coincided with intertwined lives. Case management was acutely aware of the danger of shared failure, and used group therapy sessions as a way to combat it to varying degrees of success. In one of these women-only group therapy sessions, Tieesha, a 40 year-old African-American woman, had the floor and was emotionally describing her recent actions with her ex-husband. Through tears, she said the following:

“I have been deviating from my passes for the last couple of weeks. I just have to come clean to you all about it. I told my case manager this morning and now I know I have to tell you all. I said that I was going to SPAN [community-based employment readiness partner] but what I was really doing was meeting my ex-husband. He would pick me up in his car at the T station and then he would give me stuff as long as I had sex with him first. [Long pause with heavy sobs]. I know it is wrong in so many ways, but I love him. I love him and I wanted to feel something. But ya’ll, I’ve been lying to you and I’ve been lying to myself.”

Following this declaration there was a short silence and then another woman, Stacy offered this to Tieesha: “Just the fact that you aren’t keeping it a secret anymore means that he doesn’t get to have that power over you, Ti. It may feel like you have nothing, but now you have your pride.” Tieesha shook her head and exclaimed, “That’s the thing. I’m so disappointed in myself. I feel
like shit [sic].” To this Stacy responded, “I know. I’ve been there too. We all have. But coming clean to us is a big deal. You’re like, letting us in!” At this point case management interjected and stated,

“Stacy you’re so right. We are all proud of you, Tieesha. You are taking responsibility for your behavior and refusing to lie to keep this secret anymore. You let the whole community in today for the first time in a long time, and now we can be here for you. You don’t have to do this alone.”

Tieesha’s tearful admission stood out as the most public demonstration of the reciprocal emotional support relationship the women had in reentry. They were all attempting to negotiate successful reentry in the context of limited social resources to rely on from the outside, and so as a result relied on each other. The danger inherent to relying on one another was the fragile nature of their campaigns for success. Instances of relapse or recommission of crime or past behaviors could derail transformative identity narratives like “good mother” or “clean and sober” or “independent” for each individual woman, but they also could shake the foundations of the support network the women created amongst themselves. The role of case management in discouraging a community-wide experience with failure was critical to supporting negotiations of success, but in the face of limited, shallow, and depleted positive support networks and the relative ease of relying on negative sources of support that task required constant vigilance that was not always successful.

CONCLUSION

Social support networks and the types of support they enact were perceived as limited by the women, and perceptions of the inclusiveness, utility and safety inherent to relying on the resources within those support networks revealed that even if women do have support networks to call upon for emotional and/or tangible support they may not do so. Parole reentry services via case management at the THPs provided critical support to the women that filled the void left
by exhausted, dangerous, or limited social support networks. Case management served as a key point of entrance to vital community-based partnerships for the women (i.e. educational, vocational, psychological, or medical services) that in turn made the reentry goal of economic demarginalization possible. Further, the construction of a reciprocal system of social support for tangible and emotional needs between the women was essential to the construction of campaigns for success in gendered reentry. Despite the necessity and importance of the social support the women offered each other, it was unreliable, as any instance of relapse or “failure” could deplete the support inherent to the network and derail more than one woman’s reentry process.
CHAPTER TEN
THE ROLE OF PAROLE REENTRY SERVICES
IN SUCCESSFUL PATHWAYS TO REENTRY

“I guess I just don’t think about Parole all that much. Well, without Parole I wouldn’t have been able to apply to come here [the Recovery House], so I guess yeah, when you think about it that way Parole is a big part of my reentry success!” – Alexis, age 40

From the perspective of the women the role of MA Parole services in the Transitional Housing Program facilities on a day-to-day basis was purely symbolic. The women were aware that they had been released to Parole and the conditions their released was predicated on, but there was not a “parole presence” in either the Pre-Release or the Recovery House. The behavior of the women was monitored: their activities in and outside of the house; their drug screenings via urinalysis; any and all progress toward reentry goals like employment and/or housing, but that monitoring was accomplished by the case management staff, not Parole Officers. The majority of the women interviewed either could not quite recall when they first met their Parole officer after arriving at the house, or stated that they met him a few weeks into their stay at the houses. The “daily reality of Parole” in this sense was truly the daily reality of living within the transitional program housing facility.

The role of Parole in assisting the reentry process is one that the women do not see. Parole selects which community-based partners they are going to work with as transitional housing facilities, and there is a high degree of collaboration between case management staff and both administrative offices for Parole as well as the officer assigned to each house. More than this, Parole’s daily hands-off approach allows the THP to function as both a center for case management services and as the policing agency for any violations of Parole conditions for the clients living there.
Questions that were explored in this area were: (1) Do women conceptualize parole services as supportive overall, or does the perception of parole’s support depend upon the female and her previous experiences? (2) Relatedly, do women with prior experience on parole and/or extensive experience with the criminal justice system perceive parole services as less supportive? (3) Do women with more negative network orientations perceive parole services as essential to reentry success? And (4) are parole services conceptualized as necessary for negotiating success in reentry? This chapter also examines official instances of recidivism according to the quantitative survival analysis examining the factors predicting instances of official failure from the perspective of MA Parole.

This chapter proceeds to enumerate the ways in which MA Parole provides supportive services to females under active parole supervision, the women’s perception of whether or not they felt supported by these services, the importance of Parole services in filling the gap left by the women’s limited social network supports, and the factors predicting risk to initial instance of recidivism for females on parole in Massachusetts. These findings taken together indicate that although the women did not always appreciate or consider the formal supportive services they received, they were critical to encouraging success in negotiating reentry. Additionally, there is significant evidence from the survival analysis that if Parole focused the majority of their supportive services on high-risk females (a determination based on incarcerating offense) in the first ten weeks following their release to the community, they could address the most instances of recidivism in their population.

RELEASE TO PAROLE: A DIVERSE EXPERIENCE

Exploring the daily reality of parole supervision for females in Massachusetts entailed observing Regional Parole Field Offices and the staff therein, and also encompassed examining
the web of community partnerships Parole has forged in order to accomplish this type of conditional release from incarceration. Over three hundred hours of observations were conducted in order to gain contextual, rich, and detailed information regarding the daily reality of life of Parole for females in Massachusetts. These observations were accomplished at all eight Regional Parole Offices (Quincy, Mattapan, Worcester, Springfield, Lawrence, Brockton, New Bedford, and Framingham), the two Transitional Housing Program (THP) facilities in the Boston metropolitan area that house the largest proportion of female parolees participating in this program in the whole state, as well as community organizations utilized by Parole officers and THP alike, again in the Boston metropolitan area, to provide reentry services to the female population based on referrals by Parole or its subcontractors. Each of these levels of reentry and reintegration services plays a critical role in constructing the daily reality of life on parole for a female enrolled in the transitional housing program.

**PRE-RELEASE AND THE IMPORTANCE OF CONNECTIVE SERVICES**

Observations of the transition from incarceration to community-based Parole supervision demonstrated two very distinct types of experience for females: the independent transition and the community partnership transition. Females who were assisted in their transition by formal services provided by community partners had a much more supported and positive experience than those who did not receive these services.

*The Independent Transition*

For females who engaged in an independent transition from incarceration, the immediate needs of community reintegration were met through their own initiative as well as through the actions of their support networks. Typically, females engaging in this type of transition were those that had approved home plans that fell on the independent end of the housing spectrum;
houses, apartments, hotel/motel, and mobile homes. For these women with less intensive housing requirements built into their conditions for release, the experience of release from incarceration is one that is highly dependent on the types of support available to that female from her support network. These needs were fundamentally three-fold: identification, money, and transportation. Often upon arrest or due to a consequence of sentencing females lose any form of formal identification they may have had (if they had one to begin with). A major consequence of this lack of identification upon release from prison is the limitation it represents for that female’s access to money. In Massachusetts’s jails and prisons, inmates can work to earn wages accomplishing various institutionally necessary tasks such as laundry, food preparation, etc. Upon release, inmates are given a check for the wages earned. In order to cash this check, the inmate needs a viable form of identification, and typically a prison ID simply will not suffice. One particularly powerful scenario regarding this reentry roadblock was described by Denise, a 21-year-old woman who had struggled to arrive at her first scheduled appearance at the Region One Parole office in Quincy. She described this scenario:

“I said to the guy behind the counter: ‘Please sir, I am begging you. I am who I say I am, and I just really need this money.’ Then he said, ‘I’m sorry, but I can’t take your prison ID. How do I know that you are who you say you are?’ And I just tried to explain it to him and I said, ‘Please sir, I am just trying to get on the T [public transportation] so I can go home.’ And he just wouldn’t give it to me. He said it was their policy or something. I just knew that now I had to figure out a way to get frickin’ $2.70 so I could get home.”

The $2.70 that Denise refers to is the standard one-way train ticket on Boston’s public transportation system. Lack of access to her in-facility pay served as a substantial barrier to Denise’s ability to travel to her Parole approved home plan: her family’s home, a $2.70 train ride away. Her parents did not have the means to travel into the city to fetch her, nor did she have any other person with a vehicle that she wanted to ask for a ride. She expressed her incredulity at situation she found herself in:
“That’s great, Parole. Let me out of jail so that I can be out in society, but don’t make sure that I can actually get to where I am supposed to be. That is just great.”

Denise’s transition from incarceration to community was seriously hampered by her inability to acquire transportation as it stemmed from her lack of identification.

For other similarly situated female parolees, who also had independent home plans, the transition went fairly smoothly due to the enacted forms of support given by their social networks. They were transported from incarceration to the Regional Parole Office they were assigned to by family or by friends. Once transported the newly minted parolees were cycled through the intake process; a thorough, yet standard examination of the parolee’s criminal record, an introduction to her parole officer, and then a visit to the Regional Reentry Center. For the majority of independently transitioning females this process was a fairly smooth one facilitated well by Parole services.

In each Regional Parole Office the Reentry Center consisted of one employee designated to advise parolees of the community-based services that are available to them, should they choose to use the services. Housing, employment, recovery from substance abuse, and civic reengagement were all covered in the context of a fifteen-minute time frame on average. Parolees were given the contact information for the Reentry Center should they wish to follow-up, but this was about the extent of the visible services provided at intake. The Regional Reentry Centers do represent an important connection between MA Parole and community resources, but they truly only represent an awareness shift in the policy and practice orientation of parole services toward catering to “prisoner reentry” needs. The case of Massachusetts offers an example as to the ways in which prisoner reentry needs are prioritized in language and mantra but not necessarily in services rendered. Although the Parole employee serving as the Regional Reentry Center point person in each of the Regional Offices, in coordination with the Substance
Abuse Coordinators, does in fact maintain a wealth of community connections for the Parolees, these employees serving as “centers” are not reentry programs, nor do they follow up with parolees on the basis of recommendations made. In defense of this service administration model, the parolees who utilize the service of the Regional Reentry Centers in this manner are assessed as being lower-risk for recidivism than their counterparts who are mandated to some form of transitional housing program.

*The Community Partnership Transition*

For the population of parolees who are released to the transitional housing program, the landscape of supportive services received is markedly different from their more independent parolee peers. Again, parolees mandated to transitional housing program (THP) status have been assessed by parole as higher risk for recidivism due to a range of factors; however the difference in type and amount of supportive services rendered between the THP parolees and parolees living in less restrictive housing placements is dramatic.

*The Transitional Housing Program*

In 2004, federal funds acquired by the Massachusetts Department Corrections intended to increase the within-institution bed capacity of state correctional institutions were diverted at the behest of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety to create Parole’s Transitional Housing Program, a reentry focused, community-based partnership between Massachusetts Parole and various community organizations already providing housing to both ex-offender and homeless populations. By funding housing facilities in the community with Parole-based contracts and guaranteeing a certain number of beds within the community, Parole is able to facilitate the incarceration to community transition for a traditionally at-risk population: those inmates who would have no options for safe and stable housing independently and who
otherwise would have to rely on emergency shelters. From discussions with parolees both informally at the Regional Offices, as well as the more formal interview process for this research, the two transitional housing program houses highlighted in this section of the study represented two of the most frequent “types” of houses women on parole had experience with: a “pre-release house” and a “recovery house.” The following section will consist of a case study of the day-to-day processes of two major metropolitan Boston THP contracting facilities that epitomized this dichotomy of services.

The “Pre-Release House”

The Pre-Release House is a THP contracted facility in metropolitan Boston run by a larger non-profit organization that also operates numerous other similar housing facilities throughout the city. A thirty-bed facility, the Pre-Release House maintains multiple criminal justice contracts in order to fund the services they provide to the females who occupy those beds (Massachusetts Parole, Massachusetts DOC, Suffolk County HOC, Federal Parole and Federal Probation). Managing these diverse contracts meant that during the period of observation (January 2011 to June 2011), the House was home to an ever-changing population comprised of the supervision statuses listed above.

The nature of supervision at the Pre-Release House is demonstrated through their daily schedule for “inmates” that is strictly enforced by case management, the communal style of case management employed in the house and its lack of dedication to client confidentiality, and the overall staff to inmate relationship dynamic. Inmates often complained about the schedule and supervision style of the Pre-Release House. According to one case manager:

“The inmates are difficult all of the time. I don’t know what is wrong with them. They complain about the rules, but they don’t really seem to be monitored all that much by Parole so we are the ones who have to police them all the time.”
Inmates. The moniker assigned by the Staff to refer to the women in the house exemplifies the essential nature of the staff-female client relationship in the Pre-Release House. The women are treated as if they are criminals; criminal justice system-involved persons and therefore “crazy” or “out of control.” The effect of this perspective on the inmates was significant disdain for the staff on the part of the inmates as they frequently referred to the House as being “just like jail.”

The style of case management at the Pre-Release House did not take inmate confidentiality into consideration. Case managers openly discussed the cases of all inmates using the large conference table on the second floor as their communal command center. On one occasion the Director of the House decided that she wanted to have an update on the activities for every single inmate in the house simultaneously. She yelled into the stairwell, “All inmates to the second floor!” The Director proceeded to grill each woman regarding various aspects of her itinerary and her plans for the day and an argument ensued with one of the inmates and it proceeded as follows:

Director of the House: “Miss F., you are always causing trouble. What is wrong with you?!

Miss F.: (speaking exceptionally quickly and pointedly) “You are not in charge of me— you cannot tell me what I can and cannot do! Parole and probation can tell me what I can and cannot do. I signed a contract with them, and they told me to live here, so I will only play by their rules not yours.”

This altercation in front of all of the other inmates exemplified the relationship between the staff and inmates. Inmates were to be constantly available to staff and changes to itineraries, schedules, and meetings were to be made up until the last minute by staff at on a discretionary basis, even in front of other inmates. This altercation underlined the jail-like treatment received by women on parole at the Pre-Release House, as that treatment was drastically different than that received by women at the Recovery House.

Overall the Pre-Release House was just that for women serving Parole sentences in Massachusetts; a step-down facility from incarceration that they perceived to be a supervisory
step behind where their Parole status should have placed them. The management of multiple correctional contexts created a complex supervision environment for case management, and in order to maintain control over the population in the house they adopted a high-surveillance model that produced a high level of resentment among the women in the house. Furthermore, the lack of attention to confidentiality and privacy exacerbated the tensions between staff and inmates that were already heightened with high degrees of surveillance. The overall effect of these dynamics in the Pre-Release House was to diminish the supportive role that case managers were able to play as counselors and service referral agents, placing the onus of reentry service acquisition on the women.

The Recovery House

In juxtaposition to the Pre-Release House is the case study of the Recovery House. In some respects the Recovery House and The Pre-Release House are similar; they both manage multiple contracts in order to continue providing services to their populations, and they both exist within Metropolitan Boston-proper. Beyond these basic similarities, the comparisons between the two houses and the services they provide are better discussed in terms of their dissimilarities. The main contrasting element was the type, administration, and availability of supportive services supplied to the females upon their transition from incarceration to release in particular, but also throughout their entire six-month stay at the House.

The Recovery House is a non-profit organization with a mission to help, serve, and provide both food and housing to the homeless population of Boston. Although this mission does not explicitly mention returning offenders, the reality is that often these two populations are one and the same. The Recovery House was given this moniker due to the fundamental focus of the house on supporting recovery from addiction. The House is run from a faith-based
perspective. Reentry services provided to the women’s reentry community were characterized
by a case management to client relationship founded on respect, transparent expectations,
responsibility and professionalism.

Types of service provided by the Recovery House made a positive impression on the women starting on the day of release. Unlike the Pre-Release House, the Recovery House provides transportation from the place of incarceration back to the House. This service was invaluable to the women, for most of them had few transportation sources to rely upon to make a safe transition to the Recovery House. Furthermore, by offering this secure form of transportation from incarceration to Transitional Housing, the Recovery House staff accounted for the sobriety, safety, and behavior of the women confidently to Parole. Arrival at the House was described by the women as “overwhelming,” but also “welcoming.” As Hannah recounted, she felt instantly welcomed by staff but also by the female client community:

“I mean, I have nothing but my jail sweats [sweatpants] and sneakers and like the coffee they let me stop and buy on the way here, and the girls they just opened up their drawers and gave me stuff. I mean when you don’t have anything and someone who barely has anything than you is willing to let you borrow clothes—like even underwear and a bra—that is something. I mean, I was like wow. That was really a big deal for me.”

Many of the females described having similar experiences upon arrival to the Recovery House; that both the staff and the other female clients made the transition from incarceration less difficult for them. Similarly, newly arrived clients always had their first case management meeting with their assigned case manager directly following lunch on their first day in the house. This meeting was designed to ensure that the new client could accomplish any urgent tasks (most often a need or desire to communicate with family members about safe arrival at the House), but also to acquaint the client with her new case manager.
The Recovery House valued honesty and responsibility in all relationships within the House, and most importantly in the case manager-client relationship. One of the case managers discussed this fundamental orientation as follows:

“We understand that just as the recovery process from substance abuse is one that is characterized by relapse and reliance on old patterns of behavior, so is the reentry process. Knowing this we stress to the clients that regardless of whether they do something that they shouldn’t, coming clean and being honest about it to case management is important to maintaining trust. We assume that the clients are being honest until they give us a reason to believe that they are not doing the right thing.”

This orientation was observed on numerous occasions throughout the observation period. Clients knew that honesty was expected of them, and valued above all else; but ceasing to rely on old patterns of lying or deviant behavior are hard to break, and often clients would deny having behaved poorly. This decision would result in a much harsher punishment from House staff.

From the independent transition model to the community partnership transition model (aka the Transitional Housing Programs) the experience with the range of supportive services had by women entering into Parole supervision in 2011 was extremely diverse. Supposedly driven by a risk-management model, access to and provision of services is by no means standardized across the community partners MA Parole utilizes. A greater degree of oversight as well as mandates regarding the standard of services provided would go a long way to ensure that a baseline of transitional and supportive services are guaranteed to female parolees. As it stands currently, there is too great a diversity of service delivery for female parolees supposedly assessed at the same level of risk for recidivism in the community.

**SURVIVAL ANALYSIS: TIME-TO-RECIDIVISM ON PAROLE**

The results from the survival analysis performed on the population of females on active parole supervision from 2006-2009 indicates the ways in which MA Parole could direct their reentry services for females in particular in order to better use resources, focus services to the highest risk populations, and reduce the most instances of recidivism.
For each of the recidivism outcomes examined below, there was consistently about a fifth of the overall parolee population that experienced each outcome, and the subsequent analysis sought to ascertain if that was the same 20% across the board; in other words do the “recidivist females” remain constant or is the population variable? Parole assessed risk level for recidivism as well as most serious incarcerating offense were the best predictors of instances of failure for females under parole supervision, but the dimensions of this finding are dynamic in that they have a high degree of correlation to the time-frames in which these failures occurred.

**Cox Regression Results: Housing & Employment Changes**

The Cox regression procedure is useful for modeling time to a specified event based on the values of given covariates. It is similar to logistic regression, but it assesses the relationship between survival time and the covariates modeled. Central to the output derived from a Cox regression is the hazard ratio (Exp(B)), which is the estimate of the hazard rate in one group to the hazard rate in another group (Huian, 2012). Cox regression is particularly well suited to binary dependent variables that are time-dependent, like the data in this research that examine time to a particular event within a one year observation period; the event (an instance of recidivism) either occurred within that timeframe (1) or it did not (0). Much like in a logistic regression, the overall model being estimated must converge with a given set of covariates, and be tested for overall fit using a -2 Log Likelihood omnibus test of model coefficients. The resulting chi-square and p-value indicate overall model fit, but further examination of the variables found to be statistically significant in each model will also be discussed.

Each of the seven models previously described in the univariate statistics was estimated using the Cox Regression procedure. In order to arrive at the model of covariates that would best estimate the survival time to the recidivism events in question, the available covariates from the
SPIRIT database were eliminated one by one from the models according to both theoretical as well as statistical fit (Please refer to Appendix E for a complete list of available covariates derived from the Parole SPIRIT database). For the housing, employment, positive drug test, graduated sanction, and parole technical violation survival functions the covariates of Parole assessed risk level and most serious incarcerating offense provided the best model fit. Unfortunately, none of the available covariates could be utilized to converge either of the final revocation outcome models. This result will be discussed later in the section. Given that the parole-assessed risk level is a cumulative measure that reflects criminal history, criminal associations, substance abuse, and other pathways to crime theoretical correlates, the categorical variable of risk level (low, medium, and high) was used throughout the Cox Regressions to demonstrate how the cumulative effect of most serious incarcerating offense and risk level combined to help create a profile of the type of female parolee experiencing recidivism events and when she is doing so.

**Housing**

Utilizing the covariates of most serious incarcerating offense and Parole assessed risk level, the relationship between those covariates and the time to survival for a change to housing plan was assessed. As can be referenced in Table 11.1 below, the variables in the equation predicted survival time with a well-fit model (-2 Log Likelihood = 6744.347, Chi-Square = 28.361 (df=8), \( p < .000 \)).
Table 11.1: Cox Regression Covariates for Survival Time to Housing Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables in the Omnibus Test of Model Coefficients Equation</th>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>SE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Offense</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent</td>
<td>.508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property</td>
<td>.477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug</td>
<td>.396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex Work</td>
<td>-.454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Order</td>
<td>-.175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>.112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Risk</td>
<td>3.151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium Risk</td>
<td>-.235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Risk</td>
<td>-.073</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<.05, ***p<.001

The two far right columns of the table contain the hazard ratio (Exp(B)) as well as its statistical significance. In general the hazard ratio is interpreted as the predicted change in the hazard rate for a one-unit increase in the predictor variable. In the case of housing, the probability that a female parolee incarcerated for a drug offense with have a change in housing status in the first year post release to Parole is 1.611 times higher than that of the predictor variable, in this case a violent incarcerating offense. Similarly, a female parolee incarcerated for a property offense is 1.662 times more likely to have a change in housing in the first year than a female with a violent offense.

The Cox Regression procedure also produces a visual display of the model-predicted time-to-housing change survival function that is estimated at the mean value of the risk-level covariates. Figure 11.1 below depicts the progression of time to approved home plan even on the x-axis and the cumulative survival proportion on the y-axis, and demonstrates that for the “average” risk-level female parolee the cumulative survival proportion is .76.
The most striking visual display for the Cox Regression is the survival function for the categories of low, medium, and high risk as they pertain to the cumulative estimation of time-to-survival by risk level and most serious incarcerating offense. The diagram above plots the effect of the categories of risk level on the overall estimation of cumulative survival to housing plan change based on the interaction between risk level and most serious incarcerating offense. High and medium risk female parolees are demonstrated to have lower probability of cumulative survival given the context of the offenses for which they were incarcerated. When compared to the mean survival plot, the high risk group clearly distinguished itself in terms of a trajectory of risk to changes in house plan. This is a trend that continues below in an examination of time-to-change in employment plan.

**Employment**

The model converged using risk level and most serious incarcerating offense to predict time to survival in terms of changes to employment status as well (-2 Log Likelihood, Chi-square = 78.276 (df=8), \( p < .000 \)). For employment, the hazard ratio values were estimated to be slightly different that for housing and are displayed below in Table 11.2.
Table 11.2: Cox Regression Covariates for Survival Time to Employment Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables in the Omnibus Test of Model Coefficients Equation</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Wald</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current Offense</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent</td>
<td>-.278</td>
<td>.168</td>
<td>2.734</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.098</td>
<td>.758</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property</td>
<td>-.170</td>
<td>.153</td>
<td>1.237</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.266</td>
<td>.843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug</td>
<td>-.358</td>
<td>.156</td>
<td>5.243</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.022</td>
<td>.699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex Work</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>.222</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.971</td>
<td>1.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Order</td>
<td>-.848</td>
<td>.225</td>
<td>14.224</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>***.000</td>
<td>.428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>-.482</td>
<td>.209</td>
<td>5.324</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>.618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Risk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium Risk</td>
<td>-.853</td>
<td>.186</td>
<td>20.980</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>***.000</td>
<td>.426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Risk</td>
<td>-.352</td>
<td>.185</td>
<td>3.627</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.057</td>
<td>.703</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** p<.01, ***p<.001

Here public order offenses and “other” offenses demonstrated that a unit change in the predictor hazard value for violent crimes makes it .428 more likely that a female with a public order incarcerating offense will experience a change in employment, and .618 times more likely for the “other” offenders. In terms of level of risk, a medium level risk female parolee is .426 times more likely to have an instance of employment change than a low level risk parolee, and a high risk level female parolee is .703 times more likely to experience that event. These conceptualizations of risk and how they pertain to changes in both employment and housing hint that the high risk female parolees are driving the time-to-survival estimates for the recidivism outcomes both in terms of the statistical significance of their effects on the hazard ratio, but also in terms of estimating the time to event.

Below in Figure 11.2 the survival function for the average risk level female parolee is depicted in terms of the time to employment change on the x-axis and the cumulative survival proportion on the y-axis. Additionally, as in the housing figure above the time-to-employment change survival proportion for low-, medium-, and high-risk parolees is presented side-by-side
for comparison. The cumulative survival proportion demonstrates that .70 of the female population survived the observation period without experiencing a change in employment.

Figure 11.2: Time-to-Employment Change

Particularly telling is the breakdown of cumulative survival by risk level for time-to-change in employment. There is the clear demarcation of the initial time of release critical phase where the bulk of events are occurring, while a marked differential between the probability of cumulative survival between low, medium and high risk female parolees given the context of most serious incarcerating offense. Although changes to employment and/or housing status do not necessarily indicate a negative change in the lives of the female parolees, there is ample evidence that the risk of a change in status based on the covariates of parole assessed risk level and most serious incarcerating offense suggest that not only is there a critical “initial release to parole” time period encompassing the first ten weeks (or approximately two months) where the majority of the probability of cumulative survival is low, but that those female parolees who comprise the high risk group drive the majority of the risk for the events of housing and employment changes. The fact that the high risk group is driving changes in the cumulative risk of the entire population for an instance of a change could indicate that these changes are in fact in the negative; that the first
approved home or work plan originally approved by MA Parole in the release plan did not come to fruition and a change to that plan was necessary. Again, from the data provided by Parole there is no way to know if these changes in plan were positive or negative without comprehensive access to all of the case files narratives for female parolees, but the pattern that emerges according to risk level, most serious offense, and time-to-incident of change suggests that at the very least there is significant upheaval in the release plans of high-risk female parolees in the first two months post-release from incarceration.

*Cox Regression Results: Parole Supervision Sanctions*

High-risk female parolees drove the pattern for cumulative survival for the population in the tangible outcome measures, and the pattern continued into the analysis of official Parole-recognized forms of recidivism. These results from Cox Regression analyses examine the cumulative survival for each of the three Parole-assessed risk levels (low-, medium-, and high-risk) in the context of most serious current offense. The Parole-recognized forms of recidivism as represented in their graduated sanction system are: positive drug test, any other graduated sanction, and parole technical violation.

*Positive Drug Test:*

The model again converged around risk level and most serious incarcerating offense in the omnibus tests of the model coefficients. Many SPIRIT generated variables were tested for each model, but in each case these two variables were only those that allowed for convergence. In table 11.3 below, multiple hazard ratios were found to have statistically significant effects on predicting the time to survival in terms of a positive drug test (-2 Log Likelihood =6332.631, Chi-square=55.251(df=8), p<.000).

---

18 Access to Parole-generated case file narratives in the SPIRIT system was ultimately denied by the MA Parole Legal Department.
Table 11.3: Cox Regression Covariates for Survival Time to Positive Drug Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables in the Omnibus Test of Model Coefficients Equation</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Wald</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current Offense</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent</td>
<td>-.435</td>
<td>.200</td>
<td>4.725</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.030</td>
<td>.648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property</td>
<td>-.277</td>
<td>.179</td>
<td>2.385</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.122</td>
<td>.758</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug</td>
<td>-.245</td>
<td>.179</td>
<td>1.874</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.171</td>
<td>.783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex Work</td>
<td>.035</td>
<td>.253</td>
<td>.019</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.891</td>
<td>1.035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Order</td>
<td>-.719</td>
<td>.254</td>
<td>8.017</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>**.005</td>
<td>.487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>-.551</td>
<td>.247</td>
<td>4.976</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.026</td>
<td>.576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Risk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium Risk</td>
<td>-.924</td>
<td>.215</td>
<td>18.528</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>***.000</td>
<td>.397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Risk</td>
<td>-.406</td>
<td>.213</td>
<td>3.633</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.057</td>
<td>.667</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**p<.01, ***p<.001

Here public order offenses demonstrated that a unit change in the predictor hazard value for violent crimes makes it .487 more likely that a female with a public order incarcerating offense will experience a change in employment, a nearly identical relationship found between public order crimes and an increase in the hazard risk function for changes in employment. This additional confirmation of the effect that an incarcerating offense in the public order domain has on the hazard value indicates a connection between these types of incarcerating offenses, the assessed risk level of the parolees, and time-to-positive drug test as an indicator of recidivism. In terms of level of risk, a medium level risk female parolee is .397 times more likely to have an instance of a positive drug change than a low-level risk parolee.

A familiar pattern emerged from the visual display of the model-predicted time-to-positive drug test for the average risk level female parolee (see Figure 11.3 below). Again the time intervals ranging from release to Parole up through the second month (tenth week) represent a steep curve for time-to-survival. Additionally, approximately .80 of the population proportionally does survive in the time of observation, meaning that yet again there was evidence
that 20% of the female parolee population were experiencing the parole sanction of a positive drug test. Here the relationship between public order crimes (most frequently common nightwalking), medium-risk and positive drug tests indicates that the barriers to successful reentry through recovery from substance abuse as well as economic demarginalization pathways are not being accomplished by this population.

Figure 11.3: Time-to-Positive Drug Test Change

The breakdown according Parole-assessed risk level based on the cumulative survival rate based off of most serious incarcerating offense is dramatic. The magnitude of the difference in the failure rates between risk levels provides direct evidence that the high-risk assessment is first, a good predictor of risk, and second a useful measure that can be used to direct reentry services.

Graduated Sanction and Parole Technical Violation:

The estimated model was particularly well suited for the purposes of modeling both time to survival and cumulative probability of survival for the parole supervision sanctions of graduated sanctions and parole technical violations. The overall pattern is still a story of risk and its correlation to the pre-incarcerative lives of the female parolees that are being reflected in those risk assessments. Below in Table 11.4 (-2 Log Likelihood= 5700.613, Chi-square= 88.763
omnibus tests for model fit converged for these graduated sanctions and parole technical violations respectively utilizing, here again, the covariates of most serious incarcerating offense and Parole-assessed risk level.

Table 11.4: Cox Regression Covariates for Survival Time to Graduated Sanction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables in the Omnibus Test of Model Coefficients Equation</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Wald</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current Offense</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>**.002</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent</td>
<td>-.230</td>
<td>.195</td>
<td>1.383</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.240</td>
<td>.795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property</td>
<td>-.406</td>
<td>.185</td>
<td>4.812</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.028</td>
<td>.666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug</td>
<td>-.267</td>
<td>.183</td>
<td>2.122</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.145</td>
<td>.766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex Work</td>
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<td>.310</td>
<td>3.539</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.060</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Order</td>
<td>-1.359</td>
<td>.319</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>***.000</td>
<td>.257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>.078</td>
<td>.648</td>
</tr>
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<td>Low Risk</td>
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<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium Risk</td>
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<td>.202</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Risk</td>
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<td>.199</td>
<td>16.944</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>***.000</td>
<td>.441</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** p<.01, ***p<.001

Table 11.5: Cox Regression Covariates for Survival Time to Parole Technical Violation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables in the Omnibus Test of Model Coefficients Equation</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Wald</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>***.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent</td>
<td>-.611</td>
<td>.212</td>
<td>8.302</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>**.004</td>
<td>.543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property</td>
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<td>.192</td>
<td>9.489</td>
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<td>.553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug</td>
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<td>.195</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>***.001</td>
<td>.524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex Work</td>
<td>-.743</td>
<td>.329</td>
<td>5.089</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>*.024</td>
<td>.476</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Order</td>
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<td>.342</td>
<td>18.297</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>***.000</td>
<td>.232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>.047</td>
<td>.605</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>.230</td>
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<td>***.000</td>
<td>.269</td>
</tr>
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<td>.225</td>
<td>8.386</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>**.004</td>
<td>.522</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** p<.01, ***p<.001
The findings for parole technical violations and instances of graduated sanctions are presented together visually below in Figure 11.4 to demonstrate the overt similarities between the cumulative risk level from release to parole and the first instance of these sanctions.

Figure 11.4: Time-to-Graduated Sanction and Time-to-Parole Technical Violation

As the models progressed from changes in approved conditional release plans to the most severe convergent model, that for the time-to-Parole technical violation, cumulative probability for not experiencing an instance of recidivism in the first year of supervision greatly decreased for female parolees with higher levels of assessed risk and incarcerating offenses linked to public order, property, and drug crimes (with public order crimes driving a majority of the cumulative
These findings suggest that the pathways to crime the women took had a significant effect on their negotiation of successful reentry, and as this research demonstrated, focusing on the successful pathways out of crime of recovery, reunification, and economic demarginalization will help to reduce the types of recidivism experienced, will be better focused on the time frames in which the recidivism occurs, and will be more value-focused on the types of support women on parole profess to need to aid their reentry experiences.

**Final Revocation Outcome Cox Regression Models: Non-Convergence and Lack of Statistical Significance**

Neither of the final revocation hearing outcome measures converged with any of the covariates available in the SPIRIT dataset. A myriad of combinations were attempted, but still the models would not converge. A possible explanation for the non-convergence could be due to the non-availability of covariates that could accurately predict cumulative risk for survival for these outcomes, or the lack of overall experience with these outcomes for active female parolees (15 and 16 percent). Future examinations of recidivism using a similar graduated sanctions model to this research could attempt to determine if there are other variables outside of those available for this study that could force a convergence.

**DISCUSSION OF SURVIVAL ANALYSIS FINDINGS**

The MA Parole actuarial risk assessment tool (an in-house developed assessment) utilizes the static risk factors of criminal history, criminal associations, substance abuse, and mental health diagnoses as basis for categorization into low-, medium-, or high-risk for recidivism. The findings from the survival analysis are very encouraging for MA Parole from a risk-assessment standpoint; their actuarial tool is distinguishing between levels of risk in the predicted direction, and the Cox regression survival models converged on the relationship between the covariates of this actuarial construct and most serious incarcerating offense, a good measure of a high degree
of construct validity. The covariates were related in a theoretical predictive manner, and behaved accordingly in terms of prediction of risk and statistical significance. Further, by adding a time-to-recidivism event to the assessment of risk, this analysis determined that the most significant aggravation of risk for a parole-related sanction was in the first ten weeks of parole supervised release. This time period remained across all of the models and for all of the parole-assessed risk levels. This initial critical phase for the women was followed by another ten weeks in which the high-risk group continued on a trajectory of risk similar to that experienced in the first ten weeks.

In terms of practical implications of these findings for Parole reentry services, it is indicated very strongly that if MA Parole can focus its reentry supportive services on the females assessed with the highest level of risk according to their in-house assessment tool in the first ten weeks of their release to Parole from incarceration then they would effectively address the majority of the instances of recidivism for females on parole. To integrate the findings from the qualitative conceptualization of success from the women themselves and the role of positive sources social support in that conceptualization with this critical phase would mean a unified plan for reentry supportive service delivery for Parole, but when directed on the right portion of the population could have the most benefit in reducing recidivism.

In order to focus their supportive reentry services even further, following the univariate life table descriptive statistics, Parole can focus on the approximately 20% of the female parole population that was experiencing recidivism during the first year following release. The survival analysis not only confirmed the existence of a standard 20% recidivistic population, but it also provided a more detailed profile of who these recidivistic women are. They are women assessed with a high risk level, have a most serious incarcerating offense of typically a public order offense, and are likely to experience a change in approved home and/or employment plan within
the first five to ten weeks following release to the community. These are the women most likely to “fail” in terms of experiencing official recidivism, but as the qualitative aspects of this research demonstrated, for the women actually experiencing Parole “failure” was rarely, if ever, equated with official conceptualizations of the concept.

CONCLUSION

Women released to Parole in Massachusetts had extremely varied experiences depending on independent versus community-assisted transitions to the community, and even for women released to Transitional Housing Program facilities (the highest risk population for recidivism within female parolees), the experience with the supportive reentry services provided by Parole community partners had a great effect on the perspective, quality, and orientation of their negotiation of reentry. Levels of perceived social support had little to do with assessed or perceived levels of support from Parole by the women; instead Parole itself was more of a backstage presence in the reentry process for women at the THPs. Therefore services rendered at the community-based THPs arguably had the greatest impact on determining the role that Parole would have in encouraging or discouraging success on Parole supervision according to recidivism outcomes.

The survival analyses indicated the ways in which Parole could better direct their reentry supportive services in order to reduce the greatest amount of recidivism in the female population; however focusing on this narrow conceptualization of success and failure in reentry would be short-sighted. A better policy would be to develop a standardized program of reentry services that must be accomplished by the community-based partners at the Transitional Housing
Program facilities that would ensure support in the negotiation of gendered pathways to reentry success.
CHAPTER ELEVEN

CONCLUSION

This research sought to explore the experience of negotiating reentry success for females on parole in Massachusetts. Using a mixed methodological approach, it was found that achieving success in reentry was predicated upon overcoming gendered structural marginalization and depleted/diminished social network supports while simultaneously surviving the critical first five to ten weeks post-release to parole. In sum, there is strong evidence that women take specific gendered pathways to successful reentry by negotiating reunification with children, recovery from substance abuse, and economic demarginalization. Furthermore, success experienced according to these gendered pathways required the adoption of critical psychological narratives based on personal empowerment, independence and overcoming adversity that the women had to espouse due to deficits in their social support networks. This necessary self-reliance is distinct from other (Maruna, 2001) notions of agency and scripts for change in desistance literature, because the women were self-reliant and agentic because they had to be. The types of transformation narratives and the pathways along which women conceptualized success represented claims toward accomplishing traditional femininity (Fenstermaker & West, 2002). Women measured success in accordance to their ability to demonstrate a valid claim to being a successful woman in social terms. Their pathways into crime and their marginalized social positions left them with shallow and depleted social networks. With few sources of positive support women turned to dangerous sources (i.e. former Johns or criminal associates) to fulfill their tangible and emotional needs.

Moreover, the role of parole services in the negotiation of success in reentry was one that was described as tangential by the women. The women admitted that the gendered pathways to
success they took would not have been available to them without the THP services; however there was ample evidence that the degree to which THP services were perceived as supportive and helpful by the women drastically varied by location of service delivery.

Quantitative survival analyses strongly indicate that if MA Parole can focus its reentry supportive services (namely THP services) on female parolees assessed as high risk in the first ten weeks of their release to Parole then the majority of the instances of recidivism for females on parole would be targeted and perhaps reduced. In addition to targeting the high risk population with existing THP services, if MA Parole modified its reentry services to focus on increasing the availability of gendered pathways to reentry for the women, then their resources would be best targeted to encourage the most success as well as reduce the most instances of official recidivism. In short, the women would personally accomplish gendered reentry more of the time resulting in personal empowerment, and Parole would have a lower recidivism rate overall in their female population. As it stands now, there is evidence of significant upheaval within the first two months of release plans made by female parolees prior to their release from incarceration. Changes in housing, employment, substance use, and civic identity reentry plans demonstrate a high degree of instability in this critical post-release phase. Expansion and standardization of THP policies and practices could aid in diminishing this volatility. The more stability the women could acquire in objective aspects of reentry, like housing, employment, and civic identity, then the more they could focus on the more subjective dimensions of gendered reentry like reunification with children and the necessary identity transformation narratives so critical to success.

The overall findings described above are further discussed below in terms of their (1) broad practical and theoretical implications for the concept of gendered reentry, (2) gendered
implications for the construct of social support in the reentry context, (3) suggestions for changes that could be made to the MA Parole service delivery model to address the reentry needs of women, and (4) demonstration of the necessity for more feminist research into the female experience of reentry.

GENDERED REENTRY

Criminologists have examined the myriad ways in which community reentry following incarceration is difficult for everyone. It has been well established that structural impediments, collateral consequences, and the stigma/label of “convict” are all difficult to overcome regardless of gender. Moving beyond this body of “gender neutral” literature, this research sought to explore whether or not, and subsequently the ways in which, the process of reentry might be gendered. In other words, what is the reentry process like specifically for females? This type of research on reentering female populations has only been undertaken in recent years, and with very few studies published specifically on the subject of reentry for females. Even fewer studies have made any attempt to understand the theoretical mechanisms of the process of gendered reentry for females. This is not to say that the subject has been wholly ignored. Research that has been conducted on the role of various turning points in female reentry played a large part in informing this research (Leverentz’s discussions of marriage; of sisterhood; Bersani’s discussions of marriage; Pettit, Western, and Pager’s discussions of employment and welfare dependence; Hill-Collins’ and Miller’s discussions of the intersectionality of race and reentry, and others cited in Chapter Three). However, this is the first time (to the author’s knowledge) that a comprehensive exploration of the theoretical mechanisms of gendered reentry has been put forth and accomplished.
This research advances and partially replicates one of the few comprehensive studies conducted on female experiences with reentry. Merry Morash’s research (2010) contrasting female experiences on probation and parole in a “gender responsive county” versus a “traditional services” county between 1997 and 1999 (n=369; interviews with women, surveys of supervisors, case file analysis by research staff) examined 1) whether or not gender responsive supervision promoted positive outcomes for women, 2) whether community supervision reinforced gender stereotypes in women, and 3) if gender-responsive supervision resulted in increased control and punishment for women in comparison to traditional supervision (2010: 8).

In terms of service delivery, Morash found that traditional supervision tended to fragment the interconnected needs of women, thereby making supervision limited, narrow, and malformed to women’s needs (2010: 144). Gender-responsive supervision, on the other hand allowed for interactive relationships to form between supervisory staff and women that were based on trust, honesty, and a collaborative plan for reentry (2010:143). For women supervised in either model, “social location [her term for the intersection of multiple sources of disadvantage], social networks, needs, and choices” (2010:143) influenced positive outcomes after one year of supervision, and the importance of the interaction between desistance markers of improved social networks, education/work, and lifestyle combined with cognitive transformations pertaining to identity were critical for the women (2010:148-149).

Morash’s research provided an important comparison for service delivery models for community supervision in terms of gender, and provided initial evidence of important commonalities in the experiences of women in reentry. This study advanced her research both by replicating many of her findings regarding female experience, as well as deepening the theoretical and structural understandings of the mechanisms through which success is perceived.
and achieved by women in reentry. While Morash’s research was focused on gender-responsive service delivery in the community supervision sphere, this research sought to prioritize the voices and experiences of women within that sphere to understand the mechanisms through which success can be achieved. Taken together, Morash’s research and this study provide evidence from two different perspectives for further research into the gendered dimensions of community supervision. This study represents an attempt to use a gendered perspective to place women’s reentry experiences within the global context of their experiences with pathways to crime, experiences with incarceration (and potentially prison cycling), and experiences with reentry and offer a structural, specific, and conceptually supported theory of gendered reentry.

Gendered reentry is a theory that explains how the social structure of gender (and in this case specifically the female gender) intersects with other forms of marginalization in the lives of women engaged in crime (i.e. race, socio-economic status, decreased access and opportunity to conventional avenues for success and status) to determine the available pathways to success in reentry and the ways in which success is defined. Pathways to crime have been demonstrated as uniquely gendered; meaning that women come to commit crime via a distinct set of common experiences. Gendered reentry builds off of this theoretical understanding to state that gendered pathways to crime help to determine the availability of pathways to success in reentry.

Due to the cumulatively marginalizing effect of intersecting inequalities in the lives of reentering women, pathways to reentry success were limited in gendered ways. Systematic lack of opportunity for or access to traditional avenues for success like employment, education, marriage, the military, or community status, the women conceptualized success along pathways of economic demarginalization, recovery from substance abuse, and reunification with children.
These pathways are gendered due to their derivation from the overall marginalized status the 
women hailed from that is distinct from similarly situated, criminally involved males.

Interestingly absent from conceptualizations of success in reentry was any concern for 
reoffending. The only reference to official understandings of failure that was discussed with any 
frequency was relapse into substance use. This type of parole violation would most likely result 
in a return to incarceration, but even this official response was not a guarantee and relied heavily 
on both case manager and parole officer discretion. Women would use sentences like “Parole 
isn’t messing around” to vaguely reference Parole as a sort of omnipresent, yet not materially 
significant entity in their lives, but when asked how they conceptualized both success and failure 
in reentry re-offending never even made the top three types of failure the women would 
conceptualize. Failure was not understood in a criminal justice context, which is a result that 
stands firmly as distinctly different from those of male samples. Males have tended to discuss 
re-offending as a worst case scenario of failure in reentry, for that would be the card that would 
make the whole house fall, whereas for women, as already discussed, relapse into substance 
abuse or an irrevocable assault on the “good mother” role was what would be perceived as an 
overarching failure in reentry. This result in particular lends significant support to the contention 
that conceptualizations of success in reentry are gendered, and that there may be differences 
according to female campaigns for success that are distinct from their similarly situated male 
counterparts.

Transformative narratives of self-empowerment, independence, and overcoming 
adversity were adopted to support campaigns for success due to the unavailability of traditional 
turning points (i.e. marriage, employment, and “good” motherhood), and due to shallow, 
depleted, and dangerous social support networks that could not be reliably called upon for
meaningful support. This theory makes important contributions to feminist pathways literature, updates relational theory, modernizes and gender-sensitizes turning points concepts, and prioritizes the role of gendered social support in negotiations of community reentry, and the ways in which it does so are discussed in the remainder of this section.

The five pathways to crime that have been replicated in many examinations of female offenders (abuse, trauma, addiction, mental illness, and economic marginalization) also described entrée into crime for women interviewed. The respondents were similarly marginalized in terms of the intersections of their gender, race, social status, and pathways to crime as the many populations of female offenders studied before them. In exploring whether concepts from relational theory were reflected in the narratives of these women, this research took the essentialism and universalism critiques against relational theory very seriously. These findings do not suggest that all women experience reentry in exactly the same way or that men and women are so universally different from one another in reentry that there should be separate spheres for their treatment. What this research does suggest in terms of a theory of gendered reentry is that a) gendered pathways to crime help to determine the available pathways to reentry success for the women interviewed, and b) these women had a unique perspective on success that combined relational theory concepts of the importance of maintaining relationships with personal empowerment narratives regarding scripts for change (Maruna, 2001). Although the process of taking reentry pathways to success analyzed here is not structurally dissimilar to other examinations of mostly male samples, what makes this process gendered are the nuances within this overall structure. Women campaigned for success as a way to reclaim their gender; as a way to reclaim their feminine identities. So many aspects of these women’s lives pre-incarceration were characterized by dismissal from or limited access to traditional claims to successful
womanhood. Marriage, economic independence, non-criminal lives, abstinence from illegal
drug use or abuse of alcohol and other social signifiers of successfully accomplishing hegemonic
understandings of traditional female success have been systematically denied to these women.
The doing gender literature (Fenstermaker & West, 2002), which espouses the perspective that
gender is understood as an accomplishment sheds light on why then, in the context of these
denials of traditional womanhood, reentering women campaign for reentry success in the specific
ways they do. “Doing gender” involves negotiating

“a complex of socially guided, perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities that cast particular
pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine ‘natures.’ Gender is an achieved property of situated
conduct. Rather than the property of individuals, gender is an emergent feature of social situations” (2002:
4).

Therefore, if gender is a feature of social situations and something that is accomplished through
interaction, then conceptualizing it as a “role obscures the work that is involved in producing
gender in everyday activities (2002:4). Reentering women are arguably a quintessential example
of the “double deviant” population; those women who have not only violated the behavioral
norms of society by breaking the law, but who have also failed to accomplish their “feminine”
identities through their actions. Women are not “supposed” to commit crime. Women are not
“supposed” to be addicted to illicit substances. Women are not “supposed” to be unmarried.
Women are not “supposed” to have children from multiple fathers to whom they are not married.
Over and over again, women negotiating reentry have been told both explicitly and implicitly by
society that they have not “done gender” correctly. The adoption of identity transformation
narratives of empowerment, independence, and overcoming adversity were necessary in
campaigns for success in child reunification, recovery from substance abuse, and economic
demarginalization for they provided the agentic action as well as the lexicon necessary to make
claims at gendered success. The women used identity transformation narratives were used to
empower themselves to address what they perceived to be “failures” in relationships caused by criminal behavior, substance use, and incarceration histories. Women needed to transform their identities to be empowered, independent women who could accomplish roles that signified success like “good mother,” like “clean and sober,” and like “not needing a man to support me.” These narratives demonstrate clear claims of accomplishing gender, and more specifically, accomplishing *femininity*. By conceptualizing success via the accomplishment of those remaining avenues of traditional femininity (“good” motherhood, economic independence, social independence from negative social contacts, and desistance from substance abuse) women defined success in reentry as successful accomplishment of female gendered signifiers of accomplishment. When understood through this lens of the accomplishment of gender, pathways to crime, updated relational theory concepts, and gendered identity transformation narratives all interact to create and maintain available *gendered* pathways to reentry success for women in particular.

Turning points that have been hailed in the social control literature as salient to the processes of both desistance from crime and success in community reentry (notably Sampson & Laub, 1993 and Laub & Sampson, 2003) like marriage, employment, parenthood, the military, and even incarceration have not been discussed in terms of their availability to females reentering the community in the modern context. This research demonstrated how social and economic marginalization, as well as the feminization of poverty, have limited the availability of these turning points for females reentering the community post-incarceration. This was most evident in discussions of marriage and motherhood. The disproportionate concentration of incarceration in certain populations (minority populations; low-SES populations) and in certain geographical areas (low-income, high-crime, and with limited access to resources) has had
important consequences for limiting the availability of certain turning points for many women in ways that it has not functioned for similarly situated men. The reality for many females living in communities that are disproportionately affected by concentrated disadvantage and incarceration is that the pool of eligible males to marry is dangerously shallow; meaning that the opportunity for females of minority status, aged 18-24, and living in urban environments to enter into a quality marriage is slim (Leverentz, 2006). As discussed in Chapter Four, available males within these communities are overwhelmingly likely to have criminal records and incarceration experience and therefore have decreased employment prospects (Pager, 2007; 2009), decreased wage increase potential throughout the life course (Western & Pettit, 2008), and a large population of eligible females from which to choose from in their communities. Traditionally, males had to compete for female marriage partners, but systematic reduction in available males leads to females having three options: 1) remain single and suffer the economic consequences, 2) marry “down”, or 3) have children with males out of wedlock to secure financial assistance from both the male as well as the government (1972; 1981).

The women did not have much experience with marriage, nor did they aspire to it as a transformative institution. Instead, women had experience with early and frequent motherhood, and with conceptualizing romantic relationships as impermanent. All of the women had experience with the social welfare system, and all of the women who were mothers had varying degrees of involvement with the Department of Children and Families.19 Marriage as a social institution with regulatory power for individuals did not serve as a goal to aspire to for the women. There was no inherent merit they could see in marriage that would give them a transformative narrative.

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19 Amount of DCF involvement depended on whether or not family members had assumed temporary or permanent custody of children upon incarceration, or if all parental rights had already been terminated at the time of the interview.
Conversely motherhood represented a more complicated role in conceptualizations of success. The lives of the women were characterized by concentrated disadvantage, gendered marginalization, and limited opportunities for conventional success. One avenue for success and role transformation that was available to them as a result of their biology was motherhood (barring any medical prohibitions from conceiving a child). What emerged about the role of the motherhood as a turning point in reentry was that being a mother was not enough; the women wanted to be able to make claims to being a “good” mother, and being a “good” mother meant that success in reentry was being achieved. Righting past wrongs, demonstrating reliability, earning trust, and overcoming past instances of “bad” motherhood were all examples of how success in that turning point could be achieved. Despite the salience of this pathway to reentry success, it was a double-edged sword. Women tended to place so much value in achieving the role of “good” mother (a subjective definition) that any perceived failure related to the achievement of that goal could totally decimate all of her other reentry goals and progress. For instance, a relapse into substance use did not always result in termination of parole status, discretion was used on the part of case management and parole supervision regarding how each case should be dealt with. For the women, the relapse signified a failure to fulfill promises made to children that they were “doing the right thing” or “getting clean so they could be together again.” The substance use relapse represented a marked failure in the reunification process that could send the women into feelings of shame, self-doubt, and even self-loathing that were detrimental to any progress made toward empowering, independent transformative narratives they had built. Due to the preeminence of the “good” mother role in perceptions of reentry success basing any reentry programming solely on the cultivation of motherhood as a sole pathway to success would be dangerous. The intersection of the good mother role with recovery
from substance abuse and empowerment narratives is a clear and important practical finding derived from a nuanced theoretical understanding of how traditional turning points have important gendered dimensions in the modern female context.

Gendered reentry makes a unique theoretical contribution to criminology as it uses gender as a lens to examine desistance from crime and community reentry. Using a contemporary understanding of gendered systems of structural marginalization extends both pathways to crime and desistance theories by not just accounting for gender, but by using it as a fundamental organizing concept.

The theory of gendered reentry also has important practical implications. First, there is strong exploratory evidence to suggest that gendered pathways to reentry exist, and therefore testing whether or not they exist and function similarly in other female as well as male reentering populations would be a critical next step. Second, further attempts to replicate these findings with a larger, more representative sample of the female parole population in Massachusetts as a whole would indicate if these pathways to reentry are unique to females in transitional housing programs or if they hold with other parole populations as well, namely those with lower risk levels for recidivism.

SOCIAL SUPPORT: IMPORTANCE OF NEGATIVE NETWORK ORIENTATION

As discussed in Chapter Three, the concept of social support has played a central role in many criminological and feminist understandings of why people begin, continue, and eventually desist committing crime. This research makes an important contribution to the large body of research on social support by conceptualizing it in a gendered context. Vaux, Burda & Stewart’s (1986) Negative Network Orientation scale provided the theoretical expectation that the women
would report feeling as though it was dangerous, useless, or ill advised to rely upon existing sources of social supports in their social networks. Having such a negative network orientation was expected in accordance with pathways to crime theory; that if the women experienced any of the five pathways to crime they would have a negative network orientation. Additionally, concentrated disadvantage and its related low levels of both human and social capital in high-incarceration communities suggests that the social networks of the women would be shallow and/or redundant, making it useless to prevail upon them.

The depictions of social support described were as expected in terms of negative network orientation, but with additional nuances that were not predicted. The social network dimensions reported by each woman were indeed shallow, not necessarily due to inherent lack of resources, but instead due to depletion from repeated abuse of resources in the past. Extensive criminal histories and prior attempts at recovery from substance abuse meant that the women had mobilized support from social networks in the past for tangible and emotional needs only to then resume criminal and/or substance abuse behavior. The result was support networks in varying stages of disrepair according to how many times each individual woman had cycled through the system. Although the depleted social network was a frequent occurrence, the dangerous social network was just as, if not more common. Experience with abusive relationships (both romantic- and family of origin-based), with trauma, and with engaging in survival techniques while living on the street like sex for money or sex for drugs transactions left the women with social networks that enumerated by individuals upon whom it was dangerous, useless, or ill advised to rely upon. Further, reliance upon former romantic partners or former Johns represented “prior bad behaviors” that the women were attempting to correct in the context of their recovery; therefore reliance on that type of person for support was considered to be a type of relapse. Overall, social
support networks and the types of support they enacted were perceived as limited by the women, and perceptions of the inclusiveness, utility and safety inherent to relying on the resources within those support networks revealed that even support networks existed, the women would be reluctant to rely upon them.

Parole reentry services via case management at the THPs provided critical support to the women that filled the void left by exhausted, dangerous, or limited social support networks. Case management served as a key point of entrance to vital community-based partnerships (i.e. educational, vocational, psychological, or medical services) that in turn made the reentry goal of economic demarginalization accessible. The emphasis in both the Recovery House and the Pre-Release House on recovery from substance abuse and the concomitant development of healthy coping mechanisms with which to neutralize past experiences with trauma, co-dependency in unhealthy relationships, and feelings of guilt or shame as a result of the consequences of criminal involvement were essential to changing the trajectory of previous pathways to crime into pathways to successful reentry.

Understanding social support from a gendered perspective, the role it plays in the accomplishment of success in reentry, and the critical role Parole services played in filling holes in tired, depleted, or dangerous social networks both through case management and referrals to community-based resources are all unique contributions regarding social support in the reentry context this research provides.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR MA PAROLE
This research indicates that MA Parole is doing many things right in the provision of supportive reentry services for its female population—especially its high-risk female population. The creation of the Transitional Housing Program as well as the Regional Reentry Centers was a paradigm shift in the right direction for parole services, and now the task that lies before MA Parole is to put the mantra regarding reentry services into action. First and foremost, MA Parole needs to continue to utilize and improve upon its actuarial risk assessment tool. The evidence demonstrates that it is determining risk of recidivism is a valid and reliable manner, but it need to be formally evaluated for the dynamics of its effectiveness. Second, using the conclusions from this research Parole needs to focus supportive reentry services intensely in the critical recidivism danger zone of the first ten weeks post-release, and focus those services according to the population most in danger of recidivating: high risk female parolees. By doing so, Parole could effectively reduce recidivism rates overall while freeing up resources to be spent on other critical supportive services like providing more beds in Transitional Housing Program facilities that prove to be critical in protecting these high risk women from recidivating. Third, Parole needs to standardize the reentry services females receive post-release. Overwhelming evidence of the diversity of experience on Parole even within the high-risk group of THP residents demonstrates the need for more program oversight. A full program evaluation of each of the THP partners on the basis of effectiveness at reducing official recidivism as well as subjective conceptualization of what it means to be successful in reentry to the women themselves needs to be accomplished to ensure that more good than harm is being conducted for the women on parole. Finally, MA Parole should utilize the conceptualization of successful pathways to reentry as being accomplished via recovery, reunification, and economic demarginalization in the creation and implementation of standardized reentry services. Empowerment, independence, and overcoming
adversity can be facilitated by parole it is assumes the role of key social support resource. The deficits demonstrated by the social support networks of the women in this research present a real opportunity for parole services to fill that void. Parole services are not a panacea for fixing the barriers to successful reentry for females, but there are very real and important ways in which parole could greatly improve the successful outcomes of their female population, both officially and on the women’s terms.

**SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

This study forged important theoretical, conceptual, and practical connections between gendered pathways to crime for women and the available pathways to successful reentry post-release. Although this research, like all research, had some methodological limitations that diminish the generalizability of the results, there is ample evidence here that mandates further exploration of these critical linkages. The conceptualization of gendered reentry and role that social support plays within it should be explored with other returning female population to ensure that the pathways indicated are generalizable to those populations. In addition, the social support questionnaire should be tested on various marginalized female populations to test for the validity and reliability of this gendered conceptualization of social support. Finally, extending this methodology to a larger sample of the Massachusetts female parolee population would augment the generalizability of the results. These suggestions notwithstanding, this research stands as a comprehensive, mixed-methodological exploration of the experience of gendered reentry processes in the context of parole. And while the experience of women as a group should never be reduced to the experiences of only a few, by giving power and voice to those few experiences, the ways in which women in marginalized positions empower themselves to become independent and overcome adversity empowers all women.
A FEMINIST AGENDA FOR CHANGE

This research accomplished two fundamental goals: first, to prioritize and give voice to female experiences of reentry, and second, to ensure that the message of each voice and the chorus they combine to create is translated into action. This research suggests that there are specific ways in which the available pathways to success in reentry are structured by gender, as are the social supports necessary to achieving success in those pathways. Additionally, there is evidence that Parole is doing a lot right when it comes to supporting female campaigns for success, but this research details the specific ways in which they could be targeting their resources more effectively to address recidivism, standardizing the supportive services received by female parolees, and capitalizing on community-based partnerships to implement a comprehensive effort for success.

The reality is that solution for increasing success in reentry for females cannot be achieved through Parole action alone. Major changes need to be made in social and correctional policy to address the deficits that the female offender population arrives at Parole already shouldered with. Structural marginalization based on gender, the feminization of poverty, concentrated disadvantage, substance abuse, deterioration of the value of the institution of marriage, and early and frequent motherhood are just some examples of the travesties our society is willing to be permissive of because they occur in a population of female criminal offenders. Advocating for changes in parole operations at the state level in Massachusetts needs to be the starting point for much broader action. More academic research needs to be conducted in partnership with criminal justice and community-based agencies so that we know what is working well and what we can make work better. Mixed-methodological research that examines
not only the quantitative dimensions of a phenomenon, but also the experience of what is like to be in the programs from which the data are derived is necessary if we as criminologists and a criminal justice system are to address the issues that plague the correctional system: mass incarceration and mass release and the populations of men and women they leave in their wake. Reentry success is gendered in important ways. Modifying existing strategies that support gendered reentry and implementing new strategies based on sound research that can then be evaluated for their effectiveness will produce researched, evidenced, and theoretically supported programs for success in gendered reentry.
Northeastern University
School of Criminology and Criminal Justice
Laura A. Gross, M.A.
Title of Project: Struggling For Success: The Role of Social Support in Female Reentry Pathways.

**Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study**

You are being invited to take part in a research study. This form will tell you about the study, but the researcher will explain it to you first. You may ask the researcher any questions that you have. When you are ready to make a decision, you may tell the researcher if you want to participate or not. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, the researcher will ask you to sign this statement and will give you a copy to keep.

**Why am I being asked to take part in this research?**

You are being asked to take part in this research because you are a manager or director at a Regional Parole office, Regional Reentry Center, or Transitional Housing Program site, or a member of the Research Department of the Massachusetts Parole Board in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.
Why is this research study being done?

This research is being done to 1) better understand the daily experience of being under parole supervision in Massachusetts, 2) the experience of being a Parole service provider in Massachusetts, 3) the experience of being female and under parole supervision in Massachusetts, and 4) the physical realities of parole in Massachusetts.

What will I be asked to do?

If you decide to take part in this study the researcher will ask you to consent to having your daily activities and the daily activities of any person who arrives at a Regional Parole office, Regional Reentry Center, or Transitional Housing Program site observed and recorded.

You will not be asked to be interviewed or to give your opinion on any subject. You are consenting to being observed in your everyday activities and to having your workspace, that which you are the manager of, observed for the purposes of this research.

Where will this take place and how much of my time will it take?

All of the field observations will occur at Regional Parole Offices, Regional Reentry Centers, and Transitional Housing Program sites.

Though the researcher will be present in your workplace between three and six hours per week between the months of September and December 2010, she will not jeopardize any of your work time. She will be observing the Parole environment as non-intrusively as possible.

Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?

There are two potential risks to you in this research.

The first potential risk for you in this research is a legal risk. This research is being conducted in partnership with the Massachusetts Parole Board. Therefore, any information that is shared with the researcher during the course of her observations that relates to the harm of you or another person or that a crime has been committed, that information will be reported to the Central Office of the Massachusetts Parole Board. Sharing of any information of this type could result in consequences for your standing with Parole.

In order to make sure that there are no legal consequences for your participation, both you and the researcher need to be mindful of what types of information are talked about.

The second potential risk for you in this research is a confidentiality risk. In order to protect your identity and to protect you from a connection being made to your behavior or comments in the workplace, the researcher has implemented many risk management techniques. The researcher will never record proper names in her field notes, nor will she keep a “cheat sheet” to
remind her of the proper names of people or places being observed. Your name will never appear in any written or typed document either published or unpublished.

**Will I benefit from being in this research?**

There will be no direct benefit to you for taking part in this study. However, the information learned from field observations will allow the researcher to gain important insight into the daily reality of what life is like on Parole in Massachusetts, particularly for females. All information gained will contribute to a richer understanding of how recidivism in the female parolee population of Massachusetts could be diminished.

**Who will see the information about me?**

Your part in this research will be confidential. Only the researcher on this study will be able to see information about you. No reports or publications will use information that can identify you in any way.

In order to ensure that your information remains confidential, the information from the observations will go through a process of coding. During each field observation session, the researcher will record her field notes on a personal computer. After the observation session is completed, the researcher will transcribe, or transfer the typed field notes into a software program. During this process, all names of people and places will remain absent from the typed and transcribed data. Once the field notes have been transcribed, the typed field notes will be completely erased from the personal computer of the researcher. The transcribed observations will then be used for the duration of the research. This process of transcription will occur for all field notes taken.

The only limit to your confidentiality was mentioned earlier in terms of a legal risk. Again, because this research is being conducted in partnership with the Massachusetts Parole Board, the researcher must report any information given to her by you that indicates a crime has been or is going to be committed, or that you or someone else is in danger.

Also, in rare instances, authorized people may request to see research information about your and other people in this study. This is done only to be sure that the research is being done properly. The researcher would only permit people who are authorized by organizations such as Northeastern University or the Massachusetts Parole Board to see this information.

**What will happen if I suffer any harm from this research?**

If you feel as though you have been harmed in some way from this research you may do three things:
1) You may use the professionals employed by Parole for medical, psychological, emotional or legal reasons.
2) You may contact the researcher (see contact information below)
3) You may contact Northeastern University (see contact information below)
**Can I stop my participation in this study?**

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. Even if you begin the study, you may quit at any time. If you do not participate or you decide to quit, you will not lose any rights, benefits, or services that you would have otherwise had in your workplace. Additionally, choosing to participate in this research will not result in any incentives from Parole. Your standing with Parole will not change positively or negatively as a result of participation in this study.

**Who can I contact if I have any questions or problems?**

You may contact the researcher:
Laura A. Gross  
Northeastern University, School of Criminology and Criminal Justice  
360 Huntington Ave., c/o 400 Churchill Hall  
Boston, MA 02115  
l.gross@neu.edu

Or her supervisor:  
Natasha A. Frost, PhD  
Northeastern University, School of Criminology and Criminal Justice  
360 Huntington Ave., c/o 400 Churchill Hall  
Boston, MA 02115  
n.frost@neu.edu

**Who can I contact about my rights as a participant?**

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact:  
Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subjects Research Protection  
960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University  
Boston, MA 02115  
Tel: 617-373-7570 (You may call anonymously if you wish)  
Email: irb@neu.edu

**Will I be paid for my participation?**

You will not receive any compensation for your participation in this research.

**Will it cost me anything to participate?**

There will be no costs to you to participate in this research.

**Is there anything else I need to know?**
This research is being conducted in partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Parole.

**I agree to take part in this research.**

______________________________________________
Signature of person agreeing to take part                                               Date

_________________________________________________
Printed name of person above

_________________________________________________
Signature of person who explained the study to the participant above and obtained consent.  Date

_________________________________________________
Printed name of person above
Northeastern University
School of Criminology and Criminal Justice
Laura A. Gross, M.A.
Title of Project: Struggling for Success: The Role of Social Support in Female Reentry Pathways.

**Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study**

You are being invited to take part in a research study. This form will tell you about the study, but the researcher will explain it to you first. You may ask the researcher any questions that you have. When you are ready to make a decision, you may tell the researcher if you want to participate or not. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, the researcher will ask you to sign this statement and will give you a copy to keep. If you decide not to participate, there will be no consequence to you.

**Why am I being asked to take part in this research?**

You are being asked to take part in this research because you are a female who is currently under parole supervision in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

**Why is this research study being done?**

This research is being done to 1) better understand the daily experience of being under parole supervision in Massachusetts, 2) the experience of being a Parole service provider in Massachusetts, 3) the experience of being female and under parole supervision in Massachusetts, and 4) the physical realities of parole in Massachusetts.
**What will I be asked to do?**

You are being asked to take part in a conversation-style interview with the researcher. During the interview you will be asked questions about the experiences you had in the first three days after you were released from jail or prison. Some of the questions will be personal. The researcher wants to know as much as possible about what made those three days easy and what made those three days hard for you. The researcher will ask you what was difficult, what obstacles you faced, what made your transition easier or harder, who supported you in your transition, and what role Parole played in your process of transition from incarceration to community.

You are also being asked to have the interview recorded on a digital audio recording device. If you choose to participate in the interview but do not wish to be recorded, the researcher will proceed with the interview taking notes by hand.

**Where will this take place and how much of my time will it take?**

This interview will last one to two hours and will take place at one of three places: a Regional Parole office, a Regional Reentry Center, or a Transitional Housing Program site. The time for the interview will be scheduled between you and the researcher, and she will work around your schedule.

**Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?**

There are three potential risks to you in this research.

The first potential risk for you in this research is a legal risk. This research is being conducted in partnership with the Massachusetts Parole Board. Therefore, any information that is shared with the researcher during the course of the interview that relates to the harm of you or another person or that an illegal act(s) has been committed, that information will be reported to a Parole employee. Sharing of any information of this type could result in consequences for your standing with Parole.

In order to make sure that there are no legal consequences for your participation, both you and the researcher need to be mindful of what types of information are talked about.

The second potential risk for you in this research is an emotional risk. During the interviews the researcher will be asking you to talk about life experiences, interactions with the criminal justice system, release into the community, and what is typically an emotional time for people. Thinking and talking about some of these experiences may be emotionally difficult or even harmful. However, you will never be forced to talk about any subject you are not willing to talk about and you may decide not to continue with the interview at any time.
One protection from this emotional risk to you in this research is the fact that the interviews will take place at a Parole-run facility where there are trained professionals who will be able to assist you should you need their help.

The third potential risk for you in this research is a confidentiality risk. Because the researcher will be asking you questions about personal experiences, you are the main subject of the interview. The researcher will protect your confidentiality and your identity by never recording your real name in any of the notes she takes during the interview. If the interview is recorded on a digital audio device, then once the interview is complete, the researcher will put the script of the interview through a process of transcription which will remove all identifying names by changing them. Your identity and that of anyone you mention will never be connected to you in any published or unpublished documents relating to this research.

Additionally, if you decide to participate in the interview, the researcher will remind you never to use any person’s last name when you discuss them. This is to protect the identities of anyone you talk about.

Will I benefit from being in this research?

A potential benefit to you from being in this research is an emotional one. You may feel an emotional release by talking about your experiences in the three days after you were released from prison or jail with an objective stranger. Other than this potential benefit, there are no other direct benefits to you for participating.

However, the information learned from this research may add to an understanding of the needs females have in the first hours after their release from incarceration. You could influence future programs for women like you.

Who will see the information about me?

Your part in this research will be confidential. Only the researcher and her supervisor will be able to see information about you. No reports or publications will use information that can identify you in any way.

In order to ensure that your information remains confidential, the information from the interviews will go through a process of coding. During each interview, the researcher will record the conversation on a digital recording device. After the interview is completed, the researcher will transcribe, or transfer the digital audio recording of the interview, into a typed document. During this process, all names of people and places will be changed in order to ensure that you and any person or place that could identify you are different. Once the interview has been transcribed, the digital recording of the interview will be completely erased. The transcribed interview will then be used for the duration of the research.

The only limit to your confidentiality was mentioned earlier in terms of a legal risk. Again, because this research is being conducted in partnership with the Massachusetts Parole Board, the
researcher must report any information given to her by you that indicates a crime has been or is
going to be committed, or that you or someone else is in danger.

Also, in rare instances, authorized people may request to see research information about your and
other people in this study. This is done only to be sure that the research is being done properly.
The researcher would only permit people who are authorized by organizations such as
Northeastern University or the Massachusetts Parole Board to see this information.

What will happen if I suffer any harm from this research?

If you feel as though you have been harmed in some way from this research you may do three
things:
1) You may use the professionals employed by Parole for medical, psychological, emotional or
legal reasons.
2) You may contact the researcher (see contact information below)
3) You may contact Northeastern University (see contact information below)

Can I stop my participation in this study?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you
do not want to. Even if you begin the interview, you may stop at any time with no consequences.

If you do not participate or you decide to quit, you will not lose any rights, benefits, or services
that you would have otherwise had as a parolee.

Additionally, choosing to participate in this research will not result in any incentives from
Parole. Your standing with Parole will not change positively or negatively as a result of
participation in this study.

Who can I contact if I have any questions or problems?

You may contact the researcher:
Laura A. Gross
Northeastern University, College of Criminal Justice
360 Huntington Ave., c/o 400 Churchill Hall
Boston, MA 02115
Email: l.gross@neu.edu

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960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University
Boston, MA 02115
Tel: 617-373-7570 (You may call anonymously if you wish)
Email: irb@neu.edu

Will I be paid for my participation?

You will not receive any compensation for your participation in this research.

Will it cost me anything to participate?

There will be no cost to you to participate in this research.

Is there anything else I need to know?

This research is being conducted in partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Parole.

I agree to take part in this research.

________________________________________________________________________
Signature of person agreeing to take part

________________________________________________________________________
Printed name of person above

________________________________________________________________________
Signature of person who explained the study to the participant
above and obtained consent.
Printed name of person above
Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

You are being invited to take part in a research study. This form will tell you about the study, but the researcher will explain it to you first. You may ask the researcher any questions that you have. When you are ready to make a decision, you may tell the researcher if you want to participate or not. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, the researcher will ask you to sign this statement and will give you a copy to keep. If you decide not to participate, there will be no consequence to you.

Why am I being asked to take part in this research?

You are being asked to take part in this research because you are a female who is currently under parole supervision in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Why is this research study being done?

This research is being done to 1) better understand the daily experience of being under parole supervision in Massachusetts, 2) the experience of being a Parole service provider in Massachusetts, 3) the experience of being female and under parole supervision in Massachusetts, and 4) the physical realities of parole in Massachusetts.
**What will I be asked to do?**

You are being asked to take part in five conversation-style interviews with the researcher. These interviews will happen over the course of about two months, but each interview will last about one to two hours. During these interviews the researcher will ask you questions about your life experiences in three different stages of your life: before you were incarcerated, while you were in jail or prison, and what life has been like after you were released. The questions will ask you about your personal experiences throughout these stages of your life and you may find some of these experiences emotionally difficult to remember or talk about.

Some of the topics that will be covered in these interviews are your childhood, your important relationships with family, your important intimate relationships, your first experiences with crime, your first experiences with the criminal justice system, your experiences being arrested, your experiences being incarcerated, your experiences being released from incarceration, and your experiences with being on parole supervision.

You are also being asked to have the interview recorded on a digital audio recording device. If you choose to participate in the interview but do not wish to be recorded, the researcher will proceed with the interview taking notes by hand.

**Where will this take place and how much of my time will it take?**

You will participate in about five interviews with the researcher, one-on-one. Each interview itself will last about one to two hours, but overall, you will be interviewed for a maximum of about ten hours.

The interviews will be scheduled one a week for about five weeks, though there is a chance due to scheduling between you and the researcher that it could take up to two months to complete the interviews. The researcher will schedule the interviews for when it is most convenient for you to meet with her.

The interviews will take place at one of three places: a Regional Parole office, a Regional Reentry Center, or a Transitional Housing Program site.

**Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?**

There are three potential risks to you in this research.

The first potential risk for you in this research is a legal risk. This research is being conducted in partnership with the Massachusetts Parole Board. Therefore, any information that is shared with the researcher during the course of the interview that relates to the harm of you or another person or that an illegal act(s) has been committed, that information will be reported to a Parole employee. Sharing of any information of this type could result in consequences for your standing with Parole.
In order to make sure that there are no legal consequences for your participation, both you and the researcher need to be mindful of what types of information are talked about.

The second potential risk for you in this research is an emotional risk. During the interviews the researcher will be asking you to talk about life experiences, interactions with the criminal justice system, release into the community, and what is typically an emotional time for people. Thinking and talking about some of these experiences may be emotionally difficult or even harmful. However, you will never be forced to talk about any subject you are not willing to talk about and you may decide not to continue with the interview at any time.

One protection from this emotional risk to you in this research is the fact that the interviews will take place at a Parole-run facility where there are trained professionals who will be able to assist you should you need their help. You will be able to have medical and psychological attention should you need it.

The third potential risk for you in this research is a confidentiality risk. Because the researcher will be asking you questions about personal experiences, you are the main subject of the interview. The researcher will protect your confidentiality and your identity by never recording your real name in any of the notes she takes during the interview. If the interview is recorded on a digital audio device, then once the interview is complete, the researcher will put the script of the interview through a process of transcription which will remove all identifying names by changing them. Your identity and that of anyone you mention will never be connected to you in any published or unpublished documents relating to this research.

Additionally, if you decide to participate in the interview, the researcher will remind you never to use any person’s last name when you discuss them. This is to protect the identities of anyone you talk about.

**Will I benefit from being in this research?**

A potential benefit to you from being in this research is an emotional one. You may feel an emotional release by talking about your life experiences with an objective stranger. Other than this potential benefit, there are no other direct benefits to you for participating.

However, the information learned from this research may add to an understanding of the needs females have in the first hours after their release from incarceration. You could influence future programs for women like you.

**Who will see the information about me?**

Your part in this research will be confidential. Only the researcher and her supervisor will be able to see information about you. No reports or publications will use information that can identify you in any way.

In order to ensure that your information remains confidential, the information from the interviews will go through a process of coding. During each interview, the researcher will record
the conversation on a digital recording device. After the interview is completed, the researcher will transcribe, or transfer the digital audio recording of the interview, into a typed document. During this process, all names of people and places will be changed in order to ensure that you and any person or place that could identify you are different. Once the interview has been transcribed, the digital recording of the interview will be completely erased. The transcribed interview will then be used for the duration of the research.

The only limit to your confidentiality was mentioned earlier in terms of a legal risk. Again, because this research is being conducted in partnership with the Massachusetts Parole Board, the researcher must report any information given to her by you that indicates a crime has been or is going to be committed, or that you or someone else is in danger.

Also, in rare instances, authorized people may request to see research information about your and other people in this study. This is done only to be sure that the research is being done properly. The researcher would only permit people who are authorized by organizations such as Northeastern University or the Massachusetts Parole Board to see this information.

**What will happen if I suffer any harm from this research?**

If you feel as though you have been harmed in some way from this research you may do three things:
1) You may use the professionals employed by Parole for medical, psychological, emotional or legal reasons.
2) You may contact the researcher (see contact information below)
3) You may contact Northeastern University (see contact information below)

**Can I stop my participation in this study?**

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. Even if you begin the interview, you may stop at any time with no consequences.

If you do not participate or you decide to quit, you will not lose any rights, benefits, or services that you would have otherwise had as a parolee.

Additionally, choosing to participate in this research will not result in any incentives from Parole. Your standing with Parole will not change positively or negatively as a result of participation in this study.

**Who can I contact if I have any questions or problems?**

You may contact the researcher:
Laura A. Gross
Northeastern University, College of Criminal Justice
360 Huntington Ave., c/o 400 Churchill Hall
Boston, MA 02115
Email: l.gross@neu.edu
Or her supervisor:
Natasha A. Frost, PhD
Northeastern University, School of Criminology and Criminal Justice
360 Huntington Ave., c/o 400 Churchill Hall
Boston, MA 02115
617.373.8998
n.frost@neu.edu

Who can I contact about my rights as a participant?

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact:
Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subjects Research Protection
960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University
Boston, MA 02115
Tel: 617-373-7570 (You may call anonymously if you wish)
Email: irb@neu.edu

Will I be paid for my participation?

You will not receive any compensation for your participation in this research.

Will it cost me anything to participate?

There will be no cost to you to participate in this research.

Is there anything else I need to know?

This research is being conducted in partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Parole.

I agree to take part in this research.

________________________________________________               ________________
Signature of person agreeing to take part               Date

_________________________________________________
Printed name of person above
Signature of person who explained the study to the participant above and obtained consent.

Date

Printed name of person above
Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

You are being invited to take part in a research study. This form will tell you about the study, but the researcher will explain it to you first. You may ask the researcher any questions that you have. When you are ready to make a decision, you may tell the researcher if you want to participate or not. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, the researcher will ask you to sign this statement and will give you a copy to keep. If you decide not to participate, there will be no consequence to you.

Why am I being asked to take part in this research?

You are being asked to take part in this research because you are a female who is currently under parole supervision in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Why is this research study being done?

The questionnaire you are being asked to fill out is part of a larger research project that is being done to 1) better understand the daily experience of being under parole supervision in Massachusetts, 2) the experience of being a Parole service provider in Massachusetts, 3) the experience of being female and under parole supervision in Massachusetts, and 4) the physical realities of parole in Massachusetts. The questionnaire specifically asks for information about
the social support networks of females on parole.

**What will I be asked to do?**

You will receive this questionnaire in person from the researcher and you decide to take part in the research, you will be asked to fill out a questionnaire. The questionnaire is twelve pages long and should take you about thirty minutes to complete. The questionnaire asks you questions about yourself (for example, your age, race, employment status, etc.) and then asks you a series of questions about your sources of social support and how you think about your relationships with people in your life.

If you decide to participate and begin filling out the questionnaire but then decide you no longer wish to give the researcher your information, you may stop filling out the questionnaire and ask for it to be destroyed. Deciding not to participate will have no negative consequences for you or for your Parole status. Also, participating in the questionnaire will have no positive effects on your Parole status, meaning there is no official incentive to participate.

**Where will this take place and how much of my time will it take?**

The questionnaire is twelve pages long and should take you about 30 minutes to fill out.

You will receive the questionnaire in person from the researcher, and you will complete the questionnaire where you are, at a Regional Parole office, a Regional Reentry Center, or at a Transitional Housing Program site. Once you complete the questionnaire you will simply hand it back to the researcher.

**Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?**

There are two potential risks to you in this research.

The first potential risk for you in this research is a legal risk. This research is being conducted in partnership with the Massachusetts Parole Board. Therefore, any information that is shared with the researcher that relates to your own personal harm or harm to another person, that information will be given to Parole. Also, any information about the commission of illegal acts shared with the researcher will be reported to Parole. Sharing any information of this type could result in consequences for your standing with Parole.

In order to make sure that there are no legal consequences for your participation, both you and the researcher need to be mindful of what types of information are talked about.

Another potential risk to you is a confidentiality risk. Although you will not put your name anywhere on the questionnaire, the researcher is asking you to sign this consent form. Because she will have both documents, there is a possibility she could connect your responses to you.
To assure you that your identity and any information you put on the questionnaire will remain confidential (will not be traceable to you), the researcher promises to never publish, record, or store information with your name on it anywhere that could connect to your questionnaire responses.

**Will I benefit from being in this research?**

There will be no direct benefit to you for taking part in this study. However, the information learned from this study may help future females on parole through a better understanding of the sources of social support female parolees have in their lives.

Although this research is being conducted through a partnership with the Massachusetts Parole Board, there is no Parole incentive to you for participating in this research. You will not receive any benefits from Parole for participating or any consequences for deciding not to participate.

**Who will see the information about me?**

Your part in this research will be confidential. Only the researcher conducting this study and her supervisor will be able to see information about you. No reports or publications will use information that can identify you in any way. Your name will never appear in any written document.

Also, in rare instances, authorized people may request to see research information about your and other people in this study. This is done only to be sure that the research is being done properly. The researcher would only permit people who are authorized by organizations such as Northeastern University or the Massachusetts Parole Board to see this information. But again, the information you provide will not be paired with your name or identity.

**What will happen if I suffer any harm from this research?**

If you feel as though you have been harmed in some way from this research you may do three things:
1) You may use the professionals employed by Parole for medical, psychological, emotional or legal reasons.
2) You may contact the researcher (see contact information below)
3) You may contact Northeastern University (see contact information below)

**Can I stop my participation in this study?**

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. Even if you begin the study, you may decide to stop at any time. If you do not participate or you decide to stop, you will not lose any rights, benefits, or services that you would have otherwise had as a parolee.
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</table>

| **I agree to take part in this research.** |
Signature of person agreeing to take part

Date

Printed name of person above

Signature of person who explained the study to the participant above and obtained consent.

Date

Printed name of person above
How Did You Get Here?

What Has Life Been Like Since?
Tell Your Story

HAVE A VOICE!
Tell your story--your life from the beginning to now!
Say everything you ever wanted to about how you got to you where you are today!

MAKE A DIFFERENCE!
Talk about your experiences on parole!
Talk about what parole has been like for you!
Talk about how parole could be better for other women!

Contact Laura Gross (lgross@neu.edu), Northeastern University College of Criminal Justice, to participate!
APPENDIX B:
QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

All of the following questions represent important themes to cover during each interview session. They are not meant to be answered one after the other like would be done on a survey. The interviews will be qualitative in nature and more like a conversation than a survey interview. These questions are meant to serve as a guide for the researcher, but given the exploratory nature of the research, this can only be a guide and not a specific formula.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRELIMINARY INTERVIEW</th>
<th>1-2hrs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>THEME: Experiences with Reentry from 0-72 hours.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Where incarcerated (the most recent time)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Where being released to?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Where living before incarceration? Returning to same place?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PRE-RELEASE:
• What thoughts did you have before your actual release?
  o What were you scared about?
  o What were you nervous about?
  o What were you excited about?
  o What did you think was going to be easy? Difficult?
• What was your biggest concern about being released while you were still incarcerated?
  o Housing?
  o Family?
  o Money?
  o Drugs?
  o Parole conditions?
  o Job?

AT TIME OF RELEASE:
• What was the release process like for you?
  o What do you remember from the release process?
  o Did someone pick you up?
  o Where did you go right when you were released?
  o What did you do?
• What were you the most concerned about right when you were released?
• Can you recall for me what you did in the first few hours after you were released?

PAROLE INVOLVEMENT:
• When did you first have contact with Parole after you were released?
• Where did you first make contact with Parole?
• Was this the first time you had ever been on parole?
• What was it like to have this first contact with parole?
• What feelings were you experiencing at the time?
• What did you talk about with the parole officer?
• What were your concerns during the meeting?

THROUGH 72 HOURS:
• Did you have a place to stay/sleep the first night you were released? The second? The third?
  o Where did you stay?
• Did you have any money?
• Where did you eat?
• What did you eat?
• How did you get around, transportation-wise?
  o If driving, where get a car? License?
• Did you have contact with family at this time?
  o Spouse/significant other?
  o Children?
  o Parents?
  o Other family?
• What were your biggest concerns in these first three days?
  o What did you want to do?
  o What did you need to do?
  o What was really hard for you?
  o What was really easy for you?
  o What were you worried about?
• Were the first three days after being released easy?
  o What was easy about them?
• Were the first three days after being released difficult?
  o What was difficult about them?
• Were you thinking about committing any type of crime? Drugs, alcohol?
  o If so, why?
  o How did these thoughts/actions make you feel?
    ▪ Were there any consequences?

FIRST LIFE HISTORY INTERVIEW
1-2hrs
THEME: Pre-Incarceration Experiences
• Where born?
• Family structure?

• Family:
  o Any changes in family dynamic between childhood and adolescence
  o Changes in composition of family
  o Changes in location
  o Changes in relationships between participant and family members
  o What home life was like on a daily basis:
• Get a sense of a daily schedule for that time period
  • School – middle and high school
    o Success at school
    o Problems at school
    o Relationships with peers
    o Relationships with authority figures
      ▪ Parents, teachers, law enforcement
  • Romantic Relationships:
    o First romantic relationship experiences
    o First sexual experiences
      ▪ When, how felt about them, context
  • Experiences with delinquency and/or crime
    o Problems at school, problems at home, truancy, running away, shoplifting
    o Any and all altercations with law enforcement
    o Any experience with juvenile justice system
    o Any experience with family court system
    o Any experience with school discipline system
  • Victimization experiences:
    o Up to this point, ever been the victim of a crime?
      ▪ Of abuse?
  • Trauma Experiences?
  • Mental Health Problems/struggles?
  • What was the reality of life economically?
  • Any children at this point?
    o If so:
      ▪ When was the child born?
      ▪ Is the father a part of the child’s life?
      ▪ Is motherhood easy? What is easy about it?
      ▪ Is motherhood hard? What is hard about it?
    o Personal:
      o Job history
        ▪ Had any employment at this point? Doing what?
    o Educational attainment:
      o What was highest education achieved?
    o Self-Esteem
      o Confidence, self-image
    o Romantic Relationships:
      o Interactions with significant others:
        ▪ Supportive?
        o Loving?
        o Abusive?
        o Controlling?
          ▪ Go through sequence of significant others since adolescence and talk about each relationship.
      o Were significant others involved in criminal activity?
        ▪ What type?
- Property? Violent?
  o Were significant others engaged in drug use?
    o Drug sales?
    o Large-scale drug distribution?
  o Were significant others involved in alcohol abuse?
  o Did significant others have contact with the criminal justice system?
    o Juvenile justice? Family Court?
    o School disciplinary system?
  o Criminal involvement at the time:
  o What types of criminal activities engaged in at the time?
  o Typically done solo or with others? Significant others?
  o Drug use at the time? Alcohol use at the time?
  o First interactions with the criminal justice system?
    o Interactions with police
    o Arrests?
    o Warrants?
    o Summonses?
  o Victimization history
  o Ever been the victim of a crime at this time?
  o If so, get details

---

**SECOND LIFE HISTORY INTERVIEW**

**THEME:** Experience with Arrest/Criminal Justice System

**Topics to Cover:**

- Timing of first encounter with police
  - Perception of that experience
- Subsequent encounters with police:
  - Context
  - Description of events leading up to said encounter
  - Perceptions of the experience
- Timing of first arrest
  - Context
    - Type of crime
    - How it occurred
    - Who was involved
  - Description of events leading up to arrest
  - Description of events following arrest:
    - What became of the charges?
    - Was further legal action taken?
    - How did the case progress?
    - Did the arrest lead to a trial?
    - Did the arrest lead to incarceration?
    - Was there pre-trial detention? If so, where? What was it like?
    - How did the participant feel throughout the whole process?
What were major concerns? Fears?
- How does the participant perceive the criminal justice system as a whole?
- How does the participant perceive actors in the criminal justice system?
  - Police
  - Prosecution
  - Defense attorney(s)
  - Judge
  - Correctional Officers
  - Social workers? Victim Advocates?
- How does participant feel these CJS actors had treated her at this point?
- What did it feel like to be processed through the CJS?
  - As a person?
  - As a woman?
  - As a mother (if applicable)?
- What were the consequences of this arrest?
  - Relationship?
  - Job?
  - Education?
  - Housing?
  - Family?
  - Reputation?
- Arrest that led to incarceration:
  - Go through details of entire arrest → incarceration sequence
- Where incarcerated?
  - Far from home?
  - Far from family?
  - What was that like?
- Describe the feeling had when first entered the facility
- Describe intake
- Describe what it was like being taken to cell
- Describe cell
- Describe cellmate(s)
- Describe relationships had in prison with:
  - Fellow inmates
  - Guards
  - Other staff (programming, medical, social workers, clergy)
- Describe relationship with family while incarcerated:
  - Children if applicable
  - Significant others
  - What were visits like?
    - How often?
    - How did you feel before?
    - How did you feel during?
    - How did you feel after?
- How long was your sentence?
THIRD LIFE HISTORY INTERVIEW

THEME: Experience with Release from Incarceration

Topics to be covered: (0-72 hours post-release already covered in preliminary interview)

- Housing
- Employment
- Family Reunification
  - Significant other/spouse reunification
- Drug/Alcohol Use
- Mental Health
- Economic Independence
- Parole Services:
  - Interactions with Parole officer
  - Services at RRCs
  - Housing assistance
  - Employment assistance
  - Mental health
- Satisfaction with Parole services:
  - Most helpful/beneficial service(s) Parole provides
  - Least helpful/beneficial service(s) Parole provides
  - What specific services Parole should provide
- Parole Violations:
  - Experiences with hearings
  - Experiences with graduated sanctions
  - Experiences with re-incarceration
  - Experiences with re-arrest
    - Connections of these CJ outcomes with social-structural concepts listed above.
• Meaning, what was happening in the lives of participants at the time of disciplinary actions.
• What aspect of being on parole is the most difficult?
• Is there stigma attached to being on parole?
  o What difficulty does having a criminal record cause in your life?
• Sources of social support:
  o Elaborate on knowledge from previous interviews
  o Who can rely on for tangible support?
  o Emotional?
  o Guidance?
  o Perceived vs. enacted?
  o Negative network orientation?
    ▪ Dangerous or ill-advised to rely on supports?
• Sacrificing the self scale
APPENDIX C
QUALITATIVE CODING STRUCTURES

Gendered Pathways to Crime

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mental Health</th>
<th>Marginalization</th>
<th>Addiction</th>
<th>Trauma</th>
<th>Victimization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>self-perceived</td>
<td>educational</td>
<td>drug use</td>
<td>personal loss</td>
<td>physical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diagnosed</td>
<td>vocational</td>
<td>alcohol use</td>
<td>effect of incarceration</td>
<td>sexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTSD</td>
<td>housing</td>
<td>multi-use</td>
<td>effect of prison cycling</td>
<td>emotional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marriage</td>
<td>prior attempts at recovery</td>
<td>entree into use</td>
<td>&quot;failed&quot; romantic relationships</td>
<td>isolation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>economic</td>
<td>maintenance of use</td>
<td>drug culture</td>
<td>&quot;failed&quot; family relationships</td>
<td>controlling relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>racial</td>
<td>drug culture</td>
<td>drug culture</td>
<td>witness violence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>early motherhood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>the &quot;good mother&quot; role</td>
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<tr>
<td>search for social status</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### APPENDIX C: QUALITATIVE CODING STRUCTURES (continued)

#### Experiences with Crime & Incarceration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criminal History</th>
<th>CJS Experience</th>
<th>Incarceration</th>
<th>Prior Attempts at Recovery / Reentry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>entry into criminal behavior</td>
<td>number of arrests</td>
<td>length of most recent sentence</td>
<td>prior THP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>first arrest</td>
<td>probation experience</td>
<td>incarcerating offense</td>
<td>prior detox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>types of criminal behavior</td>
<td>jail experience</td>
<td>circumstances of most recent</td>
<td>prior HVH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>prison experience</td>
<td>daily life at time of arrest</td>
<td>previous “clean time”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>parole experience</td>
<td>sentencing / intake experience</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>prison cycling experience</td>
<td>incarcerate culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>emotions related to experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C: QUALITATIVE CODING STRUCTURES (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Support</th>
<th>Parole</th>
<th>SS-Behaviors</th>
<th>SS-Appraisals</th>
<th>Negative Network Orientation</th>
<th>Network Dimensions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>referral-based services</td>
<td>emotional support</td>
<td>emotionally valued</td>
<td>should not trust network</td>
<td>network width</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>day-of-release</td>
<td>practical/tangible support</td>
<td>SS network values individ</td>
<td>trust in network utility</td>
<td>network depth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>immediate needs</td>
<td>monetary support</td>
<td>“feel” supported</td>
<td>supports are dangerous</td>
<td>network social capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>independent release</td>
<td>advice or guidance</td>
<td>need for social support</td>
<td>supports are unreliable</td>
<td>number of close contacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>community partnership release</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>can solve problems on own</td>
<td>number of mobilizing contacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CM model</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>first 72 hours post-release</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>expectations vs. realities</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>facilitation of reunification</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recovery House</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-Release House</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C: QUALITATIVE CODING STRUCTURES (continued)

Gendered Pathways to Reentry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reunification</th>
<th>Demarginalization</th>
<th>Recovery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Renegotiating the &quot;good mother&quot; role</td>
<td>accomplishing an independent identity</td>
<td>“overcoming” dependency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>double-edged sword of motherhood</td>
<td>“overcoming” past marginalizations</td>
<td>“overcoming” reasons for entree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>staying clean</td>
<td>personal empowerment narratives</td>
<td>“overcoming” reasons for continued use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>elimination of DCF involvement</td>
<td>enacted actions toward demarginalization</td>
<td>“overcoming” adversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reassuming guilt/shame for past “bad” motherhood</td>
<td>newly discovered personal agency</td>
<td>resiliency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>marriage as opposite of independence</td>
<td>AA rhetoric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“just want to do me”</td>
<td>independence not autonomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>education + employment + housing = made it</td>
<td>recovery not simply sobriety</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D:
SOCIAL SUPPORT QUESTIONNAIRE INSTRUMENT & FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION PLANS

The social support questionnaire was originally approved by the Massachusetts Parole Board for dissemination by mail to the approved home plan address of every female on active parole between September and December of 2011. Parole supervision and administration post-Cinelli and investigation by the Governor’s office resulted in a new legal team that rescinded this approval. Women who had already agreed to participate in the narrative interviews were approved for recruitment into the social support survey sample. The resulting sub-sample of ten women was a far cry from the approximately 700 women the questionnaire would have reached by mail. The information gained gave structural context to narrative explanations of social support and enriched the findings of this research regarding the role of social support in important ways. The work conducted on constructing an instrument to measure social support from a gendered perspective is not lost, in fact it leaves this research with a distinct advantage. Future research in the area of gendered reentry and the role of social support therein will begin with quantitatively examining social support using the Vaux’s Social Support Appraisals scale, Social Support Behaviors Scale, Vaux, Burda & Stewart’s Network Orientation Scale, and Jack & Dill’s Silencing the Self Scale. The utility of combining these scales (detailed below) is in focusing on the ways in which social support is gendered, and each was used in constructing this social support questionnaire instrument with the expressed written consent of the original authors.

Vaux’s Social Support Appraisals scale has good internal consistency for college and community samples (mean alpha scores of .90 and .84 respectively. Additionally, the scale
showed stability over a six week interval in a college sample \( (r = .80) \). Demonstrates convergent validity with significant associations with seven other support appraisal measures and has instrument validity across instrumentation methods.

The Social Support Appraisals Scale is designed to measure the degree to which a person feels cared for, respected, and involved. It is a twenty-three item scale that asks respondents whether they “strongly agree,” “agree,” “disagree,” or “strongly disagree” to a list of statements regarding their relationships with their family and friends. Examples of scale items are “My friends respect me,” “I don’t feel close to members of my family,” “I feel a strong bond with my friends,” and “I feel valued by other people.” Five college and five community samples have reported on the validity and reliability of the SSA scale and they have shown good internal consistency \( (\alpha = .90) \), and additionally the scale has demonstrated stability over a six-week time period \( (r = .80) \). Convergent validity was demonstrated through significant associations with seven other support appraisal measures. The scale is scored on the range of 23 (all “strongly agree” responses, with some items reverse coded for negative dimensionality) to 92 (all “strongly disagree” responses with the same reverse coding caveat). Low scores indicate a high degree of perceived support; a high degree of feeling cared for, included in, and valued by one’s social network.

Similarly, Vaux’s Social Support Behaviors Scale has demonstrated internal consistency across multiple college samples with a mean alpha level of .85. It has shown predicted associations with both support network resources and support appraisals. Confirmatory factor analyses were performed on SSB data to examine the predictive validity of subscales and overall it was found that the supportive behavior of the five distinct modes was supported. The SSB total scale as well as each of the five modal subscales have shown good internal consistency with
past samples (alpha = .85), and expected patterns of convergence and divergence between the subscales were also observed in college as well as community samples. On the SSB section of the questionnaire respondents were asked to state, on 5-point Likert Scale (1=no one would do this, 2=someone might do this, 3= some family member/friend would probably do this, 4= some family member/friend would certainly do this, and 5= most family members/friends would certainly do this), how likely members of their family and friends would be to “help them out” in the specific ways enumerated in the 45 item questionnaire. Typically scores for the SSB scale are reported for family and friends and low scores on the SSB scale as well as in each of the subscales indicate low overall enacted or available social support for the individual respondents.

Vaux, Burda & Stewart’s Network Orientation Scale’s reliability and validity are derived from five samples. The scale showed good internal consistency (mean alpha = .88) and good stability in two out of three tests over one-, two-, and three-week intervals (r = .85, .87, and .18 respectively). Negative network orientations tend to be associated with smaller support networks, less available supportive behavior, and less positive appraisals of support. NOS assesses a set of negative expectations regarding network mobilization and transactions between individuals and their support networks. Respondents are asked to “strongly agree,” “agree,” “disagree,” or “strongly disagree” with statements concerning their relationships with other people. Examples of scale items are “In the past I have been hurt by people I have confided in,” “People should keep their problems to themselves,” “Some things are too personal to talk about with anyone,” and “If you can’t figure out your problems no one can.” These items, taken together, measure the degree to which even an individual with an extensive social network to draw upon for assistance would not due to the feeling that it would be a useless, dangerous, or inadvisable endeavor. The NOS scale has demonstrated good internal consistency (alpha = .74) and good
reliability over three separate tests (r=.87 over one-, two-, and three-week intervals). Negative network associations are associated with smaller social networks, less available supportive behavior, and less positive appraisals of support.

Dill’s Silencing the Self Scale (1992) was examined for reliability and validity using university students, new mothers who used drugs during pregnancy, and residents of battered women’s shelters to levels of internal consistency of alpha = .86, .89, and .94 respectively. The test-retest statistics (r) were .88, .89, and .93 for each of these samples and suggest excellent reliability of the scale. Though the subscales are theoretically distinct they are intercorrelated.

Results from each of these scales were calculated using scoring techniques provided by the original authors, and with their expressed permission. they agreed or disagreed with thirty-one scale items on a 5-point Likert Scale relating to how they act and feel when in an intimate relationship either with a current partner or in the past. Possible overall scores on the entire scale could range from 31 (solely “strongly agree” responses) to 155 (solely “strongly disagree” responses, with five of the scale items being reverse coded for negative dimensionality).

The resulting social support questionnaire instrument combining these scales as well as asking respondent questions pertaining to demographics, pathways to crime, social support network dimensions, and criminal justice system experience is uniquely situated for future dissemination to reentering female populations. This future implementation plan provides a way to directly test the theory of gendered reentry explored by this research, as well as the role of social support to the construction and maintenance of that gendered reentry.
SOCIAL SUPPORT QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer the following questions as truthfully as possible.

I am currently:  
18 or under  19-24  25-29  30-35  36-40  41-45  46 or over

I consider myself to be: (select one or more)
Caucasian (White)  Hawaiian/Pacific Islander  Native American
Black  Asian  Other _____________________

Are you of Hispanic or Latino/a origin?
Hispanic  Latino/a  Neither Hispanic nor Latino/a

What language are you most comfortable speaking?
English  Spanish  French  Other ________________

I am:
heterosexual  homosexual  bisexual  transsexual  transsexual  transgender
other _____________________________________________________________________________

I am currently:
employed  unemployed
If employed, what type of work do you do? ________________________________

Are you actively seeking employment right now?  yes  no
If yes, what type of job are you looking for? ________________________________

I am currently receiving some type of governmental assistance:
SSI  SSDI  TANF  WIC  Other ____________
I am not currently receiving any governmental assistance.

I am currently:
single  married  divorced  separated  widowed
If single, are you in a committed relationship with a partner?

yes  no

Please answer the following questions only if you are married or in a committed relationship with a partner:

Do you currently live with your spouse/partner?  yes  no

If no, how often do you see your spouse partner?

daily  weekly  every other week  once a month  less than once a month

How would you describe your relationship with your spouse/partner?

very close  somewhat close  somewhat distant  very distant  nonexistent

I am currently living in a(n): (select the housing that BEST describes your living situation)

apartment  halfway house  hotel or motel  house  mental health facility
medical facility  homeless shelter  nursing home  sober house  rooming house
trailer/mobile home  residential treatment center

I currently live: (select one or more)

by myself  with a roommate  with a significant other  with parents
with a sibling(s)  in a group home  other

I have children:

yes  no

If yes, how many children do you have? _______________________________________

How old are your children? _______________________________________

Do you currently have primary custody of your children?  yes  no

If no, who has primary custody of your children? _______________________________________

Do you have contact with with one or more of your children?  yes  no

If yes, how often do you see your child/children?

daily  weekly  every other week  once a month  less than once a month

How would you describe your relationship with your child/children?

very close  somewhat close  somewhat distant  very distant  nonexistent
Are you currently or have you ever been addicted to drugs or alcohol?  
   yes  no  
   If yes, what is/are your drug(s) of choice?

At your highest frequency of use, how often were you using your drug(s) of choice?  
   I do not use drugs or alcohol  
   more than once a day  
   once a day  
   2-3 times per week  
   once a week  
   less than once a week  

Have you ever been admitted into a detox facility?  yes  no  
   If yes, approximately how many times?  

What is your longest period of sobriety?  
   What methods did you use to stay sober for that period of time? (please select all that apply)
   AA/NA meetings  
   incarceration  
   just stopped using  
   stayed away from people who use  
   other: ____________________________

Have you ever witnessed acts of physical violence being committed against other people?  yes  no  
   If yes, approximately how many times in your lifetime?  

Have you ever been the target of physical violence?  yes  no  
   If yes, by whom?  
   family member  
   romantic partner  
   stranger  
   friend  
   other: ____________________________

Have you ever witnessed acts of sexual violence being committed against other people?  yes  no  
   If yes, approximately how many times in your lifetime?  

Have you ever been the target of sexual violence?  yes  no  
   If yes, by whom?  
   family member  
   romantic partner  
   stranger  
   friend  
   other: ____________________________

Have you ever felt controlled by a significant other in a relationship?  yes  no  
   If yes, how what aspects of your life felt controlled by your significant other?  

Have you ever been homeless?  yes  no
If yes,

Have you been homeless more than one time over the past four years? yes no

How did you survive when living on the street? (please select all that apply)

- selling drugs
- sex for a fee
- sex for drugs/alcohol
- criminal activity
- government assistance
- other: ________________________________

Are you currently diagnosed with any mental health conditions? yes no

If yes, please select all that apply:

- anxiety
- depression
- PTSD
- bi-polar
- mood disorder
- other: __________________________________

Have you even been incarcerated prior to your most recent incarceration? yes no

If yes, how many times before? ________

Is this your first time being on Parole? yes no

If no, how many times have you been granted parole in the past? ___________

Are you currently on probation? yes no

Have you been on probation in the past? yes no

If yes, how many times have you been in probation before? ___________

How many people would you consider to be your closest friends?

- 1-2
- 3-5
- 6-8
- 8-10
- over 10

How many people in your life can you share your worries and feelings with?

- 1-2
- 3-5
- 6-8
- 8-10
- over 10

How many people in your life can you rely on for money?

- 1-2
- 3-5
- 6-8
- 8-10
- over 10

How many people in your life can you rely on for transportation?

- 1-2
- 3-5
- 6-8
- 8-10
- over 10
How many people in your life can you rely on for childcare?

- I do not have children
- 1-2
- 3-5
- 6-8
- 8-10
- over 10

People help each other out in a lot of different ways. Suppose you had some kind of problem (were upset about something, needed help with a practical problem, were broke, or needed some advice or guidance), how likely would a) members of your family, and b) your friends be to help you out in each of the specific ways listed below?

I realize that you may rarely need this kind of help, but if you did would family and friends help in the ways indicated. Try to base your answers on your past experience with these people. Use the scale below, and circle one number under family and one number under friends, in each row.

1. no one would do this
2. someone might do this
3. some family member/friend would probably do this
4. some family member/friend would certainly do this
5. most family members/friends would certainly do this

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Friends</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Would suggest doing something, just to take my mind off my problems</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would visit with me, or invite me over</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would comfort me if I was upset</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would give me a ride if I needed one</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would have lunch or dinner with me</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would look after my belongings (house, pets, etc.) for a while</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would loan me a car if I needed one</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would joke around or suggest doing something to cheer me up</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would go to a movie or concert with me</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would suggest how I could find out more about a situation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Would help me out with a move or some big chore
1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4
Would listen if I needed to talk about my feelings
1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4
Would have a good time with me
1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4
Would pay for my lunch if I was broke
1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4
Would suggest a way I might do something
1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4
Would give me encouragement to do something difficult
1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4
Would give me advice about what to do
1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4
Would chat with me
1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4
Would help me figure out what I want to do
1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4
Would show me that they understood how I was feeling
1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4
Would buy me a drink if I was short of money
1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4
Would help me decide what to do
1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4
Would give me a hug, or otherwise show me I was cared about
1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4
Would call me just to see how I was doing
1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4
Would help me figure out what was going on
1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4
Would help me out with some necessary purchase
1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4
Would not pass judgement on me
1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4
Would tell me who to ask for help
1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4
Would loan money to me for an indefinite period
1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4
Would be sympathetic if I was upset
1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Friends</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Would stick by me in a crunch</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 no one would do this</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 someone might do this</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 some family member/friend would probably do this</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 some family member/friend would certainly do this</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5 most family members/friends would certainly do this</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would buy me clothes if I was short of money</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would tell me about the available choices and options</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would loan me tools, equipment, or appliances if I needed them</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would give me reasons why I should or should not do something</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would show affection for me</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would show me how to do something I didn’t know how to do</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Would bring me little presents of things I needed: 1 2 3 4 5

Would tell me the best way to get something done: 1 2 3 4 5

Would talk to other people and arrange something for me: 1 2 3 4 5

Would loan me money and want to “forget about it”: 1 2 3 4 5

Would tell me what to do: 1 2 3 4 5

Would offer me a place to stay for a while: 1 2 3 4 5

Would help me think about a problem: 1 2 3 4 5

Would loan me a fairly large sum of money (say a month’s rent): 1 2 3 4 5

Below are a list of statements about your relationships with your friends and family. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement as being true.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My friends respect me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My family cares for me very much</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am not important to others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My family holds me in high esteem</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am well-liked</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can rely on my friends</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am really admired by my family</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am respected by other people</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am loved dearly by my family</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My friends don’t care about my welfare</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members of my family can rely on me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am held in high esteem</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can't rely on my family for support</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People admire me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel a strong bond with my friends</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My friends look out for me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel valued by other people</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My family really respects me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My friends and I are really important to each other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like I belong</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I died tomorrow, very few people would miss me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't feel close to members of my family</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My friends and I have done a lot for one another</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Below is a list of statements concerning relations with other people. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement. (Using the scale below, circle one number corresponding to each statement.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes it is necessary to talk to someone about your problems</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends often have good advice to give</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You have to be careful who you tell personal things to</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I often get useful information from other people</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People should keep their problems to themselves</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It's easy for me talk about personal and private matters</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the past, friends have really helped me out when I've had a problem</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You can never trust people to keep a secret</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When a person gets upset they should talk it over with a friend</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other people never understand my problems</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almost everyone knows someone they can trust with a personal secret</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If you can’t figure out your problems, nobody can 1 2 3 4

In the past, I have rarely found other peoples’ opinions helpful when I have a problem 1 2 3 4

It really helps when you are angry to tell a friend what happened 1 2 3 4

Some things are too personal to talk to anyone about 1 2 3 4

It’s fairly easy to tell who you can trust, and who you can’t 1 2 3 4

In the past, I have been hurt by people I confided in 1 2 3 4

If you confide in other people, they will take advantage of you 1 2 3 4

It’s okay to ask favors of people 1 2 3 4

Even if I need something, I would hesitate to borrow it from someone 1 2 3 4

Please circle the number that best describes how you feel about each of the statements listed below. If you are not currently in an intimate relationship, please indicate how you felt and acted in your previous intimate relationships.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I think it is best to put myself first because no one else will look out for me.

1 2 3 4 5

I don’t speak my feelings in an intimate relationship when I know it will cause a disagreement.

1 2 3 4 5

Caring means putting the other person’s need in front of my own.

1 2 3 4 5

Considering my needs to be as important as those of the people I love is selfish.
I find it harder to be myself when I am in a close relationship than when I am on my own.

I tend to judge myself by how other people think of me.

I feel dissatisfied with myself because I should be able to do all the things people are supposed to be able to do these days.

When my partner's needs and feelings conflict with my own, I always state mine clearly.

In a close relationship, my responsibility is to make the other person happy.

Caring means choosing to do what the other person wants, even when I want to do something different.

In order to feel good about myself, I need to feel independent and self-sufficient.

One of the worst things I can do is be selfish.

I feel I have to act in a certain way to please my partner.

Instead of risking confrontations in close relationships, I would rather not rock the boat.
I speak my feelings with my partner, even when it leads to problems or disagreements.

Often I look happy enough on the outside, but inwardly I feel angry and rebellious.

In order for my partner to love me, I cannot reveal certain things about myself to him/her.

When my partner's needs or opinions conflict with mine, rather than asserting my own point of view I usually end up agreeing with him or her.

When I am in a close relationship I lose a sense of who I am.

When it looks as though certain of my needs can't be met in a relationship, I usually realize they weren't that important anyway.

---

My partner loves and appreciates me for who I am.

Doing things just for myself is selfish.

When I make decisions, other people's thoughts and opinions influence me more than my own thoughts and opinions.
I rarely express my anger at those close to me.

I feel that my partner does not know my real self.

I think its better to keep my feelings to myself when they do conflict with my partner’s.

I often feel responsible for other people’s feelings.

I find it hard to know what I think and feel because I spend a lot of time thinking about how other people are feeling.

In a close relationship, I don’t really care what we do, as long as the other person is happy.

I try to bury my feelings when I think they will cause trouble in my close relationships.

Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Neither agree Somewhat agree Strongly agree

I never seem to measure up to the standards I set for myself.

If you answered the last question with a “4” or a “5”, please list up to three standards you do not feel you measure up to:

1)
13
2)
Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire. If you have any questions, please contact:
Laura A. Gross
gross.la@husky.neu.edu
Northeastern University, School of Criminology and Criminal Justice
360 Huntington Ave., c/o 400 Churchill Hall
Boston, MA 02115
617-373-3339
**APPENDIX E: MASSACHUSETTS PAROLE SPIRIT DATA COVARIATE CODE SHEET**

MA Parole 2006-2009 Females Code Book

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Variable</strong></th>
<th><strong>Text</strong></th>
<th><strong>Value</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>A-P</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A-I</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A-B</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I-P</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I-I</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I-O</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>Age</td>
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<td>30-35</td>
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<td>divorced</td>
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<td>separated</td>
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<td>widowed</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>common-law</td>
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<td>Ethnicity</td>
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<td>Black</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Asian/pacific islander</td>
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<td></td>
<td>American Indian/Alaskan Native</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foreign Born</td>
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<td>Foreign Citizen</td>
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<td>Driver's License</td>
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<td>Health Insurance Y/N</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>1st Arrest Age</td>
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<td>10 (min) – 60 (max)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>999</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
<td>missing</td>
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<td># Prior Adult Arrests</td>
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<td>Violence History</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assaultive Misdemeanor</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Assaultive History</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>Compliance with Supervision</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>HF: Holding Facility/Prison</td>
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<tr>
<td>HH: Halfway House/Recovery house</td>
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<td>HM: Hotel/Motel</td>
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<td>HO: House</td>
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<td>HS: Homeless Shelter</td>
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<td>MF: Medical Facility</td>
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<td>MH: Mental Health Facility</td>
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<td>NH: Nursing Home</td>
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<td>RF: Refused (RRC)</td>
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<td>RH: Rooming House/Dormitory</td>
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<td>RT: Residential Treatment Center</td>
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<td>SH: Sober House</td>
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<td>TM: Trailer/Mobile Home</td>
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<td>NW= Not in Workforce</td>
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<td>ST = School/Training</td>
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<td>UN = Unemployed</td>
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REFERENCES


