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Waiting for Mommy

Giving a Voice to the Hidden Victims of Imprisonment

Funded by the National Crime Prevention Centre

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For more information on this project, visit www.lfcc.on.ca/cimp.html

Executive Summary

This is an exploratory study of the impact of maternal incarceration on children and adolescents. While some information is available from other countries, little is known in Canada about the numbers or characteristics of Canadian children who are affected by parental incarceration. The goal here is to review available research, and undergo some preliminary data collection, to inform the next steps in research and program development. The study used several methodologies: literature review, survey of incarcerated mothers, survey of mothers after release, interviews of children and adolescents, and a review of program models. Forty-five women were surveyed to learn about their 90 children and adolescents. In addition, six children and one adolescent were interviewed.

Using information collected from the above sources, these observations were made: parental separation triggered by incarceration is different than separation for other reasons; separation because of *maternal* incarceration is more destabilizing for children than paternal incarceration; the stresses and changes associated with maternal incarceration often act on an already challenged family system; children of incarcerated mothers (and fathers) have an elevated vulnerability to criminal behaviour themselves; and, impacts – both emotional and practical – will vary depending on many factors including the age of the child. Finally, certain features of the current system exacerbate the negative impact on children but there are ways to minimize the damage: assure children have safe placements and stable caregivers, find ways for meaningful contact between children and mothers, provide parenting programs, train key professional groups to understand the unique contingencies of parental incarceration, foster meaningful release planning, and help women avoid recidivism.

A developmental framework is proposed to examine the likely impact of maternal crime and incarceration on children of four age groups: infants/toddlers, pre-schoolers, school-aged children, and adolescents. Seven case studies from two families illustrate the concepts discussed, which focus on how children can develop maladaptive coping strategies to adjust to a mother's absence and rationalize her criminal behaviour.

These cognitive and emotional factors can interact with other contextual features (disruptions, family stress, economic disadvantage, etc.) to elevate the possibility they will repeat the patterns of their mothers (and fathers, in many cases) to find themselves in conflict with the law. Important in understanding the elevated propensity for criminal behaviour are features of maternal incarceration that compromise attachment to a nurturing caregiver, compromise school readiness and success, foster anti-social value systems and disrespect for the justice system, and promote attitudes and behaviours correlated with youth crime (e.g., substance abuse, absence of adult supervision, anger management deficits). Our work suggests that, as a crime prevention strategy, early intervention with this group is an effective devotion of resources to high-need youngsters. Few groups in our communities would evidence in the aggregate the number of and range of worrisome adversities and risk factors.

The implications of these findings are .....

1 While they constitute a smaller number than children of incarcerated fathers, the children of incarcerated mothers, to generalize about them as a group, more frequently experience destabilizing disruptions and changes in their lives, are more likely to end up in foster care, are more likely to be affected by paternal incarceration in addition, have mothers with more serious social, emotional and mental health problems, and have mothers who are less well prepared by education and upbringing to provide for them emotionally and financially

2 Alternatives to incarceration would build on a woman's existing strengths rather than tear down the aspects of her life that support lawful behaviour

3 These children are a high-risk group and many are exposed to multiple factors elevating their likelihood of involvement with the criminal justice system

4 Researchers, program designers, and service providers should be aware of how the effects of maternal incarceration vary across developmental stages and how interventions should be tailored to the age and gender of the children as well as other factors such as their status as an ethnic minority and/or new Canadians

5. When women are arrested, efforts to plan for placement will minimize the disruption of multiple placements and ensure that suitable caregivers are chosen

6 Visiting programs and other efforts to maintain the parent/child bond will help children adjust to the absence of and return of their mothers

7 Parenting programs for women in conflict with the law will target a group that is experiencing many challenges and will benefit their children, who are a high risk group for abuse and other factors associated with negative outcome

8 The desire to make a better life for their children is a powerful factor motivating women to make better choices and participate in self-betterment activities

9 Many professional groups will come into contact with these children and training will increase understanding about how parental incarceration affects children on emotional and practical levels

10 Helping women with release planning and successful reintegration will help their children regain (or gain) stability

11 Helping women avoid recidivism will reduce the exposure of their children to the de-stabilization associated with multiple absences

12 Interventions for children matched to age and delivered in a timely manner will have the best chance of success

13 Adolescence (when these children come to the attention of the criminal justice system) may be too late for successful intervention so effort should start early and focus on the entire family system

Recommendations focus on three principal strategies: create viable alternatives to incarceration;assist women to lead productive lives and be nurturing parents;and,support children through increased understanding and developmentally sensitive and targeted assistance. Suggestions for the next steps in research are offered.We know very little at present about the unique circumstances of these children, especially in Canada. Efforts to increase understanding could include: routine collection of data on parental incarceration in social service settings, qualitative study of children, collections of data from incarcerated women about their role as mothers, assessment of children at their mothers'admission and release,comparison of a matched sample of children of probationers and children of inmates, follow-up study of children, follow-up study of released women, a prospective longitudinal follow-up of children, and development and evaluation of interventions for children.The single best way to help these children is to help their mothers stay out of prison.Research on women in the correctional system should focus on these questions: who comes back? ..why? ...how can we address those reasons? This may well require a community-wide response to ensure we have a spectrum of services to address the needs of both women and children.

Not a day goes by that I don't cry to be with my children.

I'm really worried that when my children are older they won't be able to be whatever they want because of me. I really wanted to be someone my children could look up to, and it did not happen.

Being in prison is about losing my identity, my kids, and putting everything and everybody else before my kids and myself. I have a lot of pain; I wonder how much pain my children have. I wonder what kind of questions my children will have, but I am not afraid to answer them honestly.

Among the many ways women in prison differ from their male counterparts, the most significant may be the most overlooked.As Faith (1993: 204) observes, when a mother enters prison she is seen as a convict. In her own mind she shares the dual status of inmate and mother, two obviously incompatible roles that she struggles to reconcile.At home, where a child awaits her mother's return, this split is rarely in evidence.Mommy is gone.

According to the Ministry of Public Safety and Security, on any given day in Ontario 434 women are housed in one of 23 provincial institutions where women serve sentences or await bail hearings or trial. Probably over 300 are mothers (based on data in Shaw & Hargreaves,1994).Assuming an average of two minor children per family, about 600 Ontario youngsters fall asleep each night separated from their mothers because of incarceration. On a national level, that number is probably at least 2,600 each day (based on data in Finn et al., 1999), about 1,700 of whom lived with their mothers at the point of arrest. Over a year, 85,000 sentenced admissions involve women, with admissions for remand and other reasons being double that number (Hendrick & Farmer, 2002).A conservative estimate based on these figures suggests that at least 20,000 Canadian children are separated from their mothers because of incarceration every year.And that number rises as penal populations increase year after year. Prevalence in the general population – how many children have ever been touched by maternal incarceration – is higher than we care to think about.Moreover, a disproportionate number will be Aboriginal or members of a visible minority or new Canadian community.

These youngsters are the hidden victims of

imprisonment. And they are one of the most needful groups of young people in our communities.

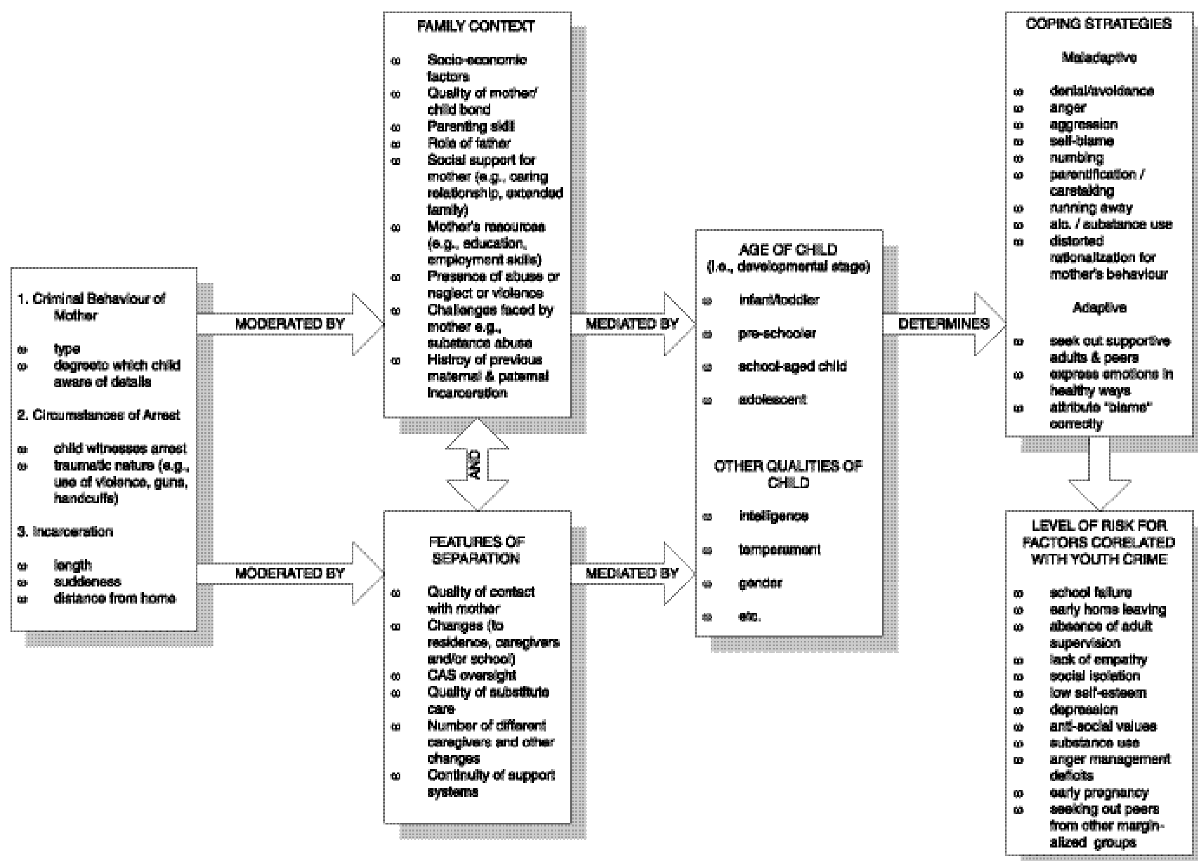
On a practical level, their lives are affected by moving, new caregivers, losing touch with friends,and separation from siblings.Emotionally, they suffer not only the loss of a mother, but also confusion, fear, anger, guilt, and shame.These changes and emotions can manifest in acting out, problems in school or substance use; or these children can prematurely adopt adult roles of caring for younger siblings and trying to keep their mother off drugs or out of prison. They may be teased at school and only reluctantly confide their feelings in others, even their own mothers.At the very least, they have forever lost that innocent place of safety, that unquestioning belief that mommy will always be there,mommy will always take care of me, and mommy is invincible.

This study is an exploratory one, investigating the practical and emotional consequences for children separated from mothers by detention, penal sentences or both. Key emphasis is placed on how these factors interact with pre-existing vulnerabilities to destabilize an already challenged family unit.This situation both disrupts the healthy development of children and seems to elevate the likelihood they will one day find themselves in conflict with the law. Information has been collected about 90 children from 40 incarcerated women and what is now a small sample of women after release. Based upon this information, a review of the literature,interviews with children,and a knowledge of child development, a hypothetical model of impact is put forward for four age groups. Key in this exercise is the explication of how a mother's criminal behaviour / arrest / incarceration,in the absence of buffering factors, puts her children at risk for factors associated with crime among youth (see Figure 1).

I find that I haven't got as many friends as I thought I had, nor has my mum.I've got into a bad habit of drugs. I'm only just coming off them now.All through her period in [prison],I've been doing them. ... I tend to be more closed in and that ... I don't communicate as well as I used to – hard hearted,sort of thing. I can't talk to anyone other than my mum, you see. Sometimes I really want to talk to her but... I don't send my letters I write. But I write to her and although I'm not talking to her, it helps. I just throw them away afterwards (18-year-old "Gina" cited in Howard League for Penal Reform,1993:16).

Figure 1

Model of Risk for Criminal Behaviour Among Children of Incarcerated Women



Background to the Study

In the United States, the mothers of an estimated 126,000 children were in state or federal prison in 1999 and 35,400 households were missing a mother because of incarceration (Mumola, 2000). Adding the enormous jail population would double those figures. In Canada, where parallel figures are not available, we do know that three quarters of federally sentenced women have children (Shaw et al., 1991). In provincial facilities, the figures are 71% in Ontario (Shaw & Hargreaves, 1994) and 69% in British Columbia (Tien et al., 1993), similar to figures from the United States (Snell & Morton, 1994), England and Wales (Walmsley, Howard & White, 1992), and Scotland (Social Work Services and Prisons Inspectorates for Scotland, 1998).

In the United States, 2 of every 100 American children has one or both parents in prison in any given year, a number which has tripled in a decade (Johnson & Waldfogel, 2002).

In other words, most incarcerated women are mothers. Moreover, their numbers (and proportion within penal populations) are growing, and growing at a faster pace than for their male counterparts. As a group they have more serious allied problems, such as substance abuse, than men. And there is evidence to suspect that the frequency and seriousness of these problems among the population of incarcerated women are on the rise. Because inmates tend to be young, most of their children are young. However, some women care for adult children with developmental disabilities and their incarceration constitutes as much or more of a hardship as it does for minor children, some of whom may be left to care for their disabled siblings (Loy, 2000).

Compared with the general population, incarcerated adults are more likely to be parents of underage children (Foran, 1995), possibly because they are younger on average as a group. However, incarcerated women are more likely to be parents than incarcerated men, they are more likely to have custody of their children at admission, and they are more likely to care for them upon release. Moreover, the number of women in prison is rising faster than the number of men (Trevethan, 1999). In the U.K., as but one example, the average number of women in prison increased 140% between 1993 and 2001 compared with 46% for men (Home Office, 2002).

This study focuses on women involved with the provincial correctional system in Ontario, specifically, those on remand, serving sentences of less than two years, or in custody for fine default (see Appendix A for a profile of provincially sentenced women). Provincial facilities house adults on remand, serving sentences of two years less a day, or those awaiting transfer to a federal facility after receiving a sentence of two years or more. Shaw (1994a) found that mothers in Ontario facilities were likely to be single or separated (63%) and had an average of 2.1 children (including adult children). Most of the children (59%) were ten years of age or under and a third were five or under.

Compared with mothers in the general population, these women are young and poor and often burdened with the long-term effects of childhood abuse and exposure to violence. **As children, 40% of the women in our study were themselves separated from parents because of incarceration**, equally likely to have been a mother or a father (and in some cases both). **About half were teenagers when having their first child**. Most acknowledge problems with substance abuse, little formal education, and poor job histories, even compared with male inmates. Indeed, their life circumstances are such that some do not have custody of their children.

Boudin (1998), herself an incarcerated mother, identifies the three central emotions of trauma, shame, and guilt: the woman's own traumatic experiences as a child; shame and guilt about choices that brought them to prison; and, the grief of separation from children. At admission, inmate mothers worry more about their children than they do for their own personal safety (Fogel, 1993). These are profoundly oppressive factors but also powerful levers for change of which correctional programmers should make good use.

I have never been in a place like this before, not to mention being away from my angel. I know what I did was very, very wrong, and I did not understand what it would do to my child. I am so sorry for what I did. Not for me, but for my angel. God knows that. If you ask me if I learned, I did. I never ever want to be away from my baby and in this kind of place again. If God ever gives me a second chance, I'm going to take a good look at my child, and I will promise to him that I will never do this, and never be away from him, again. I was a fool, but it was a learning test that God gave me. I could go on and on, but that is what I have learned. So, I am going to make big changes in my life for me and my son.

(Mother responding to our survey)

The Ontario Council of Elizabeth Fry Societies

Council is a not-for-profit entity first organized in 1952 and today comprised of nine autonomous Elizabeth Fry Societies, a voluntary board,and compassionate donors.These three components of Council are united by core beliefs and committed to raising awareness among the public, working with governments to recommend law and policy reforms reflecting the needs of women, and promoting gender-sensitive and effective services on behalf of adult women and adolescent girls involved with the justice system. Council facilitates effective communication among Ontario societies to identify issues for concerted action.The role of Council at a committee and policy level in provincial corrections compliments that of individual agencies which have both professional staff and volunteers and are governed by Boards of Directors.

Elizabeth Fry societies are located in Hamilton, Kingston,Kitchener/Waterloo,Ottawa, Peel/Halton, Peterborough, Simcoe County, Sudbury and Toronto. An agency is under development in Thunder Bay. Elizabeth Fry societies assist women,from arrest to discharge from prison and return to the community. Services are provided for women (and some men) before the courts,serving sentences in the community, or reintegrating into the community after a period of incarceration.Programs provided by individual agencies include those pertaining to court processing (e.g., court workers,mediation),diversion programs,probation/parole counselling, counselling in local jails, temporary absence supervision and/or escorts for temporary absences,life skills and drug/alcohol programs in institutions, release planning,in-reach programs for lifers,parole supervision,supervision of community service orders, counselling,employment training, and a variety of residential services that include community-residential centres, satellite housing, and supportive housing.

The Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System

The London Family Court Clinic began work in 1974 as a small team of advocates for youths appearing in what was then called the juvenile court. It continues today as the Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System with a considerably expanded range of service, research,training, consultation and advocacy areas.Service areas include preparation of children who are called upon to testify in court,assessments of children for custody and access disputes after parental separation,pre-sentencing assessment of young offenders,testimony in criminal and civil cases involving woman abuse,crisis and other intensive intervention in custody facilities and group homes, and parenting capacity assessments for child welfare cases. In 2002/03, almost 800 young people received services through six clinical programs (Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System, 2003). We have a vibrant and growing capacity for professional training and development of resource material for a variety of audiences.

The mission of the Centre is to integrate research and practice to promote safer communities.A multi-disciplinary understanding of families and the legal system informs a holistic approach to research that is sensitive to gender, culture, age, and ability. Our research helps us refine and develop innovative programs for children and families, recommend new directions for policy, and identify the next steps for further research.A strict ethical protocol demands that all research be grounded in the needs of our client groups, to help them and others like them receive a more effective service (Cunningham, 2003). We are committed to widely disseminating research findings through the the Internet.

Methodology

This study employs several methodologies to collect information from a variety of sources.

Literature Review

The first step was to conduct a review of the literature available on this topic. In recent years,there has been an increased interest in how children are affected by parental incarceration, but almost all the material has been produced in other countries.See Appendix B for a list of selected web sites, books, reports and articles.

Survey of Incarcerated Mothers

Permission was secured from the Research Committee at the Ministry of Public Safety and Security to distribute surveys in three provincial institutions: Elgin Middlesex Detention Centre,Metro West Detention Centre, and the Vanier Institution for Women.Surveys were distributed through the Elizabeth Fry Societies in Toronto and in Peel/Halton and by an MPSS social worker in the case of Elgin Middlesex. It was important that a supportive person

be available to the women should they have any questions or concerns about the survey. A quarter said that completing the survey was quite upsetting and another 44% said it was little bit upsetting. Overall, however, most of them appreciated the opportunity to discuss their role as mothers. Many wrote comments which are interjected throughout this document or are reproduced in Appendix C. The survey itself can be found on our web site at www.lfcc.on.ca/cimp.html.

I know I am a very young mom but nothing in this world comes before my children and myself or their father. Nothing. I have so much more to say but I must stop now before I start to cry. Thanks for listening. Yours truly, upset mother. P.S. I feel like a big disappointment to myself, my mother and most of all my children.

(Mother responding to our survey)

The women were asked for their correctional status (detained, sentenced or both), how much time they had to make childcare arrangements before admission, how long they had been in custody, how they kept in touch with children, whether there had been visits, and how far away their children lived. In addition to demographic information, they were asked to identify the struggles they faced as parents. Finally, the current circumstances of each child was reviewed, including caregivers, involvement of fathers, involvement of the Children's Aid Society (CAS), and life changes precipitated by their mother's admission to custody.

Only women with children under 18 were asked to complete the survey. In total 40 surveys were completed by women in custody with information pertaining to 78 children or teenagers. Forty-three percent of the women were serving a sentence and the remainder were in detention. Almost all the sentenced women had served a period of detention. **Those in detention had so far spent an average of 12 weeks in custody, with a range of 1 to 52 weeks. Women under sentence expected to serve on average 20 weeks with the longest term being two years less a day.** As described later, a similar survey was completed by different women after release, while on bail awaiting trial or on probation following a provincial sentence.

The demographics of the incarcerated women and their children are as follows:

- the women were on average 32 years old ranging from 19 to 47
- they had an average of 2 children under 18 with an average age of 8.1 years
- 10% of the women also had children 18 or over
- one of the 40 women was pregnant and one thought she might be
- two women were nursing babies at the time of admission
- 59% had been 19 or younger when their first child was born
- almost all children the women described were their biological children but four were step-children and one was the child of another family member
- half the children were aged six or under
- 74% of the children were male
- 78% of the children had siblings and 22% were only children
- 17% of the women described themselves as Aboriginal
- 38% described themselves as a visible minority
- 22% had been born outside Canada and for 13% English was not their first language
- 38% had finished high school
- 60% were unemployed when arrested for the current offence
- 38% had been supported by Ontario Work (i.e., welfare) prior to admission
- 36% said they will be returning to a relationship after discharge and 27% were not sure
- 43% of the children had no contact with their biological fathers not including two children whose fathers were deceased

Accordingly, the sample matches the expected profile: young mothers with young children, high levels of unemployment and early school leaving, low levels of father involvement, and an over-representation of Aboriginals and visible minorities. The one anomalous finding is the figure about the sex distribution of the children for which an explanation is not immediately evident. There was also, as discussed below, a high rate of reported challenges including abuse during childhood, substance abuse, poor health and problems with alcohol. In addition, 38% had been separated from a parent as a child because of parental incarceration.

In terms of their children,

- 60% of the women had custody of at least one child at the time of admission
- children not living with their mothers most often had lived with fathers, grandparents or in foster care
- for 36% of the children, this was not the first time apart from their mothers because of incarceration

- 46% of the children knew their mothers were in prison (mother report),more likely true of the adolescents that the young children
- 85% of women who had custody of at least one child said they had no time to make arrangements for the children prior to admission
- while their mothers were in custody, children most commonly lived with fathers (24%), in foster care (21%), with the mother's family (18%), or with step-fathers (10%)
- this prompted a change in residence for 43% of the children
- almost half of the children who had siblings (under 18) were living apart from them
- a CAS was involved in varying capacities with half of the children
- four of the children were in youth custody when their mothers completed the survey
- 18% said their children had been to visit them at the institution
- 77% plan to live with their children upon release including those who would have to regain custody from the CAS or an ex-partner

Survey of Mothers After Release

A survey was also developed for women recently released from a period in provincial custody. It is similar to the one administered in the institutions but addresses the challenges commonly associated with reintegration. This survey is also completed by the mothers of the children/adolescents we interview. So far five surveys have been administered pertaining to 12 children under 18. The survey itself can be found on our web site at www.lfcc.on.ca/cimp.html.

Interview of Children and Adolescents

This was the main component of the study as proposed but it proved difficult to find families to participate. We have interviewed six children (ages 5 to 12) and one adolescent. Given the vulnerability of this group, to our usual ethical safeguards (Cunningham, 2003) we added a pre-interview screening tool to identify possible points of trauma for the child (e.g., seeing the mother arrested,having a father in prison,etc.).Efforts to locate families for the study included distribution of pamphlets at key locations where women in conflict with the law might reasonably be expected to frequent (e.g., the John Howard Society, probation office,homeless shelter, Children's Aid Society). Posters were hung in several public areas around London including social service agencies and an ad was placed in the Pennysaver. Women released from the local detention centre were told about the study by the social worker (but not all are local). We believe barriers to participation include the fact that many women do not have custody of their children after release (and we were targeting mothers in our efforts), women might be embarrassed to identify themselves as former inmates, and some women have not told their children why they were gone. It would also be understandable that they do not want to dwell on a painful period from the past. However, it is our experience that most children appreciate the opportunity to speak about feelings and experiences in a supportive environment.Often, as indicated by the title of a British study, "no one's ever asked" (Brown et al., 2002).

Someone should ask me what it is like for me. Nobody had ever asked what I think about it, how it has affected me.... [My father] has had social workers, probation officers,psychologists. No one ever asks me or my mum what we want. (16-year old boy with a father in prison, quoted in Brown et al., 2002.)

Proposal of a Developmental Model of Impact

When all the information from above is contrasted with what we know about child development, we can surmise how children and adolescents of different ages come to understand the imprisonment of their mothers and are affected by it. This includes thoughts and feelings about the absence, adjustment to changes, coming to terms with the criminal offence and sentence of the court, and fears for the mother's safety.

Review of Program Models

Finally, a preliminary review was undertaken of program models now being used with women and children in Canada and in other jurisdictions.

Key Findings

Pooling information gathered from survey data and the literature review, several observations can be made about the experiences and needs of children affected by maternal incarceration.

Parental separation triggered by incarceration is different than separation for other reasons

Parents and children can be separated by many factors,including death, divorce,military service,and hospitalization.The difference here is evident most saliently in the larger context and poor outcomes of these children relative to children who experience divorce or even the death of a mother.The National Crime Prevention Centre funded this study recognizing the struggles they face – before,during and after the separation – elevate their likelihood of criminal behaviour as youth or adults.These children share the marginalized social and economic status of their mothers and generally face conditions that no parent wants for their children:poverty, multiple moves and school changes,and, for some, the cycle in and out of foster care or through the homes of multiple caregivers.The stigma of incarceration may prevent them from reaching out for help. Or, incarceration may become a normal part of family life. Even after release, a child's unquestioning belief in the continuity of a parent's presence has been shattered forever. If it can happen once, it could happen again. The anticipatory anxiety over the next separation will be debilitating for some children.

> *These children are scarred by the loss of their mothers, whose sentences often sentence their children to a shifting series of foster-care arrangements.Thus, an entire generation of children becomes at risk; in some real sense, the sins of the mothers are visited on the sons and daughters, and the potential for re-creating a new generation of inmates is great*
>
> (McQuaide & Ehrenreich, 1998: 234).

Separation because of maternal incarceration is more destabilizing for children than paternal incarceration

Because men constitute 95% of provincial inmates in Ontario, and generally serve longer sentences than women, it is easy to speculate that many more children will be touched by paternal rather than maternal incarceration.A few features of parental imprisonment are the same, including some factors commonly associated with negative adjustment among children:separation, potential for identification with the incarcerated parent, social stigma and, in some families, the effects of deception in explaining the absence (Gabel,1992). But there are good reasons to suspect that children of incarcerated women experience more disruption in their lives and suffer in ways different than children of male inmates. Therefore, while paternal incarceration is far more common, *maternal* incarceration has the potential to cause more disruption and negative consequences for children.At least one study has documented that children of incarcerated women tend to have serious emotional and behavioural problems not evident among children of incarcerated fathers (Richards & McWilliams,1996).Why is this to be expected?

* mothers in prison are more likely to be a custodial parent than fathers in prison

In the U.S., 64% of state prisoners and 84% of federal prisoners who were mothers lived with their children at admission, much higher than the parallel figures for inmate fathers (44% and 55% respectively) (Mumola, 2000). In the jail population, women were more likely than men to be parents and to be living with their children at arrest (Schafer & Dellinger, 1999).In Scotland,where 70% of women in prison have at least one child,only 17% of their children are cared for by their fathers while 87% of the children of imprisoned fathers are cared for by their mothers (Social Work Services and Prisons Inspectorates for Scotland, 1998).The implication for children is that they are likely to lose a caretaker parent, one who lived with them and took care of them on a daily basis.

* when a mother goes to prison, it is likely the children will have to change caretakers and residences

In our study, **about half of the children had to change residences. Almost half of the children who had siblings were living separately from them while their mother was in custody. For 8% of the children, the mothers felt that the current placement was not safe and a further 23% had mixed feeling**. When a father goes to prison, it is likely that his children's mother will continue to care for them, whether the father was in the home or not.When a mother goes to prison, few children continue living in their own homes. In the large American jail population, the children of women who are arrested and detained are more likely to change caretakers than the children of men (Schafer & Dellinger, 1999). In Oklahoma (Sharp et al., 1997/98), half of the children of female inmates both

lost their mothers and had to leave their homes. Most incarcerated mothers are lone parents without a partner in the home to continue or step into the caretaker role. Or, they are involved with men who are not willing or able to take care of the children. The implication for children is that they usually have to change residences to live with a grandparent, non-custodial father, or foster parents. This is often accompanied by associated changes of schools and loss of contact with friends and other family. Siblings may also be split up over several households. These factors serve to disrupt a child's social support network at a time when they are most in need of stability.

children of women in prison are at greater risk of being taken into care

In most jurisdictions, more children of inmate mothers will live in foster care than will live with their fathers. In our study, **21% of the children were in foster care while the mother was in custody while 24% were living with their fathers**. In the U.S., children of mothers in prison are more likely to end up in the care of a child protection agency than if their father is imprisoned (Johnson & Waldfogel, 2002). In a New York study of drug offenders, 0.7% of incarcerated fathers said their children were in foster care compared with 18% of women (Human Rights Watch, 2002). The implications are several. First, it can be difficult for a mother to regain custody after release. Second, children may experience multiple placements, which is an even more destabilizing experience. Finally, according to the Child and Family Services Act of Ontario (and parallel legislation in other jurisdictions), lengthy periods in care, or the accumulation of time over multiple placements, can trigger wardship. In Ontario, for example, wardship is automatic if a child under six has been the subject of a temporary care agreement for 12 months. For children over six, the period is 24 months, continuously or in intervals. While foster care is intended to be beneficial in that it is superior to the previous living arrangement, few would argue that foster care is the best situation for children. Studies in the U.S., for example, have shown that children in foster care fair poorly in school, in terms of performance, attendance, completion, and advancement to post-secondary education, even compared with children of similar backgrounds (Finkelstein et al., 2002). Reasons postulated include the frequent change of schools, missing school because of appointments and other contingencies of life in care, reluctance to form bonds with peers (because of embarrassment or anticipation of moving), difficulty concentrating because of distractions associated with their situation (such as missing parents or sibs) and because the focus of helpers in their lives is often on other issues so they are less likely to receive help with school work. These factors mirror those experienced by children of prisoners

women in conflict with the law tend to have partners who are also in conflict the law

Another factor that augers badly for children of incarcerated women is that many of them have fathers or father surrogates who are also involved with the criminal justice system. Having a criminal family member, especially a parent, is one of the variables most highly correlated with criminal behaviour in youth (e.g., Farrington et al., 2001). Some fathers in prison have relationships with women with criminal records, but it seems that mothers who have been in prison are highly likely to be in relationships with men who have criminal records. For example, in one English study, 60% of mothers with criminal records in a sample of intact families were in relationships with men who had criminal records. The reverse was true in only 20% of cases (Wilson, 1987). This means that children with mothers in prison are more likely as a group to experience both maternal and paternal absences due to incarceration. In a Pittsburgh study, among boys with mothers who had histories of arrest, 81.9% of their fathers also had histories of arrest (Farrington et al., 2001). In Maryland, 19% of incarcerated women said a father of at least one of their children was also incarcerated at the very same time and, in Oregon, 42% of women inmates surveyed had a spouse or partner with criminal convictions (Moses, 1995).

women in prison tend to have more serious allied problems than men in prison

In Canada, provincially sentenced women have higher needs than their male counterparts especially in the areas of substance abuse and marital/family issues (Finn et al., 1999). Federally sentenced women evidenced significantly higher levels of difficulty with behavioural and emotional stability and family relations, and lower academic and vocational skills compared with male offenders (Blanchette & Dowden, 1998). In the U.K., 15% of sentenced women had spent time in a mental hospital or psychiatric ward, half were on medication for a mental health problem and, at 40%, they were twice as likely as male inmates to have received treatment for a mental health issue in the year prior to admission, but there were lower rates of personality disorder (Singleton,

Meltzer & Gatward, 1998 cited in Home Office,2002). In Oklahoma (Sharp et al., 1997/98), women were more likely that male inmates to have used drugs when their children were in the home. Women in prison have a higher rate of HIV infection – almost twice as high – in all American states (Maruschak, 2002). Also in the United States (Mumola, 2000), comparing imprisoned mothers with fathers,mothers have more serious problems with drugs and higher rates of mental illness. Women were more likely to report drug use in the month before admission, more likely to report intravenous drug use, used more serious drugs, and were twice as likely to have committed their present offence under the influence of cocaine-based drugs or opiates (e.g., crack,heroin). Rates of alcohol dependence were high but the same, about one quarter for both sexes in state facilities and lower in the federal population. Rates of mental illness were about twice as high among mothers than fathers. On the other hand, women were less likely to have prior records (especially for violence) and were serving shorter sentences on average.

women in prison are more socially and economically disadvantaged than men in prison

Several features of the average incarcerated woman suggest that the mothers among them will have more difficulty with housing and other aspects of life for children. Women in provincial facilities are likely to have a grade nine education and be unemployed prior to admission (Finn et al., 1999). Compared with women in the Canadian population, women in prison are younger, have lower levels of education, and dramatically higher rates of unemployment (Trevethan,1999). Compared to male inmates, female inmates in Canada are less likely to have been employed before admission but share similar (i.e., low) levels of education (Trevethan,1999). In the United States, compared with incarcerated fathers, inmate mothers had lower incomes, higher rates of unemployment, were more than twice as likely to have been homeless in the past year, and were twice as likely as the men to be relying on friends or family for economic support (Mumola, 2000). Moreover, it is well established ethnic minorities are over-represented in penal populations, perhaps more so among women than among men. In 1992/93, one third of adult female admissions to Ontario prisons were visible minorities compared with one quarter of males (Gittens & Cole, 1995). Race may be as important as gender in understanding the needs of women in conflict with the law (Coll et al., 1997).

mothers released from prison face more parenting challenges than fathers

In a U.K.study that followed mothers and fathers for six months after release (Richards & McWilliams, 1996), the women had greater difficulty reestablishing relationships with their children and saw their children as having more emotional and behavioural problems. Because the incarceration of women is centralized in a few institutions, they are more likely to be held far from home, diminishing the likelihood of family visits. An interesting study in Kentucky (Koban, 1983) found that more men than women have frequent contact with their children while in custody, fewer men have problems contacting their children, men can generally depend on the child's mother to facilitate a visit, men's children are less often separated from their siblings, and men are usually incarcerated closer to their home communities compared with women. In consequence, not only do their children experience fewer disruptions in their lives, they would find it easier to maintain contact with an incarcerated father auguring better for the re-establishment of a relationship after release.

> *Compared with men, women offenders are more likely to have children, to have responsibility for them, to be caring for them at the time of their offence, and to feel the problems of separation as a result of custody more keenly. The children of female offenders are also more likely to be affected by their mother's conviction and absence, and to experience greater upheaval in their lives as a result of her conviction. That, in turn, increases the likelihood that they, themselves, will be at greater risk of offending as they grow up*
>
> (Shaw, 1994: 1).

The stresses and changes associated with maternal incarceration often act on an already challenged family system

The factors that bring most women into conflict with the law – and the consequences including incarceration – would severely challenge any woman in her efforts to be a mother. We asked women what factors made it difficult to be the best mothers they could be. In order of frequency, the women said:

- **not having enough money (74%)**
- **conflict with the children's father (59%)**
- **not being confident in their parents skills (56%)**
- **being abused as a child (54%), including two who felt they were better mothers because of this**
- **substance abuse (54%)**
- **not having family to help (51%)**
- **health problems (51%)**
- **having too many other responsibilities (46%)**
- **problems with alcohol (42%)**

In an open-ended question about worries for after release, **the most frequently stated factors were needing money, the CAS, a drug problem, not having enough support, and having a criminal record. Other worries were about deportation, homelessness, and how the length of time away would affect them**. Our findings are similar to those from an Ohio jail, where help with housing was the most frequently mentioned issue requiring assistance, followed by drug counselling, mental health counselling, financial aid, alcohol counselling, and education/training (Singer et al., 1995).Challenges typically faced by women in the re-entry phase include the inability to find effective drug treatment programs, health problems, mental health problems, the effects of childhood abuse, the need for educational upgrading and job skills training, the need for safe and affordable housing, and the need to re-establish a relationship (perhaps not a custodial one) with their children (Richie,2001).

Gabel (1992) argues that at least some of the emotional and behavioural problems manifested by children of incarcerated parents are less attributable to the absence than to the overall family functioning and circumstances.Even compared with other children in an intensive hospital-based day treatment program,Gabel and Shindledecker (1992, 1993) found that the children of incarcerated parents had somewhat higher levels of externalizing problems such as aggression and delinquency, more pronounced for boys that girls.They believe that higher levels of problems among clinical samples of children affected by parental incarceration can be attributed in part to higher rates of child abuse and parental substance abuse. In this view, the destabilisation associated with maternal incarceration is acting on a family unit that already faces many challenges.After release, some families are again challenged by the need to restore a residence,income source, and perhaps a social support network.

Are there things you worry about that might make it difficult [to achieve your plans for your children after release]?

- *I worry about lost time being in jail, and I worry about not having enough money.*
- *I worry about having a record, and I hope that it doesn't affect my life. I know no one is perfect, and everyone makes mistakes, so I hope that I can have a second chance. No one can judge me but God, so I am going to leave it to him.*
- *I'm worried that I won't be able to stay in Canada.*
- *Yes, I worry about not having enough support. However, I believe I will overcome, because in my heart I want to change my life. I'm looking forward to treatment and a better life.*
- *I hope my daughter is getting the best car possible.*
- *Yes, my children are currently with CAS in [a northern city] and I anticipate a problem with relocation.*
- *I am scared that my unborn baby will be born here, and about not being able to spend time with my 2 year old.*
- *I'm worried about an abusive relationship with the father.*
- *I'm worried that I will have to fight legally to get my son back.*
- *I'm worried about drugs, housing problems, no money, and no support.*
- *Yes, I am worried about money.*
- *I'm worried about the sentence length, and if I'm able to look after my child properly after a long sentence. How will my incarceration affect my ability to act as a parent?*
- *I am worried about the amount of time between being incarcerated and being released, and the effect one caregiver will have on three of my children. My 16 year old has already run away.*
- *I am worried about work and money.*
- *I am worried about CAS getting involved.*
- *No. I trust we will return back to our daily schedule as far as adjustments are concerned.*
- *CAS is going for six-month temporary care and custody of my seven-month old and CAS wants to make my son (2 years old) a ward.*
- *I worry how my newborn [three-weeks old] will react – will she remember me? I worry about how my 10-year old thinks of me and if she feels sad.*

Despite the concerns these women have about their readjustment to the parenting role, they want parental responsibilities; and they do resume them. In resuming these responsibilities, they find that in addition to juggling the needs of their children, they have the responsibilities of: (1) locating stable employment, (2) meeting the requirements of the criminal justice system, and often (3) resuming the sole financial and emotional care of their children. Such a situation is stressful even for mothers who are without the stigma of incarceration (Browne, 1989:212).

Empirical work examining criminal etiology among women almost invariably focuses on family of origin issues, victimization, and abusive or exploitative relationships in early life. The majority of abused and neglected children will grow up to lead law-abiding lives. However, the vast majority of women in correctional systems have experienced childhood abuse and neglect, compromising their health and the ability to develop emotionally in a nurturing family, complete school, live at home until adulthood, and enter into non-abusive and non-exploitive relationships. In contrast, they can develop coping strategies associated with escape and survival that can take the form of or lead to criminal behaviour.

Accordingly, criminal behaviour in women is typically seen as part of an overall coping strategy that frequently has its roots in childhood abuse or neglect, followed by leaving home young, school drop-out, and substance abuse as a coping mechanism (see Table 1). Perhaps as a direct consequence, women in conflict with the law typically have lives characterized by poverty, inadequate housing, abusive or exploitative partners, and instability such as frequent moves. As already noted, many women in prison left school before graduation, had their first child as a teenager, and are unemployed. They are also likely to have few job skills and be reliant either on welfare, low-paying jobs, or criminal sources of income. Even compared with men in prison, as noted above, they have high rates of serious drug problems.

In some families, a mother's absence benefits children. In a small number of cases, incarceration can even benefit the woman, if it constitutes a haven from a violent relationship, a respite from drugs, or a place to access educational upgrading, helpful programs or nutritious food. All these benefits, however, can be achieved in less intrusive ways. To the extent that incarceration is disproportionately experienced by women who already face many challenges in life, it also tends to break down the sometimes tenuous community ties that women need to remain crime-free: housing, employment, and support networks (see Table 2). In our sample of women, 38% had jobs at arrest and 60% had residences they characterized as safe and stable, all positive things that would be jeopardized by imprisonment. In addition, 27% were not sure if their relationships would remain intact upon their return to the community. According to this model, incarceration can elevate risk for recidivism among women.

Imprisonment is destructive to the parenting role. Not only does it sever the parent-child relationship, but it also fosters dependency, a behaviour unconducive to the development of responsibility for one's children. For many mothers, the separation from their children is akin to a loss resulting from divorce or death, and this loss necessitates difficult adjustments. Related to the sense of loss is the incarcerated mother's overall fear of inadequacy as a mother and her fear of being unable to readjust to living with her children upon release

(Browne, 1989: 212).

Table 1

Pathways from Family of Origin Factors to Conflict with the Law Among Women

FAMILY OF ORIGIN	POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES	IMPLICATIONS
• sexual and/or physical abuse • emotional and/or physical neglect • exposure to family violence • parental alcohol and/or substance abuse • parental criminality/incarceration • exposure to anti-social values/criminal role models	• health and mental health problems • early home leaving/school drop-out • early child bearing • poor housing / homelessness • abusive and/or exploitative partners • low employability and poor job record • alcohol and drug problems	• survival crime • exploitation by others in the form of sex trade involve-ment, drug sales and economic crime such as shop theft • serial incarceration destabilizing social supports, employment and housing • correctional interventions not designed to address women's unique needs

Table 2

Model of How Maternal Incarceration Destabilizes a Challenged Family System

CHALLENGED FAMILY SYSTEM	IMPACT OF INCARCERATION	CHALLENGES AFTER RELEASE
• Low education attainment + poor job history = low income • Financial pressures = poor nutrition, bad neighbourhoods, etc. • Substance abuse = potential for neglect of child's emotional and physical needs • little / no / negative involvement of biological father • history of abuse in mother's family of origin = lower likelihood of effective support from extended family, poor parenting role models, early home leaving • abusive / exploitative relationships = low self-esteem of mother, exposure of children to violence, elevated risk for child abuse	• termination of any employment • loss of housing / housing subsidy • loss of relationship • loss of custody of children • disruption of social support networks • stigma / social isolation • immersion in anti-social environment • access to substances(or decreased access to substances depending upon facility) • emotional / practical impacts on child • decreased exposure to relationship violence • potential for parenting courses	• re-establishing an income source (employment, OW, etc.) • finding appropriate / affordable housing for self and children • re-gaining custody from current caregiver (e.g., CAS) • re-establishing a relationship with children • finding affordable day care • regaining social support network • criminal record affecting employability

Among girls incarcerated by the California Youth Authority – a quarter of whom were already mothers – 89% had a family member who had been arrested and 85% had a family member who had been in prison. Half the girls (49%) said their fathers had been in prison and a quarter (27%) said this was true of their mothers. Two thirds of the girls believed this did not affect their lives. Among those who could articulate an impact, the most were: I was surrounded by crime,drugs and gangs; I admired and wanted to be like them; I wasn't able to know them because they were in prison; it made me sad and angry; I felt unloved and abandoned; it was a way of life; family member was a crime partner; when they got arrested I started getting into trouble; I was placed in care because of it; I turned to the gang because of it; and I was left on my own (Owen & Bloom, 2000).

Children of incarcerated mothers (and fathers) have an elevated vulnerability to criminal behaviour themselves

One observer has called these children "the next generation," so great is the correlation between parental criminality and delinquency (Hagan,1996). In a prospective longitudinal study of 1,517 boys in Pittsburgh, half with arrested mothers (49.2%) were reported as delinquent (Farrington et al., 2001). In our survey, as already noted, 40% of the women had been separated as a child from a mother, father or both because of parental incarceration. Moreover, among their children 12 or older, one third had spent some time in youth custody. These findings are similar to those in other studies. According to a large-scale study of American parents behind bars, for example, a significant and growing proportion of both mothers and fathers report that a mother, father or both have been incarcerated (see Table 3). In state prisons in the U.S., 42% of regular drug users and 31% of alcohol-involved offenders have a close family member who served time (Centre on Addition and Substance Abuse,1998).The same childhood factors associated with women's criminal behaviour – abuse, social disorganization, poor coping strategies such as substance use – can be replicated in the lives of their own children, a cycle many women recognize but find difficult to interrupt (Greene et al., 2000).

Table 3

History of Parental Incarceration Among State Prisoners who are Parents in 1986, 1991 and 1997, United States

	1986		1991		1997	
	Mothers (n=1,967)	Fathers (n=5,769)	Mothers (n=1,865)	Fathers (n=1,889)	Mothers (n=6,158)	Fathers (n=6,179)
Mother Incarcerated	3.1%	1.3%	4.0%	1.4%	8.6%	4.7%
Father Incarcerated	6.3%	6.4%	8.2%	6.3%	16.8%	15.9%
Mother or Father	8.5%	7.1%	10.8%	7.0%	22.6%	18.8%

Source:Reproduced from figures in Johnson & Waldfogel,2002:467.

> *I've been in corrections for 18 years and I've seen three generations of people in facilities – grandmother, mother, and daughter at the same time*
> (cited in Moses, 1995: 3).

Figures vary but the Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents conservatively estimates that these children have two to three times the average risk of being incarcerated in their lifetimes, a figure which is already very high in the United States. Why? While the correlations are strong, any causal mechanisms are not well understood. Hypothesized links between parent and child criminality typically focus on these factors:

1. Privation/adversity (i.e, the stresses and strains associated with marginalized and socially disorganized lives, residential instability, poverty, disadvantaged neighbourhoods, inter-generational transmission of abuse and neglect, exposure to violence in the home, etc.)
2. Modelling/social learning (i.e., children observe criminal behaviour as successful strategies to solve problems, adopt anti-social values, see prison as normal and expected part of family life, develop an "us vs. them" view of police and courts)
3. Stigma/stereotyping (i.e., police with discretion may be quicker to lay a charge assuming "the apple doesn't fall far from the tree," children may adopt a self-identification as a damaged or inevitably destined to follow the family script)
4. Poor coping strategies (i.e., in response to parental absences, anxiety, guilt and sadness result in angry outbursts, substance abuse, etc.)
5. Genetics (i.e., certain genes or genetic traits constitute a predisposition to violence, poor impulse control, cognitive impairments, etc.)

Farrington *et al.* (2001) outline six possible explanations for the high concentration of criminal offending in some families: 1) inter-generational continuities in exposure to multiple risk factors (e.g., poverty, poor child rearing); 2) assortative mating meaning that people tend to marry people who are similar to themselves; 3) the influence of family members on each other (e.g., younger siblings imitate the behaviour of older siblings); 4) the mediation of environmental mechanisms (e.g., criminal men choosing young partners, living in bad neighbourhoods, etc.); 5) genetic potential that interacts with environmental factors; and, 6) bias by the criminal justice system against the families of known offenders.

Teasing out the effect of parental criminality from the effect of parental incarceration may be difficult, as is isolating a temporal order of some variables. Some factors can operate as positive influences in some families and negative in others. Lengthy or repeated absences can deprive a child of a good parent or damage the parent/child bond and reduce the mother's credibility as an authority figure. Or the absence of a mother can free a child from an abusive or neglectful home. There are also many mediating and moderating factors likely at work. For example, the findings of Robins et al. (1975) suggest that larger families may be more likely to see criminal behaviour in the second generation, an explanation for which probably lies in factors associated with family size. In the developmental model hypothesized below, we demonstrate that maternal criminal behaviour and incarceration will likely affect children differently depending upon their ages but that there is a logical connection between maternal incarceration and risk factors for crime.

> *Want to create a criminal? Change everything in a child's life and keep changing it. Undermine their sense of belonging and security from their family connections and their cultural heritage. Add racism, poverty, social isolation, to further develop feelings of insecurity and social deprivation. Given a child's growth stage, they are unable to articulate their feelings so we watch this child start to "act out" their anger, frustrations and deep hurt. We then label the child "bad," unmanageable," "challenging," etc. to further perpetuate their feelings of unworthiness and victimization. Keep this up until one day the child turns to alcohol, drugs, prostitution and eventually, if there is no intervention or turn around, the child is labelled "criminal" and becomes a part of the system*
> (Theijsmeifer, 2002: 2).

Impact will vary depending on many factors including the age of the child

Not all children will be equally affected by the absence of a mother and Gabel (1992) suggests that impact must be understood from the point of view of the meaning for the child. Hagan (1996) observes that few if any studies examine children before and after the period of incarceration leaving us to speculate on specifically how children are affected – positively or negatively. Johnston & Gabel (1995) enumerate the life challenges facing most women in prison but present data to refute the assumption of many professionals that they are bad parents. Nevertheless,

some parents are negative influences – especially those who are abusive or neglectful – and their absence can be objectively positive to outside observers. The absence may bring a stable caretaker and associated benefits into their lives. However, even the most objectively toxic parent may be loved dearly by a child and the separation is keenly felt on an emotional level. Therefore, impact has many dimensions, both practical and emotional.

> *All the students concerned were very different and reacted in very different ways to the imprisonment of a parent. What they shared in common was the need for awareness and understanding of their family's situation*
> (school principal cited in Ramsden, 1998: 53).

Drawing upon our knowledge of the impact of adverse events on children, we can speculate which factors might mediate or moderate the relationship between maternal incarceration and child outcome: pre-disposition of the children (e.g., temperament, intelligence); situational factors (e.g., age, birth order, presence and age of siblings); characteristics of the parent/child bond (e.g., abusive, enmeshed, role reversal); parenting skill; characteristics of the absence (e.g., suddenness, trauma associated with witnessing arrest, length, distance from home, ability to contact mother); and, quality of care provided while the mother is gone (see Figure 1).

There is also evidence to suggest that children of Aboriginal mothers may face higher levels of challenges. Shaw (1994b) found that Aboriginal women in Ontario institutions were more likely to have children, had larger families, and were more likely to have been living with their children at admission than were non-Aboriginal women, concluding that a higher proportion of children are likely to be affected by a mother's incarceration. They were also less likely to have visits with their children while incarcerated, be institutionalized farther from home, were more likely to report sexual or physical abuse as a child, had lower levels of education on average with higher levels of alcohol abuse, and 80% lived in the north where resources are harder to access. On the other hand, Aboriginal women were serving shorter sentences on average and reported higher levels of family support.

We can also speculate that boys and girls will be affected in different ways by maternal incarceration, although there is little data available to fill out this picture. Many questions remain unanswered, including if girls are more negatively affected by the incarceration of a same-sex parent. In the hypothetical model presented below, we suggests different ways that boys and girls might cope in the aftermath of maternal incarceration.

> *[After release of the mother], young children often exhibited signs of insecurity: they became clingy and were worried about their mothers leaving them again. They were also seen by their mothers to be angry with them and often difficult to control. Women also felt that they had lost the respect and trust of their children. Those women with teenage children felt that problems they had experienced with them were not so clear cut; they may have been just a function of the young person's developmental stage. Women with younger children or those in care talked about a loss of closeness in their relationship with their children due to a lack of contact and about their children bonding with their caregivers. The women were also concerned about the attitudes of their children towards the police and the implications of this. Younger children were said to be afraid and distrustful, whereas older children had lost respect*
> (Kingi, 2000: 6).

Certain features of the current system exacerbate the negative impact on children but there are factors that can minimize the damage

In our study, and based on the literature review, we can identify several features of the incarceration of mothers that exacerbate the negative impact on children. In other words, the separation is bad enough, but these preventable factors can make things worse: lack of time to arrange a substitute caregiver, difficulty maintaining meaningful contact, absence of programs to address parenting skills especially in detention centres, lack of meaningful release planning, and the paucity of specialized programs available for children. It follows from these observations that efforts to improve these situations would ameliorate the situation for children. The general public may have little sympathy for people who find themselves on the wrong side of prison bars, but it can only be in society's interest to safeguard these innocent victims who have been called the "collateral" casualties of our zeal for imprisonment (Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999; Human Rights Watch, 2002).

Assure Children have Stable Caregivers and Safe Placements

In our study, when children lived with their mothers, in 83% of cases the women had no time at all to make arrangements for substitute carers when first admitted to custody.This could occur when a woman is arrested and denied bail or when a sentencing hearing unexpectedly results in a prison sentence. In our sample, most sentenced women had first been remanded in custody, suggesting that arrest may be a common reason for haste.The consequence is clear: hastily made arrangements – perhaps neighbours, current partners (some of whom may have entered the picture only recently), distant relatives or a combination of such people – may not be the best for children.Such arrangements may be unstable and break down (Kingi,2000), necessitating another change in residence.We know that continuity of at least one caregiver, or at least the continuity of a wider support system such as extended family, is important especially for younger children.

But placements should also be safe. Sharp and Marcus-Mendoza (2001) found instances of women leaving children with grandparents who had abused the mothers as children, fearing they could not regain custody if child-protective services were involved.In our study, almost one third of the women were not confident that their children were in safe placements – 8% of mothers worried about their children's safety where they were staying and a further 22% were not sure they were safe.The CAS was involved in the current residential placement (either directly or through supervision orders) in only about half of cases.This suggests they were not on the scene to assess or monitor the suitability of that plan. CAS scrutiny is not always welcome by women, who may purposefully avoid involving them, but when the CAS is not already involved or not called in because of a woman's arrest,there is no mandated person or agency with the responsibility of ensuring safe living arrangements.

Find Ways for Meaningful Contact

In most Ontario provincial facilities where women are held, visits take place across a glass partition.There are some exceptions such as the Metro West Detention Centre and the Hamilton Wentworth Detention Centre. In the new Maplehurst facility for women (now called Vanier),there is an area for family visiting. No on-site, overnight visits are permitted anywhere. In our study, the mothers of 80% of the children said they were in contact with children while incarcerated, most via the telephone. Only 18% of their children had been to visit them.When asked why there had been no visits, the reasons were:

- I don't want my children coming here (59%)
- the visiting arrangements here are not nice for children (35%)
- they live too far away (24%)
- the current caretaker does not believe they should come to see me (24%)
- there is not enough money to make the trip (15%)
- I just got here recently (12%)

Teenagers were more likely to visit than babies but still only 22% of them had visited.

> *Why [have them visit]? Just to see them leave? I don't want to see that pain in their eyes again.I'd rather not see them*
>
> (mother quoted in Swink, 1999).

Visiting can have both positive and negative implications for children.Children can see their mothers are safe but it can also be emotionally difficult: in most Ontario facilities they cannot touch her, children see their mother in a subservient role with prison clothing, and parting is emotionally difficult and confusing.An infant or toddler simply has no way of understanding this situation and young children may be more distressed than comforted by visits.As one woman told us, "seeing me would make them feel worse." On the other hand, Human Rights Watch (2002: 8) summarize the benefits. Visits...

- allow parents and children to maintain their existing relationship,which may also help the family to reunite upon release
- allow children to express emotional reactions to the separation,which they may not feel able to do elsewhere
- allow parents to work out their feelings about separation and loss, and thereby help them become better able to help their children with the same issues
- allay some of the more extreme fears that children may hold about prison conditions and dispel fantasies that they may develop about parents in their prolonged absence
- reduce feelings of abandonment among children,as well as the anger and guilt that may accompany such feelings
- counteract, by seeing other children and families at prison visiting centres in similar circumstances, some of the alienation that children experience
- quell the separation anxiety to which children of incarcerated parents are particularly prone

Several different models of visiting programs are available, as discussed below, that reduce the negative

aspects of visiting for children, that help women develop skills to parent from a distance and address common issues that occur among children with incarcerated mothers, and that facilitate the maintenance of a strong parent/child bond. All these factors, in turn, lessen the adjustment difficulties children will experience when mothers are released.

> *Women have different needs than men. Responses to questions [directed to correctional administrators across the United States] about women's programming and treatment needs strongly echoed the emerging writings on gender-responsive programming. Forty-nine respondents (92 percent) asserted that women have unique needs that should be addressed in correctional settings. These issues included trauma and abuse, self-esteem and assertiveness, vocational skills, medical care, mental health, parenting and child care, and relationships*
>
> (Van Voorhis & Presser, 2001).

Provide Parenting Programs

When asked, both incarcerated mother and fathers will likely say they want more help with parenting skills (Kazura,2001). With high rates of child abuse and neglect in their backgrounds, it can be assumed that many will not have been exposed to appropriate parental role models. In our study, 54% of the women acknowledged that the abuse in their backgrounds made it difficult to be the best parents they could be. As already noted, these families often struggle with multiple challenges. It is only the possibility that women might benefit in some way that makes the exercise of incarceration anything but entirely negative for the family system (see Table 2).

Basic parenting programs (i.e., classes without children present) are offered to women in 94% of U.S. correctional jurisdictions and to men in 85% (National Institute of Corrections,2002). They are much less common in Canada. A barrier to the development of these programs has been the belief of some correctional authorities that it is not their responsibility to provide parenting programs because it is not a criminogenic risk factor. This view is increasingly coming under attack for its ill fit with the situation of women in favour of more holistic and strength-based gender specific approaches (e.g., Sorbello et al., 2002).

First,parenting is explicitly connected to criminal behaviour in the case of welfare fraud,survival crime, child abuse, and when mothers engage in crime to support their families. We do not have enough data on that point to dismiss the connection so easily. At least some women see a connection between mothering and their economic and escape motivated crimes (Ferrao & Moe, 2003). Second, these children are so at risk of criminal behaviour themselves that intervening with parents is truly a crime prevention strategy. Third, women can see the patterns of their lives being repeated for their children but may not have the skills and confidence to be a change agent for their children. The desire to make a better life for their children is a powerful tool for motivating positive choices among women. Fourth, those who adhere to the criminogenic risk model of selecting programs see families as positive influences for men (i.e., married inmates have lower rates of recidivism). In the case of women, we need to investigate how the mother role and ability to reconstitute families after release are related to recidivism. We also must ensure that criminal justice requirements such as probation conditions do not conflict with parenting priorities (Ferraro & Moe, 2003).

> *When a woman goes to prison, her relationship to her children is a central emotional focus: she is torn by guilt, anxiety and a sense of failure, yet, at the same time, her child continues to be a source of hope, a connection to a part of herself, a motivation for her to change. This crisis is potentially an opportunity for enormous growth if it is faced, growth in a woman's ability to develop emotionally and growth in her ability to parent her child*
>
> (Boudin, 1998: 104-5).

Train Professionals

In general, Canada lags well behind other jurisdictions in thinking and taking concerted action on behalf of children of incarcerated parents. Later in this report, some of the strategies and program models from other jurisdictions are described. At present,these children are largely invisible. A few specialized programs do exist,such as the CABI program in Ottawa (Children Affected by Incarceration). Generally, however, dealing with the emotional and practical consequences for children will be left to teachers, CAS workers,therapists, and agencies which support women. Unfortunately, the staff of youth custody facilities also report parental incarceration as an issue that often impacts their residents. Training for these professional groups might focus on issues such as the pros and cons of visiting, how to explain incarceration to children of different ages,addressing

children's questions and worries about prison, helping them understand their mother's criminal behaviour and the connection between crime and punishment,how children's emotional reactions can manifest behaviourally, how children's school performance and peer relationships can be affected, how children rationalize the separation for mothers, and challenges faced after release.

Foster Meaningful Release Planning

While not asking specifically about this topic, several women responding to our survey mentioned the lack of release planning as a problem facing them in their future plans. People outside the correctional system are often surprised to learn how little thought and effort go into preparing inmates for life on the outside:where will they live, with whom, and how will they support themselves? The irony of "reintegration" should not be lost.A sentence of imprisonment triggers a process whereby individuals are extracted from society and forced to adjust to a closed,structured and artificial environment where an anti-social value system predominates and every decision is made for them.Then,they are required to resume life in the community holding pro-social values, decision-making autonomy and life skills such as finding and maintaining a residence and employment.This transition would challenge most of us. But imagine someone with a grade eight education, poor or no job record,tenuous or negative family support, and a substance abuse problem.

While release is keenly sought by most inmates, the reintegration phase of a prison sentence can be a difficult period as women seek to re-establish (or establish) a suitable home for their children and, in some cases, re-gain custody from the Children's Aid Society.Three areas are of paramount concern to women leaving prison:many are chronically ill; many are homeless; and, reuniting with children is of crucial importance for most (Conly, 1998). Finding employment will be more challenging for women than for men, not only because they have less education and job experience, but because they need to find and pay for day care. In our survey, 44% of the children were six years of age or less.

The likelihood of reestablishing a strong parent/child relationship will depend on the length of absence, ages of the children, and how close they remained during the incarceration.When children are in the care of a child protection agency, a mother will have to satisfy them that the children will not be placed at risk if returned to her.At the very least, she must demonstrate an income source and suitable residence.This can be a Catch-22.To get subsidized housing you must have children but to get your children back, you must have housing.

Planning for release should be the most important component of a sentence.The post-release period is challenging to navigate, even for those with good family support and employability skills.Yet, these two important components of the system – release planing and post-release programming – are given short shrift in a system where 75% of operational costs are spent on prisons even though only 20% of clients are institutionalized (Hendrick & Farmer, 2002). In our jurisdiction, one release planner serves 350 inmates. Contextual factors which now compromise reintegration in Ontario include:

- declining grant rates for parole and tight restrictions on temporary absences meaning that most inmates are released after two thirds of the sentence (discharge possible date) with no support unless there is probation to follow
- the almost complete absence of half-way house beds for provincial offenders (after their closure in 1995)
- rising use of urinalysis as static surveillance and the decline of dynamic supervision
- high case loads for probation/parole officers, compromising the ability to be effective supports
- complete absence of research on the challenges faced by reintegrating inmates
- the paucity of available vocational programs suitable for this population
- under-funding of programs that do offer post-release support

Sixty percent of the women we surveyed had custody of children at admission, and the future plans of most women were to live with their children again. Helping the women get re-established will help their children regain (or gain) some stability in their lives.

> *It seems to me that, as a matter of principle, the government has an obligation – to the prisoner, his family, his community and the general public – to facilitate a smooth and safe transition for every returning prisoner.... I think the goal of everyone involved in the re-entry process – the individual prisoner, his family, his community and the agencies of government – should be to improve the chances of successful reintegration for each returning prisoner.This means re-establishing (or, as the case may be, establishing) positive connections between the returning prisoner and his family, the world of work and the institutions of community*
>
> (Travis, 2002: 7-8).

Help Women Avoid Recidivism

Finally, it is safe to assume that helping women will help their children.This includes not parenting skills, as already noted, but helping them get a leg up with educational upgrading,employability and vocational skills,housing,therapy if needed, health care – all the factors required to attain and maintain a safe and stable residence and to play a positive role in their children's lives, even if they don't live together.While separation from a mother will always be difficult, children who experience multiple separations or who watch their mothers cycle in and out of prison – even from the vantage of a stable home – will be most affected.Efforts to help women avoid re-involvement with the justice system will help their children.

Developmental Model

This section of the report describes a hypothetical model of how children and adolescents are affected by absences associated with maternal incarceration. The Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents (www.e-ccip.org) notes that most available research data is based on parent report and fails to consider children who do not currently have a parent in prison but who have nonetheless been impacted by parental incarceration.Only a few studies have directly communicated with the children themselves.We also note in our review of the literature that, with some exceptions (e.g., Johnston,1995), most research on children has either focused on a specific age group (usually adolescents) or grouped all children together for discussion and analysis. Based upon a knowledge of child development,however, we can predict that impact will vary by age.Table 4 reproduces a framework developed at the Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents.Plainly said, infants will have different experiences than teenagers. So interventions should be differentially targeted.

While each child is unique and many individual attributes will affect their development (e.g., learning disabilities,cognitive impairments, nutrition,birth traumas,etc.), age is one of the key factors shaping...

1. practical consequences of maternal absence
2. emotional reactions to the absence
3. making sense of the absence
4. rationalizing the mother's criminal behaviour

The factors associated with elevated propensity for future criminal behaviour will also vary across developmental stages.We have grouped the 90 children in our sample into four developmental stages based on their ages:infants and toddlers;pre-schoolers (ages 3 to 5); school-aged children (ages 6 to 12); and adolescents.

Differences across developmental stages are illustrated with case studies from two families.The first family was made of five-year old Adam,nine-year old Brian,12-year old Christopher, and 16-year old Darryl.While raised in the same home, there are striking differences in how they coped when their mother spent one week in detention. Moreover, looming in the near future is a sentencing hearing that could end in another absence of four to six months. Should this occur, the family would lose their home and the boys would likely be split up among caretakers.Their father has served many prison sentences over the years and they appear well accommodated to his periodic absences and re-entry into the family. He was serving time when we met them.However, the separation from their mother for the first time – about four months before the interviews – was a deeply felt loss. By examining how these boys coped during the separation, since the separation, and in the face of another separation,one can see the differential coping strategies that would be expected across three developmental stages.

In the second case study, the impacts of maternal incarceration are examined through the words and drawings of three sisters: five-year old Amy, seven-year old Brianne and nine-year old Corry.Two years prior to our play-based interviews, the girls' mother was incarcerated for two months. Despite the time that has elapsed, the two oldest girls continue to be affected.Every time their mother goes out at night, they they worry that their mother may not come home because she will be in jail. Even though these children seem secure in the knowledge that close family members would again care for them if their mother were to be incarcerated again, this knowledge about their own well being did not seem to lessen their worry for their mother nor their pre-occupation and apprehension about further separations.

Table 4

Possible Developmental Effects of Parental Crime, Arrest and Incarceration in Children, Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents

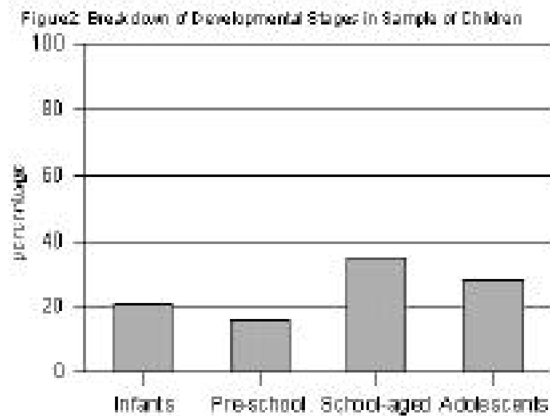
Developmental Stage	*Developmental Characteristics*	*Developmental Task*	*Influencing Factors*	*Effects*
Infancy (0-2)	Limited perception, mobility & experience; total dependency	Development of attachment & trust	Parent-child separation	Impaired parent-to-child bonding
Early Childhood (2-6)	Increased perception & mobility; improved memory; greater exposure to environment; ability to imagine	Sense of autonomy & independence; sense of initiative	Parent-child separation	Inappropriate separation anxiety; other developmental regression.Impaired development of initiative
			Trauma	Acute traumatic stress reactions; survivor guilt
Middle Childhood (7-10)	Increased independence from care givers; increased ability to reason; peers become	Sense of industry; ability to work productively	Parent-child separation	Developmental regressions; poor self-concept
			Enduring trauma	Acute traumatic stress reactions. Trauma-reactive behaviors.Impaired ability to overcome future trauma
Early Adolescence (11-14)	Organization of behavior in pursuit of distant goals; puberty;increased aggression		Parent-child separation	Rejection of limits on behavior
			Enduring trauma	Patterning of trauma-reactive behaviours
Late Adolescence (15-18)	Emotional crisis & confusion; adult sexual development & sexuality; formal abstract thinking; increased independence	Achievement of cohesive identity; resolution of conflicts with family & society; ability to engage in adult work and relationships	Parent-child separation	Premature termination of the dependency relationship between parent and child
			Enduring trauma	Characteristic legal socialization; intergeneration crime, incarceration

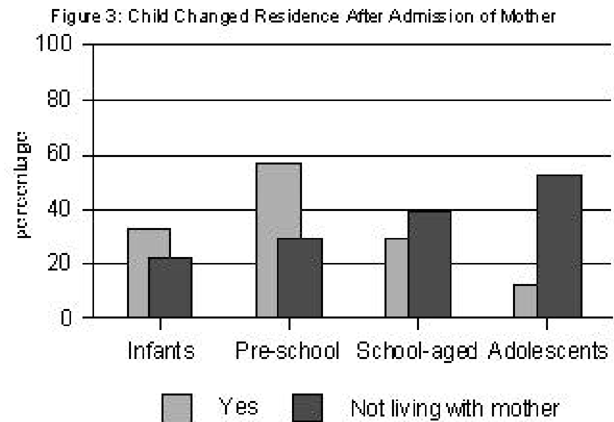
Source: Johnston (1995: 68).

While only a sparse literature on maternal incarceration is available to inform the development of our model, there are many parallels with the well-researched subjects of child sexual abuse, exposure to violence at home, or parental substance abuse or mental illness. Features of secrecy, stigma, dysfunction, and role confusion are common to many of these family situations. Indeed,there may well be much overlap with these issues in some families affected by maternal incarceration.As noted above,incarceration typically acts to destabilize an already challenged family system.

In our data, the mothers of babies predictably tend to be younger on average (27 years) than mothers of adolescents (38 years).With the young age of the women,there is an over-representation of younger children (see Figure 2). More than one-third (37%) were under five years of age. In the figures presented over the next few pages, some other differences across age groups are evident.Specifically, we see patterns in the extent to which mothers had custody of children, planned to live with children after release, whether children had experienced previous separations because of incarceration, and whether children were separated from siblings.

Overall, 28% of the children remained where they were living because a father or step-father in the home continued to look after them. However, 30% of the children changed residences after their mothers' admission to custody, and there were differences by age (see Figure 3).The trend suggests that, as the children get older, they are more likely to live





separately from their mothers, so her admission to custody would not trigger a change in residence. Overall, 38% of the children remained where they were living because they were already living separately from their mothers. This figure does not include the three youths who were in youth custody at the time and the one who entered custody while his mother was in prison.

Younger women with young children may be different as a group from the older women with adolescent children. The younger group could be made up of some women who will be in prison for the last or only time. They appear to have fewer collateral challenges such as unemployment (Figure 11) and low education (Figure 13) and their children are likely to live with them (Figure 5). Alternatively, we could be seeing a snap shot of what happens over time when women experience repeat admissions. As the children get older, they are less likely to live with their mothers (Figure 5), expect to live with their mothers (Figure 6) and have experienced a previous separation because of incarceration (Figure 7). In other words, mothers of adolescents as a group appear to have more experience with incarceration, are more disconnected from their children, have lower levels of education and employment, and rely to a greater extent on welfare.

In the adolescents, we can see the deterioration of the bond between mother and child as relatively few of these dyads live together. As one woman said about her own mother's imprisonment, "I was okay with it because I didn't want her in my life anyway!" We don't know if she recognized the poignancy when later saying that her biggest worry for her 14-year old son was "following my crazy path in life." It may well be the case that we are seeing the conditions being set into play that elevate risk for future criminal behaviour in a good proportion of these teenagers.

Indeed, half of them have already spent time in youth custody. Collectively, these figures suggest that efforts to intervene with this population should start early, to forestall some of these patterns.

Links to Factors Associated with Criminal Behaviour

By organizing impact according to developmental stages, it is possible to isolate the factors of maternal incarceration (and contextual factors) that act to elevate likelihood of future criminal behaviour. The causes of crime are complex and multifaceted and can be found at the individual, family, peer group, neighbourhood, community, and societal levels. For many young people, crime will be transitory behaviour associated with adolescent peer pressure, thrill seeking, or opportunity. Evidence is amassing, however, that chronic criminal behaviour among adults is most often found in people whose criminal behaviour began early and which was not extinguished with the typical interventions afforded through the youth justice system.

The model proposed here matches the developmentally sensitive model of preventing crime by investing in families, developed by the National Crime Prevention Council in the late 1990s (National Crime Prevention Council, 1996; National Crime Prevention Council, 1997a; National Crime Prevention Council, 1997b).

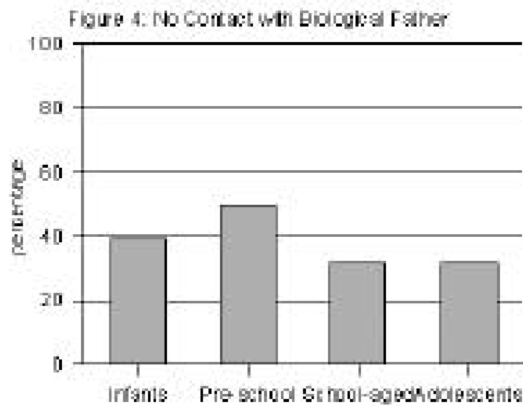
Assumptions behind our model are that:

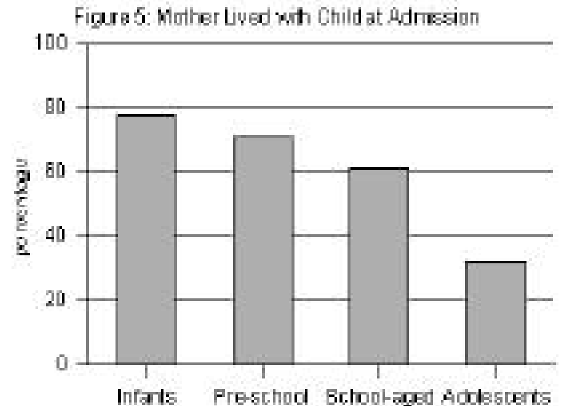
- coping styles (adaptive and maladaptive) and risk factors will vary with age
- exposure to more than one risk factor elevates concern
- exposure to risk factors over several developmental stages will have more negative impact because negative effects may accumulate

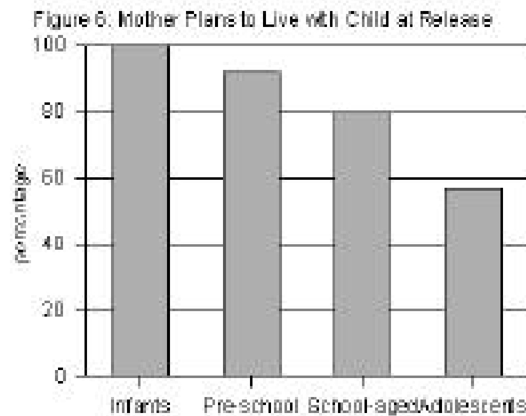
- intervention is most effective when developmentally targeted and delivered when the child is still in the developmental stage when the exposure occurred
- maladaptive coping strategies not restructured promptly may be more resistant to intervention efforts in later years

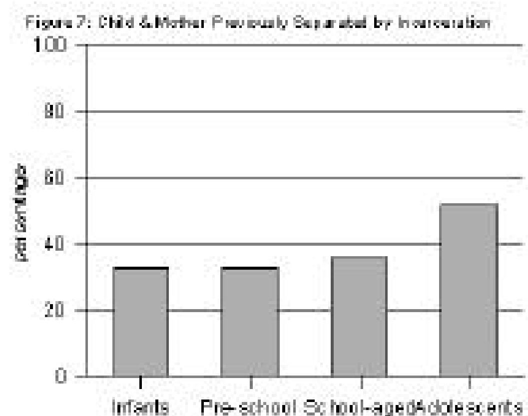
At the same time, the presence of positive factors can buffer the negative impact and should be identified and augmented where possible. To consider risk in the absence of resources would take into account only part of the picture (Gilgun et al., 2000).

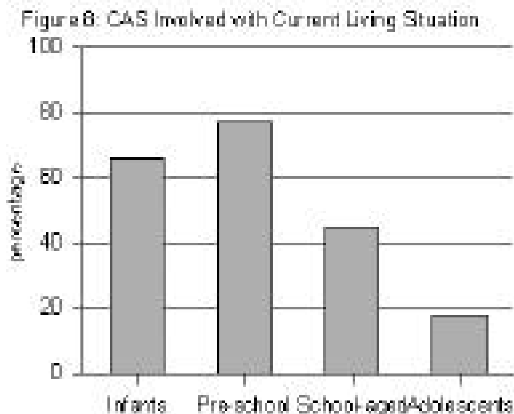
When faced with a difficult and unpleasant situation, children cope by 1) coming to some understanding about what is happening; and, 2) dealing with the flood of emotions. Rationalizations and coping strategies can be positive (e.g., talking about feelings with supportive adults or peers or focusing on activities such as sports or school) or coping strategies can be maladaptive (e.g., blaming themselves, blaming the system, becoming numb to feelings, self-harm, substance use, developing fantasies

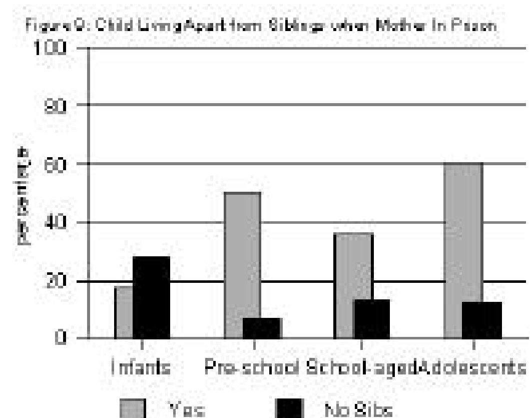












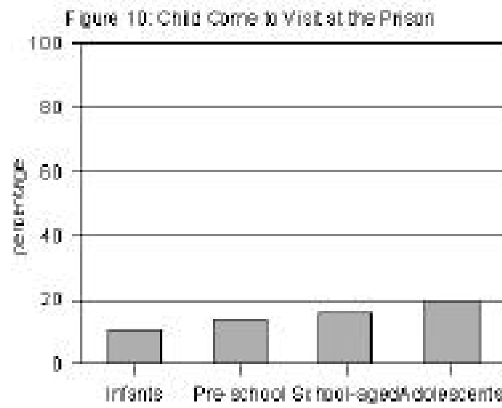


Figure 10: Child Come to Visit at the Prison
percentage
100
80
60
40
20
0
Infants
Pre-school
School-aged
Adolescents

Figure 11: Mother Employed at Time of Arrest
percentage
100
80
60
40
20
0
Infants
Pre-school
School-aged
Adolescents

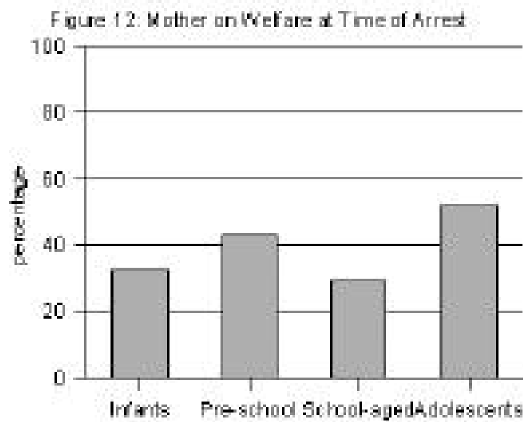


Figure 12: Mother on Welfare at Time of Arrest
percentage
100
80
60
40
20
0
Infants
Pre-school
School-aged
Adolescents

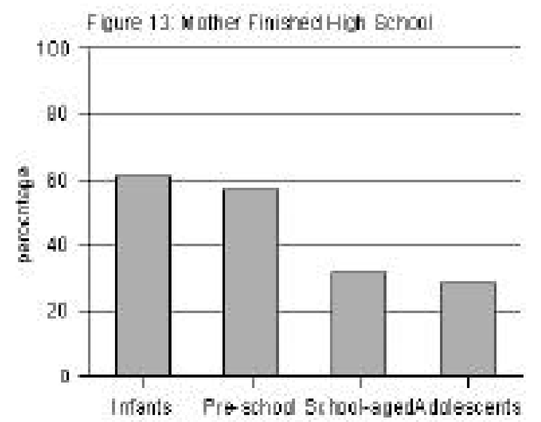


Figure 13: Mother Finished High School
percentage
100
80
60
40
20
0
Infants
Pre-school
School-aged
Adolescents

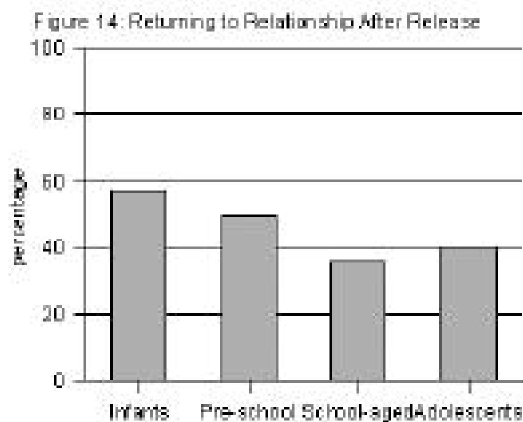
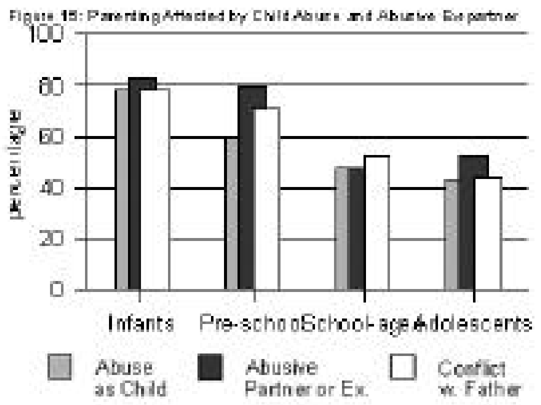
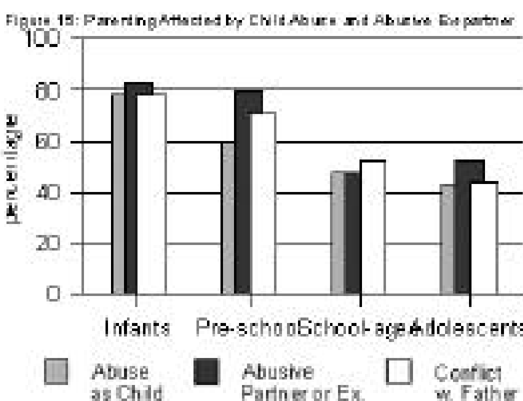


Figure 14: Returning to Relationship After Release
percentage
100
80
60
40
20
0
Infants
Pre-school
School-aged
Adolescents


percentage
100
80
60
40
20
0
Infants
Pre-school
School-age
Adolescents
Abuse as Child
Abusive Partner or Ex.
Conflict w. Father


percentage
100
80
60
40
20
0
Infants
Pre-school
School-age
Adolescents
Abuse as Child
Abusive Partner or Ex.
Conflict w. Father

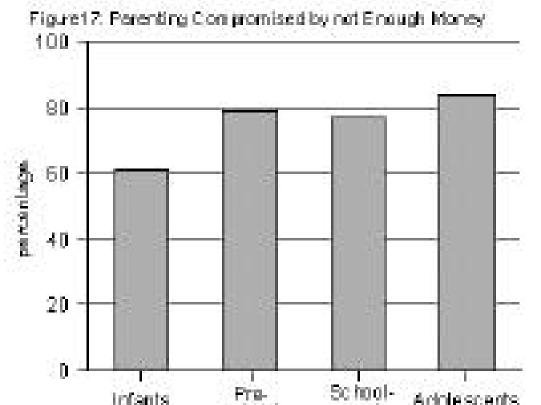


Figure17: Parenting Compromised by not Enough Money
percentage
100
80
60
40
20
0
Infants
Pre-school
School-aged
Adolescents

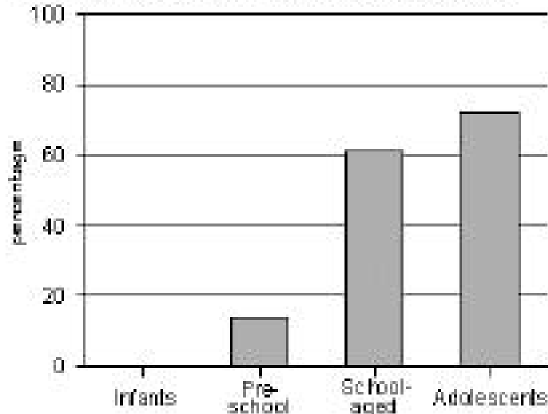


Figure 18: Child Knows Mother in Prison (Mother Report)

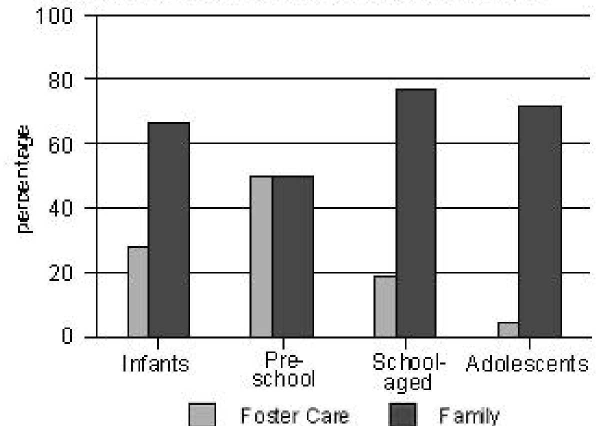


Figure 19: Where Children Lived during Separation

about their families,having a baby to escape the family, or prematurely taking on the role of emotional caregiver for a parent).Children's coping is always adaptive in that minute because it helps them navigate a painful period. But some coping strategies, if solidified and generalized to other circumstances, can support antisocial attitudes and behaviour (e.g., lack of empathy for others, addictions) or constitute emotional barriers to normal development.

Coping strategies – both adaptive and maladaptive – will obviously vary according to a child's age. For each developmental stage, the implications for intervention are enumerated.These observations are most interesting when juxtaposed against current efforts to respond to youth crime,targeted almost entirely at youth aged 12 and over. Our system is geared to a reactive response after criminal behaviour has manifested. Implications of our model suggest that efforts to interrupt the worrisome trajectory of these young lives should be prompt and should focus on the entire family system beginning when the children are young.

Infants and Toddlers

From birth to the age of two,babies grow and change rapidly, soaking in information from their world through all five senses. During this critical period of development,they form secure attachments,become more active explorers of their world through play, and learn about social interaction and relationships from what they hear and observe in families.Important for developing babies are frequent bodily contact, prompt meeting of needs for food and changing,adequate sleep, and lots of face to face interaction.They are completely dependent on caretakers and need good nutrition, reliable access to health care (e.g., vaccinations,monitoring of development),stability through routines, and high-quality nurturing.At this age,they form a secure emotional attachment to a caregiver, who may or may not be a biological parent.

The Mothers' Perspectives

In our survey, several concerns were expressed by women about their infants or toddlers.They believed their babies were confused by the sudden separation and were too young to understand or have the situation explained. Some worried that their babies would grow close to another caretaker and not remember them or that the bond between them would be damaged.Almost all the women with infants or toddlers had contact with them (though caretakers),mostly with telephone calls. Only 11% had been brought to visit the prison,probably over concern for the emotionally wrenching point of departure.Also, in settings that do not permit contact visits, children of this age will not be able to understand why they can see but not touch their mothers.

Marie remembers the look on her 2-year-old daughter's face as the child pressed herself against the inch-thick window that separated the two.The toddler pounded on the glass partition with her tiny fists, calling out and crying, "Come on, Mom! Come out of there!." Marie could only watch and reach out in a futile response (Bernstein,2002).

How Maternal Incarceration is Experienced by Infants and Toddlers

Practical ways babies are affected by maternal incarceration can include termination of breast feeding and disruption of routines,which will be unsettling until new routines are established. In this group of youngsters,there is a high rate of changing caregivers, because most babies lived with their mothers prior to admission. Some can remain in their homes with fathers or step-fathers, but where the mother was the primary caretaker, this situation will still reflect a change for the baby.The mothers are understandably worried about compromising the

mother/child bond and they are correct to assume that attachment to at least one nurturing caregiver is important for these little ones. At this age, the critical need of babies is for a nurturing caregiver to meet their needs. Ideally, infants experience good care from a constant caregiver. However, nurturing and high-quality care over time is more important than having the same caregiver. That said, however, as Pollock (2002) notes, separation will be less traumatic for a child of any age with secure attachments to other caregivers rather than only to the mother.

The period prior to the incarceration may also have been difficult for some babies. In the pre-trial period, or perhaps awaiting a sentencing hearing, a mother's stress or anxiety may be felt by a baby. Moreover, the circumstances that found these young women in prison might include factors that compromise their parenting. Many mothers acknowledged struggles with substance use that affected their abilities to be the best mothers they could be. Implications for babies under these circumstances can include an elevated risk for maltreatment and both physical and emotional neglect. The mothers of almost 85% of babies acknowledged that an abusive partner or ex-partner affected their parenting. Exposure to violence in the home, with attendant loud noises and vivid visual images, will distress infants and toddlers. Parents may not consistently respond to an infant's needs which may negatively affect the parent-child bond. Fear and instability may inhibit exploration and play and the play itself may involve imitations of the witnessed aggression (Baker et al., 2002).

Links to Risk Factors for Criminal Behaviour

Experiences in infancy set the stage for babies to

How is (your infant/toddler) most affected by the absence from you?

- *I feel that he does not understand. I hope he remembers me when I get out.*
- *At his age, my son doesn't get to spend the valuable time with both parents.*
- *My daughter doesn't know who "mom" is!*
- *As he is so young, he cannot understand where mommy is, and why he cannot go home to mommy.*
- *My son's daily routines have changed, and he misses me.*
- *I think she's wondering where I am and why I haven't seen her.*
- *I hope my son's routine is being followed somewhat.*
- *I think my son felt abandoned. I don't think he knows who I am anymore.*
- *He is very confused.*
- *He is troubled and confused.*
- *I was nursing my baby and he slept with me.*
- *I think she is most affected by being separated from me for so long. She is not used to being away from me.*
- *She is a newborn. I'm not sure if they suffer from separation or not. I miss her a lot. I was breastfeeding which stopped without weaning. She is still with my family but her bonding with her mother has been affected by jail.*

What are your biggest worries for (your infant or toddler)?

- *I'm worried that he is going to forget me because he is a baby; and I don't want that to happen. But what can I do? I know for certain he is receiving good care; my family are wonderful people, and he couldn't be in a better place than with them.*
- *I worry that he will grow apart from me because of my being away from him for so long.*
- *That she feels abandoned and feels a loss.*
- *I worry how my being away from him for so long is going to affect him.*
- *I worry about his health, and wonder if he is okay.*
- *That I am not there to see her.*
- *That he is involved with the family he is with right now, and that they take care of him in a loving and nurturing way.*
- *That he won't understand and that he won't know me when I get out.*
- *That he'll lack the understanding of how deeply I love him, and that he doesn't understand why he can't be with me.*
- *That bonding was hindered, and that feelings of love and caring are absent in my child.*
- *The bond won't be the same.*
- *My biggest worries are that she will be upset with me and that she will not relate to me the same way when I see her again. [I also worry] that she is ill or that she is upset all the time.*
- *I worry there may be lasting effects of such a sudden separation, that our bonding has been affected. A newborn needs her mother and I know that no one could care for her as well as me.*

Table 5
Consequences of Maternal Imprisonment for Infants and Toddlers

Practical Consequences	• most live with mother so will lose primary caregiver • high rate of foster care placement • changes in routines if primary caregiver changes • breast feeding may be terminated earlier than expected
Potential Emotional Reactions	• interruptions in attachment can manifest in distress, un-sootheability, withdrawal,etc.
Understanding Mother's Criminal Behaviour	• not applicable at this age
Factors that Elevate Risk of Future Criminal Behaviour	• inappropriate (neglectful/abusive) caregivers • disruptions in attachments • severe or chronic family stress • compromised capacity for self-regulation

develop into socially competent and adaptive pre-schoolers.The National Crime Prevention Council (1996) reviewed the factors characteristic of little ones at risk of later adversities and problems.They included poverty, poor health and nutrition, reduced opportunities to form secure attachments, exposure to violence, and high levels of family stress.All these factors can commonly be found among many babies of incarcerated women.

When maternal incarceration touches a family already challenged by factors associated with conflict with the law in women, it can affect babies in ways that compromise their normal development.Interruptions in attachment and exposure to inappropriate surrogate caretakers can interact with other family challenges to trigger delay in developmental milestones,compromised attachment,and vulnerabilities in the neurophysiological foundations for self-regulation of emotions and behaviours. If that trajectory is not interrupted, some of these factors can set the stage for problems in later life that might include criminal behaviour. Unaddressed risk factors of infancy may accumulate with the effects of risk factors in the pre-school years (e.g., attention problems,impulsiveness, aggression,delayed social development) to compromise school readiness.Of course, the frequency and intensity of such problems will vary by many factors innate to the child (e.g., temperament), but gender differences will probably be minimal at this stage.

Implications for Intervention

The potential consequences for infants and toddlers are summarized in table 5. Babies need safe environments and emotionally accessible and responsive caregivers.As with children of all ages, babies will benefit when we assist their mothers with addictions and help them extricate themselves from abusive partners.Children in this developmental stage fair best with the continuity of at least one nurturing caregiver, ideally augmented by continuity in larger systems such as child care arrangements and extended family contact.Things that should be avoided are multiple placements, exposing babies to convenient but inappropriate caregivers, and sudden termination of helpful child care or other arrangements with which the infant is familiar. Ideally, when a mother is arrested, the police should notify the CAS to permit an assessment of the suitability of the plan for surrogate caretakers.Targeted support for this group of youngsters and their caregivers is likely to be an efficient devotion of resources to a group that, even at this early stage, is a needful population.

Pre-schoolers

Children from three to five years of age are rapidly learning and consolidating skills that will see them succeed in school.Pre-schoolers exhibit increased individuation and physical independence (e.g., will take pride in dressing themselves) and think in egocentric ways.Important at this age is the learning of appropriate ways to express emotions to others, including family and peers.They will also develop an understanding of gender roles based upon messages relayed by family and other sources such as the media.

In our sample of pre-schoolers,more than half (57%) changed residences because of their mothers' incarceration. On the other hand, 27% were by that point living separately from their mothers and stayed where they were. Half were in foster care when their mother was in prison and almost all of them (77%) were the subjects of an open CAS file.The other half lived with family members,usually their mothers' parents (21%) or their fathers (14%). In their current placement, half were separated from siblings. Changing schools and child care settings is an issue at this age.Many (29%) changed schools because of their mothers'incarceration, a high figure in an age group where many are two young for school.Already one

How is (your preschooler) most affected by the separation from you?

- *My son is concerned that he isn't living with me; he misses me dearly.*
- *My son feels sad that he can't see his mom.*
- *My son misses me.*
- *He misses me.*
- *She doesn't really know what's going on.*
- *My son is lonely, and has a different routine.*
- *My daughter is too young.*
- *My son's routine has probably changed because of this.*
- *My daughter knows why she is living with her grandparents, and she is okay with it.*
- *I think he misses me, I hope he misses me, and I think it is very confusing for him to go from one place to another. He should be with me. He is affected by not being with me, his real mother.*

What are your biggest worries for (your pre-schooler) right now?

- *These are his first years to go to school, and I cannot take him. I feel very bad. He's too young to stay separated from me, and I feel very sorry.*
- *No one [at CAS] knows where I am, and I am afraid they will take my child away.*
- *That my sons (age 4 and 5) feel abandoned.*
- *Everything.*
- *I wonder if he is okay.*
- *I am worried that she will not remember me.*
- *If I am going to have to fight through the system to get him back.*
- *That he is missing the unconditional love that only a mother can give. The caring, teaching, learning is not as good as I could give. He doesn't understand why he can't come to my 'home'.*
- *My biggest worry is that I will never see him again and that he will not remember me when I see him, if I do. I worry that he will not be comfortable with me when he sees me.*

third had previously experienced a separation because of maternal incarceration.

The Mothers' Perspective

The mothers' concerns about pre-schoolers were similar to those for infants in many respects, including a concern that little ones would not remember them and are confused by the separation. Appropriately, few pre-schoolers were told the reason. Only 14% were brought to visit. The women spoke most often of the emotional strain of separation and longing to be together. Some spoke of the difficulty their children would have adapting to new routines and caregivers. A third of the women worried their pre-schoolers might not be safe in the current placement. A few women are concerned over losing custody permanently.

How Maternal Incarceration is Experienced by Pre-schoolers

Most preschoolers have a basic vocabulary for feelings (sad, mad, love, happy, etc.) and recognize behavioural expressions linked to these emotions. For example, they may recognize that Grandma is sad because Mommy is away. While they lack the cognitive skills to understand complex situations and motives, they feel for and resonate with the emotions of those close to them. For example, they are likely to be distressed if Mommy is noticeably upset during arrest, or if Mommy telephones from jail and is sobbing. At this stage, Mommy does not fade from their awareness because she is not visibly present, nor do the daily routines that have been overseen by Mommy. In fact, routines are very important for this age group and they may not adapt quickly nor willingly to changes in food, nap time, bathing, toys, etc. They experience powerful emotions of sadness, anger, fear, confusion, grief, and loneliness. With limited ability to verbalize these feelings, they may act out, cry, resist comforting, or become despondent. While this stage is characterized by increased physical independence, one might observe delays or even regressions in areas such as emotional expression, toilet training, clinging to adults or security objects, and needing help with tasks previously mastered.

Preschoolers may be confused by conflicting messages such as "Mommy loves you" when Mommy is clearly gone. Those who know where Mommy is will not be able to grasp the causal relationship between crime and punishment (especially because of the delay between arrest and sentence). At this age, they are focused on the outcome itself rather than the process or rationale that led to the outcome. They may blame the police or the judge for taking Mommy away. Or, they may blame Mommy for being bad and needing a "time out," which is again difficult to reconcile with the good Mommy they know who does nice things for them. They make sense of their world through concrete thinking, rudimentary categorizations, and extensive generalizations. This age-appropriate way of processing information can lead to distortions such as "all police are bad," that can in turn filter their interpretations of future experiences.

Table 6

The Consequences of Maternal Imprisonment for Pre-schoolers

Practical Consequences	• likely to change residences • high rate of CAS involvement • separation from siblings • need to change schools
Potential Emotional Reactions	• distressed by disruptions of routines • sad, lonely, angry, frightened, confused
	• may feel abandoned or rejected • may exhibit delay of regression in milestones • will mirror the emotional distress of the mother
Understanding of Mothers' Criminal Behaviour	• might blame themselves • will see the police as bad or Mommy as bad
Factors that Elevate Risk of Future Criminal Behaviour	• inappropriate expression of emotions (e.g., aggressiveness) • belief that justice system is not fair • compromise of school readiness

In a pre-schooler, thinking starts and stops with "me." The egocentric thinking of this developmental stage often results in unrelated events being linked together and to them. For example, being scolded by Mommy for not picking up your toys can be viewed as the reason for her anger when the police came to the house, as well as the reason for Mommy being taken away by the police. In their egocentric way, young children may blame themselves for Mommy's distress and her absence from home.

Links to Risk Factors for Criminal Behaviour

Pre-schoolers who witnessed or were told about Mommy's arrest may see police officers or other people in the justice system as being mean to a person who is nice to them. This can set the stage for children to see the justice system as unjust and "people like them" as victims of that system. Unless re-framed, this view may colour their impressions of subsequent incarcerations by either parent. In later years, they may be less likely to see, as many adolescents can, that Mommy has a problem (e.g., with drugs), that Mommy is making bad choices, or even that Mommy is a good person who does bad things for a good reason (e.g., to feed the family).

Also important at this age is learning to express emotions in age-appropriate ways. This is an important goal of parenting, pre-school and kindergarten programs because it is such an essential feature of school readiness and socialization at this age. As noted above, these little ones may be flooded with unpleasant emotions for which they have limited coping skills. They may lash out with temper tantrums and aggression. Or they may be anxious and inconsolable. The correlation between early childhood aggression and later criminal behaviour is often cited in the research literature. Also emerging as a concern, especially for girls, is the area of depression and other ways hurtful emotions are internalized in problematic ways. Unless assisted to develop healthy strategies to cope with these emotions, the stage is set for maladaptive coping strategies such as numbing, denial, substance use, or anger regulation deficits.

Success in school is an important protective factor against involvement with the justice system. Children who enter grade one ill-equipped to learn alongside others in this highly regulated environment may fall behind quickly. When your mother is in prison, many factors can compromise school readiness and make success at school very difficult.

Implications for Intervention

Children of this age do not have many helpful coping skills in their repertoire. They cannot seek out peers for support, talk about their feelings, or instinctively sublimate their anger through sports, for example. It will be the adults in their world who create the conditions that help them best navigate this difficult period. As with the babies, continuity of a caregiver is desirable but it is more important that any substitute caregiver provide a safe environment and be nurturing and emotionally accessible.

Case Study: Adam, age five.

Adam is the youngest of the four boys in his family. We saw him about four months after his mother spent one week in detention. Adam is an energetic boy who attends kindergarten. His literacy skills and fine motor development are developing slowly. He enjoyed drawing pictures and his attention span during these activities was typical for his age. His mother describes him as "happy-go-lucky" and as a "very shy child who plays on his own."

Adam's mother and older brothers describe him as "crying and crying … he couldn't stop" during the week his mother was gone. His mother thinks Adam thought she wasn't coming home again. A maternal aunt took him to visit his mother, hoping to reassure him she was okay. The week before we met him, he accidentally learned his mother might return to jail soon to serve a sentence. His mother viewed Adam as noticeably upset upon learning that she might be incarcerated again.

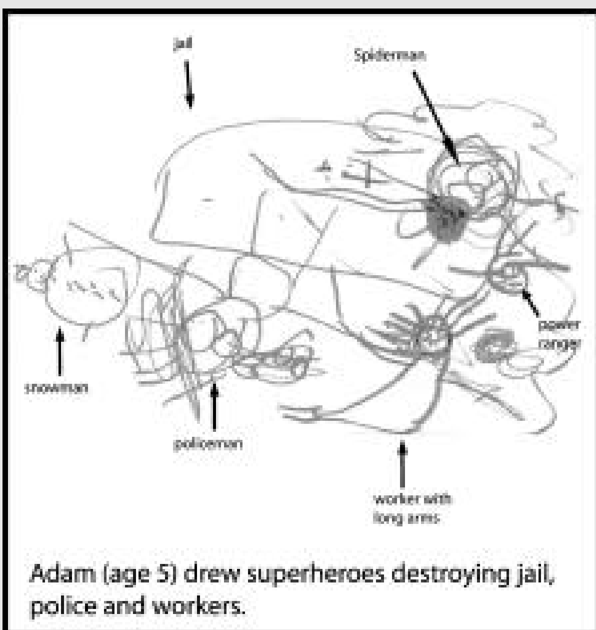
Adam was asked to draw a picture of a jail. The drawing (Figure 20) shows Adam visiting Mommy in the "big jail." Adam is the filled-in circle in the centre. His mother is the larger circle in the upper right-hand portion of the drawing. He physically demonstrated how he covered his eyes with his hands when he saw his mother the day he visited. He said he was "sad, very sad" when he saw "Mommy in jail." The dots inside the jail are "Mommy's tears." The dots surrounding the jail are also tears. Adam's memories of his mother's incarceration are filled with sadness and tears.

Adam is a fan of the Power Rangers and had a picture of one of these heroes in the room where he was being interviewed. When asked to draw a Power Ranger visiting jail, Adam made a drawing (Figure 21) accompanied by these comments:

> *The Power Ranger flipped the jail over … he killed the police, the policeman is bleeding … He killed all the police … He grabbed the worker by his long arm and threw him out. … This is Spiderman … he flipped the jail over too and beat up the police. …Here is Frosty the Snowman – he flipped the jail over and then he died.*

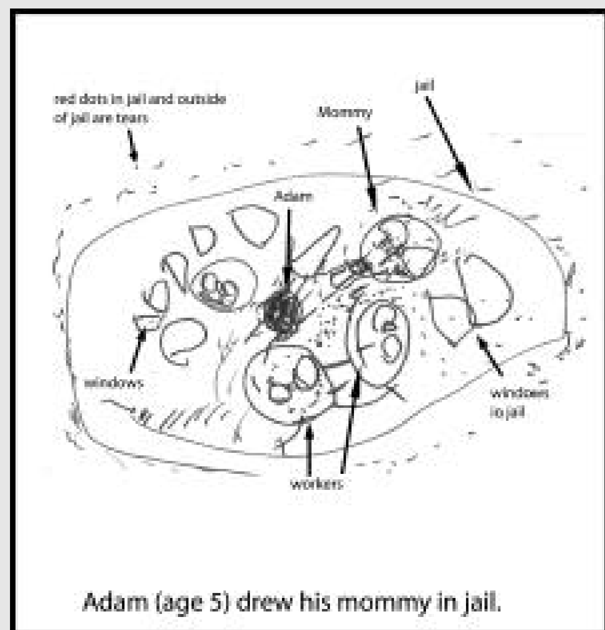
Like most young children, Adam's play and drawings contain fantasy elements and super heroes that fulfil wishes and solve problems. Consistent with his developmental stage, Adam focuses on the outcome (e.g., police put Mommy in jail) and is not yet capable of considering the intent behind people's actions. Accordingly, in contrast to most young children, he views police officers as bad because he thinks they put mothers in jail. His child-like solution is to have super heroes destroy the police officers and the jail. Adam's early experiences related to his mother's arrest and incarceration may lay a foundation pre-disposing him to develop anti-social attitudes.

Figure 20



Adam (age 5) drew superheroes destroying jail, police and workers.

Figure 21



Adam (age 5) drew his mommy in jail.

Case Study: Amy, age five.

Amy is the third oldest child in a family of five daughters. We met Amy about two years after her mother spent two months in prison. Amy is a playful child who is described by her mother as "quiet and independent" for her age. She enjoys cats, dolls, drawing pictures, and school.

Amy was three when her mother was incarcerated. Consistent with her stage of development, her memories are anchored by the practical consequences associated with her mother's absence.

> *I went to my grandma's. It was fun. On weekends I got to be at my house with my Dad ... when Mommy was at jail – I mean the day she was coming home, I fell off the couch 'cause Corry tickled me.*

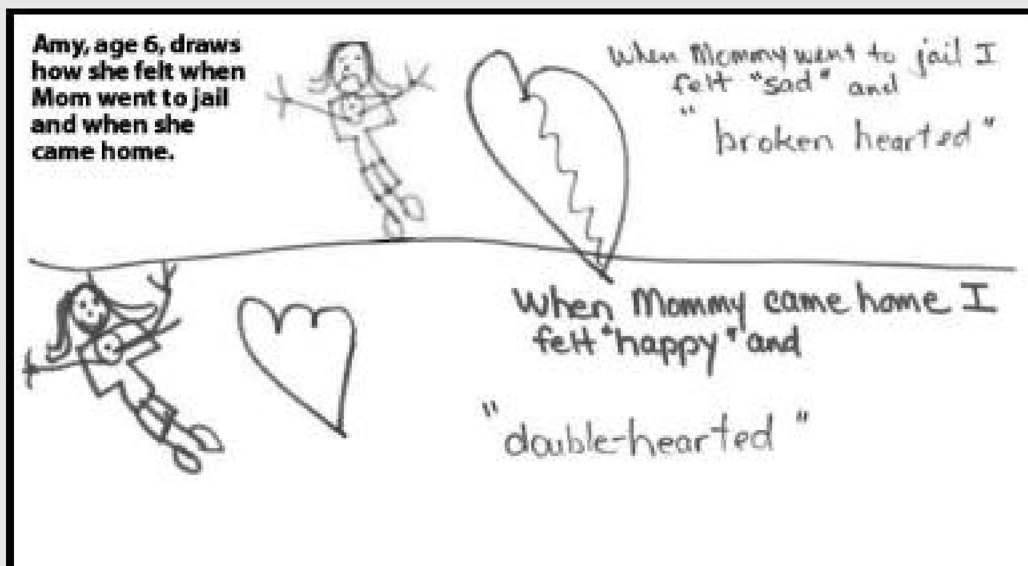
Amy appears to have been buffered from the disruption and distress often experienced when a mother goes to jail. Protective factors included her age; her position within an intact, nurturing sibline; the opportunity to stay in her own home during weekends with a parent she views as protective; and, her placement during the week with a grandmother who has always been part of her life and lives "just a couple of blocks away."

Amy would not or could not draw a picture of her mother in jail. However, she eagerly accepted the invitation to draw the feelings when her mother was in jail and how she felt when her mother came home (Figure 22). Her pictorial representations of being "sad" and "broken hearted, followed by images of being " and "double-hearted," capture the concrete associations she makes with her mother's incarceration and subsequent return.

It is not clear how much Amy recalls from the time, how much she has subsequently woven into memory from listening to others talk about this emotional event, or how much her responses reflect how she thinks she would have felt. Amy's actual experience of this early childhood event has become indistinguishable from her subsequent experiences related to the event (e.g., listening to others talk of their memories). Her older sisters identified the same feelings but their recollection of their mother's incarceration was accompanied by emotional distress that was not evident in Amy.

It is important to determine how preschoolers have been affected by the separation from their mother and by later related experiences (e.g., media references to jail, family discussions about jail). Even though very young at the time, Amy was part of this significant familial event and her mother wisely included her in the excursion to take part in this project. Amy and her sisters benefited by coming together, being with their mother, and sharing snacks and playtime. This case study also illustrates the importance of interviewing each child separately. Amy may have become needlessly upset by seeing her sisters' distress or her sisters may not have felt able to share concerns in front of each other or in front of a younger sister.

Figure 22



Amy, age 6, draws how she felt when Mom went to jail and when she came home.

School-aged Children

Elementary school children, ages six to 12, who live with their mothers may be far more aware of the circumstances leading up to and following a period of maternal incarceration. At this age, children have an increased emotional awareness of themselves and others and are better able to think in more complex ways about right and wrong, and cause and effect. Academic and social success at school will have a primary impact on their self-concept. They will be forming friendships and starting to plan activities for themselves. Toward the end of elementary school, many will start thinking about how they are perceived by members of the opposite sex. They will increasingly identify with the same-sex parent and will be keenly aware of the differences between males and females in our society.

Compared with the babies and pre-schoolers, the school-aged children in our sample were, as a group, growing away from their mothers and being established with other caregivers, so the admission to custody was less disruptive to their living situations. Only 61% of the mothers lived with their children at admission. Less than one third (29%) of the school-aged children in our sample had to change residences and the others stayed where they had already been living, with fathers, other family members, or in foster care. About one quarter (26%) had to change schools. Perhaps an indication that this group was more established in stable living situations, only 45% were the subjects of open CAS files and only 19% lived in foster care while their mothers were in prison. For one third, this was not the first time they had experienced the incarceration of their mothers. Twenty-percent of the mothers did not plan to live with their children after release, either because they recognized the severity of their own problems or because their custody of children would be opposed by a father or a child protection agency.

The Mothers' Perspective

According to the women, many children in this age group (61%) knew where their mothers were and the mothers had discussed the issue with 29% of them. As with all groups, only a small percentage of them (16%) had been taken to the prison to visit. The comments of the women show an appreciation for how emotionally difficult their incarceration is for the children and many speak of the stress, sadness, confusion, and longing to be together. Several mothers recognized maladaptive coping strategies in their children, noting suppressed feelings or withdrawal. Some were having problems in school and mothers recognized that their incarceration would expose them to teasing by their peers. You also see in the

How is your [school-aged child] most affected by the separation from you?

- *My daughters (6 and 11) and son (11) have been affected greatly;they keep asking me when I'm coming home.*
- *My son (10) and daughter (12) are very sad to know that I am in prison.*
- *I really think that if my son knew this it would deeply bother him.*
- *My son misses me deeply. He has never been separated from me before.*
- *My son is upset that he can't see me when he would like.*
- *Being away from our home, and being with strangers.*
- *Not being able to see me.*
- *I think that he may be confused as to why I'm not there taking care of him like I always am and by having to move in with his grandparents.*
- *My son misses me very much.*
- *My daughter was affected because they gave us visits, then they were cut off. I think they put ideas in her head.*
- *He really misses me.*
- *The way his (biological) mother has dealt with it. She said he was as important or loved as much as his dad's murderer.*
- *My son's feelings are most affected by the separation.*
- *I think he gets very stressed. His school grades were visibly lower this year. We are all very close.*
- *I know he gets stressed. No one can replace your mother no matter her problems. He misses me a lot. School is going well for him.*
- *This child is "my boy." He said he can't come to see me because he would just feel worse. He misses his mom.*
- *I'm not sure, she is probably most affected by the teasing and hard time she would get from her biological mother.*
- *I am not there every day and night and it is affecting her because I'm not there to tuck her in and read to her.*
- *I believe he is affected because I've raised him one-on-one. I've never slept away from my child. He is worried about me.*
- *Emotionally – sad, confused, helpless, worried for me.*
- *She misses me.*

What are your biggest worries about [your school-aged child]?

- *Proper care and general well being.*
- *My son (10) and daughter (12) have no money to go to school, and nobody to take good care of them.*
- *That one day I will be a burden on his future.*
- *That CAS in North Bay is not accepting my collect calls, and they don't know where I am.*
- *That he feels abandoned.*
- *I am worried that he is not safe right now;he was taken illegally [by his father].*
- *His nightmares, and not able to be there to comfort him.*
- *Everything.*
- *I worry how my being away from him for so long is going to affect him emotionally.*
- *Of him withdrawing.*
- *I worry about his happiness. I hope he has good school clothes, and a good hair cut, so that he doesn't get teased at school. I don't like where he's going to school at all. They tease him because he now goes to a different school in the afternoon because of his behaviour.*
- *Because of the ideas I put in her head, she will grow up frustrated and resentful.*
- *Him stuffing his feelings.*
- *He'll be emotionally abused and become bitter.*
- *His feelings.*
- *That he won't fully understand. He might feel animosity towards me for not being there. Something might happen to him that's out of my control.*
- *None, except that he might get mad at me in the future.*
- *Of my doing it again, and having to go back to jail.*
- *My biggest problem is his not trusting me and not believing in me as his mother.*
- *Her being with her [abusive] dad. Having problems in school.*
- *This child is very sensitive and I fear the damage that will be caused to his self esteem from others knowing that his mom is in jail.*
- *Just the damage to confidence and self-esteem as a result of others knowing her step-mom was in jail.*
- *This will have long-term effects.*
- *My biggest worries are how he is feeling, I know he is confused and sad. I know he misses me so much.*
- *I'm worried about how I am affecting her, how she is feeling, if she is coping okay, if she understands or has someone to talk to, if she is sad, lonely, worried about me. I don't want her to feel hurt.*
- *She misses me.*

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comments of some women that they are losing control over the care of their children and are not always confident that surrogate caretakers are acting in their best interests.

How Maternal Incarceration is Experienced by School-aged Children

At this age, children will become aware of how imprisonment might affect their mothers. Television images of prison may figure into how they imagine their mothers "behind bars." They are just starting to appreciate how their mother's absence is affecting them, emotionally and practically, but they will be focused on the unfair system that took Mommy away. Most are not ready to judge her harshly or see her as a flawed person. Indeed, they find it difficult to reconcile that their mother, who is a good person, can be in a place so obviously meant for bad people. To think critically about their mother is to think critically about themselves, and they are hurt when people say bad things about her. They may vigorously defend her and boys especially may take on the role of protector. Girls may begin to adopt the role of caretaker, for her and for any younger siblings.

As with children who face other family adversities such as abuse and parental alcoholism, they may come to see their families as different. Forming friendships and being accepted by peers is becoming important and most children will hide their "secret" from everyone. This attitude is a barrier to help seeking, either from adults such as caretakers or teachers, or from peers. Many are separated from siblings who would be natural allies and sources of support. If news of their mothers' imprisonment gets out – as happens in high-profile cases covered by the media – the self-imposed shame will be overwhelming and add to the feelings of sadness, vulnerability and confusion. Means of dealing with these emotions might include avoidance, numbing, and substance use.

The separation will be painful but children of this age may recognize some positive aspects to their mothers' absence. It may free a child from contact with a mother's abusive partner or trigger the move to a nicer house with better food and other amenities. The burden of a mother with a substance abuse problem can weigh heavily on older children especially. Their new caretakers may distract them

with outings and fun activities. Experiencing any pleasure or even relief during their mothers' absence can create a sense of dissonance if they feel they are betraying their mother.

Lauren is 11 years old and her sister, Charmaine, is six. Lauren lives with their father while Charmaine lives with their grandmother and many of their extended family. ...Lauren remembers feelings sad and lonely when her mother left her. She says that she also misses her mother's "cuddles." Charmaine was asked how she felt when she came to visit her mother on the extended day visits. Her answer was that: "I want to sleep with Mummy .. and I want to stay with her ... I want her to come home and I miss her a lot .. I want her to come home." Lauren, when asked what she was looking forward to when her mum comes back home replied: "Mum's dinners ... just being with her .. I just want her to come home" (Howard League for Penal Reform, 1993:18).

Links to Risk Factors for Criminal Behaviour

At this age, children are susceptible to adopting rationalization they hear to justify their mothers' behaviour. They must come to terms with her behaviour in a way that preserves their sense of her as a good person. Considering the reason for their mothers' incarceration, they will focus on fairness and intent. It is likely that this will lead them to focus on the fairness of the circumstances of her arrest and prosecution rather than on her behaviour itself. They may come to see the system as unfair or biased or believe everybody does it but "the system" chose to pick on her, no one can live on welfare without augmenting their income, or she is an innocent person being persecuted. They may also excuse their mothers' behaviour because of her good intentions (e.g., our family needed the money). Left unaddressed, these attitudes can predispose them to adopt anti-social rationales for their own criminal behaviour, especially those who offend to provide needed items for younger siblings or the household in general. They may also be resistant to later efforts to cognitively re-frame their value system, so entrenched is their view that the justice system is capricious, biased, and not deserving of respect.

A second risk area is that of school success. Having to change residences will disrupt children who are well established in supportive school settings and peer networks. Even those who stay in the same school may experience adjustment difficulties that can manifest in a variety of ways including aggression, difficulty concentrating, multiple absences (e.g., visits, court attendance, CAS appointments), despondency, and even school avoidance. All these factors will be amplified greatly if the other students were to learn of their mother's incarceration.

Implications for Intervention

Interventions for children of this age should respect their need for privacy, their need to see their mother as a good person, and address any cognitive distortions about their mother's behaviour, self-blame, and the role of the system. Basic education about the prison and legal systems can alleviate anxiety in

Table 7

The Consequences of Maternal Imprisonment for School-aged Children

Practical Consequences	• many already live separately from mother • one third had to change schools • one third separated from siblings • lower rate of CAS involvement and foster care, but still high • most know where mother is although few visit
Potential Emotional Reactions	• greater awareness of mother as individual so concerned about her safety • dissonance about seeing positive aspects to mother's absence • embarrassment / need for secrecy • possible reactive depression • increased sense of vulnerability • may avoid dealing with where mother is • separation from siblings may increase distress and isolation
Understanding of Mothers' Criminal Behaviour	• can view mother as a victim of the "system" • concern about fairness of circumstances surrounding prosecution • may excuse or justify mother's behaviour because of her "just" intent • will have difficulty separating behaviour (bad) from person (good) or prison (bad) from mother (good)

children who worry about safety and have other fears. At this age, some children are expressing the need to have specific information about their mother's case rather than vague platitudes. Group interventions for children can be helpful for some, by breaking the isolation and introducing strategies for positive coping. Entry into groups should be preceded by a through individual assessment, however, because some children will be facing multiple challenges and would benefit from individual therapy.

In our schools, these children as a group are invisible, a status they share with children undergoing other family problems such as mental illness, parental addictions, or domestic violence (Dibbs,2001). Unless a CAS worker reveals the situation, teachers will be unaware of most cases where students are experiencing paternal incarceration. Maternal incarceration, being a greater stigma in a child's eyes, will rarely be disclosed by students. Teachers can refer to an excellent resource from the United Kingdom (Ramsden,1998). Important is the need for confidentiality. General knowledge of the situation can trigger school avoidance, victimization of the child, aggression, or despondency. Children of incarcerated parents can benefit from the support typically available to students experiencing family crises or learning difficulties (Dibbs, 2001). Maximizing success at school is crucial, but so is providing a supportive environment:"school can be the anchor point in an otherwise chaotic and fluctuating world. It can be the only norm that these children have, their only stability" (Dibbs,2001:11).

With my 11 year old, I'm not as hard on her now [since parenting program]. I expected her to be an adult. I'm now telling her, "be the little girl. You don't have to worry about the big people things." I don't tell her the things her little mind can't handle (Jerri, an incarcerated mother quoted in Boudin, 1998:111).

Case Study: Brittany, age seven.

Brittany is in grade two. She likes school, dolls and laughing with her sisters and friends. She was almost five when her mother was incarcerated for two months.

Brittany said that her mother was in jail for a "big time" and that it was "like a secret." At first, she thought her mother was at a cousin's place. Her mother thought it best to tell Brittany and her younger sisters that she was at a relative's place so they wouldn't worry. However, it is very hard to prevent children, especially when an older sibling knows the truth, from learning what is happening in the family. Brittany suffered alone because the significant adults in her life did not know she had discovered the truth and because she knew she wasn't suppose to know that Mommy was in jail.

It's really hard to keep a secret…you don't want to tell but finally I told Dad. He said he didn't want Mommy to be in jail either…I didn't tell my friends ever 'cause I didn't want them to tell anyone else.

Like many affected adults, Brittany's mother, father and grandmother wanted to protect her from the negative reactions of others. While this is understandable and may avoid hurtful responses from the outside world, it also prevents children from benefiting from supportive responses and burdens them with a worrisome secret. In Brittany's case, it even delayed her ability to receive support from within the family.

Children need to make sense of why their mother is in jail in a way that preserves their view of the parent and their beliefs. Brittany explains her mother's situation in words very similar to those used by her mother and younger sister.

My Mother was with [my uncle] and he gave stuff he wanted to steal to my mom and then he ran away and that's how my Mom got in jail. It wasn't nice to leave my mom and have her go to jail when she didn't do anything.

While Brittany can clearly articulate the practical consequences of her mother's incarceration (e.g., going to live with Grandma during the week and at home with Dad on weekends), her thoughts largely focus on her emotional reactions of sadness and worry (Figure 24).

Like most young children, Brittany has never visited a jail. Some of her concerns relate to her mother's well being in the jail created in her child's imagination.

She was in a bad place...you only get dry bread and water… I was afraid she'd get sick…I worried that she wasn't sleeping... a person in a room down from her made noises…when she doesn't sleep she gets all kinda cranky. . . doesn't wanta get up in the morning.

Like many young children, her image of jail consists of barren bars and is devoid of any of the comforts associated with home (Figure 25). Children tend to miss an absent mother more

acutely at nighttime regardless of the reason for her absence (e.g., vacation). Brittany's narrative illustrates how worry related to incarceration can be intensified by child-like images of the "bad" place called jail and shows how a child's longing for her absent mother grows to include concern about the parent's welfare.

Brittany's comments also demonstrate that the impact of maternal incarceration may affect a child long after a mother returns to the home. Consider this seven-year-old child's responses made almost three years after her mother was in jail.

Do you have any worries now? "When she's not at home I worry that she might be in jail." What would that mean? "That my worries would be coming back." What do you do when you worry about this? "Tell my dad and he lets me sleep with him and then the worries go away." (Brittany began to suck her thumb and gently rock back and forth). When do you worry about this? "Sometimes when she's out at night in town. I wonder if she's gone to jail." What is your biggest worry now that Mommy is back home with you? "Mommy might go back to jail."

Comments made by Brittany's mother suggest that references to trouble or going back to jail may emerge in marital arguments. A child's stress over current concerns (e.g., marital tension) may evoke memories associated with or conditioned to the anxiety felt around maternal incarceration.

Brittany has the following advice for the people who want to help children when their mothers have to go to jail.

Tell children not to worry about Mom when she's in jail. Tell them she's in a safe place. Will children believe their mother is in a safe place? No. How come? Cause the people might be lying. So will anything help children? People shouldn't lie to children even if they are trying to make them feel better.

Figure 23

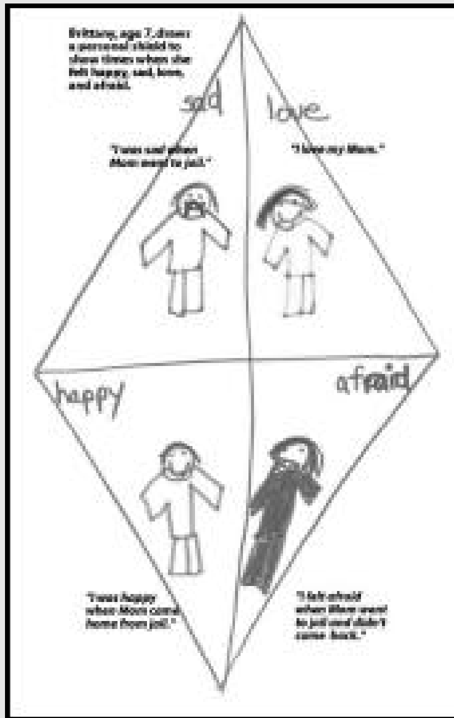
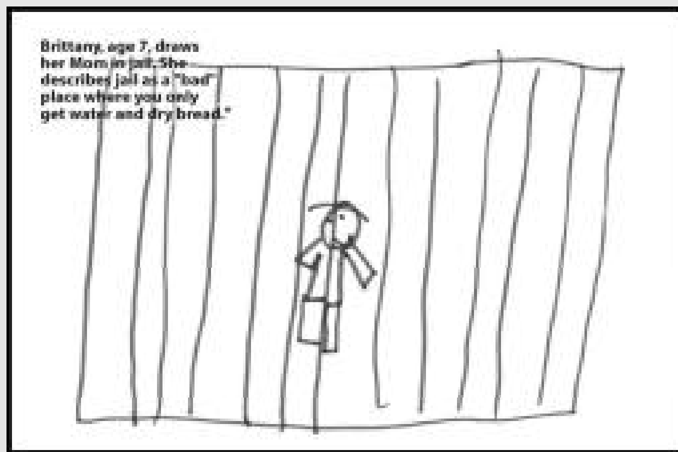


Figure 24



Case Study: Brian, age nine.

Brian is the second youngest of four boys.Brian is described by his mother as "an emotional child who is sweet and sensitive." He is enrolled in a special learning program and gets along well with others.

Brian's mother reported that they have never spoken about her incarceration because "he doesn't ask." He did not visit her at the jail but spoke with his mother over the phone. Brian told the interviewer that he did not go to visit his mother because "I would have cried 'cause I missed her." He indicated that neither his friends nor teachers know about his mother's incarceration. He says "nobody needs to know" and that he would feel "mad" if anyone found out. Brian clearly identifies with pro-social symbols (e.g., police) and attitudes (e.g., "people who rob should go to jail"), and feels embarrassed by his mother's incarceration.When asked if people in jail are like his mother, he replied:"No,they're bad. They shouldn't put my mom in jail 'cause she didn't do anything." This thinking helps Brian integrate pro-social values and knowledge about jail while preserving the image of his mother as a good person.

Brian's responses to interview questions revealed his dissonance and guilt about enjoying special activities arranged by his temporary caregiver while his mother was incarcerated (e.g., shopping, looking at a neat car, buying toys, going to the fair). He states that he "wouldn't have got to do that kinda stuff" if his mother had not been in jail. It was apparent that he did not know how to deal with his positive feelings about these fun opportunities without feeling like he was betraying his mother.

Brian identified two major concerns related to his mother's incarceration.The first worry is best described as an increased sense of personal vulnerability when his mother is in jail. He indicated that he worried at night when he tries to go to sleep: "I think about how I might get hurt and need stitches or have to go some place ... I worry that my mom wouldn't be here to look after me or take me to the hospital." This worry was linked to a recent traumatic incident at school that resulted in a serious injury requiring Brian's mother to take him to the hospital for stiches. Brian felt more vulnerable being separated from his mother because of other stresses in his life (e.g.,trauma resulting in injury).

Brian's second and "biggest worry" was the fear that his mother would be killed in jail: "that she will get - that she - that she will - die - that someone will - will hit her." The overwhelming nature of this fear was conveyed in Brian's uncharacteristically halting speech and in his immediate attempt to reassure himself that his mother would be okay: "...but she's got friends in there.She'll be okay."

Brian was asked to draw a picture to show what he imagined when he thought of his mother in jail (Figure 26). It captures his sense of his mother's sadness, her isolation, and the bars that lock her inside. He used the expression "behind bars" to connote jail during the interview. As for many children, his drawing reflects an imagined jail rather than the actual jail (which he has not seen).

Figure 25

Brain (age 9) draws his Mom in jail.

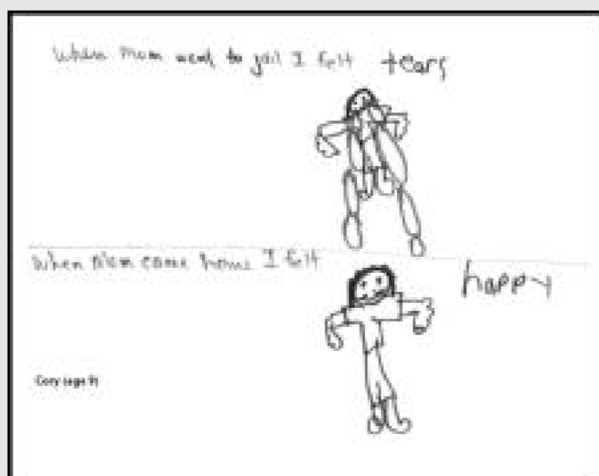
Case Study: Corrie, age 9.

Corry is the eldest of five girls. She looks after her younger sisters to such an extent that the youngest calls her "Momma." Her mother worries about her being so responsible and serious that she might miss out on her childhood. Corry is described by her mother as quiet, easy to talk to, and able to "read my feelings." Her mother's descriptions likely explain why Corry was the only child told about her mother's incarceration before it happened. Corry describes being very sad and worried about the practical consequences of her mother's absence. Tears are prominent in Corry's drawing and her memories about her mother going to jail (Figure 27).

> *I started to cry 'cause I thought Mom was going to be in jail for a very long time. What did you know about jail? That's where bad people go 'cause they've done really bad things. Where you worried about things? That she was never coming home and we'd be stuck at our grandma's. What was the problem with Grandma's place? I missed my mom and my toys.*

Corry's situation illustrates how the effect of maternal incarceration can be intensified when a child is already experiencing emotional challenges. Corry was struggling at school and had to repeat grade one. In addition to navigating her school struggles, Corry had to cope with her mother's incarceration. She described feelings of failure and aloneness related to school where she was temporarily placed in a special program at a different school. Her mother's incarceration intensified Corry's feelings of displacement, not belonging and low esteem. Her emotional distress was felt and expressed most keenly at school.

Figure 26



> *I worried most at school. I felt alone and different 'cause their moms wasn't in jail. The teacher kept on asking what was the matter 'cause I kept crying. Sometimes I'd say I don't want to talk about it and sometimes I'd talk about it.*

Corry's mother said the school had wanted to know what had happened to her and called her mother who was keeping the girls during the school week. Her mother then sat the girls down and explained that they must not tell anyone Mom was in jail. Corry felt she should not have talked to the teacher and that she had let her mother down. As with most children in similar situations, talking to peers was not seen as an option because of the shame and fear of being shunned.

> *I didn't tell them (friends) 'cause they might have started laughing at me…might not like me or my parents. Did you think of it as a secret? Yeah, 'cause if I told somebody they'd spread it.*

Unlike her sisters, Corry found it difficult to seek comfort from her father or grandmother. Even her advice to other children only identifies people outside of the home as sources of potential support when a mother goes to jail. Corry's narrative gives us a sense of the pain and isolation she experienced when her mother went to jail.

> *I told grandma a little but stopped 'cause I almost started crying – didn't want Grandma to see me cry. How do your tears make others feel? They know I'm sad – makes them feel not that good about me. Is that why you didn't want people to see you cry? Yes.*

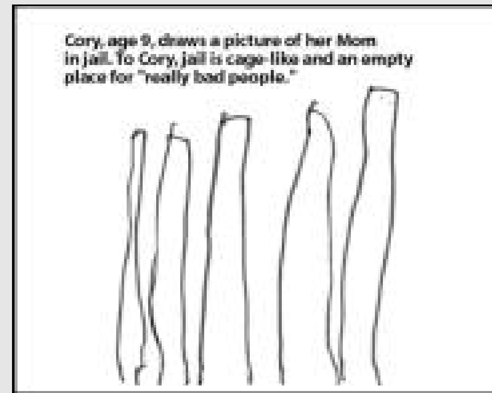
Corry's efforts to make sense of her mother's incarceration also demonstrate how the egocentricity of a young child can cause them to blame themselves: "I thought it was my fault. Sometimes kids think it's their fault 'cause their parents yell at them before they go." While it is typical in this stage of development for children to assume they caused events that actually have nothing to do with them, Corry's drawing of jail demonstrates how the resulting guilt and worry are intensified because of the incarceration outcome. Feeling guilty because mother looks sad at dinner or argued with dad, is very different from believing you caused your mother to be in a cold, cage-like jail from which she might not be returning (see Figure 28).

Corry's words and drawings teach us that the hurt and distortions a child experiences when her

mother goes to jail do not magically evaporate or self-correct because Mommy comes home.The secrecy, sadness, worry, and guilt that surrounds maternal incarceration often continue after release and may severely compromises a child's healing and recovery. Corry's opinion about what would have helped her illustrates the need for a child to be able to talk with someone they can trust about their situation.

Would it help a child to talk with other children whose moms were in jail? "Yeah.That'd make me feel better 'cause I could trust them 'cause they'd already been through what I had.

Figure 26



Cory, age 9, draws a picture of her Mom in jail. To Cory, jail is cage-like and an empty place for "really bad people."

Case Study: Christopher, age 12.

Christopher's mother reported he has been experiencing stress as a result of his paternal grandfather's illness and his maternal grandfather's death (two years ago).While these events would presumably affect all the boys,Christopher was the only son described by his mother as troubled by these matters.Christopher did not speak of these issues but reported missing his same-aged cousin who used to live with his grandparents across the street.Christopher has struggled with academic achievement and rules at school. He has served time in secure detention and is on probation.He will be attending an anger management group as a condition of probation.

The crime for which his mother was arrested occurred while she was out looking for him because he was late for his court-ordered curfew. Christopher may feel some responsibility for the circumstances leading to his mother's incarceration.While he did not speak of this connection to his mother's arrest,Christopher was obviously distressed by any reference to his mother's past or future incarceration.While appearing tough to others,Christopher's mother described him as one of the most sensitive of her children. He presented as a very sad and worried youth who was struggling hard not to be overwhelmed by emotions. His eyes repeatedly filled with tears.

Christopher indicated that he did not want to talk "'cause it's my mom." He stressed that he "didn't want friends to know – they don't need to know." He talked of his mother's sadness and tears about being in jail. He indicated that "we all cried and cried but Adam [age five] couldn't ever stop." He acknowledged worrying about his mother and stated, "She could be killed.They make knives and things in there." When asked whether he had any advice for helping professionals,Christopher said, "moms shouldn't go to jail.They just shouldn't."

The interview was ended because of Christopher's obvious distress. He appears to cope through internalizing and externalizing behaviours.When overwhelmed by feelings of vulnerability and sadness,Christopher is at risk of thrill-seeking (e.g.,joy riding, substance abuse) or aggressive behaviour to block his emotions.

Adolescents

Adolescence, or the teenage years, is widely known as a challenging stage for both parents and youth. It is an important phase of development when young people move rapidly from the self-identity of "child" toward but not quite reaching "young adulthood." Parents are called upon to adapt their parenting style and gradually change expectations as these young people experiment with adult-like activities from the safety of a solid home base.They need input and supervision but may not readily recognize or accept that reality. Key aspects of this developmental stage are:

- increased sense of self and autonomy from family
- dramatic physical and mood changes brought on by puberty
- increased peer group influence and desire for acceptance
- dating, rasing issues of sexuality, intimacy, relationship skills

Parents play a key role in guiding young people through the dramatic changes they undergo, providing a solid and reassuring presence against which to rebel and test boundaries in a safe way. Important aspects of this process are clear and age-appropriate rules and consequences, supervision and monitoring, and open communication.

The picture of adolescents that emerges from our data is one of children who are drifting away from their mothers (possibly because of the severity and chronicity of problems that bring these women into conflict with the law) and who have little if any contact with their biological fathers.Compared with the other age groups,they are less likely to have lived with their mothers at their admission to custody and only half the women plan to resume living with their teenagers at release.Only 20% of the teenagers continued to live in the same residence they shared with their mothers after the admission to custody. Four of them were in youth custody and half of them continued living in the residence (often with friends or other relatives) in which they already lived.During this time, most will live apart from siblings.Almost one quarter (23%) of the adolescents live with their mothers' family and 18% live with their biological fathers. Because of their age, the number of foster care placements is low, but 10% are wards of the CAS.

Two thirds of the mothers of adolescents acknowledged a substance abuse problem that compromises their abilities to be the best mothers they could be. Half of the women were supported by Ontario Works prior to admission and only a quarter had finished high school. Most of these children will have been the subject of an open CAS file at some point in their lives, but they are reaching the end of their time with that agency. One suspects that, given the mandate of the CAS, a good portion will have been abused, neglected and/or in need of protection at least once in their lives. For about half of the teenagers, this is not the first separation from their mothers because of incarceration and about half have themselves spent time in youth custody (by mother report).What we see, therefore, is a group of youngsters who have probably experienced some instability in their lives, who are rapidly emancipating themselves from maternal supervision, and who are following their mothers' (and maybe their fathers') footsteps on a path that will find many of them in conflict with the law.

The Mothers' Perspectives

According to the women, most of the adolescents (72%) knew their mothers were in custody. However, only 20% had been to visit In addition to the general worries all mothers have, that their children are healthy and being taken care of, the mothers of adolescents were more likely to worry about their teenagers drifting toward risky behaviours such as drug use. Some saw other worrisome coping styles in their teenagers,like suppressing emotions. One mother believes her son committed a crime solely to have a place to live while she was gone (i.e., youth custody).Also, some mothers are sensing in their teenagers an anger over the behaviour bringing them to prison. In a few comments, one senses guilt and disappointed in themselves as mothers and role models.

How is (your teenager) most affected by the separation from you?

- *My son has been affected in a negative way; he is drawing further and further away.*
- *It bothers him, but he does not show it.*
- *Right now I know my child is safe, and I believe it's best for him to be living with my mom and dad. But then I need to get released to get proper help for us to have a better life.*
- *My daughter has been adopted, and I'm sure she appreciates the family that is raising her.*
- *My son needs to study in China, so I came here to make money to help him go to high school, and to make a nicer home.*
- *We have not talked about this yet, but I'm sure we will all have different kinds of feelings.*
- *My daughter (17) is hurt because she and I were super tight.*
- *My daughter (15) misses both her parents.*
- *We are very close and miss each other's friendship. He is disappointed.*
- *My son has to take care of himself financially.*
- *It's high profile. His natural mother has said cruel and hurtful things that have affected his relationship with me [his step-mother] and with his dad. His whole world has been turned upside down. He is angry and sad.*
- *My son doesn't think I care about him.*
- *My 16 year old son] is angry and feels abandoned.*
- *Angry, confused.*
- *I have a very close relationship with her and it is just tough not to be t here for the important stuff – big or small. She likes and is secure knowing Mom is at home. She doesn't have that now.*

What are your biggest worries right now about [your teenager]?

- *Proper care and general well being.*
- *That my getting into trouble will affect his future.*
- *That my child cannot go to school because he doesn't have any [immigration] papers. It is all my fault that he worries a lot because he's a teenager. I don't want him to feel badly that he has a mother in jail.*
- *I'm not too worried because I know he's doing well. He misses me, and I miss him; he also misses his friends because he's had to change schools.*
- *That she may feel I don't love her or want her.*
- *I'm worried that he doesn't have any money to go to school because his father isn't working at all [this woman came from China and sends money home to her family].*
- *I don't want to lose what I had with her before I went to jail.*
- *They (15 and 17 year old girls) will fall into the wrong peer group.*
- *Drug abuse and abandonment issues.*
- *Her happiness. Her behaviour got bad at school, real bad, that her aunt [where she is living now] could not stop her doing things she can't do, e.g., boys, smoke. Although my [13-year old daughter] is very mature I still worry about this greatly.*
- *He is a good kid, in school. I wish he would stop smoking cigarettes.*
- *The amount of medication he is on, and the fact that I'm not notified about it.*
- *My son being in jail. Ontario Works refused him assistance so he went and got himself arrested.*
- *His environment is hostile and critical.*
- *His vulnerability.*
- *His emotional state.*
- *That he'll follow my (crazy) path in life.*
- *Her being with her dad.*
- *Keeping him from getting tn trouble with the law and drug abuse/marijuana.*
- *Problems with the law, drugs.*
- *At her age, I'm afraid this may cause this incredibly good child to rebel.*

How Maternal Incarceration is Experienced by Adolescents

A glimpse into the lives of these teenagers is provided by two British studies, one about children visiting mothers at Holloway Prison (Howard League for Penal Reform, 1993) and one of 53 teenagers with a mother, father or sibling in prison (Brown et al., 2002).

Isolation and Stigma

The principle theme emerging from their comments was that of isolation and fear of public discovery of their secret:

I've only told one of my friends but she's the closest person to me ... I don't really like telling people what's happened to Mum because they might think she's a bad person (16 year old girl cited in Howard League for Penal Reform, 1993: 10).

[I want to change schools.] I'm always getting picked on — people cuff me one and I end up having a fight ... then end up being put on report. Quite a few people know [that my mother's in prison] in school. ...some of them happened to find out and I told one person and they've obviously told other people. I don't really mind as long as they don't start saying things about her (14 year old male cited in Howard League for Penal Reform, 1993:10).

I didn't tell anyone, not friends of school. A social worker got involved and informed the school. I told one friend who then told te whole school, who then stopped talking to me. Another girl supported me because her mum was in prison too. I dropped out of school for six months (16 year old female cited in Brown et al., 2002:42).

I don't feel alone but still wouldn't talk about it generally, only to friends. I wouldn't hide it now though. I used to because I didn't want others to think my mum is bad (16 year old female cited in Brown et al., 2002: 50)

I felt I had no one to talk to. I told my two best friends. The school still doesn't know because I do not feel they will be sympathetic. Now I am doing my [final exams] I really wish they knew. I have hardly any free time (15 year old female cited in Brown et al., 2002: 56)

The growing importance of the peer group for adolescents is a significant point here. The embarrassment of having a mother is prison can be keenly felt by children of this age and can amplify the sense that their family is somehow different. The irony is that many have lost the person to whom they would normally confide their problems. As one 16 year old girl said: "I would really like to have talked to Mum about boyfriends and that. It's not bothered me too much, really. Though I had to stop my dancing – only Mum was interested" (Brown et al., 2002:47).

Caretaking: Practical and Emotional

Another theme was that of caretaking and responsibility for very grown up matters not typically faced by teenagers. While adolescence is a period of transition to increased autonomy, some teenagers with mothers in prison will skip this stage of development and advance to pseudo-adult roles that can include taking care of younger siblings and taking on roles more commonly associated with parenting than with being parented. While some children have to confront this situation when a mother becomes ill or injured, those children would receive sympathy and support and would be more likely to share feelings with friends, seek help, or express an unwillingness to take on a caretaker role. Children of incarcerated women, on the other hand, are not likely to seek assistance or share their burden with peers, as discussed above. Moreover, they may take on adult roles before they are old enough to navigate their way through these added responsibilities. The comments of 16-year old "Darryl," below, reveal his recognition that he is not yet ready for the responsibility of young children.

Being left to care for younger siblings is a significant burden and one which may compromise school performance and other important features of a teenager's life such as social activities. Moreover, they may take great pains to disguise the absence of their mother from the school, child protection authorities or welfare officials, lest the monthly payment be reduced below a level sufficient to pay the rent. Some of the adolescents interviewed in the U.K. spoke of the responsibility they felt:

I feel responsible for my brother, I'm getting a flat when I am 17. Social Services will help with grants and stuff, so I won't ever have to go back and live with my mum. If my brother can't stay with our mum, he will come and live with me. I would rather that than have him move around and all over the place 'cos it's not fair (16 year old female cited in Brown et al., 2002: 43).

I used to have to look after my brother from 10 o'clock in the morning until six o'clock at night so I couldn't go out anyway. I didn't have much of a social life. I think I missed out on that, having a social life. Mum sends money for birthdays and stuff. I get my brother's stuff for him, presents and that (16 year old female cited in Brown et al., 2002:47).

I have a little girl of my own, I mean, I honestly don't mind [taking care of my younger sister], but I'm in two places at once and trying to lead two lives at once as well – it's pretty hard (16 year old female cited in Howard League for Penal Reform, 1993:9).

I suppose we behave a lot more responsible ... we've all had to grow up quickly (17 year old female cited in Howard League for Penal Reform, 1993:11).

I've done ten years of growing up in a matter of months (20 year old female cited in Howard League for Penal Reform, 1993:15).

Equally or more detrimental to the normal development of an adolescent is the role of emotional caretaker for a parent. Some teenagers will shield their mothers from upset and not articulate emotional needs. The urge to vent or express negative feelings may be usurped by their intent to protect and care for their mother's feelings. After her release, they may attempt to minimize any stresses hoping she will stay out of trouble. Taking on the responsibility of keeping a mother out of prison, they can feel to blame if she returns. These comments represent examples of emotional caretaking:

She mustn't think we don't love her – if we don't keep in touch she will think we don't love her and she will harm herself again. (13 and 15 year old sisters, cited in Brown et al., 2002:32).

Coming home won't be too good. Prison does a lot to your brain, because it's hard. Prison should be a learning centre where you are trained towards a job. It has damaged Mum – she is more fearful of normal day to day things, like going to the toilet. It's hard for the family to readjust.... Mum needs support, because the family has grown different. Mum still thinks I am 13 (16 year old female cited in Brown et al., 2002: 44).

Mum should understand how difficult it has been for our [older] brother, but we can't say anything because Mum would get upset (12 year old female cited in Brown et al., 2002:49).

I had to be strong for everyone and I was/am really under pressure (15-year old female with both parents in prison cited in Brown et al., 2002: 56)

She's locked up and my brother's in care and, like, it might sound selfish, but the fact that she's not with me when I need her [is what I hate]. I

just want to help her now ... cause she needs me now (18 year old female cited in Howard League for Penal Reform, 1993:17).

Caretaking may not start with incarceration. It may be a long-term pattern if the mother has been chronically involved with the criminal justice system or had a substance abuse or mental health problem. In their minds, her incarceration may represent their failure to take care of her and keep her out of trouble. The roles of parent and child may become blurred and even reversed.This will certainly compromise the ability of a mother to act as an authority figure, not to mention how her credibility as a rule setter and disciplinarian will be compromised by a criminal conviction.There may be more role confusion when a mother returns to a family where an adolescent has been in the parental role during the absence.

A Foot in Both Worlds

On the one hand, they are acting in adult roles.On the other hand, we still see them as children who need protection from knowing too much.A 16 year old girl put it this way:

[My mother] was on remand for six months before she went to court. I didn't go to court because I wasn't allowed, because I was too young. I wanted to go because I thought I should know all about it because I was closest to Mum. I would have been a support for Mum. I felt that they thought it had nothing to do with me – I wasn't considered. I was drinking with friends, saving money for drink, blotting it all out (Brown et al., 2002: 40).

One of the most common recommendations made by the U.K.teenagers was to know more about case developments and the workings of the system.

Emotional Responses

Adolescence is typically a time of heightened sensitivity and emotional reactivity. Common experiences of intense and rapidly changing emotions are likely to be amplified by factors associated with maternal incarceration. Emotions to be expected include:anxiety, fear, anger, confusion,shame, frustration,loneliness, sadness or even depression,loss of control,guilt, and concern for their mother's safety. Such emotions are experienced by most teenagers from time to time, however, these youth are likely to suffer them more frequently, intensively and more of them at the same time and for longer periods.

Teenagers'struggle with complexities inherent in their situation reflect their emerging and advanced cognitive abilities.A huge leap to abstract thinking means that teenagers can be critical of a mother's behaviour, which might include drug use and other risky activities that elevate the possibility of incarceration.There may be resentment for her failure to conform to the expected maternal role, at their being thrust into adult-like roles such as caretaker, and for disappointing them after past promises of avoiding prison.Others might experience ambivalence over a mother's absence and some will even let themselves feel relief, if her presence is viewed as a negative influence or if a teenager has been a caretaker of the mother.

Gender Differences

We can speculate that maternal incarceration could well be a different and more difficult experience for adolescent girls.Adolescents move from an increased identification with the same-gender parent as a role model, to a more generalized identification with same-sex role models. Girls with role models who abuse substances and who have access to drugs may be at risk to use substances to cope with the reality of their mothers'imprisonment.The drug or alcohol use may reduce their anxiety and contain sadness, but may also start a problem that handicaps their success in life. Girls may also seek belonging through precocious intimate relationships and may find themselves mothers at a young age,which may repeat their mothers'pattern of teenage motherhood.

According to our data, with a sample of only 25 adolescents, girls teenagers were less likely to have lived with their mothers at arrest (33%) than boys (47%) but were more likely to have contact with their biological fathers. Girls were more likely to know that their mothers were in prison but all the adolescents who had visited their mothers were male. Only one of the seven adolescents who had been in youth custody was a female adolescent, the sex ratio to be expected among young offenders.Clearly more remains to be known on this topic.

This dependency on children to meet our own needs is exacerbated by the prison context.We are not just struggling with the kind of roles that developed in the past but also with the impact of the present conditions.Women want their children to meet their needs for connecting to the outside world and to family, even when it may be more important for a child not to visit, not to communicate on the phone or even to be distant. You will hear women say things like, 'It was Christmas, that day is hard for me, my daughter should have stayed home so that I could call her.' Group members would ask one another

empathetically, 'Do you think that your teenage daughter might have other needs, other things she wanted to do?' (Boudin, 1998:113).

Links to Risk Factors for Criminal Behaviour

There are three categories of concern over how adolescents might drift into behaviour that could find them in conflict with the law.The first is early emancipation from the care and supervision of adults, or reliable adults, who monitor their activities and encourage success at school.While teenagers can feel quite confident about coping in the adult world,most are still in need of guidance and supervision.They can fall in with the wrong crowd or exercise poor judgment about risky behaviours.Their mothers' incarceration may find them living with "friends" of dubious ability to supervise a teenager, or with "step fathers" whom they only met recently. In a related vein, those who do live with their mothers might not see her as a credible authority on matters of rules and discipline, or even guidance and advice.As the mother of three adolescent boys told us: "being in jail has caused my children to feel 'if mom's there it's okay for me to break the law.' Guess I am not a very good mom." Her status as former inmate may compromise her ability to command respect from her children.

The second area of concern relates to the distorted rationalizations they may develop to explain in their own minds the behaviour of their mothers.Some teenagers need to make sense of their mothers' behaviour in ways that help them preserve the sense of her as a good person.This may involve denying her behaviour was criminal,normalizing her criminal behaviour (e.g., everybody does it), accepting rationalizations for criminal behaviour (e.g., need/survival,drug problems,stress), blaming others for their mother's criminal behaviour (e.g, pressure from friends or partner), or blaming the system (e.g., bias,persecution, racism,unfair law).We see some rationalizations in the comments of the U.K. youth. For example, some of the youth saw their mother as the victim of a problem:

It is not her fault. She is not well. She can't look after herself and it isn't her fault what happened" (16 year old female cited in Brown et al., 2002: 29).

I was already living in a children's home so it made no difference. She is bad with her nerves, she has always been bad. She was in hospital first when I was 12" (16 year old female (16 year old female cited in Brown et al., 2002:38).

Others saw her as the victim of external circumstances, forced to commit crime for a good reason such as supporting the family:

She did the right thing – to help the family with money. It's not acceptable but she had to do it. I accepted what she did because I understood why she did it" (16 year old female cited in Brown et al., 2002:30).

I'm not embarrassed of her or anything.She's my mum. She only done what she did to support us (18 year old female cited in Howard League for Penal Reform, 1993:16)

On the other hand there were those who saw the behaviour as a stupid mistake for which there was no excuse:

I think she is really stupid to have done what she did but that does not mean I don't love her (15 year old female cited in Brown et al., 2002: 30).

When young people see logical reasons for the criminal behaviour, perhaps combined with the perception that the "system" acted unfairly, they may be pre-disposed to rationalize their own criminal behaviour.They may also come to see imprisonment as a normal way the "system" responds to "people like us."

[The police] were horrible. She [my mother] was pregnant and they banged her against the wall.... When [the police] say hello to me I stick my fingers up at them (14 year old girl quoted in Howard League for Penal Reform, 1993:13).

The third area of concern involves strategies for coping with powerful emotional reactions.These overwhelming emotions will be experienced by most adolescents in this situation but some are better able to cope with these feelings in a positive way. In other words,how a youth copes with these emotions may be either healthy or maladaptive. Factors associated with their ability to cope include the nature of the mother-child bond, exposure to abuse and violence, child characteristics (e.g., intelligence,temperament), continuity and quality of substitute care,and characteristics of the mother's absence (see Figure 1 earlier).

For some youth, the feelings associated with maternal incarceration are so overwhelming that they avoid or refuse to talk about their mother, her criminal behaviour or her incarceration. When mothers have been incarcerated before, true for half the adolescents in our sample, there can be a need to buffer oneself from the repeated emotional assaults and disappointments. Efforts to numb, block, or escape negative feelings may lead to substance abuse or thrill seeking behaviours. Frustration and anger may result in acting out behaviours that bring young people into conflict with family members, the school community, and the police. This effect may be delayed to a point when it is safer to express the anger, such as when the mother returns home. The mother's actions could be seen as shameful and embarrassing and they may cope by distancing themselves from her emotionally and physically. This can look like rebelling, blaming, rejecting, running away, disconnecting from the family, and, perhaps, developing pseudo-family relationships or sexually intimate relationships to create a sense of belonging and security.

Feelings that they cannot and should not count on a mother may generalize to other adults and authority figures and manifest in a lack of trust. When a mother is apologetic and promises to prevent future separations, relapses from drugs or a subsequent incarceration can feel like a personal rejection. The stigma could draw them toward anti-social peer groups who readily accept them. The ability to concentrate at school may also be compromised. Also concerning, but less likely to manifest in criminal behaviour, is the possibility that children feel compelled to take on the role of good boy or girl in the family.

While individual differences exist within sexes, both girls and boys may engage in internalizing and externalizing behaviours and these two coping styles can co-exist. Precocious sexual intimacy could be seen in youth of either sex, for example. At the same time, there may be coping strategies that are more frequently used by boys or girls. Coping styles in the face of maternal incarceration and how they vary by sex are not well understood at this point and need to be investigated empirically.

When she does get out people are going to be talking about her ... when someone says something about my mum I get mad ... that's what happens sometimes (14-year old boy cited in Howard League for Penal Reform, 1993: 17).

Implications for Intervention

Interventions with these youth should start by ensuring they have a safe and stable residence with appropriate adult supervision. Many will be beyond the age of child protection jurisdiction so foster care is not an option, however. Group or individual

Table 7

The Consequences of Maternal Imprisonment for Adolescents

Practical Consequences	• likely not first experience of maternal incarceration • probably knows about mother's incarceration • unlikely to live with mother • lowest rate of CAS oversight • high rate of separation from siblings
Potential Emotional Reactions	• anger at mother / anger at "system" • shame / stigma • avoidance / denial / blocking • guilt, self-blame and inappropriate attribution • sadness / loss / loneliness • confusion
Understanding of Mothers' Criminal Behaviour	• may rationalize her behaviour as necessary • may see mother as victim of circumstances • may see mother as a victim of the "system"
Factors that Elevate Risk of Future Criminal Behaviour	• early emancipation / lack of parental supervision • decay in respect for parental authority of mother and/or system • anti-social rationalizations for criminal behaviour • normalization of imprisonment • maladaptive coping strategies such as substance use • early school leaving • lack of empathy • anger management deficits

counselling can break the isolation, provide information on the correctional system, and address any distorted rationalizations or mis-information they might use to justify their own criminal behaviour. As with all ages,amplification of protective factors such as positive coping strategies, and other resiliency factors innate in the child are always important. Also critically important will be efforts to support the women and help them cope after release.

Adolescents interviewed by Brown et al. (2002) were asked for their suggestions for how to support children in their position. The top four suggestions were:

1. someone to talk to (independent of family or the prison system)
2. help with visiting and associated practical issues
3. to be kept informed and have access to information
4. provision of a youth space (e.g., "club" or chat room)

Other suggestions included the development of books and other resources for youth, the development of a web site or other forums where youth could speak among themselves,development of self-help programs for youth, and family rooms at prisons with visiting restricted to close relatives. One young person wanted to know how to handle information provided by a parent about difficult situations in the institution, such as victimization by other inmates. That would truly be difficult information for a young person to receive from an incarcerated parent.

Case Study: Darryl, age 16.

Darryl plans to re-enroll in high school to complete the three credits he needs to graduate. His descriptions of school suggest he has struggled academically and has had difficulty accepting rules. He has been convicted of several criminal offences and sentenced to probation and community service hours. On one occasion, he was held in secure detention for four days.

Darryl learned of the arrests and incarceration of his mother and father over the phone. He told us he had responsibility for his three younger brothers for three days before his aunt came to look after them. He explained that he still had "lots" of responsibility even after his aunt arrived because she had young children of her own and needed help looking after so many children. Although both parents went to jail, Darryl reported that we "get more upset when my Mom goes to jail." He explained their greater distress over their mother's incarceration by the following comment, "she spends a lot of time with Adam (5 year old brother)." While Darryl said he was affected by his mother's incarceration, he tended to focus on the effects of her absence on his younger siblings and his sense of responsibility for them. In his mind, he and his brothers would not have been affected as intensely if their mother had been absent due to a hospitalization or holiday. However, he was unable to articulate the difference. In contrast to his siblings,Darryl would voluntarily express his concern for his father and when a question was asked about his mother, he would often make reference to both mother and father in his answers.

Darryl believes his mother was falsely accused: "They nabbed her. She didn't do anything wrong. She was charged but didn't do anything." He did not suggest that his father was falsely accused. However, when asked about his own convictions he denied responsibility for any wrong doing and indicated that his criminal record happened because of misunderstandings and misinformation on the part of the police. He explains his mother's arrest in the same way he makes sense of his own convictions. His current beliefs enable him to blame others and avoid making changes in his conduct.

Darryl's sense of responsibility for his younger siblings during his mother's incarceration is evident in his descriptions of the impacts. He expressed concern about the long-term effect on his youngest brother Adam (age five), who still does not want to leave the house and episodically wet his pants (a problem that started with his mother's arrest).Darryl described his nine year-old brother as coping by staying in his room and stressed that he could neither sleep nor eat while his mother was absent. Finally, he suggested that his 12 year old brother coped outside of the home with friends and that he was okay. Darryl's perceptions of his youngest brothers seem congruent with the reports of others.However, his sense that his 12 year old brother was fine suggests that this youth's distress was not recognized by Darryl.

Darryl's major concern is that he wouldn't be able to handle looking after his brothers if his mother returns to jail: "All three kids, the house – too much to look after…no idea what I'd do…I don't even

want kids ever." Darryl's perception that he is not ready for the responsibility of looking after children is viewed to be accurate and raises the question about the children's potential risk while in his care. He reported that his friends came over to help him look after the kids for a few hours here and there. These are the same friends with whom he parties and who have been in trouble with the law. He noted that they couldn't help him in the future because of their jobs. His worries are compounded by his belief that there is no one else in the extended family who could look after all the boys. At the same time, he clearly does not want CAS to find a placement for his brothers.

Darryl also worries about his mother's well being in jail. He explained that he does not think she is at risk of being harmed but that her health needs (e.g., bad back) will not be adequately addressed. His beliefs are based on his own experience in youth custody. He did not experience any fears or harm while incarcerated, and thinks jail is an okay place unless you are not healthy.

Program Models

The Elizabeth Fry Societies across Canada, including the nine agencies in Ontario, offer a wide range of supportive resources to women in conflict with the law both in institutions and in the community. Children are the indirect recipients of services aimed at helping their mothers remain crime-free. They also directly benefit from efforts to facilitate prison visiting, organize Christmas presents for children, and from support groups for young people. One reason for doing this study was a desire to explore the needs of this group of young people and the ways we might tailor our services to be more responsive. Accordingly, the next section of the report reviews examples of models for informational resources, visiting programs, mentoring, residential programs, and groups for children.

Informational Resources

Several organizations create and distribute informational material for families.

Canada

The Canadian Family & Corrections Network (www3.sympatico.ca/cfcn/cfcneng.html) is a non-profit coalition of individuals and local, regional and national organizations. Their mission is to "encourage leadership, the sharing of resources, and the development of policies, practices and programs that enable prisoners and their families to build holistic family and community relations." They develop and distribute educational material for families, principally addressing the federal system, and have a directory of Canadian agencies providing services to families. Withers (2000) provides some helpful suggestions on speaking with children about a parent's incarceration.

United States

The Family and Corrections Network (www.fcnetwork.org) offers web-based information on children of prisoners, parenting programs for inmates, prison visiting, hospitality programs, keeping in touch, returning to the community, and the impact of the justice system on families. They offer a directory of programs (covering Canada as well), the Incarcerated Fathers Library, chat groups, a general reading room, and a list of books to read with children.

The Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents (www.e-ccip.org) in California is one of the most valuable resources for anyone interested in this topic. The Center, founded in 1989, has as its mission the prevention of inter-generational crime and incarceration. One goal is documenting model services for children and families. They have carried out several large-scale research projects, some of which are summarized in Gabel and Johnston (1995). In addition to publications and other resources aimed at service providers, they engage in many educational activities geared to parents. Available curricula cover topics that include:

- parent education for prisoners
- parent empowerment
- parent education for substance-dependent parents in treatment
- parent education for elementary school children
- family life education
- health education for incarcerated mothers
- women's issues
- the effects of trauma and violence on children
- mentor training
- parent advocacy for prisoners

They offer these programs as correspondence courses for prisoners nationwide or through direct instruction in several regions. They also train instructors to teach their curricula and offer technical assistance with

program development.Their Clearinghouse contains over 3,500 documentary and audiovisual items available for purchase.They offer more than 200 items free of charge to prisoners and their families.

United Kingdom

There are many organizations in the U.K. that offer support to the families of inmates, most of which are affiliated with Action for Prisoners' Families (www.prisonersfamilies.org.uk), formerly the Federation of Prisoners' Families Support Groups. Action for Prisoners' Families recently released an excellent report about the children and siblings of inmates (Brown et al., 2002).

Family Liaison Officials

Already under consideration in England and Wales, a Scottish initiative is worthy of mention as a model for potential adoption elsewhere. In Scotland, following the recommendations of Asquith and Peart (1992), a Families Contact Development Officer can now be found in each institution. Individuals in this role liaise with families and oversee the conditions of visiting and the relationship between families and staff. They also hear complaints from families about visits and other matters and organize training for correctional staff who are involved in visiting.The FCDO facilitates improvements to the physical layout of visiting areas including, in some facilities, the installation of baby change facilities and washrooms for the disabled. They produce information pamphlets for visitors and distribute that material to families. An initial pamphlet is made available with information such as the telephone number of the prison,how to get there by public transport, details of visiting hours and items which can be handed in for prisoners' personal use and the name, and contact information of the FCDO. More detailed informational material is available at the institution.

[Studying visiting facilities in California],viewed from a child's perspective,they were hostile and confusing. "These are things people normally don't think about," says Denise Johnston, a pediatrician. "Cement floors, concrete walls, a steel counter in front of the window, plastic or metal chairs – that seems so irrelevant,but in fact for small children, the amount of the surface of their body that comes into contact with this cold environment is huge compared to adults. There can also be aural distortions, and they often can't hold the phone correctly because they're little." Johnston recalls one young girl who was so confused by visiting her mother through glass that when the mother called the next day, the girl asked her, "Are you dead, Mommy?" When the mother reminded her that she had just visited the day before, the child replied,"It's like TV in there – I'm not sure it's really you" (Bernstein,2002).

Visiting Programs

Many non-profit agencies such as the John Howard societies assist the families of inmates with transportation to penal facilities for family visits. Some of these programs will extend opportunities for families – usually the partners and children of male inmates – to attend support groups. Once at the prison,however, many children visit their mothers through a glass in a common visiting area.There are example of more welcoming visiting set-ups, the best of which are accompanied by programming to help women and their children stay connected on a physical and emotional level and to prepare the women to re-establish their role as parent after release. At the Pine Grove Correctional Centre in Prince Albert,Saskatchewan, the vision of the Meyoyawin Children's Visiting Program is "to promote healthy and safe relationships between incarcerated women and children using a wholistic approach." In 2000/01, 100 women used the program (Ombudsman Saskatchewan,2002:156),which has four main components:

1. a relaxed atmosphere where children and mothers can interact, bond and re-establish relationships
2. classroom instruction in parenting skills using the healing circle model and a cultural component.The women will then have an opportunity to develop and enhance skills before visits.
3. transportation for children for the visits (it is the only facility in the province that houses women)
4. identification of services available to incarcerated mothers and their children and assisting communities to develop programs

When children don't know, they fantasize. They create an image of what happened to Mommy – and some of these imaginary pictures are horrible. They envision their mothers are in chains (cited in Moses, 1995:p. 3).

The Continuité-famille auprès des détenues et ex-détenues (CFAD) program operates both "inside" and "outside" the Maison Tanguay facility in Montreal. The goal is to maintain ties between women and children and to help the incarcerated mother exercise her parental responsibilities in various everyday activities. Children can live two days per week with their mothers in a trailer on the facility grounds. Mother prepare meals and attend to all aspects of the children's care. A CFAD worker maintains a discrete presence during the visits. Parent skills training is also provided in workshops and with the assistance of visiting speakers. Topics can include nutrition,how to

speak with your children about your incarceration, sharing household tasks, and substance use. Another feature of the "inside" program is supervised Sunday visits in the facility's gymnasium complete with activities for the children and the celebration of special events. Once a woman is released, she can visit the downtown office for a range of supportive programs including parenting skills workshops, information, second-hand clothing, and the preparation of communal meals. The agency also operates a half-way house.

In the U.S., women's prisons are more likely than prisons for men to the have specially designed visitation spaces for inmates and their children,true of 43 jurisdictions (National Institute of Corrections, 2002). About half of correctional jurisdictions base placement in part on proximity to family (National Institute of Corrections,2002). In about one third of jurisdictions, visitation is facilitated by assistance with transportation and lodging,equally true for the families of men and women. For example, the Family Visitation Program in New York State provides free bus service from New York City and Buffalo to facilities across the state (with stops at some smaller cities as needed). In 43 women's institutions, there are special visitation spaces, a few of which can accommodate over-night stays.

Some visiting programs are augmented with structured activities for families, that often include reading or literacy programs. One example is the M.O.T.H.E.R.S program (Mothers of Tots Help Expand Reading Skills). The Motherread program, aimed at literacy, operates in three facilities in North Carolina helping mothers read with their children. From 2002 until budget cuts ended the program in the women's portion of the institution, a grant from the Reading is Fundamental organization supported a reading program in the Maryland Correctional Institution – Jessup (Martin,2003). Correctional librarians worked with children's librarians on the outside to identify appropriate books and three copies of each were acquired, one for the child to take home, one for the library, and one for the parent to practise with if they had literacy deficits and were embarrassed to read with their children.

Girl Scouts Beyond Bars is an example of a visitation program augmented by group activities both inside and outside the institution (Moses, 1995). Daughters of institutionalized women meet as a group with their mothers at the facility but also meet in the community for activities commonly associated with girl scout troops. Components vary across programs but can include parenting courses (including role playing of common situations encountered when women parent from inside prison),transitional support, and school liaison.

In Oregon, the Parenting Inside Out is a 90-hour curriculum delivered to parents within the institution. Those who complete the program are eligible for the second phase, called therapeutic visiting. In this part of the program, the parent meets with the children, their caregiver and a family therapist to practise the skills learned in the classroom. Visits are video taped and played back so the parent can receive constructive feedback from the therapist.

Over-night Visiting Programs

The Private Family Visiting program of Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) comes under this category, as do the circumstances of some children who live part-time with mothers in federal facilities. This can include short access visits such as over the weekend, sometimes to share custody with the other parent. Over-night visiting on institutional grounds is not currently available to provincially incarcerated women in Ontario but, as noted above,trailer visits are available in Quebec at Maison Tanguay.

Mentoring Programs

The Kids Helping Kids program in Alabama promotes peer mentors for adolescents who have experienced parental incarceration. In the United States, funding for the Mentoring Children of Prisoners Initiative was announced in January of 2002 by the White House "to provide mentoring through networks of community organizations,including religious organizations." The U.S.Dream Academy (www.usdreamacademy.org) is one of the first groups to take advantage of this new pool of funds. The Precious Pals program of Elizabeth Fry Manitoba is a Canadian example,pairing community volunteers with children of women,to serve as role models and engage in pro-social activities. A mentoring program is planned for Canada by Big Brothers/Big Sisters and so may be available more widely in the near future.

Residential Programs

When women give birth in custody, the baby stays for a short period as the mother recuperates. Typically, however, mother and baby are soon separated and they take different paths, one back to prison and one to a parental surrogate. Taking the lead from other jurisdictions principally in Europe, the first mother-child programs were started in the late 1980s, at provincial facilities in Manitoba and British Columbia (Faith,1993). For provincial sentences, a live-in program can shorten or eliminate the period of separation. It is, however, in the federal correctional system where most such programs can be found. This was a key recommendation of the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women (1990) that led to the closing of the Prison for Women in Kingston. Chief

among the rationalizations for this move was the need to house women closer to their home communities to facilitate maintenance of family ties which, in turn, aids reintegration. When CSC decentralized the placement of federally sentenced in women in five regional facilities, the establishment of mother-child live-in programs was a key goal (Watson, 1995) and the design of the new facilities included bedrooms for children.

Supporters of on-site mother-child programs believe they create or maintain the mother-child bond; they facilitate closer monitoring of the health and safety of children than would be possible in the community; and they enable the contextualized teaching of parenting skills (e.g., communication and age-appropriate discipline) and general parenting education (e.g., such as developmental stages in children, nutrition). It is also noted that many criminalized women, those who suffer health problems that make the peri-natal period one of high risk, can benefit from the close monitoring (Barkauskas,Low & Pimlott, 2002).

Interventions for Children

Children of incarcerated women are likely to be well represented on the client lists of many social service agencies,including children's mental health, child protective services, special education, and public health.The extent to which their status as the children of prisoners is recognized and/or addressed is not known. Interventions for these children can also be embedded in services for women leaving prison,such as those offered through half-way houses. In terms of programs targeted specifically at this group,there seem to be two approaches. The first is to let children engage in fun group activities not directly related to incarceration. For example,the Continuité-famille auprès des détenues et ex-détenues (CFAD) program in Montreal offers various recreational and supportive activities to children and adolescents,such as the Samedi-Jeunesse and the Courage en musique programs for music, painting and word working. The young people meet others in the same position to break the isolation and staff are available to answer questions.

The second approach is to undertake a group-based intervention that directly addresses the topic of maternal or paternal incarceration.The CABI program (Children Affected by Incarceration) of the House of Hope in Ottawa is one of the few Canadian examples of such a program. It is a group intervention for six to 12 years old and another for 13 to 18 year olds, based on play and art therapy techniques and a cognitive behavioural approach. The SKIP program (Support Groups for Kids with Incarcerated Parents) of PACT, PROJECT SEEK (Services to Enable and Empower Kids) of the Mott Children's Center, CHIPS (Children of Incarcerated Parents) of the Center for Community Alternatives, and the Therapeutic Intervention Program (TIP) designed by the Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents are examples of such programs in the United States.

If you think it's bad for me, imagine what me being in jail is like for my kids. Yes,they have suffered alright. They have no one to help them along now that I am here. No mother, no father, all of their friends make fun of them, and they don't have anyone in the world. At least if the judge is going to keep me here,he should give something to my kids. I worry that my boys are already headed down the wrong path because I'm not there to be watching out for them. Can't someone help my children? (mother quoted in Richie,2001:379)

Recommendations Based on Interim Findings

This project involved reviewing available sources of information on the children of incarcerated women. Much has yet to be learned and we call this study exploratory because there are so many gaps in the knowledge base. One purpose has been to raise awareness about these children who are largely invisible. Another purpose has been to do some preliminary thinking on how to do a better job of helping them before,during and after their separation. In crafting strategies to support this group, it is impossible to ignore the need to support their mothers. Yet, neither mothers nor children is a homogeneous group. We call these observations "interim" and posit various recommendations for discussion for program designers and deliverers as well as policy makers.

1. While they constitute a smaller number than children of incarcerated fathers, the children of incarcerated mothers, to generalize about them as a group,are in need of intensive and specialized support because they more frequently experience destabilizing disruptions and changes in their lives, are more likely to end up in foster care,are more likely to be affected by paternal incarceration in addition,have mothers with more serious social, emotional and mental health problems, and have mothers who are less well prepared by education and upbringing to provide for them emotionally and financially.
2. Alternatives to incarceration would build on a woman's existing strengths rather than tear down the aspects of her life that support lawful behaviour
3. These children are a high-risk group and many are exposed to multiple factors elevating their likelihood of involvement with the criminal justice system

4 .Researchers,program designers, and service providers should be aware of how the effects of maternal incarceration vary across developmental stages and how interventions should be tailored to the age and gender of the children as well as other factors such as their status as an ethnic minority and/or new Canadians

5. When women are arrested,efforts to plan for placement will minimize the disruption of multiple placements and ensure that suitable caregivers are chosen

6. Visiting programs and other efforts to maintain the parent/child bond will help children adjust to the absence of and return of their mothers

7. Parenting programs for women in conflict with the law will target a group that is experiencing many challenges and will benefit their children, who are a high risk group for abuse and other factors associated with negative outcomes such as school failure

8 .The desire to make a better life for their children is a powerful factor motivating women to make better choices and participate in self-betterment activities

9. Many professional groups will come into contact with these children and training will help them understand the emotional and practical effects of parental incarceration

10. Helping women engage in release planning and successful reintegration will help their children regain (or gain) some stability in their lives

11. Helping women avoid recidivism will reduce the exposure of their children to the de-stabilization associated with multiple absences

12. Interventions for children matched to their age and delivered in a timely manner will have the best chance of success

13. Adolescence (when these children come to the attention of the criminal justice system) may be too late for successful interventions so interventions should be delivered early and focused on the entire family system

In summary, these children and adolescents are possibly one of the most high-need groups in our communities. Interventions with these children should be designed with consideration of the unique contingencies of parental incarceration,which include not just grief and loss but also stigma, secrecy, exposure to anti-social values and rationalizations for criminal behaviour, the need for education about the criminal justice system, fears for a parent's safety, identification with the criminal parent,and, in some cases, media attention.

Criminal violence in America has not declined with the rising use of imprisonment. The research literature reveals that offenders defy as often as they defer to criminal sanctions, and criminal violence continues unabated. Disappointing findings about the effects of penal sanctioning should be evaluated in the broader context of the unintended consequences of these sanctions. A father or mother's imprisonment can be the final, lethal blow to an already weakened family structure (Hagan, 1996:19).

Based upon consideration of all the information collected here, a three-pronged suggests itself to address the needs of these children and reduce the probability they will find themselves behind bars as young offenders or adult inmates:

1. Create Viable Alternatives to Incarceration
2. Assist Women
3. Support Children

The number of female prisoners in Scotland continues to rise, even when many of these women pose very little risk to the communities in which they live. Given the problems of many of these women and the nature of their offences – shoplifting and other petty offences – a very early message to emerge from our work was the need not only to provide alternatives to custody but also to build the confidence of the courts in these alternatives so that they are willing to use them more frequently instead of sending so many women to prison (Ministerial Working Group on Women's Offending, 2002:3).

Create Viable Alternatives to Custody for Women

Alternatives to incarceration serve either as a community-based sentencing option or a way to reduce the period of custody by, for example, accelerated access to temporary absence programs. In the United States, at least 60 residential community-corrections programs exist as alternatives to incarceration for women, and some of them house and/or provide services to children (Chapple, 2000).

Some women have committed serious crimes that harmed others. According to data on the web site of the Ministry of Public Safety and Security, 16% of provincially sentenced women in Ontario were convicted of interpersonal offences and a portion of these would have been serious. On the other hand,

almost one quarter are in custody for offences against the administration of justice, such as failing to appear for court or violating a technical condition of probation. The intention here is not to claim that mothers should have a "get out of jail free" card. However, we believe that, when appropriate given the severity of the offence,especially for victimless offences such as breach of probation,alternatives to incarceration should be encouraged whenever possible. Indeed, given the potential to cause harm to children, a sentence of incarceration should be a last resort when no other option is appropriate. This would mean that community-based and intensive interventions should be widely available so judges can be confident that granting bail or a community sentence will not place the public at risk.

Crime among women is usually a symptom of painful life experiences such as abuse and neglect so a less punitive and more supportive approach could better promote community safety in the long run (Radosh, 2002). Women in Canadian prisons pose as a group a lesser risk of re-offending than men (Finn et al., 1999) and,indeed,they are less likely than men to recidivate (Thomas et al., 2002). These points are salient here:

- current "risk assessments" are not designed for women and over-classify and over-predict the "risk" they pose
- current "need assessments" are not designed for women and ignore need areas such as victimization history, health problems and homelessness
- incarceration is often used for enforcement of probation conditions, fine default, and other offences against the administration of justice

In the United States, a federal program for judicial training (Cicero & DeCostanzo, 2000) distinguishes women from male offenders in these ways:

- women are far less apt to be convicted of violent crime
- in the case of drug-related offences,they are not likely to be a major dealer or kingpin of the enterprise
- women are less likely to use a gun or other weapon during commission of a crime
- women are far less apt to have played a major planning role in any joint enterprise
- women are less likely to present the same degree of danger to the community
- women are less likely to recidivate for a violent crime

It is also noted that women are more likely to be a caretaker parent of a minor child, to have been the subordinate member in a coercive relationship with a man who spearheaded the crime, and are generally regulated to a lower status and lesser role in criminal enterprises.

Male and female offenders are not equals in the male-dominated world of crime, where aggression and physical prowess are the main determinants of role and status.... A strong case can be made that those who sentence women offenders are morally and ethically justified (even mandated) in ensuring that levying the same sentence on a female offender as on a male offender does not in reality impose far greater deprivations on the woman because of her gender. For example, because most women have children and lack adequate child care, they will face more difficulty than men in complying with the strict and frequent reporting requirements of a day reporting program. At the same time, their typically lower risk profiles make them ideal candidates for community-based options (Cicero & DeCostanzo, 2000:1-2, 1-3).

Another issue is the enormous fiscal costs of incarcerating women when community safety is not at risk. The money spent on adult corrections constitutes 22% of total direct expenditures on the criminal justice system (Taylor-Butts, 2002) which is an enormous proportion to spend on a fraction of cases. Moreover, 75% of the $2.5 billion costs of the correctional system is spent on the institutional side even though only 20% of correctional clients are in institutions (Hendrick & Farmer, 2002). Moving some of those dollars to support community-based programs would help both men and women.

While women are in prison, a good proportion of their children will be in the foster care system, which itself is quite costly and over-burdened. In Ontario, the direct costs of a foster-care placement for a six year old child with no special needs is about $9,500 per year, a figure which does not include the enormous costs of agency operations, the oversight of a CAS worker and supervisor, transportation,health care (e.g., medications), legal costs, and any special programs required.

You need only impose a sentence of incarceration on a mother whose children are present to know what a terrible impact it has on the children (judge cited in Moses, 1995:3).

Shaw (1994a) found that one quarter of mothers undergoing community-based sentences were

parenting on their own,compared with 8% of the institutional sample, suggesting to her that sentencing judges may be taking motherhood into account. Temin (2001) goes so far as to propose that the implications for children be considered in pre-sentence reports (PSRs). Specifically, prior to sentencing,there should be a portion of the PSR called a "family impact statement" which addresses the contribution of the woman to the well-being of her children and outlines the plan for where the children will live in the event of a prison sentence. This information could also be used to as part of facility selection and release planning. This is one simple step in the process of making these youngsters visible to the system.

One change [I] would like to see in the system is a 'family impact statement' during the sentencing of female offenders. Similar to a victim impact statement, it would explain to the court the offender's familial responsibilities and reveal the others cost of incarceration (Mary Leftridge Byrd quoted in Martin:2002).

Assist Women

There are a number of program initiatives aimed at women that suggest themselves from the material reviewed here. First and foremost, the priority should be placed upon devising a spectrum of correctional responses that reduce the likelihood of recidivism. Much information is now available from the U.S. about the desirable characteristics of gender-specific and woman-centred programming. Many have also called for programming designed with an understanding of how women learn and grow (Coll et al.,1997). Having better research data could advance program effectiveness (Bloom, 1998).

Parenting Programs

A second recommendation that emerges forcefully from these pages is that of devoting some of the time women spend behind bars to helping them be good parents. Few of us can claim to be among the best parents on the planet and women in prison are no different. Several model programs are available the best of which teach skills, facilitate visiting, and are matched to programs in the community after release. The Mother-Child Community Corrections Project of the National Institute of Corrections in the U.S.is surveying programs across that country and highlighting exemplary models, as did Pollock (2002). A list of community correctional programs for women and children is under development (Berman,2001).

Corrections agencies worldwide have realized the value of educating inmates about becoming better parents to their children. While the programs may differ on a number of levels from facility to facility, the goal is largely the same. By offering numerous services to the parent, the real focus for change lies in their children and their future (Martin,2002).

Assistance with Parenting from a Distance

Fogel (1993) found that being separated from children and family was the single most stressful aspect of prison life for women, ahead of loss of freedom, the restrictions of prison life,lack of control over choices, and lack of privacy. Continuing to play a parental role can help alleviate some of that stress but also facilitate family reunification after release. Parenting from a Distance (see Boudin, 1998), a program developed at the maximum security Bedford Hills Correctional Facility in New York,encourages women to work on their own issues but also helps them parent from prison and prepare for release and resumption of parenting. This involves a balance between reflecting on past issues and working on the present, and a balance between focusing on the mother's experience while addressing the children's needs.

Reduce the Social and Economic Inequities Experienced by Women

Finally, no list of reform initiatives would be complete without an examination of the broader spectrum of systems that impact children, women and families (Kim,2003). The correctional and child welfare systems cannot do this work alone. As Jacobs (2000: 44-45) concludes:

With a woman, we see clearly that though the criminal justice system may determine whether she is incarcerated or free, many other systems actually have more to do with her prospects for successful living in the community....Community-based criminal justice interventions typically focus on monitoring and reporting, urinalysis, drug treatment, and referral to employment. However, these are not adequate strategies for dealing with most women offenders. To construct a law-abiding life, a woman offender is likely to require the assistance of a large number of our public systems: public assistance [welfare], homelessness services, family court, child care, public education, drug treatment, and health and mental health care, to name a few. Her prospects will also be directly shaped by federal law and local practice on matters as diverse as employment, immigration, child welfare, and eligibility for student loans.

Women must have access to education and vocational

training,housing, violence against women services, child care, adequate welfare, addictions counselling, and legal aid. In short, we must ensure women can support their children using legitimate means.

Programs for inmate-mothers should provide them the skills necessary to be good parents – this would include life-skills to earn a decent wage, the tools necessary to stay drug-free, and skills necessary is be a good parent (Pollock,2002:140).

Support Children with Appropriately Targeted Interventions

Finally, we should start some dialogues in our communities about how best to support these children in ways that help them weather the separation with as much support and as little disruption as possible. Ideas could include community protocols on the arrest of women with minor children or the development of support programs for children (e.g., mentoring,school support, peer connections). Another potentially powerful strategy is to sensitize deliverers of child mental health services and child protection services to look for parental incarceration among their client populations. Once identified,services can be delivered in a way that is sensitive to the unique circumstances. Services can profitably be targeted even after release.

Interventions with these youth should begin early and be family-based, focusing on parenting skills, values, and the development of pro-social skills, perhaps mentoring so as to provide a continuous presence in their lives. Another implication of the findings is that interventions aimed at youthful offenders should examine the connections between any parental criminality and the criminal behaviour of the youth.

Chapple (2000: 32) describes a spectrum of services that emanate from some community correctional environments in the U.S.:

> If services [in community-correctional facilities] are also being provided to the children of these offenders,they are likely to be high-risk children in need of comprehensive,developmentally appropriate screenings and services.Children of women offenders have often lived in a dysfunctional system with limited supervision, especially if their mothers have abused substances. The child has often taken on adult responsibilities and has difficulty relinquishing that role.At the same time the mother is learning effective parenting skills in the residential setting, her children are often involved in play therapy, family therapy, substance abuse prevention sessions, and medical treatment and prevention.

However, the responsibility is broader than that of the correctional system alone.

> *To take on the well-being of the woman means, by extension, taking on some responsibility for the well-being of her children and, often, of several other adults in her constellation. The children have been hurt by their mothers's drug use. They were traumatized by her arrest and the resulting separation from her. They were traumatized by her arrest and the resulting separation from her. They suffer a wide-range of psychological problems including trauma, anxiety, guilt, shame, and fear. These problems frequently manifest themselves in behavior problems, poor academic achievement, truancy or dropping out of school, gang involvement, early pregnancy, drug abuse, and delinquency (Jacobs, 2000: 44).*

Recommendations for Future Research

Research on this topic – while voluminous – is at a nascent stage, being comprised of descriptive studies of isolated populations, with some large-scale epidemiological reviews of the American prison population. Johnston (1995) notes that little research has examined children directly (independent of parent report). The exceptions are often clinical studies of small samples in children's mental health settings, or small-scale studies of convenience samples of prisoners' children (much like we did). There are no pre/post studies and as yet no longitudinal studies, although at least one should be available in a few years to shed light on outcomes associated with both maternal and paternal incarceration in the United States. In Canada, however, we have virtually no data on this group of children and most previous research has focused on mothering-in programs in federal settings. There are good reasons to suspect that women in Canadian prisons are different as a group from women in American prisons,where the war on drugs has been described as a war on women.

Data collection on a new topic such as this ideally grows through these stages, although not necessarily in this order, to collect descriptive,correlational and eventually evaluative data:

1. case studies
    - to show there is a "problem" we don't know much about

2. in-depth study samples of
small unrepresentastive samples
    • to learn about the scope of the problem and identify key independent variables

3. cross-sectional or retrospective study of
large representative samples
    • to learn about dynamics and develop (and possibly test) theories

4. prospective studies of representative
or general population samples
    • to understand risk and resilience by seeing if adverse outcomes happen for everyone

5. large-scale epidemiological studies
on a probability sample
    • to show incidence or prevalence in the general population and sometimes correlation with key independent variables

6. evaluation of participants exposed to
a program designed using theories
    • to see if we understand how to modify the problem

In the latter case, "evaluations" should evolve over time from descriptions of program delivery to, when the program is well established and has evidence of pre/post changes, outcome evaluations using a basis of comparison,ideally a control group (see Table 9). At present, we are still early days yet, gaining a tentative understanding of the characteristics and needs of these children. We need to have this knowledge before recommending program approaches, to avoid providing the wrong service to the right children (or vice versa).

Routine Collection of Data in Social Service Settings

It may well be the case that a high proportion of children and adolescents who present at social services agencies for assessment or counselling have experienced parental incarceration. Twenty years ago, our understanding of family violence and its effects on children was greatly advanced when service providers started simply to ask questions about abuse. Gabel and Shindledecker (1993) found that 40% of the children in their day treatment program had

Table 9

Evolution of Questions and Methodologies in Program Evaluation

Purpose	*Research Question*	*Methodologies*	*Result*
NEED	Do we have a program gap in our community?	Needs analysis,stake-holder & community consultation	Decision to pursue or abandon program development
	What program do we deliver to fill that gap?	Literature review, consultation with others	Decision to adopt a specific program strategy
PROCESS	Can we implement that program here?	Observation of implementation and challenges faced	Conclusion that program is or is not feasible in this community
	Are we meeting the needs of the client group and stakeholders?	Consumer and stakeholder surveys or interviews	Feedback to modify the program (target group, referral stream, method,etc.)
OUTCOME	Do members of the client group make gains in the desired areas?	pre-and post testing or observation	Data that documents gains in target areas
	Do members of the target group make more gains than they would have anyway without the program?	Experimental design with control group for comparison	Data that documents effectiveness of the program
EFFICIENCY	Does the program make as many or more gains at less cost than other programs?	Experimental design with control group for comparison	Cost-efficiency analysis

Source:Cunningham,2002.

experienced the incarceration of one or both parents. Perhaps asking the question on a routine basis will bring these children out of the shadows.This strategy would be especially useful in youth correctional programs, because of the implications for programming and release planning.

Qualitative Study of Children

Interviews with children who have experienced maternal incarceration will yield important information about how they cope with and come to understand what happened to their mothers.Data collected within the framework of the developmental model proposed above will be especially useful in informing the design of intervention strategies for this group,including perhaps a coordinated community response.At this stage, the representativeness of the sample would not be crucial.

Collect Data to Understand Women's Role as Mothers

Almost all the information relied upon here came from other countries.Compared especially to the United States, our knowledge of women as mothers lags far behind.The excellent series of studies about provincially sentenced women in Ontario by Margaret Shaw and colleagues should be replicated and extended to collect a richer array of information on women as mothers. Focus should be on provincially sentenced and detained women because of the volume of cases (and hence children) and frequency of repeat admissions among a proportion of this group.Interviews are the preferred data collection strategy. Securing a representative sample will be important although a good stratified probability technique used to select a sub-sample will be sufficient,especially if combined with the "snap-shot day" approach.

Assessment of Children at Admission and Release of Mother

One of the problems in determining the effect of parental incarceration on children is that it is so rarely the case that parental imprisonment is the only adverse event ever experienced in their lives.As already noted, maternal incarceration usually affects families already struggling with many challenges. Hagan and Dinovitzer (1999) have called for research that compares the well-being of children before and after they experience separation from a parent. In this way, it is possible to gain an understanding of the unique impact – positive or negative – of maternal incarceration and the changes it creates in children's lives.We could also compare the relative outcomes of children under different circumstances (e.g., those who stay in their home versus those who changed residences).

Comparison of the Children of Probationers and Inmates

One of the many questions as yet unanswered pertains to the differential impact of four phases of the incarceration process:criminal behaviour, arrest, separation, and release.Incarceration might act as a stressor to tip a child's delicately balanced coping for pre-existing adversities. By comparing matched samples of youth who experienced either maternal incarceration or whose mothers received a community-based sentence, we can start to untangle the impact of a mother's criminal behaviour from the impact of the incarceration.

Follow-up Study of Children

The previous strategy can determine how children are impacted in the short term.However, seeking them out after one or two years will yield information on the longer-term impact and subsequent changes in their lives.We would expect that at least some of them will have experienced quite a bit of disruption while others would have settled back into their normal lives after the release of their mothers. It is important when conducting such a follow-up that a bias not be introduced by failing to find most of the original participants.A key problem is that the latter more stable group is over-sampled relative to the former more transient group who can be difficult to track down.The Centre for Children of Incarcerated Parents is planning a follow-up study of some of the children who they have studied before in California.

Follow-up with Released Women

There is almost no Canadian research about the challenges faced by inmates leaving prison and in the period after release (Griffiths & Cunningham, 2000). The focus instead is on assessment techniques and institutional programs.When inmates are tracked after release, it is as part of an aggregate study using official statistics to determine if the prediction of risk was correlated with some outcome such as parole revocation for new offence (which is only vaguely related to criminal behaviour).This tells us little or nothing about how to help people during the difficult period of re-integration.

Moreover, few (if any) correctional programs for women have been well evaluated in Canada. Most evaluations use problematic designs such as pre/post psychological testing with no basis of comparison and no post-release follow-up,strategies which do not directly address the key questions of effectiveness and efficiency and which might well be leading to the wrong "answers" (Cunningham, 2002). One problem is the tendency to study the program instead of studying the program participant. In this way, the program can look like it is successful even while the

program participant falls flat on her face. The goal of a program should be to create positive change in as many participants as possible, not statistically significant differences in mean scores on tests that do not measure the actual goals of the program. Again, this tells us nothing about who got worse during the program (probably one third), who stayed the same and therefore did not derive any benefit or did not need the program (probably one third), and whether the people who improved (probably one third) would have improved anyway.

Given the mandate of the institutional correctional system, evaluations of their services should measure two things:

1. is each offender released in ways that maximize their likelihood of success (i.e., do they have a safe and stable residence, an income source, access to health care, social supports, legal assistance if needed,treatment when required,etc.)?
2. who comes back and why, and how can we address those reasons?

We have already noted that one of the absolute best ways to help these children is to help their mothers stay out of prison. Systematic study of women after release will yield useful information about how best to help them

To give women offenders a fighting chance requires significant changes in our strategies and public systems. Certainly we should expect as much of ourselves as we do of them! (Jacobs, 2000: 49)

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Researchers at the University of Chicago are planning to track 14,000 women in state facilities in Illinois and their estimated 35,000 children to measure the life trajectories of women after release (Schuler, 2002). Even a much smaller scale study of 100 women in Ontario would yield information that would her extremely helpful.

Prospective Longitudinal Follow-up of Children

One of the key findings emerging from any study of incarcerated parents is the elevated risk that their children will one day find themselves behind bars. At present, the hypothesized connection between parental incarceration and later criminality is based on admittedly large correlations. But it remains a matter of speculation as to whether or not this correlation is spurious (being explained by other factors such as poverty). Prospective study of this group would assist in teasing out the risk and protective factors and in developing theoretical models of any causal links. A similar effort in Canada, perhaps aimed at a cohort of pre-schoolers which can be tracked into early adulthood, would yield some useful information on this high-risk group. Adding this variable to the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and youth would be one example of how such information could be collected.

Development and Evaluation of Interventions for Children

The final strategy to be recommended here is the determination of which types of interventions are associated with the best outcomes for children. "Intervention" might include community protocols on responding to the arrest of women with minor children, individual or group counselling, or visiting programs.

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Appendix A:Profile of Women in Provincial Facilities

Many of the difficulties experienced by women in conflict with the law are concomitant. Women with substance abuse problems often have histories of physical and sexual abuse in childhood and, as adults, are also likely to have physical health problems and to have developed a variety of emotional and psychiatric conditions. Coupled with a lack of financial or employment resources and single parenthood, these problems create a web from which it would be difficulty to expect anyone to extricate herself without considerable support and assistance. The implications of high levels of abuse among offender populations and their links with other problems such as substance abuse, ill-heath, and low socio-economic status all point to the need for specific programming for women.(Shaw & Hargreaves, 1994:17)

Women in prison do not comprise a typical cross-section of society. This fact has profound implications for their children, who share their world of social marginalization,poverty, and racism. Understanding the profile and needs of incarcerated women helps identify implications for policy and programming. Much useful information can be found in material produced by Statistics Canada and a survey conducted by Margaret Shaw and her colleagues of 243 incarcerated Ontario women (Shaw and Hargreaves,1994). While almost a decade old, the Shaw studies remain the best evidence we have of the overall profile of women under both community and institutional supervision. The Report of the Commission on Systemic Racism in the Ontario Criminal Justice System (Gittens and Cole, 1995) is also a useful resource.

women are a small proportion of adults under correctional supervision in Ontario

According to the web site of the Ministry of Public Safety and Security, 15% of adults under correctional supervision are women.This figure mirrors the proportion of women who are charged by police (15%) and convicted (13%) in court (Bélanger, 2001). Most women on register in a given day are on probation (90%) or some form of conditional release (6%).

women comprise a small group of adults in Ontario correctional facilities

In correctional facilities, women are a minority in a system that was designed for men. On any given day in Canada, only 7% of on-register inmates in provincial facilities are female (Robinson et al., 1998). In Ontario, in 1997/98, 9% of the 33,971 sentenced admissions to provincial custody were women (Reed and Roberts,1999). On any given day, only 4% of the institutional correctional population is female.

women in provincial custody are under sentence, on remand, or awaiting transfer

In 1992, Shaw and Hargreaves (1994) found that half of the women surveyed were serving a provincial sentence in the facility where they were located, about one third were on remand and the remainder were awaiting transfer to another facility, most the Vanier Centre for Women (due to close soon) or federal custody.

provincial sentences are short

The median provincial sentence in Canada in 1997/98 was 44 days (45 in Ontario). Because of remission and temporary absence programs, the median time actually served is 24 days (Reed and Roberts,1999).

women are primarily incarcerated for property offences or offences against the administration of justice

In the provincial system, Shaw and Hargreaves (1994) found that about one third of women were in prison for property offences,primarily theft and fraud. More recent data show that the two most common offences of conviction for provincially sentenced women are drug offences (13%) and theft (12%) (Finn et al., 1999).According to a Statistics Canada survey, incarcerated women are less likely to be incarcerated for an interpersonal offence (64% of federal and 28% in provincial custody) than male inmates, 74% and 34% respectively (Robinson et al., 1998). According to information on the MPSS web site, property offences accounted for the majority of offences by adult female offenders sentenced to incarceration (32%), followed by administration of justices offences (e.g., breach of probation,unlawfully at large, fail to comply, fail to appear) at 22%; and offences against the person (16%).

*** most incarcerated women are socially and economically marginalized**

These women are typically young (average age is

about 30), lone parents, and poor. The average woman in prison has less than a grade nine education and was unemployed at arrest (Finn et al., 1999). What little employment experience they have is usually in unskilled and minimum wage jobs.

women are less likely to recidivate and constitute a lower risk to the community than men

Compared with their male counterparts, provincially sentenced women have lower levels of the risk factors known to be correlated with recidivism (Finn et al., 1999). Little research in Canada follows women (or men) after release to determine their rate of recidivism, but we believe based on research in other countries that women constitute a lesser risk to re-offend than men. Ontario data are being collected on this point but have not been released in a form that provides a sex breakdown.

women in prison have higher needs compared with male offenders

On traditional measures of risk/need assessment, provincially sentenced women evidenced higher needs than their male counterparts (Finn et al., 1999). Federally sentenced women evidenced significantly higher levels of difficulty with behavioural and emotional instability, poor family relations, and lower academic and vocational skills compared with male offenders (Blanchette and Dowden, 1998).

many women in prison have multiple needs

The needs of women can include educational upgrading, vocational training, employability skills, life skills, substance abuse treatment, housing, individual therapy, family therapy, financial planning and health care. Women, especially Aboriginal women and other women of colour, may suffer systemic disadvantages that compound the situation by acting as barriers to full participation in the labour force. Legal issues can include disputes over custody of their children and child-welfare proceedings in family court.

most incarcerated women are parents

The majority (71%) of institutionalized women surveyed by Shaw (1994) had children and most of them (80%) were parenting on the own for some or all of the time. Half had been teenagers when their first child was born. One in ten women surveyed by Shaw (1994) was pregnant at the time.

Aboriginal women are over represented

The Commission on Systemic Racism in the Ontario Criminal Justice System found that Aboriginal women were admitted to provincial custody at a rate five times that of white women (Gittens and Cole, 1995). The disparity was greater for women than for men. In 1992/93, 9.2% of provincial admissions of women were Aboriginal compared with only 5.6% of male admissions.

over-representation of visible minorities more evident among women than men

In 1992/93, one third of adult female admissions to Ontario prisons belonged to visible minority groups compared with one quarter of males (Gittens & Cole, 1995). Asians, East Indians and Arabs are under-represented in penal populations relative to their proportion in the Ontario population. However, Black women are admitted to provincial custody at a rate almost seven times that of white women. As with Aboriginals, this rate is higher than is the case for Black men. At Vanier Centre for Women, admissions of Black women increased 630% over the six years between 1986/87 and 1992/93. The comparable figure for Caucasian women was 59%.

the profile of women in prison may be changing but more research is needed

Concern is commonly expressed that the rates of crime among women, particularly violent crime, are rising. Shaw and Dubois (1995) reminds us of these important facts:

- women commit proportionately far less violent crime than men
- violent offences constitute a small proportion of all female offending
- the violent offences with which women are charged tend to be less serious than is true for men
- most increases in women's offending are accounted for by property offences
- any increases in violent offending are accounted for mostly by minor assaults
- race and social class must also be considered with gender in understanding women's violence

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Appendix B: Resources

Web Sites

Canada

Canadian Family and Corrections Network
www3.sympatico.ca/cfcn/cfcneng.html

Canadian Outsiders On-line Support Group
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/canadian-outsiders/

Children Visiting Prisons (Kingston, Ontario)
www.geocities.com/cvpkingston/

United States

Aid to Incarcerated Mothers (AIM Inc.), Alabama
www.inmatemoms.org

Centre for Children of Incarcerated Parents
www.e-ccip.org

Centerforce: Service, education, advocacy for those imprisoned and those in the community
www.centerforce.org

Child Welfare League of America, Federal Resource Center for Children of Prisoners
www.cwla.org/programs/incarcerated/

Legal Services for Prisoners with Children
http://prisonerswithchildren.org

Family and Corrections Network
www.fcnetwork.org/

National Institute of Corrections, Mother-Child Community Corrections Project
www.nicic.org/services/special/women/mcccp/default.htm

Prison Match, North Carolina Correctional Institution for Women
www.prisonmatch.org

U.S. Dream Academy
www.usdreamacademy.org

United Kingdom

Action for Prisoners' Families
www.prisonersfamilies.org.uk

HARP: Help and Advice for Relatives of Prisoners
www.harpinfo.org.uk

Support, Help and Advice for Relatives and Friends of Prisoners (SHARP)
www.s-h-a-r-p.org.uk

Videos

What we Leave Behind: Women Former Prisoners Tell Their Story (United States)
www.beyondmedia.org/vv.html

When the Bough Breaks (United States)
http://www.itvs.org/whentheboughbreaks/mothers.html

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APPENDIX C:Comments from Women Completing Surveys

What is like being a mother in prison?

It is very hard to have children,especially young ones, and leave them to be in prison. It takes away from the child's future. It's not fair to them to be missing out on opportunities in life. It hurts us as parents and there is a great impact on the child.The system has a lot of other doors open to me, but I am not utilizing them because I am not aware of the proper channels to take to let me get ahead in life.They don't want to give us a chance.

I feel very bad, and I miss my children a lot. I can't sleep, thinking about what I did to my children. Because of me, they can't go to school [because they do not have immigration papers]. I just want to do my sentence, become a better person, and find a job. I don't want my children to grow up with their mother in jail.

The prison system doesn't do anything to help us. There are some people that really do want to get help to try honestly to help themselves.More programs and more education would help; nothing constructive is done in this detention centre.

My child's father will not let me see my child because I have a drug problem.

I realize how precious it is to have access to my children. I love them very much.

I miss my children very much. I feel ashamed about where I am, knowing that they need me. I feel like a bad mother because I'm not there for them.

I just want to tell my family that I'm fine, and not to worry about me. I want to be released; I miss my son and husband very much. I am so worried about my son.

It's a pain that has no explanation, but feels very deep.The nurture feeling plays on my head.

Being an addict, I think that when I get well,there will really be people who care about me.

It hurts not to be with my children.

My kids have suffered a great deal because of my drug addiction and separation from them. I am now drug free and am doing well. I will do my very best to have a good life for me, my husband, and our children.

Being incarcerated and away from my children is devastating. No one sees the mothers and fathers crying quietly at night. No one sees the children crying quietly at night, and blaming themselves.The institution should offer more programs and counselling for parents and their children.There should be more visits and more interaction for parents and their children.

I feel like a real loser because of a mere charge that could result in my losing my home or my children.

I am a single parent. My (16 year old) son is having difficulties - financially, taking care of himself, and going to school.

My children and I were very close. Few options exist at this Detention Centre.

My children are still mine.

I'm scared that my children won't know me when I get released. It hurts to be away from them. I am also scared for them.

Both of my kids are very good kids. Even though I am young,they are well-adjusted and intelligent kids.They are exceptionally handsome, and talented in sports..

The one-year house arrest prior to sentencing had an emotional and custodial effect on my children and me. The judge's denial of my request to be allowed to attend at the CAS office (for scheduled access visits) proved to show lack of interest regarding access to my children. CAS requested wardship and it was granted mostly due to my showing a "lack of interest" by not attending the supervised access visits during this period.... They should make it more an issue while a person is in custody, being arrested, or on probation to know the family status of the female and make available assistance to her. After all, it not only affects her but the children as well who are innocent.

My two children are angry and anxious about the last four years of my life. But I let them know everyday that they are special to me, and that I love them.

No matter how long or short a child is separated from a parent, it affects the child. I think my son has a right to know, but not too much. I am one of the lucky ones in that my son is doing well in school.However, he doesn't get close to anyone, in fear of losing the. I wish things were different, but they are not.The only thing I can do is give him as much support as possible.The Elizabeth Fry Society does a lot of that. We need more.

The judicial system should not be so harsh on women who have been dealing with domestic violence and then being incarcerated for trying to save their own lives and the lives of their children.

It is like hell on earth and that is the only way to describe it.

When I'm done serving my time, I'm going to get into an adult literacy program and find work. Get my life back on track. My child, my life are far more important than jail. I made a mistake and now I'll serve my time.

Being a mother incarcerated is not very good for my self-esteem nor self-confidence. I have a tremendous amount of guilt and remorse for the bad decision I've made that resulted in my arrest, I feel so sorry for my boy and how I have let him down as a role model. I'm trying to remain focused on my plans for my release date. I plan to return to my own college classes as well. I just want to move forward with our family life together and gain some support systems.

Being a mother in prison personally is heart breaking, knowing that my children are with someone that I do not even know or do not approve of. It is very hard and extremely disturbing. I miss my children and I have to hope that they miss me too. I think my children are going through an extremely hard time not so much my son but my daughter who is only [a baby] and has never been away from me for a long period of time. In my opinion and the opinion many other responsible parents I am a great mom and I deserve to have my children. I believe the CAS is wrong in taking my children from me. .... I know I am a very young mom but nothing in this world comes before my children and myself or their father. Nothing. I have so much more to say but I must stop now before I start to cry. Thanks for listening. Yours truly, upset mother. P.S. I feel like a big disappointment to myself, my mother and most of all my children.

[My plans are] to go home and try to make up for lost time. I was in custody over Christmas, we missed a lot. You can't make up for lost time and you can't plan another Christmas. It was an unfortunate time of the year. ... I spent all of my [sentenced] time in a detention centre so because of the awful atmosphere I didn't see my children throughout my entire stay. I was incarcerated for the first time and this was my first time in trouble, I was terrified – there is no division offenders violence / drugs / fraud. I was only in about five minutes before I saw a fight. It was a good couple of minutes before a guard came because you are basically locked in a cage. I have obtained a much better knowledge of drugs. Inmates use and smoke all the time. I know of several times that drugs,needles, tobacco all get in and it's there in your face every day. I easily could have gone home addicted to crack. I am not nor have I ever been a drug user and most I would say are. This place breeds bad. Nothing to do. Basically no programming. They will all obtain a far greater knowledge of law breaking, myself included,before leaving this place.

It's awful to leave your children. I miss them terribly. I think Judges should be more compassionate with mothers of young children and use alternative forms of sentencing where you don't have to be suddenly separated for long periods of time. Cruel world.

I am struck with the fact that I am different here.Not street person.Well educated! Feeling isolated from population. My family (still intact) means the world to me.

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