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Changes in the Parenting Perceptions of
Incarcerated Mothers who Participate in
a Parenting Class

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CHANGES IN THE PARENTING PERCEPTIONS OF INCARCERATED MOTHERS
WHO PARTICIPATE IN A PARENTING CLASS

DISSERTATION

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Doctor of PHILOSOPHY

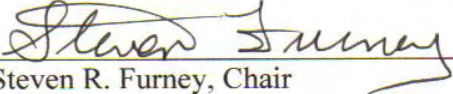
by

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San Marcos, Texas
August 2009


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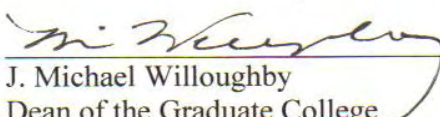

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2009

DEDICATION

To

My Father

Dr. Bob J. Cox, Sr.

During the last conversation I had with my father before he died we talked about how much he wanted to be at my graduation and honor me by placing the academic graduation hood on my doctoral regalia and then give a cheer he called, “The Girl Scout Yell.” Although his passing ended any possibility of his being able to be a part of the ceremony, I believe he would take pleasure in my giving the Girl Scout yell as part of this dedication.

The Girl Scout Yell: “Hi Lo Mini Cow Cow, Uuh Chow Chow, Pee Wow Wow, Iddy Addy Iddy Addy, Yahoo!”

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I knew I wanted Steve Furney to be the chairman of my committee when I saw the video of him skydiving. Anyone who would jump out of an airplane has what it takes to be the chairman of my committee. Thank you for answering my phone calls, reading every version of my paper, and reminding me to keep laughing. Bill Stone kept me grounded, Kathy Fite kept me grammatically correct, and Jovita Ross-Gordon kept me honest. All in all, I believe I had the best committee anyone has ever assembled.

To thank the cohort for their role in this experience I must quote Dr. Barbara Stevenson, “Here’s to us, we’re a damn fine bunch.” In particular, thank you to my cohortian friend, David Allen.

This experience has taught me the importance of family. I would have given up this quest had it not been for my brother, Billy Bob Cox and mother, Bernice Cox who gave me strength, comfort, and an occasional kick in the seat of the pants. Special recognition goes to my daughter Brigette and son Bobby who put the “fun” in dysfunctional. Thank you to my granddaughter Myra who, like a firefly, would flit in to light up my life from time to time.

Finally, thank you to my Warden, who reminded me daily to keep working on my dissertation.

The committee received this document on May 4, 2009.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
LIST OF TABLES	x
ABSTRACT.....	xi
CHAPTER	
I. OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	6
Scope of the Study	6
Research Questions.....	10
Importance of the Study.....	10
Assumptions.....	11
Limitations of the Study.....	11
II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	13
Theoretical Foundations.....	13
Life Course Theory.....	14
Strain Theory	16
Social Functionalism.....	16
Social Learning Theory.....	17
Parenting Issues of Female Offenders	17
Parenting Courses Offered to the Public.....	18
Parenting Course Offered to Incarcerated Females	20
Impact of Incarceration on the Children	22
Parenting Patterns	25
Structured Inequality of Female Offenders.....	27
Marginalization of Female Offenders.....	29
The Maintenance of Strong Family Ties on Recidivism	31
Profiles of Women in the Criminal Justice System	32
Pathways into Crime	34

Women and Crime	36
Incarcerated Mothers as Parents	38
III. METHODOLOGY	41
Rationale for the Study	41
Program Description	42
Context of the Study	43
Research Design.....	46
Receiving Permission to Do this Research	47
Participants.....	48
Procedures.....	55
Reliability of the Adult Adolescent Parenting Inventory-2	58
Content Related Validity.....	59
Reliabilities	59
Dependent Variable	60
Independent Variable	60
Data for the Quantitative Assessment.....	61
Summary	62
IV. FINDINGS.....	63
Research Question One.....	67
Findings Relative to Five Constructs From AAPI-2.....	67
Construct One	68
Construct Two.....	70
Construct Three.....	74
Construct Four	78
Construct Five.....	80
Multivariate Analysis of Variance	83
Research Question Two	87
Perception of Their Roles as Mothers.....	87
V. DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS.....	92
Life Skills Curriculum	96
Expectations of the Life Skills Instructor	100
Effects of the Life Skills Class.....	101
Parenting Intervention Program.....	102
Expectations of the Intervention Instructor.....	104
Effects of the Intervention Class.....	104
Conclusions and Recommendations	106
Further Research	112

REFERENCES	114
APPENDIX A: LETTER OF PROPOSED PROJECT	127
APPENDIX B: FORMS	129

LIST OF FIGURES

Figures	Page
1. Figure 1	70
2. Figure 2.	73
3. Figure 3	74
4. Figure 4	79
5. Figure 5	81
6. Figure 6: Expectations	85
7. Figure 7: Empathy.....	85
8. Figure 8: Corporal Punishment.....	86
9. Figure 9: Reversing Roles.....	86
10. Figure 10: Oppressing Children's Value	86
11. Figure 11	89

LIST OF TABLES

Tables	Page
1. Table 1: Demographic Survey Results	52-54
2. Table 2: Comparison of Parenting Intervention and Life Skills Curriculum.....	63

ABSTRACT

**CHANGES IN THE PARENTING PERCEPTIONS OF INCARCERATED MOTHERS
WHO PARTICIPATE IN A PARENTING CLASS**

by

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August 2009

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Having the ability to procreate does not ensure the ability to parent. Many offender mothers come to prison only to realize they are ill equipped to raise their children. After generations, devastated by abuse, single parenthood, neglect and poverty the offender mothers' worry their children will follow in their footsteps and eventually serve time in prison.

Parenting skills tend to be learned behaviors that are part of the historical, social, cultural and environmental factors that form interactions and expectations. Offender mothers who participated in the parenting project used a parenting curriculum that offered them the skills to teach their children: autonomy, social competence, interdependence, problem solving and resiliency.

The Adult, Adolescent, Parenting Inventory (AAPI-2) was used to study the impact of the parenting curriculum on the offender mothers who took the class. A control group and offenders in the Life Skills program also participated in the AAPI-2 and their scores were compared to those of the offenders who participated in the parenting project.

Rehabilitative projects such as the parenting project are designed to offer the offender mothers an alternative to doing the same thing the same way and expecting different results.

CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The challenges of parenthood for women who are incarcerated can be overwhelming; in reality, few people are prepared for the responsibilities and life changes that accompany the birth and continued development of a child.

Perhaps nothing we humans do is more relentlessly demanding; nothing calls on a wider range of physical and emotional capacities. To parent a child entails at least two decades of sustained attention; many see it as a lifetime commitment. At the same time, if parents are to acquire the resources they need to support their children, they must work, usually outside the home. Balancing these responsibilities is never easy. For all these reasons, the challenges of parenthood are daunting, but its rewards go to the core of what it means to be human (Carnegie Task Force on Meeting the Needs of Young Children, 1994, p. 25).

Contemporary parents have begun to rely on formalized parenting education programs, facilitated by parenting educators, to increase their knowledge and develop a repertoire of skills to assist them with raising their children. Parenting education programs have come to prominence as the result of geographic separation from extended family members, increased knowledge of child development, and parental anxiety about child rearing (Amm & Juan, 1994; Breuer & Moskovic, 1994; Rief, 2005). It is estimated that there are over 50,000 parent education programs currently in existence nationwide (Breuer & Muskovic, 1994; Edwards, 1995; O'Brien, 1996; Siegel & Hartzell, 2004).

Parenting education has received validation from parents, major corporations, policy makers, and the judicial system. Many Fortune 500 companies offer parenting education programs (Breuer & Moskovic, 1994; Fanasheh, 2005). Furthermore, parenting education has been recommended by:

- The Carnegie Task Force on Meeting the Needs of Young Children, (<http://www.carnegie.org>)
- The National Head Start Association, (<http://www.nhsa.org>)
- The National Parenting Center, (<http://www.tnpc.com>)
- Texas Network of Youth Services, (<http://www.tnoys.org>)
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, (<http://www.hhs.gov>).

Parenting education has been sanctioned by the American judicial system. Family court judges, who preside over foster care cases, frequently impose the requirement of successfully completing a parenting class before the court will consider returning the children to their biological parents. Additionally, judicial systems have endorsed, and in some cases mandated, parental attendance at seminars which address the impact of divorce on children (Ainsworth, 1996; Brown, 2003; Landky, 2003; Schaffner, 2006).

Parenting classes have the endorsement of public and private institutions that see the value of parental training programs. Parents willing to invest the time and effort necessary in parenting classes hope to learn methods they can use to help their children grow up to be emotionally healthy. Wandersman (1987) stated, “A certain level of personal resources (confidence, social competence, and/or social support) is likely to be necessary for people to participate and benefit from parent education” (p. 214).

Therefore, parents who are lacking in resources and struggling to meet the basic needs of their family are less likely to attend parenting programs. When low-income parents are concerned about issues such as housing or medical care, parenting skills, and child development are often overlooked (Forehand, 2002; Powell & Eisenstadt, 1988). Less fortunate families find themselves attempting to raise their children in the context of poverty (particularly when it is generational poverty) that is complicated by active drug, alcohol, or physical abuse. For parents in less fortunate circumstances, learning parenting skills, which will lead to healthy changes in the family system, can empower them to become agents of change in the lives of their children.

Raising children has always been a challenging experience, but for women who are incarcerated there are additional challenges. While they are in prison, incarcerated mothers miss the opportunity to be involved in the day-to-day lives of their children. The consequences of their illegal activities have taken them out of society and into the criminal justice system. Most come from homes ravaged by a long history of drug and alcohol abuse that often leads to other forms of abuse. Research indicates that incarcerated women have a history of being the victims of sexual and/or physical abuse, both as children and adults (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2001; Feinman, 1994). The Bureau of Justice Statistics (1999b) found that more than 57% of incarcerated women reported experiencing physical or sexual abuse at least once prior to their incarceration usually perpetrated by a close family member.

In recent years, crime trends have shown increasing numbers of female arrests and incarcerations. Although these numbers continue to be small in comparison to the number of arrests and incarcerations of male offenders, incarcerated women account for

approximately 10% of the combined U.S. jail and prison populations (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2008). The Bureau of Justice Statistics (2001) states the female populations in America's prison system doubled from 1990 to 2000 which continues to be an issue since there was a 313% increase between 1980 and 1993 (Committee to End the Marion Lockdown, 1995).

According to Bloom, Owen, and Covington (2005) the average female offender is:

- Under the age of 35 years
- A member of an ethnic minority
- Either divorced or never married
- Poorly educated
- Unemployed or underemployed
- On welfare prior to incarceration.

Incarcerated mothers have an average of two dependent children, usually under the age of 14 years. The incarcerated women studied by Bloom et al. (2005) are single mothers and the sole support for their children. Once released, these mothers anticipate re-establishing a home with their children. While these mothers are in prison their children are usually placed with relatives, friends, neighbors, or the state takes custody and they are placed in foster care. Grandparents, grandmothers in particular, are selected by more than one-half of the mothers as the primary caregivers for the children during the mothers' absences (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2001; Bloom, 1996).

According to LeFlore and Holston (1998) our society traditionally views the role of caregiver for the children as that of the female. Further, parenting is seen as a

predominately female activity associated with certain behavioral and emotional expectations. Shaffer (2007) reported that incarcerated mothers need to receive counseling and be taught skills that will help them become prepared for motherhood and parenting. According to Pollock (2002) parenting programs need to address the psychological and physical needs of mothers in prison. The prison system is making attempts to address these issues of proper socialization and social interaction and 90% of states make parenting classes available to female prisoners and 75% provide special visiting areas for parents. However, few programs go beyond the assumption that all that is needed to address the needs of female offenders is retraining in parenting skills, or that woman's needs are limited to the area of parenting.

It is important for correctional facilities to direct part of their resocialization and rehabilitation programs toward the incarcerated mother. LeFlore and Holston (1998) noted that the criminal justice system has a history of being unresponsive to the needs of incarcerated mothers and their children. Feinman (1994) stated that rehabilitation programs for the incarcerated women have been designed to conform to the social values of the dominant white, middle class, Protestant culture, not the socioeconomic realities of either the backgrounds of the women in prison or the neighborhoods to which they return. Parenting programs in particular lack sensitivity to cultural and ethnic issues and create a gap between what is taught and the authentic experience the offenders will face on the outside. For example, many of the offenders' families do not have the financial resources which allow them to participate in regular visits with the offenders. Unfortunately, without constant healthy contact, complete separation may be damaging to the mother-child relationship as well as the child's future development (Baunach, 1985; Deck, 1988).

For African American women and Latinas, who make up the majority of the prison population, the situation can be even more devastating due to factors such as cultural and language barriers for Latinas and poverty for African Americans (Langston, 2003).

Because the majority of the female offenders have children, this presents a complex challenge to the correctional and criminal justice systems. The fact that once the female offenders are released from prison or jail they undoubtedly will resume their role as the sole caretaker of their minor children has brought the issue of rehabilitation programs to the forefront. In particular, culturally sensitive parenting education programs that offer the female offenders the opportunity to obtain the skills and knowledge they need to be effective parents.

Statement of the Problem

Parenting competency classes could dramatically alter the lives of offenders and at the same time dramatically impact the lives of their children who, without meaningful intervention, might otherwise become offenders themselves (Johnston, 1995; Kim & Cho, 2007; O'Neill, 2006; Sheehan, McIvor & Trotter, 2007; VanDeusen, Yarborough & Cornelsen, 1985; Wilson, 1983).

Scope of the Study

State and the federal governments have instituted tough new mandatory sentencing policies as part of the "War on Drugs" (Acoca & Raeder, 1999). Incarceration has displaced probation as the prime sentencing option for many women offenders. Current sentencing practices are the flip side of the equal rights movement and are reflective of the sentencing practices received by men. While these changes have been

justified in terms of greater equity in the sentencing process, many believe that grave injustices are being perpetrated in the name of gender fairness (Chesney-Lind, 2001).

Criminal activity, subsequent arrests, and parental incarceration cause chaos in the lives of children including traumatic separations and erratic shifts from one caregiver to another.

The general effect on a child separated from an imprisoned parent, especially the mother, is situational interference with the child's ability to successfully master developmental tasks and overcome the effects of such an enduring on-going trauma as parent-child separation. Frequently, the children are left with a caregiver arrangement that is inadequate, unreliable or irregular, further exacerbating long-term damage to the development of the character and personality of the child. Because of these deprivations and traumas, children of incarcerated parents may be six times more likely than the general population to become incarcerated themselves (Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999, p. 147).

Individuals who maintain contact with family members while incarcerated have a built in support group. Incarcerated females who have the strength and support of their family are more likely to leave prison and complete any of the stipulations mandated by the parole system. Continuing to be active in the role of parent, child, or sibling while in prison enables individuals to see themselves as more than just inmates and eases their transition back into these social relations after release. Hairston (1998) reports that inmate mothers are as committed to values associated with parenting as a comparison group of non-criminal mothers on welfare. At the same time, some inmates are conflicted about motherhood and their ability to be good parents for their children. (Enos, 2001; Glaze & Maruschak, 2008; Leflore & Holston, 1998; Miller, 1972 O'Neill, 2006, Shaffer 2007; Thornburg & Trunk, 1992).

How mothers see their roles in families and how they understand their obligations as mothers is a combination of social and cultural influences.

Inmate mothers, by virtue of their imprisonment, face a variety of challenges in constructing and maintaining both identities and roles as mothers. If an understanding of motherhood and an enactment of mothering depend on social position and family relationships, how do women understand these identities and how salient are they? How are those identities threatened when children are cared for and mothered by others? This means that inmate mothers will construct their concepts of mothering in prison, along with an array of strategies to accomplish this (Enos, 2001, p. 43).

Constructing the role and identity of a mother under these conditions is a matter of work and active negotiation by the inmate mother and many other parties as well. Managing motherhood from prison requires that the inmate mothers face overwhelming challenges. What the inmates bring to prison in terms of relationships with family, ideas about mothering, childcare, and other dimensions will determine how they understand and individually manage parenthood. To create change in the lives of women offenders they need to experience relationships that do not repeat their history of loss, neglect, and abuse (Baunach, 1985; Gillian, Lyons & Hammer, 1990; Schaffner, 2006; Snell 1994).

In a study by Xiao (2001) parental beliefs and values were correlated with ethnic and social class membership. Consequently, generic programs tend not to meet the needs of parenting program participants, but meet the needs of a very limited group. Over the last decade, there has been increasing concern regarding the promotion of values reflected in the dominant professional culture (Combrinck-Graham 2006; Fine & Henry, 1989; Powell, 1987; 1994; Wachtel, 2004;). Although most parents strive to do their best for their children, there is no standard definition of a “good parent,” only definitions based upon the values and beliefs of the individual (Wandersman, 1987). In a prison setting the offenders bring with them a profoundly different set of parenting skills that do not always resemble the values and beliefs commonly held by the general public. Many come to prison from life pathways that appear to be filled with neglect, abuse, and

depravation. Yet, when asked about their upbringing they become protective of the people who raised them. When speaking about the way she was raised, one offender stated emphatically, "*My mama did the best she could.*"

Authoritative parenting aims to have children feel confident and independent by encouraging mutual respect and providing reasonable choices and consequences. Authoritative parents set realistic limits and consequences for their children and are more likely to raise their children to have a positive sense of themselves and feel as though their own efforts make a difference in their lives (McLun & Merrell, 1998). In an authoritative home, feelings and perspectives are heard and validated in a mutually respectful way in order to empower the children to create solutions to their own problems.

Along with authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative, Lamborn et al. (1991) and Maccoby and Martin (1983) suggested a fourth parenting style called the rejecting-neglecting parent. The rejecting-neglecting parent rarely sets limits or offers positive affection (Huxley, 2001). Typically, the rejecting-neglecting parent is frequently not present or distracted with social and environmental disruptions such as financial hardships, work, divorce, illness, or substance abuse. This child is likely to develop the belief that they are unimportant and may experience confusion about their role in life.

Professionals who work with parents were found to be most successful when they understand the cultural orientation of the family and put aside personal standards and values which conflicted with those of the parents (MacPherson, 1993; Schaefer, 1991; Schaffner, 2006). The curriculum used for this study has elements that attempt to understand the cultural orientation of the family through the use of group discussion.

However, the intent of the curriculum was to convey the skills associated with resiliency to those who participated in the project. Culturally responsive programs match the most appropriate modes for disseminating information to the needs of the family (Combrinck-Granham, 2006; Powell, 1994; Wachtel, 2004; Wandersman, 1987). Parenting education classes must display cultural sensitivity and flexibility in programmatic delivery and design. Accordingly, parenting educators should incorporate diverse modes to meet the needs of a given culture while being cognizant of adult learning styles and values (Meyers, 1993; Steffenmeier & Allan, 1998).

Research Questions

This study will examine the perception of the participating incarcerated mothers on the effectiveness of a parenting class taught to them while in prison.

- Question One: Will parenting classes taught to incarcerated mothers improve their understanding of how expectations, empathy, corporal punishment, role responsibilities, and development of children's value and independence relate to effective parenting?
- Question Two: Will parenting classes taught to incarcerated mothers change their perceptions of their roles as mothers to their children?

Importance of the Study

Maintenance of the mothering role is of utmost importance to incarcerated mothers and their children. The implementation of parenting programs within the correctional institution can assist the incarcerated mothers as they attempt to maintain their role of mother to their children. Most rehabilitative programs have been designed to conform to the social values of the middle class culture. The discrepancy between the

needs of female offenders and the actual rehabilitative services and programs that exist has been the emphasis of some recent reform movements. Yet, little research indicates whether these programs are effective, useful, or relevant in meeting the needs of the growing population of incarcerated mothers (Bloom, et al., 2005; Clement, 1993; Enos, 2001; Johnston 1995; O'Neill, 2006; Sheehan, McIvor & Trotter, 2007).

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made in the design and implementation of this study:

1. The Adult Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI-2) is a valid and reliable instrument for gathering information regarding an individual's attitudes and beliefs toward parenting and child rearing.
2. This is a confined population, and we cannot be absolutely certain that information regarding the parent education program will not be shared with offenders who are part of the other groups in the research project.
3. The parenting portion of the Rainbow Connection is an appropriate curriculum for the subjects of the current study.
4. The AAPI-2 will accurately express any changes in the offender's attitude toward their own parenting skills.

Limitations of the Study

1. Only students with a basic command of the English language were included in the project.
2. Participants with more than one child used their youngest child as the focus of the coursework.

3. Findings of the study were limited to measuring the changes in acquired knowledge and perceptions of assessed parenting skills, not to whether participants actually applied these skills with their children.
4. The parenting education program was limited to the specific parenting skills taught within the parameters of the Rainbow Connection Curriculum.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Theoretical Foundations

Theoretical foundations for this research are generally located in the sociological literature which suggests that both family socialization and family relationships affect individuals' potential for criminal behavior. These family processes are discussed in both criminological and family theoretical literature. The fields of criminology and family studies are a sub-specialty of sociology and have developed in relative isolation for each other despite considerable overlap in their concerns and subject matter (Fox & Benson, 2000). It has also been asserted that exploring the interconnections between criminology and family studies is beneficial for understanding family processes as sources of both vulnerability to and protection from criminal behavior.

Researchers document that the way children are parented is associated with delinquency and adult criminal life styles (Agnew, 1992; Akers, 1997; Farrington & West, 1990; Loeber & Stouthamer-Lober, 1986; Patterson, Reid & Dishion, 1992). Fox and Benson (2000) sketch various points of convergence in theoretical and empirical approaches to families and crime, which is helpful for understanding the connections between families, crime and criminal justice programming. No single sociological or criminological theory focuses on the impact of family sociology on criminal behavior.

However, reviews of select theories on effective and ineffective parenting are part of the theoretical literature.

Life Course Theory

Life course theory is the most helpful theoretical framework for this research as it asserts that delinquency and criminality is likely a product of a combination of multiple factors, forces and processes that occur throughout the developmental context from childhood to adulthood. The life course is defined as the sequence of culturally defined age-graded roles and social transitions that are enacted over time (Caspi, Elder & Herbener, 1990). These sequences are described in terms of pathways and transitions. Pathways are long-term patterns of development. Transitions are events or short-term changes that can alter the trajectory of a pathway. Parenting, in this theoretical framework, is considered to be an informal social control during childhood, adolescence, and adulthood which if done correctly can help mediate the effects of negative events by equipping individuals to successfully navigate pro social life course pathways (Sampson & Laub, 1993).

Life course theory suggests that how individuals develop is influenced by a combination of factors and environmentally contextualized experiences, these combinations can come together to create either persistence in or avoidance of a criminal lifestyle (Loeber & Strouthamer-Loeber, 1986). Strong family relationships may deflect someone from a criminal pathway onto a pathway of non-criminal conformity (Sampson & Laub, 1993). Conversely, a negative event can serve as a turning point that sets off a chain reaction of events that direct a child onto a delinquent pathway (Hagan and Paloni, 1990). The same process that may propel an individual's negative behavior may also alter

a negative life course pathway by serving as a deflection event that guides and supports an individual's positive pathway.

Life course theory draws on previous conceptualizations of human and social capital (Becker, 1964; Coleman, 1988; Schultz, 1961) which suggests that criminal behavior across the life course is associated with the acquisition, investment, expenditure, and possible loss of resources that occurs at various life stages. Human capital refers to the skills and knowledge acquired by individuals through education and training. These skills and knowledge can facilitate change which gives a person the ability to act in new ways (Hagan, 1997). Social capital is derived from strong social relations or social bonds, allowing the individual to have the resources to draw on throughout life's transitions (Sampson & Laub, 1993).

Life course social capital models assume that through parenting and relationships, parents use their own social capital to help create the social capital as well as the skills and capabilities of their children who in turn grow up and pass their social resources to their children. Ineffective or dysfunctional parent-child relationships disrupt the development of social capital. Ineffective parenting and relationship characteristics identified in life course theory include:

- lack of parent-child involvement
- lack of emotional ties
- lack of supervision or discipline
- parental absence and parental criminality
- harsh, inconsistent or ineffective communication or discipline
- parental rejection

- rigid control
- inability to set behavioral limits (Farrington, 1986; Glueck and Glueck, 1950; Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber, 1986; Patterson, Reid & Dishon, 1992).

Strain Theory

Strain theory is derived from Robert K. Merton's work in the early 1930s. According to Merton, crime may result from strains and frustrations related to the inability of some to achieve middle class standards or monetary success through legitimate channels. Goal blockage increases the likelihood that an individual will find illegitimate means or strike out at others because of emotional stresses and strains (Cloward & Ohlen, 1960; Merton, 1938).

Strain theory can also result from a range of family conditions related to feelings associated with provider role failure, parental inadequacy, and perceptions that others see them as inadequate parents. Adding parental strain blockages to legitimate means of economic support can increase frustration and further promote illegitimate means of obtaining financial resources or destructive ways of coping (Agnew 1992).

Structural Functionalism

The theory of the structural-functionalism says the proper functioning of family and parents are keys to the regulation of individual social systems. Family is the social institution first charged with socializing its members by applying moderate forms of social control when needed to correct and keep members in compliance with societal norms and expectation. When family socialization fails to produce and maintain patterns of socially conforming behavior, another societal structure (the criminal justice system)

steps in to reinforce and protect the social order. From this perspective, criminal behavior represents a failure of socialization (Fox & Benson, 2000; Parsons & Bales, 1955).

Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory assumes that individuals learn behavior through association with others and through positive and negative reinforcement. The family's ideal role is that of the conventional socializer against delinquency and crime. The family provides anti-criminal definitions, conforming models, and the development of self control (Akers, 1997). Deviant behavior on the part of the children may be an outcome of internal family interactions which are the result of deviant parental models, ineffective and erratic parental supervision along with behavior which endorses non-conforming or criminal activity (Akers, 1997).

Parenting Issues of Female Offenders

Prison, by its very nature, is designed to segregate a segment of society from the general public due to the illegal activities on the part of the offenders prior to their arrest. This creates a serious issue for incarcerated mothers when it comes to parenting as the offender mothers do not have access to their children on a daily basis. Often their children are being raised by a family member or have been placed in foster care. Children living in an alternative setting create additional expenses and logistic difficulties for those who supervise the children (Blinn, 1997). In fact, maintaining any contact with their children becomes a challenge for many of the offender mothers. Incarcerated parents may have little or no contact with their children due to numerous barriers (Blinn, 1997; Bloom, 1993). Generally, the offenders are incarcerated more than 100 miles from where their children are living, and prior to incarceration, offender mothers were living on

incomes below the poverty line. They leave their children behind in situations that are sometimes even more impoverished than when they lived together as a family. Children in that situation are at the mercy of someone else to drive them to see their mother. If the poverty level has them in reduced circumstances, a trip of that magnitude would be cost prohibitive. Children may be in foster care or with family members who believe incarcerated parents are bad parents and refuse to bring the children to see their mother. The offender mothers may not want their children to see them in prison or be exposed to the prison environment (Coll, Surrey, Buccio-Notaro & Molla, 1998).

Fortunately, society has evolved to the point where we protect the rights of children to live in a home where they are safe and free of abuse. Child Protective Services (CPS) is an arm of the legal system and entrusted with protecting those rights. Unfortunately, many children living in a dysfunctional family system believe that what is going on in their home is normal or are afraid to say anything to the authorities for fear that they will be blamed for radical changes to the family unit. Most children learn to cope with the deceit and constant fear that something they say or do will incur the wrath of the offending member of the family. Many of the female offenders continue to live with these unresolved issues with their dysfunctional upbringing and are interjecting them into the next generation.

Parenting Courses Offered to the Public

Effective parenting programs outside of the context of prison concurrently involve the parent and the child. This dual approach to parenting programs combine classroom education for both the child and the parent with additional components where the child and parent interact. Because both parties are present at their respective training classes,

each utilizes the same vocabulary; both are familiar with the structure of the program and can employ any mutual self-esteem reinforcing slogans or activities (Block, 1998; Tremblay, Vitaro, Bertrand, LeBlanc, Beauchesne, Boileau & David, 2001; Wilczak & Markstrom, 1999). Society as a whole is taking seriously the use of parent training coupled with parent-child interaction opportunities. Many of the parenting issues faced in any home in America could improve with better parent-child interactions. Children's disruptive behaviors are one of the specific areas where improving parent-child interaction has been successful in reducing the severity and frequency of those behaviors (Tremblay et al., 2001).

Models of good parenting programs include methods of improving parent-child relationships through parent education and parent-child interaction. Research suggests that a relationship building program is the current model for parenting education programs and have been particularly effective.

With the advent of online computer courses, a Google search for parenting classes resulted in almost 4 million places where that phrase was used in a document. On-line parenting classes offer certificates of completion to parents who are under court order to participate in parenting class. With divorce rates at 50%, many people remarry and take on the responsibility of raising step-children. Several parenting programs, available on-line are designed to meet the challenges of step parenting. On-line courses can focus on the specific needs of single parents, parents of children with handicapping conditions, parents of children with attention deficit disorders and parents of two year olds.

The sheer number of parenting classes offered within society indicates that the act of parenting is complicated and challenging. Difficulty raising children is a timeless

problem, according to biblical history the first family on earth had a son who murdered his brother in what amounted to little more than sibling rivalry.

People who bring a child into the world are generally concerned with the welfare of that child and do not want to do anything to jeopardize the child's future. Sometimes, participating in a parenting class eases the parent's mind and gives them a sense that they understand the basics of child rearing, and barring some unforeseen tragedy, they will get to watch as their child develops into a productive member of society.

Parenting Courses Offered to Incarcerated Females

Any type of programming in prison can be viewed as a survival mechanism for inmates and as a key organizational element in a well-managed facility (Flanagan, Marquart & Adams, 1998; Morton, 1998). For inmates, most of whom are uneducated and ill-equipped for a competitive job market, well-integrated programs are vital for their survival once they leave prison and attempt to compete for a decent job. For the correctional facility, well-structured programs are essential for keeping prisoners busy. However, the combination of several factors has limited both the amount and quality of programs in prison. Some of those factors include lack of resources, lack of support from policy makers, the general public, media, and politicians.

Not only are there a limited number of programs for women in prison, most of the existing programs were designed around models based on the needs of male inmates and have not been altered to meet the needs of female prisoners (Schupak, 1986; Weisheit, 1985). According to a recent investigation, the barriers to meeting the treatment needs of the offenders include: budgetary limits, lack of counselors, inadequate space and capacity, frequent inmate movement in and out of the facility, and lack of interest on the

part of the offenders (Belenko, 1999). Unfortunately, the correctional system in which female offenders are incarcerated very often discourages them from attaining that goal (Carp & Schade, 1992). Long waiting lists, lengthy classes, unexpected reassignment to another facility and few meaningful work assignments contribute to discourage the female offenders and contribute to the cycle of recidivism.

According to Bloom (2003) female offenders face issues specific to their gender. Marginalized by society, they come to prison with depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, poor nutrition habits, reproductive issues, and specific concerns about the welfare of their children. The need for programming, which addresses improving parent-child relationships through parent education and parent-child interaction, should be part of a comprehensive education program for female offenders.

Strong relationships with children encourage substance abusing mothers to stay free of drugs (Finkelstein and Piedade, 1993; Finnegan, 1988). Relationship building models may be particularly applicable to parenting programs in women's prisons and may aid in developing important social and interpersonal skills in inmate parents. Klein and Bahr (1996) studying family centered cognitive skills programs, reported that after completion of the program prisoners' abilities to recognize, reflect upon, and generate possible solutions to a variety of relationship problems were enhanced. Wilczak and Marstrom's (1999) study of the impact of parent education on a group of offenders shows that knowledge about parenting and child development was enhanced and inmates became more confident parents. They began to believe that their parenting practices directly affected their child's behavior and that they had the ability to manage relationship problems with their children. Byase, Allgood, and Van Wyk (1991) found

that inmates who completed a parent education course were significantly less narcissistic than those in the control group in that study. Offenders who participated in parenting programs were more focused on family responsibilities, valued family cohesion and perceived greater social support for refraining from behavior that could result in being reincarcerated.

Parenting skills are not instinctive. These skills are learned behaviors based on individual parental experiences and the personal process of trial and error in raising children. Fortunately, the skills of parents who have had poor role models can be improved through training (Patterson, Capaldi & Bank 1991).

Impact of Incarceration on the Children

Human development is affected by historical, social, cultural, and environmental factors that shape expectations and interactions with others. Children develop in the context of the family-type relations (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Combrinck-Graham, 2006; Klein & White, 1996; Wachtel, 2004). “Unless measures are taken to give these mothers the skills and knowledge they need, a high percentage of their children will also go to prison” (Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999, p. 67). Fritsch and Burkhead (1981) found children of incarcerated mothers exhibited problematic behavior, including withdrawal, a drop in grades, use of drugs or alcohol, school truancy, and hostile behavior.

When parents go to prison, most families experience financial losses or incur additional financial expenses. Financial problems are greatest for those families where the mother was responsible for most of the parenting roles prior to imprisonment. Family members who take on the responsibility of raising the children while their mother is in prison, many of whom are poor, use their meager incomes to meet the needs of the

children they are suddenly required to raise. They also subsidize the needs of the person in prison by sending them money for toiletries and items they can purchase through the prison commissary. They are called on to cover the co-payments for health care and pay for any collect phone calls from the person who is in prison. Grandparents raising their grandchildren indicate that financial problems represent one of their main difficulties (Bloom & Steinhart, 1993; Myers & Kennon, 2006; Smith, Drisman, Strozier & Marley, 2004).

Changes in the family finances due to a mother's incarceration might not be understood by the children; nonetheless, they feel the effects. Often the family must move into a less expensive apartment in a poorer neighborhood. Making visits to the prison means less money is available and there is less money for new school clothes, as well as recreational or extracurricular activities.

Prisoners and their families often experience a tremendous sense of loss when incarceration occurs. The daily interactions, experiences, and shared activities are disrupted, resulting in loneliness, mental health problems such as depression and a range of feelings associated with being separated from their mother. Children may also express concern for their mother's safety due, in part, to the sudden interest in prison life on the part of reality television shows.

Research dating back to the 1960's indicates that children whose parents were incarcerated exhibited externalizing behaviors such as aggression, defiance, and disobedience. They also exhibited internalizing behaviors such as depression, anxiety, and withdrawal. Children's reactions to their parents' absence included loneliness, fear, developmental regression, guilt, excessive crying, and sadness. Among school age

children, difficulties with peers and people in authority were not uncommon. Among younger children, emotional withdrawal, anxiety, anger, and hostility toward caregivers were more pronounced. Children's behavioral problems and adjustment issues were not unusual, but the children's home environments and the influence of the remaining caregivers were crucial factors in children's adjustment (Gable, 1992; Park & Clarke-Stewart, 2003). Children whose mother was incarcerated had lower self-esteem and performed less satisfactorily in school (Stranton, 1980).

Children with a parent who is incarcerated are exposed to many of the risk factors associated with children who are likely to have behavioral problems. In a study of 258 adolescents receiving mental health services, youth who were discovered to have experienced the incarceration of a parent were exposed to more parental substance abuse, child abuse, neglect, and extreme poverty. In addition, factors prevalent prior to the arrest and incarceration of the parent may also contribute to significant emotional distress among children. Family and community violence, poverty and homelessness, children's exposure to criminal lifestyles, and parental substance abuse are some of these factors (Dalley, 2002).

A study of mother-child relationships indicated that there was a trend for young children who visited their mothers in prison to have less positive representations of their mother two weeks after the visit than young children who had not visited their mothers (Snyder, Carlo & Mullins, 2001). Pochlmann (2005) suggests that conditions in many prison visitation areas are not ideal for children. Visits often involve traveling a long distance and can be physically and emotionally exhausting. Immediately following prison visits with their parents, children are sad, tired, or tearful and engage in aggressive and

unruly behaviors. While most children are happy to have seen their parents, many are sad that their parents are not able to come home with them.

Parenting Patterns

The image of the traditional nuclear family does not represent the experience of most parents in prison. Three out of four incarcerated females were raised in homes where the parents were either divorced or never married (NCJ 2003). A study of parents in prison shows that before going to prison most mothers had their children living with them at the time of their arrest. Much of the parenting patterns the incarcerated females exhibit are a product of the life circumstances they experienced as children. While many people who have been raised in poverty or have been victims of abuse never engage in criminal behavior, the common thread of continuity that runs through the histories of incarcerated females is that they share the same life circumstances. As children they were very likely to have been living in extreme poverty, experienced prior abuse by a male family member or family friend, and had childhood experiences that included substance abuse by one or both parents. Throughout most of their lives, female offenders have endured sexual abuse, trauma, and personal stress and fear (Chelsey-Lind & Pasko, 2004). As adults, life circumstances of the incarcerated females colored the parenting patterns they developed and used to raise their own children. These issues continue to be firmly entrenched in their parenting skill set after they come to prison.

A study by Mackintosh, Myers, and Kennon, (2006) of the quality of relationships between children with incarcerated mothers and children's caregivers offers some insight on children's stress levels. The results were that the children experienced considerable

cognitive and emotional dissonance. They tended to be reluctant to openly address their problems and instead presented a façade of well-being.

Currently, research into the effects of parenting classes to incarcerated females focuses on ways to provide for the relief of the immediate issues related to stress, anxiety and the development of strong family ties. However, the issue of being a good parent to their children is broader than the immediate needs of inmates or their families. Factors related to the life histories and crimes of inmate mothers explain incarceration patterns and influence both post-release success and family unity. As little girls, the offenders were systematically destroyed by their abuser in an effort to keep them from disclosing the fact that they were being abused to the authorities. Whether victimized sexually, physically, emotionally or verbally by individuals who were morally incompetent, their victims took their victimization as an invalidation of their own personal worth and value as a human being. Even as adults, the offenders believe what their abuser said to them and find it difficult to shrug off what has become a core belief that is part of their abused past. Without a clear understanding of the behaviors associated with being the victim of abuse, the cycle of abuse will perpetuate to the next generation (Burney, 1995).

Although incarcerated female histories are not exactly the same, their background characteristics are more similar than those of their male counterparts. The overriding experience of abuse and very common pattern of substance abuse by female offenders are linked. The fact that most have dependent children means that most of the problems of female inmates also present problems for their children (Chelsey-Lind & Pasko, 2004).

Structured Inequality of Female Offenders

Since being admitted to prison, more than half of parents with minor children have never seen any of their children. Two-thirds of mothers who are incarcerated sent and/or received mail from their children at least once a month, making letter writing the most common method of staying in touch (Hariston, Rollins & Jo, 2004).

Policies governing the location of prisons pose a problem for families. Prisons are often located in rural areas with poor transportation systems and are far away from the cities and towns where the prisoners' children reside. Many families indicate that distance from the prison and related problems of transportation are a major factor prohibiting frequent visitation. Nevertheless, it is a reality that in order for children to visit their parents in prison the children must travel to where the parents are housed in order to see them.

Prison visits often take place in environments that are not friendly or hospitable. In many ways, visiting policies and practices reflect the interests of the facility rather than those of the children. Facility rules inhibit the quality and frequency of contact and undermine any meaningful communication between the children and their parents. Visitation held in the prison where this research was conducted is guided by the visitation rules as established by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. Most visits occur in a secure room or outdoor area on the prison grounds that are designated for visits. Although there are some exceptions, the majority of visitors are able to be in close proximity to the offender during the entire visit rather than talk through a hole in a window or through a phone system. Visitors are required to remain seated on opposite sides of the table and are limited to one hug at the beginning of the visit and one at the

end. Although the offenders are allowed to hold their children they must keep any small children under control or the visit will be terminated.

The conditions of prison visiting rooms and visitor processing vary widely. Some visitation areas are hot and overcrowded and lack basic amenities. Others, such as the prison where this research was conducted, are clean well maintained and equipped with vending machines. Families and prisoners often report that prison visiting policies and staff practices are among the reasons children do not visit their parents more often (Christian, 2005; Hariston, 1995). Grandmothers say the conditions they are subjected to during prison visits make the experience unpleasant and create negative perceptions. In particular, they refer to harsh rules and poor treatment by the correctional officers who supervise visitation. The same sentiments were expressed during interviews with teenagers who visited their incarcerated parents (Bates, Lawrence-Will & Hairston, 2003; Bosewill & Wedge, 2002; Withers, 2001). Many visitors describe prison visits as physically and emotionally exhausting. They are typically tense, stressful situations involving pat and frisk searches, long waits, a lack of privacy, intense scrutiny, and surveillance. Some visitors indicate that the process makes them feel like prisoners themselves.

Phone calls made by incarcerated parents allow them to talk regularly with their children and other family members. Families generally welcome this form of communication but have identified some drawbacks. The greatest drawback to staying in touch by phone is the tremendous expense phone calls can have on the budget of those who are caregivers to the children. The amount caregivers pay for this opportunity to connect the children with their parents is exorbitant. Persons accepting collect phone calls

from prison are charged a per-minute rate and surcharges that far exceed typical phone rates. It is not unusual for a 30 minute interstate collect phone call to cost as much as 30 dollars. Providing phone services to prisons is so lucrative that phone companies will pay a commission to governmental jurisdictions for the contract (Criminal Justice Newsletter, 2007).

Marginalization of Female Offenders

The majority of offender mothers indicate that they plan to reunite with their children when they are released from prison (Arditti & Few, 2006; Hariston, 1991). However, the reality of parent-child reunifications following incarceration typically falls short of their expectations. Incarceration appears to lead to the permanent severance of family ties in many situations and decreased parent-child interactions in others. Any number of family and social factors affects the aspirations of offender mothers who dream of being reunited with their children once released from prison. Some parents lose permanent legal custody of their children while they are in prison, although the exact numbers who do so is not known as this information is not systematically collected and reported. One study suggests that many children are placed in foster care prior to their mother's arrest and that children's placement often leads to a downward spiral in which family reunification is unlikely (Ross, Khashu & Wamsley, 2003). Reasons for that downward spiral include the difficulty offenders have in meeting the child welfare mandates. The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA) was enacted with the intent of achieving a permanent living situation for children but has the potential of leading to the permanent severance of family ties between prisoners and their children. ASFA requires that termination of parental rights proceedings be filed whenever a child

has been in foster care for 15 of the previous 22 months, a period of time that is significantly shorter than the expected average prison term.

Even if the offender mother manages to maintain contact with her children, upon release from prison she might not be in a position to support her children financially, find suitable housing or even ensure that they are safe and protected. If the offender mothers must demonstrate the ability to provide these things for their children in order to regain custody and maintain the parent-child relationships, they are unlikely to be successful (Fishman, 1990; Hariston & Oliver, 2007).

There is evidence that many children are not prepared for their parents' release and that incarcerated parents are often not adequately prepared to resume a parenting role. Incarcerated parents' efforts to renew parenting roles as members of households where other adults have been the children's primary caregivers seem to cause tension and create more stress when the parents have not discussed and agreed on role changes. Among the problems identified were children's resentment toward a shift in disciplinary measures, lack of understanding of their needs, new technology, and the children's belief that their mother has broken her promises to them (Hariston & Oliver, 2006).

Grandparent caregivers express similar concerns about their daughters' ability to resume parenting roles upon release from prison. Concerns about the offender mothers' parenting abilities, the caregivers' own attachments to the children under their care and doubts about the mothers' desires to give up certain lifestyles are among the reasons the grandparent caregivers are reluctant to relinquish their role when the offender mothers returns home (Bloom & Stienhart, 1993; Smith, Krisman, Strozier & Marley, 2004).

The Maintenance of Strong Family Ties on Recidivism

Research over several decades supports strengthening family bonds through parent education as an effective correctional rehabilitation strategy that reduces recidivism. Hairston (1988) found post release success to be higher among inmates who had strengthened family ties during incarceration than among those whose families discontinued contact. Carlson and Cervera's (1991) research indicated that releasing prisoners to a solid family relationship is the single best predictor of post release success. In the case of mothers in prison, a weak or nonexistent mother-child relationship tends to lower self-esteem, self-confidence, motivation, and hope. Lack of family ties could result not only in detachment from society, but create difficulties for inmates while incarcerated and make reintegration into society extremely difficult as well.

Typically, female prisoners find prison disheartening and demoralizing. Once released, they are scared about having to interact with a society that is judgmental toward convicted felons. Many offenders who have served lengthy sentences might experience additional difficulties, such as more severe health problems and being out of touch with advances in technology. Since the typical female offender leaves prison economically, politically, socially, and morally bankrupt, most offenders will return to prison (Guevara, 2008). Still, the majority of women have hopes, dreams, and the desire to stay out of trouble and become productive members of society (Gittelson, 1982). For many of the offenders, having strong ties to their family is the safety net they need to survive long enough to face the task of becoming acclimated back into society.

Profiles of Women in the Criminal Justice System

Contemporary theorists note that most theories of crime were developed by male criminologists to explain male crime (Belknap, 2001). Historically, theories about women's criminality have ranged from biological to psychological and from economic to social. Social and cultural theories have been applied to men, while individual and pathological explanations have been applied to women. One organizing principal behind the reasons for women to lead a life of crime is the assumption of victimization. This assumption says that women carry some of the impact of victimization with them on their bodies, in their mind, in their habits and in the strategies they use to survive. The victimization of women assumes that the pathway to crime included witnessing extreme violence as a child, being neglected, experiencing physical, sexual, or emotional abuse. Others were compelled into crime by caregivers who victimized them by enticing them to use and sell drugs as well as forcing them to shoplift. Other pathways to crime include physical victimization that result in the offenders committing defensive or retaliatory efforts to end the abuse (DeHart, 2005).

Research also indicates that dimensions of female criminalization include structural dislocation, deviant and criminal associations, shaping and re-shaping of family relationships within the deviant world, being labeled and processed as habitual criminals as juveniles, and eventually labeled as adult criminals. Once the process of young female criminalization is in orbit, deviance becomes a way of life which serves as a survival mechanism in a world of neglect, abuse, violence, uncertainty, and fear (Guevara, 2008).

Women are more likely to be involved in crime if they are drug users (Kroll & Taylor, 2003; Patterson, 1996; Pollock, 1999). Substance abuse is also linked to issues of

trauma and mental health. Approximately 80% of women in state prisons had been using alcohol, drugs, or both at the time of their offense. Nearly one in three women serving time in state prisons reported committing the offense to obtain money to support a drug habit. About half described themselves as daily drug users (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1999a).

In 2006, an estimated 55% of women in local jails, 56% of women in state prisons, and 73% of women in federal prisons had high school diplomas. Approximately 40% of the women in state prisons reported they were employed full time at the time of their arrest, this compares with almost 60% of males.

About 37% of women and 28% of men had incomes of less than \$600 per month prior to arrest. Most of the jobs held by women were entry-level jobs with low pay. Two-thirds of the women reported they had never held a job that paid more than \$6.50 per hour. Women are less likely than men to have engaged in vocational training before incarceration. Those who have received vocational training in the community have tended to focus on traditional women's jobs, such as cosmetology, clerical work, and food service (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1994).

Pollock (1999) found that, until recently, most criminology theory ignored the dynamics of race and class and how these factors intermix with gender to influence criminal behavior patterns. She argues a common belief is that adding gender to these analytic variables "tended to complicate the theory and was better left out" (Pollock, 1999, p. 8). Based on this lack of attention, several writers have begun to refer to female offenders as the invisible woman (Belknap, 2001).

Pathways into Crime

Theorists argue for the integration of race, class, and gender in any analytic framework to study the experience of women in the criminal justice system. Without such a framework, they assert, it is impossible to draw an accurate picture of the experience of these women. Research on women's pathways into crime indicates that gender matters significantly in shaping criminality. Zaplin (2008) noted that the profound differences between the lives of women and men shape their patterns of criminal offending. Among women the most common pathways to crime are based on survival of abuse, poverty, and substance abuse. The prevalence of physical and sexual abuse in the childhood and adult backgrounds of women under correctional supervision has been supported by the research literature; abuse within this segment of the population is more likely than in the general population (Guevara, 2008; Mauer, Potler & Wolf 1999; Motz, 2001). Belknap (2001) has found that pathways perspective incorporates a whole life perspective in the study of the causes of crime. The pathways research has used extensive interviews with women to uncover the life events that place girls and women at risk of criminal offending. From these and other studies of life events that shape women's choices and behavior, it has been established that women enter the criminal justice system in ways different from those of male offenders. The following have been documented:

- The role of violence, trauma, and substance abuse
- Patterns of offense and re-offense
- The impact of responsibilities for children and other dependent family members
- Reduced ability to support self and children
- Race and ethnicity and the impacts of these in terms of crime

- Violent partners
- Substance abuse
- Connections with violent and substance abusing partners (Belknap, 2001; Browne, 1997; Enos, 2001; Guevara, 2008; Kruttschnitt, 2001; Pollock, 1999;).

Research on the totality of women's lives has established that because of gender, women are at greater risk of experiencing sexual abuse, sexual assault, and domestic violence (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1999b). The pathways research has identified issues in producing, and sustaining female criminality:

- Histories of personal abuse
- Mental illness and substance abuse
- Economic and social marginality
- Homelessness and poverty
- Relationships (Arnold, 1990; Braithwaite, Arriola & Newkirk, 2006; Daly, 1992; Owen, 1998; Richeie, 1996).

Rehabilitation emerged as the guiding philosophy of corrections during the early 1900s. Beginning in the 1960s two important ideas emerged. First, because each person violates the law for a different reason, the sanction imposed by the court should be contingent on the nature of the offender rather than the offense. Second, attention should be given to moving beyond inflicting pain on offenders to the task of changing the law-breakers into law-abiding citizens (Cullen & Applegate, 1997).

Women and Crime

The Bureau of Justice Statistics (2008) estimates that 11 of every 1000 women will be incarcerated at the federal or state level at some time in their lives. This probability is mediated by racial and ethnic membership. Approximately 5 of every 1000 white women, 15 of every 1000 Hispanic women, and 36 of every 1000 African American women will be incarcerated at some point in their lives.

Offenders with histories of criminal offenses as juveniles are in the greatest risk group for adult criminality (Blumstien, et al., 1986; Motz, 2001). As Farrington (1992) notes, criminological research increasingly points to the need to intervene early in life, during childhood, when the first signs of waywardness are emerging. Over the past decade, scholars working within the life-course paradigm have documented that children who later become serious delinquents and adult criminals manifest conduct problems during childhood such as bullying, lying, and stealing. The link between delinquents becoming adult criminals does not always manifest itself, as not all troubled children turn into offenders. However, there is considerable evidence to suggest that antisocial behavior during childhood should be addressed as early in a child's life as possible (Schaffner, 2006; Wachtel, 2004).

Two factors associated with crime are high impulsivity and low intelligence (Braithwaite, 1999). Both may be linked to a poor ability to manipulate abstract concepts, which may also be related to other individual factors such as egocentricity and low empathy. The most important family factors are poor parental supervision combined with harsh and erratic parental discipline. As the roots of crime lie primarily in individual and family factors, methods of reducing crime should attempt to tackle these factors. Training

in cognitive, behavioral, and interpersonal skills; preschool intellectual enrichment programs and parent management training all seem to be effective methods of preventing offending (Cooke, 2001; Hawkins, Catalano, Morrison, O'Donnell, Abbot & Day, 1989).

Women in the criminal justice system are likely to have grown up in a single-parent home. Nearly 6 of 10 women under all forms of criminal justice supervision, which includes those in prison as well as those on parole or probation, grew up in a household where at least one parent was absent. Forty-two percent of women in prison grew up in homes with only one parent, usually the mother (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2008). Almost 14% of women offenders lived in foster care or in a group home at some point during childhood.

According to a recent study in California, three fourths of the women in jail were incarcerated for property, drug, or public-order offenses. The majority is under the age of 30 and is addicted to drugs or alcohol. More than three fourths report having had a first child by the age of 18. The women in this study were characterized as being mentally ill or seriously drug dependent, homeless prior to incarceration, and indigent. The two most common offenses in this sample were for drug offenses and petty theft with a prior petty theft conviction. More than 60% of women in jail reported having been sexually assaulted before the age of 18 (Johnston, 2001).

Approximately 51% of incarcerated women have one or no prior offenses. Three of four women offenders serving time for a violent offense committed simple assault. An estimated 62% of women offenders serving time for a violent offense had a prior relationship with the victim as an intimate, relative, or acquaintance with 60% being against an intimate or family member. The reason for the increase in the number of

women who go to prison has been due to an increase in the number of women convicted of drug offenses (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2008; Mauer, Potler & Wolf, 1999).

Incarcerated Mothers as Parents

Parents who provide high levels of positive parenting are more likely to have children with an internal locus of control, active coping styles, and greater levels of interpersonal trust (Kapalka, 2007; Mondell & Tyler, 1981). Storthamer-Loeber, Loeber, Farrington, Zhang, VanKammen and Maguin, (1993) argues that greater parental monitoring encourages adolescents' facilitation of prosocial and reduces the likelihood of adolescents developing antisocial behavior (Dishion & McMahon, 1998; Dishion, Patterson, Stoolmiller & Skinner, 1991).

In many cases the emotional well-being of parents affects their ability to parent and is often reflected in the behavior of the children. Belsky (1995) assessed empirical linkages between parental psychological well-being and parental function. He found that parental psychosis affects parents' abilities to assess and meet the needs of their children, which in turn affects the children's functioning abilities.

Negative parenting practices encourage the development of antisocial behavior in children (Forehand, 2002; Lyman, 1996; Rief, 2005; Schaffner, 2006; Simons, Whitbeck, Conger & Melby, 2000). Antisocial parents are more likely than conforming parents to use dysfunctional parenting practices. Corporal punishment, harsh and inconsistent discipline, aggressive and rejecting behaviors encourage the development of antisocial behavior in children. Negative parenting behaviors have been linked to deviant behavior, including early initiation of sexual relations among adolescent girls. Young

girls with parents who are emotionally distant are more likely to report depression (Whitbeck, Hoyt, Simons, Conger, Elder, Lorenz & Huck, 1992).

Ineffective parenting is related to the likelihood of developing conduct problems in children who demonstrate significant levels of callousness and unemotionality traits (Cohen & Stryer, 1996; Wootton, Frick, Shelton & Silverthorn, 1997). Keyes & Goodman (2006) found that paternal rejection increases the likelihood of depression from generation to generation. Whitbeck, et al. (1992) found support for the intergenerational transmission of negative personality traits (such as explosive behavior), which increases the likelihood for strained parent-child relationships.

LeFlore and Holston (1998) conducted an exploratory study on inmate mothers' perceived importance of parenting behaviors. Their findings supported the notion that inmate mothers are as caring and concerned about their children as are non-criminal mothers. These authors also found that the women in their study placed a tremendous value on the role of the mother as a provider for her children's needs:

The findings suggest that the unique social role mothers play in society be addressed in correctional programs, that efforts be made to facilitate the maintenance of present perceived importance of parenting behaviors and ties with children, and that meaningful vocational skills and counseling programs be instituted (Leflore & Holston, 1998, p. 122).

Parents, whether they are in the community or in prison, are worried about what role they can play in their children's lives, how to protect them from possible dangers and meet their needs. Clement (1993) conducted a national survey of programs for incarcerated women, with a focus on parenting. She noted that existing state correctional programs are not meeting the needs of incarcerated females. Thirty-six of the 43 respondents indicated that parenting programs for incarcerated women were available on

their facilities; however, there was no consistency in length, depth, or content of these programs. The survey also noted that volunteer groups, external to the correctional system, provided most programs or services. She concluded that one of the major stumbling blocks in developing programs for incarcerated women comes from a society “wherein people do not want to recognize the fact that inmates themselves might be victims needing treatment” (Clement, 1993, p. 99).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of a parenting class that teaches incarcerated females autonomy, social competence, interdependence, problem solving and resiliency. The goals of the intervention for incarcerated mothers were to enhance their parenting skills so that when they leave prison they can share what they learn with their children and apply those skills to their own recovery. This chapter describes the methodology employed in this study. Included are the research questions, descriptions of the participants, the variables, the procedures, and the data analysis.

Rationale for the Study

Understanding the needs of incarcerated mothers in the criminal justice system as well as the impact of a parent being incarcerated in prison on their children is central to providing appropriate and effective parenting programs for incarcerated mothers. An incarcerated mother is still her children's mother and many will resume the primary caregiver role upon release. Most incarcerated mothers suffer from increased feelings of anxiety, guilt, and depression concerning separation from their children. Parenting education for incarcerated mothers is a fundamental component for improving family dynamics. These skills are essential for maintaining the parent-child relationship during incarceration as well as when the parent goes home and resumes the parenting role.

Program Description

The program selected for implementation in this study attempts to give incarcerated mothers an understanding of their responsibility to promote a healthy relationship between themselves and their children. It also offers them the opportunity to increase their knowledge of their children's developmental issues, improve communication skills, and gives suggestions as to how they can remain a part of their children's lives during incarceration as well as after they are released to society.

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) has made a commitment to meet the needs of offenders and encourages prisons, such as the one where this project was administered, to make available to the offenders a variety of programmatic activities. As part of their contractual obligation, the staff and administration of the facility provide educational services to the offenders, including academic, vocational, and Life Skills training. The administration of the facility also recruits and encourages a group of volunteers who come onto the facility to present:

- Twelve-step and similar substance abuse recovery programs
- Religious programming
- Self-discovery programs
- Programs focusing on women's issues.

The administration of the facility was supportive of a special parenting class that teaches mothering skills to the female offenders with children. Volunteers staff this program and the only requirement of the facility is to supply the classroom space for the class. The prison where this research was performed is home to 500 men and 500 women who are incarcerated predominantly for crimes related to substance abuse. On an annual

basis the offenders are asked to complete a survey that reflects their perceptions of their educational needs. One repeated request, on the part of the female offenders, has been the development of a parenting class that focuses on the issues common to inmate mothers.

Some of the issues identified by the offenders were:

- Being separated from their children
- Child placement and custody
- The health and safety of their children
- Communication with their children
- Issues associated with reunification with their children (Annual Performance Report, GEO Group, Inc. 2005).

Context of the Study

Because of the offender's history of criminal behavior the organization holds to the belief that most of what the offenders say is designed to be subversive and to "con" people into doing what the offenders want them to do. In an effort to indoctrinate new officers to the devious and manipulative behavior of the offenders, the initial staff training program can last as long as three weeks with an additional week of training under the supervision of an experienced training officer. Numerous lectures and videos are presented in the training program, addressing the subject of "games offenders play," and new officers leave training with a heightened sense of distrust. The assumption of the staff training program is that new officers are naïve about the inherent danger associated with working in a prison and need a healthy dose of reality. Distrust of the sincerity of the offenders can prevent the new officers from falling prey to subtle enticements to do something inappropriate in a secure environment. A clear sense of the craftiness the

offenders helps ensure that the officers are aware of the difficulties they face as they supervise offenders.

Maintaining the security of the facility is the highest priority. Tools are marked with a tracking number and repeatedly inventoried to ensure that they are not taken into the offender population and used as weapons. The offenders are counted a minimum of seven times per day to ensure that anyone who escapes only has a few minutes of freedom before his/her absence is detected. Anytime the offenders are outside the fenced compound armed officers, who would not hesitate to use deadly force, are present to prevent any innocent citizen from being harmed.

The facility where this research took place is organized around a para-military model. The Senior Warden, assisted by the Warden of Security and Warden of Programs, is charged with the oversight of a multimillion dollar budget and over two hundred employees as well as 500 male offenders and 500 female offenders. The facility Major, assisted by the Captain, along with several lieutenants and sergeants work around the clock to ensure the safety of the staff as well as the offenders. Each employee must pass through a metal detector each time he or she enters or exits the building. They are required to submit to random drug screenings, and an annual background check prevents any indiscretions of the staff from becoming a problem within the facility. The decisions made by the administration concerning who can visit or what can be brought into the facility is driven by the question, In the event of a riot or someone is taken hostage, can any of the things they brought on the facility be used by the offenders to advance their cause? While this attitude might seem paranoid to the uninitiated, had these techniques been in place in the year 2000 the escape of seven men from the Connelly Unit in

Kenedy, Texas might have been prevented. The escape of these men stunned the community as the escapees were free for several weeks before being captured in Colorado. During the time they were free, they committed numerous crimes, including murdering a policeman in Dallas, Texas.

Even though a riot or escape attempt at the prison where this research was conducted is remote, the risk of a hostage situation or escape attempt is one of the realities faced by officers and administration of a prison. The staff and administrators who are tasked with maintaining the security of the facility require that every proposed program, including the parenting class that was part of this research, be planned out in minute detail. A written prospectus of the parenting class was submitted to TDCJ and the facility for their approval. Part of the approval process included each portion of the program being scrutinized against the possibility of a riot or hostage situation occurring at the facility. Once approved, every department in the facility was kept abreast of the progress and implementation of the program.

The Education Department at the prison has twelve classrooms and three vocational labs at their disposal. Anytime after 3 P.M. the classrooms are available for activities other than educational programming. Volunteers come to the facility to teach the parenting classes in the evenings. With the permission of the Assistant Warden of Programs, the volunteers are able to access the classrooms, and the security department ensures that the students arrive to class on time. Oddly enough, prisons are unusually busy places, and the offender's days are scheduled to fill as much of their time as possible. The adage, "idle hands are the Devil's playground" is taken seriously in this institution. The administration looks very carefully at each offender's schedule in order to

minimize the amount of time they have to get into mischief. Any activity that will fill the lives of the offenders with constructive programming is generally supported by the prison administration.

The success of any volunteer program on the facility is directly related to the support it gets from the upper administration of the facility. Access to classrooms, items needed to conduct the class, and whether the offenders are allowed out of their cells to participate are completely under the control of the person on duty at the time the volunteers arrive. In an effort to expedite the movement of offenders to their various programs, the warden must approve memos from department heads and forward them to those who are on duty outlining the program and its participants. It is fortunate that the administration of the facility where this research took place is very receptive to volunteers coming to the facility and offering the offenders specialized programs.

Research Design

This research project seeks to understand the effect of parenting classes on the female offenders who participate. The questions focus on the inmate mothers' perceptions of their roles as mothers.

- Question one: Will parenting classes taught to incarcerated mothers improve their understanding of how expectations, empathy, corporal punishment, role responsibilities, and development of children's value and independence promote effective parenting?

In order to answer this question an assessment instrument that is useful in assessing individual strengths and weaknesses involved in child rearing was administered to the participants. A pretest and posttest using the AAPI-2 was administered to all of the

participants prior to the start of the class and at the conclusion of the class. Comparisons were made that evaluated the offender's perception of any changes that occur between the first administration of the assessment and the final administration.

- Question two: Will parenting classes taught to incarcerated mothers change their perception of their mothering role?

The AAPI-2 has Forms A & B which facilitate a pre and post test. The responses of the students on the pretest and posttest were used to express any changes in their perception of their role as mother after participating in the parenting class.

Receiving Permission to Do this Research

One of the most challenging dimensions of this project was the process that one must go through to receive permission to work with a protected population, such as prisoners. Many years ago there were no specific rules governing the use of human subjects as part of a research project. This lack of oversight set the stage for well meaning researchers to set up experiments that had a severe, negative impact on the participants. As a result, any type of research must be approved by the institution sponsoring the research, which makes that institution responsible for any harm that might come to those who participate. An extensive review of the project methodology was conducted by Texas State University-San Marcos, Texas through their Institutional Review Board (IRB) and recommendations are made to ensure that the offenders who participate are well informed as to the extent of their participation and possible impact the research might have on them. The participants must also be given an opportunity to sign an informed consent form, which outlines the intent of the research. In addition, the participants understand that they can drop out of the research at any time. Gaining the

approval of the IRB became a lengthy process that required two face-to-face meetings with the researcher, the chairman of the researcher's committee and the entire review board in order to obtain their approval for the research.

The population that was to be the subject of the research was incarcerated females, which created a second layer of review by the State of Texas. As wards of the State of Texas, the offenders, even though they are adults, cannot consent to participate in research until TDCJ first gives its approval for that research. Texas Department of Criminal Justice had to review the methodology to ensure that the offenders would not be subjected to any research that might endanger the participants in any way. Documents requesting permission to use female offenders as part of this research were submitted, and the methodology was reviewed by the Research, Evaluation, and Development (RED) Unit of TDCJ. Several revisions were requested in order to satisfy all of the concerns the RED Unit had in reference to the research. In a strange turn of events, halfway through this process, TDCJ consolidated the work of the RED unit with another TDCJ unit and this project was reassigned. Much of the initial work done with the RED unit had to be repeated with the new director for this project. After two years of effort on the part of the researcher, final permission to conduct research was granted. Once the initial request was granted both the IRB and TDCJ required periodic progress reports. At the conclusion of the research a copy, signed by the dissertation committee, must be forwarded to TDCJ for their archives.

Participants

The prison where this research was conducted houses 1000 prisoners, 500 men and 500 women. Approximately 350 of the female offenders have children. Notification

of the need for volunteers to participate in this research was posted on bulletin boards in the common area in each of the pods where the female offenders live. Over 100 females responded to the notification and a search through their personal file was conducted to verify that they did in fact have children. One of the main documents in each offender's file is called their travel card. The travel card is color coded by ethnicity. Along with ethnicity, the travel cards contain a brief summary of all the pertinent information related to the offender. The travel card lists the offender's age, number of children, religious preference, length of sentence, names of all the prisons where they have served a portion of their sentence, any aliases they have used and a summary of all arrests and convictions. The next of kin and a phone number where they can be reached is also part of the information on the card.

Using the travel card to verify the accuracy of all the information about the offender's children, a note went out to every qualified volunteer who wanted to participate in the research. The note requested that they come to a meeting to go over the parameters of the research and sign a consent form. Students currently enrolled in the Life Skills class were recruited to participate in the pre and posttest while they remained in the Life Skills class. Sixty of the other offenders were randomly selected to either participate in the intervention or be a part of the control group. Soon after the meeting, all three groups were called back together to administer the pretest of the AAPI-2. Once the pretest was administered the parenting intervention class began.

The intervention class met 12 times over a six week period. Each class lasted approximately two hours and began with a brief introduction of the topic of the day followed by an open discussion. During the second hour the large group broke up into

small groups to discuss specific content from the class discussion. Some days the time was devoted to role playing activities or an open forum where individual issues were discussed by the class.

One of the areas of greatest concern for the offenders in the intervention group was how to effectively discipline their children. They expressed deep concern that the methods they used to discipline their children were too harsh or erratic. The offenders did not want their children to repeat those behaviors and follow in their mother's footsteps. They acknowledged that their children are angry at the situation and often the children's behavior expressed that anger in inappropriate ways. The consensus of opinion was for the mothers to be particularly vigilant during visitation to allow the children the opportunity to express their feelings without fear of being chastised or told they have no right to feel like that. The offender mothers developed a phrase they could use to open lines of communication with their children. That phrase expressed the mother's willingness to listen and react appropriately to the child's feelings. When the child began to open up about his or her feelings the phrase the offenders would use was, "You may be right." This seemed to be a non-threatening way to invite the child to address some of his or her issues. Many of the offender mothers reported back to the group how effective that phrase had been to keep the emotions out of the conversation and allow true feelings to be expressed.

The class also discussed how to practice effective communication with not only the child but the child's caretaker. The students were asked to observe their own behavior during visitation with their family. Several reported back that the bulk of the time they had one child in their lap, but spent most of the time talking to the adults. Conversation

between the mother and her children was sporadic and consisted of a few questions that received brief answers from the children and single word answers from any teenagers who came to visit. Several of the offender mothers came to the realization that they were not devoting enough time to conversations with the children, and the last hour of each class was used to develop the listening skills they needed to truly hear what their children were saying.

The final class session explored how to establish a plan to renew the bonds with their children that were broken while the mothers were incarcerated. The question was asked, "How can I make my child believe I have really changed?" After much discussion, the class decided that it would take a minimum of three years for their children to believe they had really changed. The figure of three years came after a lengthy discussion of how long it took the offenders to believe their parents when they promised to turn over a new leaf. The offenders decided that their parents had to successfully follow through on their promised behavior for approximately three years before they began to believe a real change had occurred. The group agreed to apply that same time frame to their own lives.

Finally, the issue of disciplining the children came into the discussion. The offenders expressed a lack of knowledge of how to impose logical discipline on their children. Most of the offenders in the class had experienced punishment, but few had experienced discipline. A distinction was drawn that rather than using physical punishment to tell them what they did wrong, they could offer their children rewards for correct behavior. Several offenders made trips on their own time to the prison library to check out books on teaching discipline to children. One astute observation was made by an offender when she pointed out that most of her children's behavior problems were

rooted in her inconsistent pattern of being firm with them one day and permissive the next.

On the last day of the class the students were asked to fill out an evaluation form for the class and received a certificate of completion. Certificates are used by the offenders to prove to TDCJ that they are actively pursuing ways to improve their life while incarcerated. Some have been court ordered to participate in a parenting class due to the nature of their crimes and use the certificate to help in the process of regaining custody of their children after they are released.

Any rehabilitation efforts on the part of the offenders is looked on favorably by the parole board and can have a positive impact on the decision to allow the offenders early release from prison. Notification to the parole board is made through a computer program that has the offender's profile, all the classes they have attended and any rehabilitation programs they have completed. TDCJ calls this the Inmate Treatment Program (ITP). Those records are maintained on the TDCJ mainframe computer in Huntsville, TX and can be accessed by the parole board. Information, such as the completion of the parenting class, is updated on the TDCJ computer system and available to anyone with access to the system. A small portion of the project included a demographic survey of the offenders, the results are as follows:

Table 1: Demographic Survey Results

	Intervention	Control	Life Skills	Total
Number Responding	29	25	28	82
Average Age	27.8	33	34	31.6
Ethnicity				
Black	9	7	11	35%
Hispanic	7	8	3	23%
White	10	9	8	35%
Other	2	1	2	6%

Table 1-Continued

Marital Status				
Never Married	16	7	9	41%
Married	5	13	10	36%
Divorced	7	5	5	22%
Education				
Drop-out	12	9	4	32%
High School Graduate	9	6	4	20%
GED	8	10	15	43%
Occupation				
Fast Foods	8	4	3	19%
Entertainment	2	3	5	12%
Hotel/Housekeeping	4	3	3	12%
Homemaker	5	3	2	12%
Self Employed	2	5	2	11%
Medical	3	3	2	10%
Clerical	1	1	3	6%
Construction	1	0	1	2%
Assembly Line	1	0	0	1%
Drug Use				
Pot	11	3	1	30%
Cocaine/Crack	7	7	6	40%
Methamphetamines	5	4	5	28%
Frequency of Drug Use				
Daily	15	12	8	59%
Weekly	1	6	5	20%
Occasionally	3	6	3	20%
Participated in Drug Treatment				
Yes	4	9	15	34%
No	25	16	13	66%
Length of Treatment Program				
1-28 Days	0	3	5	29%
1 month	0	0	1	3%
2 months	0	0	3	11%
3 months	1	2	2	18%
6 months	2	2	1	18%
9 months	0	2	0	14%
More than 9 Months	0	2	0	7%

Table 1-Continued

Family History				
Mother Living	26	19	17	81%
Father Living	21	16	15	68%
Age When Parents				
Divorced	7ys.	8.5ys.	10.7ys.	8.7ys.
Age at birth of first child	17.1	18.8	17.2	17.7
Total Number of Children	87	74	68	229
Incarceration History				
Age at first arrest	29ys.	19.9ys.	20ys.	23ys.
Current Offense				
Possession	9	7	6	29%
Assault	4	5	8	22%
Robbery	4	4	6	19%
Injury to Child	2	3	1	8%
Org. Crime	0	2	2	5%
Parole Violation	1	1	1	4%
Did Not Report	5	3	1	12%
Average Number of Times Incarcerated	2.4	1.9	4	2.7%
Average Length of Sentence	5ys.	8.1ys.	5.5ys.	6.2ys.
Offenders with other Family Members Incarcerated	23	15	12	65%

Initially, there were 90 offenders participating in the project at the end of the project 82 offenders had completed all the paperwork and both forms of the AAPI-2. A search of the offender records revealed that four had been released on parole, three had been sent off the unit to another TDCJ facility and one decided to discontinue participation in the project.

Procedures

Thirty of the offender mothers participated in the parenting class which used The Parenting Connection of the Rainbow Days curriculum. The Rainbow Days curriculum is made up of two parts: The Parenting Connection and The Children's Connection. The original intent of the curriculum was that both the children and adults would take the classes simultaneously so that they would be studying together the same concepts, vocabulary, and rituals. Although this would be an excellent project to conduct in the future, circumstances only allowed the mothers the opportunity to participate in this project.

The Parenting Connection provides the parents of children living in high-risk situations with the skills they need to teach their children how to overcome adversity. Parents learn how to help their children become resilient and protect them against the pressure to participate in illegal activities. The curriculum examines the risks children face within the community, school, family, and peer group. The framework for helping children build assets focuses on external assets (support, empowerment, boundaries, expectations, and use of time) and internal assets (commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity). The principles of helping children develop the assets they need to avoid high-risk behavior were taught along with lessons on the power of positive self-talk.

The Rainbow Days curriculum is a cognitive-behavioral intervention in the individual domain focusing on changing attitudes and intentions toward participation in illegal activities. The focus of the curriculum is on prevention. It is different from intervention or treatment in that the intended target group is considered at a higher risk

than average for participation in illegal activities. The offender mothers learned methods they can use to empower their children to develop a support group of positive people rather than involve themselves with people who will lead them astray. This curriculum is appropriate for this population since the offenders have a history of personal involvement with illegal activities and in their absence their children often experience intense pressure to become involved in similar criminal activities. This curriculum had a two-fold impact on the offenders. First, they were able to share some of the skills they learn with their children, and second, they can take the knowledge learned and apply it to their own recovery. Each session focuses on specific protective factors such as:

Autonomy: Most offenders spend the bulk of their lifetime practicing the art of denial. They learn during their formative years not to tell what is going on at home. As small children they were encouraged to deny their feelings. If they kept the family secrets of addictions, abuse, or violence to themselves they were rewarded by the adults in the home; if they exposed the secrets, they were criticized and blamed for the destroying the family. As adults they continue to be out of touch with their feelings. The program gave them the time and support they needed to explore their feelings and begin to open up to idea of being honest with themselves.

Social Competence: This portion of the program deals with how the offenders can relate to other people in appropriate ways. Topics such as anger management, making healthy choices, choosing healthy friendships, and resisting negative peer pressure are relevant to life in a secure environment as well as the world outside the prison walls.

Interdependence: Many female offenders report the primary reason they came to prison was because of a friendship with someone who encouraged them to become

involved in illegal activities. The curriculum section dealing with interdependence focuses on how to find and maintain a peer group that will encourage commitment to a healthy lifestyle that does not include criminal behavior.

Problem Solving: Knowing appropriate ways to express one's anger is crucial to the offender's recovery. Offenders often bring problems on themselves as a result of inappropriately expressing their anger. The program gives them the skills they need to question the source of their anger (embarrassment, frustration, feeling overwhelmed) and eliminate the root cause, rather than acting impulsively.

Resiliency: One of the key factors in the program is to give the participants the opportunity to dream and set goals for themselves. For many of the offenders the first 30 days of freedom once they are released from prison are pivotal as to whether they will come back to prison or remain in society. Setting goals for those first few weeks of freedom can give the offenders the opportunity to think realistically about their future.

The researcher is a certified facilitator of the Rainbow Days curriculum and used the Parent Connection curriculum which is a support group based program. This curriculum is designed to increase the capacity of the parents to enhance their families' protective factors and to foster their children's resiliency.

During the project 30 volunteers from the Life Skills class continued to participate in the class. Their participation in the research was limited to taking the AAPI-2 at the beginning of the project and at the end of the project.

The Life Skills class is a project of TDCJ and most of the students who take that class are very close to the end of their sentence or are eligible for early release. The purpose of the Life Skills class is to help the offenders prepare themselves to participate

in the process of reintegrating back into their homes and society at large once released.

The curriculum for Life Skills class addresses seven broad topics:

- Personal development
- Interpersonal relationships
- Civil and legal responsibilities
- Victim awareness
- Health and wellness
- Career planning and employment
- Re-entry into society.

Interspersed throughout the Life Skills curriculum are specific topics that address parenting issues and how they apply to the offenders as they face the realities that await them once they are released.

The third group of thirty participants was the control group. These participants were female offenders who have children and have not participated in any parenting classes or Life Skills classes at this facility. As a control group, their participation was limited to taking the pre- and post-test using the AAPI-2. Offenders in the control group and Life Skills class were offered the opportunity to participate in the parenting classes but the class was delayed until the data for this research have been collected. Prior to the initiation of the project all of the participants were asked to sign an informed consent form and fill out the demographic survey.

Reliability of the Adult Adolescent Parenting Inventory-2

The AAPI-2 is a valid and reliable inventory designed to assess the parenting and child rearing attitudes of adult and teen parent and non-parent populations. Responses to the inventory provide an index of risk for abusive and neglecting parenting attitudes and practices. There are five sub-scales to the AAPI-2.

Responses are converted to sten scores that compare the participant's responses to a normal distribution. A sten score is a standard score often used in the interpretation of psychological tests. It has a mean of 5.5 and a standard deviation of 2. Thus, approximately 95% of respondents would typically fall between two standard deviations of the mean (i.e., 1.5 and 9.5). Use of standardized scores makes it easier to interpret test scores which are otherwise on arbitrary metrics. Sten scores in the 1 to 3 range indicate high risk parenting attitudes. Scores in the 4 to 7 sten range indicate moderate to average risk. Scores in the 8 to 10 sten range indicate low risk (Bavolek & Keene, 1999, p. 42).

The AAPI-2 provides risk scores in five parenting behaviors known to contribute to the maltreatment of children.

- Inappropriate expectations of children
- Parental lack of empathy towards the needs of children
- Strong parental belief in the use of corporal punishment
- Reversing parent-child family roles
- Oppressing children's value and independence.

Content Related Validity

Analysis of the data generated from the field-testing of nearly 1,500 adults and adolescents from 53 agencies in 23 states formed the basis of norming and validating the AAPI-2. The AAPI-2 consists of two parallel forms. Factor loadings obtained from the Factor Analysis and the corresponding correlations between the two forms ranging from .80 to .92 and between the constructs ranging from .75 to .49 strongly support the validity of the inventory (Bavolek & Keene, 1999, p. 26).

Reliabilities

The Spearman-Brown and Cronbach estimates of internal reliability range from .80 to .93 on both Form A and Form B of the AAPI-2. Diagnostic capabilities of the AAPI-2 with adolescents show that nearly 13% of 2500 non-abused teens participating in the study had factor scores -1 or more standard deviations below the mean. Discriminatory abilities of the AAPI-2 indicate significant overall mean differences ($p < .001$) between abused and non-abused teens across all factors. Further analyses indicated significant overall mean significance ($p < .001$) differences between males and females in both abused and non-abused groups. Diagnostic capabilities of the AAPI-2 with adults mirror the findings of the adolescent population. Between 13% and 19% of the scores fell -1 to -2 standard

deviations below the mean. Discriminatory abilities of the AAPI-2 with adults also found that the mean scores of adults identified as abusive were significantly ($p < .001$) different from non-abusive adults across all factors. The mean scores of male and female adults in both the abusive and non-abusive groups were also significantly ($p < .001$) different in all factors (Bavolek & Keene, 1999, p. 32).

and,

For over 30 years, the Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory has been utilized in studies assessing the differences of abusive and non-abusive parents and abused and non-abused adolescents. Studies have also incorporated the AAPI-2 in assessing the effectiveness of programs designed to treat and prevent initial or recurring episodes of child maltreatment (Bavolek & Keene, 1999 p. 4).

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable was the changes indicated by the outcome of the scores on the Adult Adolescent Parenting Inventory. This inventory was used as a pre and posttest and is designed to assess the offender mothers' understanding of how expectations, empathy, corporal punishment, role responsibilities, and development of children's value and independence promote effective parenting.

Independent Variable

The independent variable was the form of treatment offered to the Parenting Class, the form of treatment offered to the Life Skills class, and the relationship to the control group. The Parent Connection portion of the Rainbow Days curriculum offers the offenders the opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to become effective parents. During the six weeks in which the class met, the offenders followed a curriculum designed around the support group model. The support group model allows more time for individual attention, group discussion, and skills modeling. It establishes and enforces the boundaries associated with matters of confidentiality. The support group model encourages introspection, opens discussion, and fosters trust. It also creates an

atmosphere where the students can experience belonging, bonding, and personal investment among its members (Brilhart, 2006).

Data for the Quantitative Assessment

The data for the quantitative assessment are the result of the pre and posttest with the AAPI-2 assessment instrument. There were three groups of participants and the data from each group was compared with those receiving the intervention, parenting lessons from the Life Skills class and the control group. The AAPI-2 assesses changes in parenting and child rearing practices after treatment. This is an objective device used to measure post-treatment effectiveness. Pre and post-treatment data provided the researcher with information regarding the attitudinal changes in parenting. All data collected from the three groups were used to ascertain whether the perception of the offenders who participated in the parenting class has changed in comparison to the perceptions of those who were not part of the parenting class. These data were collected from all 90 participants prior to the beginning of the six-week class and a second data collection occurred after the class ended. The data from the offenders who have received the intervention were compared to the data collected prior to the class in order to assess whether there has been any change in their perceptions of the participants parenting skills. These data will also be compared to the pre and post data collected from the students in the Life Skills class and the control group who have not received any intervention.

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to test this hypothesis. This was based on a comparison of the error variance/covariance matrix and the effect

variance/covariance matrix. The covariance was the two measures of probability between the reaction to the questionnaire and assessment by the group receiving the intervention, the comparison group, and the control group.

Summary

This proposal explores the need for incarcerated mothers to participate in parenting classes. The literature review offers a glimpse into the profiles of women in the criminal justice system, their pathways into crime, the sudden increase in the number of women in the criminal justice system, and the responsibility the offenders have to their children. The methodology includes the research questions, descriptions of the participants, the variables, procedures, and the data analysis.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

A large portion of the data collected for this project was the information gathered from the pre and posttest of the AAPI-2. Thirty offender mothers participated in the parenting class and were designated the Intervention Group. Thirty of the offenders who attended the Life Skills class received that as their designation and thirty offenders who received no intervention or Life Skills classes were designated the Control Group.

Table 2: Comparison of Parenting Intervention and Life Skills Curriculum

Program Features	Intervention	Life Skills
Length of Class	24 hours	180 hours
Focus of Curriculum	Needs of children	Needs of the offenders
Instructor's Teaching Style	Lecture	Discussion
Classroom Environment	Inhibited	Uninhibited
Student Response	Open/Observer	Open/Participant
Class Agenda	Learn to be a better parent	Be better prepared to return to society
Desired Outcome	Empathy	Competence
Type of Student Targeted	Offender Mother	General Female Population

After much consideration a distinction was drawn between the offenders in the Life Skills class and those who received the parenting intervention. The purpose of that distinction is to highlight the differences between the intervention and the Life Skills curriculum. Those differences were distinct enough to raise the question as to the depth of comparison that could be drawn from the two classes.

As indicated by Table 2, there are many areas where the two classes can be compared. However, the focus of the curriculum for each class is divergent enough that whatever comparisons can be drawn are not substantial enough to show that one class was superior to the other or that one class is more desirable than the other. In fact, the comparison of the classes only serves to show that each class has a specific purpose. Offender mothers who take the parenting class could also benefit from the Life Skills curriculum. Offenders with children, who take the Life Skills class, could benefit from a class that focuses on teaching parenting skills. For that reason, a distinction is indicated by a vertical dotted line between the graphic representations of all five constructs. This distinction allows the reader to observe the results of the pre and posttest for the Life Skills and intervention group without feeling compelled to assert one over the other. The actual comparison is between the control group and the intervention class as well as the control group and the Life Skills class.

Students who participated in the intervention class did show an improvement in their scores between the administrations of the Adult/Adolescent Parenting Inventory-2 Form A and Form B. However, the students from the Life Skills class scored higher on the same set of tests. There are four possible reasons for those differences:

1. Competence verses incompetence: *Life Skills* The Life Skills curriculum considers the offenders as competent people who need a little direction while the parenting intervention suggests that they are not competent parents and need special help to be good mothers. The Life Skills curriculum encourages the students to rise above their current circumstances and use the experience of being incarcerated to project themselves back into society as a whole person, capable of re-defining themselves and able to move beyond the past to a better future. Feeling as though they are competent adults, it stands to reason they would also feel as though they could be competent parents. *Intervention* Most of the offenders who sign up for the parent intervention class feel as though they are less than competent parents who must go to someone else to learn good parenting skills. After years of feeling like the have failed their children, it is difficult for any curriculum to overcome those emotions. In addition, the curriculum is further complicated by the fact that the students are called upon to focus on someone else's needs, rather than their own.
2. The focus of the curriculum: *Life Skills* The Life Skills curriculum was focused on the needs of the student while the *Intervention* focused on the needs of the children. It is difficult for the offenders to think about something as esoteric as the needs of someone other than themselves. While the offender mothers love their children and do not want them to come to prison, they do not believe they will have much impact on their children until they are released back into society.

3. Teaching styles: *Life Skills* The Life Skills teacher has time to allow the students to explore their feelings while the intervention teacher had to rush to get the entire curriculum into the allotted time frame. The Life Skills instructor teaches her class by allowing her students to explore the topics at their own pace. The students in the Life Skills program have a curriculum that allows them multiple opportunities for group work, time to create and make presentations to the class along with an atmosphere that encourages them to take the risks. *Intervention* The intervention instructor's teaching style encouraged the students to discuss the specific needs of the children, leaving little time to discuss the needs of the adults.
4. Class environment: *Life Skills* The Life Skills class was an open forum that was topic driven focusing on the needs of the offenders while the intervention was subject driven and focused on the needs of the children. The Life Skills curriculum offers the students the chance to develop communication skills through discussion, group activities and presentations made before the class. As the students progress through the curriculum they hear stories told by other offenders in the class and realize that they share many of the same experiences with other members of the class. Knowing that they have much in common with their fellow students gives other students the confidence to tell their story, too. *Intervention* For those who participated in the intervention class, feeling confident enough to talk about painful life experiences takes more than the 12 sessions. Although there were many lively discussions during the class,

the students wanted to explore specific issues they were having with their children rather than discuss issues they had with their own upbringing.

The vertical line is drawn between the intervention and Life Skills data on each graph is there as a reminder that the Life Skills students were offered a very different set of experiences than those who participated in the parenting intervention.

Research Question One

Will parenting classes taught to incarcerated mothers improve their understanding of how expectations, empathy, corporal punishment, role responsibilities, and development of children's value and independence relate to effective parenting?

Overall, the data collected as a part of this project indicate that female offenders who participated in the parenting intervention improved their understanding of effective parenting. The assessment data on the constructs of expectations, empathy, corporal punishment, role responsibilities, and developing children's value and independence suggest that parenting courses based on those topics would enhance the parenting skills of female offenders.

Findings Relative to Five Constructs From AAPI-2

The early work of Bavolek, Kline and McLaughlin (1995) authors of the AAPI-2, systematized information and identified parenting patterns that lead to the development of four parenting constructs. These constructs represent a summary of theory, research, and practice put forth by scientists, researchers, clinicians, and practitioners in describing abusive and neglectful parenting practices. Recent research by Bavolek and Keene (1999) revealed a fifth construct from the research generated from the administration of the

AAPI-2. These five constructs serve as the basis for assessing attitudes known to contribute to child abuse and neglect.

Construct One. Expectations: High scores indicate a realistic understanding of the developmental capabilities of children, as well as a general acceptance of developmental limitations. Parents who understand the children's capabilities tend to allow their children to mature at whatever pace is appropriate and give them ample opportunities to explore their environment. Generally, parents who score high in this construct grasp the fundamental need of their children to develop skills appropriate to their age and physical abilities.

Low scores in this construct indicate a general lack of understanding of children's developmental capabilities. Parents who expect children to achieve at a higher level than they are capable often display a sense of inadequacy with themselves and perceive themselves to be poor parents. Children become the standard by which they measure their competence as a caregiver. Failure on the part of the child is perceived by the caregiver as an affirmation of their own inadequacies as a person and a parent (Bavolek and Keene, 1999).

Inappropriate Expectations: A parenting practice that is very common among reported cases of child abuse and neglect is inappropriate expectations parents have for their children. Very early in the infant's life, abusive parents tend to inaccurately perceive the skills and abilities of their children. Inappropriate expectations of children are generally the result of three factors:

1. Parents simply do not know the needs and capabilities of children at various stages of growth and development. Ignorant of this knowledge, expectations are made that often exceed the skills and abilities of the child.
2. Many parents who abuse their children generally lack a positive view of themselves and consequently of their children. Inadequate perceptions of self as an adult generally stem from early childhood experiences of failure, ridicule, and disappointment. These patterns of childhood failure are repeated to yet another generation where demands are made for children to perform tasks that they are emotionally, physically, or intellectually incapable of performing.
3. Abusive parents generally lack the empathy that is required to determine what an appropriate expectation is for children at different stages of development. Lacking empathy is a major contributor to the inappropriate demands parents make of their children (Bavolek & Keene, 2001).

Children who depend upon and seek the approval of their parents willingly try to meet the needs and expectations of the adults upon whom they depend. It is impossible for the children to know that many of those expectations are unreasonable for their age and skill set. The effects of inappropriate parental expectations upon children are debilitating to the children. Many children perceive themselves as being worthless, as failures, and as unacceptable and disappointing to adults.

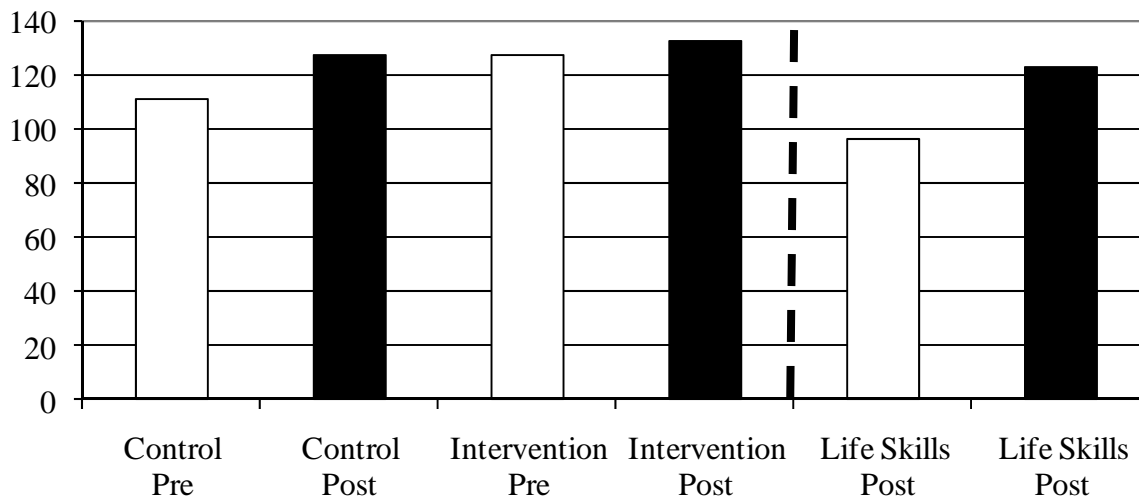


Figure 1. The figure compares the pre and post test results of Construct 1 from the control group, intervention group, and Life Skills group.

Parental Expectations: Figure 1 indicates the students in the intervention class showed a slight rise in their results even though the control group and Life Skills group had a larger increase. The intervention group did have the highest score on the pre-test and managed to demonstrate improvement on the post-test. The scores of all three groups indicate that the offenders recognize the importance of understanding the capabilities of their children. Everyone who participated in the project showed progress toward being able to recognize when they are demanding something of their children that the children are not capable of delivering due to physical or developmental limitations. Responses to the AAPI-2 posttest also indicate that when the offender mothers have a positive view of themselves they are in a better position to protect their children from abuse.

Construct Two. Empathy: Empathy is the ability of being aware of another person's feelings and state of being. It is the ability to place the needs of another as a priority. Empathic parents are sensitive to their children and create an environment that is conducive to promoting children's emotional, intellectual, physical, social, spiritual, and

creative growth. Empathic parents understand their children from the inside, not from the outside as though they were some interested observer.

Fundamental to being a nurturing parenting is the ability of the adult caregiver to demonstrate empathy toward the needs of children. High scores in empathy indicate an individual is sensitive to the needs of children. Children and their needs are valued rather than looked down upon. The empathic parent knows that helping the children learn to meet their own needs will not spoil them, instead it will foster independence. The children of empathetic adults are listened to; comforted when hurt, supported when feeling inadequate, and accepted for who they are rather than for what they can do to make the caregiver's life easier. Behavior management programs are utilized to help children achieve autonomy and responsibility rather than for the purpose of strictly controlling the children's behavior. Empathic caregivers are capable of utilizing alternatives to corporal punishment and believe hitting children is not a healthy type of parent-child interaction.

Caregivers who indicate a low empathic awareness of their children's needs often have difficulty helping children find ways to meet their needs. Non-empathetic caregivers find hitting a child much easier than listening to or talking with the child. For the non-empathetic parent, the normal demands that children have are often treated as bothersome and annoying. Children should be seen and not heard is the motto of people who score low on the empathic awareness scale. Low empathy caregivers believe that it will spoil the children if they give in to every request the child makes. The parents who score low in this construct have children for a variety of reasons such as companionship, someone to care about or someone to care about them. When they learn that children take more

time and effort than they are capable of giving, the appeal of having a child is drastically lessened (Bavolek & Keene, 1999).

Empathy exists in children at birth and is developed or suppressed through the manner in which they are treated during the process of growing up. Parents lacking sufficient levels of empathy find children's needs are often overwhelming. Normal demands placed on parents by their children are perceived as unrealistic, resulting in increased levels of stress and frustration.

Lacking an empathic home life, children often fail to develop a solid moral code of conduct. Right and wrong, cooperation and kindness are not important to the children because they are not standards of conduct which are valued by the parents. Any attempts on the part of the children to develop positive traits are devalued because of the self-centeredness of the parent. The ability to care about the needs or feelings of another is not as important to the parents and eventually the children assume the same attitude. Adults who exhibited low levels of empathy as children, were labeled as troublemakers. They often engaged in acts of cruelty to themselves, others, and animals.

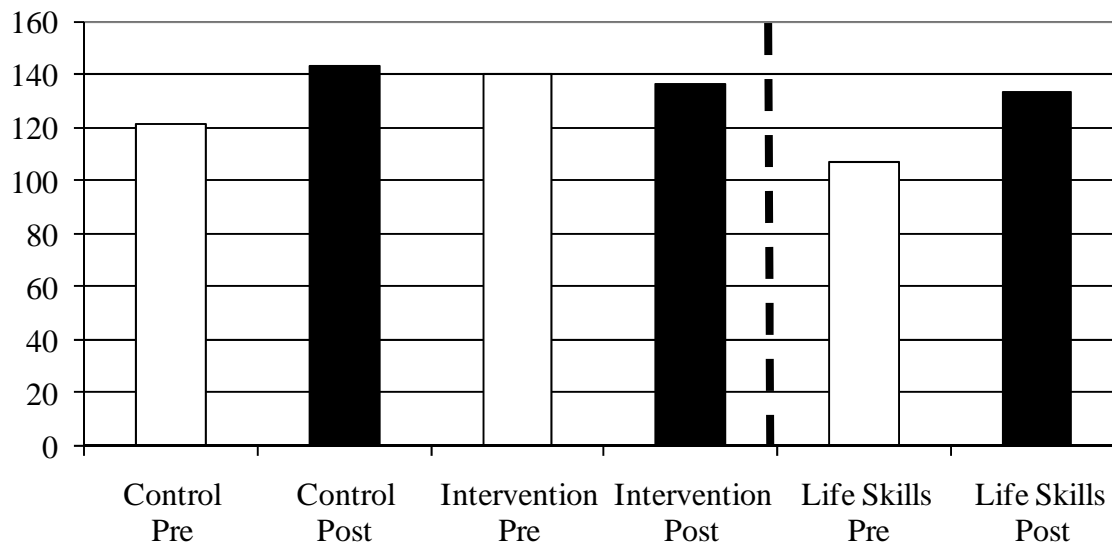


Figure 2. The figure compares the pre and post test results of Construct 2 from the control group, intervention group, and Life Skills group.

Students who participated in the intervention indicate a slight decline between the administration of the pre and posttest. It should be noted that the scores for the intervention group were much higher on the pretest when compared to those of the control group or Life Skills. This suggests that the offender mothers who participated in the intervention came to the class with a strong understanding and knowledge of empathy and its importance to parenting their children. The results of having higher scores on the pretest suggest that a statistical anomaly referred to as regression to the mean has occurred. Regression to the mean is defined as having such high scores on the pretest that it is difficult to show an increase in scores on the posttest.

Those who participated in the Life Skills class showed a marked improvement between the pretest and post test. It is important to note that offenders in both the Life Skills class and the control group discovered that the key to empathy is when people care about what happens to themselves and to others.

Construct Three. Corporal Punishment: High scores indicate the ability to correctly use alternatives to corporal punishment as a strategy for changing children's behavior. Such attitudes reflect a general dislike for spanking children and a positive attitude toward non-violent ways of providing discipline for children.

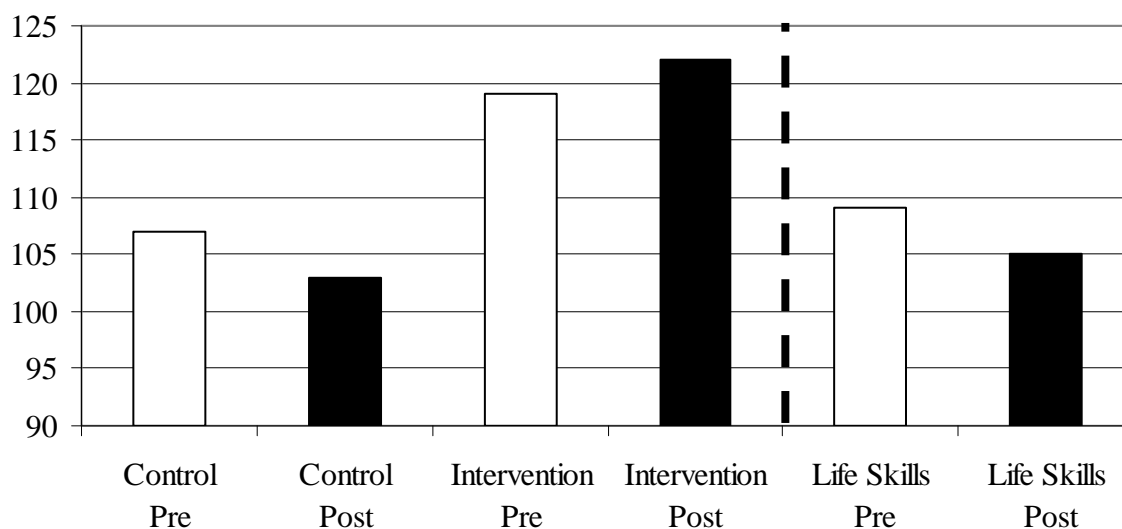


Figure 3. The figure compares the pre and post test results of Construct 3 from the control group, intervention group, and Life Skills group.

In figure 3 the intervention group was the only group to indicate significant gains between the administration of Form A and Form B was the intervention group. The control group and the Life Skills class scores suggest they are firmly entrenched in the belief that corporal punishment should be the primary method of changing the behavior of their children.

Corporal punishment is widely used by abusive parents because of the immediate effect on behavior. Society generally supports the use of corporal punishment as a way to regulate the behavior of misbehaving children. In fact, most religious institutions

maintain that one of the ways you show your children that you love them is to use physical punishment to keep them on the straight and narrow path.

The use of physical punishment is sometimes a subtle and dangerous way to correct behavior. In the short run corporal punishment does stop the behavior; however, physical punishment can have far reaching affects that go beyond physical pain. The effects of corporal punishment, while devastating to the well-being of children, is often passed from generation to generation.

For those who score low on this construct, hitting is the only way children learn to obey rules and stay out of trouble. People in this category believe that fear, pain belittlement teach appropriate, healthy behaviors to children. In families where hitting children is a common practice, communication among family members is usually limited. The family is managed by a how the parent feels on any given day, or parents establish a punitive set of rules which they strictly enforce. Recognition of children's feelings and needs is usually limited. Orthodox beliefs in corporal punishment usually result from a very strict, rigid, authoritarian environment (Bavolek & Keene, 1999).

Physical punishment is generally the favored means of discipline used by abusive parents. Throughout history, the use of corporal punishment has played a major role in the way children's behavior is shaped by their parents. Rationale for the use of corporal punishment practices include:

- To teach children right from wrong
- It is sanctioned by Bible, particularly the Old Testament
- It is a cultural practice in most societies

- A way to punish misbehavior
- It produces quick results.

Parents who score low on this construct often believe children should not be allowed to get away with anything. The children must show respect for authority and periodically need to be reminded that someone else is in charge of their life, in order to keep the children from becoming sassy or stubborn. Abusive parents not only consider physical punishment a proper disciplinary measure, but strongly defend their right to use physical force. The use of corporal punishment by the abusing parent is not haphazard. Abusive parents do not typically act on impulse but utilize physical punishment as a method of correcting specific bad conduct or inadequacy on the part of the children. Many parents were criticized and punished as children for the same behaviors they see in their own children; hence the punishment carries the approval of family tradition and gives the impression that the offending parent is a strong disciplinarian.

It is a common tendency for abused children to feel an unusually close connection to the aggressive parent in an effort to gain some measure of self-protection and control. Abused children often develop aggressive behavior patterns against the outside world in order to manage their own insecurities. Additionally, children who see and experience recurring, serious expressions of violence in their own family are taught that violence is the way to solve problems. The effects of physical abuse are often demonstrated once the children become parents, as they tend to punish their children even more severely for similar infractions. As a result, abused children often become abusive parents.

Students in the intervention class were acutely aware of their abuse issues and were very open in their discussion of the subject. However, the emphasis of the

curriculum was toward teaching children how to self regulate through a system of rewarding proper behavior and extinguishing inappropriate behavior. Many of the offenders have been raised in an abusive home and spent much of their childhood energies in an attempt to survive. Their primary method of survival was to try not to do anything to irritate the offending parent. Consequently, the offenders spent most of their childhood in a state of terror; never knowing what would trigger a violent reaction from the offending parent.

After the initial discussion of the abuse cycle, the students wanted to learn how to establish a relationship with their children based on rewarding appropriate behavior. Several books were purchased and placed in the library that taught methods of modifying behavior that did not include physical punishment. The students were fascinated with the use of time-out as a way to control bad behavior and how a simple reward system can be implemented to improve behavior.

In the construct that explored the use of corporal punishment the intervention group was the only group to show positive gains between the administrations of the pretest and post test. Few of the offender mothers have ever given much thought as to how to raise a child. Often, the ability to procreate is all it took to become a parent. After participating in the parenting intervention the offender mothers expressed their desire to replace the conventional method of discipline with more difficult methods of changing behavior. For the intervention students learning how to replace a perceived negative behavior on the part of their children with a positive behavior, without using corporal punishment, is challenging.

Construct Four. Parent-Child Role-Reversal: High scores in the parent-child role-reversal often indicate the ability to understand and accept that the needs of the children are different from those of the parent. People who score high on this construct understand that they are responsible for meeting their own needs rather than depending on their children to meet their needs. High scoring parents in this construct find their peers more appropriate for helping them meet their social, physical, emotional, and sexual needs. A clear understanding of the role of parent and child is apparent. Children are permitted to be children rather than pseudo adults and caregivers to adults. Appropriate role clarification is an essential ingredient to effective parent-child nurturing.

Low scores in the construct of parent-child role-reversal imply children are perceived as objects for adult gratification. In essence children exist to meet the needs of their caregivers. These needs may be social, emotional, or physical. These relationships reach an extreme, when companionship, love, affection, and a sense of being wanted become sexual. Children are only valued and are perceived as worthwhile when they are pleasing their caregiver. Individuals who reverse parent-child roles are usually very needy and often feel insecure and inadequate. The needs of the children are secondary to the needs of the caregiver (Bavolek & Keene, 1999).

Parenting behavior common among abusive parents is their need to reverse parent-child roles. When the parent-child role is reversed the traditional roles between a parent and child are confused so that the child adopts some of the behaviors traditionally associated with being the parent. In role-reversal, parents act like helpless, needy children looking to their own children for care and comfort.

Although the phenomenon of role-reversal is often associated with an inability to be empathically aware of the children's needs, the two behaviors are markedly different. When abusive parents fail to show an empathic awareness of their children's needs, the children are often left to care for themselves. Carried to the extreme, children are emotionally and/or physically neglected or abused. The effects of role-reversal on abused children are destructive. Assuming the role of the responsible parent, children fail to negotiate the developmental tasks that must be mastered at each stage of life. They are also hampered as they reach succeeding developmental stages, further reinforcing feelings of inadequacy in both the child and the parent. Children in a role-reversal situation have little sense of self and see themselves as existing only to meet the needs of their parents.

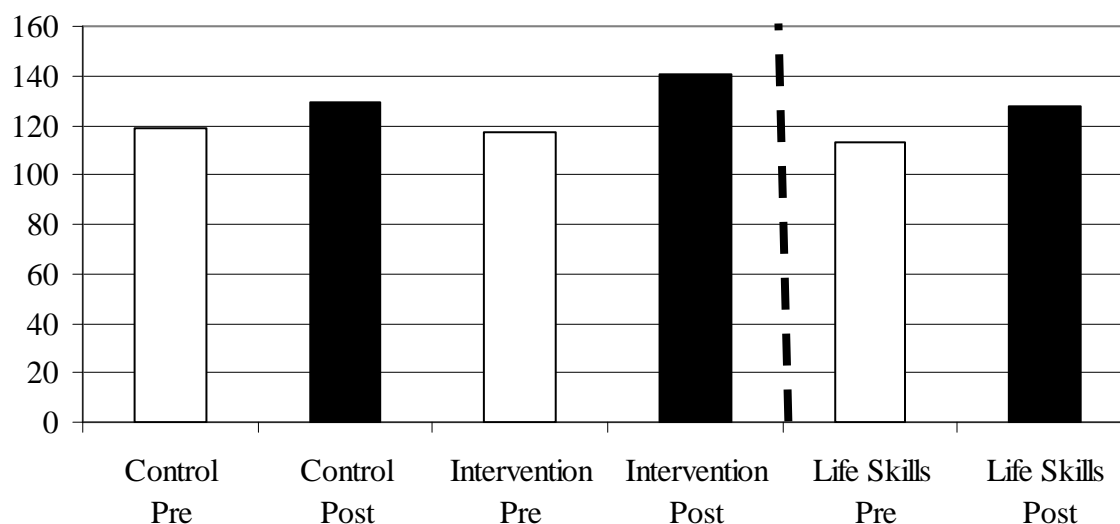


Figure 4. The figure compares the pre and post test results of Construct 1 from the control group, intervention group, and Life Skills group.

The differences between the pre and posttest scores for the intervention group are important as they suggest those who participated in the parenting class understand the issues associated with role reversal. For many of the offenders they experienced role

reversal as small children who were often encumbered with the responsibilities associated with running a household and taking care of their siblings. As adults, many feel the need to assume responsibility for everyone and everything. Often the offenders become obsessed by the need to be perfect and feel as though they are a failure if they do not attain that level of perfection. In many cases the offenders will not attempt anything that they do not feel they can do perfectly and put the responsibility of their lives on their children. Then, if their lives are not perfect, they can blame someone else for their problems. In some cases, offender mothers put the responsibility for their lives on the children, who only serve to make both the adult and children feel inadequate. The scores for participants in the Life Skills and control group saw a similar rise between the pre and posttests, but were not as dramatic.

Construct Five. Oppressing Children's Value and Independence: High scores in this construct generally mean parents place a strong value on children feeling empowered. Empowered children are given choices, have input in planning family activities, are encouraged to problem solve, brain storm solutions to problems, cooperate, have input into family rules, and are allowed to express their opinion.

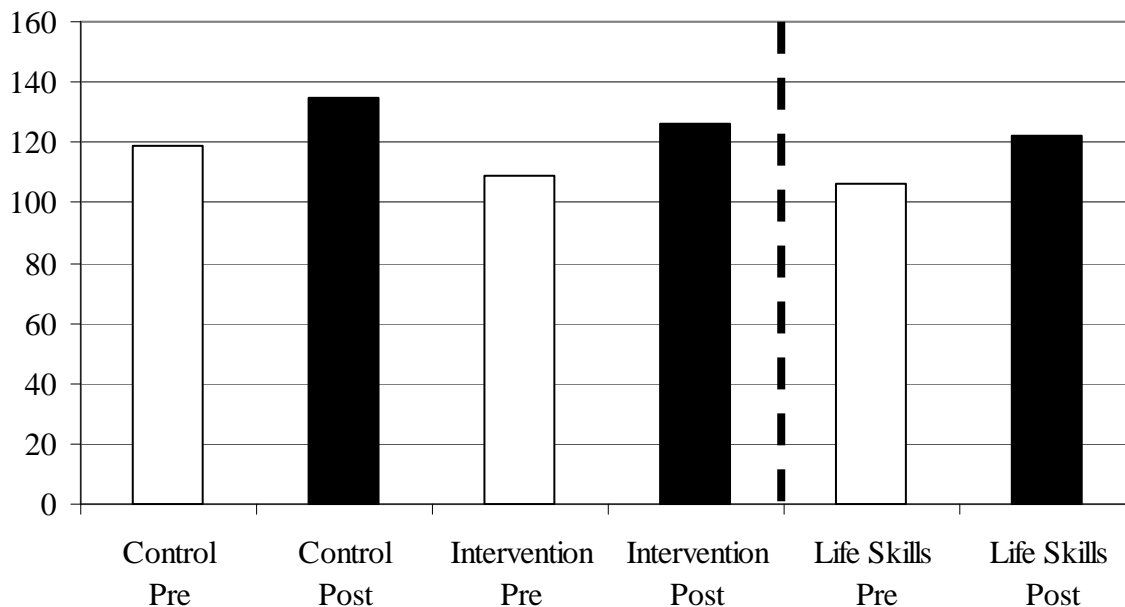


Figure 5. The figure compares the pre and post test results of Construct 5 from the control group, intervention group, and Life Skills group.

Low scores in this construct suggest parents place a strong emphasis on obedience; having children do what they are told to do, when they are told to do it. Obedient children do not challenge parental authority, do not express opinions except when asked, learn how to suppress feelings of discomfort, and generally stay out of their parent's way. Differences of opinions are viewed as back talk and disrespect. Generally, parents who demand obedience as the basis of their discipline often use threats and physical punishment to ensure the children comply with their demands.

Parental belief that a child's independence and value needs to be oppressed lacks an empathic awareness of what a child needs to be successful. The primary concern associated with this construct is that if children are permitted to use their power to explore their environment, ask questions, or challenge parental authority, they will begin acting out and become disrespectful. Parents who resort to physical punishment to control the behavior of their children often feel the need to oppress their children to keep them in

line and ensure the outward appearance of a normal, happy family. Therefore, obedience and complete compliance to parental authority is demanded. When children's value and independence are oppressed, they are not allowed to voice opinions, challenge the parent's logic or make choices. Children in this environment are told what to do and are expected to instantaneously follow directions. This demand for compliance to parental authority has a detrimental effect on the child:

1. **Powerlessness:** Children who live in a family structure that seeks to control every aspect of the children's behavior are expected to obey their parents without question. When independence is not fostered in children, the feeling of dependence becomes a dominant personality trait. Young children who are denied the opportunity to explore their world never learn about cause and effect, the relationships between concepts, or the laws of logic and nature. Young children who are never allowed to say "no" never learn how to establish boundaries or develop their sense of personal power; both of which are necessary for success in life.
2. **Inadequacy:** Children who are not allowed to make their own decisions perceive themselves as inadequate and less than capable. In their attempt to control their children. Parents teach that power is equal to control and the more power you have the more control you exert on others. By demanding obedience, parents model that power is something to be used on others to get them to do what you want. Excessive dependence and a sense of personal inadequacy are common traits of oppressed children.

3. **Rebelliousness:** History teaches that the oppressed will rise up to be recognized. The human spirit cannot be denied. Power struggles, acting out behavior and disobedience are all common behaviors resulting from years of being oppressed by parental rule.
4. **Compliance:** Doing only what one is told to do often teaches children to comply without hesitation. Children who have been raised to be obedient to authority lose their ability to withstand peer pressure. Children that would have normally been able to withstand the pressure to break the law often find themselves going along with the group because of the children's belief that they must comply to the demands made by the group.
5. **Followers:** Parents who demand unquestioned obedience from their children ultimately oppress their children's value and independence which has long lasting, devastating consequences. Adults who have been raised under this type of oppressive environment are unable to make wise choices, take initiative, or provide the leadership critical to being a nurturing parenting.

Multivariate Analysis of Variance

Another analysis of the data was a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA). For these data the numerical values collected for all three groups were the sample set used to generate a test of within-subjects contrast in each of the five constructs. The sample set for Form A and sample set for Form B were compared, and the results suggested that the data were significant to the 0.05 level or higher with the exception of the corporal punishment construct. The data for all five constructs were analyzed using SPSS software. SPSS is a comprehensive system for analyzing data.

When the results of a set of statistics are significant it means that there is an observed relationship between variables or there is a lack of difference which did not occur by pure chance. Using less technical terms, one could say that the statistical significance of a result tells us something about the degree to which the result is true. When the results are statistically significant there is a strong probability that the experiment could be replicated with similar results.

Construct One: Expectations results of the data from this construct show a very high statistical significance to the .001 level which indicates the probability of this result happening by random chance is about one tenth of one percent (see Figure 6).

Construct Two: Empathy results show a high statistical significance to the .01 level which indicates the probability of this result happening by random chance is less than 1 in 100 (see Figure 7).

Construct Three: Corporal Punishment results show less significance statistically (see Figure 8). One explanation for the lack of significance in the corporal punishment construct can be illustrated by Figure 3. The figure indicates that participants in the control group and Life Skills showed negative growth between administrations of Form A and Form B while participants of the parenting intervention show positive results between administrations.

This result seems to imply that, while there was no statistical significance, there may be a practical significance to the results found in the corporal punishment construct. It appears that those who were in the control group and Life Skills classes continue to hold to the belief that the use of corporal punishment should be the primary method of controlling the behavior of their children. However, those who participated in the

parenting intervention group appear to have accepted the idea that there are ways to manage their children's behavior other than physical violence.

The resulting lack of significance in the corporal punishment construct should not be surprising since the majority of statistical data between Form A and Form B were in the negative numbers rather than expressing positive growth on the part of the control group or Life Skills students.

Construct Four: Parent-child role-reversal results show a high statistical significance which indicates that the probability of this result happening by random chance is less than one in a 1000 (see Figure 9).

Construct Five: Oppressing Children's Power results show a statistical significance which indicates the probability of this result happening by random chance to be better than 1 in 20 (see Figure 10).

Source	Expectations	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Expectations	Linear	15.156	1	15.156	11.610	.001	.127
Expectations * Group	Linear	5.689	2	2.844	2.179	.120	.052
Error(Expectations)	Linear	104.432	80	1.305			

Figure 6. Expectations. Tests of within-subjects contrasts.

Source	Empathy	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Empathy	Linear	13.133	1	13.133	5.883	.018	.069
Empathy * Group	Linear	10.767	2	5.383	2.412	.096	.057
Error(Empathy)	Linear	178.570	80	2.232			

Figure 7. Empathy. Tests of within-subjects contrasts.

Source	Corporal Punishment	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corporal Punishment	Linear	.189	1	.189	.199	.657	.002
Corporal Punishment * Group	Linear	.605	2	.303	.320	.727	.008
Error(Corporal Punishment)	Linear	75.744	80	.947			

Figure 8. Corporal Punishment. Tests of within-subjects contrasts.

Source	Reversing Roles	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
ReversingRoles	Linear	14.157	1	14.157	9.968	.002	.111
ReversingRoles * Group	Linear	1.422	2	.711	.501	.608	.012
Error(ReversingRoles)	Linear	113.614	80	1.420			

Figure 9. Reversing Roles. Tests of within-subjects contrasts.

Source	Oppressing Children	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Oppressing Children	Linear	14.497	1	14.497	4.233	.043	.050
Oppressing Children * Group	Linear	.044	2	.022	.006	.994	.000
Error(Oppressing Children)	Linear	273.992	80	3.425			

Figure10. Oppressing Children's Value; Tests of Within-Subjects Contrasts.

Many of the lessons taught in the intervention class helped the offender mothers understand the reason they have struggled at being parents to their children. As one of the participants put it, "You can't give what you don't have." Her poignant comment was an

observation on the parenting she received as a child. Now, as an adult, she does not have the skills she needs to parent her children because she did not see the role of parent modeled by her parents.

After analyzing the data, it appears that students who participated in the intervention class learned that the use of discipline, rather than punishment is a more caring way to help a child learn self control. Discipline involves clearly communicating limits and expectations in a fair and consistent manner. On the other hand, punishment tends to be a reactive way to control children. They learned that disciplining a child is not punishing him or her for stepping out of line, but teaching the child the way he ought to go.

Research Question Two

Will parenting classes taught to incarcerated mothers change their perceptions of their roles as mothers to their children?

Perception of Their Roles as Mothers

Family environment can be a strong source of support for children as they develop their independence and self control. A healthy family atmosphere provides close relationships, encourages communication, and models positive behaviors. However, if family life is problematic and the environment is filled with troubling emotions and behaviors, the support system within the family can lack the substance needed to nurture the children and help them mature into emotionally secure adults.

Much of the research on how parents perceive their roles in the lives of their children has to do with parenting styles. Early parenting research, conducted by Baumrind (1991) divided parents into three groups of parenting styles:

- Authoritarian
- Permissive
- Authoritative.

This demarcation of parenting styles is frequently the foundation for parenting education programs and a study of parenting perceptions could draw from the three divisions as a way of focusing on how female offenders perceive themselves as they provide mothering to their children.

An authoritarian parent may best be characterized by frequently giving orders to their children. The style is perceived as harsh and punitive. Often children who are reared in the manner learn to conform to authority based on fear. Children raised in this type of environment learn to act without question which frequently inhibits the confidence needed to think and act for themselves. An authoritarian parent would not be interested in understanding their child's perspective of matters that concern the family.

For this study, the type of permissive parenting style is characterized by giving in to the child's demands. This parenting style is also associated with a lack of clear, firm boundaries and inconsistent discipline. Children, who experience this parenting style, are frequently pampered and often come to develop a sense of entitlement in the world. Conversely, they may develop a sense of inadequacy as a result of their parents frequently doing things for them that they were capable of doing for themselves. Opposite to the authoritarian style, a permissive parent would only be interested in their child's perspective of matters concerning the family and dismiss their own feelings.

Many of the participants indicated that their lives were extremely chaotic prior to being arrested. Raising children was not a priority. Drugs, alcohol, and illegal activities

created a situation where their lives were spiraling downward and subsequently their children were often in danger, too. Little thought was given to the situation in which they found themselves, as the pursuit of the next “high” was the focus of their attention.

After being arrested and put in prison the offenders have the opportunity to get their lives back into a state of equilibrium. At that point the offenders begin to realize how much damage their behavior inflicted on their children. Their desire to participate in the class indicates their readiness to put aside their selfishness and take into consideration the needs of their children. They also realize they have few parenting skills to offer and need a class that will allow them to step back into that role.

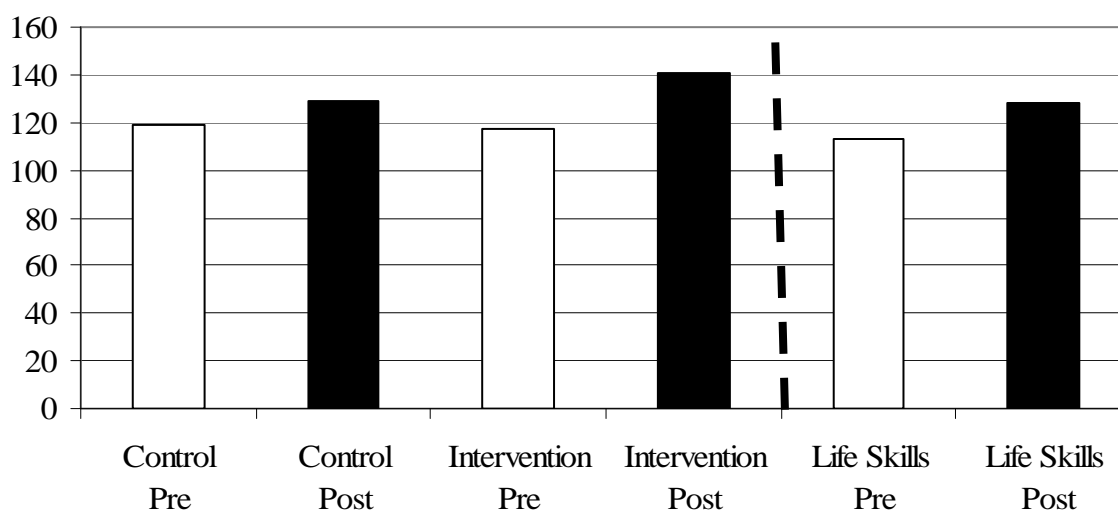


Figure 11. The figure compares the pre and post test results of Construct 1 from the control group, intervention group, and Life Skills group.

Figure 11 indicates that the offenders who participated in the class show an increase in scores between the administrations of Form A and Form B on the AAPI-2 in the area of family roles. Gains in that construct indicate that the offenders are beginning to recognize the effect of their chaotic life had on their children. Prior to incarceration, the offenders’ lives were out of control and their children often had to be overly

responsible for their siblings, and in many cases, the oldest female child had to take on the role of parent to her parent. The offenders' children had to remind their parents to buy food, pay bills, wake up in time to drive the children to school, and perform other responsibilities commonly associated with appropriate parenting.

The female offenders' perception of their parenting skills prior to coming to prison was that they were bad mothers. Offenders who participated in the parenting intervention told of situations where they had endangered the lives of their children by driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs with their children in the car. They told of how they would leave their children in the other room and take their drugs to the bathroom, stuff a towel under the door, and smoke crack cocaine in the house. Others told of how they neglected and abused their children. One told of the accidental death of a child due to her negligence.

Prior to coming to prison the offenders more closely related to the rejecting-neglecting parenting style and perceived themselves as negligent parents. Their children were often unsupervised and had to "fend" for themselves. In extreme cases the children and parents reversed roles, and the mother became overly dependent on her child to take care of siblings, make arrangements for the siblings, and call into work for the parent to let them know she was too "sick" to come to work.

The classroom experience offered lessons intended to help the offenders delineate their current role of parent from roles they held prior to coming to prison. Lesson topics included:

- Discipline vs. punishment
- Empathy and empowerment

- Events that trigger inappropriate behavior on the part of the adult
- Behavior management skills
- Imparting values
- Praise and encouragement.

This type of lesson structure offers the offenders a model to use with their children while incarcerated and after the offenders are released to go home.

During the final session with the offenders who participated in the parenting class the participants were offered the opportunity to discuss their current perception of themselves. Their comments suggested that the class had given them a new way of looking at how they raise their children. Many expressed that they had been waiting to get out of prison to begin trying to develop a relationship with their children. They said that the class offered them instruction in appropriate ways to establish realistic limits and consequences for their children and how to raise their children to have a positive sense of themselves. Participation in the class allowed the offender mothers to feel as though their own efforts could make a difference in the lives of their children right now as well as later.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Each offender mother who participated in this research longs for the day when she completes her sentence and is released back into society. An inordinate amount of the time the offenders are incarcerated is spent ensuring they complete all the TDCJ requirements for parole in order to be eligible to leave prison and put this experience behind them. With a nationwide recidivism rate of 60% the odds are against the offenders staying out of prison, but each believes she will be one of the few who will not come back. They also dream of being reunited with their children and want to somehow make up for lost time.

In the years prior to being incarcerated, many of the offenders neglected or rejected their children. Now, many of the offender mothers are frightened at the prospect of going back to their role as parent to their children. They are apprehensive about their ability to perform that role and do not want to fall back into the ineffective parenting practices of the past. In an effort to address those concerns the offender mothers requested that a parenting class be developed and taught on the facility.

The initial idea to conduct research with the offenders to see if this class could be a model for similar programs that could be offered in female prisons all over the state

began with a request on the part of the female offenders. On the surface it seemed to be a forgone conclusion that teaching a parenting class to offender mothers would not only benefit the offenders but their children as well. Two questions guided the research:

- Question One: Will parenting classes taught to incarcerated mothers improve their understanding of how expectations, empathy, corporal punishment, role responsibilities, and development of children's value and independence relate to effective parenting?
- Question Two: Will parenting classes taught to incarcerated mothers change their perceptions of their roles as mothers to their children?

These questions not only guided the research, they helped narrow the scope of the study. The curriculum and the evaluation instrument were chosen to help evaluate and compare these areas of understanding. However, once the research was concluded and the data analyzed, the results indicate that the next time this class is conducted there are several things that can be done to improve the quality of services offered to the offenders. In particular, the class should be held twice a week for sixteen weeks for a total of 64 hours. This increase in the number of hours would allow for the offenders to explore in greater detail their role as mothers to their children. In addition, the Rainbow Days curriculum would be a more effective program if the offenders were encouraged to open up and participate in the discussions from the very first day of class. While the results derived from the AAPI-2 were encouraging, because the evaluation instrument was a self-report, the results might have been affected by a desire on the part of the offenders to give socially acceptable answers rather than truthful ones.

Merriam (2001) indicates that adults will commit to learning when the goals and objectives are considered realistic and important to them. While offender mothers recognize the need to fully participate in the parenting classes their egos are fragile. Often their fear of being judged harshly by their peers or offering too much information get in the way of participation. Many have come to the belief that their children have been so adversely affected by the parents' behavior that nothing can be done to restore the parent-child relationship. Nonetheless, there is the hope that attending a parenting class will help them overcome their fear and give them the courage to make the changes necessary to be an effective parent.

The task of effective parenting is difficult and a great deal of importance is placed on the family atmosphere in relation to optimal child development (Gfroerer, Kern & Curlette, 2004). In an effective family atmosphere each child needs to feel a sense of belonging and connection, which in turn promotes a greater sense of well-being. This emphasis on belonging can be measured in terms of one's social interest, willingness to participate in the give and take of life, and cooperate with others and be concerned about their welfare (Dinkmeyer, McKay & Dinkmeyer, 2000). Research has shown the effectiveness of parent education study groups aimed to teach parents discipline strategies (Burnett, 1988; Moore & Dean-Zubritsky, 1975; Mullis, 1999).

While we were not able to conclude from the data that the parenting class was able to provide the learning experiences that would improve the offenders' understanding in all five of the constructs, it is important to note that three of the five constructs did indicate a positive response from the offenders. The two areas that did not indicate as positive a result as anticipated were: expectations and empathy. These results give rise to

the question of whether we may have been asking too much from the curriculum when we attempted to address five complex concepts in such a short period of time. It has been noted elsewhere in this paper that the pretest scores were so high that it was difficult for the offenders to show improvement on the posttest. It should also be noted that the offenders were most responsive to lessons that focused on helping their children manage their behavior and there is statistical evidence to support that claim. Other areas that indicate a positive reaction from the offenders were role responsibilities and the development of children's value and independence. Role responsibilities play an important part in answering the second question in this study. It is important to note that the AAPI-2 does not predict future behavior. It does indicate positive change in the offender mothers' perception of themselves as mothers to their children between the administrations of Form A and Form B of the AAPI-2.

Feed-back from the female offenders indicates that they would appreciate a longer class and one that includes more time for discussion of the topics. The class that was part of this research had a specific curriculum that was followed as closely as possible in order to maintain the empirical cleanliness of the program. The students did have the opportunity to participate in open discussions, but it took several class sessions before the group felt secure enough to open up and share their stories with their peers. The data suggests that the class may have been too confined by the curriculum which could have stifled additional discussion on the part of the offenders.

It is worthwhile to include in this discussion an explanation of the attempt to compare the parenting class with the Life Skills class. When this research was proposed the researcher felt compelled to include a comparison of the two programs. The Life

Skills program has been a mainstay of TDCJ programming and is one of the quality programs offered to the offenders. If the parenting class were able to demonstrate results equal to those of the Life Skills class it would offer additional evidence to TDCJ that a parenting program would be a positive addition to their programming. After reviewing the data it was concluded that the Life Skills and parenting intervention classes were two very different programs and comparisons between the two programs would be difficult. For that reason a dark vertical dotted line was placed between the Life Skills and parenting intervention data.

Life Skills Curriculum

Offered here is an in-depth analysis of the two programs that were a part of the study. The Texas Department of Criminal Justice requires that all TDCJ facilities offer the CHANGES (Changing Habits and Achieving New Goals to Empower Success) curriculum (referred to on the facility where this research was conducted as Life Skills) to any offender who is within two years of their projected release date. Some offenders are placed in the class early because they have been able to convince the parole board that they are good candidates for early release. While the parole board investigates the possibility of early release, the offenders can be ordered into the Life Skills class to accelerate their rehabilitation efforts.

Research indicates that the first 90 days after release from prison is the time when offenders are most likely to re-offend and return to the criminal justice system. The Life Skills curriculum is designed around the premise that the first 90 days after the offenders are released from prison will be the most challenging 90 days of their life. The vast majority of those released from prison return to the very neighborhood in which they

lived prior to being arrested and sentenced to prison. Soon they will be walking among the same people who, in the past, might have encouraged their illegal activities, supplied them with drugs or alcohol, recruited them into gangs, and/or fueled their anger toward society.

It is necessary for offenders who are on the verge of leaving prison to develop a plan for those first 90 days after their release. The plan should include how they will handle encounters with old friends who invite them to celebrate their release from prison with drugs or alcohol. They also need to think about how they will reintegrate back into the family after being absent for such a long time.

Additional issues addressed by the Life Skills curriculum include transportation, appropriate behaviors when dealing with their parole officer, finding mentors, staying off drugs, and assuming responsibility for their children. However, the highest priority for the newly released offender will be securing employment.

The Life Skills class is taught by an experienced teacher who has been a part of the faculty since the prison opened in 1993. Her teaching style relies on an open discussion led by the students concerning the topic of the day. Students are encouraged to share their fears, concerns, worries, and experiences. The teacher brings a wealth of knowledge to the classroom and is using a curriculum designed to be flexible enough to encompass the changes in society that have occurred while the students have been incarcerated. Her respect for the students and openness to any topic of discussion allows the students to drop their guard and engage in frank discussions about their own painful past and the horrors to which many have been subjected.

The aim of the curriculum is to help the offenders face the reality that their past cannot be changed but the future is in their hands. The students are offered lessons on the process of becoming capable adults. Capable adults practice letting go of their wounded past and they grapple with how to forgive those who have wronged them. The students begin to understand that being in prison is just one part of their life story; it does not have to define them as human beings. The curriculum takes a holistic approach to learning and does not shy away from difficult issues that affect people on an emotional, physical, and spiritual level.

Students who participate in the class receive motherly advice from the teacher and over the course of the class, develop relationships that emulate a healthy home life. The teacher refers to her students by the nickname “Ladybugs” and bestows on her charges wise sayings by which one should live. Her constant encouragement gives the students a glimpse into what they can become if they believe in themselves. The teacher’s personal stories about her own childhood, at first glance, appear to be presented for the amusement of the class all the while teaching some of the basic principles of maturity, economics, and respect. The teacher does not hesitate to discuss the benefits of having a spiritual life and devotes several sessions to assisting the students as they learn to rely on their Higher Power. She also points them toward the religious programming and 12-Step programs available on the facility. During the 180 hours the students spend in the Life Skills class, they have the time to reflect on the lifestyle that brought about their arrest and subsequent incarceration. As they participate in the class, it is hoped that they will begin to embrace new ways of thinking and make positive changes that will allow them to live within the rules set down by our society.

For the purposes of this research the Life Skills students received instruction from the section of the curriculum entitled interpersonal relationships. This section of the Life Skills curriculum was chosen because it was most closely aligned with the topics taught in the intervention class on parenting. The lessons taught in the Life Skills class during that section were:

1. Factors affecting interpersonal relationships: These class sessions focus on identifying behaviors that contribute to the development and maintenance of positive personal relationships. The class explores the diverse meanings of the word *family* and the impact of culture on the concept of family.
2. Defining family: In this section the students attempt to define “family” and acknowledge the changes in the current structure of the family. The students realize that healthy families support each other, hold each other accountable, and celebrate the accomplishments of each member of the family.
3. Responsible family life: The students study the responsibilities associated with living in a family. The students gain knowledge of three types of parenting styles, methods of supporting the family, appropriate methods of discipline, family responsibilities and the extended/blended family are part of the discussion found in this section.
4. Parental responsibilities: The class is given the opportunity to investigate the many victories and pitfalls associated with guiding their children to adulthood. Topics include legal and moral responsibilities of the parent, physical development of the child, health and safety issues, intellectual development, and financial responsibilities.

5. Stages of child development: Topics in this series of lessons include pregnancy, health services, children's health, human development, developing your child's self-esteem, and how to relate to their children.
6. Domestic violence: Spousal abuse: Topics include recognizing the characteristics of an abuser and understanding the cycle of spousal abuse. The class covers violence prevention, myths and realities of battering, how to access help for the abuser as well as the abused, and the relationship between assertiveness and ending the abuse.
7. Domestic violence: Elder abuse: The class analyzes why adults are abused, indications of abuse, physical neglect, emotional abuse, financial abuse, surrogate abuse, and abuse by a caretaker.
8. Domestic violence: Child abuse: The class discusses the four types of child abuse. They are apprised of the legal aspects of abuse and neglect. The class studies the myths and realities of child abuse, signs of physical abuse, characteristics of abusive parents, neglect, sexual abuse, and ways to determine the difference between discipline and abuse. They also learn how to prevent such abuse and how abusive situations affect children later in life, as adults (Bradford, 2005).

Expectations of the Life Skills Instructor

Extensive interviews with the instructor of the Life Skills class indicate that her expectations for her students are for them to use the time they are incarcerated to slow down and assess the direction their lives are taking. One of the things she teaches her students is, "The definition of insanity is doing the same thing the same way and

expecting different results.” For many of the offenders their lives are characterized by experiencing extreme difficulty conforming, no matter the system of which they are a part. From their earliest days in school they stood in the corner, sat out at recess, were sent to in-school suspension, or assigned to the alternative campus in hopes that they will learn to conform to the rules. Once they left the school system they became part of the juvenile justice system and were ordered to boot camp, wore an ankle monitor, or were assigned to a Texas Youth Commission facility. After “aging out” of that system they found themselves in the adult criminal justice system and eventually to the prison where this research was conducted.

The Life Skills instructor believes that her students are capable of change. However, the changes required of the students strike at deeply ingrained thinking patterns. For that reason, the instructor attempts to create an environment where her students can explore their thinking patterns without fear of ridicule. The student-centered approach used by the teacher allows individuals to reveal their lives through poetry, music, art, relating an incident from their past, or sharing a portion of a letter from home. The length of the class allows the students to reveal their lives at their own pace since many of them have difficulty believing that the confidentiality measures taken by the teacher are sufficient. Once the students are convinced that they can take a risk in the class they open up and share with each other.

Effects of the Life Skills Class

Students who participate in the Life Skills classes learn how to be competent adults. The offender studies her life pathway in order to see herself as a whole person. They believe they are capable of re-defining themselves. The students look for personal

characteristics that will allow them to exhibit outstanding rather than average performance in a given job, role, organization, or culture. As competent adults the students leave the class having developed an understanding of the challenges that lay ahead of them and feel they have the skills to face them, including being mothers to their children.

Parenting Intervention Program

The curriculum used in the intervention is The Parent Connection provided by Rainbow Days, Inc. The curriculum is designed to help the parents focus their attention on the needs of their children. The foundation of the curriculum is for parents to learn how to surround their children with a protective buffer that allows the children to rebound successfully in the face of adversity and misfortune. Having that protective buffer allows the children to develop self discipline, resistance to negative messages, and the ability to separate from inappropriate peer pressure. In addition the curriculum discusses ways to teach resourcefulness, initiative, planning skills, and how to ask for and receive help. With the proper application of the program by the parents, children see their lives as having a purpose and can look forward to a bright future. Children who have this protective buffer have the tools necessary for them to live life with enthusiasm, hopefulness, aspirations, faith, and persistence.

The class was taught three times a week for twelve sessions that included sessions held during the Christmas holiday. The administration of the facility was pleased that the research was conducted during the holiday period. According to the correctional officers, Christmas is a time when the students need a diversion to help them endure the loneliness experienced during what is considered a family holiday. As an added bonus, most of the

other programs were suspended during the holiday which allowed the research to go on without having to contend with any of the other volunteer programs for a time slot or classroom space.

The researcher conducted the classes and most of the classes were in the form of lecture. Students were provided copies of the lesson outline, handouts, projects the mothers could do with their children, and other material associated with good parenting practices. In order to make the classes more meaningful to the students, many of the outside projects could be done by mail or during visitations.

Due to the nature of their offences, many of those who participated in the class were under court order to attend parenting classes. An unfortunate by-product of applying to the parenting class was the implication that the offender mothers did not possess the skills necessary to be an effective parent. Some even expressed the feeling of having failed as a parent. Most came into the class with expectations that the instructor would give them a step by step program that would magically make them good mothers with happy children. Questions during the class were often directed toward how the mother could manage the misbehavior of their children or how to deal with the current caregivers who were not (in the offender's opinion) raising the children correctly. A great deal of effort went into structuring the lessons in order to remain focused on the needs of the children rather than the needs of the mother. Initially there was a lot of dissent from the students, as they wanted to discuss behavior modification techniques rather than the character building lessons from the curriculum. It took at least three sessions before the students felt comfortable enough to risk opening up and joining in the discussion. Prior to that, the students took notes and listened to the instructor.

Expectations of the Intervention Instructor

The instructor has years of experience in the field of corrections and has taught or been an administrator in the education program of several correctional institutions. In the year 2000 he attended a GED graduation ceremony with the female offenders on the facility where this research was conducted. While waiting for the program to begin he was engaged in a conversation with some of the graduating offenders. During the course of the conversation one of the offenders related that she wished she could return to her sixth grade years. When asked why, the offender said that was when she had started using drugs and alcohol, and if she could go back to that time knowing what she knows now, she would have had a very different life. Stunned that someone between the age of 10 and 12 would be involved in dangerous as well as illegal activities he asked the offender for clarification. The story she related included having been sexually molested by her father for many years and that she felt so dirty and so ashamed that the first time she did drugs was the first time she had ever felt free of the pain and continued to use drugs to mask the pain. Later, she became addicted to the drugs and was forced to turn to prostitution to pay for her habit. Now, as an adult she faced the fear that her children would follow in her footsteps and wind up in prison, just like their mother. That conversation had a profound effect on the instructor and he became devoted to studying the issues female offenders bring with them to prison and what can be done to prevent the children of offenders from coming to prison.

Effects of the Intervention Class

Much of the class was theoretical, in that there was limited opportunity for the mothers to practice any of the concepts with their children. However, the participants

were encouraged to arrange at least one visitation with their children during the class. Because of the nature of living in a secure community even when a visit could be arranged there were severe constraints as to how and when those visits could be held.

Typically, visitation is offered to the family of the offender on either Saturday or Sunday and lasts for no more than two hours at a time. Visitation is held in a large room filled with plastic tables and chairs. Each offender is required to create a visitation list consisting of any potential visitors. That list gives the facility the name and address of each person who might come to the facility to visit the offender. Each visitor must register before being allowed to enter the visitation area and cross-referenced with the offender's visitation list.

The facility has an extensive list of rules and a dress code for anyone desiring to visit an offender and violations of the rules or dress code will be cause for the facility to suspend the privilege. When the family is allowed into the visitation area the rooms at the facility where this research was conducted are large, stark and unadorned. Unlike many prisons, all of the offenders at this prison can sit at a table with their families rather than talk through a hole in the window or use a telephone system. Up to thirty different family groups can be present in the visitation area at any one time. The room is large enough to have an echo, but children are expected to be quiet; and if they are not kept under control, the visit will be suspended.

The mothers who were able to arrange a visit with their children related that the visit held during the course of the class was different from those of past visits. The students had been challenged to focus their attention on the needs of their children during the visit. Many came back to the class relating stories about having, for the first time,

truly communicated with their children. Some related stories of the children being afraid to discuss their feelings or being so out of touch with their feelings that they were not able to effectively communicate them. Others told of children unleashing some deep resentments and frustration. One student told how, after offering her 13-year-old daughter the opportunity to speak, the daughter angrily rose up out of her chair and said, "You aren't my mother!" Then pointing to her grandmother the daughter said, "She has been more of a mother to me than you." Continuing, she said, "You get out of prison, get back on drugs and go back to prison. What kind of a mother is that?" Using the lessons from the class, the mother was able to defuse the situation and use the honest statements of the child as a springboard into a conversation that opened doors to healing.

As the students returned from visits with their children they were inspired to invest in their children's future. They practiced creating a bond with their children based on openness and being truly present when the children came for a visit. Many began to understand that helping their children develop character was a difficult but rewarding experience, one they were willing to attempt. Some had to endure hearing the painful truth from their children. Students in the intervention class were equipped to turn the conversation into an experience that brought healing between the mother and her children. From those experiences the students in the class were able to grow as parents, ready to encourage their children to be optimistic, caring, and prepared to fully participate in life.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Merely having the ability to procreate does not ensure the ability to parent. Several offenders admitted to being 13 years of age when they had their first child and

the average age for first time mothers in the project was slightly over the age of 17. Being young and having the responsibility of a newborn child is overwhelming. Typically, the father of the baby is not available to support and assist with the child. The parents of the young mother find themselves supporting her by caring for their grandchild and incurring much of the additional expense associated with a newborn child. In most cases, the parents are willing to help their daughter and her child, but there are expectations that the young mother will continue going to school, maintain a part time job and take her turn caring for her baby. Between trying to work and raising a baby without support from the baby's father the young mother often feels so beleaguered that dropping out of school becomes a necessity. Her decision to drop out of school usually leads to low paying jobs, resulting in the constant frustration of being more dependent on her parents and lacking the money necessary to become self supporting. Most of the time young mothers have accepted the responsibility of raising their children without turning to criminal activity. However, this story repeats itself among the female offenders as the beginnings of their downward spirals into the world of drugs, criminal behavior, and eventual imprisonment.

Having a child often creates additional problems for the young mother. While she loves her child, the young mother comes into the situation unprepared for such a difficult task. With few parenting skills of her own and even fewer positive role models the young mother must use whatever parenting skills she has developed along with trial and error to create a relationship with her children. In addition, it is difficult for the young mother to find time to be with her peers and many feel as though all she does is go to work and come home to take care of her baby. They point out the additional difficulty of finding a suitable husband who would be willing to assume the responsibility of helping them raise

their children. Nowhere in this unfortunate situation does there seem to be time for the young mother to locate and attend a class that will help her be a better parent.

Most of the offender mothers come to prison carrying the additional guilt of having disappointed her children along with the concern for their welfare while under the supervision of someone else. It is crucial that while the offender mother is incarcerated and has the time to improve her parenting skills. The opportunity to develop appropriate parenting skills needs to be offered to her through additional programming.

It is the observation of this writer that male and female offenders serve prison time differently. Male offenders tend to perform whatever job they are given, keep to themselves, watch sports on television, and work out in the gym. Female offenders are social and gather together in pseudo-families. They share their deepest emotions and together they suffer the indignities of being incarcerated. They discuss the abuses they suffered as children, read each other's mail, laugh together, cry together, and make deep lasting friendships with other incarcerated females. In the same way males and females serve prison time differently, they experience education differently.

Currently, only one fifth of the prison population is female. Most curriculum are developed for male offenders and are sent over to the female prisons with the request that those who present the curriculum do whatever is necessary to make the curriculum relevant for the female offenders. As female incarceration rates have increased over the past ten years, the need to develop curriculum sensitive the needs of female offenders is becoming apparent.

This research, conducted with female offenders highlights the need for curriculum that will allow offender mothers to leave prison and assume the role of the primary

caretaker of their children. The parenting education class taught to the female offenders revealed a need for additional programming designed specifically for offender mothers. After living in a home twisted by abuse, drugs, crime, and poverty the offender mothers do not feel competent to raise emotionally healthy children. Many dread leaving prison and having to go back and face their children. During the years leading up to their incarceration, they were more interested in their next high, causing them to be distant and uninvolved in the lives of their children. For the years they have been incarcerated the offender mothers have been out of touch with the day to day experiences of their children.

Without a strong understanding of the skills necessary to raise their children, the female offenders may leave prison with unreasonable expectations. Their children might attempt to manipulate them by making them feel guilty or reject any attempts on the mothers' part to bring discipline into the home. In an effort to make up for lost time the female offenders might be too permissive with their children. They may further exacerbate the situation by abruptly taking back the responsibility of raising the children from the current caregivers. Parenting classes would give the female offenders the opportunity to reflect on the realities that await them once they are released and return to their children.

Merriam (2001). In keeping with appropriate adult education principles, the classes need to include goals and objectives that are realistic and focus on what is important to the offenders, rather than formulaic or an "out of the can approach." Because it is important to the offenders that they receive credit for participating in a parenting class, it would be desirable if TDCJ were involved the development and

implementation of the parenting class. Were TDCJ involved in the development of the curriculum, they would be in a position to identify the qualifications of the instructor, establish the requirements for completion of the class and issue each offender a certificate upon completion of the class. By creating a parenting class, designed around the specific needs to offender mothers, TDCJ will be serving the needs of this population and the needs of their children.

The female population brings to prison a unique set of issues that are not typically addressed in most areas of correctional research. Female offenders have medical issues, work restrictions, and outside concerns that most male offenders do not experience. Even though the majority of the offender's children are being raised by their grandparents, there are many challenges facing the grandparents burdened with the responsibility of raising their grandchildren. While the grandparents are doing the best they can, they are older, usually on a fixed income and many experience health restrictions that make raising children difficult. The female offenders also raise concern that their teenaged children will experience a more traumatic adolescence because their peers might tease them about their mothers being in prison. However, the most overwhelming concern of the offender mothers is the fear that unless there is some intervention in the lives of their children they may one day be coming to visit their children in prison.

This research focused on five constructs found in the AAPI-2 and served as the basis for assessing the attitudes of the female offenders who participated in the study. In construct one, parental expectations, the students in the intervention group show a slight improvement between the administration of Form A and Form B. This increase suggests that the offenders recognize that they should not demand something of their children that

the children are not capable of delivering due to physical or developmental limitations.

Results from construct two, empathy, are important because the offenders who participated in the intervention show a remarkable knowledge of the need for empathy when they answered the questions in Form A and maintain a continued understanding of empathy through Form B. These data suggest that the offender mothers in the intervention group grasp the concept of empathy and have the ability to care about the needs and feelings of their children.

Results from construct three, corporal punishment, were the most validating of the five constructs. Offenders in the control group and Life Skills class expressed a decline in their scores between Form A and Form B, suggesting that offenders in the control group and Life Skills group continue to believe that corporal punishment should be the primary method of discipline. However, the offenders who participated in the intervention class seem to have a better understanding that corporal punishment is only one of many strategies used to correct and change children's behavior. The intervention group appears to have embraced the curriculum's emphasis toward teaching children how to self regulate through a system of rewarding appropriate behavior.

The effect of the fourth construct, parent-child role-reversal, clarifies many childhood memories held by the offenders who participated in the intervention class. The majority of the offenders expressed the fact that they had experienced role-reversal during their childhood, and as small children they assumed many adult responsibilities. As adults, they continue to feel an inordinate amount of responsibility for everyone and everything. After participating in the intervention the offender mothers began to

understand the problems associated with placing too much responsibility on their children.

Construct five, oppressing children's value and independence, is characterized by an attempt to project the outward appearance of a normal, happy family. When a member of the family is involved in drug and alcohol abuse, illegal activities, or other forms of abuse the entire family is affected by that behavior. Instant obedience, the inability to voice an opinion, and complete compliance are required of the children. Otherwise the parents may resort to physical punishment to control what they consider disrespectful behavior on the part of the children. The offenders who participated in the intervention learned how to empower their children and offer them opportunities to have input in family decisions.

This research suggests that a parenting class offered to offender mothers would be beneficial. The research also suggests the need for modifications to the class, in particular a broader curriculum and additional classes would have additional impact on the learning experiences of the female offenders. While the results were not as impressive as one might anticipate, they were sufficient to warrant a continuation of research in this area with respect to the suggested modifications.

Further Research

In the past female offenders have not been sentenced to serve time in prison as frequently as they are being sentenced today. Unless they were guilty of heinous crimes, females who were arrested in years past were given probation because the courts believed that they needed to be home taking care of their children. Today, that kind of leniency is not offered to females who are convicted of a crime. Sadly, this is a rare opportunity for

research to be conducted with female offenders since we now have a large enough sample to extract meaningful data.

During the course of this research, many questions came to mind that would require additional research, such as: What were the events that occurred in the lives of the offender mothers that brought them to prison? Further, can that pattern of behavior be broken in order for future generations of children to avoid coming to prison? Finally, are we currently providing the female offenders with programming that will allow them the opportunity to be rehabilitated and restored to their families as women capable of withstanding the stress of returning to society without reverting to their previous behaviors?

This research suggests that the Life Skills program does offer the general female population many of the rehabilitative services they need to be prepared to reenter society. However, it falls short of meeting the needs of offender mothers who require the additional skills necessary to be good mothers to their children. A parenting class, designed to offer those skills to offenders with children is necessary in order to give the next generation the hope of leading a life that does not include incarceration.

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APPENDIX A

LETTER OF PROPOSED PROJECT

Bob Cox

Description of the problem and Research Questions:

Prior to incarceration, many of the female offenders were so caught up in the day to day struggle to survive they felt they did not have the time to invest in learning how to be an effective parent. Now, time is one of the things they have in abundance. The research that was conducted will attempt to answer the questions:

Question One: Will parenting classes taught to incarcerated mothers improve their understanding of how expectations, empathy, corporal punishment, role responsibilities, and development of children's value and independence promote effective parenting?

Question Two: Will parenting classes taught to incarcerated mothers change their perceptions of their role as mother to their children?

Note to Participants:

The parenting class will meet twice a week for six weeks. Each participant will receive a copy of the curriculum and will be able to read each chapter in preparation for the class. The curriculum covers topics such as how to help your child "bounce back" after having been disappointed, how to help your child choose good friends and adult mentors. It also discusses in depth how to help your child avoid the pressure to use drugs and alcohol. Mr. Cox will be the instructor for this class. The company that wrote the curriculum has certified him to teach the class and he has presented it on several occasions.

Your participation in this project will consist of participating in a pre and posttest using the Adult Adolescent Parenting Inventory. To insure your confidentiality and privacy, your name will be on one page with a code number that will be used to identify you as a participant in this project. The list connecting your name to these numbers will be kept in a locked file in my faculty supervisor's office. When the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, the list will be destroyed. Your name will not be used in any report. The Texas Department of Criminal Justice will never be given any information that

would associate your name with this project. Personal information shared in class will not be discussed with anyone outside of the class.

You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. I want to use the data to benefit other mothers who may take this parenting class in the future and help the facility design even more effective programs for the female population.

By signing this letter, you are giving me permission to collect the data mentioned above and to report the results in conferences, in publications and reports. No names will ever be used.

Risks:

There are no more than minimal risks for your participation in the study. However, because you are not living with your children at this time, you may experience feelings such as sadness, guilt, anger and frustration when you talk about your situation and listen to others talk about their situations. Most of those feelings will be addressed during the class; however, if you ever feel the need to talk to someone about your feelings arrangements can be made through the medical department for personal counseling.

Benefits:

This class can help you understand yourself and others and help you relate to others in an effective and caring way. It can provide you with ideas about how to parent your children more effectively. Your participation may help other mothers in prison who may take this parenting class in the future. For completing this class, you will receive a certificate and summary of overall results.

Compensation:

There is no compensation for attendance or participation in this class.

Voluntary participation:

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Participating in this study will not have any effect on your parole status. You will not get out of prison early if you participate in this program and you will not have to stay longer if you do not participate. Nor will any other privileges that you have earned while incarcerated be negatively affected by your decision to not participate.

Right to withdraw from the study:

You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.

Whom to contact if you have a question about the study:

If you have any questions about this program or procedures for data collection, you may contact Dr. Steven Furney, Texas State University-San Marcos 601 University Drive, San Marcos, Texas 78666 and/or the Warden.

APPENDIX B

FORMS

CONSENT FORM

Dissertation Project

I, _____, have read the letter of the proposed project. I agree to participate and understand the objectives and methods outlined in the proposed project. I agree to participate under the study's terms of protections of individual privacy.

I understand that all data collected will be used strictly for analytical research and educational purposes. I give my permission for the release of these data in the public domain, within the confidentiality guidelines outlined. This includes the use of these data in written reports, graduate classes, educational conferences and ultimately a dissertation. I realize that my name will not appear in any of these reports.

I grant permission to Bob Cox, under the authority of Texas State University-San Marcos, Doctor of Philosophy in Education Program to collect data from my participation in this research. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, if so desired.

Name (Print) _____

Consent Granted (Signature) _____

Date _____

Signature of Researcher _____

Bob Cox

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FORM**CODE NUMBER _____****Please print the following information:****Name _____ Date _____****TDCJ Number _____ SID Number _____****The researcher will send you a summary of the results of this study.****Street Address _____****City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____**

To insure your confidentiality and privacy your name will only be on this page along with a code number that will be used to identify you as a participant in this project. All the information connecting your name to these numbers will be kept in a locked file in my faculty supervisor's office. When the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, the list will be destroyed. Your name will not be used in any report. The Texas Department of Criminal Justice will never be given any information that would associate your name with this project. Personal information shared in class will not be discussed with anyone outside of class.

Code Number _____

Personal Information:

Date of Birth _____ **Age** _____

Race, ethnic background _____

Current Marital status: **Never Married** **Married**
 Divorced **Widowed**

Number of Marriages _____

Highest Level of Education: **High School Graduate** **GED**
 Number of Years of College
 Highest degree awarded

If you did not graduate from high school what was the last grade attended? _____

Are you a US citizen? **Yes** **No**

What language did you speak as a child? _____

What language do you speak with your children? _____

What was your usual occupation before incarceration?

Describe the job: _____

Code Number _____

Alcohol and Drug Use:

Please describe your use of alcohol and/or drugs before incarceration.

How often did you drink? _____

What type of alcohol/drugs did you use? _____

How often did you get drunk/high? _____

Were you ever arrested for alcohol or drug use? _____

What was the outcome of that arrest? _____

Have you had treatment for your substance abuse? ____ Yes ____ No

If yes, what type of treatment? _____

Where did you get your treatment? _____

How long were you in treatment? _____

Family History:

Parents: Is your mother still living? ____ Is your father still living? ____

If your parents are divorced, how old were you at the time of their divorce? ____

Number of brothers _____ Number of Sisters _____

What was your birth order (Example, the oldest) _____

Description of your children:

How old were you when you had your first child? ____

How many boys do you have? ____

What are their ages? ____, ____, ____, ____, ____

How many girls do you have?

What are their ages? ____, ____, ____, ____, ____

Code Number _____

Arrest and Incarceration history:

How old were you when you were arrested the first time? _____

How many times have you been incarcerated? _____

What offense are you currently incarcerated for? _____

How long were you sentenced to prison for this offense? _____

Have any other family members ever been incarcerated? ____ Yes ____ No

If yes, who, no names please (example; father, mother, uncle, grandfather)?

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

VITA

Bob J. Cox, Jr., joined the U. S. Navy in 1972, near the end of the Vietnam War. It was his intention to serve his country and then utilize the GI Bill to go to college. After his GI benefits ran out he was informed that there was a special program in Texas called the Hazelwood Act, which allowed him to continue to attend college even though his funds from the GI Bill were exhausted. Utilizing these programs, he was privileged to attend college in cities all over the state of Texas and earn degrees in theology, business administration, elementary education, as well as earning his teaching credentials and principal certification.

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This thesis was typed by Bob J. Cox, Jr.