

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF FEMALE OFFENDERS  
IN OKLAHOMA: AN ANALYSIS OF HIGH RATE  
OF INCARCERATION

BY

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The present study is an attempt to find out why Oklahoma has the highest rate of female incarceration in the nation? Data of prison admissions from the year 1988 to 1992, and data from Probation and Parole termination cases from the year 1989 to 1992, and in-depth survey of 191 female inmates, were used to examine the characteristics of female offenders in Oklahoma in comparison with the national profile of women in prison, and to examine the rate of reporting, arrest and conviction both for Oklahoma and for the nation.

Nationally, the percentage increase in the female prison population was higher than the increase in the male population each year between 1980 and 1989. Although the number of male inmates had increased more than 353,000 after 1980, the rate of increase in the number of male prisoners (112%) was about half that of women (202%). At the yearend 1989 women accounted for 5.7% of the Nation's prisoners, the highest percentage since the collection of annual data began in 1926 (Department of Justice, 1991).

Oklahoma ranks first in the nation in its rate of imprisonment of women. Nationally 5.6% of prison inmates are women. Whereas women comprised 8.7% of the inmate population in Oklahoma in 1991, and 9.5% in January 1993, and almost 10% in September 1993. The actual number of women in Oklahoma prisons has quadrupled since 1980 (Women in Prison Conference, 1991, ODOC Monthly Reports; March and October, 1993). The above percentages show us the

proportion of females in the total prison population on a given day. Next we look at the annual receptions.

According to a recent reports issued by the Oklahoma Department of Corrections (March & October 1993), the percentage of female receptions reached 12.4% in January 1993, and 13.4% in September 1993. The percentage of women in parole comprised 14.2%, and in probation they comprised 23.5% of the total population of probationers (ODOC, 1993). According to the most recent report the percentages went up both in Parole (14.4%) and Probation (23.6%) in September 1993 (ODOC Monthly Report, October 1993).

Thus, both the segment of the female inmates in the total population, and the female annual admissions are increasing. Next, we observed that the rate of female admissions in Oklahoma is not only larger from the national rate of female prison admission, but the rate of annual incarceration is also continuously growing larger (see Chapter 5, Table 23). So the rate of intake of female offenders is growing larger every year in such proportions that if it is not checked or reversed, Oklahoma may have the same number of female inmates as male inmates, in a few more years.

The reasons for abnormally higher incarceration rate of female offenders in Oklahoma have not been researched, and this study attempts to look into the possible reasons. After talking to the practitioners and the scholars, we decided to look into the following:

- (1) If the Criminal Justice System is responsible for the higher rate of incarceration,
- (2) If there are certain problems in the social systems (institutions of family, marriage, work, employment) which are contributing to the higher rate of their involvement in the criminal Justice system, and the kind of crimes committed by them.

- (3) If the prevalent drug abuse is causing more female criminality, or
- (4) all of the above.

### The Statement of the Problem

Since 1988 Oklahoma is leading the nation in rate of female incarceration (Mecoy, 1991). The Oklahoma Department of Correction wanted to analyze the causes for higher incarceration of female offenders in Oklahoma. The opportunity was given to this researcher and primarily to his major advisor to study and analyze several sets of data on female offenders in Oklahoma Correctional System.\* The data sets used covered the period from 1989 to 1992, for both incarcerated female offenders (N=3636) and inmates under Parole and Probation supervision (N=6259). The analysis revealed several findings, for example, while overall the arrest rate in Oklahoma was approximately similar to the national rate, Oklahoma courts were sending far more women to prison.

Then, the researcher was interested in shedding more light on several aspects of female offenders' life and socioeconomic conditions. For this purpose the researcher had the opportunity to use the aforementioned sets of data plus in-depth questionnaire which was administered to 191 female inmates from the Oklahoma's four institutions that house female offenders. The researcher wanted to revisit the characteristics and circumstances of female criminals, by broadening the field of analyses and taking into account personal, social, and economic backgrounds. This researcher asked them questions about their circumstances, (1) before their incarceration, (2) during their incarceration, and finally (3) looked at parole (including probation) circumstances.

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\* Summaries of these studies are reported in chapter 4 and 5.

There is a limited research on the overall social and economic structures and the new trends of change that affect the life of people in society in general and women in particular. This study supplements the research on female criminality and broaden our understanding of the social and economic factors of the female offenders.

### The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is manifold:

- (1) To construct a comprehensive profile of the female offender in the Oklahoma Correctional System, both in the prison system and under parole and probation supervision.
- (2) To compare the Oklahoma women prison profile with the national profile of "women in Prison." as published by the US. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice statistics. This should assist in finding clues to high rate of female offenders' incarceration in Oklahoma.
- (3) To examine the socioeconomic situation of the female offenders which could lead to criminal life.

### Significance of the Study

The strength of this study stems from its multi-methods approach in achieving its goals. This study intended to provide a broader picture of female criminality, where both personal and social circumstances are analyzed. By this approach a better understanding of female criminality is hoped to be achieved.

Hopefully, improved knowledge will lead to better policy making in alleviating the burden of female offending populations and reduce the burden on the state and citizens in general.

### Summary and Organization of Remaining Chapters

Chapter two reviews the literature related to the condition of women in society and the impact of changes in the economic and social arena on the conditions and well-being of women in society. Chapter three discussed the data sets used, research methodology, statistical analysis and issues of reliability, validity and generalizability. Chapter four present a detailed characteristics of the three populations of inmates under study; the surveyed population (N=191), Inmate population (N=3636) and Probationers and Parolees terminated between 1989-1992, (N=6259). Chapter five reports the findings of the research, and Chapter six provides summary, conclusions, recommendations, and limitations of the study.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### 1. The Position of Women in the American Economy

This chapter, offers an overview of the main trends of change taking place in the economic and social sectors of American society during the recent decades. It is believed that personal decisions and adaptations are made in reaction to or an interaction with the surroundings environment, and a better understanding of individual circumstances require an adequate understanding of their environment. First part will present an overview of trends of change in the economic sector, followed with an overview of the conditions of women in the labor market, followed by a section on major trends of change in family formation and dissolution. Then the interaction between economic and social aspects of women's life and the resulting problems and difficulties such as poverty will be discussed. Also, this chapter presents an overview of the theoretical efforts to explain the rise in female criminality.

#### Trends of Economic Change

Research has pointed out at the main trends of change in the macro structure of the American economy, for instance, Wilson and Aponte (1985) asserted that the United States has entered a postindustrial revolution characterized by a capital-intensive restructuring of the industrial and manufacturing sector and a phenomenal growth of the service sector. Kasarda (1983) traced economic development to cities, where most of the economic development and the growth of employment occurred. But in recent



history cities experienced major changes and transformations in their role as centers of economic development and employment. Kasarda (1983:41) identified two types of changes:

first is a functional change: these cities are becoming administration, information, and higher-order service centers, rather than centers of producing and distributing material goods. Secondly, there is a demographic change: the residents are no longer predominately whites of European heritage, but are predominantly blacks, Hispanics and members of other minority groups.

According to Kasarda (1983) this change in the structure and function of large cities created serious problems, including a widening gap between urban job-opportunity structures and the skill levels of disadvantaged residents. The white population who moved to the suburbs, were partially replaced by minority groups. Down towns experienced both a decrease in the population, and a decrease in income of its residents. The job losses in urban areas have been partially replaced by newer service industries, which typically have higher educational requisites for entry. Cities no longer are the opportunity ladders for the unskilled, disadvantaged minorities. Consequently, unemployment rate of inner cities are well above the national average and are disproportionately high among educationally disadvantaged minorities, whose numbers continue to grow in urban centers.

These findings are supported by other researchers, for instance; DiPret (1993) argues that occupational distributions have shifted toward upper non-manual jobs and away from manual jobs. Simultaneously, wages have fallen in the declining manual sector, and a growing share of the work force consists of temporary workers on contract who together make up the cotangent work force.

In fact forecasts by the US Department of Labor, Women's Bureau (1992) assert that the same pattern of economic change will continue well into the twenty-first century. Approximately 25 million new jobs will be added to the economy by

2005. The report adds that the service-producing sector will continue to dominate job growth and will account for nearly 94 percent of newly created jobs. Its share of all jobs will rise from 69 percent to 73 percent in 2005. Service workers tend to have lower educational attainment and lower earnings, except for occupations such as firefighters and police officers. Women accounted for 62 percent of all service workers in 1990 and should increase their share by the year 2005 (US Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, 1992)

Hwang and Fitzpatrick (1992) anticipated that male and female workers will be limited in their choices of workplace. Although workers of both sexes were expected to prefer working as close to their residence as possible, male and female workers alike may be forced to adjust this preference as a result of the spatial distribution of "suitable jobs."

In their study of commuting patterns, Hwang and Fitzpatrick (1992) concluded that commuting differences by gender, occupation, and residence are, in part, a function of the spatial distribution of workers and sex-segregated jobs in the metropolitan labor market.

Minorities are expected to be most sufferers of this pattern of economic change. According to Kasarda (1983):

racial discrimination and insufficient low-cost housing in areas of employment growth further obstruct mobility and job acquisition by the underclass, as do deficiencies in the technical and interpersonal skills so necessary to obtain and hold jobs.

In fact Hwang and Fitzpatrick (1992) support Kasarda (1983) in that, the spatial distribution of jobs places a significant constraint on worker's commuting in addition to their Socio-economic status.

Spatial mismatch has been cited as an important factor contributing to higher central city versus suburban unemployment rates. However, Blackley (1990) argues

that this trend can be reduced when controlling for race and sex effects, improvement in the quality of labor force, and avoidance of conditions leading to female-headed families. Blackley, concluded that the spatial mismatch is supported only for the female labor force. It seems that females face more difficulties in accessing the low-skill suburban jobs, the result is high unemployment rate for females.

Blackley (1990) indicated that higher central city unemployment rates are strongly related to human capital deficiencies. The main component of human capital deficiencies to be addressed according to Blackley, is high rate of failure to complete high school, which is often accompanied by an increase in the number of female-headed families.

In sum, the major trends of change in the economic structure of society, and the concomitant changes in the structure and function of urban areas, resulted in the growth of the service-based economy and a dramatic decrease in the production sector. The new jobs are knowledge-based which require higher levels of education and training. This put minorities and women in a critical situation where they are unable to compete in the new job market and avenues to lower-entry level jobs are greatly obstructed by the disappearing production sector.

### Women in the Labor Force

Women participation in the labor force is growing rapidly. And the participation of women is increasing regardless of their marital status. Most importantly, the number of working mothers is growing in the labor force. In 1977 less than half of all children under age 18 had mothers who were employed or seeking employment. While in 1988, six out of ten children under 18 had mothers in the labor force. In march 1988 there were nearly 33 million women who had children under the age of 18. Sixty five percent of these mothers are in the labor force.

"whether in married-couple families or families maintained by single parents, approximately 34 million children had mothers who were working or seeking employment (US Department of Labor, 1989). In 1990, 53 percent of women 18 to 44 years old with infants under 1 year old were in the labor force, compared with 38 percent in 1980. For women with less than a high school education the rate in 1990 was 30 percent, not significantly different from 1980 rate of 28 percent. For women who were college graduates the rate rose sharply, from 44 percent in 1980 to 68 percent in 1990 (Department of Commerce, 1992).

While black women have increased their employment in a wide variety of professions. However, there are occupations, some of them well paying, where their employment has declined. These occupations include the following: typists; sewing machine operators; computer operators; secondary school teachers; librarians, archivists, and curators; bus drivers; duplicating, mailing, and office machine operators (US Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, 1991).

Unemployment. Marital status and unemployment have a strong relations. Figures from US Department of Labor (1989) showed that divorced mothers were more likely to be employed (75%), while in married couple families 61.9% were employed). Mothers who are less likely to be employed are those who are married with spouses absent, widowed, or have never married. Only 46.7% of these mothers were working as of march 1988.

According to the US Department of Labor (1989) mothers who are female householders have the highest unemployment rate. Thirty-six percent of the widowed were unemployed, 28 % of the single; never married, 12.9% of those married with spouse absent, and 17.7% of the divorced. Mothers in married couple families had the lowest unemployment rate of 6.8 percent in March 1988. On the other hand, Single (never married) mothers have the highest unemployment rate of all mothers.

At 22.1 percent, the unemployment rate is nearly double that of widowed mothers (11.6 %) and almost five times that of mothers in married-couple families (4.8 %).

Teenage mothers without help and motivation are less likely to be employed or to be seeking employment. In March 1988, they had an unemployment rate of 39.4 percent and slightly more than one-third (37.1%) were labor force participants. Unemployment was particularly high among black teenage mothers at 48.8 percent (US Department of Labor, 1989:5).

Women Jobs and Skills. Women will be affected the most by changes in the economy. A study by US department of Labor, Women's Bureau (1990) commented that, women, traditionally have "crowded" into a few occupations. According to the study, in 1989 the six most prevalent occupations for women were, in order of magnitude, secretaries, school teachers (excluding those teaching in colleges and universities), semi-skilled machine operators, managers and administrators, retail sales workers, bookkeepers and accounting clerks. It has been argued that women choose these occupations because there tends to be less skill obsolescence for workers who leave and reenter the labor force. It has also been argued that the educational commitment for employment in these fields is less than some others, and workers can have more time at home for other responsibilities (US Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, 1990).

Another report issued by the US Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, (1989), observed that, although more women hold management positions than at any other time, few have made the breakthrough to top-level executive positions. Estimates suggest that only 1 to 2 percent of senior executive level officials are women "women are still underrepresented in managerial occupations when compared with their overall share of the civilian labor force." Women are more likely to be managers in areas where there are already more women employed at lower levels. For

example, women are 61% of managers in medicine and health, 49% of personnel and labor relations managers, and 48.9% of administrators in education and related fields. On the other hand, women are only 17.9% of administrators, protective service, and only 24.2% of purchasing managers."

Reskin and Hartmann (1986) concluded that women face discrimination and institutional barriers in their education, training, and employment. Women faced with narrow alternatives that they have to choose from, not of a free choice. Reskin, and Hartmann (1986) noticed that since 1900 sex segregation in the labor market has not changed, despite all changes in the structure of the economy, in education and in similarity in the work pattern.

Income and Earnings Differences. Reskin, and Hartmann (1986) noted that, for as long as data have been available for the United States, women's average earnings have been 60 percent of men's for full-time workers. According to the US Department of Labor, Women's Bureau (1990) in 1988 for those receiving hourly rates, women's median hourly earnings were 74% of men's; for full-time wage and salary workers, women's median weekly earnings were 70 percent of men's; and median annual earnings for women were 66 percent of men's annual earnings.

As is it was mentioned earlier, mothers participation in the labor force is increasing. However, this high participation does not yield similar income. Figures of the US Department of Labor (1989) show significant differences in earnings and poverty level relative to the structure of the households. For instance, In 1987 married couple families with 2 children had a median income of \$36,807, while female headed households with 2 children had a median income of only \$11,257.

According to 1989 data from the Bureau of the Census, black families with the husband and wife as labor force participants had a median income (\$37,787) higher than that of married couple families with the wife not in the labor force (\$18,727).

black male headed households, no wife present, had a median income of \$18,395, while black female headed households, no husband present, had a median income of \$11,630 (US Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, 1991). Recent report by the US Department of Commerce (1993) shows that Median household income declined by 3.5 percent in real terms between 1990 and 1991 from \$31,203 to \$30,126. The change in real median household income between 1990 and 1991 differed across race and ethnic groups. White household income declined by 3.0 percent to \$31,569, and for Asian and Pacific Islanders by 9.0 percent to \$36,449. The median income of black households (\$18,807) and of Hispanic origin households (\$22,691) showed no significant change. The report concludes that while the median income for males increased between 1990 and 1991 by 2%, for women the figures remained the unchanged, and the female-to-male earning ratio decreased to .70.

In their study about gender salary gap, Fuller and Schoenberger (1991) concluded that female college graduates in business earn less than their male counterparts in their first full-time job after graduation and that this salary differential widens over time. According to a report issued by the US Department of Labor (1989) among householders who work year round, full time" female householders have the lowest median income and earn, on average, 56 percent of what married-couple families earn. Besides, female householders had a lower rate of high school graduation. For blacks the rate was 42.4%, 55.2% for whites. The US Department of labor report went to say that these two factors contribute greatly to the extremely high poverty rate of female headed households which was 34.3% in 1987. "Families maintained by women represented over half (52%) of all families below the poverty level in 1987. Within these families resided 7.1 million related children under age 18. The number of children in families maintained by women that were below the poverty level in 1986 was 2.2."(US Department of Labor, 1989)

## 2. Trends in Family and Household Composition

### Trends in Marriage and Divorce

As it was the case in the economic structure of society, recent decades also witnessed many changes affecting the family and social structures. For examples, there have been increase in divorce rates and in marital separations; and increase in the number of women who have decided to have children without getting married (US Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, 1991). According to Norton, and Miller (USDL, 1992) changed that have taken place during the last century in patterns of marriage behavior in the United States have profoundly influenced citizen's life socially and economically. Also, trends in marriage behavior are generally responsible for trends in family formation and /or dissolution. The total number of family groups with children under 18 rose from 32.2 million in March 1980, to 34.7 million in 1990. During the same period, the number of two-parent family groups remained essentially unchanged (24.9 million in 1990), and the number of one-parent family groups increased by 40.9 percent (to 9.7 million). In addition, the study found that premarital childbearing, separation, and divorce have caused one-parent family groups to become much more prevalent (and accepted) in the United States in the last 20 years. Now, about 3 out of 10 family groups are maintained by just one parent, but in 1970 only 1 out of 10 were (US Department of Commerce, 1992).

According to a report issued by US Department of Labor (1990) married-couple families dropped from 87 percent of family households in 1970 to 82 percent in 1980 and 79 percent in March 1990. Families maintained by women with no husband present doubled from 1970 to 1990. Women alone maintained 13% of white families, 44 % of black families, and 23% of Hispanic families in 1990. In 1990, the



proportions of family groups maintained by one-parent were 23% for whites, 65 % for blacks, and 33% for Hispanic.

The Rise of Out-of-Wedlock Births and  
the Rise of Single Motherhood

Single mothers are the youngest marital group with a median age of 23.1 years. They also have the largest number of preschoolers among families maintained by women (1.5 million). Even though black women comprise only 19% of the single women in the nation, a disproportionate 59% (1.6 million) of all single mothers are black. Only 8,000 of the 216,000 black teenage mothers (4%) are in married couple families, compared with 51% of Hispanic teenage mothers and 48% of non-Hispanic white teenage mothers (US Department of Labor, 1989).

Out-of-wedlock childbearing has increased sharply in the past generation as indicated by a report issued by the Department of Commerce (1992). The report adds that among first births to women 15 to 34 years old in 1985-89 period, 29 percent were born out of wedlock, up from 13 percent in 1960-46 period.

Explaining the rise in black female-headed families, Ellwood (1987) traced it to the sharp decline of marriage among young Blacks. Ellwood (1987:32) referred to the explanation given by William Julius Wilson (no reference was given). According to Wilson's explanation:

employment among young black men has also declined sharply. Marriage looks less attractive to both parties. And in the ghettos of America the answer is no doubt even more complicated. Women with little hope of achieving middle-class status, with little control and limited affection in their life, with few marriageable men around, may see motherhood as one of the few ways to gain some measure of identity and self-worth.

It seemed that black men due to their obstructed opportunities, and their low-level of education to meet the new requirement of the changing labor market, cannot afford to support a family. By having easy access to their sexual desires, they find it not appealing to start a family under the current circumstances.

Due to the continuing high levels of divorce and increasing premarital childbearing, the proportion of children living with a lone parent doubled between 1970 and 1990, reaching 25 percent (US Department of Commerce, 1992). And the number of single parents with one or more children under 18 rose from 3.8 million in 1970 to 10.5 million in 1992, and the vast majority (86 %) were mothers. About 62 percent of black family groups with children were single-parent families in 1992. The corresponding figures for whites and Hispanics were 24 percent and 34 percent, respectively (US Department of Commerce, 1993).

Trent and Harlan (1990) argue that there is a great deal of evidence showing that women who begin childbearing in their teen are more likely eventually to head their own households, and consequently more likely to be poor, than women who delay childbearing.

Trent and Harlan (1990) concluded that mothers who marry as teenagers may be taking the quickest route to a mother-only family. In fact in their study, they found that being formerly married is strongly associated with female headship. Given that teenage marriages are unstable, mothers who marry may actually be putting themselves at greater risk of living and facing economic hardship at an earlier age than those who do not marry.

The trend toward more one-parent family groups holds regardless of race or Hispanic origin. However, the magnitude varies. In 1990, one-parent family groups accounted for 22.6 percent of all white, 60.6 percent of all black, and 33.2 percent of all Hispanic family groups (US Department of Commerce, 1992).

Now the most common living arrangement for black children is the one-parent family groups, but for white and Hispanic children, the one-parent family group is now common living arrangement but not the most common. In March 1990, 72.5 percent of children under 18 were living with two parents (including step and adoptive parents), 24.7 percent were living with one parent, and 2.7 percent were living with neither parent. The comparable portions for March 1970 were as follows, 85.2 percent living with two parents, 11.9 percent living with one parent, and 2.9 percent living with neither parent (US Department of Commerce, 1992).

According to the Department of Labor, Women's Bureau (1991) even though one-third (3.7 million) of the black female population aged 16 years and over are in married-couple families, their marriages last fewer than that of their counterparts. For a variety of reasons- divorce, death of a spouse, or separation, black women, on average, spend only 16 years of their expected lifetime of 74 years with a husband. black women also, are less likely to remarry.

### 3. The Feminization of Poverty

Ozawa (1989) argues that current economic conditions of American women is a product of two divergent forces: women's growing economic capability, as evidenced by their labor force participation on the one hand, and women's loss of the economic benefit derived from sharing households with men, either by their choice, or for reasons beyond their control. Women's progress in the labor market is offset by a growing number of social problems, such as teenage pregnancy, childbearing and divorce. Ozawa (1989:1) comments that, the net result is that women's economic lot is deteriorating in comparison to that of men.

According to Scott (1984) "The feminization of poverty" is the phrase used to describe the fact that a growing proportion of families below the official poverty line are headed by women alone. It describes the economic vulnerability of women who are the sole supporters of their children. It refers to those societal processes through which poverty is concentrated among younger women and children. Scott argued that poverty also is concentrated among the elderly. Mulroy (1988) emphasized that Public attention is drawn to the "feminization" of poverty because families headed by women are six times more likely than two-parent families to have income below the poverty line.

According to the US Department of Labor (1993) there were 35.7 million persons (14.2%) below the official poverty level in 1991, up from 33.6 million (13.5%) in 1990 and 31.5 million (12.8 %) in 1989. The 1991 poverty rate for whites (11.3 %) was higher than in 1990, whereas the 1991 rates for blacks (32.7 %) and Hispanic (28.7 %) did not change significantly. The same report indicated that, between 1990 and 1991, the poverty rate for families increased from 10.7 percent to 11.2 percent, representing an increase of 613,000 poor families. About two-thirds of this increase was due to the rise in the number of female householders families with no husband present below the poverty level.

According to the US Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census (1992), young children were most at risk of living in poverty in 1990. Twenty-five percent of children under age 3 lived in poverty, and 22.1 percent age 3 to 5 lived in poverty, compared to 17.3 percent for adolescents age 12 to 17." The report added that the overall poverty rate in 1990 for children under 18 years was much smaller for children in married-couple families (10.2 %) than for children in female householder families (53.4 %). In each of these two family situations, poverty rates were much larger for

black and Hispanic children than for White children. "Overall, black children were 3 times more likely as White to live in poverty."

Expectedly, according to Stone (1989) the racial differences in poverty surpass the gender differences. The poverty rate among black men in 1986, for example, was 11 percentage points higher than the rate for white women. Black females aged sixty-five and over were almost three times as likely as their white age peers to be impoverished.

#### The Impact of the Rise of Single-Parenthood on Women's poverty

According to Abrahamse, et al, (1988:1) single-parent teenage families impose large and lasting burdens on society. In addition to the financial burdens estimated at over \$16 billion annually, are other social costs imposed on the mothers and infants whose potentials and lives are blighted. The impact of single-motherhood is beyond the economic well-being of family members, in fact Garfinkel and McLanahan (1986) reported that the mother and children in such families have poorer than average mental health and use a disproportionate share of community mental health services. Garfinkel and McLanahan added that most importantly, compared with children who grow up in two-parents (husband-wife) families, the children from mother-only families are less successful on average when they become adults. They are more likely to drop out of school, to give birth out of wedlock, to divorce or separate, and to become dependent of welfare.

In their study of poverty and mental health, McLand, and Shanahan (1993), reported that the length of time spent in poverty is an important predictor of children's mental health, even after current poverty status is taken into account. "As the length of time spent in poverty increase, so too do children's feelings of unhappiness,

anxiety, and dependence." Zinn (1989) warned that a two-parent family is no guarantee against poverty for racial minorities:

Long-term income of black children in two-parent families throughout the decade was even lower than the long-term income on non-black children who spent most of the decade in mother-only families. Thus, increasing the proportion of black children growing up in two-parent families would not by itself eliminate very much of the racial gap in the economic well-being of children; changes in the economic circumstances of the parents are needed most to bring the economic status of black children up to the higher status of non-black children.

According to Garfinkel and McLanahan (1986) mother-only families are also subject to numerous other forms of economic and asocial instability, such as income loss, residential moves, and change in employment and household compositions. McLanahan (1985) shows that offspring who are living with single mothers at age 17 are less likely to be in high school than offspring who are living in two-parent households. In their review study, Wilson and Abonte (1985:241) concluded that:

female-headed families are heavily represented in the poverty population, are highly urbanized, and are disproportionately black; that black female heads are much less likely to marry if single, or to remarry if divorced or widowed, and therefore that female headed families among whites tend to be of relative short duration, whereas among blacks they tend to be prolonged; that teenage pregnancies are strongly associated with being reared in female-headed families; poverty, and ghetto residence; that black children are increasingly growing up in families without fathers not only because more black women are getting divorced, separated, or are being widowed, but also because more black women are not marrying; and that the increasing joblessness of black men is one of the major reasons black women tend not to be married.

According to US Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, (1991) Although the median income of black families has risen substantially since 1980, but the fact is

that the median income of all black families continued to lag behind that of all white families by more than \$15,000 in 1989 (\$20,209 Vs \$35,975).

Poverty is the major problem facing families maintained by women, in particular black families. Of the 3.3 million black families maintained by women in 1989, 46.3 percent were poor. Event though most women who maintain families are employed (56.8%), they rarely earn enough to raise their family income above the poverty level (US Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, 1991). The Same report adds that in 1989 black children under age 18 represented nearly half of the black population that is poor. The poverty rate for black children was 43.7 percent. Some 5.3 million black families with children under age 18 were poor (US DL, WB, 1991).

### The Impact of Divorce

According to Peterson (1989:1) rising divorce rates have had a significant impact on American women over the last several decades. No longer can most women assume that marriage will last "forever", because half of all marriages now end in divorce. Biblarz T., and Raftery A. (1993) argue that family disruption affects the occupational mobility, men from nonintact family backgrounds have greater odds of entering low status occupations. Family disruption, also weakens intergenerational inheritance and resemblance, even after disruption's direct effects are taken into account.

Divorce has a great impact on women's economic well-being. Women, especially those who have children suffer a drastic drop in their income and standard of living in the first year after their divorce (Peterson, 1989). Mauldin (1990) noticed that a black woman will experience a greater decline in economic well-being following marital disruption solely due to her race.

The inequality between men and women in marriage is magnified in divorce as women's standard of living declines and men's rises. Men leave marriage with their earning abilities and social statuses intact (Arendel, 1987). In a study on women who remain above the poverty rate after divorce, Mauldin (1990) found that for women who experienced stability or economic hardship following marital disruption it appears that investment in education, job training, and health care help improve economic circumstances. Reducing financial worries might help alleviate stress and increase women's ability to cope with other problems.

Peterson (1989) concluded that the economic well-being of divorced women depends on their work history and family situation. While divorce is a disruptive life event, some women are better prepared for it than others.

The Case of Black Women: Women in general as already indicated are the worst sufferers of the recent changes in both the economic and social fabrics of society. Black women, in particular, in addition of experiencing all the burdens of women, have the disadvantage of their race.

Blacks represented 11 percent of the civilian non institutional population and 11 percent of all families in the United States in 1990. However, they comprised a disproportionate share of poor families (30%) -with a poverty rate of 27.8 percent, black families with female householders accounted for nearly one-fourth of all poor families and nearly three-fourth of all poor black families (US Department of Labor, 1991).

According to a US Department of Labor, Women's Bureau (1992) young, single black women have the greatest difficulties obtaining a foothold in the labor force, but with increased school and skills training, they find more niches for themselves. The fact is demonstrated in the low percentage of employed single black women when compared with other marital groups, excluding widows. Only 48 percent of single



black women were working in March 1990--divorcees, 68.2 percent; married, spouse present, 60.9 percent; and married, spouse absent, 56.8 percent.

On the other hand, black teenage women have a high unemployment rate. Since early 1980s, their unemployment rate ranges from 48% to 30% (US Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, 1991).

The largest sources of employment for black women were low paying jobs, such as: retail sales, nursing aides, secretaries, cashiers, cooks, janitors and cleaners (private households and buildings). These occupations offer low pay, require little training and lower skills, demand little work experience and offer very limited chances for advancement. These occupations accounted for 33 percent of total black female employment in 1990 (US Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, 1991).

#### 4. Marital Status of Female Offenders\*

As observed by Pollack (1950) married offenders appear to be more frequent among women than men. Female offenders experience greater marital disruption, while marriage may be a stabilizing factor in the case of men, it is not the case with married female offenders. Offenders are notorious for their disorganized married life, but the female offenders, in particular, have very disorganized married lives. More of the female offenders have a higher rate of marriage, separation, divorce and remarriage. They also have more children or sets of children (from different lovers or husbands) than male offenders, and their married lives are, as a result, quite complicated, and problematic. A recent study of Oklahoma probationers and parolees showed that females married a mean number of 1.58 times and male probationers married a mean number of .85 times. Also, female offenders had an average of 1.85 children as against 1.16 of their male counterparts (Jackson, 1993), for the sample

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\* This segment is based on recent research completed by Harjit Sandhu, researcher's major advisor.

data used in the present study, the average number of children was 2.28. These patterns have persisted over a long time. A quarter of a century back, 35% of the female inmates had two marriages, ten percent had three marriages, four percent had four or more marriages as against 14.0 percent 4.7 percent, and 1.0 percent (respectively) of male inmates in Oklahoma correctional system during 1969-72 (Sandhu, 1974). In 1934, Gluecks in their classic study of Five Hundred Delinquent Women had similar comments about the reformatory women whom they studied over several years.

By a reasonable standard, only two of the three hundred and one marriages could be deemed entirely successful. The reasons for the failure of marital ventures of our women involved not only their own shortcomings but also those of their husbands. The majority of them (the husbands) were vicious and criminal.

A practitioner who worked very closely with women offenders said:

The female offender is inclined to respond quickly to any emotional stimulus, particularly where her family, her husband, boyfriend, or her children are involved. A good portion of her antisocial behavior may result also when her role as the dependent member of the household has been disrupted. (Payak 1963)

## 5. Socioeconomic Conditions and the Rise in Female Criminality

Steven Box (1987, in Carlen, 1988) having reviewed fifty North American and British studies of unemployment and crime concluded that "the most plausible reason for the increase in conventional crime committed by females' is that more women have become economically marginalized during the recession" (1987:43). Box quoted from his previous research with Hale, that:

the vast bulk of women have become increasingly economically marginalized--that is, they are more likely to be unemployed or unemployable or, if employed, more likely to be in insecure, lower-paid unskilled part-time jobs in which career prospects are minimal. This marginalization, particularly in a consumer-oriented and status-conscious community that is continuously conditioned by aggressive media advertising, is ... an important cause of increase in female crime rate... (Box and Hale, 1984:477)

Crutchfield (1989) in his research examined the idea that "neighborhoods with higher level of people who are unemployed, working less than full time, or employed in secondary occupations, will have higher crime rates." His findings support the relationships between poverty and rates of violent crime. Crutchfield argues that observed relationships between poverty, income inequality and violent crime are in large measure produced by the stratification of labor. Crutchfield (1989:507) writes that:

the stratification of labor directly affects the likelihood that young males find themselves in a "situation of company" that is conducive to crime. Moreover, labor stratification influences the distribution of persons bonded to careers, places of employment, and coworkers, which theoretically should increase the likelihood of criminal behavior.

In her qualitative study about women, poverty and crime Carlen (1988:13) concluded that:

early imprisonment of young women combines with prevailing economic and ideological conditions to minimize (or in many case destroy) the likelihood of their having either future opportunities or inclinations to make either the class deal or the gender deal. they perceive themselves as being marginalized and therefore, having nothing to lose decide that law-breaking is a preferable alternative to poverty and social isolation.

Blau and Blau (1982) argued that high rates of criminal violence are apparently the price of racial and economic inequalities. Economic inequalities are more likely to

create alienation, despair, and conflict. Blau, and Blau added that inequalities generally, within as well as between races, promote criminal violence.

Kasarda (1983:47) warned that:

increasing numbers of potentially productive persons find themselves socially, economically, and spatially isolated in segregated inner-city waste-land, where they subsist on a combination of government handouts and their own informal economies. Such isolation, dependency, and blocked mobility breed hopelessness, despair, and alienation which in turn, foster drug abuse, family dissolution, and other social malaise disproportionately afflicting the urban under-class.

## 6. Explaining the Rise in Female Criminality

According to Gora (1982) there have been two major schools of thought attempting to explain the etiology of female crime; the earlier, traditional school of thought, represented by the writings of Lombroso, and Ferrero (1920), Pollack (1950), Thomas (1907,1923), Konopka (1966). These writers emphasize the physiological and psychological factors inherent in the nature of women as motivating criminal behavior. Zaitzow (1990:3) did not like the studies which focused on the biology of women as responsible for their criminality. Likewise, Radosh (1990) critiques most of the writing on female criminality because they place too much emphasis on feminine characteristics as antecedents to female criminality.

Radosh (1990:108) writes:

The theoretical orientations throughout the twentieth century have been succinct in their delineation of monocausal explanations for female crime that have attached primary importance to factors present in the lives of women, in the biology or psychology of women, or in the rejection of traditional status differentials.

The second school identified by Gora (1982) stepped beyond these individualistic factors to emphasize the social and structural factors in explaining female crime. The second school of thought is best represented by the works of Adler (1975) and Simon (1975, 1979).

Adler (1981:1-2) hypothesizes that "the increasing opportunities, temptations, challenges, stresses, and strains to which women were subjected to in the recent years caused them to act or react in a manner not previously experienced by them to the same extent as men do. Consequently, as women increasingly abandon their traditional gender identities and sex-role attitudes, they become more like males in their behavior, including criminal behavior. "the closer they get, the more alike they look and act." (Adler, 1975:30). Adler (1975:251-2) writes:

As the position of women approximates the position of men, so does the frequency and type of their criminal activity... if present social trends continue women will be sharing with men not only ulcers, coronaries, hypertension, and lung cancer... but will also compete increasingly in such traditionally male criminal activities as crimes against the person, more aggressive property offenses, and especially white-collar crime.

Similarly, Simon (1975:1-2) argues that as women become more liberated and more involved in full-time jobs, they are more likely to engage in the types of crimes for which their occupations provide them with the greatest opportunities. Simon (1979:7-8) explains the increase in female crimes in regard to the improved and expanded opportunity structure for women. In order for women to commit the same kinds of offenses as men do, they have to have similar opportunities. Simon noticed that the increase has been in certain types of offenses, such as forgery, fraud, embezzlement,-- not in crime of violence or in the traditional female crimes such as prostitution and child abuse.

According to Simon (1979:8)

The fact that female arrests have increased for these offenses and not for all offenses is consistent both with the opportunity theory and with the presence of a sizable women's movement.

Primarily, Adler's work has stimulated much research on female criminality.

The alleged relationship between women's movement, sex-role orientation and the rise in female criminality were studied thoroughly by many researchers. In general research findings lend no support to both claims by Adler or Simon. For instance, Streifel (1989) multivariate analysis of data aggregated across SMSAs from 1979-1981 arrest files of the Uniform Crime Reports, 1980 U.S Census data, and several miscellaneous data source fails to provide support for the emancipation hypotheses that greater equality for women will result in higher female -to-male levels of offending.

Polcari (1991) study on criminal behavior and sex-role orientation found no support to the predicted relationship between Masculine sex-role orientation and the propensity to commit violent crimes. Polcari, also, found no support to a second hypothesis which predicted a relationship between Feminine sex-role orientation and the propensity to commit non-violent crimes. Steffensmeier (1980) attributes much of the change in female arrest "to changing law enforcement practices, market consumption trends, and worsening economic position of many females in the U.S. rather changes in sex roles or the improved occupational, educational and economic position of women. He contends that females are not catching up with males in the commission of violent, masculine, male dominated serious (excluding larceny) or white-collar crimes. Women are still typically nonviolent, and petty property offenders. Steffensmeier (1978:580) asserts that:

Increases in female crime have come primarily in larceny (viz. shoplifting), and secondarily in fraud (viz. bad checks and welfare fraud). These traditionally female offenses reflect traditional sex-determined roles in legal and illegal marketplaces: from shopper to shoplifter, from cashing good check to passing bad ones, from being a welfare mother to being accused of welfare fraud, and so on.

Smart (1979) pointed out that it is not the "liberated" who represents female criminals. Rather, these are the poor and working class women who are more likely to be involved in crime. Leonard (1982:10) questions Adler's assumption of rapidly increasing equality among men and women, and claims that Adler greatly exaggerates the freedom that modern women supposedly have. Leonard argues that "women are far from equal to men in terms of occupations, income, social expectations, and so on.

The present study contends that there was no evidence that female offenders under study were responding to the feminists movement. They were poor whom the emancipation movement has not yet touched. Similarly, these women were not trying to copy male offenders, they were still committing the same offenses (property offenses, and drug offenses) as they did before. So there is no masculinization of female criminality as alleged, (Chapter VI, P. 117).

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

The present study is concerned with Oklahoma's high rate of incarcerated female offenders. The purpose of this study was: (1) to construct a comprehensive profile of the women offenders in the Oklahoma correctional system, and (2) to compare the Oklahoma's women in prison profile with the national profile of women in prison.

#### Data Sets Used

In order to achieve the manifold purpose of this research several data sets analyzed. These data sets are:

1. Parole and probation Termination Data (N=6259)
2. Inmate Data sets (N=3636)
3. Questionnaire Data (N=191)

Table 1 describes the four correctional institutions from which the sample was drawn. The table shows for each institutions type of security, total population, the sample drawn from that institution, and the percentage of the sample to the institution's population. Approximately the sample constituted between 13% to 24% from each institution and 17% from the total population of the four Institution. In addition, to the data collected through the survey, the researcher had data on 6259 Probationers and Parolees and 3636 prison inmates (see Table 1). Overall, this study covered 10,086 female offenders who were either previously, or currently under the custody of the Oklahoma Correctional System. It is hoped that with this varied and moderately large sample, the study will capture the entire spectrum of the



characteristics of the women offenders in the Oklahoma Correctional System. To be noted here, is that the three data sets were used to characterize the female offenders in Oklahoma's correctional system. But for analysis purposes only the data collected on 191 female inmates was used. Because the questionnaire was designed to fulfill the objective of the present study, considering that official statistics is gathered for different purposes and may not be adequate for sociological research.

Table 1

Institutions, Total population, Level of Security and Sample  
Number and Percentage Drawn From Each Institution

Institution	Type of Security	Population	Sample	Percentage of the ( Institutional female population)
Kate Bernard	Minimum	180	36	20
Eddie Warrior	Medium	500	85	17
Mable Basset	Maximum	350	46	13
Tulsa CC (Co-correctional)	Minimum	100	24	24
Total		1130	191	17
Probationer & Parolees*	Supervision	6259	6259	100
Prison Inmates**	All Levels	3636	3636	100
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>10,086</b>		

\* Total female probationers and Parolees in the system whose supervision was terminated between 1989-1992.

\*\*Total female prison inmates admitted to Oklahoma prisons between 1988-1992.

Following is a brief description of each one of these data sets:

#### 1. Parole and Probation Termination Data

This data set covers the years from 1989-1992, and it has information on 36732 Probationers and Parolees (both males and females). The data set was

checked for inaccuracies, only accurate data was included in the final analyses. The refinement process resulted in a data set with 6259 female offenders (19.5 percent) which was used for the present study. This data set contained types of Probation or Parole termination, degree of success or failure, behavior under supervision, fulfillment of restitution, payment of fines, type of supervision, marital status, gender, race, employment status, wages earned, prior convictions, and history of drug and alcohol use. For the purpose of this study only females were included in constructing the profile.

This data set was obtained from Planning and Research Division of the Oklahoma Department of Corrections. It was handed to us in a computer diskette format as a part of the grant to evaluate the outcome of Parole and Probation supervision.

## 2. Inmate Data

This data set contains a large variety of information on female inmates admitted in the Oklahoma prisons covering the period from 1988 to 1992. The data set is divided into 12 different files, each file has information on some aspects of the inmates population. For example, the Profile File contains the following pieces of information; race, sex, facility, date of birth reception date, substance abuse, and cap eligibility.

These data sets were checked for accuracy and only the reliable data were included in the study. This data set covered the following information on 3,636 female inmates: Type of offense, sentence length, drug and alcohol use when committing the crime, physical and psychological problem, violence offense, school history, highest grade, current residence's type, high school diploma, number of children, employment history: employer, length of employment, work type, hourly

pay and reason for leaving the job. The above mentioned data sets were provided by the Division of Planning and Research of the Oklahoma Department of Corrections on 4 computer diskettes.

### 3. Questionnaire Data.

To fulfill the purpose of this research a questionnaire was designed to gather data from female inmates to cover those aspects that the official data lacked. The researcher wanted to have a closer look at the perceptions and attitudes of the female inmates, in several aspects of their life. The instrument contained a large number of questions that covers a wide range of areas, these are:

Sociodemographic: race and ethnicity, present age, income, education, General Education Diploma, vocational and technical training, marital status, number of children, number of times married and type of community.

Legal Background: This section covered age at first arrest and conviction, conviction by Juvenile and adult courts, time spent in correctional system, types of sentences and for what type of crime, drug and alcohol use, type of present offense, length of present sentence, prison violations, participation in prison programs, and reason for committing the present offense.

Social Background: This section contained questions regarding the social backgrounds of female inmates that may have led them to criminality. These questions covered husband's problems with addiction, single parenthood, status as head of household, unwed motherhood, problems related with being a single mother, relation with children and relatives, prison visitations, anticipated difficulties, post release needs, the sources and the degree of help expected after release. The section also has a group of open-ended questions asking inmates to state any problem in their life that may have landed them in trouble with the law.

Work and Employment: The purpose of this section was to understand the employment situation of women offenders' skills for employment, employment history and problems related to the multitude of roles occupied by women in society. This section also covered questions regarding satisfactions with jobs and wages, welfare dependency and attended problems.

General Questions: a number of questions were asked soliciting inmates' perceptions of why they were arrested and convicted and if they knew other friends or relatives having the same troubles but were not arrested. Other questions were asked to seek offenders' perceptions and views on Oklahoma criminal justice system and what they thought of the reasons behind Oklahoma's high rate of female incarceration.

In general, the questionnaire contained a large number of open-ended question in order to provide respondents with the opportunity to express themselves freely, and give honest and most accurate responses to questions without confining them to a preset range of answers. This large number of Open-ended questions put more burden on the researcher in reading, understanding and coding the different answers, but it was worth the effort which greatly added to the understanding of the issues under study.

#### Design of the Questionnaire

The researcher designed the questionnaire and refined it in cooperation with his major advisor. In the design process it was meant to make it easier for the respondent to understand and answer, and simple and direct for the researcher to code and input. The researcher participated in all stages of design, administration, coding and inputting the data. This eliminated the possibilities of errors and miscoding if more than one individual was involved in these processes.

The questionnaires were administered to 191 of the 1130 of female offenders in the Oklahoma Correctional system. Arrangements were made with official of the four institutions that house female offenders in Oklahoma. The research team visited the four institutions in several days and handed questionnaires to the inmates who volunteered to participate in the study. Officials in these institution were informed about the research by Planning and Research Division of the Oklahoma Department of Corrections. It was made clear to the official of these institutions and to the inmates that participation in the study is completely voluntary, and inmate were asked to sign two consent forms: one for the Department of Corrections, another required by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Oklahoma State University.

Earlier, the researcher and his major Advisor appeared before the IRB to seek clearance for the instrument. The Board made some suggestion to ensure complete confidentiality and anonymity which was taken into consideration in the revised version of the questionnaire. (see IRB's approval in Appendix D).

### Reliability

According to Farrington (1973) scales containing many items and several types of deviant behavior were found to be internally consistent to a high degree. Cook and Campbell (1979) arrived at similar finding; they suggested that using longer tests for which items are carefully selected for their high intercorrelation can help counter unreliability. Farrington (1973) indicated that a group self-completion method is more objective and capable of standardization. Respondents are less likely to admit deviant behavior in face to face situation. A combination of official

records and a self-administered questionnaires will be the most accurate measure of deviant behavior.

For the present study a multi-item instrument was carefully designed to collect data from participants of the study. Parts of the questionnaire were previously used and tested many times and found to be reliable (Meno et al, 1992). Most of the previously tested parts contained questions on sociodemographic and legal data, and some on future expectations. The remaining parts of the instrument were designed especially for the present research.

A female colleague was asked to read the questionnaire and check the appropriateness of the language for the female population. Copies of the questionnaire were submitted to the 15 members of the Institutional Review Board to seek their input and suggestions, also copies were sent to the Department of Correction for their Board review.

For this research, respondents were gathered in groups to fill in the questionnaire. A research team of three members was present all the time to explain the purpose of the research, assure anonymity and confidentiality, answer their questions and provide all necessary arrangements or tools to help respondents in filling the questionnaire. The timing for these meeting were arranged with official in these institutions to suit the convenience of the inmate population, to ensure a higher number of participants without the pressure of time or other duties. This arrangement necessitated some of the meeting to be held in the afternoons and in weekends.

## Validity

Most questions were direct and straightforward which were previously used and tested with inmate population. To ensure the accuracy of the data, the researcher designed a strategy that provides instant check of the input data. Eight checkpoints were used for that purpose. For example, each page of the questionnaire ends with a specific column marked on the computer screen.

The data also is divided into three blocks, each one ends with a marked column shows on the computer screen. A two blank columns were left between the blocks of the data, and the data takes two lines, each one of them ends with a marked point. All these visual marks make it difficult to miss any typing or coding error. If any error happened it will be noted instantly and corrected.

The input data for at least 10 respondent was checked against the raw data. In addition the whole data set was printed and checked for any errors in coding. For example if race is given 5 categories, and a 6 category is found that means it is a mistake. Fortunately, for the extreme precautions and care in designing and inputting the data very few miscodes were found. The researcher is quite confident that the data represent the actual responses of the respondents.

Briefly, the following measures were used to enhance the validity of the results of the instrument used:

1. Respondents were assured anonymity, and were asked not to write their names anywhere in the questionnaire.
2. Also the confidentiality of the raw data, the researcher had to sign a statement certifying that the information given in this questionnaire will not be divulged to any one and will be strictly used for research purposes only.
3. Respondents were informed that participation in the study is on a voluntary basis.

4. Group administration: Respondents were arranged in groups to fill in the questionnaire. This arrangement was found to attract more honest answers.
5. The administration of the questionnaires was supervised by the research team, who were knowledgeable of the instrument and ready to clarify any ambiguities to respondents.

### Generalizability

The sample for this research was drawn from Oklahoma's four Correctional Institutions that house female offenders. Officials, as well as inmates were informed that participation in the study was on voluntary basis. Consequently only those who wished to participate did so. This process may attract inmates who were willing to speak out, and those who had previous experience in similar occasions. It is quite possible that the sample was biased and it is quite possible that the remaining population has different views. But in term of sociodemographic representation, it seems that the sample reflects the actual composition of the inmate population. For example, a similar study done with random and representative clustered samples from the 50 states had similar finding (See American Correctional Association, 1991). Expectedly, the questionnaire could be used with any female offender population, in any part of the country, regardless of the race, ethnicity, marital status and educational level. It was easily understood by all.

### Statistical Analysis

The Statistical Analysis System (SAS) was used to check, describe, and analyze the data. Inmate data set (N=3636) and Probation and Parole termination data set (N=6259)--due to the limited number of variables which they contain--were



mainly used to construct the profile of female offenders, and to compare inmates under custody with inmates under suppression. In-depth analyses were mainly carried out with the sample data, because the instrument was designed especially for this research, and contained a large number of variables which generated a rich source of information.

Statistical tests were used taking into consideration the assumptions of each test. Appropriate Parametric and /or Non-parametric Statistical Tests were used in accordance with level of measurement. Chi-square test was used to compare data at the ordinal level; and Univariate analysis and T-Test were used for interval and ratio levels of measurement.

## CHAPTER IV

### CHARACTERISTICS OF FEMALE OFFENDERS

Before going out to the four prisons, to survey 191 female offenders in great depth, this researcher had already access to two large data sets (one of the Incarcerated offenders, and the other of Probationers and Parolees). With such a large data being available, it was decided that we could have a very reliable characterization of Oklahoma's female offenders. So this Chapter analyzes the characteristics as extracted separately from the following three data sets.

- I. Female Inmates surveyed (N=191).
- II. Female Probationers and Parolees terminated between 1989-1992  
(N=6259).
- III. Female Inmates incarcerated in Oklahoma prisons between 1988-1992  
(N=3636) compared with the national profile of women in prison.

The presentation of the characteristics of female offenders is organized as follows: first, the characteristics of the female inmates who responded to the survey (N=191), second, the characteristics of the female offenders under Probation and Parole supervision (N= 6259) and finally the characteristics of female inmates (N=3636). In order to find an answer for the higher rate of incarceration of female offenders in Oklahoma, some of the characteristics of Oklahoma prisoners were compared to that of the nation, if available.

## I. Characteristics of Female Inmates Surveyed (N=191)

### Racial Composition

The sample was racially constituted as follows: Whites 89 (46.8), blacks 79 (41.6) American Indians 18 (9.5%) and other races 2 (1.1%). It is obvious that the black women offenders are disproportionately represented in the incarcerated population considering that black females are only 3.4% of the total Oklahoma population.

### Age

Agewise, 5.2% were 20 years or less, 65.4% were between 21 and 35 years. If we add the percentage of those who reported age between 36 and 40 which is 14.7%, then 80.1% of all the respondent were between the age of 21 and 40, and 14.5 % were 40 years of age or more. So the two-thirds of the incarcerated female population is either in 20s or early 30s.

### Income

Of the total sample 15.% reported no income before incarceration and 3.85% reported income of less than \$200 a month, 13.6% reported income of \$200-\$399 a month, another 20.1% with income between \$400 and \$599, 10.9% reporting income between \$600-\$799, another 10.3% reported income of \$800-\$999, and the remaining 26.1% reported income of \$1000 or more. If we consider the sample to be constituted of single persons only with no children, and considering that the official poverty level is \$10,000 of annual income, then almost 75% of the respondents are under the poverty level. Since the women surveyed had 2.3 mean number of children, so more than 75% of these women were under the poverty line.

### Employment

In relation to employment before imprisonment, 54.9% were employed, 19% were part-time employed and 26.1% were unemployed. So their rate of unemployment is far higher as compared to the 7% unemployment in the general population.

### Education

The education status of the respondents was as follows; 9.1% reported having eight years or less of education, 79.9% reported 9-12 years of education, 18.9% reported 13-16 years of formal education, and 1.2% reported 18-20 years of education. It seems that most of the respondents have some kind of high school education, while 18.9% had some college education. As many as 45.2% reported having GED, and 50% had some technical or vocational training.

It appears that about 20% of the incarcerated female offenders had better education, and about the same percentage made an income of \$1000 and more. Excepting this segment the rest are low in education, low in employment, low in income and below the poverty line. This does substantiate that poverty is associated with female criminality and incarceration (Carlen 1988, Box 1984).

### Marital Status

Of the marital status, 69 (36.3%) were single, 32 (16.8%) were legally married, 48 (25.3%) with common-law marriage, 37 (19.5%) were separated or divorced and 4 (2.1%) were widowed. Of those who were married, 67 (50.8%) reported married for one time, 46 (34.8%) were married twice, and 19 (14.4%) married three times or more. Almost 50% reported having married for more than one time. This may tell us something about the instability in female offenders married life.

While only 36.3% of the sample population were single, 85.6% reported having children. A lower percentage reported legally married, and a higher percentage reported separated or divorced. The change in the family structure is reflected again under the head of household question; a higher number of inmates were heads of households 108 (57.1%), and 104 (59.8%) were single mothers.

### Types of Community

A high percentage of the respondents came from large city (62.1%), 15.8% came from rural areas and (22.1%) came from towns under 30,000 population. A large percentage of those who came from large city were black women. So female delinquency and criminality is essentially a large city phenomenon.

### Family and Social Life

Majority (60%) of the female offenders had several problems in their social life with their families, friends, relatives, siblings, spouses, and also at school. These problems range from lack of communication and support, dysfunctional families, abuse by husband, and pervasive drug abuse. Their immediate family was characterized as dysfunctional and authoritative (42%)--spouse was abusive or criminal (52%), addicted (60%) giving unlawful habits and constant source of troubles, and the marital relationship was unstable. In many cases wives had to associate with their criminal husbands and had to steal or sell drugs to support their husbands,

More than one-half of the female offenders ran away from home as juveniles, for reasons of sexual and physical abuse within their immediate families (29.7%)- mostly by their father, and some by their step father. They quit high school for reason of early pregnancy and to take care of their children (33.6%), some quit high

school to get married or work (16.3 and 8.7 respectively).

About one half of the female offenders had illegitimate premarital births (49%), 60 percent brought up their children as single parents, 57 percent were heads of their households, and 36 percent faced difficulties in bringing up their children. While in prison, their children were taken care of mainly by their mothers (39 %), and by husband or ex-husband (25%). Being unwed mothers (36%), they faced difficulties in bringing up their children (see Table 2). During the course of imprisonment, their children were mainly under the custody of their grandmothers or fathers.

### Legal Background

The timing of female criminality is somewhat different from that of male criminality; women tend to start late in their criminality and quit late. Of the total sample 23.6% were convicted at least one time as juveniles, and 96.8% were convicted as an adults, and 93.8% were incarcerated as an adults. These percentages many not reflect the actual picture, because all the respondents are incarcerated at least one time at the time of the study. Table 2 shows the actual variation in the frequency of conviction and incarceration. For example 47.6% of the sample were convicted for one time, 26.7% were convicted for two times; and 8.6% were convicted for three times; and 13.2% were convicted five times or more. In regards to incarceration, 54.5% were incarcerated one time, 26.2% incarcerated two times, 7.0% incarcerated three times; and 5.9% incarcerated four times or more. The frequency of conviction is expectedly higher than the frequency of incarceration, because some female offenders were given alternative sentences.

Most of the female offenders came from criminal background as 47 percent had other family members previously or currently incarcerated, and 77 percent had

relatives and friends who had the same criminal and troubled life as they did, though not arrested. Thirty-five percent held their friends responsible for their troubles with the law, for reasons of being with wrong crowd (35%), drug users (21%) or simply by association with this type of friends.

The criminality of women is also reflected in the type of recent offense they have committed; of this sample; 20.6% reported property offenses; 20.0% reported bad checks and consumer related offenses, 8.9% reported sexual and misconduct offenses, and 33.3% reported drug offenses, finally 17.25 percent reported a violent offense. It is evident that property offenses and drugs constitute the top crimes committed by women.

### Drug and Alcohol

Drugs had great impacts on female offenders' life. Drugs and alcohol use is rampant within the female offenders' population. Majority of them (84%) drink wine/liquor or beer, 15 percent had daily use; 20 percent had 1-2 times a week and 24 percent had 1-2 times a month. Sixty percent used Marijuana; 30 percent used it 1-2 times daily, and 21 percent used it 1-4 times a month. A higher percentage (64%) used hard drugs, 35 percent of them used it 1-2 times a daily, and 21 percent used it 1-4 times a month. Fifty-five percent also used combination of drugs, 27 percent used it 1-2 times a day, and 21 percent used it 1-4 times a month.

Drugs played a major role in the female offenders criminal history. Eighty-eight (46%) of them had at least one drug conviction, and 33 percent were doing time for drug offenses when they were surveyed. Drugs were the only thing that the female inmates referred to on 15 different occasions as a reason for their all kinds of troubles. In addition, drugs were one of the main reasons given by female inmates behind Oklahoma high rate of female incarceration. These facts about the pervasive use of

drugs among female inmates, the problems caused by drugs, and the damage done by drugs to their social and family life, led us to identify drugs as one of the main reasons behind Oklahoma rate of female incarceration.

### Other Characteristics

Univariate analysis was conducted on appropriate interval variables (see Table 3 ). The results of this analysis best describe the female offender population. Average female offender had 11.24 years of education which is obviously a low level of education. Majority of the inmates in this sample were mothers 104 (54.45%), and on the average they had 2.3 children. This high number of children may be one of the burdens on the female offender population.

It is an established fact in the literature on female offenders that they start their criminal activity later in their life and quit later. Female offenders' mean age at first arrest was 23.57 year and their mean age at first conviction was 26.26 year. They had a small number of juvenile convictions (.38) times, and a higher number of adult convictions (2.01) times and 1.56 times of adult incarceration.

Female offenders had more property convictions (1.04) than violent convictions (.79), above all they had more drug convictions (1.18). Women may commit property crimes to support themselves or support their children or to support their illegal habits. It seems that drug abuse is one of the major factors behind women offenders' high incarceration rate in Oklahoma. Due to their social and economic hardship women turn to the welfare system to seek assistance to support themselves and their children.



### Summary

To briefly summarize, the female inmates surveyed on seven page questionnaire were disproportionately black, mostly young in their 20's and 30's, mostly below poverty-line, 42% were married or cohabited under common-law marriage (half of them had to marry several times), 86% of them had children even though only 42% were married and 57% had to support their children as heads of households. About a quarter of them had been convicted as juveniles; and half of the total sample had been previously convicted more than once; 41% were convicted for property offenses and (46%) of them had at least one drug conviction. Majority of them (84%) used beer/ wine/liquor, 64% used hard drugs, and 60% used marijuana. Most of the female offenders came from criminal background as 47 percent had other family members previously or currently incarcerated.

Table 2  
Characteristics of the Sample (N=191)

Variables	Categories	Number	Percentage
<u>Race</u>			
	White	89	46.8
	Black	79	41.6
	Indian	18	9.5
	Mexican	02	1.1
	Other	02	1.1
<u>Age</u>			
	20 or Less	10	5.2
	21-25	42	22.0
	26-30	44	23.0
	31-35	39	20.4
	36-40	28	14.7
	41-45	11	05.8
	46-50	12	06.3
	51-55	02	01.0
	56 or More	03	01.6
<u>Monthly Income</u>			
	None	28	15.2
	\$1-\$199	07	03.8
	\$200-\$399	25	13.6
	\$400-\$599	37	20.1
	\$600-\$799	20	10.9
	\$800-\$999	19	10.3
	\$1000 or More	48	26.1
<u>Years of Education</u>			
	8 or less	15	09.1
	9-12	116	79.9
	13-16	31	18.9
	18-20	02	01.2
<u>G.E.D.</u>			
	Yes	70	45.2
	No	85	54.8
<u>Vocational Training</u>			
	Yes	92	50.0
	No	92	50.0

Table 2-Continued

Variables	Categories	Number	Percentage
<u>Marital Status</u>			
	Single	69	36.3
	Legally Married	32	16.8
	Common-law	48	25.3
	Separated/Divorced	37	19.5
	Widow	4	2.1
<u>Times Married</u>			
	Once	67	50.8
	Twice	46	34.8
	Three Times or More	19	14.4
<u>Number of Children</u>			
	None	26	14.4
	One	35	19.4
	Two	44	24.4
	Three	39	21.7
	Four	21	11.7
	Five or more	15	8.4
<u>Types Of Community</u>			
	Rural	30	15.8
	Town	42	22.1
	Large City	118	62.1
<u>Head of Household</u>			
	Yes	108	57.1
	No	81	42.9
<u>Addicted Husband</u>			
	Yes	85	60.3
	No	56	39.7
<u>A single parent</u>			
	Yes	104	59.8
	No	70	40.2
<u>Unwed Mother</u>			
	Yes	75	47.8
	No	82	52.2

Table 2-Continued

Variables	Categories	Number	Percentage
<u>Times Convicted As</u>			
<u>An Adult</u>			
	None	06	03.2
	One	89	47.6
	Two	50	26.7
	Three or more	42	22.46
<u>Times Incarcerated As</u>			
<u>An Adult</u>			
	None	12	6.4
	One	102	54.5
	Two	49	26.2
	Three or more	24	12.83
<u>Time in adult corrections</u>			
	1-2 years	93	59.96
	3-4 years	45	28.84
	6-9 years	18	11.53
	10 years or more	15	09.62
<u>Time between incarceration</u>			
	1 year	35	41.11
	2 years	11	12.94
	3 years or more	39	45.88
<u>Drinking beer/wine/liquor</u>			
	Never	24	12.8
	A few times a year	53	28.3
	1-2 times a month	44	23.5
	1-2 times a week	38	20.3
	1-2 times a day	28	15.0
<u>How many drinks at a time?</u>			
	1-2 drinks	25	13.4
	3-4 drinks	62	33.2
	4 or more drinks	100	53.4

Table 2-Continued

Variables	Categories	Number	Percentage
<u>Use of Marijuana</u>			
	Never	46	31.9
	A few times a year	25	17.4
	1-2 times a month	14	9.6
	1-2 times a week	16	11.1
	1-2 times a day	43	29.9
<u>Use of Hard Drugs</u>			
	Never	55	35.9
	A few times a year	11	7.2
	1-2 times a month	13	8.5
	1-2 times a week	20	13.1
	1-2 times a day	54	35.3
<u>Multiple Hard Drug Use</u>			
	Never	58	45.3
	A few times a year	9	7.0
	1-2 times a month	14	10.9
	1-2 times a week	13	10.2
	1-2 times a day	34	26.6
<u>Type of recent offense</u>			
	Drugs	60	33.3
	Property	37	20.6
	Checks, Fraud	36	20.0
	Violent	31	17.2
	Sex and misconduct	16	8.9
<u>Number of prison violations</u>			
	None	111	63.4
	One	33	18.9
	Two	10	5.7
	Three or more	21	12.00
<u>Reason for recent offense</u>			
	Drugs	55	32.2
	Greed for money	43	25.1
	By association	20	11.7
	Personal problems	15	8.8
	Other reasons	14	8.2
	Money for drugs	11	6.4
	Family problems	07	4.1
	Innocent	06	3.5

Table 2-Continued

Variables	Categories	Number	Percentage
<u>Are your friends responsible for your trouble with law?</u>			
	Yes	66	35.1
	No	122	64.9
<u>Friends' responsibility</u>			
	Help and association	18	27.3
	Bad influence	15	22.7
	Drug use	14	21.2
	Wrong Crowd	8	12.1
	Other	5	7.6
	Own actions	4	6.1
	Snitched	2	3.0
<u>Other reasons for trouble with the law</u>			
	Drugs	31	26.5
	Family problems	18	15.4
	Spouse's problems	11	09.4
	Wrong crowd	10	08.5
<u>Having difficulties bringing up children</u>			
	Yes	57	36.1
	No	101	63.9
<u>Types of difficulties</u>			
	Problems with children	22	35.5
	Marital problems	07	11.3
	Economic problems	10	16.1
	Drug problems	11	17.7
	A single mother	07	11.3
	Other problems	05	08.00

Table 2-Continued

Variables	Categories	Number	Percentage
<u>Do you have a place to live?</u>			
	Yes	168	89.9
	No	19	10.2
<u>Who is taking care of your children</u>			
	Mother/parents	60	39.0
	Husband	32	20.8
	Grown	21	13.6
	Relatives	11	7.1
	DHS	11	07.1
	Sister	09	05.8
	Friends	05	3.2
	In-laws	05	3.2
<u>Needs after release</u>			
	Job/home	47	26.7
	A job	44	25.0
	Job/home and more	34	19.3
	Treatment and reform	29	16.5
	Education	10	5.7
	Place to live	04	2.3
	Car and Transportation	04	2.3
	Children	04	2.3
<u>Expected help from parents</u>			
	Fully	58	40.3
	Partially	48	33.33
	None	38	26.4
<u>Expected help from spouse</u>			
	Fully	40	40.0
	Partially	12	12.0
	None	48	48.0

Table 2-Continued

Variables	Categories	Number	Percentage
<u>Expected help from boyfriend</u>			
	Fully	21	24.7
	Partially	10	11.8
	None	54	63.5
<u>Expected help from troubles friends</u>			
	Partially	7	10.1
	None	62	89.9
<u>Expected help from other friends</u>			
	Fully	20	21.7
	Partially	28	30.4
	None	44	47.8
<u>Expected help from employer</u>			
	Fully	34	33.7
	Partially	24	23.8
	None	43	42.6
<u>Run away from home</u>			
	Yes	89	47.8
	No	97	52.2
<u>Reason for running away</u>			
	Sex/Phys. abuse	21	23.1
	Personal problems	19	20.9
	Dysfunctional family	14	15.4
	Rebellion	11	12.1
	Mother	9	9.9
	Get married	8	8.8
	Abuse by step father	6	6.6
	Peer pressure	3	3.3
<u>Problems in social life</u>			
	Yes	102	61.8
	No	63	38.2



Table 2-Continued

Variables	Categories	Number	Percentage
<u>Problems with friends</u>			
	Drugs	24	42.1
	Influence	14	24.6
	Other	12	21.1
	Wrong crowd	07	12.3
<u>Problems with family</u>			
	Lack of communication	17	32.1
	Dysfunctional	15	28.3
	Drug use	08	15.1
	Other	07	13.2
	Authoritarian	06	11.3
<u>Problems in Marriage</u>			
	Abusive spouse	24	48.0
	Drug use	15	30.0
	Unstable relation	07	14.0
	Other	02	4.0
	Criminal spouse	02	4.0
<u>Problems with relatives</u>			
	Other	08	34.8
	No communication	05	21.7
	Drug use	05	21.7
	No support	05	21.7
<u>Problems at school</u>			
	Other	08	34.4
	School in general	07	29.2
	Drugs	05	20.8
	Not interested	04	16.7
<u>Problems with siblings</u>			
	Other	11	55.0
	Drug use	05	25.0
	Fighting	04	20.0

Table 2-Continued

Variables	Categories	Number	Percentage
<u>Employment before recent incarceration</u>			
	Full-time	101	54.9
	Part-time	35	19.0
	Unemployed	48	26.1
<u>Previous jobs</u>			
	Services/outside	32	21.2
	Sales	25	16.6
	Technical	18	11.9
	Clerical	18	11.9
	Machines	16	10.6
	Other	10	6.6
	Management	9	6.0
	Labor	9	6.0
	Professional	8	5.3
	Services/home	6	4.0
<u>Happy with these jobs</u>			
	Yes	134	87.0
	No	20	13.0
<u>Occupations</u>			
	Other	43	26.9
	Services/outside	23	14.4
	Sales	19	11.9
	Technical	15	9.4
	Management	13	8.1
	Machines	12	7.5
	Clerical	11	6.9
	Labor	10	6.3
	Professional	7	4.4
	Services/home	7	4.4

Table 2-Continued

Variables	Categories	Number	Percentage
<u>Skills for employment</u>			
	Clerical	34	20.5
	Technical	32	19.3
	Other	27	16.3
	Services/outside	19	11.4
	Professional	12	7.2
	Machines	12	7.2
	Sales	11	6.6
	Labor	8	4.8
	Services/home	6	3.6
	Management	5	3.0
<u>Family problems caused by work</u>			
	Yes	23	15.5
	No	125	84.5
<u>Satisfied with wages</u>			
	Yes	117	67.2
	No	57	32.8
<u>Being a female difficulties</u>			
	Yes	70	37.6
	No	116	62.4

Table 2-Continued

Variables	Categories	Number	Percentage
<u>Types of being a female difficulties</u>			
	No skills	15	29.4
	Conviction	12	23.5
	Discrimination	09	17.6
	Scarce jobs	06	11.8
	Low pay	06	11.8
	Racial	03	5.9
<u>Ever received welfare assistance</u>			
	Yes	117	62.9
	No	69	37.1
<u>Years with welfare</u>			
	One	38	37.6
	Two	21	20.8
	Three	10	9.9
	Four or more	32	31.8
<u>Was the welfare adequate?</u>			
	Yes	38	44.2
	No	48	55.8
<u>Problems with welfare agencies</u>			
	Yes	31	18.3
	No	138	81.7
<u>Types of welfare problems</u>			
	Not helpful	10	40.0
	Other	08	32.0
	Not enough	05	20.0
	Deduction if employed	02	8.0
<u>Any role difficulties</u>			
	Yes	49	27.2
	No	131	72.8
<u>Types of role difficulties</u>			
	Role demand	12	25.0
	Being a mother	10	20.8
	Husband	10	20.8
	Discrimination	07	14.6
	Drugs	03	6.3
	Being in Oklahoma	03	6.3
	Psychological	02	4.2

Table 2-Continued

Variables	Categories	Number	Percentage
<u>Other family members incarcerated</u>			
	Yes	88	47.1
	No	99	52.9
<u>Friends having similar problems but not arrested</u>			
	Several	91	49.2
	Some	52	28.1
	None	42	22.7
<u>Why you are in trouble and they are not?</u>			
	Got caught	29	19.9
	Not caught	24	16.4
	Others	24	16.4
	Blame self	22	15.1
	System	12	8.2
	Snitched	11	7.5
	Rich	9	6.2
	Drugs	9	6.2
	Don't know	6	4.1
<u>In what way you are different</u>			
	Better and I'll reform	68	49.6
	Arrested	19	13.9
	Other reasons	16	11.7
	Blame self	10	7.3
	Helpful	9	6.6
	Use of drugs	8	5.8
	Follower	3	2.2
	Don't know	2	1.5

Table 3  
 Number, Means and Standard Deviation for Selected  
 Sociodemographic and Legal Variables for the Sample Data (N=191)

Variable	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation
Years of Education	164	11.24	2.21
Number of Children	180	2.28	1.66
Age at first Arrest	188	23.57	8.76
Age at first Conviction	187	26.26	8.03
Juvenile Convictions	174	0.38	0.91
Adult Convictions	187	2.01	1.62
Adult Incarceration	187	1.56	1.82
Property Convictions	70	1.04	1.37
Violent Convictions	78	0.79	0.68
Drug Convictions	96	1.18	0.85
Number of Prison Violations	175	0.92	1.81
Years on Welfare	101	3.10	2.53

## II. Characteristics of Female Probationers and Parolees

Terminated Between 1989-1992 (N=6259).

Data for this section were collected from Termination Summaries provided by Planning and Research Division of Oklahoma Department of Corrections. This data set contains termination information on 36781 persons. The data set were checked for accuracy, and it was refined to 32443, out of which 6259 (19.2%) were females.

A research grant was awarded to the major advisor to analyze the above mentioned data, relevant results were used in construction the profile of the female offenders in Oklahoma. Table 4 shows numbers, and percentages for selected variables, for the female offenders under Parole and Probation supervision. In addition, the table shows comparison between white and black female offenders on the same set of variables.

### Marital Status

Almost one quarter of the total female under supervision were never married (24%), and about (30%) were married, divorced and separated comprised 31.39%. When controlling for race; black showed a higher percentage of single, never married (42.25%), the whites showed a lower percentage of single, never married (16.60%) and a higher percentage of marriages (36.62%), and a higher percentage of divorcees compared to the black percentages of (13.82) marriages and (21.46) of divorce. These results are somewhat similar to those results obtained from the sample data. It seems that the institution of marriage is comparatively still more intact within the white offenders' population rather than that of the blacks.

### Employment

Their employment situation, at termination, did not make a happy picture as only about 39% were employed full-time; and another 1.5% were employed full time

only seasonally. About 10 percent were employed part time. On the other hand, about 11% were unemployed, but seeking for a job, and a higher percentage 21% were unemployed and not seeking a job.

Compared to the whites, black female inmates seem to suffer from unfavorable job opportunities. More of the blacks were unemployed and not seeking a job in comparison with the whites (32% Vs 16%), more of the blacks were unemployed and seeking a job (14.9% Vs 9.65). A lower percentage of black female inmates were employed full-time (32%) compared to 42.7 of the whites.

### Income

The income of female probationers and Parolees is somewhat small. About 28% of them had no income at all, another 22.84% made an income ranging from \$1.00 to \$399.00 a month. Only 7% made a monthly income of \$1,000 or more. In Sandhu's study (1993) those who had no income at all were the main contributors to Probation and Parole failure (51.29%).

A higher percentage of the black female offenders had no income compared to the whites (31.09% Vs 26.95%). Another 27.36% of blacks made an income ranging from \$1.00 to \$399, compared to 19.84% of the whites made the same income. While only about 3.76% of the blacks made an income of \$1000 or more, the whites females made about two times more than the blacks 8.75%.

### Education

As many as 45.85% were reported to have 12 years of education or less, another 8.67% reported having GED, and about 30% were high school graduates. Only about 13% reported some college education, while only about 1% reported graduating from college. Graduate education seemed a far reaching goal for female offenders, less than half of one percent reported some graduate education and



graduate degrees. This low level of educational achievement reflected on inmates job opportunities and probably their behavior as well.

When comparing black and white female offenders, in general blacks showed a lower level of education than the whites. Whites excelled the blacks in GED, college and graduate education, while more of the blacks had 12 years of education or less compared to the whites (46% Vs 45%).

### Alcohol and Drug Abuse

It is a common knowledge that the abuse of drugs and alcohol among the offender population is rampant and many of them commit crime under the influence of drugs (Sandhu 1993, AL-Mosleh 1989). About 34% of the probationers reported different degrees of interference of alcohol and drugs with their functioning, while 66.2% reported no interference. Those who reported no interference with functioning does not mean that they are not abusing any drugs, but the other 34% were definitely abusing alcohol and drugs to the degree that this abuse interfered with their functioning.

### Previous Record

Sixty-six percent of the total female Probationers and Parolees had no prior conviction, while 39.97% had 1-3 convictions and 2.93% had 4 or more convictions. About 71% had no previous probation, and 22% reported 1-3 probations and 6.56% reported 4 or more probations. blacks reported lower percentage of no previous convictions compared to the whites (61% Vs 69%). On the other hand blacks had more previous convictions (1-3 times) than the whites (35% Vs 29%). Almost had double the number of previous convictions of 4 or more times than the whites (4.46% Vs 2.40%). The same pattern apply for previous

probations. blacks had more experience of probation than what the whites had (see Table 17). It seems that the black female offenders had more involvement with the legal system than any other race, and early involvement with the system may affect future arrest and conviction, it makes them more vulnerable to commit crime and get arrested or convicted.

### Summary

Oklahoma correctional institutions were supervising 36781 offenders between 1989 to 1992 , 80.49% were males and 19.5% were females. Whites offenders constituted 68% of the total caseload. Blacks offenders constituted 24% of the total Probation and Parole population. Only 41% of total female offenders were employed full-time; and 32% were unemployed. Less than one-third were married (30%); one-quarter were single (never married). Racially; more of the whites were married (37%); and divorced (26%), compared to 14% and 22% married and divorce black female offenders.

Probationers and Parolees had lower income; more than one-fourth of them (28%) reported no income; about 23% had income from \$1-\$399; only small percentage (7%) had income of \$1000 or more. Whites on average had a better income than the black counterparts.

Educationally, about 46% reported 12 years of education or less, only 13 percent with some college education, and only one percent graduated from college. It seemed that majority of them were high school or college drop-outs.

One-third reported that drugs had interfered with their functioning, and around 40 percent had 1-3 previous convictions, and 3 percent had 4 or more previous convictions; about one-fourth had 1-3 previous probations, and about 7 percent had 4 or more probations. Racially, blacks, on average had more previous convictions or probations than the whites.

Table 4  
 Characteristics of Female Parolees and Probationers  
 Discharged Between 1989 and 1992, (N=6259)

Variables	All Races (N=6259)		Blacks (N=1798)		Whites (N=4058)	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<u>Age</u>						
<=20	202	(03.23)	62	(03.45)	132	(03.25)
21-25	1239	(19.80)	376	(20.91)	798	(19.66)
26-30	1574	(25.15)	479	(26.64)	993	(24.47)
31-35	1367	(21.84)	414	(23.03)	865	(21.32)
36-40	863	(13.79)	239	(13.29)	569	(14.02)
41-45	471	(07.53)	108	(06.01)	326	(08.03)
46-50	268	(04.28)	63	(03.50)	184	(04.53)
50-55	150	(02.40)	34	(01.89)	99	(02.44)
=>56	125	(02.00)	23	(01.28)	092	(02.27)
<u>Marital Status</u>						
Single, (never married)	1487	(24.01)	0752	(42.25)	0666	(16.60)
Married	1832	(29.59)	0246	(13.82)	1469	(36.62)
Common-law	0680	(10.98)	0159	(08.93)	0470	(11.71)
No Cohabitation	0120	(01.94)	0052	(02.92)	0061	(01.52)
Separated	0391	(06.31)	0146	(08.20)	0211	(05.26)
Divorced	1553	(25.08)	0382	(21.46)	1060	(26.42)
Widowed	0129	(02.08)	0043	(02.42)	0075	(01.87)
<u>Employment at Termination</u>						
Unemployed:						
(and not seeking)	1309	(21.15)	0567	(32.03)	0653	(16.24)
Unemployed:						
(seeking)	689	(11.13)	0264	(14.92)	0388	(09.65)
Full-time (35-40 hours)	2435	(39.35)	0568	(32.09)	1717	(42.71)
Full-time (seasonal)	094	(01.52)	0021	(01.19)	068	(01.69)
Part-time	651	(10.52)	0168	(09.49)	436	(10.85)
Student	224	(03.62)	0056	(03.16)	154	(03.83)
Homemaker	577	(09.32)	0066	(03.73)	463	(11.52)
Retired/Disabled	209	(03.38)	0060	(03.39)	141	(03.51)

Table 4-Continued

Variables	All Races (N=6259)		Blacks (N=1798)		Whites (N=4058)	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<u>Income</u>						
None	1724	(28.12)	546	(31.09)	1072	(26.95)
\$1-\$199	375	(06.12)	127	(07.23)	226	(05.68)
\$200-\$399	1025	(16.72)	371	(21.13)	563	(14.16)
\$400-\$599	1242	(20.26)	370	(21.07)	794	(19.96)
\$600-\$799	824	(13.44)	182	(10.36)	585	(14.71)
\$800-\$999	505	(08.24)	94	(05.35)	389	(09.78)
\$1000 or more	435	(07.10)	66	(03.76)	348	(08.75)
<u>Education</u>						
1-12 Yrs	2844	(45.85 )	820	(46.07)	1809	(44.97)
GED	538	(08.67)	114	(06.40)	383	(09.52)
High school grad.	1881	(30.32)	602	(33.82)	1178	(29.29)
Some college	828	(13.35)	224	(12.58)	558	(13.87)
College graduate	79	(01.27)	13	(00.73)	61	(01.52)
Some graduate work	21	(00.34)	4	(00.22)	17	(00.42)
Graduate degree	12	(00.19)	3	(00.17)	9	(00.22)
<u>Alcohol /Drug Abuse</u>						
Yes	2094	(33.76)	655	(36.76)	1280	(31.34)
No	4188	(66.24)	1127	(63.24)	2742	(68.66)
<u>Prior convictions</u>						
None	4124	(66.10)	1087	(60.62)	2774	(68.60)
1-3	1932	(30.97)	626	(34.91)	1173	(29.01)
4 or more	183	(02.93)	80	(04.46)	97	(02.40)
<u>Prior probations</u>						
None	4447	(71.30)	1176	(65.63)	2973	(73.52)
1-3	1381	(22.14)	462	(25.78)	840	(20.77)
4 or more	409	(06.56)	154	(08.59)	231	(05.71)

III.. Characteristics of Female inmates Incarcerated in Oklahoma Prisons Between 1988-1992 (N=3636), in Comparison with the Characteristics of the National Female Inmates as Published by the U.S. Department of Justice<sup>1</sup>.

The data for this section were provided by the Planning and Research Division of the Oklahoma Department of Corrections, which were stored in 12 different computer files, each file contained information on some aspect of the female inmate population covering the period from 1988 to 1992. This study made use of the usable data from all files.

This section presents the characteristics of female inmates admitted in Oklahoma prisons between 1988-1992, in comparison with the characteristics of female inmates on a national level as extracted from official data. In addition, this section presents some comparison with Oklahoma Probationers and Parolees when it deemed appropriate.

Race

Racially, black females accounted for 40.0% of all females incarcerated in Oklahoma during the years 1988-92. It appears that the black female inmates are disproportionately represented in the prison population. (see Table 5)

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<sup>1</sup>This section is based on a recent research completed by Dr. Harjit Sandhu.

Table 5  
Race Distribution of Oklahoma Female Offenders:

<u>Race</u>	<u>(N=3636)</u> <u>Incarcerated (1988-92)</u>		<u>(N=6259)</u> <u>Probationers and Parolees (1989-992)</u>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
White	1661	53.0	3632	63.7
Black	1254	40.0	1687	29.6
Hispanic	44	1.4	48	0.8
Indians	175	5.6	337	5.9

It is noteworthy that while 40% of the women sent to prison were black, only 29.6% of the women placed on probation and parole were black; and the reverse was true of white women: while 53.0% of the women sent to the prison were white, 63.7% of the women placed on probation were white. Black females were also found to be more likely to be incarcerated as compared to black males.

Table 6  
Female Versus Male Offenders Incarcerated in Oklahoma by Race (1988-92)  
N=Female 3,134 N=Male 22,106

<u>Race</u> <u>Gender</u>	<u>White</u>		<u>Black</u>		<u>Hispanics</u>		<u>Indians</u>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Female	1,661	53.00	1,254	40.01	44	1.40	175	5.59
Male	13,116	59.33	6,817	30.84	721	3.26	1452	6.57

Nationwide, looking at the composition of the female inmate population, the percentage of black female inmates has ranged between 46.1 in the year 1986 to 47.01% in the year 1992, but these figures came from a higher base of 12.25% black population in the nation. Oklahoma, with a smaller base of 7.43% black population, has a rate of 40.0% black female incarcerations. Also, it should be noted that while in the nation the percentage of black female and black male inmates is close to each

in the nation the percentage of black female and black male inmates is close to each other (46.1% versus 45.3%), the percentage of black female and black male inmates in Oklahoma tends to differ widely (40.0% versus 30.8%) as shown in Table 7.

So while in the national rates of incarceration, the male and female percentage is equally represented, in Oklahoma the black females represent a disproportionately higher percentage as compared to their male counterparts. All of the above leads to the necessity of a special study of black female incarceration which is enormously high in Oklahoma. There must be some legal, social and personal circumstances behind black women's high vulnerability to incarceration. One racial difference noticed by Sandhu (1993) was that:

many more black female probationers and parolees (42.57%) reported their marital status as "single, never married" as against 16.20% of their white counterparts. Yet a large number of them had children to support.

Table 7  
Race and Ethnicity of Prison Inmates by Gender: Nation Versus Oklahoma

<u>Race</u>	Percent of Prison Inmates			
	Nation*		Oklahoma**	
	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>
White	39.6%	39.5%	53.0%	59.3%
Black	46.1%	45.3%	40.0%	30.8%
Hispanic	11.7%	12.6%	1.4%	3.3%
Other Race	2.5%	2.5%	5.6%	6.6%
Number of Inmates	19,812	430,604	3,134	22,106

Source: Women in Prison 1991 (The data pertains to the year 1986).

\*\*Oklahoma Department of Corrections data: 1988-92.

### AGE

As expected, most of the women inmates were in their 20's or early 30's and that was true of both the inmates and the probationers/parolees. Their age levels are compared in Table 8.

Table 8

Age Levels of Female Inmates (N=3134) and Probationers/Parolees (N=5704)

<u>Age Levels</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Below 20 Years	6.5	2.6	5.2
Lower 20s	20.5	19.8	22.0
Upper 20s	25.6	25.1	23.0
Lower 30s	22.1	22.1	20.4
Upper 30s	13.2	13.9	14.7
Lower 40s	6.4	07.6	5.8
Upper 40s	3.2	4.4	6.3
Lower 50s	1.2	2.4	1.0
56 and above	1.2	2.1	1.6

There were the same percentage of women both in the institutions and under probation/parole supervision up to age 30. But at age levels 40s and 50s there were more probationers/parolees.

It is an established fact that criminal tendencies decline with aging. It is noteworthy that female offenders are generally arrested and convicted for their first crime a little later in life as compared to the male offenders; and as such they are generally older than males and drop out from criminal activities a little later in life. So the female offenders are late starters and late quitters. The national survey supports the above statement.

This "late starter-late quitter" pattern on the part of the female offenders has persisted over the years. Looking at the probationers/parolees data, it is interesting to note that there is a higher percentage of black female probationers at every age level up to age 35; and after that the white females are higher at every age level. So the white female offender fits in with the "late starter-late quitter" pattern more than the black female offender.



Table 9  
 Characteristics of State Prison Inmates, By Age and Sex, U. S. Data 1986

<u>Age</u>	<u>Female</u> <u>N=19,812</u>	<u>Male</u> <u>N=263,484</u>
17 or younger	.2%	.5%
18-24	22.3%	26.9%
25-34	50.5%	45.5%
35-44	19.6%	19.4%
45-54	5.5%	5.2%
55-64	1.5%	1.9%
65 or older	.4%	.6%

Women offenders seem to have more problems in their upper 20s and lower 30s, which may have originated earlier, but get complicated in their lower 30s. Male criminals start dropping out of criminal life around age 30. About 48% of the female inmates and 52.50% of the female probationers/parolees are above age 29. All of them start resolving their problems in upper 30s, or at least drop out of criminal statistics.

### Marital Status

The national marital statistics of female offenders differ somewhat from those of Oklahoma. Both sets of statistics are presented in Table 10 for comparison. Oklahoma's female offenders are a lot more married than the national sample, although the combined percentage of separated and divorced is about the same. The national figure of widowed amounting to 6.7% was more than three times larger than Oklahoma's figure of (2.1%).

Table 10  
Marital Status of Female Offenders: National (Year 1986) and Oklahoma  
(Years 1988- 1992)

<u>Marital Status</u>	<u>National</u>		<u>Oklahoma</u>	
	Female		All Probationers	
	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Inmates</u>	<u>Parolees (M&amp;F)</u>
Married	20.1%	20.4%	29.4%	30.7%
Common Law Marriage	----	----	12.6%	10.0%
Widowed	06.7%	01.6%	2.1%	0.8%
Divorced	20.5%	18.0%	25.2%	18.0%
Separated	11.0%	5.0%	6.5%	4.1%
Single, Never Married	41.7%	54.3%	24.1%	35.2%
Number of Inmates	19,812	430,604	3,636	28,872

### Children of Mothers in Prison

Regardless of marital status, most female inmates are mothers, as Table 11 shows. While in 483 cases there was no information whether they have children or not, seven percent said that they had no child. The rest of the table very well resembles the national figures: one child 31.7%, 2 children 28.7%, 3-4 children 29.1%, 5-6 children 8.3%, 7 or more 2.1%.

Table 11  
Number of Children of Female Inmates admitted between (1988-1992) N=3,636,

<u>Inmates Data</u>		
Number of Children	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
None	220	7.0
1	1,053	33.4
2	796	25.2
3	601	19.1
4	302	9.6
5 or more	181	5.7
Number of Inmates	3,153	100.00
No information	483	

### Education

Nationally, female inmates are somewhat better educated than male inmates, more so at the college level. Oklahoma's female inmates' last grade completed is higher than their national female counterparts.

Table 12  
Last Grade Completed by National and Oklahoma's Female Inmates

<u>Education</u>	<u>National 1986</u>	<u>Oklahoma 1988-92</u>	
	Female <u>N=19,812</u>	Male <u>N=430,604</u>	Female <u>N=3,636</u>
8th grade or less	16.5%	21.0%	5.9%
Some high school	40.4%	40.8%	32.5%
High school grad	28.4%	27.4%	46.6%
Some college or more	14.8%	10.8%	15.0%

Better education of Oklahoma's female offenders is a healthy sign which should bring a message of hope for final recovery from their social and legal problems.

### Pre-Arrest Employment

Table 13 shows (with some adaptation) comparisons between the national employment and Oklahoma employment of female offenders.

Table 13

#### Pre-Arrest Employment of Female Offenders National Versus Oklahoma

Pre-Arrest Employment	National (1986) Female Inmates	Oklahoma (1988-92) Female Probationers/Parolees
Employed	47.1%	64.7%
Full-time	37.1%	39.9%
Part-time	10.0%	24.8%
Not Employed	52.9%	31.9%
Seeking	22.0%	10.9%
Not Seeking	30.9%	21.0%
Retired/Disabled	NA	03.4%
Number of Inmates	19,812	3,636

Oklahoma's female probationers/parolees were reported to have a better employment rate (about two-third) as against the national rate (about one half), but probationers and parolees are supposed to hold a job. Female inmates' employment situation may not be as promising as that of the probationers/parolees.

### Legal Background

This section deals with female offenders' commitment offense, sentences, length of sentences, alcohol and drug abuse.

Commitment Offense: The commitment offenses of the female inmates admitted to Oklahoma correctional institutions are presented in Table 14. The Oklahoma percentages of various offenses could not be compared with the national percentages as the national percentages were based on the existing populations in

State institutions, and Oklahoma's data were collected from the five years' receptions from 1988 to 1992.

Table 14

Percent of Most Serious Offenses of Female Prison Inmates Admitted  
in Oklahoma (1988-92) and Male and Female Inmates  
Admitted Nationally (1986)

<u>Most Serious Offense</u>	<u>Oklahoma</u>	<u>U.S.</u>	
	<u>Female %</u>	<u>Female %</u>	<u>Male %</u>
<u>Violent Offenses</u>	9.2	23.2	34.3
Murder	1.4		
Negligent Manslaughter	1.5		
Kidnapping	0.2		
Rape	0.0		
Other Sexual Assault	0.0		
Robbery	2.9		
Assault	2.1		
Other Violent	1.1		
<u>Property Offenses</u>	48.0	48.0	40.5
Burglary I and II	3.0		
Larceny/Theft	20.0		
Motor Vehicle Theft	1.2		
Arson	0.4		
Embezzlement	2.7		
Fraud	4.0		
Forgery	8.5		
Bogus Check	5.8		
Other Property	2.4		
<u>Drug Offenses</u>	34.6	21.5	15.9
Possession	15.0		
Trafficking	19.6		
<u>Public-Order Offenses</u>	5.2	6.0	8.0
Weapon	1.4		
Other Public-order (DUI)	3.8		

Female offender's major offenses are property offenses (48%) half of which are offenses like fraud, bogus check writing, forgery, and embezzlement which account for 22% of all serious crimes of female inmates. More than one-third of female inmates are incarcerated for drug-related offenses.

Prior Sentence: More female inmates are known to have shorter juvenile and adult criminal history as compared to those of male inmates and that is also true of Oklahoma female inmates as well.

Table 15  
Prior Sentences of Inmates: National (1986) and Oklahoma (1988-1992)

<u>Number of Prior Sentences</u>	<u>National</u>		<u>Oklahoma</u>	
	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>All (Male &amp; Female)</u>
None	31.1	18.0	75.5	64.2
1	22.3	19.8	18.1	23.0
2	15.5	16.6	4.6	8.7
3-5	18.5	26.2	1.6	4.0
6-10	7.8	12.7	0.2	0.8
11 or more	4.7	6.7	0.0	0.2
Number of Inmates	19,812	430,604	3,636	25,202

Oklahoma's female inmates have a far shorter criminal history than the rest of the country and, as such, Oklahoma's practice of higher incarceration needs a careful study. Relatively, most of them were sentenced for property offenses and drug offenses for which alternative sentencing and intermediate sanctions may be more suitable. Black inmates (males and females combined) had more priors (31.8%) than the white inmates (21.3%).

Length of Sentence (1988-92): The majority of the female inmates (45.2%) were sentenced up to 3 years; 22.1% between three to five years; 6.7 % between six to eight years; another

7.3% between nine to eleven years; 2.6% between 12 to 17 years; 2.3% between 18 to 20 years; 2.6% above 20 years; and in 11% of the cases, the sentence was not available. The national sentencing statistics are presented in a different format (see Table 16).

Table 16  
Average Maximum Sentence for New Court Commitments and Time Served by First  
Releases for Female State Prison Inmates, National Data, Year 1986

Most Serious Offense	Mean Maximum Sentence of Women Admitted in 1986	Mean Time Served by Female Inmates Released in 1986
All Offenses	66 months	16 months
Violent Offenses	108 "	27 "
Property Offenses	53 "	13 "
Drug Offenses	54 "	14 "
Public Order Offenses	47 "	12 "
Other Offenses	48 "	15 "
Number of Inmates	8,506	9,471

### Drug and Crime

Drug abuse by females is all pervasive in their criminality. We have already seen that 34.6% of them were incarcerated for possession and drug trafficking. Nationwide the rate of arrest of females for drug violations has increased at about twice the rate of men over the decade of the 1980s. A special report published by the Bureau of Justice Statistics on Women in Prison (1991) has the following to say:

Over the 1980s the number of arrests of women for drug violations increased at about twice the rate of men. Between 1980 and 1989, there was a 307% increase in the number of women arrested for drug crimes, including possession, manufacturing, or sale of illegal drugs. Over the same period, arrests of men for drug violations increased 147%. While women accounted for less than 11% of the adults arrested for drug violations in 1980, they accounted for 20% of the increase in drug arrests between 1980 and 1989.

Increasing drug violations have heavily contributed to increasing female incarcerations in Oklahoma as well. Of those incarcerated for drug violations, 70% were in their 20s; race-wise 41% were black, 54% were white. Eleven percent of the incarcerated were under the influence of alcohol at the time of offense and 23% were under the influence of drugs at the time of offense or arrest.

What kind of drugs were these females using at the time of crime or arrest? Twenty-three percent of those incarcerated confessed using (or abusing) one or more than one of the following drugs as shown in Table 17.

Table 17  
Percentage of Female Inmates in Oklahoma Using Drugs Prior  
to Current Incarceration (Years 1988-92), N=3,636

<u>Drug</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Narcotics	2.9
Depressants	0.7
Stimulants	
Cocaine	9.8
Crack	1.2
Amphetamines	0.6
Other Stimulants	1.5
Hallucinogens	0.2
Marijuana	3.9
Paint	0.1
Unknown Drug	0.9
No Drug Use	77.3

The above drug information in regard to the inmates seems somewhat conservative, because 33.7% of their counterparts under probation and parole supervision confessed that alcohol/drug abuse was interfering with their functioning, and in some cases very severely. Ninety-six percent of the abusers had one to five positive urine analysis.



## Summary

Black females are disproportionately represented in prison admissions. Black females account for 3.8% of the total Oklahoma population, yet they comprise 40% of the female prison admissions. A black female is more likely to be incarcerated rather than placed on probation as compared to her white counterpart and also is more likely to be incarcerated as compared to a black male. Black female inmates may have problems needing a special study. Age-wise, most of the female inmates were in their 20s and early 30s and that was true of both the inmates and the probationers/parolees. Yet at age levels 40s and 50s there were more probationers/parolees. As compared to males, females start crime later and quit later in life. And, this "late starter-late quitter" pattern fits in more with the white female offender rather than with black female offenders.

More of the female inmates are married or cohabiting under common law, and also much more burdened with worries about their children as compared to their male counterparts. Also, more of the female inmates are divorced, and single parents. These problems relate to the infra structure of the society.

Compared to the nation, Oklahoma has a lower percentage of violent offenders, but a higher percentage of drug offenders. This necessitates a very effective drug abuse program both inside the institutions and in the communities.

## CHAPTER V

### FINDINGS

As figures would show, Oklahoma's rate of female incarceration is more than twice the national rate and the worse is that it is increasing every year. Why do Oklahoma's females have such a high rate of incarceration? In an attempt to find out a scientific explanation, one has to look into the following:

- 1) Is Oklahoma's criminal justice system taking a harsher view of female criminality?
- 2) Are there sociodemographic characteristics (race, marital status, income) which are associated with high rate of incarceration?
- 3) Do women perceive some structural barriers in the infra-structure of the society which render them vulnerable for breaking laws of the society?
- 4) If there are some other personal problems (such as drug abuse) leading them to criminality!

On account of the complicated nature of the inquiry, the researcher proposed to look into the characterization of female offenders, and to seek answers to the higher rate of incarceration. This study, therefore, explores 1) the rate of female incarceration in Oklahoma and (2) provides a thorough examination of the characteristics gathered from a selected sample of 191 female inmates.

The preceding chapter examined the characteristics of female inmates received by Oklahoma's correctional institutions during the five years' period of 1988 to 1992, and also examined the characteristics of female probationers and parolees as well, released during the period 1989-1992. In addition, a thorough examination of the selected sample of 191 female inmates was presented. This chapter presents in-depth statistical analysis of sample data. The sample was analyzed from different angles and different views. For instance, the sample was analyzed on comparative basis; the blacks versus white female offenders; violent versus non-violent; repeaters versus first-timers, drug users versus non-drug users were compared. In addition, the sample was examined thoroughly on the basis of family types and household composition. Single parents, unwed-mothers and female heads of households who were groaning under the burdens of running a family of two to three children without a spouse, without marriage, and without adequate income, were grouped together for analysis and given the name "the triple loading syndrome".

After thorough analysis, a comprehensive examination of the criminal justice processes is presented. This analysis is based on official statistics, for the period of five years (1988-1992). While searching an answer to Oklahoma's highest rate of incarceration in the nation, this researcher thought fit to seek the perceptions of incarcerated offenders, because they must have an opinion being the consumers of the justice system.

### Analysis of the Sample

#### Race Differences Among Female Inmates: The white Versus The black

In this section black and white women offenders were compared on several sets of variables covering, personal, social, legal, and work and employment aspects of their life. In this sample 79 participants were black and 89 were white.

Race and the Workplace: The white female inmates seemed to enjoy relatively better opportunities in life, more of them (58.61% Vs. 32.015) were making above \$600 a month, a low-income indeed, yet higher than their black counterparts. Educationally too, more of the white inmates had better opportunity and perhaps higher motivation to complete their GED (53.62% Vs 30.30%). In the work world, while the white inmates, before incarceration were working in skilled managerial or professional positions; their black counterparts ended up in unskilled jobs. It is noteworthy that while white female offenders had better opportunities in the arena of jobs, yet more of them felt discriminated against, had complaints, and developed problems with their management. It appears, having somewhat better opportunities (in education and job opportunities) the white female offenders wanted to pursue lower middle-class life ambitions, but when she was frustrated in the realization of her goals, she reacted in frustration with complaints and deviant acts. It may be added here that more of the black female offenders made use of welfare payments and they also stayed longer on welfare as compared to the white offenders.

Race and the Married Life of Female Inmates: More of the white female inmates were married (22.47% Vs 8.86%) and also more of them were separated and divorced. They made a poor selection of husbands (their men were addicted), the marriage failed, and they remarried many more times than their black counterparts (60.28% Vs 26.84%).

On the other hand, the black female offenders also wanted their place in the sun, but actually landed in low-paying jobs for lack of better opportunities, or lack of skills (few had GED). More of them made less than \$600 a month, came from large cities (75.64% Vs 52.81%) where they had all kind of large city-problems. Their marital circumstances were also not comforting either. More of the black female inmates were single (48.1% Vs 26.97%), but more of them had children out-

of-wedlock (67.74% Vs 30.67%), they were raising them as single parent (76.06% Vs 43.21%), and relatively more of them were heads of the household (65.82% Vs 47.73%) with meager resources. Also, the families of black female inmates reflected a subculture of crime, because more of their members were incarcerated either concurrently or previously as compared to the families of their white counterparts (57.69% Vs 41.38%).

Race and the Drug Use: Even though drinking and drugs were found very common with female inmates of all races; but more of the white female inmates tended to be inebriate with excessive drinking than their black counterparts (34.09% Vs 15.38%). Also, more of the white were using marijuana (69.86% Vs 66.67%), and more of the blacks confessed using hard drugs (66.22% Vs 60.66%). The white female inmates blamed the excessive use of drug for their crimes, and the black inmates blamed the "wrong crowd" and their criminal boyfriends who introduced them to drugs.

The white female offenders gave an impression that they were impulsive hedonists, who wanted to live it up. They wanted to enjoy their kind of social life, but with their irresponsible behavior, they developed problems with their families and friends. They indicated that their excessive drinking and drugs led to severance of communication with their families and friends. They were confused about their role; the white female offenders wanted to seek counseling, while their black counterparts wanted jobs. Expectedly; clinical supportive therapy is the likely choice of the white female offenders. But only a better paying job can resolve black offender's problems. One gets the impression that while white female offenders get into trouble with law seeking fun, the black female seeks resolution to burdensome problems of joblessness, single motherhood, and raising children.

### General Differences

"T-Test" was used to compare the means of both black and white female offenders on a number of selected sociodemographic and legal variables. Significant differences were found only in the number of children, and in the number of years on welfare. On the average black female offenders had 3 children, while the white female offenders had 2 children. On the other hand, black female offenders were more likely to depend on welfare for their subsistence, and on average they stayed longer than the white female offenders (3 years Vs 2 years).

While not statistically significant, there are a number of noticeable differences between whites black offenders (see Table 19). For instance, it seems that black female offenders had earlier contact with the criminal justice system, they had been arrested on average around six months earlier then the whites (23.59 Vs 24.06) and they had more convictions by juvenile courts (0.45 Vs 0.30). On the other hand both races had similar age at first conviction (26.58 Vs 26.16), and both races had more adult convictions compared to juvenile convictions. This finding is in agreement with the literature that women as compared to men start criminal activity later in their life and quit later.

While the white female offenders had more adult convictions, yet they had fewer adult incarcerations compared to the black female offenders (1.47 whites Vs 1.58 blacks). The black female offenders had more violent convictions than the whites (1.10 Vs 1.03), and had fewer drug convictions than the whites (1.03 Vs 1.34). The white had a higher number of prison violations than the blacks (1.00 for the white Vs .68 for the blacks).

Table 18

## Comparison Between White and Black Female Offenders.

	Whites (N=89)		Blacks (N=79)		
Variables	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Chi-square
<u>Monthly Income</u>					
None	14	16.09	13	17.33	
<\$600	24	26.96	42	53.16	
>\$600	51	57.30	24	30.37	12.28*
<u>GED</u>					
Yes	37	53.62	20	30.30	
No	32	46.38	46	69.70	7.52*
<u>Marital Status</u>					
Single	24	26.97	38	48.10	
Married	20	22.47	7	8.86	
Common-Law	22	24.72	20	25.32	
Sep/Divorced	21	23.60	12	15.19	
Widowed	02	2.25	2	2.53	11.42*
<u>Times Married</u>					
Once	29	39.73	30	73.17	
Twice	32	43.84	8	19.51	
Three +	12	16.44	3	7.32	11.76*
<u>Type of Community</u>					
Large City	47	52.81	59	75.64	
Rural	22	24.72	3	3.85	
Town	20	22.47	16	20.51	15.59*
<u>Unwed Mother</u>					
Yes	23	30.67	42	67.74	
No	52	69.33	20	32.26	18.71*
<u>A Single Parent</u>					
Yes	35	43.21	54	76.06	
No	46	56.79	17	23.94	16.82*

\* Significant Chi-square at  $P < 0.05$  level

Table 18 -Continued

	Whites (N=89)		Blacks (N=79)		
Variables	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Chi-square
<u>Head of Household</u>					
Yes	42	47.73	52	65.82	05.54*
No	46	52.27	27	34.18	
<u>Triple Syndrome</u>					
Yes	57	64.04	69	87.34	12.11*
No	32	35.96	10	12.66	
<u>Addicted Husband</u>					
Yes	52	73.24	22	40.74	13.41*
No	19	26.76	32	59.26	
<u>Members Incarcerated</u>					
Yes	36	41.38	45	57.69	04.38*
No	51	58.62	33	42.31	
<u>Use of Alcohol</u>					
No	12	13.64	11	14.47	6.78
Yes	76	86.36	65	85.82	
<u>Number of Drinks</u>					
None	13	14.77	11	14.10	10.4*
1-2 times	23	26.14	36	46.15	
3 or more	52	59.09	31	39.74	
<u>Use of Marijuana</u>					
No	22	30.13	18	33.33	4.33
Yes	51	69.86	36	66.66	
<u>Use of Hard Drugs</u>					
No	25	33.78	24	39.34	1.42
Yes	49	66.21	37	60.65	

\* Significant Chi-square at  $P < 0.05$  level



Table 19

Number, Means and Standard Deviation for Selected  
Sociodemographic and Legal Variables for Whites Versus Black Female Offenders

Variables	Whites			Blacks			F-value
	Number	Mean	Std.	Number	Mean	Std.	
Years of Education	84	11.21	2.55	58	11.46	1.44	3.13
Number of Children	86	1.80	1.38	73	2.71	1.76	1.63*
Age at first Arrest	89	24.06	9.23	78	23.59	8.35	1.22
Age at first Conviction	89	26.16	8.50	76	26.58	7.52	1.28
Juvenile Convictions	84	0.30	0.71	68	0.45	1.10	2.29
Adult Convictions	87	2.11	1.77	77	1.78	1.30	1.84
Adult Incarceration	88	1.47	0.91	76	1.58	1.16	1.62
Property Convictions	35	1.03	1.20	24	1.08	1.53	1.63
Violent Convictions	35	0.80	0.76	29	0.86	0.60	1.71
Drug Convictions	47	1.34	0.98	36	1.03	0.65	2.26
Number of Prison Violation	81	1.00	1.88	73	0.79	1.79	1.09
Years on Welfare	41	1.85	1.15	48	2.85	1.22	1.12*

\*Significant F Value at  $P < .05$ .

### Unwed-mothers Versus Not Unwed-mother

The sample was divided into two groups based on their premarital illegitimate births. Seventy-five (48%) had children before getting married, and 82 (52%) did not have children before they got married according to their own statements. These two groups were compared on a large number of sociodemographic, legal, social and economic variables. In this section only statistically significant findings at  $P < 0.05$  level or less are presented (see Table 20).

Racially, unwed mothers were most likely to be black (65%) compared to being white (35%). And around two-thirds of the unwed-mothers did not have GED. A higher percentage of the unwed mothers quit high school compared to the other group (57.33 Vs 42.13). Out-of-wedlock pregnancy and children were the main reasons for them to quit high school (53%), while the other group quit high school for normative reasons of marriage, work and family problems. Out of wedlock pregnancy leads to single parenthood, and "head of household" status and all the attending problems. Of the present sample 74% of the unwed mothers became single parents, and (69%) percent of the unwed- mothers became heads of households.

Due to all of these family burdens, unwed mothers were more likely to be unemployed (66% Vs 7.5%). Consequently unwed-mothers had low income, but burdened with children. About 88% of the unwed mothers had friends and family members in that area who had similar troubles (both social and criminal), though the latter were somehow not arrested. That means they came from criminal subculture. This criminal and deviant environment coupled with the burdens of unwed motherhood may have contributed to their female criminality and hardship in life.

### Single-parents Versus Not-single-parents

Further the sample was differentiated on the basis of parenthood. Those who were single parent 104 (60%) versus those who were not 70 (40%). These two groups were compared on different aspects, and only statistically significant differences between them are presented. (see Table 21).

These two groups differ Significantly in regard to the reasons which led them to quit high school. For instance, single-parents quit high school for reasons of pregnancy or to take care of their already born children (35.19% and 20.37%) respectively, while the other group quit high school for reasons of marriage and work (23.81% and 11.90%) respectively. It appears that single-parents started their sexual activity early in their life and were not able or not ready to establish stable family life. This finding is in agreement with the literature that early pregnancy eventually leads to single parenthood and poverty (see Chapter 2). Also more of the female single-parents were less married (9.8% Vs 23.53%), but if married, they were more likely to be in common-law marriage relationship (23.53% Vs 18.57%). Also they had higher divorce rate (23.53% Vs 18.57%). Black female offenders were more likely to be single-parents than the whites (61% Vs 39%). As the pervious literature tells us majority of the single-parents become heads of their households and have to shoulder the responsibility for themselves and their children.

### Female Heads of Household Versus

### Not Heads of Household

The third distinction between inmates was made on the basis of their being head of household (see Table 22). Female inmates were asked if they were heads of

their household; 108 (57%) answered "yes", and 81 (43%) answered "no."

Sequentially, illicit pregnancy leads to single parenthood and then to being head of households. Female inmates householders were compared to non-householders on several aspects of their life. These two groups were found to be significantly different in several aspects of their life. For instance, more of the female heads of households were single (39.24%), compared to (33.33%) of the other group. Female offenders heads of households were less likely to use hard drugs than their counterparts (53.65% Vs 75.76%). If more of the black female offenders were unwed mothers, single parents, more of them were also heads of household (55.33%).

#### The Triple Loading Syndrome

Some of the female inmates were single-parents (59.8%), (having married earlier, or not married), other were unwed-mothers (47.8%); and as a result 57.1% were supporting their children fully or partially as heads of the household before incarceration (see Table 23). The female inmates who were under all of these pressures--single parenthood, unwed motherhood and running the household as head--were reckoned as suffering from Triple Loading Syndrome. Grouped together they were 146(76.4%) of the sample surveyed--a clear majority. Characterizing them, 55% were black, 55% made low income, 66% quit high school for reasons of pregnancy, children and to get married and 52% were runaway from home as juveniles. More of them got into trouble the law on account of family problems, and running around with the wrong crowd according to their own statement. More of the Triple Loading Syndrome sufferers had relatively low-grade skills, more of them (65% versus 25% of the non sufferers) showed

dependency on employer's help, 71% were on welfare, more of them stayed longer on welfare three or more years (46% versus 19%). They were products of low-income, multiple problems families from which they tried to escape, but fell in wrong hands, where they got entangled in more problems of illegitimacy, unwed motherhood, and welfare dependency.

### Repeaters and First-timers

Further the sample was divided into two groups, repeat offenders versus first timers, or non-repeaters. Repeaters were those who had two or more convictions, 102 (53.4%) , and non-repeaters were considered those who had only one conviction 89(46.6%). Table 24 shows the significant differences between these two groups. More of the repeater female offenders completed GED (52.81% Vs 34.85%), they had more opportunities to do so because of their repeated incarceration. More of the first timers quit school for reasons of pregnancy and getting married; and the repeaters quit for drugs, family and school problems. The repeaters were far more into hard drugs and two-thirds of them used combination of drugs. The first-timers were holding their friends responsible for their troubles with law; the repeaters like most experienced criminals did not want to name their friends for their troubles. Forty-nine percent of the first timers tended to lean on parents and other family members for help fully, but not the repeaters. More of the repeaters had run away from home during their teen years. More of the first-timers (78% Versus 59%) were satisfied with the wages, and more of the repeaters had problems with their employers. Majority of female repeater offenders (91%) had difficulties finding a job because of their long criminal record. More of the repeater offenders were at odds with the world; and as a repeater they perceived difficulties

in their social status and social role. Summing up the repeater offenders tended to show more hardened attitudes, experience in criminality and more difficulties in their life.

#### Violent Versus Non-violent Female Offenders

The sample also were divided into two groups; violent offenders versus non-violent offenders. Violent offenders were considered those who had at least one conviction for violent crime, and non-violent who did not. Table 25 show significant differences between violent and non-violent offenders.

As expected, the violent offenders had more drinks, they were less employed than the non-violent, and they were less satisfied with their jobs situation. More of the violent offenders perceived their status and the role of a female as difficult. Violent offenders had more vocational and technical training than the non-violent offenders (61.4% Vs 44.88%), because of their longer terms of incarceration. So the violent female offenders seem to have faulty habits (associated with excessive use of alcohol), higher unemployment and less satisfied with the world around them.

#### Drug-Users Versus Non-Users

Further the sample was divided into two groups; drug users 141(74%) and non-drug users 50 (26%). It appears that almost three-quarters of the inmates were drug users (see Table 26). These two groups were compared on several aspects; chi-square test revealed several differences between the two groups. For example, as expected drugs were the main reason behind "drug users" recent offense, more of the drug users were convicted for drug offenses compared to the

non-users (39.53% Vs 9.52%), and some committed their recent offense to support their drug habits (6.98% Vs 4.76%), non-user were mainly convicted for associating with "wrong crowd" (24%), 21 percent committed their recent offense for economic reasons and 10 percent of them claimed being innocent. More of the drug users faced difficulties in bringing up their children compared to non-users (40.84% Vs 21.05%). It seemed that drugs were interfering in their daily life functioning, so they were unable to take care of their children. In addition, majority of the drug-users were on welfare (68.57% Vs 45.65%), drugs may hinder their abilities to find a stable jobs. Also drug-users were less likely to commit violent offenses, (26.24% Vs 42%), as drugs were more associated with property crimes rather than with violent crimes. Finally, majority of the drug-users were also repeat offenders (60.28% Vs 34.00%). Drug abuse generated recurrent problems in the inmates' life which interfered with their functioning and cause more encounters with the criminal justice system.

Table 20  
Comparison Between Unwed Mothers and Not Unwed mothers

Variables	Unwed Mothers (N=75)		Not Unwed-Mothers (N=82)		Chi-square
	N	%	N	%	
<u>Race</u>					
White	23	35.38	52	72.22	
Black	42	64.62	20	27.78	18.71*
<u>Reasons to quit high School</u>					
Pregnancy	14	32.56	07	16.28	
Get married	06	13.95	09	20.93	
Work	00	00.00	05	11.63	
School	02	04.65	07	16.28	
Family & other problems	08	18.60	11	25.58	
Children	09	20.93	01	02.33	
Drugs	04	09.30	03	06.98	18.60*
<u>Single Parent</u>					
Yes	54	72.97	32	41.56	
No	19	25.68	45	58.44	17.14*
<u>Head of household</u>					
Yes	51	68.92	39	48.15	
No	23	31.08	42	51.85	6.85*
<u>Welfare assistance</u>					
Yes	56	75.68	46	56.79	
No	18	24.32	35	43.21	6.13*
<u>Drinking (wine/beer/liquor)</u>					
Never	10	13.51	12	14.81	
A few times yearly	19	25.68	26	32.10	
1-2 times a month	15	20.27	26	32.10	
1-2 times a week	15	20.27	13	16.05	
1-2 times a day	15	20.27	04	04.94	10.44*
<u>Friends in trouble</u>					
Several	43	59.72	33	41.77	
Some	20	27.78	23	29.11	
None	8	11.11	23	29.11	9.48*
<u>GED</u>					
Yes	21	33.87	36	57.14	
No	41	66.13	27	42.86	06.82*
<u>Employment</u>					
Full-time	30	42.25	53	66.25	
Part-time	17	23.94	13	16.25	
Unemployed	24	33.80	14	17.50	9.03*



Table 21  
Comparison Between Single-parents and Not-single Parents

Variables	Single Parents				Chi-square
	Yes (N=104)		No (N=70)		
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
<u>Race</u>					
White	34	38.64	46	73.02	18.32*
Black	54	61.38	17	26.98	
<u>Reasons to quit high School</u>					
Pregnancy	19	35.19	4	9.52	27.03*
Children	11	20.37	1	2.38	
Get married	6	11.11	10	23.81	
Family & other problems	7	12.96	11	20.37	
Drugs	4	7.41	5	11.90	
Work	4	7.41	5	11.90	
School	3	5.56	6	14.29	
<u>Marital status</u>					
Single	40	39.22	20	28.57	17.29*
Married	10	09.80	21	30.00	
Common-law	24	23.53	16	22.86	
Sep/Divorced	24	23.53	13	18.57	
Widowed	04	03.92	00	00.00	
<u>Unwed Mother</u>					
Yes	54	62.79	19	29.69	17.19*
No	32	37.21	45	70.31	
<u>Difficulties in bringing up children</u>					
Yes	43	45.26	13	22.03	9.08*
No	52	54.74	46	77.97	
<u>Welfare assistance</u>					
Yes	77	76.24	38	55.88	8.28*
No	24	23.76	30	44.12	

\* Significant Chi-square at  $P < 0.05$  level

Table 22  
Comparison Between Heads of Households and Not Heads of Households

Variables	Head of HH (N=108, )		Not HH (N=81)		Chi-square
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
<u>Race</u>					
White	42	44.68	46	63.01	5.54*
Black	52	55.32	27	36.99	
<u>Single Parent</u>					
Yes	78	75.00	24	35.82	27.44*
No	26	25.00	43	64.18	
<u>Unwed Mother</u>					
Yes	51	56.67	23	35.38	6.85*
No	39	43.33	42	64.62	
<u>Welfare assistance</u>					
Yes	75	72.12	40	50.00	9.44*
No	29	27.88	40	50.00	
<u>Use of Hard Drugs</u>					
Never	39	45.35	16	24.24	12.14*
A few times yearly	03	03.49	08	12.12	
1-2 times a month	08	09.30	05	07.58	
1-2 times a week	12	13.95	07	10.61	
1-2 times a day	24	27.91	30	45.45	
<u>Marital status</u>					
Single	42	39.24	27	33.33	12.33*
Married	13	12.15	19	23.46	
Common-law	22	20.56	25	30.86	
Sep/Divorced	26	24.30	10	12.35	
Widowed	4	3.74	0	0.00	

\* Significant Chi-square at  $P < 0.05$  level

Table 23  
Significant Differences Between Sufferers and None-Sufferers  
of the Triple Loading Syndrome.

Variables	Number	Triple Loading Syndrome				Chi-square
		Yes (N=146)		No (N=45)		
		Percent	Number	Percent	Number	
<u>Race</u>						
White	57	45.24	32	76.19		
Black	69	54.76	10	23.81		12.12*
<u>Income</u>						
None	16	11.43	12	27.27		
\$1-\$199	5	3.57	2	4.55		
\$200-\$399	23	16.43	2	4.55		
\$400-599	33	23.57	4	9.09		
\$600-\$799	14	10.00	6	13.64		
\$800-\$999	13	9.29	6	13.64		
\$1000+	36	25.7	12	27.27		13.63*
<u>Reasons to Quit</u>						
<u>High School</u>						
Children &						
Pregnancy	34	43.59	1	3.85		
School	10	12.82	7	26.92		
Get Married	12	15.38	5	19.23		
Drugs	6	7.69	4	15.38		
Work	6	7.69	3	11.54		
Family	5	6.41	2	7.69		
Other	5	6.41	4	15.38		15.17*
<u>Run Away From Home</u>						
Yes	74	52.11	15	34.09		
No	68	47.89	29	65.91		04.37*
<u>Help From Employer</u>						
Fully	28	37.33	62	3.08		
Partial	21	28.00	31	1.54		
None	26	34.67	17	65.38		07.65*

\* Significant Chi-square at P< 0.05 level

Table 23- Continued

Variables	Number	Percent	Triple Loading Syndrome		Chi-square
			Yes (N=146)	No (N=45)	
			Number	Percent	
<u>Reasons for Trouble with Law</u>					
Drugs	19	22.35	12	37.50	
Blame Self	14	16.47	5	15.63	
Other Reasons	13	15.29	5	15.63	
Family Problems	16	18.82	2	6.25	
Blame Others	7	8.24	3	9.38	
Wrong Crowd	10	11.76	0	0.00	
Spouse's Problems	6	7.06	5	15.63	19.94*
<u>Skills for Employment</u>					
Clerical	20	15.87	14	35.00	
Other Skills	18	14.29	9	22.50	
Technical	30	23.81	2	5.00	
Services/II	18	14.29	1	2.50	
Management	1	0.79	4	10.00	
Professional	8	6.35	4	10.00	
Machinery	10	7.94	2	5.00	
Sales	8	6.35	3	7.50	
Laborers	7	5.56	1	2.50	
Services/I	6	4.76	0	0.00	27.96*
<u>Welfare Assistance</u>					
Yes	100	70.92	17	37.78	
No	41	29.08	28	62.22	16.06*
<u>Years on Welfare</u>					
One-Year	26	30.59	12	75.00	
Two-Years	20	23.53	1	6.25	
Three or More	39	45.88	3	18.57	11.88*

\* Significant Chi-square at  $P < 0.05$  level

Table 24

Significant Differences Between  
Violent and Non-Violent Women Offenders

Variables	(N=58)		(N=133)		Chi-square
	Violent Offenders		Non-Violent Offenders		
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
<u>Vocational &amp; Technical Training</u>					
Yes	35	61.40	57	44.88	4.30*
No	22	38.60	70	55.12	
<u>Number of Drinks</u>					
None	10	17.54	15	11.54	13.87*
1- 2	8	14.04	54	41.54	
3 or more	39	68.42	61	46.92	
<u>Employment</u>					
Full-time	23	41.07	78	60.94	6.49*
Part-time	15	26.79	20	15.63	
Unemployed	18	32.14	30	23.44	
<u>Job Satisfaction</u>					
Happy	36	75.00	98	92.45	8.91*
Not Happy	12	25.00	8	7.55	
<u>Difficulties being a Female</u>					
Yes	29	51.79	41	31.54	6.84*
No	27	48.21	89	68.46	

\* Significant Chi-square at  $P < 0.05$  level

Table 25

## Significant Differences Between Repeaters and Non-Repeaters

Variables	(N=102) Repeaters		(N=89) Non-Repeaters		Chi-square
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
<u>GED</u>					
Yes	47	52.81	42	47.19	04.94*
No	23	34.85	43	65.15	
<u>Reasons to Quit High School</u>					
Children & Pregnancy	18	30.00	17	38.63	14.30*
Get Married	5	8.33	12	27.27	
Other	9	15.00	8	18.18	
Drugs	8	13.33	2	4.55	
Work	7	11.67	2	4.55	
School	8	13.33	1	2.27	
Family	5	8.33	2	4.55	
<u>Use of Hard Drugs</u>					
Never	19	22.89	36	51.43	15.91*
Yearly	6	7.23	5	7.14	
Monthly	8	9.64	5	7.14	
Weekly	11	13.25	9	12.86	
Daily	39	46.99	15	21.43	
<u>Use of Combination of Drugs</u>					
Never	22	33.85	36	57.14	13.07*
Yearly	4	6.15	5	7.94	
Monthly	7	10.77	7	11.11	
Weekly	6	9.23	7	7.94	
Daily	26	40.00	8	12.70	

\* Significant Chi-square at P&lt; 0.05 level

Table 25 -Continued

Variables	(N=102)		(N=89)		
	Repeaters		Non-Repeaters		
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Chi-square
<u>Friends' Responsible</u>					
Yes	27	26.73	39	44.83	
No	74	73.27	48	55.17	6.72*
<u>Help From Parents</u>					
Fully	24	32.43	34	48.57	
Partially	32	43.24	16	11.11	
None	18	24.32	20	28.57	7.06*
<u>Run a Way From Home</u>					
Yes	55	55.00	34	39.53	
No	45	45.00	52	60.47	4.43*
<u>Problems with Employer</u>					
Yes	11	11.70	3	3.66	
No	83	88.30	79	96.34	3.87*
<u>Satisfied With Wages</u>					
Yes	55	58.51	62	77.50	
No	39	41.49	18	22.50	7.07*
<u>Role Difficulties</u>					
Yes	32	33.33	17	20.24	
No	64	66.67	67	79.76	3.88*

\* Significant Chi-square at  $P < 0.05$  level

Table 26

## Comparison Between Drug-Users and Non Drug-Users

Variables	Drug Users (N=141)		Non Drug Users (N=50)		Chi-square
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
<u>Reason for Recent Offense</u>					
Drugs	51	39.53	04	09.52	
Greed	34	26.36	09	21.43	
Personal	11	08.53	10	23.54	
By Association	10	07.75	10	23.81	
Other	10	07.75	04	09.52	
Money for drugs	09	06.98	02	04.76	
Family Problems	04	03.10	03	07.14	25.46*
<u>Difficulties Bringing-Up Children</u>					
Yes	49	40.83	08	21.05	
No	71	59.17	30	78.59	4.89*
<u>Welfare Assistance</u>					
Yes	96	68.57	21	45.65	
No	44	31.43	25	54.35	7.80*
<u>Violent</u>					
Yes	37	26.24	21	42.00	
No	104	73.76	29	58.00	4.33*
<u>Repeat Offender</u>					
Yes	85	60.28	17	34.00	
No	56	39.72	33	66.00	10.25*

\* Significant Chi-square at  $P < 0.05$  level



### Female Incarceration: A Statistical Analysis

Before we examine the high rate of female incarceration in Oklahoma, it is imperative that we look at what precedes incarceration (or conviction): the rate of female arrests, and before that the rate of reporting female crime\*.

Table 27  
Crime Reported in Oklahoma and the United States 1988-1991

Year	Crimes Reported	Rate per 100,000	Crimes Reported	Rate Per 100,000
1988	182,361	5,800	13,923,100	5,700
1989	177,285	5,700	14,251,400	5,700
1990	176,027	5,600	14,475,600	5,800
1991	179,790	5,700	14,872,900	5,900

Source: FBI "Uniform Crime Reports: Crime in the United States." 1988-1991.  
OSBI "Uniform Crime Reports: Crime in Oklahoma." 1988-1991.

Crime rate in Oklahoma (reported) is the same as in the United States in 1989, and after that it is actually lower. It should be noted that the reported crime includes both male and female crime. Next, we should look at the arrest rate, which is indicative of police attitude to the alleged female suspects.

Table 28  
Total Arrests and Rate of Arrests of Females in Oklahoma and the U.S. 1988-1991

Year	Total Arrests of Females	Oklahoma Rate of Arrests per 100,000	United States Total Arrests of Females	Rate of Arrests per 100,000
1988	19,727	600	1,652,304	700
1989	21,155	700	1,544,336	600
1990	22,854	700	1,674,882	700
1991	23,013	700	1,754,397	600

Source: FBI "Uniform Crime Reports: Crime in the United States." 1988-1991.  
OSBI "Uniform Crime Reports: Crime in Oklahoma." 1988-1991

\* This section is based on recent research completed by Dr. Harjit Sandhu.

The arrest rate of Oklahoma is the same as that of the rest of the nation. If Oklahoma incarcerates more of its female offenders, it is not because Oklahoma has a higher rate of crime, or it has a higher arrest rate. The above two tables have cleared the blame from both the crime base or arrest rate and lead us to examine and focus on the rates of incarceration per se. The next table presents the number of the females incarcerated at the year-end both in Oklahoma and the nation and compares the rate of females incarcerated per 100,000 population.

Table 29

Female Inmates Confined in Correctional Institutions at Year End (1988 to 1991):  
Oklahoma's Rate of Incarcerated Females Versus national (State & Federal Institutions)

Year	Oklahoma		National	
	# Incarcerated at Year End	Rate per 100,000	# Incarcerated at Year End	Rate per 100,000
1988	731	23.61**	32,691	13.30*
1989	900	28.73	40,646	16.37
1990	1,058	33.64	43,845	17.63
1991	1,236	39.15	47,691	18.91

\*Source: BJS: Prisoners In 1988, 1990, 1991.

\*\*Source: Admissions records of Oklahoma Department of Corrections.

Oklahoma's rate of female incarceration per 100,000 population is more than double the national rate, and is increasing. Clearly then, the Oklahoma courts are incarcerating female offenders at a rate much higher than the rest of the nation and not using adequately the alternatives to incarceration. The rate of female incarceration per 100,000 population as shown in BJS: Women in Prison 1991, is double the rate shown in this report. The Bureau has calculated their rate on 100,000 female residents exclusively, rather than 100,000 population (both males and females). The population figures we used for U.S. for the years 1988 to 1992 were 245,807,000; 248,239,000; 248,709,813; and 252,177,000 and for Oklahoma for the same years 3,122,000; 3,133,000; 3,145,000; and 3,157,000 respectively.

The rate of female incarceration in the nation has also increased over the decade of 1980s from 12 to 31 (about 2 1/2 times) and the female inmates have outstripped their male counterparts in the annual rate of increase. Oklahoma's rate has grown much faster than that of the nation's.

The percent of females in all inmates in the nation for the years 1988 to 1991 was 5.2, 5.7, 5.7 and 5.8 respectively, while in Oklahoma for the same years the percentage was 7.0, 7.9, 8.6, and 9.2 (BJS: Prisoners in 1988-91).

And comparing the male and female receptions (or admissions) during the five year period from 1988 to 1992, the females account for an average of 12.4 in 100 admissions in Oklahoma's correctional institutions, while in the nation females accounted for 7.7% in the year 1990 (BJS: National Corrections, 1990). The readers will appreciate that if in the yearly prison admissions in Oklahoma, the percentage of female admissions has that kind of an edge over the national admissions, Oklahoma's year-end female prison population will far outstrip the national figures. And the worse is, if the yearly increases in female admissions keep that pace, Oklahoma may need as many prisons for women as for men. What will be the economic and social costs at that time is beyond the scope of the present study.

### Inmates' Views Regarding Oklahoma's High Rate of Female Offenders

It was intended from the outset of this research to go to the inmates population and seek their opinion on their problems, and on Oklahoma high rate of incarceration. An open- ended question was directed to the inmates asking them to state the reasons behind Oklahoma high rate of incarceration. A variety of answers were given to this question (see Table 30 ). Female inmates attributed the high rate mainly to the criminal justice system. Some of them (22.6%) viewed the system as

unjust, unfair, and punitive to the female offenders, in sending more of them to prison, others blamed this phenomenon on the "lock them up" mentality (6%) as a viable way of punishing female offenders. Another 12.8% expressed their concern that the courts are sending more offenders with petty and minor crime to prison instead of finding alternatives to incarceration. Inmates indicated that drug offenders, shoplifters and the like, need more treatment, counseling and community supervision, not incarceration. About 8.5% of the female offenders indicated that there was no help for them in the society. They were burdened with children and other responsibilities with meager means, and no support. Then when they resorted to economic crimes to support themselves and their children, they had to face incarceration. Others (6.1%) said that there were no programs for them in the system, or even outside.

When we met with the female inmates during the administration of the questionnaire, several inmates expressed their concern for the lack of treatment and educational programs. The main theme of their concerns was that, they are in need of help, support, understanding, educational and treatment programs but not incarceration. They deeply expressed their resentment of the system which sends them to prison for the petty crimes instead of referring them to other means of correction and reform. Imprisonment will aggravate their situation and hinder their ability to reform and support themselves and their children.

Being in the State of Oklahoma was another reason given by the respondents for the high rate of Incarceration. Female inmates indicated that there was not much tolerance for female crime or deviance, women were expected to adhere to certain level of conduct and behavior, and if they violated the societal expectation they faced a harsh treatment. Some other inmates attributed the high rate of female incarceration to the multiplicity of roles occupied by women in society. Women are

mothers, bread-winners, heads of household, girlfriends, wives to name a few of their roles. Their responsibilities are rising without a concomitant improvement in their financial and social capabilities. This situation creates an atmosphere conducive to crime and deviance. Women may find illegitimate means as the only means available to them at some times.

This situation coupled with the pervasive drug problem accounts for some of women's troubles with the law. More women are on drugs and alcohol, and more women are committing crimes in such circumstances. Still some women blamed their men for their trouble with the law (4.9%). The man either facilitated the crime, puts more pressure on the woman, to support his illegal drug habits, or simply by association with criminal spouses or boyfriends. Some women--as they indicated--had no problems until they got married to a man who turned out to be a wrong kind of a person.

In sum, female respondents attributed much of the Oklahoma high rate of incarcerated for female offenders to the criminal justice system. A system which--as they think--works against women, not helping them or trying to understand their needs, incarcerating them instead of finding them alternatives to incarceration, such as treatment, educational programs, or community-based correction. And even after incarceration, the system, in general, just warehouses female offenders, not providing them with the necessary means and skills that equip them to face their new life after their release from the prison system.

Table 30

Why Oklahoma Has a Higher Rate of Incarcerated Women ?

<u>Blaming Oklahoma's Criminal Justice System</u>		
Unjust System	37	22.6
Over punishing petty crimes	21	12.8
Lack of programs	10	6.1
"Lock Up mentality"	10	6.1
Total	(78)	(47.6)
<u>Blaming the Society</u>		
Women's multi roles	20	12.2
No help	14	8.5
Oklahoma's overly conservative society	14	8.5
Instigation by deviant partner	8	4.9
Total	(56)	(34.1)
<u>Blaming Drugs &amp; other reasons</u>		
Abuse of drugs	16	8.5
Other reasons	14	8.5
Grand Total	164	100.00

## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents a summary of the present study which attempted to construct a profile of female offenders in Oklahoma in order to answer the basic research question of why Oklahoma has the highest rate of female incarceration in the nation? After the summary, findings of the study will be discussed, finally recommendations for policy-making and further research will be presented.

#### Summary

##### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was: (1) to construct a comprehensive profile of the characteristics of the female offenders in the Oklahoma Correctional System, (2) to compare the Oklahoma women in prisons with the National profile of women in prison, and (3) finally to seek answers to the puzzling question of why Oklahoma has the highest rate of incarceration for female offenders. In this section a brief summary of the fulfilled objectives is presented.

##### Research Methods:

A detailed instrument designed exclusively for this research was used. The instrument contained a large number of questions probing the following areas; sociodemographic; legal background (including drug and alcohol use); social

system. The instrument contained both structured, and open ended questions in order to provide respondents with an opportunity to express their views and concerns freely and smoothly without confining them to preset of structured responses. In addition to the data sets analyzed, a brief review of the literature was designed to enhance our understanding of the macro structural aspects of society, such as social and economic factors. Using both the review of literature and the rich data sets, the researcher hoped that objective of the research were met, and a better understanding of the personal, social and economic conditions behind female crime was achieved.

### Research Findings:

These finding include the following:

#### (1) Summary Characteristics of Female Offenders.

Sociodemographic Characteristics: The average adult female offender in the Oklahoma Correctional Institution was a member of the minorities especially Blacks (58%). Age-wise, most of the female inmates were in their 20s and early 30s and that was true of both the inmates and the probationers/parolees. Yet at age levels 40s and 50s there were more probationers/parolees. As compared to males, females start crime later and quit later in life. And, this "late starter-late quitter" pattern fits in more with the White female offender.

Thirty-six percent were single (never married), and 17 percent were legally married, 25 percent had common-law marriage, and 20% were divorced or separated. Yet majority of them (86%) had an average of 2.3 children. Sixty-two percent came from the city, and a majority of them were Black.

Black females are disproportionately represented in prison admissions. Black females account for 3.8% of the total Oklahoma population, yet they comprise 40% of the female prison admissions. A black female is more likely to be incarcerated rather



than placed on probation as compared to her white counterpart and also is more likely to be incarcerated as compared to a black male. Black female inmates may have problems needing a special study. More of the female inmates were married and cohabiting under common law, and also much more burdened with worries about their children as compared to their male counterparts. Also, more of the female inmates were divorced, and single parents. This problem relates to the infrastructure of the society.

Criminal History: On average female offenders start their criminal activity later in their life (97 %) arrested as an adult compared to 23.6 percent arrested as juveniles. Average female offender arrested at the age of 24 and convicted at the age of 26. On average they had .38 juvenile conviction, and 2 adult convictions. Average female offender had one property conviction, and .79 violent convictions, and 1.18 drug convictions.

Compared to the nation, Oklahoma has a lower percentage of violent offenders, but a higher percentage of drug offenders. This necessitates a very effective drug abuse program both inside the institutions and in the communities.

Work and Employment: Fifty-five percent had full-time employment, 19% had part-time employment, and 26 percent were not employed before their recent incarceration. Majority had low-paid jobs; such as retail sales, clerical, and services, and very few had management or professional jobs. Though their jobs were mainly from the low-paid service sector types, majority (87%) expressed their happiness about their jobs and 67 percent were satisfied with their wages.

Some of the female offenders faced difficulties in the job market. Some suffer from discrimination, others suffer from their ex-convict stigma, and some complained from lack of skills and training. With their low-paid jobs, and sole responsibility for themselves and their children, their income was not adequate to

meet their living expenses. This situation led majority of them (63%) to turn to welfare agencies for assistance. Some stayed for one year (38%), others from 2-3 years (30%), and the 32 percent were on welfare at least for 4 years. But on average female offender were on welfare for at least 3 years. Welfare assistance was not adequate for 32 percent of them, and 27 percent had some minor problems with welfare agencies.

Majority of female offenders needed a job after release, few others need treatment and counseling, and some needed further education. Post-release help was expected from different source, mostly from parents, then from spouse, from employer, and some expected help from friends.

#### (2). Criminal Justice Processes:

The rate of crime reported in Oklahoma is not higher than that of the nation, and the rate of arrest of female offenders in Oklahoma is the same as that of the nation. Yet, the rate incarceration of female convicted offenders is more than double the national rate of incarceration. The courts are not making full use of alternatives to incarceration. The rate of incarceration is increasing every year with the result that the female inmates in Oklahoma constitute 12.4 percent of the total inmate admissions, which is again more than 2 1/2 times the national rate. If this trend is not reversed, Oklahoma tax payers will have to open more prisons for women, in a few years.

#### (3) The Depth of Drug Problem

Drugs played a major role in the female offenders criminal history. Eighty-eight (46%) of them had at least one drug conviction, and 33 percent were doing time for drug offenses when they were surveyed. Drugs were the only thing that the

female inmates referred to in 15 different occasions as a reason for their all kinds of troubles. In addition, drugs were one of the reasons given by female inmates behind Oklahoma high rate of female incarceration. These facts about the pervasive use of drugs among female inmates, the problems caused by drugs, and the damage done by drugs to their social and family life, led us to identify drugs as one of the main reasons behind Oklahoma's high rate of female incarceration.

#### (4) Social Stressors (The Triple Loading Syndrome)

The study presented a detailed analysis of the major trend of change that took place in the American society during the recent decades. Changes in the economic sector and the labor market were summarized with brief analysis of the economic conditions of women and the place of women in the labor force. Also, a summary of the major trends of changes that took place on the realm of family formation and dissolution was presented. Major trends indicated the rise of the proportion of female single-parents; the rise of the proportion of unwed mothers, and the rise of the proportion of women who headed their households.

In the present study, women offenders were mostly affected by both trends of change in the economic structure and the social structure. Majority of the female offenders in the present study suffer of what been called the Triple Loading Syndrome, were they were unwed-mothers, single-parents and heads of households. As many as 49 percent of female offenders had illegitimate premarital births, 60 percent brought up their children as single parents, and 57 percent were heads of household.

In addition, female offender's jobs were most affected by the changes in the economic structure and job market, majority of their jobs and skills reflect the move

from production to service-based economy, where jobs are characterized by low pay, low skill, high turn-over and less chances for advancement.

This socioeconomic condition of women is conducive to frustration, alienation, poverty, drug use and all attended problems. A situation within which female offenders may have nothing to lose by engaging in criminal activity as some researchers put it (Carlen, 1988, Kasarda, 1983).

## CONCLUSIONS

In analyzing the possible causes for the higher rate of incarceration of female offenders in Oklahoma, the researcher would like to highlight the following findings:

- (1) The rate of crime committed by women in Oklahoma, and also their arrest rate is not higher than the national rate. But their incarceration rate is 2 1/2 times the national rate. It appears that the courts are not making full use of the alternatives to incarceration.
- (2) Are the Oklahoma women committing more serious crimes for which the courts must use incarceration? A statistical comparison of Oklahoma versus the United States shows that Oklahoma's female offenders committed significantly less of the violent crime than their counterparts in the rest of the country, but they excelled in drug offenses. These women came from drug subculture where their family members, spouses, boy-friends and other friends were abusing drugs. Many women started dealing, possessing or abusing drugs to conform to the groups norms, when they started going about with a "wrong crowd", others blamed their husbands who introduced them to drugs. Expressing their reasons for high rate of incarceration, and their personal problems 13 percent blamed

drugs. The drug abusers faced more difficulties in taking care of their children, or in finding and holding a job, with the result that about 69 percent of them turned to welfare and once they were on welfare they stayed on welfare longer.

- (3) The black female offenders comprised 40 percent of the female inmate population as against their share of 3.81 percent in Oklahoma's total population. As such, they were over 10 times disproportionately represented in prison population. It should be noted further that while 40 percent of the women sent to prison were black, only 29.6 percent of the women placed on probation or parole were black, and the reverse was true of the white women. Also, black females were more likely to be incarcerated as compared to black males. Both her race and gender seemed to go against her.
- (4) Looking at the entire group of over 10 thousands Oklahoma women offenders under study, it was noted that about 42 percent of them were married legally or under common law and in this marriage group, they exceeded the national figures. Previous research has observed that marriage which is generally considered as a stabilizing influence does not demonstrate the same benign influences in the case of women offenders; in many cases it generated more problems if the husband was a vicious person. Married or not, 81 percent had one to five children with all the responsibilities in the absence or lack of resources. As many as 76 percent or them had (1) children out of wedlock, (2) supporting them as single mothers, (3) and bearing the family burden as head of the household. These women undergoing the combination of stressors, we named as

Triple Loading Syndrome to compare them with a smaller group (24 Percent) who did not suffer from this syndrome:

Characterizing the sufferers of the Triple Loading Syndrome, 55% were black, 55% made low income, 66% quit high school for reasons of pregnancy, children and to get married and 52% were runaway from home as juveniles. More of them got into trouble the law on account of family problems, and running around with the wrong crowd according to their own statement. More of the Triple Loading Syndrome sufferers had relatively low-grade skills, more of them (65% versus 25% of the non sufferers). showed dependency on employer's help, 71% were on welfare, more of them stayed longer on welfare three or more years (46% versus 19%). They were products of low-income, multiple problems families from which they tried to escape, but fell in wrong hands, where they got entangled in more problems of illegitimacy, unwed motherhood, and welfare dependency (Chapter 5, P:83).

- (5) Of special sociological significance is the comparison of white and black female offenders each of the two racial groups having a different instigator to crime. More of the white female offenders were married, also more of them were separated and divorced, as they married addicts, and so more of them remarried. More of them made relatively better income, some drank excessively to inebriation, others used marijuana, committed mostly property offenses, half of which were check writing, embezzlement, and fraud, and blamed excessive abuse of drugs for their crimes. The white female offenders gave an impression that they were impulsive hedonist who wanted to seek thrill (see Chapter 5). They committed crime for fun and wanted counseling and therapy to alleviate their problems.

More of the black female offenders were single, but more of them had children out-of-wedlock (67.74% Vs 30.67%), more of them made less income, more of them suffered 'Triple Loading Syndrome', more of them came from criminal families, and they blamed their criminal friends who introduced them to drugs. More of them committed violent crime. The black women were asking for a job or welfare assistance to resolve their problems (detailed Chapter 5). Their crime was instigated by poverty.

- (6) There was no evidence that these female offenders were responding to the feminists movement. They were poor whom the emancipation movement has not yet touched. Similarly, these women were not trying to copy male offenders, they were still committing the same offenses (property offenses, and drug offenses) as they did before. So there is no masculinization of female criminality as alleged.
- (7) The repeater offenders, as expected, were runaways as juveniles. They developed disdain for school, and quit school to indulge in drug world, gathered experience in crime, and their ties with the conventional world were weakened. They had difficulties in finding and holding a job.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Oklahoma can and should reduce the rate of incarceration and find alternatives to incarceration based on very strong and effective substance abuse programs, parenting classes, job training and appropriate educational programs. The successful completion of these programs should be mandatory, with a stiffer penalties in case of non-completion of these programs. These programs must be reinforced by community efforts and cooperation. The volunteers from private

agencies, women organizations, civic organizations, social institutions (like religious institutions), and business can really help in alleviating the problems of these needy women. These women must be saved, because their hand rocks the cradle of our future civilization.

### Limitations

Both the computerized data, and the detailed information on 191 female inmates surveyed in the four women's institutions came from Oklahoma. The findings, as such, are more pertinent to Oklahoma, and may be generalized to the nation only cautiously.



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## APPENDIXES

**APPENDIX A**  
**SURVEY INSTRUMENT**



## Research Questionnaire

I am a college professor doing research on women. I request your cooperation to fill in this questionnaire. Your answers will not be identified with your name. Please do not write your name and number anywhere on this questionnaire to ensure your privacy.

### SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

1. Race and Ethnicity: 1\_\_\_ White    2\_\_\_ Black    3\_\_\_ Mexican American  
4\_\_\_ American Indian    5\_\_\_ Other\_\_\_\_\_
2. Present Age: <= 20 \_\_\_, 21-25 \_\_\_, 26-30 \_\_\_, 31-35 \_\_\_, 36-40 \_\_\_  
41-45 \_\_\_, 46-50 \_\_\_, 51-55 \_\_\_, >=56 \_\_\_
3. What was your gross monthly income before your recent incarceration?  
( please check one category)
  1. None \_\_\_    2. \$1-\$199 \_\_\_    3. \$ 200-\$399 \_\_\_    4. \$400-\$599 \_\_\_
  5. \$600-\$799 \_\_\_    6. \$ 800-\$999 \_\_\_    7. \$1000 or more \_\_\_
- 4,5. Education:    \_\_\_ School Years
6. Have you completed GED?    1\_\_\_ Yes    2\_\_\_ No
7. If you did not finish high school, why did you quit? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Have you attended a vocational or technical school? yes \_\_\_ no \_\_\_
9. Marital Status: 1\_\_\_ single    2\_\_\_ legally married  
3\_\_\_ common-law marriage    4\_\_\_ separated or divorced
10. Number of times married: 1\_\_\_ once    2\_\_\_ twice    3\_\_\_ three times or more
11. Number of children (if any) \_\_\_\_\_

12. What kind of community were you living in before coming to the prison?

1. \_\_\_ farming or rural

2. \_\_\_ town (under 30,000 pop.) 3. \_\_\_ large city

### LEGAL BACKGROUND

13. What was your age at first arrest? \_\_\_\_\_ years

14,15. What was your age at first conviction? \_\_\_\_\_ years

16. How many times were you convicted by juvenile Court? \_\_\_\_\_

17. How many times you have been convicted as an adult? \_\_\_\_\_

18. How many times were you incarcerated in a prison as an adult? \_\_\_\_\_

19,20. How much time have you done in adult correctional facilities in total? \_\_\_\_\_  
Years

21,22. If you were incarcerated more than once, how much time did you stay out  
on the street between the last two incarcerations? \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_  
months

How many times have you been sentenced?

23 for property offenses \_\_\_\_\_ times

24. for violent offenses \_\_\_\_\_ times

25. for drugs only \_\_\_\_\_ times

26 for other offenses: \_\_\_\_\_ times (please specify offenses ) \_\_\_\_\_

27. How often on the average, did you usually drink beer/wine/liquor?

	a few times	1-2 times	1-2 times	1-2 times
Never	a year	a month	a week	a day
1	2	3	4	5

28. When you did drink, how many drinks, on the average, did you usually have at  
any one time? (check one)

	1-2	3-4	More
None	Drinks	Drinks	Drinks
1	2	3	4

How often did you use drugs?

		Never	a few times a year	1-2 times a month	1-2 times a week	1-2 times a day
29. Marijuana	1		2	3	4	5
30. Hard drugs	1		2	3	4	5
31. Combination	1		2	3	4	5

32. What was the offense for which you are doing time now? \_\_\_\_\_

33,34. What is the length of your present sentence? \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months

35,36. When did your present sentence start? \_\_\_\_\_ month \_\_\_\_\_ year

37. How many prison violations did you have during your current imprisonment?

38. In what prison program did you participate during your current term?

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39. In your opinion what are the reasons that led you to commit your recent offense(s)?

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40. Do you think that some of your friends were responsible for your trouble with law? \_\_\_\_\_ If so, in what way? \_\_\_\_\_

---



---

41. Please describe any other problem(s) that you think is responsible for your troubles with law.

---



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## SOCIAL BACKGROUND

42. Are you the head of your household? 1. Yes \_\_\_\_ 2. No \_\_\_\_
43. Did your husband have any problems of addiction?  
\_\_\_\_\_
44. Were you raising your child(ren) as a single parent (1) yes \_\_\_\_ (2) no \_\_\_\_
45. Did you have any children before you got married? yes \_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_
46. Did you have any difficulties bringing up your children? if yes, of what kind?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
47. Name one activity which you are very much involved in. \_\_\_\_\_
48. Before your recent incarceration, what was your living arrangement?  
\_\_\_\_\_
49. Do you have a place to live after you are released from this institution?  
1. Yes \_\_\_\_ 2. No \_\_\_\_
50. If you have children, who is taking care of them? \_\_\_\_\_
51. How often do your children visit you in the institution \_\_\_\_\_
52. Have any other members of your family ever been incarcerated?  
1. Yes \_\_\_\_ 2. No \_\_\_\_
53. How often are you visited by your family members?  
1 \_\_\_\_ weekly 2 \_\_\_\_ monthly 3 \_\_\_\_ quarterly 4 \_\_\_\_ once a year 5 \_\_\_\_ never
54. Do you anticipate any difficulties after your release from the current supervision? If so what are they?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

55. What would be your needs when you are released from the prison?

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56,57. Upon release from prison from whom do you expect to receive help ?

none    yes, fully    only partially

(i) from parents	1	2	3
(ii) from spouse	1	2	3
(iii) from boy friend	1	2	3
(iv) from friends involved in trouble	1	2	3
(v) from other friends	1	2	3
(vi) from employer	1	2	3

58. When you were young, did you ever run away from home?

1. Yes \_\_\_\_ 2. No \_\_\_\_

59. What were your reasons for running away from home?

---

60. Did you have a problem in the following areas which landed you in trouble with law? explain the nature of the problem.

1) in your social life with your friends?

---



---

2) with your family?

---



---

3) in your married life?

---



---

4) with your relatives

---



---

5) at school

---



---

6) with your siblings.

---



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## WORK AND EMPLOYMENT

61. Before your recent imprisonment, were you employed?

1\_\_\_ full-time      2\_\_\_ part-time      3\_\_\_ unemployed

Mention some of your jobs. \_\_\_\_\_

62. Were you happy with these jobs? \_\_\_\_\_

63. What was your occupation before your recent imprisonment?

---

64. What's your trade or skill for employment?

---

65. If you were working outside your home, did your working cause any problem in being able to take care of our home and children?

---

66. Did you have any problems with your employers? 1. yes \_\_\_ 2. no \_\_\_, if yes what are those problems? \_\_\_\_\_

67. Were you satisfied with the wages? yes \_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

68. Being a female, do you think it is difficult for you to find a job? yes\_\_\_ no \_\_\_ please explain\_\_\_\_\_

69. Have you ever received assistance from welfare programs? yes \_\_\_ no \_\_\_ If yes, how long approximately \_\_\_\_\_ years Was the welfare adequate? \_\_\_\_\_

70. Did you have any problems or difficulties with welfare agencies? yes \_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_  
If yes what were the problems \_\_\_\_\_

71. Do you think of your various roles as a wife, mother, girlfriend, worker, or being a female created any difficulties for you? yes \_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_  
If yes, what are these difficulties \_\_\_\_\_

#### GENERAL QUESTIONS

72. Could you think of some friends or family members living in your area who have similar problems as you do, and yet they were not arrested or convicted? several \_\_\_\_ some \_\_\_\_ none \_\_\_\_

73. Why do you think that you got in trouble and they did not?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

74. In what way you are different from them?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

75. Oklahoma has the highest rate of incarceration for women, what is the reason for that according to you?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

76. During your current trial and conviction what's your opinion about the police and the courts?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX B  
CONSENT FORMS



OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

CONSENT FORM

## OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

## CONSENT FORM

"I understand that participation is voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw my consent and participation in this project at any time without penalty after notifying the project director."

I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ (a.m./p.m.)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Subject

I certify that the information given in this questionnaire will not be divulged to any one and will be strictly used for research purposes only.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Project Director or his/her authorized representative

**OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS'**  
**CONSENT FORM**

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS  
INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

I, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,  
                    (Name)                    (DOC Number)

\_\_\_\_\_, do hereby consent to participate in research by:  
(Date form signed)

Harjit S., Sandhu, Ph.D.  
Professor of Sociology  
Oklahoma State University  
Stillwater, OK 74078

(Name or title and address of person  
conducting the research)

Expiration date (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

AUTHORIZATION: I certify that this consent has been made freely, voluntarily, and without coercion, after a fair and understandable explanation of the nature of the research activity, the purpose, and the procedures to be followed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
( Offender's Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Witness)

**APPENDIX C**  
**PROBATION AND PAROLE SUMMARY**

Oklahoma Department of Corrections  
Division of Probation and Parole  
Termination Summary

Client Name \_\_\_\_\_ DOB # \_\_\_\_\_ District \_\_\_\_\_  
Last First MI  
DOB \_\_\_\_\_ Race/Sex \_\_\_\_\_ Case Type \_\_\_\_\_  
Date Placed on Supervision \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Evaluation \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Discharge \_\_\_\_\_  
Supervising Officer \_\_\_\_\_ Officer Badge # \_\_\_\_\_

**CIRCLE THE APPROPRIATE ANSWER**

**Type of Termination:**

1. Expiration of sentence
2. Court-ordered discharge
3. Closed--Interstate Compact
4. Revocation
5. Acceleration to suspended
6. Acceleration to incarceration
7. Reclass to higher security--employment
8. Reclass to higher security--housing
9. Reclass to higher security--program failure
10. Parole
11. Discharge to community portion of split
12. Waiver of parole
13. Commutation
14. Escape
15. Two Year Termination
16. Death
17. Other \_\_\_\_\_

(Specify)

**Circle any of the following that occurred during supervision:**

1. No rule violations or new offenses reported
2. Client absconded, but was reinstated
3. Two or less rule violations reported
4. Three or more rule violations reported
5. Arrested but not charged
6. New conviction, client continued on supervision
7. New conviction, new probation sentence
8. New sentence, given jail/prison term
9. Escaped--New sentence
10. Waived parole

If acceleration/revocation/escape or program failure occurred, complete the following items:

**Reason for acceleration/revocation/transfer to higher security:**

1. Conviction for new offense
2. Incarceration for new offense
3. Revocation substituted for new conviction
4. Charged with another offense but not yet convicted
5. Absconded
6. Other rule violations
7. Program failure

**Most serious violation:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Court ordered restitution paid in full:**

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not ordered
4. Current at time of termination

**Comments** \_\_\_\_\_

**Probation/Parole/Support fees paid in full:**

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not ordered
4. Current at time of termination

**Significant Others:**

1. Single, never married
2. Married
3. Common-law marriage, living with "significant other"
4. Offender has significant other, no cohabitation
5. Separated
6. Divorced
7. Widowed

Briefly summarize offender's progress during supervision: \_\_\_\_\_

**Amount of time employed at termination:**

1. Unemployed and not seeking
2. Unemployed and seeking
3. Full-time (35-40 hours)
4. Full-time but seasonal
5. Part-time
6. Student
7. Homemaker
8. Retired/Disabled

**Gross monthly income at termination:**

1. None
2. \$1-\$199
3. \$200-\$399
4. \$400-\$599
5. \$600-\$799
6. \$800-\$999
7. \$1000 or more

**Last grade completed:**

00. None
- 01-12 (enter specific number) \_\_\_\_\_
13. GED
14. High school graduate
15. Some college
16. College graduate
17. Some graduate work
18. Graduate degree

**Payments received during period of supervision:**

	YES	NO
Disability/workers' comp.	1	2
Social Security	1	2
VA Benefits	1	2
Unemployment Compensation	1	2
Other	1	2

**Alcohol/Drug Abuse:**

1. No interference with functioning
2. Some abuse, did not seek treatment
3. Some abuse, attended but did not complete community treatment
4. Some abuse, actively involved in or completed community treatment
5. Severe abuse, did not seek treatment
6. Severe abuse, attended but did not complete treatment
7. Severe abuse, actively involved in or completed treatment

Number of U/A's taken during supervision \_\_\_\_\_

Number of positive U/A's taken during supervision \_\_\_\_\_

**Number of prior convictions:**

1. None
2. 1 - 3
3. 4 - 7
4. 8 +

**Number of prior incarcerations:**

1. None
2. One
3. Two or more

**Number of prior probation(s):**

1. None
2. One
3. Two or more

APPENDIX D  
APPROVAL BY  
OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD  
FOR HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH

Date: 09-22-93

IRB#: AS-93-047

Proposal Title: WOMEN OFFENDERS: PROFILE AND SOCIETAL BARRIERS

Principal Investigator(s): ~~Dr. Sandhu~~ Hmoud Almosleh

Reviewed and Processed as: Full Board

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): ~~Approved~~

APPROVAL STATUS SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AT NEXT MEETING.

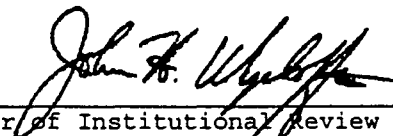
APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR ONE CALENDAR YEAR AFTER WHICH A CONTINUATION OR RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE SUBMITTED FOR BOARD APPROVAL. ANY MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL.

---

Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Reasons for Deferral or Disapproval are as follows:

Provisions received and approved.

Signature:

  
Chair of Institutional Review Board

Date: October 22, 1993



2

## VITA

Hmoud Salem AL-Mosleh

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: THE CHARACTERISTICS OF FEMALE OFFENDERS IN  
OKLAHOMA: AN ANALYSIS OF HIGH RATE OF  
INCARCERATION

Major Field: Sociology

### Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Znieh-Mafraq, Jordan, on December 24, 1954, the son of Salem AL-Mosleh AL-Olimat, and Eida Abdulmuhdi AL-Qallab.

Education: Passed the Jordanian General Secondary Examination (Tawjihi), in June, 1974; received Diploma in Radiologic Technology from the Paramedical Institute in Amman, Jordan in July 1976; received Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology from King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia in June 1984; Received Master's of Science in Sociology from Oklahoma State University in December, 1989; Completed requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy from Oklahoma State University in December, 1993.

Professional Experience: Working as a Radiologic Technologist in Jordan and Saudi Arabia, 1976-1986; Research Assistant, Department of Sociology, Oklahoma State University, August 1989 to December 1989; Graduate Associate, Department of Sociology, Oklahoma State University, 1990, 1991, and 1993.