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Mothering in Prison: Maintaining Relationships through Prison Programs

Shawna Bussone
Northern Michigan University

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This thesis by Shawna Bussone is recommended for approval by the student’s thesis committee in the Department of Criminal Justice and by the Dean of Graduate Studies.

Committee Chair: Dr. Gregory Warchol  Date

First Reader: D/Sgt. Steven Snowaert  Date

Department Head: Dr. Dale Kapla  Date

Dean of Graduate Studies: Dr. Terrance L. Seethoff  Date
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NAME: Bussone, Shawna Marie

DATE OF BIRTH: October 16, 1976
ABSTRACT

MOTHERING IN PRISON:
MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH PRISON PROGRAMS

By
Shawna Bussone

As the number of women in our nation’s prisons has increased, so has the number of children that they leave behind during incarceration. The separation of the mother and child because of incarceration can be traumatic and have a negative impact on both the mother and the child. The maintenance of the relationship through phone contact, letters, and visitation can help to soothe the negative effects of the incarceration. Mother-child visitation programs like the Girl Scouts Beyond Bars (GSBB) program facilitate activities aimed at preserving the relationship between mother and child. This paper is a descriptive exploratory analysis of the impact of the separation of mother and child, the various visitation programs that are available to them, and an in depth look at the Girl Scouts Beyond Bars program. This analysis is supplemented with surveys completed by staff from the Girl Scouts Beyond Bars program. The surveys covered the implementation and the perceived impact of the program on the inmates’ relationships with their children and their behavior in prison. The researcher expected to find that the participants would corroborate the hypothesis that the program has positive effect on the mother-child relationship and inmate compliance with prison rules. Both hypotheses were supported, and qualitative data was provided through the surveys as well.
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INTRODUCTION

When you talk about women in prison, you have to talk about the children. You can’t avoid it.

Elaine Lord, Superintendent at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility

As the female prison population grows, a disadvantaged minority grows along with it: the children of incarcerated mothers. The number of women sentenced to prison has grown dramatically over the last two decades, and many of these women are mothers. Because of the gendered nature of child care, many of these mothers were the primary caregivers of their children. When they are convicted of a crime and given a prison sentence, they need to find someone to take their place and provide care to their children during their absence.

Women have an array of options as to who shall provide this child care: grandparents, husbands, aunts, uncles, other relatives, boyfriends, friends, or foster care. If women have many positive relationships and are confident that competent care can be provided by a specific individual or individuals, then the choice is not difficult. However, some women may be estranged from their family and friends, especially if they have a substance abuse problem. Then the state may become the ward of the children.

Decisions about child care during incarceration may become more complicated if a woman is given a longer sentence. Many relatives may only have the resources to help for a short amount of time. Grandparents especially may have a problem with long term child care because of their age, and they may be living on a fixed income.
Many a mother in prison is concerned about the kind of care that her children are receiving while she is in prison and is worried about the situation the family will be in when she is released. Many want to reunite with their children upon release and resume their mothering duties, but for women without a strong support system this could be very difficult. In many states, like Michigan (Ash & Guyer, 1982), an incarceration constitutes legal abandonment, and the state may take over the children’s care. After a designated period, depending on the state, the children may be legally adopted out. Also, the Adoption and Safe Families Act was passed in 1997 to help children in the foster care system find permanent placements in a timely fashion, defining this as within a calendar year (Travis, 2005). So, if an incarcerated woman has children in foster care and a sentence longer than a year, her rights could be terminated and her children adopted by new caregivers. For this reason many women would prefer to place their children with family or friends while they are incarcerated in an attempt to limit the state’s involvement and better their chances of familial reunification.

Whether a woman can realistically reunite with her children or not, it is probably in the best interest of the mother and her children to attempt to maintain their relationship while she is incarcerated. This can be achieved through letters, phone calls, and visits. However, according to interviews conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice (2002), a little over 50% of women had not received a face-to-face visit from their children since their incarceration. This may be due to the limited resources of the caregivers or opposition from the caregivers. Also, some mothers may not want their children to visit them, and some children may object to going to the prison.

Many mothers and their children do want to spend time together during the period of incarceration. The increase in the population of female offenders has prompted prisons to tailor
programs to their special needs, including the need to be with their children. Almost every woman’s prison in the United States offers parenting classes (U.S. Department of Justice, 2002). These are taught without the children present. Fourteen departments of corrections reported that they offered parenting classes that include children in some stage of the tutelage. Many prisons have special visiting areas and/or extended visitation so that the inmates’ relationships to their children can be maintained. Mother-child visitation programs that are offered in the prison but run by an outside provider are available in 28 departments of corrections (U.S. Department of Justice, 2002). Some agencies and programs even aid in transporting the children to the facility.

The research that has assessed these programs suggested that they have a positive impact on the mothers and the children. This research attempted to add to the knowledge available by contributing a descriptive analysis of the issue and qualitative data obtained from structured interviews regarding one of these prison programs: The Girl Scouts Beyond Bars Program. Some staff members from the programs were interviewed to explore their perceptions about the impact of their program on inmate mothers and their children. The qualitative data gathered during this research may hopefully inspire prisons that don’t have one of these programs to develop one like it, or adopt the one evaluated herein.

Literature Review

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. state and federal prisons held 113,462 women in 2009 and 91,884 adult females in local jails by midyear 2010 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2010; BJS, 2011). Forsyth (2002) estimated that two thirds of the entire female incarcerated population are mothers to minor children, however, another study postulated that it could be as high as 80% of imprisoned women (Clark, 1995). The Bureau of Justice Statistics (2008) reported that female prison inmates in 2007 had 147,400 children. There are no standard reporting systems yet that can accurately determine exactly the number of children that all of the women in prison and jails have produced; it has been estimated that 400,000 children in the United States have mothers that are incarcerated (Forsyth, 2002). Also, approximately 9% of female inmates are pregnant at the beginning of their sentence and give birth on the inside (Applebome, 1992, as cited in Clark, 1995). Thompson and Harm (1999) reported that 79% of their sample of female inmates with children had lived with them prior to incarceration. Another study reported this to be the case for about 72% of the sample (Young & Smith, 2000, as cited in the U.S. Department of Justice, 1994). High percentages of mothers in both studies expressed plans to reunite with their children after release. The separation of the family due to incarceration can be very traumatic, and can have an impact on mothers and their children in many different ways.
A famous poet, William Ross Wallace wrote these famous lines: “For the hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world.” But what happens when the mother (and her hand) goes to prison? If one asks a devoted mother, who is the primary caregiver to her children, what would happen if she were made to live without her children, she might tell you that her reason for living would be gone. By the middle of the year 2007, there were 65,600 mothers in prison who had 147,400 children (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2008). If one accounts for the number of women who are in jail as well (see above), there are even more children who are affected, an estimated 400,000 (Forsyth, 2002).

There are female members of every race and age group in the prison population, but according to Forsyth (2002), who conducted interviews in a women’s prison which focused on the inmates’ children and relationships, female inmates who are mothers are statistically more likely to be single, unemployed, fairly uneducated African Americans with two children and in their late thirties or early forties. Many mothers who were interviewed by Ferraro and Moe (2003) stated that they were in prison because of minor probation violations. They claimed that they were given probation after committing crimes to help support their children, like theft or the sale of illegal substances. Data from the Bureau of Justice Statistics report published in 1998 indicated that fraud, larceny, and drug offenses were indeed the crimes most frequently committed by inmate mothers. More recently in 2008, a Bureau of Justice Statistics special report revealed more about females in state prisons: 64.7% of those convicted of property crimes were mothers, 62.5% of drug offenders were as well, along with 57.3% of violent offenders.
Because mothers make up such a high percentage of the female prison population, the full spectrum of crimes is sure to be represented by them.

After conducting research in a prison for three years, Enos (2001) described four general “mother trajectories” for prison mothers. The first is *motherhood accepted*; commitment to motherhood is initially low due to drug use and crime, and the children usually had to be cared for by others. After the mother went to prison, she decided that she would be more involved in or primarily responsible for her children after her release, so her commitment to motherhood rose. *Motherhood terminated* is the second trajectory in which the mother was involved with her children, but eventually lost parental rights because of criminal activity and multiple prison sentences. The third trajectory is *mother on leave*. These mothers were taking care of their children before they went to prison, and they planned to fully resume that role after their release. Finally, the fourth trajectory is *shared or sporadic mothering*, and it is exactly what it sounds like. The mothers care for their children on and off, sharing the responsibility with others (Enos, 2001).

Clark (1995) observed both negative and positive viewpoints of mothers in Bedford Hills regarding the impact of incarceration and the changes their sentences had on their families. As one might expect, some mothers viewed incarceration as having a negative and oppressive influence on their parent-child relationships. However, other mothers thought incarceration had some positive benefits; it provided a break from the children’s bad behavior and the responsibilities of parenting. It also gave the mothers time to work on themselves in an attempt to become a better person and parent. Some inmate mothers who felt this way discouraged their children from visiting during their time in prison (Hairston, 1991).
The interviews and journal writings of female inmates and staff in Forsyth’s (2002) study revealed some of the many different feelings of incarcerated mothers. Some were sad and grieving; concerned about the welfare of their children and the delinquent behaviors some were exhibiting. They expressed that children are a source of motivation to change themselves for the better and/or a reason for them to keep going. The statements sometimes hinted at the guilt and anger they felt within because of their actions. Some interviewees said that the mother role is a significant part of the culture of the prison, but that some mothers would feign an interest in their role as a mother because to do so was popular, expected, and they thought it might help them get a reduction in their sentence. Clark (1995) described the “mother culture” as a positive force for many mothers: they talked to each other, shared things together and got to know each other and the children.

Celinska and Siegal (2010) observed a very different phenomenon in their study. The women who valued their role as a mother disassociated themselves from an identity as a prisoner, thereby isolating themselves from the other mothers and not getting the social support from them that they could. The researchers conducted 74 interviews with mothers who were going to trial and facing possible separation from their children and mothers that were already incarcerated. They wanted to analyze the coping strategies that the women used to maintain their identities as mothers and deal with the possible or actual separation from their children. They claimed that they could not find any previous qualitative studies on the issue.

Seven strategies for coping emerged from the interviews: “being a good mother, mothering from prison, role definition, disassociation from prisoner identity, self-transformation, planning and preparation, and self-blame” (p.456). The strategy of being a good mother mostly had to do with the way the women tried to present themselves as good and fit parents to their
children. Many of the women practiced the *mothering from prison* coping technique to stay involved with their children. Inquiring about school, homework, and other goings on gave the women the feeling that they had an ongoing maternal role in their children’s lives. The *disassociation from prisoner identity* technique was mentioned above, and the researchers theorized that the women did this because the prison identity was incompatible with their notion of a good mother. Another researcher, Enos (2001), observed the same disassociation in her research, and stipulated that it is especially common in the early stages of dealings with the criminal justice system. Women with multiple sentences seemed to become more comfortable with the inmate role. The strategy of *role redefinition* involved the mothers tweaking their perceptions of the roles of their children—they would credit their children with more maturity than they actually had, telling themselves that their children could handle being apart from them during their sentence. Sometimes these women would even treat their children more like friends than their children. Enos (2001) observed a similar redefining, yet it would not be the role but the situation that was redefined. For example, a mother would contest that she was in prison not because she was caught breaking a law, but because she was ill and needed help. *Self-transformation* was discussed by 45 of the 74 women, and many of these saw religion and service to others as a means to achieve this. A *planning and preparation* strategy was talked about by 40 of the 74 women, and depending on which group they came from, discussed who was to care for their kids if they lost their trial and went to prison or what they were going to do with their kids when they were released from prison (Celinska & Siegal, 2010). The final coping strategy was *self-blame*, and it was the mothers who were incarcerated who used it. They felt guilty about and took responsibility for their mistakes that led to their incarceration and subsequent separation from their children. The researchers thought that this coping technique
was harmful at first, but then they came to understand that self-blame was a pathway to self-transformation. Being realistic about how their past behavior led to their present life circumstances could spark a motivation to begin to make the necessary changes that needed to occur for them to be successful parents, inside or outside of the prison (Celinska & Siegal, 2010).

Sandra Enos (2001) also became interested in prison mothers after visiting a Northeastern women’s correctional facility. Her book, “Mothering from the Inside: Parenting in a Women’s Prison”, documents three years of semi-structured interviews with female inmates that were mothers, and Enos wanted to learn from them not just how they coped with the separation from their children, but how they managed motherhood from inside the prison. After she analyzed all of the interviews, five main strategies for doing so became apparent: “arranging and managing caretakers, demonstrating fitness as mothers to official agencies and other audiences, managing motherhood tasks and identities, negotiating ownership of and rights to children, and balancing motherhood, crime, and drug abuse” (p.19).

Allotting and directing caregivers were important tasks for mothers in prison. A large percentage of Enos’s sample, 75%, were the primary caregivers for their children before they had to leave for prison, and these children needed care during the mother’s absence. Where the children went was dependent on the individual circumstances and resources.

Enos found some cultural differences regarding this: white women were more likely to leave their kids with their husband or foster care than women of color. African American and Hispanic women were more likely to be able to find a family member to take their children, sometimes not even an immediate family member. Her theory was that racial minorities seemed to view the children as valuable resources, and the children gave mothers an important reason to change their behavior. Therefore, these families would go to great lengths to avoid the social
service system. An African American research participant said, “They [my family] would never put my daughter in foster care. Somebody would come to take care of her” (p.60). The white women seemed to prefer to deal with child welfare than suffer the consequences of leaving their children with family. Here is a quote from a white participant’s interview, “If I put my kids with them, I would never hear the end of it. Every time there was a holiday or something, they would throw it up in my face, how they helped when I was in jail. I would rather take my chances with foster care” (p.61).

The children’s caregivers had a lot of power once the mothers were in prison. They could impose conditions that mothers had no choice but to follow if they wanted contact with their children. The mothers had to negotiate their position regarding the children with the caregivers as well, giving up control but still fitting in somehow.

The caretakers were classified by the mothers as overwhelmed, supportive, incompetent or hostile (Enos, 2001). Overwhelmed caretakers were generally older ones who may have been caring for the children for a long time or caretakers with very limited resources. Many times grandparents or other caregivers cannot qualify for welfare or other financial help because they are not the biological parent, and this can lead to significant financial hardship. Caretakers also tended to become overwhelmed if they had to keep the children during very long or multiple prison sentences. Supportive caretakers let the mothers stay informed, involved, and provided good care for the children. The mothers were usually happy with this arrangement unless they felt that their children were becoming too attached to their caretakers. Caretakers were deemed incompetent if it seemed like they were not doing the things that the mothers thought that they should do. Some mothers who were worried that their children weren’t receiving proper care felt powerless to do anything about it; if social services were called, an investigation into the
mother’s fitness could be opened and parental rights could eventually be terminated. The label *hostile* was given to caretakers that did not support a relationship between the mother and the child, and in some cases were trying to become permanent caretakers to the children via legal guardianship or adoption. Some of these mothers did not get to visit or even speak with their children because of this.

Mothers who wanted to maintain a relationship with their children felt pressure to demonstrate fitness as mothers. These women needed to show many people that they were good mothers: their children, caretakers, corrections staff, and perhaps child welfare advocates. They even felt that they had to prove this to the other female inmates. Enos (2001) stated that mothers used “identity talk” to help show their commitment to the mother role. A variety of means were used to defend their identity as good mothers—resisting the prisoner label, minimizing and/or compartmentalizing their past behavior, and comparing their behavior to other inmates. Apparently, there was a hierarchy of behavior that the women used, and the mothers would feel better knowing that others had done worse things than they did.

Some of the mothers tried to balance their role as mothers with crime and drugs using various tactics. It was argued that some crimes helped them to mother their children—stealing and selling drugs provided the things that children needed. Mothers also rationalized using violence, saying they did it to protect their children from being assaulted by others. A few of the drug using mothers tried to argue that they kept their drug use separate from their life with their children. They tried to assert that their children had no idea that they were involved with drugs, crime, prostitution, etc. None of these women wanted to believe that any of these activities prevented them from being good mothers. However, some woman asserted that mothering children did not mix well with drugs and crime. One said, “You can be an addict and a mother
for a while. You can go along for just so long and then eventually something will go out of control” (p.120). These mothers were more likely to admit that their children knew more about what they were involved in, and expressed the desire to amend their lifestyle (Enos, 2001).

Aside from the verbal tactics, actions were also used by the mothers in an attempt to prove motherly competence. Taking parenting classes to improve parenting skills was one way to verify a commitment to motherhood. Maintaining contact by way of phone calls, letters and visits conveyed a desire to continue a relationship with the children. Some mothers had the opportunity to extended visitation programs that would grant them even more time with children. This contact afforded the women more awareness about what was happening in their children’s lives, and the perception that she was interested. The children all had their individual issues due to age and development, such as the risk of being molested, trying drugs, or joining gangs. The children dealt with the mother’s absence in various ways as well. Some of the mothers exhibited mothering ability by understanding these issues and resolving to try to address them.

Maintaining frequent communication and knowing all about what the children were doing was not as easy as it sounds. At times contact between mothers and children could be painful, calling to mind that everyone else’s lives were going on outside the prison. A mother in Enos’s (2001) study explained, “Sometimes I think it is better not to call, because it gets everybody upset, especially me” (p109). The mother and/or child could also become upset during face-to-face visits, and it could lead a caregiver, child welfare worker, or even the mother to decide that visiting is not in the child’s best interests. In that case it would be more difficult to maintain the mother-child relationship and demonstrate parental efficacy.

One of the prominent ways that women used to express their fitness as mothers was making a plan to reunite with their children after their release from prison. Some of the mothers
had detailed plans, especially if their release was pending. Women whose children lived with family members usually had an informal agreement which included a plan to ease back into the parenting role. Social services stipulated that some women must follow case plans and perhaps even complete drug treatment before they were allowed to live with their children. Other mother’s plans were not as detailed or realistic. No matter what the circumstances, most mothers had to overcome significant obstacles to procure housing and employment, which were almost always requirements they had to fulfill to have children placed with them (Enos, 2001). One woman expressed that she understood the difficulties she would encounter upon release, “Can I do that? Can I handle the responsibility? Can I get him to school? Get him to his appointments? Get his medicine? I need a car. I need a job. All that stuff is taken care of right now” (p.90).

Regardless of their efforts to demonstrate parental efficacy, some prison mothers will lose custody of their children. Enos (2001) stated that recidivist mothers are more likely to lose custody, and some of the mothers in her study did indeed have their rights terminated. Long term caretakers may be forced to pursue legal custody so they can enroll children in school or seek medical care for them. Some families do not have the resources to keep the children for long periods or multiple prison sentences, so child welfare may have to step in to provide foster care.

Becoming embroiled in the foster care system is one way that incarcerated women risk losing parental rights to their children. The Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) was passed in 1997, and it stipulates that children should receive a permanent placement within a year of entering the system. For inmate mothers with sentences longer than a year, this means that a petition could be filed to terminate parental rights, and the children could be legally adopted, especially if there is someone who wants to adopt them (Travis, 2005). Women with longer
sentences and children in foster care may not be able to avoid this fate, but even for women for whom this is not the case, significant changes need to be made if they do not want to lose their children while they are in prison.

*The Children*

Many children have to face dramatic and sometimes difficult changes in their lives if their mother is convicted of a crime and given a prison sentence. It is difficult to say exactly how maternal incarceration changes a child’s life and affects their behavior; there has not been much research done with the children themselves. Many researchers interviewed a caregiver or parent for their opinion about the children’s adjustment or lack thereof. Travis (2005) stated that the best way to assess the impact would be to do multiple longitudinal studies that begin right at the time of arrest and continue through the trial, incarceration period and conclude after the family adjusts to the mother’s release. These studies would focus on the children, the changing family dynamic, and the mother-child relationship for the duration. The research that does exist focuses on many issues including the loss of the mother, adjusting to a new guardian, and changes in the relationship between the child and the incarcerated mother. Enos (2001) observed that for some children whose mothers are heavily involved with drugs and criminal activity, a mother’s incarceration could actually be positive in that their lives could become more stable with a new caregiver. In these cases, an arrest is almost a relief for the families who were not able to control these women.

The San Francisco Partnership for Incarcerated Parents (2003) postulated that if the criminal justice system incorporated more policies that were sensitive to the needs of offender’s
families, their children would fare much better, and there would be less intergenerational crime. This partnership wrote a paper titled “Children of Incarcerated Parents: A Bill of Rights”, and that is exactly what it is. They stated that children with parents in prison deserve to be kept safe when a parent is arrested, taken care of while the parent is away, offered support while adjusting, and not suffer judgment because of their parent’s crime. The right to have an ongoing child/parent relationship with regular contact was also stressed (The San Francisco Partnership for Incarcerated Parents, 2003). These rights may not sound like much, but many children with parents in prison do not even have these basic rights that some take for granted.

An important task women face when they are incarcerated is finding someone to assume their parenting duties for the duration of their absence. Some women do not get to choose where their children go if Social Services steps in before a family member or friend does. Many studies show that the majority of children will live with relatives, but there are other placements as well. Thompson and Harm (2000) evaluated a parenting program in an Arkansas prison, studying 104 women and their 134 children. Out of the population of 107 children who were still minors, 75% were living with maternal relatives, 16% with their fathers and 9% had been placed in foster care. Another study reported 65.1% of minor children lived with grandparents or other relatives, 17.4% lived with the fathers, and 17.5% lived in foster care, with friends or others (Bloom & Steinhart, 1993 as cited in Young & Smith, 2000). Yet another researcher relayed this breakdown in her sample’s children: 46% lived with grandparents, 28% lived with husbands, 18% with relatives, and 10% with foster care (Enos, 2001). The statistics captured are fairly comparable, but the placement of children can be dynamic. Some mothers from the sample studied by Snyder, Carlo, and Coats Mullins (2001) relayed stories of their children going from
one relative to another, or from one foster home to another, and often the siblings had to be divided.

The ways that children express their upset about their parent’s incarceration can vary immensely. The initial separation from their parent can be traumatic, so much so that some children can exhibit some PTSD like symptoms. Some caregivers of the children who witnessed their mother’s arrest said that since then the children were having problems such as nightmares or bedwetting (Snyder, Carlo, & Coats Mullins, 2001). The San Francisco Partnership for Incarcerated Parents (2003) reported that because there are no universal protocols for arrest, some children will return to an empty apartment or house, having no idea where their mother has gone. One can only guess how distressing this would be for a child, especially as time passed and the mother still failed to return.

The Third Year Evaluation of Girl Scouts Beyond Bars Program (2008) included interviews with mothers and primary caregivers, and they were asked how the girls initially responded to their mother’s incarceration. They reported that the girls suffered emotional, behavioral, and school problems. The emotional problems included anger and depressive symptoms, the behavioral problems included crying, withdrawal, and disobedience, and the school problems included lowered grades, more absences, and suspensions.

Enos (2001) described some ways that children’s ages can affect the way they understand the absence. Younger children tended to be more confused by the situation, and would attribute the sentence to an illness or a mistake that the mother made. Older children were more attuned to what the real reasons are for the sentence, and sometimes they would try to help their mother by telling her how to be good in order to avoid more trouble. Older children were also more likely to act out and become angry at their mother for her absence, especially teenagers.
Sack, Seidler, and Thomas (1976) interviewed male and female inmate parents and some of the male inmate’s spouses to compare their perceptions regarding the reactions of their children to parental incarceration. According to the findings, the children felt the social stigma attached to the incarceration of a parent, over half had problems in school, and some of the children who were between the ages of six and eight exhibited symptoms of school phobia. Some were more aggressive toward their siblings or peers. A small number of the prepubescent or adolescent group developed antisocial behaviors. In most of these cases it was the father who was incarcerated and a regular visiting pattern had not been established. The marriages of many of these parents were already problematic before the incarceration. The authors stated that when parents and children are separated because of divorce, reactions of aggression and antisocial behavior may occur, so the phenomenon is probably not just related to separation due to incarceration (McDermott, 1970 as cited in Sack, Seidler, & Thomas, 1976). To mitigate some of the negative effects that parental incarceration may have on children, counseling was recommended for the families of incarcerated individuals to assess their financial needs, keep communication flowing during visitation, and attempt to identify children at risk who may need intensive intervention.

Fritsch and Burkhead (1981) questioned a random sample of 91 male and female inmates about the impact of parental absence due to incarceration on children. Their findings support the notion that children may react differently depending on whether the mother or the father was incarcerated. When the father was incarcerated, the children were more likely to “act out,” which included various delinquent behaviors like skipping school, using drugs, or getting into fights. In contrast, when the mother was incarcerated, the children were more likely to “act in,” which consisted of withdrawal, school phobia, or various symptoms of depression. The authors’
findings support a relationship between children’s problem behaviors and the separation from the parent that preceded them.

Another study conducted by the Urban Institute Justice Policy Center assessed the impact of parental incarceration on children using focus groups made up of children’s mentors from the Big Brothers Big Sisters program in four U.S. cities. All of the mentors had a relationship with a child for six months or longer, and they were asked to share their perspective on how the separation from the parents had affected the children. The mentors seemed to agree that the lives of these children could be difficult. Like in the previous study, the children who were having problems tended to act out with anger and misbehavior or internalize and withdraw. There seemed to be an agreement that when the mother was incarcerated it had more of an impact because many of the children then lost their primary caregiver and their residence. In contrast, many of the fathers that went to prison did not live with the children at the time of the arrest, so this was naturally less disruptive to these children. An interesting finding from the focus groups is the general agreement that it would be better for a parent to be given one long sentence then for the parent to continually go in and out of prison. The children would adjust to life without the parent instead of the parent making promises to the child only to break them and go back to prison. The mentors also described the parent’s release as a stressful time for the children, who tended to have high expectations, but usually faced more disruption and sometimes disappointment. The mentors stressed that the children need steady routines, positive activities to take up their time, and supportive adults. This study was meant to be subjective, not quantitative, and the authors specifically stated that it was not meant to be generalized to the population of children with parents in prison (Urban Justice Policy Center, 2008, p.2).
Myers, Smarsh, Amlund-Hagen and Kennon (1999) warned, however, that there is not enough research with this population, and some of what has been done has limitations. They could find no longitudinal studies and stipulated that the children themselves need to be interviewed and observed to try to avoid findings that are based only on the parents’ or the caregivers’ observations. The Virginia Child Protection Newsletter stated that another problem with the research is that most studies on these children do not have a control group whose parents are not incarcerated to compare them to (Virginia Department of Social Services, 2007). Thankfully, some recent studies have been conducted that do interview not just the incarcerated parents or the caregivers, but the children themselves.

One such study was executed by the Council on Crime & Justice (2006). The goal was to find out how parental incarceration affected the children by talking directly to them and their caregivers. A convenience sample of twenty-one families from the Minneapolis/St. Paul area was gathered using advertisements and flyers. The researchers employed qualitative methods, using open ended interview guides for a more relaxed and conversational feel for the participants. Each family went through three rounds of interviews. The first interview gleaned when the arrest happened and how long the sentence would be, the relationship between the caregiver and the incarcerated parent, and all changes that the family felt occurred because of the incarceration. They also asked the family where they received support and help from. The second interview explored the family’s relationships farther, and the third interview consisted of a brief survey, more demographics, and asking the family for an evaluation of the interviews. Some attrition occurred because of families moving or having their phone numbers disconnected over the course of the year of interviews, but fifteen families completed all of the interviews which consisted of thirty-four children and twenty-one caregivers. The caregivers and the
children were interviewed separately by two different researchers and all interviews were recorded. The interview dialogue was analyzed for themes and five “were determined to be the most critical” (Council on Crime & Justice, 2006, p.15):

A. Social Challenges
B. Child’s Awareness of Adult Needs
C. Caregiver as Gatekeeper
D. Perceptions of the Criminal Justice System
E. Resiliency & Coping

Every one of the families described social challenges that they were dealing with because of the incarceration of their family member. Many of the caregivers and children described feeling isolated and having to cope with the negative stigma of having a parent in prison. Sometimes they felt like they had to keep the incarceration a secret from everyone to avoid stereotyping or gossip, some of the children even seemed to think that their families did not want them to tell anyone. However, some children said that these issues became easier to deal with as they got older and developed more of their own identity.

These children came from areas where the incarceration rate is higher than average, and some revealed that they could sometimes make fast friends with another child who had a parent in prison. They described a bond formed through understanding the shared experiences. Unfortunately, many of the children interviewed did not have a friend like this and expressed feeling uncomfortable with their family’s plight. They stated that the situation made them feel isolated from other children their age. Some of the children also mentioned that another social challenge they had to deal with was not having a role model to look up to and emulate.
The second dominant theme was the child’s awareness of the adult needs. This simply meant that the children understood that the caregivers were under stress even if the caregivers did not expressly state this to the children. Many of the children tried to alleviate the stress, sometimes even “taking on adult responsibilities” (p.22), because the children were so grateful to the caregivers for taking care of them while their parent was away. Enos (2001) also heard about this phenomenon during her research, although it seemed that some of the children had to take on adult responsibilities not just because they were grateful, but because it was needed. This was the case especially in arrangements where family members were caring for multiple children, sometimes the older children were expected to help with the younger children.

The third theme was a phenomenon described as caregiver gatekeeping. The researchers stated that the caregiver became an intermediary between the child and the parent in prison. First and foremost the caregiver had the power to decide whether or not they were going to help facilitate the relationship between the parent in prison and the child, who most often wanted a relationship with the parent. This decision would be affected by a number of things; if they thought the relationship would be beneficial to the child or not, and whether or not they had the resources to pay for the expensive collect phone calls from the prison and trips to the prison. If the caregiver did decide to let the child-parent relationship continue, they would then be responsible for setting up these calls and trips. When time would pass by, caregivers sometimes found themselves explaining to the parents how much their children had grown and changed while they had been in prison. Caregivers also had to decide how to proceed when the parent was released from prison and wanted their parental responsibilities back (Council on Crime & Justice, 2006).
The fourth dominant theme regarded the families’ perceptions of the criminal justice system, and these covered the spectrum from negative to positive. It seemed like the views from the caregivers and children on police, the courts, and prison varied depending on their individual circumstances and experiences. The researchers found that some of the children who got to visit their parent in prison would describe a place filled bars, locks and scary people. Some of the children who did not get to visit their parent in prison would use their imagination to describe what prison was like and make up stories about it. Others were even led to believe that the prisoners spent the day playing sports and doing fun activities. Most of the children had positive views of the police, even though some had witnessed their parent being arrested. A lot of the children were torn between knowing that their parents broke the law and had to face the consequences, and wanting their parents to be back with their families because they missed them (Council on Crime & Justice, 2006).

The final dominant theme, the one that makes this study unique, is resiliency and coping. The researchers did not want to only focus on the negative impact that incarceration has on families; they wanted to also highlight how the families were getting through the situation. The researchers declared that “it was striking how many children found healthy outlets for their feelings or creative coping mechanisms” (p.40). Many of the children became very involved in activities outside of school such as church, clubs, or sports. This gave them something to do and think about that would take up their time and help their self-esteem. These activities also helped the children meet new people and make friends; some spent a lot of time with their friends as a way to cope. Religion, church activities, and prayer were described as an important source of support and assistance by many of the children and the caregivers as well. A teenager in the study expressed that getting older, becoming more independent, and learning to think for himself
has helped him. However, not all of the children had positive or healthy outlets. Some children admitted to using negative ways to cope such as yelling or breaking things, citing a temporary relief afterwards. The caregivers said that the children were the reason they made it through the challenges, most stating that they pushed forward because of their faith in God and support from their families. Only a few felt that they did not have much of a support system.

The researchers concluded that the family members of the offenders, especially the children, were punished along with the offenders when they were sent to prison. The children needed to continue to have a relationship with their parent, including regular communication and visits, but for many reasons this was rather difficult. The researchers felt that the criminal justice system, policy makers, and social services needed to consider the needs of the offenders’ families and operate with those needs in mind (Council on Crime & Justice, 2006). One way to do this would be to incorporate more alternatives to incarceration for mothers so that they could be under some form of correctional control, but the children would not have to be separated from them in the first place (Enos, 2001).

Although some researchers have concurred that regular visitation with the incarcerated parent seems to reduce the occurrence of their children’s problem behaviors (Block & Potthast, 1998), the families’ experience many difficulties that hinder the establishment of a regular visiting schedule. Gaudin (1984) noted three main impediments. First, many prisons are in rural areas that may require long drives which places a financial burden on potential visitors. Indeed, the caregivers interviewed in the study by the Council on Crime & Justice (2006) cited transportation as the main hindrance to visitation because of the long drive and also because they did not have a reliable car or any car at all. Second, many visitation areas are uncomfortable for children and visitation rules limit the times and days that visits are allowed. Finally, sometimes
the caregivers may not have good relationships with the offenders and do not put forth the effort to establish a visitation schedule or oppose visitation altogether. Another problem, according to Kazura (2001), is that visits may be scary and/or over stimulating for children. Interviews with prison staff conducted by Casey-Acevedo and Bakken (2002) revealed the perception that “upon reaching the age of nine or ten children develop negative attitudes about visiting a prison” (pg. 76).

The Programs

To attempt to ease the impact of the familial separation and help women change for the better, prisons for women may offer parent support groups, parenting classes, and programs. Enos (2001) stated that it “is assumed that enhancing the connections between mothers and children [with the programs] will have an ameliorative impact on the criminal lifestyles of women” (p.85). In other words, the hope is that the mothers will become more committed to their children, so much so that they will be inspired to become law abiding citizens. The research that has been done on this topic is limited, but it suggests that if the bond with the child is maintained, the mother will have a better chance of avoiding another prison sentence (Showers, 1993).

Kazura (2001) used needs assessment questionnaires to determine what kind of parenting information and services a sample of 136 male and female inmates would be interested in. In this Canadian prison the only contact inmates are allowed with their children in the first 60 days is by letter, and inmates of both genders seemed to want the policy to change to allow visitation during that period. Female inmates were more interested than male inmates in ascertaining how
to parent from prison and how to talk to their kids about their situation. Females were also more interested in attending family counseling after visitation and support groups for them and their children. They were more concerned than the males about arranging transportation for their children to the prison.

Hoffmann et al (2010) sent out surveys to 999 state correctional facilities, 246 of those were for women or had some women housed within. The survey asked questions about programs for parents and children, and also asked about the motivation behind establishing such programs. Helping the inmates’ children was marked as a motivation by almost one-third of the female facilities, compared to only 18% of the men’s. More reasons given for establishing these programs were: “improving/maintaining family relationships during incarceration, reducing recidivism, easing the reentry transition for incarcerated parents, breaking the intergenerational cycle of crime and nearly a dozen respondents reported doing so because ‘It’s the right thing to do’” (p.407).

That national survey of correctional facilities found that 90% of facilities for females have some variation of a parenting program (Hoffman et al., 2010). The parent support groups concentrate on emotional support and the classes on honing parenting ability. Some programs may also offer therapy to further help mothers in a one-on-one or group setting (Virginia Department of Social Services, 2007). A good example of an educational parenting program that is available to mothers in Virginia is called “Parenting on the Inside”, and it was written by Dr. Ann Loper and her graduate students. The participants learn using 8 modules, which mainly focus on feelings, talking to the children’s caregivers, and communicating with the children. The program uses DVD’s and handbooks to get the lessons across, including a card that focuses on phone calls and a booklet about writing letters to the children. Dr. Loper has asserted that the
program helps the mothers to feel better about their parenting skills (Virginia Department of Social Services, 2007).

Another parenting program is called M.I.L.K., or “Mothers Inside Loving Kids”. The program was established in the 1980’s with the goal of assisting the mothers and their children. It employs both means mentioned above: support groups and parenting classes, but as women progress in the program they start to teach the classes and mentor other women. This leadership element is supposed to aid women with their feelings of efficacy and self-esteem. The participants of the program also enjoy an exclusive perk—day long visits with their children every other month in addition to the weekly visits that they are allowed to have. The day visits are scheduled with child centered activities like games and crafts, which give the children and their mothers time to bond (Virginia Department of Social Services, 2007).

Many prisons have developed programs that center specifically on visitations between female inmates and their children, attempting to aid in the maintenance of parent-child relationships. The programs mentioned in this section are not meant to be a comprehensive list, which would be beyond the scope of this paper, but an array of examples of the programs that are available. These programs can range from a special two hour meeting, to a weekend together, to mother and children living together in the prison or another facility.

The National Institute of Corrections conducted a survey of state, territorial, and federal departments of corrections (DOC’s) to determine what program options existed for maintaining family relationships in the 54 responding DOC’s (U.S. Department of Justice, 2002). Half of the 54 DOC’s that responded to the survey reported that when it was possible to do so, the location of the family influenced the decision of where each prisoner served their sentence. Almost all DOC’s had instituted parenting classes and 14 of them offered parenting classes that included the
female inmate’s children. More than 50% (28) of the DOC’s offered mother-child programs in the prison and seven made available programs that were held outside of the prison. Similar findings were reported by Hoffman et al. (2010).

Forty-three DOC’s have created special visiting areas in their facilities so mothers and children can avoid stark visiting areas and spend time together in a child friendly environment (U.S. Department of Corrections, 2002). Bedford Hills in New York fashioned the Parenting Center where the mothers can take classes or receive counseling and children can be bussed in for various programs that may last a weekend or a week, or they can just come and play with their mothers in the playroom (Clark, 1995). Vermont implemented the Family Tree Access Center, a privately run facility designed for visitation between the inmates and their children, to facilitate communication between the inmates and their children’s caregivers, and other social service coordinators (U.S. Department of Justice, 2002). A “family preservation center” was opened in 1997 at the Indiana Women’s Prison, which not only encourages visitation but also meaningful communication between the mother and the child’s present guardian (Kauffman, 2001). An area with a two-way monitoring mirror that allows mothers and children to visit without anyone else in the room was constructed in a New Hampshire prison (U.S. Department of Justice, 2002). The basement of the administration building in the Topeka Correctional Facility in Kansas was remodeled into the Women’s Activities and Learning Center (WALC) for mothers and children, where visits and also various parenting and related classes are held (Logan, 1992).

There are many programs in prisons designed specifically to provide inmate mothers and their children opportunities for extended visitation. If the mothers at the Topeka Correctional Facility complete a ten week parenting program, are minimum security status, and stay infraction
free for 90 days, they are then allowed to go on camping outings with their children at a nearby campground. The program lasts three days, and transportation for the children for this and other visiting occasions is provided by the WALT (Logan, 1992).

A similar weekend camping program operates at the Dwight Correctional Center in Illinois. Camp Celebration opened in 1998 with the help of a Federal grant, and later progressed without Federal funding. Up to 12 mothers who have not been convicted of child abuse or caught with contraband, and can find transportation to the facility for their children, are allowed to camp up to 13 weekends per summer. The mothers attend orientation beforehand which outlines the rules and the optional activities that the family may participate in: arts and crafts, sports, and a petting zoo with farm animals. Security is minimal so staff costs are low. There were no reported problems from staff regarding disruptive behavior or introduction of contraband. The women who participate unanimously give positive feedback about the time they spent with their children when asked for written comments regarding how they felt about the program experience (Stumbo & Little, 1991).

On a campground or at the prison itself, ten different states permit overnight or weekend visits. In Delaware for example, eligible inmates are granted overnight visits with children ten and under, in New York overnight visits are allowed in mobile homes in 11 locations. Mothers in South Dakota may enjoy up to two weekends per month with their pre-adolescent children in the Parents and Children Together, or PACT House (U.S. Department of Justice, 2002). Families may be granted up to five nights every month at the Nebraska Correctional Center for Women (Kauffman, 2001).

There are other prison programs that allow women to be even more involved in their children’s lives through extended visitation. Project Pride and the Community Prisoner Mother
Program in California and Family Foundations Program in New Mexico grant women the privilege of living with their children during the last part of their sentence or while attending substance abuse treatment respectively (Kauffman, 2001; U.S. Department of Justice, 2002). Women may live with their children that are six and under during their sentences in a treatment center outside of the prison thanks to another division of the Department of Corrections in California, Programs for Inmate Mothers (U.S. Department of Justice, 2002). Colorado’s prison has four apartments designed for mother-child extended visits and bonding towards the end of the sentence when release is near (Mjoseth, 1999).

Women may live with their babies and/or toddlers in housing facilities or nursery programs in 11 DOC’s (U.S. Department of Justice, 2002). The Women’s Treatment Center in Illinois, Nebraska Correctional Center, New York’s Bedford Hills and Washington State Corrections Center for Women all have founded programs where mothers take care of their children from birth until a year to 18 months of age while attending various classes and counseling sessions (Kauffman, 2001; Ervin, 1998). Similar nursery programs exist in Tennessee, Montana, Massachusetts, New York, Illinois and Ohio (U.S. Department of Justice, 2002; Women’s Prison Association, 2009). Many of these nurseries provide GED programs and expect the mother to work part time. To participate the mothers have to be model prisoners who have shorter sentences and were convicted of nonviolent offenses. However, the nursery program in Washington allows any mother who is going to provide the principal care for their children after release to participate, no matter what her offense may have been (Kauffman, 2001).

Whether or not these extended visitation and parenting programs are effective in maintaining the relationship between inmates and their children, abating some of the negative
effects of familial separation, and lowering recidivism rates has yet to be fully investigated. Surprisingly, only a few evaluations on these programs have been done (Thompson & Harm, 2000). Craig (2009), who wrote a historical review of programs for incarcerated women and their children, pointed out that over time these programs have not been given much consideration by academia. One reason may be because researchers have to go to great lengths to gain approval to study both populations (incarcerated people and children). The research that has been done so far suggests that prison visitation programs have a positive impact on the relationship between the mother and her children. More program evaluations need to be conducted to encourage women’s prisons to incorporate more programs and so that the programs that do exist can continue to be funded and fine-tuned to be even more effective. Additional research needs to focus on the children of these inmate mothers directly, not just the reported perceptions of the mothers and caregivers regarding their outward behavior.

The following research serves as a descriptive analysis of the Girl Scouts Beyond Bars program in an attempt to add to the existing body of research. It is supplemented by surveys that explored the implementation and the impact of the Girl Scouts Beyond Bars program. The research contributes by exploring the perceptions of staff regarding the program and its’ impact on the inmates, their behavior, and their relationship with their children.

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY
The aim of the research was to contribute to the existing knowledge of mother-child prison programs. The researcher decided to write a descriptive analysis of the Girl Scouts Beyond Bars (GSBB) program, and to supplement the analysis using structured interviews/surveys with the program staff (see Appendix A for IRB approval). These surveys gathered qualitative data regarding the implementation and the impact of the Girl Scouts Beyond Bars (GSBB) program. The researcher was also interested in the determination of whether or not the program is effective in having a positive impact on the inmates’ relationships with their daughters and their behavior while in prison. The answer to this question may be very important to prison administrators who are considering the development of a similar program in their prisons. The GSBB program was first conceived in Maryland with help from the National Institute of Justice and has since spread to many other sites throughout the nation. The award winning program has been praised for the relaxed environment and the absence of limitations on the amount of physical contact that can occur between mother and child during the meetings, allowing affectionate behavior and bonding that may be restricted or forbidden in many prison visitation areas. Some goals of the program are to keep the parent-child relationship intact, to give the inmates incentive to change themselves for the better, to teach the children social and leadership skills, to create an environment where mothers and daughters can discuss many issues that the children face outside the prison, and to break the familial cycle of incarceration (Block & Potthast, 1998). The plan for this research was to focus on the goals of maintaining the mother-child relationship through the regular visitation that the meetings provide and the incentive that mothers feel to exhibit good behavior day-to-day in the prison so that they may continue to participate in the program.
Sampling

There are about 25 Girl Scouts Beyond Bars programs in operation nationwide. All of these programs were contacted by way of phone calls and/or e-mails in an attempt to recruit participants. The sample consisted of 22 people who were staff members of the Girl Scouts Beyond Bars program or those who had facilitated the program in the past that were willing to complete the survey. The 22 participants were from 19 different programs. The sampling was open to those who volunteered for the program, but the researcher was not successful in getting volunteers to participate with this research.

Data Collection

Every Girl Scouts Beyond Bars program in the nation was contacted and given the opportunity to participate in this research. Data were collected by way of structured phone interviews or surveys (see Appendix B) through e-mail with program staff after receiving informed consent (see Appendix C). The researcher developed a one-page survey that would ask the same questions whether it was conducted in writing or over the phone. Questions were written to address the hypotheses, demographics, the implementation and impact of the program, and other areas of interest regarding the program. The total number of questions was restricted so the entire survey could fit onto one page and be completed fairly quickly. Surveys that were sent to the GSBB staff through e-mail were e-mailed back when completed, with the exception of one that was sent back via standard mail and another that was faxed back to the researcher. Much effort was applied to insure that participating in the research would be as convenient as
possible for the participants. The survey was designed to take less than an hour, so completing it would not be too time-consuming in consideration of the staffs’ busy schedules. Even so, there was some program staff that accepted a survey but did not send a completed survey back. Participants were not paid for their cooperation. The data was qualitative in nature.

Variables

There were two hypotheses. First, that participation in a GSBB program had a positive impact on the relationship between the mother and her children. There were multiple questions about how the staff thought the program impacted the mother-child relationship. They were asked if they thought the program helped the mother and child to communicate better and be more affectionate. They were also asked directly whether or not they thought that the program improved the mother-daughter relationship.

The second hypothesis was that participation in a GSBB program gave an inmate an incentive to follow the rules of the prison to maintain participation in the program. This was addressed with a direct question: “Do you think that the program gives the mothers the incentive to follow prison rules?”

The staff survey also included questions regarding both the implementation and the impact of the program, and the differences between the programs at the various sites. The implementation segment inquired about the history of the program, the staff, funding, program activities, transportation for the children, and other implementation variables. Some basic demographic information about the program participants was asked for, such as the number of
women and children the program was serving at that time. However, absolutely no identifying or confidential information of any kind about the participants of the program was requested.

The impact segment included the hypothesis questions explained above, and also explored the staff’s perceptions about the impact the program has on the daughters’ adjustment to the maternal incarceration. Other impact questions focused on whether or not the staff felt that the program had an impact on the mother’s propensity to reoffend, or if she would reunite with her children after release. These were asked in the form of yes or no questions, but there was room to elaborate. The staff was also asked to share what they thought the program’s strengths and weaknesses are. The final question of the survey asked if there was anything else that they wanted to add about their program.

Findings

*Analysis of the Girl Scouts Beyond Bars Program*

The focus of this research is a program that has won multiple awards and has some positive evaluations under its proverbial belt: the Girl Scouts Beyond Bars (GSBB) program. The need to help families fractured by incarceration was recognized in Maryland. Therefore, the pilot GSBB program was implemented in 1992 in Maryland’s Correctional Institution for Women with the help of the warden, Melanie Pererra, the Girl Scouts of Central Maryland, and the National Institute of Justice (Moses, 1995). As news of the program spread, more states decided to start one of their own. Thousands of people have been served by this program.
including daughters, mothers and caregivers, and hundreds of girls are currently enrolled. The GSBB program has many ambitious goals, such as:

To provide enhanced visiting between mothers and daughters so as to preserve or enhance the mother-daughter relationship, to reduce the stress of separation, to enhance the daughter’s sense of self, to reduce reunification problems, and, ultimately, to help decrease the likelihood of the mother’s failure in the community (Block & Potthast, 1998, p.564).

Many children are traumatized by the loss of their mother, and could possibly suffer ill effects due to this loss. A main goal of this program is to help the children cope with their circumstances by giving them a chance to have a healthy relationship with their mother and friendships with other girls who are going through the same thing (Reaching all Girls, n.d.). These relationships could help to ease the stigma and the loneliness that the girls may feel. Another goal is to try to reduce the probability that the girls will follow in their mother’s footsteps to their own prison sentence, and some prison staff have stated that this danger is very real. Melanie Pereira, Maryland’s Deputy Commissioner of Corrections said,

“I’ve been in corrections for 18 years and I’ve seen three generations of people in facilities—grandmother, mother, and daughter at the same time. I’ve seen where the mother was here, gave birth to a child, and the child is now here”

(The Girl Connection, 2003).

Direct observation aside, there is research that supports the notion that there is an intergenerational cycle of crime (McCord 1991; Australian Institute of Criminology, 2011).

The GSBB program attempts to thwart this cycle by acknowledging the bad choices the mothers have made and providing alternative, positive examples through adult mentoring
relationships and education. Beyond that, the Girl Scouts organization aspires to teach all of its members about responsibility, respect, goal setting, and teamwork (Moses, 1995). The Girl Scout promise, which is recited at every meeting states “On my honor, I will try, to serve God and my country, to help people at all times, and to live by the Girl Scout law” (Youngwood, 2006).

The program works like this: the mother, the daughter, and the caregiver all have to agree to participate in order to be accepted into the program. The mother has to fill out an application to be accepted into the program by the Girl Scouts and the corresponding Department of Corrections. Mothers are not guaranteed entry into the program. The qualifications for each program vary, but most stipulate that women must remain infraction free or they risk removal from the program immediately (Moses, 1995).

Once the family is accepted the girls will attend their own Girl Scout meetings in the community, and also participate in other Girl Scout events and activities like camping, visits to museums and galleries, and roller-skating. However, the difference between their troop and others is that some of their Girl Scout meetings are held inside the prison with their mothers. Going into the prison helps to do away with the fears their imaginations have created about where their mothers live (Picard, 2008). The mothers are granted some time to meet on their own as well, to help plan the future meetings with their daughters. This way, their daughters can see them taking initiative and acting in leadership type roles (Moses, 1995). The meetings are structured with time allotted for different things. There is an educational component, and some of the subjects include: financial literacy, drug and alcohol awareness, teen pregnancy, bullying, life skills, conflict resolution, dating, making value based decisions, dealing with stress and peer pressure, and self-esteem building (www.girlscouts.org; Moses, 1995). Time for fun is also a
priority; the mothers and daughters will do arts and crafts, spa treatments, and role playing together. Mothers and daughters are allowed to connect through physical affection, which is restricted or forbidden in some formal prison visitation areas. Most programs will also have the participants work on community service projects such as cards for soldiers and packages for the homeless (www.girlscouts.org; Girl Scouts Beyond Bars, n.d.,b; nationalserviceresources.org). Some programs will invite guest speakers with an expertise, like yoga, to speak during the meetings (www.girlscouts.org). The Texas GSBB program has social workers give individual and group therapy to both the mothers and the daughters to work on their issues (White, 2010). Each program’s structure varies, but one thing is the same—the mothers and daughters spend time together.

Here are a few examples of some of the special things different GSBB programs have done:

In Eastern Missouri the Girl Scouts Beyond Bars program participated in the annual April Showers Personal Care Item Drive. Essential toiletries like soap, shampoo, and toothpaste cannot be purchased with Food Stamps, so the Girl Scouts worked to collect over 1 million of these items for needy families across the region (Girl Scouts Beyond Bars, n.d.,b).

The daughters in Troop 60 in Oregon were treated to sleepover visits to both the Oregon Zoo and the Pacific Science Center (Children’s Justice Alliance). They also get to enjoy special family events four times a year at the Coffee Creek Correctional Facility. Each event features season specific activities; for example, the summer event includes a barbeque, zoo animals, and games and snow cones (Craig, 2006).

Washington’s Totem Council Girl Scouts created a new program called “Transitions for Success”, in which a mother and daughter can still continue to visit after the mother is released
or if she is to be released in six months. This program was established to keep the mother-child relationship intact during the reentry process and to support reunification efforts (Reaching all Girls, n.d.).

Troop 1500 in Texas, along with Ellen Spiro and Karen Bernstein, filmed a documentary that followed the troop for a year doing Girl Scouts activities and visiting with their mothers in prison. The girls were trained how to use the cameras, and they filmed intimate interviews with their mothers, asking tough but fair questions about their crime, drug use, and perceptions about prison (Kasten, 2006; Acosta, 2005; Girl Scouts of Central Texas, n.d.). This same troop has compiled their own statistics, and the results look good; as of 2004, 96% did not experience a teenage pregnancy, 93% were still in school, and 0 of the girls were arrested (www.utexas.edu).

The GSBB program is funded by various means. The Girl Scout headquarters, GSUSA, gives money to some of the programs, as do some of the individual Girl Scout councils. A substantial amount of Federal funding, 1.8 million dollars, was given to the Girl Scouts as part of the 2003 Federal Omnibus Appropriations bill, and the United States Department of Justice gave grants to many of the GSBB programs (www.girlscouts.org). State and city funds also go to the programs in some cases, as well as corporate and private donations. Proceeds from cookie sales and other fundraisers also help to pay for the programs.

With this money, the Girl Scouts provide all of the materials and food for all of the meetings. They pay for the girls’ uniforms and for the expenses incurred during various field trips. Almost all of the councils provide the transportation to and from the prison, and it is quite expensive. There are very few organizations that help with transportation for prison visitation, most are run by religious or volunteer establishments, and they can only provide so much (Cork, 2007). Many states only have one or two female facilities, so the mothers can be very far away
from their families. The caregivers for the girls may not be able to take the time or spend the money on regular visits to the prison (Council on Crime & Justice, 2006), so these Girl Scout meetings may be the first regular visits that the mothers get to have with their children. Many mothers may have had no visits from their daughters before joining the program (Moses, 1995; Block & Potthast, 1998).

Some of the mothers may have ignored their motherly duties in favor of drugs and crime, and participating in this program gives them a chance to work toward making amends. Seeing their children also gives the mothers incentive to change their behavior and motivation to become a better parent upon release (Enos, 2001). Many of the GSBB programs have an educational component for the mothers that include parenting classes to help them do this (Moses, 1995). Some say that when a mother works on her relationship with her child while she is in prison, when she is released she will feel freer to focus on other things like finding a job, housing, and adjusting to life outside of prison (Moline, 2002). Just the assertion that change is possible can help to motivate the mothers. One former inmate said, “When no one else believed I could turn my life around, the Girl Scouts told me I could do it. When people are telling you that you don’t amount to anything, for someone to say that you do, it means everything”(p.1). This woman was released from prison, acquired a full time job, moved into an apartment, and resumed custody of her young daughter (Moline, 2002). The GSBB program encourages these mothers and their daughters to continue to attend Girl Scout meetings in their community after the mother’s release so the Girl Scouts can remain a consistent positive influence and support in both of their lives (www.girlscouts.org; Moses, 1995).

Block and Potthast (1998) conducted a program evaluation to assess the effectiveness of Girl Scouts Beyond Bars (GSBB) in Maryland. To qualify for the program at that site, the
mothers had to have good behavior status and a year or less left on their sentences. Prisoners who were convicted of crimes against children were not allowed to participate.

Mothers and daughters attended troop meetings together twice a month in the prison. In a $30,000 per year effort, the daughters were bussed to the prison every other Saturday, each of them getting picked up right at their door.

During the meetings, the mothers and daughters did activities like crafts and community service projects. An educational component included curriculum and group discussions on life skills and contemporary issues regarding adolescence. There was also time set aside for mothers and daughters to converse privately, and they were allowed to hug and kiss each other, which was restricted during regular prison visitation.

Block and Potthast (1998) studied the GSBB program in Maryland for two years to assess the benefits for participants and whether or not the frequency of the daughter’s visits increased. The researchers compared the participants of the program from the study period and a matched group of inmate mothers who qualified for the program but did not participate during the same time. The researchers found that 73% of the program participants were the principal caregivers of their children before prison, compared to 69% of the matched sample. All of the GSBB participants wanted to reunite with their children after release, and 94% of the matched control group planned to do the same.

The mothers and daughters who participated in the GSBB program were interviewed and given standardized tests. Many of the daughters’ caregivers were also interviewed. The matched group did not complete any of the measures. The relationships between the mothers and daughters were analyzed with the help of the Hudson Parent-Child Contentment Scale, which gives negative or positive scores regarding one’s feelings about a relationship. Overall the
scores of the mothers and the daughters revealed that these relationships were fairly positive. The Piers-Harris Children’s Self-Concept Scale measured the daughter’s self-concepts and the girls were found to be normal with only a few exceptions of very low scores. The Conner’s Parent Rating Scale was given to the mothers and the caregivers to determine if the children were exhibiting signs of problematic behavior patterns and the results indicated that the girls were mostly in the normal range (impulsivity and the likelihood of “conduct problem behaviors” were slightly higher than average). This finding is surprising given that 52% of the caregivers and 70% of the mothers reported that the girls were having behavioral, emotional, or school problems after their mothers went to prison. According to the results of Fessler’s Worry Scale, “the imprisoned mothers’ main worries concerned their daughter’s feelings (anger, missing mother); certain aspects of their daughters’ living situations (schooling, friends); and their ability to support their daughters after prison” (Block & Potthast, 1998, pg. 565). The researchers began the study after the participants had already started the program, so no pretest could be completed. These findings, therefore, cannot be attributed to the program alone.

The visiting patterns of the daughters were examined to determine whether the program changed the frequency of visits. The researchers compared the number of visits the mothers involved in GSBB received to the number of visits a matched group received. They found that the GSBB mothers were more likely to receive visits and to receive more visits in a year on average than the matched group. Twenty-seven percent of the GSBB involved mothers reported that their daughters visits had increased since they entered the program, 53% of the families’ visiting patterns were not affected by the program, and 27% used the program as a visit substitution.
The caregivers of the daughters involved in GSBB that were interviewed said many positive things about the program. They stated that the girls enjoyed the activities and most had made new friends. There was a reduction in the problems the girls were having before their induction into the program and a noticeable improvement in the mother-daughter relationship. Block and Potthast (1998) contended that this program has positive outcomes that strengthen the ties between mother and daughter and soothe some of the pain of separation. They postulated that this type of program helps the child welfare professional to create a plan for the family to move towards reunification at the end of the prison sentence.

The Girl Scouts of the USA commissioned CSR, Inc. to do a program evaluation of the Girl Scouts Beyond Bars program for them. The main goal was to ascertain whether or not there was improvement in the mother-daughter relationship because of the GSBB program. Two other important objectives: to discover if the girls experienced “personal growth”, and developed leadership skills after participating in the GSBB program. The primary survey data was garnered from 93 girls from 12 program sites. The researchers visited one site and had the Troop leaders fill out Rating Forms on the girls and the mothers. The researchers also interviewed the mothers and had them complete their own surveys (Third Year Evaluation, 2008).

The girls’ ages were between 9 and 18. The majority of the girls were African American, and the most common living arrangement was with grandparents. Almost 30% of the girls had been a member of the troop for one or two years, and at least 25% had been a member for more than three years.

The researchers asserted that the data indicated that the relationships between the mothers and daughters in the program had indeed improved since becoming involved in the program. A majority (85%) of the girls marked that they felt “a lot” closer to their mothers, and
84% hoped that the improvement in the relationship would continue. Almost 70% felt that their communication with their mothers was “a lot” better.

Answers to some survey questions illustrated that the girls had learned from the program, and the longer they had been in the program, the better the outcomes were. Almost 75% of the girls revealed that the program helped to teach them to avoid drugs, alcohol, and smoking. Over 70% of the girls indicated that the program had helped to teach them to have respect for themselves and others. Almost all of the girls (90%) were optimistic that they would finish high school, and three-fourths asserted that they would be on their way to college. Survey answers also showed that the girls felt that they were given many opportunities to develop leadership skills in the Girl Scouts.

The caregivers of the girls were interviewed as well, and they stated that the GSBB program had been beneficial to the girls in a number of ways. They reported a reduction in the problem behaviors that the girls were exhibiting when their mothers were first incarcerated, and they felt that the girls learned a lot from the curriculum.

The study also included a sample of 103 incarcerated mothers who participated in 12 GSBB programs. They completed surveys, and some participated in structured interviews during the site visit. The mothers had many positive things to say about the program, about how it impacted their relationships with their daughters and caregivers (Third Year Evaluation, 2008). They also reported that the program impacted them in positive ways, asserting on their surveys that the program helped them change “a lot”.

The qualitative and quantitative data gathered in this research supported the conclusions that the GSBB program does help the mother-daughter relationship, and also encourages “personal growth” and leadership skills for the girls who participate. They found that higher
scores on many of their measures were positively correlated with length of membership in the program. So, the longer the mothers and daughters were in the program, the better (Third Year Evaluation, 2008).

The findings from research that has been done on the GSBB program have been very positive. However, some of the programs seem to struggle with finding sustainable funding. A very unfortunate finding that the author discovered during the course of this research is that at least a dozen GSBB programs that were once running are not anymore (personal communication). The main reason why many of the programs have closed is indeed funding. The cost per girl, especially for programs that provide all of the transportation, is very high. Some programs were started with grant money, and when the grant was cut and the money ran out, it proved difficult to find other means to pay for the program. Other programs fell because of staff changes in the hosting correctional facility—sometimes the new warden would not feel the same way about the program as the previous one. Or a new warden would hire some new staff, and the GSBB program had to go through the red tape to gain permission for entry into the prison all over again with new people. There were cases when the women from a program were transferred from one prison to another, greatly increasing the burden of transportation. There also seemed to be cases where the Girl Scouts staff member who ran the program retired or left the job for some other reason, and no one would took up her responsibilities right away, so the program kind of fizzled out. No matter what the reason was for the closures, there are many girls in those twelve states who don’t get to attend Girl Scouts meetings with their mothers anymore and other girls and mothers who will never get the opportunity.
Survey Results

There are 25 of the Girl Scouts Beyond Bars programs operating nationwide. The number of programs is very dynamic; some programs get cut and new ones open up. The sample was made up of 22 people from 19 different programs. The survey revealed that each program usually has a very small number of staff; many only have one or two. Because of this the researcher decided not to disclose which states the survey came from or which correctional facilities the programs were affiliated with because that could possibly be identifying information. The 19 programs that were represented were serving a total of 306 mothers and 496 daughters at the time of the survey. Transportation alone cost an average of almost $1000 each month for these programs, although some programs paid much more per month, and there were three programs that did not pay to transport the girls to the prison. In those cases the children’s caregivers were responsible for the transportation. Funding for the programs came from various resources, including the Department of Justice, general council operating funds, grants, various fundraisers, private foundations, individual donors, and profits from cookie sales. Seven of the 19 programs revealed they were at risk of closing because of funding issues. For a graph summarizing the sample demographics see Table 1 on the next page.
Both of the hypotheses were supported. One hypothesis was that the GSBB program gives an inmate incentive to follow the prison rules in order to maintain participation in the program. The survey question that addressed this was direct: “Do you think that the program gives the mothers incentive to follow the prison rules?” A majority of the respondents (84%) answered in the affirmative.

The second hypothesis was that the GSBB program has a positive impact on the relationship between the mother and her daughter. A few questions were related to this hypothesis. The most direct question was: “Do you think that the program helps to improve the mother child relationship?” Every single survey participant answered yes to this question. Other related questions asked if the respondents thought that the program helped the mother and child to communicate better and if it helped them to be more affectionate- 100% and 89% circled yes for those questions, respectively.

The survey also included questions about how the staff thought the GSBB program affected the daughters. Participants were asked if they thought that the program helped the girls adjust to the separation from their mother and if it helped to soothe the negative effects from that separation. While 79% of the staff responded that they thought that the program helped the girls adjust, a full 100% of the staff felt that the program helped to soothe the negative effects from

Table 1, Sample Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No. of Mothers</th>
<th>No. of Daughters</th>
<th>No. of Staff</th>
<th>No. of Volunteers</th>
<th>Cost of Transport per month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>496</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>$17,170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>$904</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the separation. When asked whether or not the program helps the girls to make friends, 100% felt that it did.

Additional questions were asked about the mothers. Ninety-five percent of the staff agreed that the program helped to improve the parenting skills of the mothers. When asked if they thought the program had an impact on whether or not the mother would reunite with her children after her release, only 68% answered yes, and 26% were undecided. The staff was also asked if they thought that the program had an impact on whether or not the mother would reoffend, only 47% circled yes, 16% circled no, and 37% were undecided. Many survey respondents expressed that the last two questions about the mothers were very complicated, so it was hard to answer one way or another. Perhaps these questions would have been presented better with a Likert scale instead of asking restricting the answer to yes or no.

Overall, the staff had very positive things to say about the program. More than one staff member described working with the girls as a privilege, and one stated that they were “amazing”. Staff members wrote that they were very thankful for their volunteers; some of them were said to have served the program for many years. It was clear that the staff became close to the families that they worked with, and were very invested in the program. The staff believed that the program had a real impact on the lives of the participants, especially the girls. Some staff stressed that the main focus of the GSBB program is on the girls and trying to keep them out of jail. A graph depicting some of the survey question results can be seen in Figure 1 on the next page.
The staff was asked to share what they thought the strengths of the program were, and they gave a variety of answers. Many stated that they felt that the program helped the mothers and daughters to reconnect, bond, and strengthen their relationship. One staff member stressed that the program creates a secure environment for the mothers and daughters to be able to work on their issues one-on-one without any other family members present. A few wrote that they know some girls would not have the means to visit their mothers at all without the program.

Figure 1, GSBB Staff Survey Results

Staff Perceptions on Program Strengths

The staff was asked to share what they thought the strengths of the program were, and they gave a variety of answers. Many stated that they felt that the program helped the mothers and daughters to reconnect, bond, and strengthen their relationship. One staff member stressed that the program creates a secure environment for the mothers and daughters to be able to work on their issues one-on-one without any other family members present. A few wrote that they know some girls would not have the means to visit their mothers at all without the program.
Staff described benefits for the girls as one of the strengths of the GSBB program. More than one wrote of how their Girl Scouts become bonded through their similar circumstances and support each other. Multiple staff expressed that they develop positive mentoring relationships with the girls. One staff member pointed out that the program is a consistent occurrence for the girls; it may be some of the first consistency that they have experienced in their lives. The staff wrote about how the girls learned self-respect, social skills, life skills, leadership skills, and developed better self-esteem. It was written that many girls who stay in the program for years made smarter choices for themselves, attaining higher education levels and working toward their life goals. One staff member said this about the program; “This program allows girls who are usually stigmatized to come together and just be girls. These young ladies appreciate this safe environment in which they can freely process any emotions they feel, and talk about what they are going through.”

Benefits for the mothers were also discussed by the staff. They asserted that the mothers learned better communication and positive parenting skills, and that the mothers also gained more self-esteem and leadership skills from helping to organize and run some of the activities in the meetings. The mothers in the program also help each other, and give each other feedback and advice. According to a staff member; “One mother was getting in trouble on her unit for fighting. Another mom reminded her that she wouldn’t be able to participate in the program if she continued that behavior. They are holding one another accountable for their actions and the effects that such actions have on their daughters.” A staff member contended that she has seen the program change some mothers’ lives drastically.
Staff Perceptions on Program Weaknesses

The main challenges that the staff mentioned many times were funding and transportation. Because transportation is so costly, it can be difficult to find the funds to cover it. This was also a factor in another issue reported by the staff; they would like to be able to include more girls in their program, but they are constrained by geographical boundaries that have to be set because of transportation costs.

Staff described the complexity of running the program, that they are sometimes the liaisons between the girls, mothers, and caregivers, especially when there is a problem. They also have to navigate the social service system, the foster care system, the legal system, and the prison system. This was described as “difficult” and “a learning curve”. One staff expressed that she wished that there was “more staff support to get the girls and their families connected to every resource that they need or is of interest to them.” She seemed frustrated that the social service agencies are not more connected in order to better help the girls and their families.

Issues with the mothers came to light here as well. One staff member said “Female offenders can be very manipulative and some become more focused on what they can gain personally than on spending quality time with their daughters. One offender with a negative attitude can change the mood of the entire group if not carefully managed.” Also mentioned by more than one staff is that it can be difficult to get the mothers to stay involved with the Girl Scout troop after they are released from prison.

Another challenge reported is that these Girl Scout troops can include girls from age 5 to 18. A staff member stated that “this is a compromise that can often short change the oldest and the youngest girls.” It can sometimes be difficult for the staff to choose curriculum and activities that will be age appropriate for all of the girls. The same staff member also mentioned that
“while spending time in transit younger girls can be exposed to inappropriate conversation from older girls, even with a lot of supervision things get said unexpectedly that must be explained/mitigated/diffused."

This program is so different than the others in the Girl Scouts, that one staffer said that sometimes it feels like it is the “step-child of programs”. A few staff members described how these differences can cause feelings of isolation, disillusionment, and even burnout. The girl’s lives can be chaotic, their families may be low income and transient, and it can be hard for the staff to explain to others why the effort and expenses that the program incurs are worth spending. The funders look at the high cost per girl relative to other troops, and seem to need convincing to keep the program going. A staff member commented, “Funders want data- we often are asked to administer too many evaluations to girls. They become lab rats. Funders also want girls to attend events, speak at events, write letters, draw pictures, have observers, etc. Although it sounds small this can create a sense of indebtedness and detract from the positive experience.” The girls themselves may feel the need to prove that their program is worth the expense.

Summary and Conclusions

It is clear that when women go to prison, breaking up the family unit can be traumatic. This can have a negative impact on the both women and their children. Continued communication may help to ease the negative effects and serve to keep the relationship intact, but a lot of caregivers do not have the means that are required to do this. This is why there is a great need for programs for this population.
Even without research support, it seems logical that a “like mother, like daughter” scenario could occur, especially if the trauma of losing a parent is never dealt with. The maternal incarceration creates a risk factor that calls for intervention—like the Girl Scouts Beyond Bars program. Many people complain about crime, but how many are actually doing something to try to stem the flow of people into the prison system? These people are, and so far it seems to be working.

Both of the author’s hypotheses were supported by the anecdotal evidence. All of the staff (100%) thought that the program had a positive impact on the mother-daughter relationship, and 84% thought that the program gave the mothers an incentive to follow prison rules.

Overall, the staff reported very positive things about their program and the perceived impact that is has on the girls. Some stressed that the program focus was on the girls, their healthy development, and keeping them out of trouble. They asserted that the program can help to soothe some of the negative effects from the maternal incarceration and that the program helps the girls to make friends.

The staff was more cautious about making claims about the program’s impact on the mothers, which made them all the more plausible to the researcher. It was obvious that the staff was very invested in the program, and they could have some bias. Yet, they did not try to make overly far reaching claims about what their program could change for the participants.

Some of the survey questions could have been presented differently. The question asking the staff what the programs weaknesses were was left blank by a few participants. Perhaps if the question asked what the programs challenges were instead, more people would have answered. Also, as stated above, two of the questions about the mothers would probably have been better with a Likert scale instead of a yes or no.
More research and program evaluations need to be done, but not so much that it intrudes on the girls and their program experiences. They should not be made to feel like they are under a microscope. The GSBB program has been operating since 1992, 19 years, so it would be possible to recruit a large sample for a cross sectional study. Moreover, longitudinal studies that follow the girls for years could yield a better look at how these girls are faring when they are in their twenties and thirties, after their involvement with the Girl Scouts is over.

The opinion of the author is that this program is very beneficial to the families that participate. It is much more likely to break the cycle of crime than no intervention at all. The government, communities, companies, foundations, and individuals would be well served to shore up these programs with their money and their time. More of these programs and ones like it should be opening up all over the country, and the ones that are operating now should be able to grow. However, that is not what is happening. A dozen of the programs that were once running are no longer in service, so there are hundreds of children in those states that are at risk because of their circumstances, and a program that was once available to reach out and help no longer can do so. In the sample, 7 out of the 19 programs reported that they are also at risk of closing.

While it is unfortunate to see so many programs, and ultimately children, left with a lack of support and resources, there are points of encouragement. This research found that there are a number of vibrant programs in place that are thriving despite trying circumstances. They serve as a model of how beneficial a program such as GSBB can be if properly supported. It is also inspiring to find such great courage and commitment by all those interviewed, to the purpose of their efforts, which is to help children who by no fault of their own have been faced with difficult circumstances. In closing, it can be stated with confidence that the Girl Scouts Beyond Bars
program provides an efficacious means by which to accomplish a very valiant effort- to help children and families impacted by incarceration.
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Children’s Justice Alliance Services website: http://www.childrensjusticealliance.org/resources


January 25, 2011

TO:  Shawna Bussone
     Criminal Justice

FROM: Terrance Seethoff, Ph.D.
      Dean of Graduate Studies & Research

RE: Human Subjects Proposal  HS11-383

"Mothering in Prison: Maintaining Relationships Through Prison Programs"

The Internal Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your proposal and has given it final approval. To maintain permission from the Federal government to use human subjects in research, certain reporting processes are required.

A. You must include the statement "Approved by IRB: Project # (listed above) on all research materials you distribute, as well as on any correspondence concerning this project.

B. If a subject suffers an injury during research, or if there is an incident of non-compliance with IRB policies and procedures, you must take immediate action to assist the subject and notify the IRB chair (dereande@nmu.edu) and NMU’s IRB administrator (tseethoff@nmu.edu) within 48 hours. Additionally, you must complete a Unanticipated Problem or Adverse Event Form for Research Involving Human Subjects.

C. If you find that modifications of methods or procedures are necessary, you must submit a Project Modification Form for Research Involving Human Subjects before collecting data.

D. If you complete your project within 12 months from the date of your approval notification, you must submit a Project Completion Form for Research Involving Human Subjects.

E. If you do not complete your project within 12 months from the date of your approval notification, you must submit a Project Renewal Form for Research Involving Human Subjects. You may apply for a one-year project renewal up to four times.

All forms can be found at the NMU Grants and Research website: http://webb.nmu.edu/GrantsAndResearch/SiteSections/Compliance/HumanSubjects.shtml
APPENDIX B

Survey Questions

Your state is ____________________    Correctional Facility ______________________
What year did your program start? __________________
How many mothers are you serving at this time ____________ Daughters? ____________
How many staff do you have? ____________ Volunteers? ____________
How long are your meetings? ______________ How often? ___________________________
Please name a few activities that the program participants do. ____________________________
How much does transportation cost? __________________________
How is your program funded? ________________________________
Is your program at risk of closing? ____________________________
Do you think that the program........................
Gives the mothers incentive to follow prison rules? YES NO
Helps with prison staff/inmate relations? YES NO
Helps mothers to improve their parenting skills? YES NO
Do you think that the program helps to improve the mother child relationship? YES NO
Helps mother and child to communicate better? YES NO
Helps mother and child to be more affectionate? YES NO
Do you think that the program has an impact on whether or not the mother will reunite with their children after release? YES NO
Has an impact on whether or not the mothers will reoffend? YES NO
Do you think that the program helps the children to adjust to the separation from their mother? YES NO
Helps to soothe the negative effects from the separation? YES NO
Helps the girls to make friends? YES NO
What are the program’s strengths?
What are the program’s weaknesses?
Is there anything else that you would like to add about your program?
Dear Participant,

My name is Shawna Bussone, and I am writing to you on behalf of Northern Michigan University’s Criminal Justice Department. I am inviting you to participate in a research study about the Girl Scouts Beyond Bars program in order to complete my thesis.

If you agree to participate, we would like you to answer the interview questions either in writing or during a phone interview. The interview will take approximately ten to twenty minutes depending on how much you elaborate. The questions are about the implementation and impact of the Girl Scouts Beyond Bars program. You are free to skip any questions that you do not want to answer for any reason. I will not ask for any identifying information about any of the participants of the program or their children.

Interview participants will not be named in my thesis, and I will report the information from the interview in a way that you cannot be identified. The research data will be kept in a locked file cabinet at 117 Gries Hall at Northern Michigan University; however, federal regulatory agencies and the Northern Michigan University Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies) may inspect and copy records pertaining to this research.

If at any time you decide that you would like to participate through e-mail, my address is shawna777@charter.net. If you have any questions or would like to schedule a phone interview, my phone number is (906)228-5264.

There are no known risks from being in this study, and you will not be paid for participating. However, we hope that others may benefit in the future from what we learn as a result of this study.

You will not incur any costs because of this study. Taking part is completely voluntary, and there will be no penalty if you choose not to participate.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant you may contact Dr. Terry Seetoff of the Human Subjects Research Review Committee of Northern Michigan University (906-227-2300). Any other questions regarding this research project can be directed to Dr. Kapla, the Criminal Justice Department Head (906-227-2660).

I have read the above “Informed Consent Statement”. The nature, risks, demands, and benefits of the project have been explained to me. I understand that I may ask questions and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without drawing ill will or negative consequences. I also understand that this informed consent document will be kept separate from the data collected in this
project to maintain anonymity (confidentiality). Access to this document is restricted to the principle investigators.


Participant’s Signature  Date

Thank you so much for your consideration. Please sign and return this form if you are willing to be interviewed.

Sincerely,

Shawna Bussone