

AN EXAMINATION OF FEMALE INMATES' HOMOSEXUAL BEHAVIOR
IN A SOUTHERN CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

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AN EXAMINATION OF FEMALE INMATES' HOMOSEXUAL BEHAVIOR
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Research concerning same-sex sexual behavior within female correctional facilities has been sparse in both sociological and correctional literature. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to expand upon previous literature and ascertain not only the rates of various homosexual behaviors among female inmates, but to examine which individual variables impacted inmates' participation in same-sex sexual behavior. Using data collected from anonymous questionnaires at a southern female correctional facility, this study examined the characteristics and motivations which influenced women to engage in same-sex sexual behavior while incarcerated.

The most significant and salient variables associated with same-sex sexual behavior among female inmates were prior homosexual behavior, age, and amount of time served. Women who had participated in same-sex sexual behavior prior to incarceration were more likely to engage in same-sex sexual behavior during incarceration than women who had not participated in homosexual behavior prior to incarceration. Younger inmates were also more likely to engage in same-sex sexual behavior than older inmates. Female inmates who had served more time were more likely to engage in same-sex sexual behaviors than those who had served shorter

periods of time. Race was a statistically significant variable on two types of same-sex sexual behaviors. Non-white inmates were more likely to participate in same-sex sexual behavior than white inmates.

Within the history of prison sex research, a perpetual debate has existed between the deprivation and importation models. It is important that sociologists and penologists evaluate these theoretical underpinnings when trying to understand the nature of homosexual behavior within prison facilities. The present study found equal and strong support for both theoretical perspectives. On the one hand, the importation model received support from the prior homosexual behavior and race variables. On the other hand, the deprivation model received support from the amount of time served variable. Both models received support from the age variable.

This study revealed that consensual same-sex sexual behavior continues to occur within female correctional facilities. It also pinpointed several variables which influenced an inmate's decision to engage in homosexual behavior during incarceration. Therefore, it is imperative that correctional administrators and staff begin to believe that positive sanctions (including conjugal visitation programs) can be used to decrease the amount of female same-sex sexual behavior within their facilities.

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INTRODUCTION

In both modern and post-modern society, correctional administrators, politicians, and researchers alike have simply overlooked female offenders. When considering the idea of inmates in prison, the average person envisions the stereotypical male population as represented through the media. Coverage of prison riots, announcement of escapes, and the reporting of executions are the primary focus of the media when relating any information about prisons within our nation. Since the preponderance of these events involve male inmates, the female inmate population continues to be both an afterthought and a forgotten entity.

However, with the increasing rate of women being imprisoned in the United States, more attention than ever before is being directed toward the incarcerated female. Between 1990 and 1998, the number of female prisoners increased 106%, while the number of males grew only 75%. During 1998, while the number of male prisoners increased 4.7%, the female population increased 6.7%. Subsequently, reports for the year's end (December 1999) furthered this trend. The number of incarcerated women increased 4.4% exceeding that of the males who only increased 3.3%. This was the fourth consecutive year that the female prison population increased at a faster rate than the male prison population (U.S. Department of Justice 2000).

The number of facilities for female-only offenders has also increased significantly in the last two decades. During the 1980s, 34 female facilities were opened. From 1990 to 1995, the number of female-only facilities increased from 71

to 104 (Chesney-Lind 1997). Due to this encroachment into a predominantly male subculture, sociologists, psychologists, and penologists have begun to investigate incarcerated females.

The fact that women and men differ in behavior, attitudes, life experiences, and socialization within the general populace enticed researchers to delve into these differences within the incarcerated setting. However, most of the studies of the past decade on women in prison have limited their examination of incarcerated females to issues such as: the history of female reformatories and institutions, explanations for female criminality, sentencing decisions, the lack of or inappropriate programs for the female inmate, adjustments to being imprisoned, and treatment while confined (Maher and Daly 1996; Morash, Haarr, and Rucker 1994; Nagel and Johnson 1994; Steffensmeier 1993; Chesney-Lind 1991). While the above studies contribute a wealth of information concerning female inmates, they rarely address the interpersonal and sexual relationships that evolve between women in correctional facilities.

It seems ironic in a society so focused on sexual behavior and sexual relationships that the study of female prison sex is a topic under investigation by only a few researchers. For the past century, research on the subject of same-sex activities in female correctional facilities has been both sporadic and multi-dimensional in sociological and correctional literature. The few pioneers, in their various modes of exploration, have enlightened those interested in homosexual behavior, make-believe families, and argot labels within female correctional facilities. The current study

differs from previous studies in that it addresses the characteristics and motivations that influence a female inmate's decision to engage in same-sex sexual activity in a southern prison facility.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Pioneer Sex Studies: 1913-1931

The first sex study conducted on incarcerated females scrutinized the “unnatural relationship” between Black and white females in reform schools and institutions for delinquent girls. Otis (1913) argued that same-race homosexuality between females was a “difficult issue” to address. However, homosexuality between white and Black females was seen as a “perversion not commonly noted” (p. 113). Girls often entered into these relationships for fun and entertainment. For many, however, it became a serious enthrallment that evolved into a same-sex sexual relationship. The white girls that became involved in the same-sex sexual relationships were termed “nigger-lovers” (p. 114). Any girl, whether Black or white that changed partners frequently was considered fickle.

Otis (1913) stated, “the difference in color, in this case, takes the place of difference in sex, and ardent love-affairs arise between white and colored girls in schools where both are housed together” (p. 113). The white girls disclosed that the Black girls predominantly assumed the male role in the relationships. It was assumed by “some interested in this phase of the school life” that only mentally defective white girls would indulge in this type of relationship (p. 116). However, the reverse was discovered. Otis (1913) stated that “some of the girls indulging in this love of colored have, perhaps, the most highly developed intellectual ability of any of the girls in school” (p. 116).

Fifteen years later, Ford (1929) described similar Black-white sexual relationships within a different female juvenile institution. Homosexual activity was found to be a voluntary act. The term, "friend," was applied to one who engaged in homosexual behavior. The relationship between two individuals was classified as husband and wife. But, the assumed role (husband or wife) was not always the same in each "friendship." This study suggested that not only were these girls promiscuous, but also that they assumed both dominant and submissive roles with respect to the same behavior.

Approximately two years later, Selling (1931) examined the pseudo-family alliances which developed in female juvenile institutions. These alliances evolved as psychological, non-pathological, substitute families because of the emotional disassociation from their own families. Selling (1931) distinguished four stages (friendship, pseudo-family membership, pseudo-homosexuality, and overt homosexuality) of the homosexual relationship in the female juvenile facility.

The first level was friendship. This was a natural relationship between girls who became fond of each other as acquaintances, sharing confidences and spending time together, much like friendships that developed in society outside the institution. The second level consisted of the formation of the pseudo-family which contained only platonic roles (i.e., mother, daughter, sister, brother). Titles such as "Mammy" or "Mumsy" were given to the person who assumed the maternal role in the family. Often, these girls were only two or three years older than other family members. "Popsy" was the general title given to the father figure of the families. Pet names

were often assumed for various members of these families. Male roles (brothers or uncles) were usually derivatives of the girl's real name (Louis for Louise, Bob for Barbara, etc.).

Relationships of the third level were characterized by pseudo-homosexual behavior. Administrators at the facilities were "concerned with the intimacies that developed between two girls, one of whom was frequently colored and the other white" (p. 247). This level involved playing the conjugal role of husband or wife. Girls within these relationships addressed each other as "my woman," "my man," or "honey." Thus, the term "honies" was implemented by the other girls within the facility for those who were participants in these relationships. Physical contact in these "couples" included putting one's arm around one's "honey," occasional kissing, and some fondling (Selling 1931). This was viewed as more social than emotional or sexual role behavior due to two facts. First, if "honies" were given permission to be together, the white girl often denied the relationship or insisted that she did not want such contact or opportunity. No information was supplied by the researcher concerning the response of the Black girls in this given situation. Second, girls who did not want to have a "honie" were often belittled by other girls in their cottages. They felt pressured and therefore, often corresponded by letter with other girls in mock relationships to alleviate harassment. Many engaged at this level disapproved of those girls who participated in overt homosexual alliances (the fourth level). Girls at the fourth level were repudiated by their peers who labeled these relationships as

lesbian. The girls at this level were not classified as “honies and certainly do not exist on the family plane” (Selling 1931: p. 253).

It is regrettable that not one of these researchers used any type of statistical analyses or methodological techniques to substantiate their findings. In addition, these early researchers did not provide a clear conceptual or functional definition of “sexual” acts. Most of their findings on the type and amount of female homosexual behavior within the juvenile institutions were derived from their own perceptions and from estimates supplied by the staff.

Prison Sex Studies During The 1960s

In 1962, research-based methodology was incorporated by Halleck and Hersko when they gathered data on 57 girls’ homosexual behavior within a juvenile institution in Wisconsin. These researchers used a 73-item biographical inventory and an anonymous questionnaire to “attempt to describe the psychological and social determinants of this behavior” (p. 912). They found that a large majority of the girls became involved in some type of homosexual behavior. However, there were different degrees of emotional involvement and sexual intimacy. The results of the study revealed that 69% of the females had engaged in “girl stuff.” Seventy-one percent reported “mugging” (kissing limited to the facial area) and 11% admitted to fondling another girl. Only 5% of the girls reported that they had stimulated another girl’s genitalia, while 7% had permitted another girl to stimulate hers. Interestingly, only 9% of the girls reported that they had been involved in “girl stuff” prior to their incarceration (Halleck and Hersko 1962).

While many of the girls did not openly show a preference for a male or female role in the “girl stuff” relationships, it was discovered that some of the girls openly changed their mannerisms, grooming, and attire to portray a masculine appearance. These girls were termed “butch” as a status among their peers because of strength and dependability. Both competition and rivalry evolved between the girls who wanted to be with the “butches” as well as between the “butches” for a new attractive arrival. Nonetheless, these relationships were often short-lived due to jealousy and infidelity (Halleck and Hersko 1962).

In 1965, Ward and Kassebaum studied adult female inmates’ sexual behaviors at the California Institution for Women in Frontera (a medium security facility). Prison records (jackets) of 832 female inmates at Frontera were made available by the California Department of Corrections for examination by Ward, Kassebaum, and their staff. In depth semi-structured interviews were also conducted with members of the staff who worked in close contact with the female inmates and with a random sample of 45 inmates over a sixteen month period. In addition, questionnaires were answered by staff members and 293 female inmates concerning issues of prison life, homosexual behavior, staff attitudes, and inmate codes.

In order to alleviate misconceptions about what constituted homosexual behavior, homosexual behavior was defined as “kissing and fondling of the breasts, manual or oral stimulation of the genitalia and stimulation of intercourse between two women” (p. 80). Prison records identified 19% of the population as homosexual. Results from the staff (33% of total staff) and inmate (42% of total population)

surveys disclosed that between 30% and 75% of the inmates had sexual affairs while in prison. Interviews with the inmates estimated the number to be between 60%-75%. It was conservatively estimated by Ward and Kassebaum that approximately 50% of the women had engaged in "some form of overt sexual experience at least sometime during their sentence" (p. 92).

Ward and Kassebaum's (1965) study focused not only on data concerning homosexual behavior in the female prison, but examined the argot roles associated with homosexual behavior. The primary argot role was the inmates' differentiation between a true homosexual and a jailhouse turnout. A true homosexual was defined as a woman who was homosexual before she was incarcerated and continued to be after she was released. A few of the true homosexuals remained faithful to their significant others on the "outside" and did not pursue relationships in prison. According to the data collected by Ward and Kassebaum (1965), many of the true homosexuals were found in positions of prison politicians and merchants. These women were concerned with obtaining a decent prison job, adequate living quarters, material goods, and keeping a low profile while doing time. True homosexual couples carried on their relationships in secret and did not display affection in front of others. From both staff and inmate surveys, it was found that not one estimate of the number of true homosexuals within the Frontera population exceeded ten percent.

In contrast, the jailhouse turnout was introduced to homosexuality after her incarceration in jail or prison. All the inmates that were interviewed and 80% of the staff surveys maintained that 90% of the homosexual activities in the facility involved

women who were jailhouse turnouts. The jailhouse turnouts were known to display overt homosexual behavior and draw attention to themselves (Ward and Kassebaum 1965).

Secondary argot roles termed by inmates for roles played in their sexual relationships were used by both true homosexuals and jailhouse turnouts. Ward and Kassebaum (1965) noted that the most obvious role was the butch (also referred to as stud broad, or drag bitch). The butch was the aggressive and dominant member of the dyad both socially and sexually. Those women demonstrated characteristics that were usually associated with a male such as control, strength, and independence. For some women, these characteristics were enough to differentiate them as butch. Others considered butch assumed a European masculine demeanor in their grooming (short hair, no make-up, unshaven legs), attire (jeans, shirts, men's underwear), and mannerisms (walking gait, crossing legs at knee when sitting).

Ward and Kassebaum (1965) found that in the jackets of the 832 female inmates at Frontera, "approximately one-third of the 400 inmates at Frontera who were homosexually involved at one time or another are butch. Of the 170 women identified by prison records (jackets) as homosexual, 43 were labeled as butch, based on their physical appearance and mannerisms" (p. 104). It was observed that many unattractive, overweight, aggressive jailhouse turnouts assumed the butch role in prison in order to attract interest from members of the same sex. The butch role enabled women to not only have a sexual partner, but provided a means of material

gain through exploiting their partners for contraband, commissary items, and other services (laundry and house cleaning).

The reciprocal homosexual role to the butch was the femme. Results from both questionnaires and interviews of the female inmates revealed that most of the jailhouse turnouts (two-thirds) were femmes. The femme jailhouse turnouts did not have a long commitment to the homosexual lifestyle. Therefore, according to the inmate and staff surveys, femmes were the most likely to revert to heterosexuality upon release from prison. The femme maintained her feminine appearance, was subordinate to the butch (both sexually and socially), and provided housekeeping services. Emotional support, security, and the attention of the butch were cited as some of the reasons for being in the relationship (Ward and Kassebaum 1965).

Role switching was seen as a rare occurrence among the butches and femmes. Instances where this phenomenon did occur was when one relationship ended and a new relationship began. A jailhouse turnout butch would assume the role as femme when she entered into a relationship with a true homosexual butch who had a stronger masculine personality. Often, due to the low number of butches available, femmes switched their roles to obtain sexual partners. However, the femme did not adopt the overt butch mannerisms or attire during this time.

Interviews with both homosexual and non-homosexual inmates offered explanations into the role of the butch and femme during sexual activity. In about one-third of the relationships within the institution, the butch remained clothed during the encounter and refused to let the femme reciprocate sexual gratification. This

served a twofold purpose. First, the illusion that the butch was masculine was not dispelled by showing her body. Second, emotional ties were not as strong for the butch if the femme had not stimulated her, thus, the butch could remain emotionally detached.

Similarities between the butch and a “john” on the streets were also noted. Many of the aggressive butches prevented themselves from becoming attached to the femme due to the fact that many of the femmes were promiscuous and only seeking a temporary substitute for a man. By denying herself the psychological stigma of emotional attachment, the butch was more readily able to handle the rejection of the femme should it occur. However, the remaining two-thirds of the butches would become emotionally involved and asked the femme to reciprocate, thus, the union was consummated. Interestingly, a number of the femme inmates viewed homosexuality as a woman giving sexual satisfaction to another woman. By only receiving sexual satisfaction, many femmes avoided the homosexual stigma resulting from labeling themselves as such (Ward and Kassebaum 1965).

Ward and Kassebaum’s (1965) study presented no data concerning make-believe (pseudo) families at Frontera. Since the major focus of Ward and Kassebaum’s study was about sexual practices within a female facility, either the family issue was not addressed, the families were underground, or they truly did not exist. In addition, this study did not consider age, race, ethnic composition, religion, or other characteristics while investigating the inmates’ sexual behaviors. Therefore,

the question still remains unanswered as to which inmates were involved in same-sex sexual activity within the facility.

Giallombardo's (1966) study in the West Virginia Women's Federal Reformatory not only complemented Ward and Kassebaum's (1965) review of sexual practices (interpersonal homosexual relations) and argot roles within a female institution, but also examined the membership and relationship of inmates involved in make-believe families. It was found that these kinship and dyad relationships evolved as a result of the female inmates' social, psychological, or physiological deficiencies. Giallombardo (1966) examined the women's adaptation of the mainstream "cultural expectations of differential sex roles in society within the prison society" (p. 14). She spent nearly a year interviewing inmates and staff as an observer. Data were collected "by participating in the daily life of the group and by personal observation of the inmates as they participated in the formal inmate activities" (p. 191). While private interviews with the inmates were conducted in their rooms, group sessions often occurred in the various cottages. Employee interviews occurred both in staff meetings and in various offices across the facility.

When questioned about the number of inmates involved in homosexuality within the facility, the inmates placed the number between 90% to 95%. The staff gauged the figures between 50% to 75%, while the associate warden estimated that 80% of the female inmates were involved in homosexual behavior within the facility. This resulted in the estimate that approximately 86% of the women had had a homosexual experience of some type during their incarceration (Giallombardo 1966).

The study also revealed that “approximately 5% of the inmate population” had practiced homosexuality before incarceration (p. 98).

Giallombardo (1966) discovered that the most important relationships within the facility were the homosexual alliances of inmates who were considered “married.” The informal prison structure recognized these marriages as being just as legitimate as marriages outside of prison since there was a representative role of both husband and wife. Reasons given for participation in these partnerships included companionship, security, accouterment, and interdependence. These unions were strictly established on a voluntary basis. Even though these relationships were conclusive between the two women, the alliance could not be totally self-sufficient. Interactions with other inmates evolved into kinship networks. While these families formed for protection and members shared information, they also supplied members with access to institutional goods and services that would not be readily available to the individual inmate or “couple.”

These make-believe (pseudo-families or kinship networks) families also served as a substitute family for the women while they were incarcerated. Same-sex alliances and age limited the role that one adopted within a family. Older, established “married” couples often assumed the role of the parents within these families. Other roles within these kinships were adapted to the personality and behaviors of individual inmates (brother, sister, aunt, uncle). This prison “family” performed all the functions normally attributed to the biological family (economic, protective, affectionate, recreational, and social) with the exception of reproduction.

Even though an inmate's role could change within a given family, the kinship ties usually lasted throughout the inmate's sentence. Sexual relationships within the "family" were limited to the parents (never between daddy/children, mommy/children, or sister/sister, brother/sister, or brother/brother, uncle/niece, etc.). Homosexual activities between members of a kinship were considered a misconduct and classified as incestuous behavior by the Alderson inmates (Giallombardo 1966).

In reference to the subject of argot roles, Giallombardo (1966) found that although the inmates' terminology at Alderson differed from the inmates at Frontera (Ward and Kassebaum 1965), the definitions for the major argot roles were very similar. The Alderson inmates termed the jailhouse turnout and true homosexual as "penitentiary turnout" and "lesbian/fag" respectively. The "stud/stud broad/daddy" was found to be the parallel identity of the butch. The identification as a femme/mommy at Alderson was basically the same as the femme who maintained her feminine mystique at Frontera. However, differences arose within the complexity of the relationships. Femmes at Alderson entered the alliance because of romantic love and the ideal of having a "sincere" relationship (sharing of household duties by both partners) as opposed to those at Frontera who often entered the relationships for support or protection (Ward and Kassebaum 1965).

Giallombardo (1966) also discovered several titles given to the trouble makers and promiscuous women within the facility. A "jive bitch" was an individual who tried to break up a stud and femme by lying and spreading gossip about the couple. A person who allowed herself to be exploited economically and as a laborer was termed

a “trick.” The “commissary hustler” was usually a stud involved in a relationship, but exploited others sexually for economic or commissary gain to supply necessities for the femme. “Chippies” were individuals who were not in a permanent relationship and used sex as a means of acquiring goods (much like a prostitute). “Kick partners” entered a relationship for purely sexual gratification. These individuals did not want the permanence and responsibilities of a relationship. “Kick partners” were often groups of women who shared partners and remained friends. These affiliations were usually very discreet and not scorned by the other inmates.

Inmates who propagated roles, but did not fulfill the expected roles were given titles of “punk” or “turnabout.” Individuals with these labels were despised by the other inmates. A punk demonstrated feminine mannerisms when male behavior was expected. Basically, a punk was a stud with an incomplete adaptation to the role. A turnabout played either the male or female role depending on the situation. Generally speaking, inmates appreciated the structured setting that they had created and felt that a woman should choose one role and remain in it (Giallombardo 1966).

Argot roles were also applied to women who had not engaged in homosexual behavior within the facility. The “square” not only refused to engage in any form of homosexual behavior, but identified with the prison officials’ attitudes. Often they were informants. The square was not included in mainstream activities and often blacklisted by other inmates. Other inmates pitied the squares because they believed that these women were gullible and foolish. In contrast, the “cherry” was an inmate that had not yet engaged in homosexual behavior, but was considered a potential

partner. These individuals were usually young, first-time offenders that were learning the routine of prison life from older inmates. Often due to their short sentences, not wanting to get emotionally involved, or not desiring this type of lifestyle, the cherry did not get sexually involved. The Alderson inmates respected and preferred the “cherries” over the “squares” (Giallombardo 1966).

In contrast to previous subject matter, Mitchell (1969) conducted her research in two adult women’s prisons (one treatment-oriented and one custody-oriented) to address the correlation between pre-prison and prison homosexuality. Homosexual behavior was reported by 37% of the women in the treatment-oriented facility in contrast to only 21% in the custody-oriented facility. Rates of prior homosexual behavior reported by the women in the treatment-oriented facility (31%) were higher than the custody-oriented facility (21%). When this factor was taken into consideration, Mitchell (1969) concluded that previous homosexual behavior clearly played an important role in explaining prison homosexual behavior. The formation or inclusion in make-believe families by inmates was not addressed in Mitchell’s study.

Prison Sex Studies During The 1970s And The 1980s

Another variation into the study of homosexual behavior among female inmates was conducted by Tittle (1972) in a small coed narcotic treatment center for inmates. Respondents were asked both about their participation in homosexual activities and their estimates of the number of inmates that had participated in homosexual behavior since being incarcerated at the center. Tittle (1972) found that 14% of the women reported homosexual involvement. An additional 5% indicated that they had been involved while at the institution but were not currently involved. Comparatively to Giallombardo's study, 21% of the females described their homosexual relationships as voluntary, involving love, affection, and companionship.

Heffernan (1972) conducted both structured interviews and surveys of 100 female inmates in the Women's Reformatory of the District of Columbia in Occoquan, Virginia. Interviews were also conducted with the correctional staff and administrators. The study focused on the solidarity of the various inmate subcultures within the social organization of the facility. Heffernan was given access to all inmates records: criminal history, medical, financial, demographic, and administrative records and reports. This study included, but was not limited to, involvement of inmates in make-believe families, the definition of various argot roles used within the facility, and estimates of inmates who "played." The term, "played" was used by the inmates to distinguish those females who were involved in conjugal roles from those who were not. It was difficult to ascertain reliable data concerning homosexual behavior and the number of "marriages" within the institution.

Due to negative institutional policies against homosexual behavior, many inmates were reserved discussing these issues. This resulted in a plausible estimation given by inmates that 71% of the population were involved in sexual relationships, but only 50%-60% of the inmates were involved in a “marriage.” Staff members interviewed for the study considered only those inmates in “marriages” when asked about rates of homosexual behavior and approximated that 37% of the inmates were involved. Roughly 13% of the prison population had an outside history of homosexual behavior according to their records and interview material. It was assumed that this behavior was continued during incarceration.

The make-believe families at Occoquan were viewed by inmates as a critical element of social order within the facility. Memberships within these families supplied the inmate with a sense of stability and support during their incarceration. Overall, results indicated that 60% of the respondents favored and accepted the formation of the families. Half of the 72 women who discussed the families were either a current member or had been a member in a family during their incarceration. While the members of these families offered both affection and advice, it appeared the family unit was the “basic economic unit in the inmate system of exchange” (p. 91). It was discovered that the familial kinships were not limited to individual buildings or dormitories as in Giallombardo’s (1966) study, but extended throughout the institution. With members active throughout the facility, the family had access to more goods, services, and information (new inmate arrivals, staff changes, schedule

changes, access to contraband or scarce commodities, gossip, news from outside the facility).

The interviewees also revealed that within a family all four stages of Selling's (1931) homosexuality continuum were observed. The homosexual relationship was available "for anyone who is willing or capable of sustaining it- this is a part of the life, part of the institution" (Heffernan 1972: p. 101). The family argot roles were basically the same as in Giallombardo's (1966) study (daddy, mommy, sister, brother, etc).

In order to develop a perspective of the major argot labels used in Occoquan, Heffernan (1972) interviewed correctional staff who had extensive contact with the inmates. Information about the roles and the patterns of association of each role were discussed. Interviews with the inmates supplied additional information concerning the roles. The major argot roles of "the square," "the cool," and "the life" referred to members of the inmate subsystems that were affiliated through their criminal convictions. The squares were females who had no previous criminal record, but were convicted for homicide or assault. White collar convictions of embezzlement or forgery committed during employment also afforded an inmate the title of square. Sentence time for squares ranged from one year to 50 years. The square just wanted to do her time, obey the rules, and did not care about gaining any status among the other inmates. The square chose esteem rather than control of other inmates. This was gained by "recognition of work, respect of staff, affective relations with friends, and

moral standing as a good woman” (p. 143). While 31% of the squares participated in make-believe families, only 9% of the squares reported “playing.”

Inmates with an arrest record including burglary, robbery, check stealing, and forgery (professional) were considered cools. If an individual was convicted of drug dealing, but was not an addict, she was also considered to be a cool. The cools usually had shorter sentences and when released were not rehabilitated. The cool adhered to both the code of the inmates as well as the policies of the staff. The cools were the operators and conformists within the prison that sought status through channels provided by the prison administration (inmate council positions, working on the newspaper, etc.) and interrelations with other inmates. Interestingly, 32% of the cools reported “playing,” while 48% mentioned their participation in “familying” even though cools felt that “close” relationships in prison should be avoided. This was viewed as an economic outlet, not an affectionate one (Heffernan 1972).

The lifes were habitual offenders who were drug addicts or alcoholics convicted for such crimes as prostitution, shoplifting, or larceny. Most of the life inmates had juvenile records of incarceration. The lifes had long and indeterminate sentences. These inmates were manipulative of both staff and inmates for both legal and illegal goods and services. The lifes reported that 57% “played” and 58% were “family” members in order to maintain their addictive habits (Heffernan 1972).

While each of these roles differed in ideology, various members of all three subsystems shared not only emotional and economic ties, but interracial family and conjugal roles to sustain them during their incarceration.

Expanding on the aforementioned studies by Heffernan (1972), Giallombardo (1966), and Ward and Kassebaum (1965), Nelson (1974) conducted a study of female homosexual behavior and argot roles both in a New Jersey and a Pennsylvania female correctional facility. The basis of her inquiry was whether racial diversity had an impact on pre-prison homosexual behavior, incarcerated homosexual behavior, conjugal roles, and membership in make-believe families. One hundred and nineteen female inmates from both facilities voluntarily filled out questionnaires. But, due to a time lapse of several months between the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews, many of the volunteers had either been released or paroled. Only 34 of the original 119 volunteers were interviewed.

Based on questionnaire responses, Nelson (1974) found that 44% of the 119 respondents reported having had sexual relations with another woman prior to incarceration. Of these women, 57% of the respondents were Black, 37% were white, and 6% were other races. The questionnaires further disclosed that 55% of all the Black female inmates and 37% of all the white inmates at the prison considered themselves to be homosexual during their incarceration. Psychological security and sexual satisfaction were the important factors listed for participation in voluntary homosexual alliances. Concerning homosexual behavior within the facility, the questionnaires and interviews revealed that homosexual behavior was considered the norm in both prisons. Specifically, “53% of the inmates believed that ‘most’ other inmates held hands; 48% of the inmates believed ‘most’ other inmates kiss women; 53% of the inmates believed that ‘most’ other women hug other inmates; and 49% of

the inmates believe 'about half' of the other women have sexual relations with other inmates" (p: 143).

Nelson (1974) also found that Black women were more likely to play the male role in the homosexual dyad. She felt that the socialization of Black women to be aggressive, dominant, primary care-givers, self sufficient, and strong predisposed them to acquire the role of husband. Of the seven interracial couples interviewed, six consisted of Black studs or butches and white femmes. Pertaining to "marriages," the majority of the respondents affirmed that marriages were not only present, but mock ceremonies were performed for the couples.

Responses from both the questionnaires and interviews revealed that the make-believe family network was prevalent at both facilities. Due to the total institutional nature of these facilities (demographic isolation, long distance from natural families, limited telephone privileges, and highly censored mail), make-believe families were formed. Inmates at the New Jersey facility often belonged to more than one family and had a different role in each family. In addition, sexual relationships occurred within these family structures.

Nelson (1974) also found that previous argot roles were different from those used at other female institutions. To be "turned out" or to be "in the life" meant that an inmate was homosexual. The heterosexuals were referred to "straight" or "square." The butch was often referred to as the "bulldagger," "man," or "dude." The femme was also known as the "woman" or "the frail." Giallombardo's (1966) jive bitch (troublemaker) was known as the "strumpet" or "instigator," while the chippie

(sex for gain, not love) was referred to as one who “played around” or was merely a “fuck buddy.” The cherry (inmates not yet involved in homosexual behavior) was known as “new stuff” or “baby.”

Two years later, one of the most exhaustive studies of homosexual behavior in correctional institutions was undertaken by Propper (1976). In a comparative study of four female juvenile institutions and three co-ed juvenile institutions, self-report data from the 396 female respondents revealed that 14% of the females were “going with” or married to another girl. Additionally, 10% of the females reported passionately kissing another girl, 10% wrote love letters to another girl, and 7% reported sexual behavior beyond just hugging and kissing (Propper 1982, 1981, 1978, 1976). The “percentage reporting at least one of these homosexual experiences varied from 6% to 29% depending upon the institution, with an overall average of 17%” (1978:269). In addition, Propper found that the rates for pre-incarceration homosexual behavior ranged from 3% to 32% at all seven institutions, making the overall rate 9%. In addition, 71% of the females who had pre-incarceration homosexual experiences disclosed having homosexual experiences during incarceration (Propper 1978).

Based on her original data, Propper (1981) constructed a social-psychological model of the causes of prison homosexuality. The multi-causal model proposed that prison homosexuality was affected by countless cultural, personality, and biological variables prior to incarceration. She stated that “previous homosexuality was included . . . because this study found that it had strong and direct effects upon prison homosexuality” (p. 184). Propper concluded that dominance and self-esteem issues

were also associated with participants of homosexual behavior while incarcerated. If the homosexual experience was found to be satisfying both physically and emotionally, individuals would be more inclined to repeat the experience.

When examining the make-believe families, Propper (1982) extended her original thesis (1976) on incarcerated female homosexuality to determine if there was a link between those who participated in make-believe families and homosexual behavior. Propper (1982) found that 49% of the 382 respondents reported membership in a make-believe family. She found that (1) participation rates were equal in both the coed facilities and in the female institutions, (2) both male and female inmates were included in the families in the co-ed facilities, (3) homosexual “marriages” were rare, (4) the families consisted of basically asexual relationships (mother/daughter, sister/sister), and (5) membership in the make-believe families were not associated with the potentiality of homosexual behavior. Affiliation with these families were not for sexual gratification. Rather, it was for a sense of security, companionship, affection, attention, status, prestige, and acceptance.

In contrast, Hopper’s (1980) study of 176 female inmates in the Florida Correctional Institution in Lowell, Florida, found that two separate make-believe families existed. The conventional family foundation still revolved around security, companionship, and affection without the presence of homosexual behavior. However, a second smaller family unit had evolved that centered not only on the traditional initiatives, but hosted homosexual relationships within its framework.

Hopper proposed that membership into this second type of family provided an outlet of new sexual partners for females who were predisposed to homosexual behavior.

The predominate roles within these families were mother and sister. While only 27% of the “mothers” reported homosexual behavior, 43% of the “daughters/sisters” reported such behavior. Hopper (1980) discovered that “a greater proportion of younger inmates (age group 21-25) engaged in homosexual activities than the total in any of the remaining groups” (p. 64). Race was not a determinant since no statistically significant differences were found between Black/white involvement. It was also revealed that the majority of the women’s first homosexual experiences occurred before incarceration (75% of these 84 women reported pre-prison homosexual experience). Notably, only 5% of these women reported their sexual orientation as homosexual.

Contemporary Prison Sex Studies

It would be eighteen years later before another major publication appeared concerning incarcerated female same-sex sexual behavior. In 1998, after a three year study in the Central California Women’s Facility (CCWF), Owen reported her findings concerning friendships, make-believe families, and homosexual behavior within this facility. The study was considered by Owen (1998) to be a “quasi-ethnography” because observation and evaluation of an inmate’s life within the facility was limited. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with 294 female inmates as well as staff members at the facility. From these interviews, it was confirmed that a complex system of interpersonal relationships based on emotional, practical,

material, sexual, and familial overtones existed among the inmates. Most of the relationships were temporary, while others lasted the duration of the inmate's sentence. It was also discovered that the prison families and dyads crossed both racial and ethnic boundaries.

Friendships were defined as being equal and reciprocal affairs between the inmates. Friends performed the same functions in prison as they did outside of prison. These were allies that you could rely on, talk to, share confidences, and know that they were there for you if you needed support. However, most of the respondents argued that you "harden" the longer incarcerated, causing one to become less dependent on friends (Owen 1998).

The make-believe family structure at CCWF resembled the basic family structures discovered in previous institutions. An older woman assumed the role of mother with younger inmates taking the role of the "kids." The more aggressive, dominant women assumed the role of dad or brother. These designations were flexible and could change over time. Many entered into the prison "family" because they had either no family or a disruptive family on the "outside." The family members had reciprocal social and material responsibilities. The older inmates in terms of both their actual age and time being served, often assisted new arrivals by becoming mentors. They offered advice, guidance, and protection to them (Owen 1998).

Concerning homosexual behavior within the prison, most of the staff and inmates claimed that "everybody was involved." However, conservative estimates

ranged from 30%-60% of the inmate population actually engaging in homosexual behavior. Many of the women interviewed denied any such behavior, while others disclosed that they had been lesbian on the streets and were active participants within the facility. The social construction of the couples and families in Owen's (1998) study paralleled the findings of Ward and Kassebaum (1965), Giallombardo (1966), and Halleck and Hersko's (1962) argot roles of butch, stud broad, daddy, mommy, sister, brother. Derivative titles such as "canteen whores," "box whores," or "hoovers" complimented the previous role of Giallombardo's (1966) "trick" and "chippie" (Owen 1998).

In 2000, Greer conducted a study in a mid-western state female correctional facility. Of the 238 women who were incarcerated, only 35 participated in semi-structured interviews that addressed the subject of friendships, sexual relationships between the inmates, and the lack of kinship networks. The demographic data of the respondents disclosed variables of age, race, type of crime, and length of time served. A table was supplied with percentages of their responses of involvement within same-sex sexual relationships while incarcerated. However, no association between the responses and the specific demographics were supplied.

The results of the study disclosed that 10 of the 35 women had been involved in a sexual relationship with another women while incarcerated. Five of the 35 respondents reported that they were currently involved with a woman in a sexual relationship. The reasons given by the respondents for being involved in this type of

relationship included game playing, economic manipulation, loneliness, the need for companionship, and genuine affection.

Many (21 of the 35) of the respondents described themselves as “loners.” These women observed their peers as manipulative and self-serving. Mistrust was cited as the main reason for no established friendships. Others hesitated in establishing alliances because of the frequent discharges and transfers of inmates from one facility to another. There was not enough time to establish a trustful relationship with another inmate.

Greer also discovered that the kinship network (make-believe families) did not exist at this facility. Respondents indicated that these “families” were not part of the prison culture within their facility. The families were usually formed as a “proxy” for the family on the “outside” and as a means of obtaining information. Since correctional facilities of today are no longer considered “total” institutions that disallow exposure to the outside world, not only has communication with family on the outside become more prevalent, but access to media coverage of local and world events (television and newspapers) is an everyday occurrence.

As one can discern from the sparse research over the past ninety eight years on the sexual behavior of incarcerated females, it is evident that this behavior has and continues to be a major characterization within the prison setting. From the pioneer studies that addressed the issue of the unnatural alliances between “colored” and white females in juvenile correctional facilities (Selling 1931, Ford 1929, and Otis 1913) and building upon the evidence that homosexual behavior, argot roles, and

make-believe families did exist within both juvenile and adult female correctional facilities (Hopper 1980; Propper 1976; Nelson 1974; Heffernan 1972; Tittle 1972; Giallombardo 1966; Ward and Kassebaum 1965; Halleck and Hersko 1962), only a few contemporary researchers (Greer 2000; Owen 1998; Hopper 1980) have continued to address studies concerning these issues.

Research on same-sex sexual relationships in female correctional facilities has been sporadic and provided only an incomplete understanding of the incidence, structure, and dynamics of these same-sex sexual relationships among female inmates. The subject matter most frequently addressed in this literature focuses primarily on the formation of pseudo-families and if and why homosexual behavior emerges once a female is incarcerated. Few studies have examined the number of women who engaged in homosexual behavior prior to and during incarceration. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to understand the motivations, occurrence, dynamics, and characteristics of the women who engage in consensual same-sex sexual behavior while incarcerated. The next chapter will discuss the theoretical framework for the present study.

CHAPTER III

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Explanations as to why homosexual behavior has occurred and continues to occur within female correctional facilities has been outlined by the various researchers. Numerous conclusions have been made to explain the intricacies of both homosexual relationships and the formation of make-believe families within the female correctional system.

Within the history of prison research, an on-going debate has existed between the importation and deprivation theoretical perspectives in explaining the behavior and adaptations of incarcerated individuals. Each perspective has its own merits and shortcomings that have experienced changes due to the modification of correctional policies and procedures. Because one must examine the theoretical considerations involved when trying to understand the complexity and nature of such a controversial subject, the present study of female homosexuality within a female correctional facility will address these perspectives by first outlining each framework and then by defining each concept as relevant to the investigation.

Proponents of the deprivation model proposed that prisonization was the assimilated procedure used by inmates to endure the social and physical deprivations of being incarcerated. In 1958, Sykes maintained that the prison subcultures existed due to the deprivations presented by the prison. Deprivations outlined by this researcher included: forfeiture of liberty, withholding of goods and services, denial of heterosexual relationships, loss of autonomy, the sacrifice of security, boredom, lack

of privacy, loss of emotional relationships, and forced association. It is not inconceivable to realize that these “pains of imprisonment” would be experienced differently by men and women within a correctional setting (p. 78).

The pioneer sex researchers, Selling (1931), Ford (1929), and Otis (1913) did not present theoretical perspectives, per se. Otis (1913) discovered that the girls “haven’t much of the emotional nature that they crave, and it seems they must have the sensational and emotional in some form” (p. 116). She maintained that the segregation of the “colored” and white girls into separate cottages only intensified these unnatural alliances (p. 113). The separation and forbidden alliances only strengthened the girls’ tolerance to the added deprivations enforced by the administration. Selling (1931) felt that the formation of the make-believe families represented a surrogate family for the inmates. Within these families one gained emotional support, affection, and a sense of security which were lacking within the institutional setting.

However, after Sykes’s publication of *The Society of Captives* in 1958, the theoretical concept of deprivation entered all arenas of prison research including homosexual behavior and make-believe family formation. Halleck and Hersko (1962) stated that “the training school [juvenile facilities] fosters homosexual behavior by putting girls of similar psychodynamic backgrounds together in a group living situation and depriving them of contact with the opposite sex” (p. 915). Homosexual involvement provided love, attention, status, and acceptance, thus, alleviating some of the stresses of being institutionalized.

Ward and Kassebaum's (1965) study within a female adult correctional facility discovered that although both genders suffered loss of self-image, routinization of daily life, restrictions, punishments for violation of rules, and segregation from the outside world, women cited their inexperience of 'doing time,' lack of companionship, lack of heterosexual sex, and separation from their children/families as the major pains of imprisonment. As in previous research, Ward and Kassebaum (1965) also found that the need for love, interpersonal contact, security, personal worth, and social status aided the inmate in alleviating the depersonalization of being incarcerated. These needs promoted "homosexuality as the predominant compensatory response to the pains of imprisonment" (1965: p. 76).

Giallombardo (1966) focused on the deprivations that Sykes (1958) enumerated to in his publication. Women entered into homosexual relationships and make-believe families voluntarily to compensate for those losses and as a deterrent from social and physical isolation. The basic needs of affiliation, affection, and an identity were found. These relationships fulfilled each individuals' self-interests. Thus, it allowed one to adjust to incarceration by adaptation, thus alleviating the pains of imprisonment.

Heffernan (1972) concluded that inmate subcultures with their economic, political, religious, sexual, and familial roles developed due to the deprivations felt by the inmates during incarceration. These essentials were cited as "freedom, familial relationships, choice of associates, status, and material supports" (p. 12). Inmate social systems evolved from the interrelations of the individuals seeking alternative

mediums to satisfy these deprivations. Heffernan (1972) found that the degrees of deprivation felt by the female inmates varied between the square, the cool, and the life. Adaption into homosexual alliances or make-believe families was not only for emotional support and affection, but an economic means to obtain goods and services throughout the facility. Nelson (1974) found that due to the nature of their incarceration, the female inmates felt depersonalization, boredom, and despair. Concurring with Giallombardo (1966) and Ward and Kassebaum (1965), Nelson (1974) found that the isolation from and loss of familial roles (wife, mother, daughter, sister) were the major pains of imprisonment.

Some contemporary researchers support the previous viewpoints concerning homosexual behavior within the deprivation model. "Because sex and the expression of sexuality are crucial components of human life, and because of their association with intimacy and the romantic ideal of love, the deprivation of sexual outlets causes extreme emotional, psychological, and physical distress" (Tewksbury and West 2000: 368). Due to the fact that prison facilities today house same-sex inmates, homosexual behavior continues to occur. Except for the few states that have conjugal visitation programs (California, Mississippi, New Mexico, New York, and Washington, and New York) correctional administrators still continue to deny heterosexual outlets for inmates (Hensley, Rutland, and Gray-Ray 2000b). Homosexual behavior and make-believe families are needed to compensate psychologically, physiologically, and socially for the deprivations imposed during incarceration. These deprivations still include, but are not limited to, feeling wanted or needed, being appreciated, feeling

affection for and by another, emotional ties, economic fears, sexual intimacy, security, as well as group/peer acceptance (Owen 2000; Pollock 1997).

In contrast, the importation model argues that patterns of behavior, emotions, attitudes, social and cultural experiences, race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, education, previous incarceration, and membership in various groups before incarceration predispose the characteristics, actions, and adherence to the subculture values of an individual during incarceration (Greer 2000; Owen 1998; Pollock 1997; Propper 1981; Nelson 1974; Heffernan 1972; Mitchell 1969; Giallombardo 1966; Irwin and Cressey 1962).

The importation model was first proposed by Irwin and Cressey in 1962. They argued that each individual inmate's characteristics, attributes, traits, and social histories were critical factors that affected the individual's adaptation and adjustment into prison life. Sex roles, expectations, needs, and values from the outside world affected one's behavior in prison.

The emotional, social, and sexual needs that women import into prison differ greatly, not only from that of men, but from individual to individual. Emotional needs of acceptance, nurturance, and affiliation with others were characteristics imported into the correctional facility. The membership and roles within the make-believe (quasi/pseudo) families enabled many women and girls to function in the same capacity that they had maintained before incarceration (wife, mother, daughter, sister, etc.). Moreover, inmates often assumed roles due to their life experiences and personalities (i.e., Selling's young inmates assuming "mother" roles). Family values,

ideas, norms, and traditions from their “outside” families were often incorporated into the “inside” families consequently forming a sense of cohesiveness, emotional ties, and stability within the prison walls. (Owen 1998; Pollock 1997; Propper 1981; Giallombardo 1966).

Both Pollock (1997) and Giallombardo (1966) argued that homosexuality was prevalent in female institutions because verbal and physical affection between women has always been more acceptable in society. Women were less inhibited within the prison setting to experiment with homosexual behavior as a sexual and emotional outlet. They could explore their imported feelings of curiosity and not feel that their sexuality had been threatened. Most women who entered the prison system as heterosexuals left as heterosexuals (Greer 2000; Owen 1998; Pollock 1997; Propper 1981; Hopper 1980; Nelson 1974; Heffernan 1972; Giallombardo 1966; Ward and Kassebaum 1965).

The studies that occurred within juvenile correctional facilities (Propper 1976; Halleck and Hersko 1962; Selling 1931; Ford 1929; and Otis 1913) examined various suppositions in attempting to explain the prevalence of homosexual behavior. These researchers failed to consider that these young women had reached puberty before being detained and they were experiencing both biological and emotional changes that could have prompted both homosexual behavior and certain roles within the make-believe families.

Some researchers discovered that homosexuality was an imported commodity and it affected the rates of homosexual behavior within various institutions. Hopper

(1980) and Mitchell (1969) both discovered that large percentages of those inmates involved in prison homosexual behavior had also been participants in homosexual behavior prior to their incarceration. Nelson (1974) found that the Black women in her study not only were more likely to be involved in the homosexual prison subculture, but that they also had higher rates of pre-incarcerated homosexual experiences. Propper (1982, 1981, 1978, 1976) found that previous homosexuality accounted for 29% of homosexual involvement within the seven juvenile institutions.

The argot roles used in the various facilities often reflected the imported qualities of the inmates who acquired them. Ward and Kassebaum (1965) found that the official identifiable homosexuals that were labeled butch at Frontera possessed characteristics of control, strength, and independence that were imported from society into the prison. Nelson (1974) noted that the butch (masculine/dominant) role in the homosexual dyads in her study were predominantly Black women. It was suggested that this occurred because of the imported dominant, aggressive behaviors, and street coping skills. Heffernan's (1972) study showed that female labels were directly related to the inmates' crime before incarceration. Similar to Irwin and Cressey's (1962) thief, convict, and square, the labels enabled not only other inmates, but also correctional staff, to have a predetermined status on the behavior (social or antisocial) of the inmate.

As one can see, both the importation and deprivation models have been supported by researchers' empirical investigations. But, perhaps because modern prisons are no longer total institutions initiating the deprivations of the past,

contemporary researchers tend to support the importation model. Wooldredge (1991) concluded that the deprivation model “may no longer be applicable to an understanding of inmate behavior because of the changes in institutions and lifestyles which have occurred over the past 30 years” (p. 6). Greer (2000) believed that the importation of societal attitudes, histories, and cultural needs has influenced the subcultures in female correctional facilities. Even so, Owen (1998) supported both the importation and deprivation models within her study. Pre-prison experiences had a direct influence on the adaptation to imprisonment with the females in her study. But, in support of the deprivation theory, Owen found that the “social organization of women in a contemporary prison is created in response to demands of the institution and to conditions not of their own making” (p. 2). Our conventional explanations for same-sex prison sexuality are, nevertheless, drawn into question by these changes. Can the deprivation and/or the importation model(s) demonstrate sufficient explanations for female prison inmates’ same-sex sexual activities and relationships? One of the purposes of the current study is to address this issue.

Problem Statement

Multiple techniques of research (interviews, self-reports, questionnaires, observations, and surveys) have been implemented to answer numerous questions about the causes of and the participation in homosexual behavior and make-believe families within the female correctional system. Many of the former researchers have asked questions relating to the demographics (age, race, education, type of offense) of the sample groups involved within their studies, but they have not considered a more

direct investigation of the effects of these demographics on inmates' participation in homosexual behavior. In other words, while various researchers concentrated on distinct variables (race, pre-prison homosexuality, prison subcultures), when conducting their studies, common demographics such as age, education, religion, type of offense, amount of time served, or security level were often overlooked (Propper 1976; Nelson 1974; Tittle 1972; Mitchell 1969; Giallombardo 1966; Ward and Kassebaum 1965). The purpose of this study is to ascertain not only rates of various homosexual behaviors among female inmates, but to examine which distinctive variables affected the inmates' participation in this type of behavior.

Unfortunately, some of the previous studies on female prison sex have been compromised due to the interpretations by both researchers and inmates as to what behaviors actually constituted homosexual behavior within the respective study. One must consider the various time frames in which these studies were conducted in order to understand the limitations that the researchers faced, namely, the concerns of correctional administrators about the structure and content of questions that focused on homosexual behavior. One of the advantages of the present study is the implementation of very straightforward questions that addressed female homosexual behavior.

Another distinct aspect of the present study is that it did not address issues concerning the make-believe families or argot labels. While prior female prison sex studies have made important contributions in this area, they tended to minimize the subject of female same-sex sexual behavior by focusing more on the make-believe

families and argot roles. Therefore, in order to conduct a study of female homosexual behavior within a female correctional facility, the present study will focus on both the same-sex sexual behavior and on selected characteristics of the participants involved.

CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

This chapter will discuss and describe the data source used in this study, the sampling design, the sample characteristics, the measurement of variables, and the techniques of analysis. Each section will be described below.

Sampling Design

After gaining permission and approval from the Department of Corrections administration in a southern state, the lead researcher and a graduate assistant were allowed to visit the female correctional facility in order to explain the purpose of the study and to distribute questionnaires. Each questionnaire contained a cover letter that explained to the inmates that their participation in this study was voluntary and that all answers were confidential. Since no formal letter of consent was included, participants filling out and returning the questionnaire constituted consent.

Sample Characteristics

Of the 643 incarcerated females at this facility at the time of the study, 245 returned completed questionnaires to the researchers. This yielded a response rate of 38%. Although the response rates may appear low, most prison studies dealing with sensitive topics attract response rates at or below 25% (Hensley, Rutland, and Gray-Ray 2000a). Table 1 displays the characteristics of the general prison population and the sample of the inmates in the study. The comparison of the general population and

TABLE 1

Population and Sample Characteristics

Characteristic	Prison Population		Sample	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Race:				
White	394	61.3%	150	61.2%
Black	247	38.4	82	33.5
Other	02	0.3	11	4.4
Security Level:				
Minimum	241	37.5%	92	40.2%
Medium	393	61.1	121	52.8
Maximum	09	1.4	16	7.0
Average Age:	35.0 years		34.4 years	

the sample revealed slight differences. Blacks and inmates in medium security were under-represented in the sample group. Maximum security inmates and those inmates who classified their race as other were over-represented in the sample group. According to direct chi-square goodness-of-fit comparisons, the sample is representative of the prison population.

Measurement of Variables

Inmates answered four questions concerning their consensual same-sex behavior while incarcerated. Inmates were asked, 1) Have you kissed another inmate in a sexual manner since being incarcerated?; 2) Have you touched another inmate in a sexual manner since being incarcerated?; 3) Have you received oral sex from another inmate since being incarcerated?; and 4) Have you performed oral sex on another inmate since being incarcerated? Responses were dichotomized so that negative responses were coded as zero and affirmative responses received a score of one. Each one of these items served as dependent variables.

Both demographic characteristics of age, race, religion, education, and prior homosexual behavior and incarcerated-related characteristics of amount of time served, type of offense committed, and security level were recorded for the study group. All of these items served as independent variables. The variables were dichotomized due to the low sample size in some of the categories.

Independent Variables

Age

Respondents' age was operationalized where 0 represents females 34 years or younger and 1 represents females 34 years or older.

Race

Respondents' race was operationalized where 0 represents nonwhite (Black, Hispanic, and Other) and 1 represents white.

Religion

Respondents' religion was operationalized where 0 represents Protestant and 1 represents Non-Protestant (Roman Catholic, Jewish, and Other).

Education

Respondents' education was operationalized where 0 represents high school or less and 1 represents some college or more.

Amount of Time Served

Respondents' length of time served was operationalized where 0 represents less than one year, 1 represents 1-5 years served, 2 represents 5-10 years served, 3 represents more than 10 years served.

Type of Offense

Respondents' type of offense was operationalized where 0 represents personal crimes and 1 represents non-personal crimes.

Security Level

Respondents' security level was operationalized where 0 represents minimum, 1 represents medium, and 2 represents maximum.

Prior Homosexual Behavior

Respondents' prior homosexual behavior was operationalized where 0 denotes a negative response and 1 denotes a positive response.

Although they were not used in the statistical analyses, two additional questions were asked regarding the inmates' sexual orientation prior to and during incarceration. First, inmates were asked to characterize their sexual orientation before incarceration. Inmates were also asked to characterize their sexual orientation on the day of the survey. Respondents were given three response categories: straight, bisexual, or gay.

Techniques of Analysis

The statistical procedures used to generate the results of the collected data will be discussed briefly in this section. Before examining the effects of the eight independent variables (age, race, religion, education, amount of time served, type of offense, security level, and prior homosexual behavior) on each of the four dependent variables, a Spearman correlation analysis was completed utilizing listwise deletion of missing cases. Correlations were compiled for all independent variables in a correlation matrix. This type of correlation analysis was administered not only to provide an objective summary measure to compare and summarize the relationship between the pairs of variables, but to also examine for multicollinearity between the

variables. To denote multicollinearity, pairwise relationships between variables were examined. As a general rule, if r values are greater than 0.80, the variables are strongly inter-related and should not be used (Norusis 1999; Menard 1995).

Logistic regression was also chosen as an appropriate statistical procedure for the current analysis. This method of analysis is used when the dependent variable is dichotomous rather than continuous. Logistic regression produces a formula that estimates the probability of the occurrence as a function of the independent variable. Moreover, the relationship between the independent variables and dependent variable is not linear and the dependent variable is generally not distributed. By coding the values of the dependent variable as 0 and 1, the result estimates the proportion of cases higher in either category of the variable. The predicted value of the variable becomes a predicted probability that an occurrence falls into the higher of the two categories of the dependent variable. The predicted probability cannot be less than 0 or more than 1 (Menard 1995).

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This chapter discusses the results of the statistical analysis of the data. The results are presented in three stages. First, the percentages of the rates of female same-sex sexual activity prior to incarceration and during incarceration are compared. Second, the problem of multicollinearity is evaluated by examining the intercorrelations of the independent variables. Third, the estimates of the logistical regression analysis are presented. These results address the relationship of designated factors on the dependent variables. This allows for the estimation of the influence of the independent variables on each of the dependent variables. In other words, this analysis addresses the primary research question: How much of the total variation in each of the dependent variables was explained by the independent variables?

Percentage Comparison

Of the 245 female inmates who answered the questionnaire, 64% reported being exclusively heterosexual, 28% reported being bisexual, and 8% reported that they were lesbians before they were incarcerated. But, when asked about their sexual orientation while they were incarcerated, only 55% reported being heterosexual, 31% reported being bisexual, and 13% reported that they were lesbians.

It should be noted that more inmates reported participating in the four types of same-sex sexual behavior prior to incarceration than they did during incarceration. Paired sample *t*-tests revealed that three (touched another female, received oral sex from another female, and performed oral sex on another female) of the four

prior/during variables were statistically significant at the .05 level (see Table 2). It is possible that the decrease in the same-sex sexual behavior by the female inmates could be attributed to several factors: a significant “other” on the outside; the choice of not wanting to be involved with another inmate; the option of abstinence while incarcerated; lack of privacy within the institution; fear of being found out and disciplined; or the choice to use masturbation as their sexual release.

Intercorrelations of the Independent Variables and Multicollinearity

This section of the analysis describes the bivariate relationships between the independent variables. Close attention was paid to the intercorrelations between the independent variables that showed a correlation of .80 or above. If a correlation between the predictor variables has an .80 or higher, the regression equations risk having multicollinearity which can produce large standard errors and therefore should not be used (Norusis 1999; Menard 1995).

Table 3 presents the correlation matrix of all the independent variables. According to the table, race had a weak positive relationship with religion ($r = .155 @ .05$). Thus, whites were more likely to be Non-Protestant than non-whites. Religion also had a weak positive relationship with education ($r = .265 @ .01$). Therefore, Non-Protestants were more likely to at least have some college education compared to Protestants. Religion also had a weak positive relationship with prior homosexual behavior ($r = .144 @ .05$). In other words, Non-Protestants were more likely to have participated in homosexual behavior prior to incarceration than Protestants.

TABLE 2

Inmates Engaging In Homosexual Activities Prior To And During Incarceration

	Prior to Incarceration	During Incarceration
Kissed Another Female	44.3% (n=244)	43.7% (n=245)
Touched Another Female*	47.5% (n=242)	40.0% (n=245)
Received Oral Sex By Another Female*	43.2% (n=243)	30.6% (n=245)
Performed Oral Sex On Another Female*	35.2% (n=244)	26.6% (n=244)

* Prior and during differences were statistically significant at the .05 level

TABLE 3

Spearman Correlation Coefficients (n=215)

	AGE	RACE	REL	EDUC	TIMESER	TYPEOFF	SECURITY	PRIORHB
AGE	1.000							
RACE	.061	1.000						
RELIGION	-.032	.155*	1.000					
EDUCATION	.021	.073	.265**	1.000				
TIMESER	.028	.069	.103	.119	1.000			
TYPEOFF	-.059	-.063	-.024	-.018	-.422**	1.000		
SECURITY	.054	.066	-.003	-.099	.206**	-.333**	1.000	
PRIORHB	-.106	-.083	.144*	.023	.096	-.064	.139*	1.000

2-tailed Signif: *.05 ** .01

Coding:

Age (0 = Younger than 34, 1 = 34 or older); Race (0 = Nonwhite, 1 = White); Religion (0 = Protestant, 1 = Non-Protestant); Education (0 = High School or Less, 1 = Some College or More); Amount of Time Served (0 = Less than 1 Year, 1 = 1 - 5 Years, 2 = 5 - 10 Years, 3 = More than 10 Years); Type of Offense (0 = Personal Crime, 1 = Other Crime); Security Level (0 = Minimum, 1 = Medium, 2 = Maximum); Prior Homosexual Behavior (0 = No, 1 = Yes).

Amount of time served had a moderate negative relationship with the type of crime committed ($r = -.422 @ .01$). Those with longer amounts of time served were more likely to have committed a personal crime than those with shorter amounts of time served. Amount of time served also had a weak moderate relationship with security level ($r = .206 @ .01$). In other words, those respondents who had served longer amounts of time were more likely to be housed in higher security levels compared to those who had served shorter amounts of time.

Type of crime committed had a moderate negative relationship with security level ($r = -.333 @ .01$). Inmates committing “other” crimes were more likely to be housed in lower security levels than those committing “personal” crimes. Security level had a weak positive relationship with prior homosexual behavior ($r = .139 @ .05$). Inmates in higher security levels were more likely to have participated in homosexual behavior prior to incarceration than inmates housed in lower security levels. None of the independent variables had correlations .80 or higher. Therefore, no multicollinearity was found.

The Direct Effects of Demographic and Incarcerated-Related Variables on the Dependent Variables

Since the dependent variables were dichotomous, a series of logistic regression analyses were performed to test if the independent variables had an effect on each of the dependent variables. Table 4 contains the standardized betas and Pseudo R's of each of the dependent variables. The most salient independent variables predicting consensual same-sex sexual activity while incarcerated were age, amount of time served, and homosexual behavior prior to incarceration. These three variables were statistically significant predictors of all four dependent variables (kissing, touching, receiving oral sex, and performing oral sex).

Prior homosexual behavior showed the greatest influence on female inmates' same-sex sexual behavior. Females that reported prior homosexual behavior were more likely to engage in all four types of same-sex sexual behavior than women who had not. Age is also a statistically significant predictor of all four dependent variables. Women under the age of 34 were more likely to engage in all four types of same-sex sexual behavior compared to women over the age of 35. Additionally, amount of time served was a statistically significant predictor of all four types of same-sex sexual behavior. Women who had served longer periods of time incarcerated were more likely to engage in all four types of same-sex sexual behavior than women who had served shorter periods of time.

The only other independent variable that was a statistically significant predictor of any of the four types of same-sex sexual behavior was race. Race was a

TABLE 4

Summary of Logistic Regression Beta Weights (n = 215)

	Kissing	Touching	Received Oral Sex	Performed Oral Sex
Age	-1.213*	- 1.325*	-1.195*	-.890*
Race	-.482	-.842*	-1.109*	-.604
Religion	-.005	.231	.143	.856
Education	.455	.257	.487	.591
Amount of Time Served	.610*	.772*	.827*	.558*
Type of Offense	-.557	-.679	-.684	-.650
Security Level	.431	.290	.219	.445
Prior Homosexual Behavior	2.147*	1.639*	1.180*	1.123*
Pseudo R^2	.448	.415	.366	.330

* Denotes statistical significance at the .05 level.

Coding:

Age (0 = Younger than 34, 1 = 34 or older); Race (0 = Nonwhite, 1 = White); Religion(0 = Protestant, 1 = Non-Protestant); Education (0 = High School or Less, 1 = Some College or More); Amount of Time Served (0 = Less than 1 Year, 1 = 1 - 5 Years, 2 = 5 - 10 Years, 3 = More than 10 Years); Type of Offense(0 = Personal Crime, 1 = Other Crime); Security Level (0 = Minimum, 1= Medium, 2 = Maximum); Prior Homosexual Behavior (0 = No, 1 = Yes).

statistically significant predictor of only two (touching another inmate in a sexual way and receiving oral sex) of the four types of same-sex sexual behavior. Non-white women were more likely to touch another woman in a sexual manner and to receive oral sex from another woman than were white women. As shown in Table 4, between one-third and one-half of the total variance in the analyses was explained by the independent variables.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION

This chapter examines the results of the current study in relation to the findings of previous studies concerning the demographic and incarcerated-related variables and their effect on female inmates' participation in same-sex sexual activities while incarcerated. Limitations concerning this study will also be addressed. This will be followed by an overall conclusion concerning the present study.

The main purpose of this study was to explore the characteristics which influence a female inmate's decision to engage in same-sex sexual activity while incarcerated. The primary objective of the current study was to not only ascertain rates of various same-sex sexual behaviors among female inmates, but to examine which variables influenced the inmates' participation in this type of behavior. The secondary objective of the current study was to consider whether the traditional theoretical models (deprivation and importation) offered adequate explanations for female inmates' homosexual behavior during incarceration.

According to the present study, three factors, prior homosexual behavior, age, and amount of time served, significantly affected an inmate's decision to engage in all four types of same-sex sexual behavior (kissing, touching, receiving oral sex, and performing oral sex). Race was statistically significant on only two of these variables (touching and receiving oral sex).

Prior homosexual behavior showed the greatest influence on female inmates' same-sex sexual behavior during incarceration. In other words, inmates who engaged in homosexual behavior prior to incarceration were more likely to engage in same-sex sexual behavior during incarceration compared to inmates who had not engaged in homosexual behavior before being incarcerated. It would appear that women in the current study who participated in same-sex sexual behavior prior to incarceration imported these same behaviors into the prison.

Propper (1981) also included prior homosexual behavior in her multi-causal model because “[the] study found that this had strong and direct effects upon prison homosexuality” (p. 184). She further stated that “those who find homosexuality satisfying are more likely to repeat the experience” (p. 188). Prior homosexual behavior accounted for 29% of the variance of the individual's scores on the homosexuality index within her study.

When discussing inmates who had prior (to incarceration) homosexual encounters, Hopper (1980) stated that “the types of relationships an individual is accustomed to, and how they are established by an individual is simply re-established in the artificial prison environment” (p. 68). Of the 49% of women in Hopper's (1980) study who reported participation in prison homosexual behavior, three-fourths of the women also reported homosexual behavior prior to incarceration. Even though prior homosexual behavior was not the focus of Nelson's (1974) study, she was aware of the impact of prior same-sex sexual behavior. When considering the results of her study, she stated that “the point is worth repeating, almost half of the women in the

sample said they had sexual relations with another woman before prison” (p. 146).

When considering age in the present sample, younger inmates (34 years and under) were more likely than older inmates (35 years and over) to engage in same-sex sexual behavior while incarcerated. Younger inmates may be more inclined to engage in these behaviors because of the increasing liberal attitudes concerning homosexuality within society (Hensley, Tewksbury, and Koscheski 2001).

According to Hopper (1980), “the greater proportion of subjects in the age group 21 to 25 engaged in homosexual activities in prison than the total in any of the remaining groups” (p. 64). Results from other studies (Owen 1998; Hopper 1980; Giallombardo 1966) indicated that younger inmates needed more attachment and emotional security to adapt to the realities of prison life. The belief that younger women may have had more experiences with bi- or same-sex sexual experiences prior to incarceration assumes that these practices are imported into prison upon their incarceration. These explanations lend support to both the deprivation and importation models.

Another statistically significant predictor of same-sex sexual behavior was amount of time served. Those inmates who had served longer sentences were more likely to engage in same-sex sexual behavior than inmates who had served shorter sentences. According to Hensley et al. (2001), these inmates are deprived of normal heterosexual and psychological outlets which may lead to depression and increase their chances of participating in same-sex sexual activity. Thus, this finding lends support to the deprivation model.

While these three variables were statistically significant predictors of same-sex sexual behavior, race was statistically significant in only two types of same-sex behaviors. Non-white females (82 of the 93 non-white females were Black) in the sample were more likely to engage in homosexual behavior compared to white women. This finding moderately supports Nelson's (1974) study on female prison sexuality. According to Nelson, Black women in prison are more able to openly express themselves sexually, which lends support to the importation model. However, most prison sex researchers have found no statistically significant differences between race and same-sex sexual behavior within the various female prison facilities (Propper 1981; Hopper 1980; Giallombardo 1966; Ward and Kassebaum 1965).

Limitations of the Present Study

This section discusses the limitations found within the present study. The first limitation of the present study was the questionnaire itself. The focus of the present study was directed entirely toward the four types of same-sex behavior and the demographic variables and incarcerated-related variables. Due to the delicate subject matter, it was reiterated several times to the prospective respondents that their answers would be anonymous and that no one affiliated with the Department of Corrections would view their answers. Even though the response rate was 38%, there is the possibility that the response rate could have been higher if inmates did not fear disciplinary action as a result of their answers on the questionnaires.

Another limitation of the present study would be the under-representation of both Blacks and inmates in medium security. Maximum security inmates and those

inmates that classified their race as non-white were over-represented in the sample group. Because these are tentative findings, future researchers should consider expanding the racial categories to include not only white vs. non-white, but categories such as: Black, Hispanic, Latino, Native American, Asian, and Other.

Additionally, a limitation was discovered within the present study concerning the religion variable. Respondents could classify themselves as either Protestant or Non-Protestant. Because of the coding and the lack of religious fundamentalism questions in the present study, it is suggested that future researchers should address the religion/homosexual behavior link by examining religious fundamentalism and religious denominations as two separate and discrete variables.

Finally, the results of the present study cannot be generalized to all populations within other female correctional facilities. The current study involved only one female correctional facility which housed all three security levels. According to Chesney-Lind (1997), there were 104 female-only facilities within the United States in 1997. Even though some of the findings support previous research, further studies need to be conducted in female facilities across the United States addressing same-sex sexual behavior and the various demographic and incarcerated-related variables that impact such behavior.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the present study has added another chapter into the often considered taboo subject of female prison sex. For nearly ninety years, researchers have sporadically ventured into the realm of the incarcerated female to study the

inmate sexual subculture. As the existence of sexual orientation continues to be on the forefront of societal concerns and academic agendas, it is imperative to not exclude members of society who are behind bars.

Inmates are no longer totally secluded from society. For the most part, the total institutions of the past have ceased to exist in modern American prisons. Female inmates can keep in close contact with their families and maintain ties with the outside world through various components of the media. The changes that are found within female prisons across the United States reflect not only the changes in society, but the influences, interpersonal relationships, and social histories that the women import into the prisons.

Although the main purpose of the current study was to ascertain which women within the female southern correctional facility participated in same-sex sexual behaviors, an examination of the deprivation and importation models was also explored. The deprivation model received strong support from the variables, amount of time served and age. Being deprived of heterosexual relationships, affection, and emotion stability over a long period of time could be the reasons that female inmates seek same-sex sexual relationships while incarcerated. Being deprived of attachment and emotional stability could be the reasons that younger inmates seek same-sex sexual relationships while incarcerated. The importation model received strong support from the variables, prior homosexual behavior and age, in addition to moderate support from the variable of race. The various lifestyles (where both age and race are concerned) and the individuality (where prior homosexual behavior, race,

and age are concerned) that the females experienced before incarceration were imported into the prisons.

The primary reason for this study was to investigate same-sex sexual behaviors of incarcerated females. As further studies in society address the issue of sexual behavior, one must not forget to include females behind bars, who throughout history have often been forgotten and overlooked. Studies that delve into the inner sanctum of same-sex sexual behavior within prisons not only enlighten penologists, but also correctional administrators. Through continued research which discloses the prevalence of these activities within correctional facilities, one could hope that policy and procedure personnel would repeal disciplinary actions against these behaviors and impose positive sanctions such as conjugal visitation programs for all female inmates.

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